

Thesis

Cycling as a Right to the City

Bicycle Advocacy and Cycling Citizenship in Guadalajara



By Nina van Belzen & Tirza Noach

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Universiteit Utrecht

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¹ COVER Nanna de Jong Illustration 2017. <http://nannabananna.com/>.

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Nina & Tirza

TABLE OF CONTENTS	
Acknowledgements	5
Maps	7
Introduction	9
Methods and techniques	12
Thesis outline	14
Chapter 1 Theoretical framework	16
1.1 Cities, citizenship and mobility	16
1.2 ‘Cycling citizenship’ and identity	18
1.3 Cycling, social inequalities and agency	21
1.4 Bicycle networks, movements and practices	24
Chapter 2 The Setting	27
Chapter 3 Everyday Cycling in Guadalajara: From Structural Conditions to Personal Experiences	31
3.1 Structural barriers to mobility	32
3.2 Urban governance and promoting bicycle use	35
3.3 Perceptions and motivations surrounding cycling	37
3.4 Bicycle culture and road education	39
3.5 Gender and age differences and cycling	42
3.6 Bicycle infrastructure	44
Chapter 4 Bicycle Imaginaries	48
4.1 The cycling ‘self’	48
4.2 Lifestyle and consumption	50
4.3 Cycling symbolism and ideologies	54
4.4 Cycling communities	56
Chapter 5 Bicycle Advocacy in Guadalajara: From Visualization to Consolidation	59
5.1 Typology of bicycle advocacy	60
5.2 Visions and aims	61
5.3 Strategies, tactics, and activities	64
5.4 Outcomes, results, criticism	69
Conclusion	73
Bibliography	79
Appendix	85
I. Resumen de la investigación en español (research summary in Spanish)	85
II. Research reflections	91
III. Mobility pyramid	94
IV. Division of writing	95

Maps

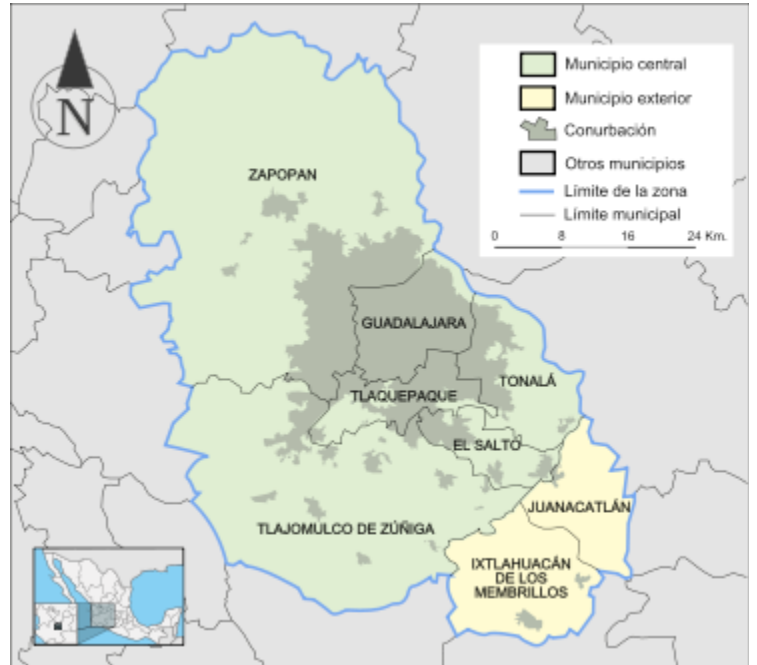


FIGURE 1: Map of the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area (GMA). Source: <http://wikimedia.org>



FIGURE 2: Map of Jalisco state. Source: <http://stratfor.com>

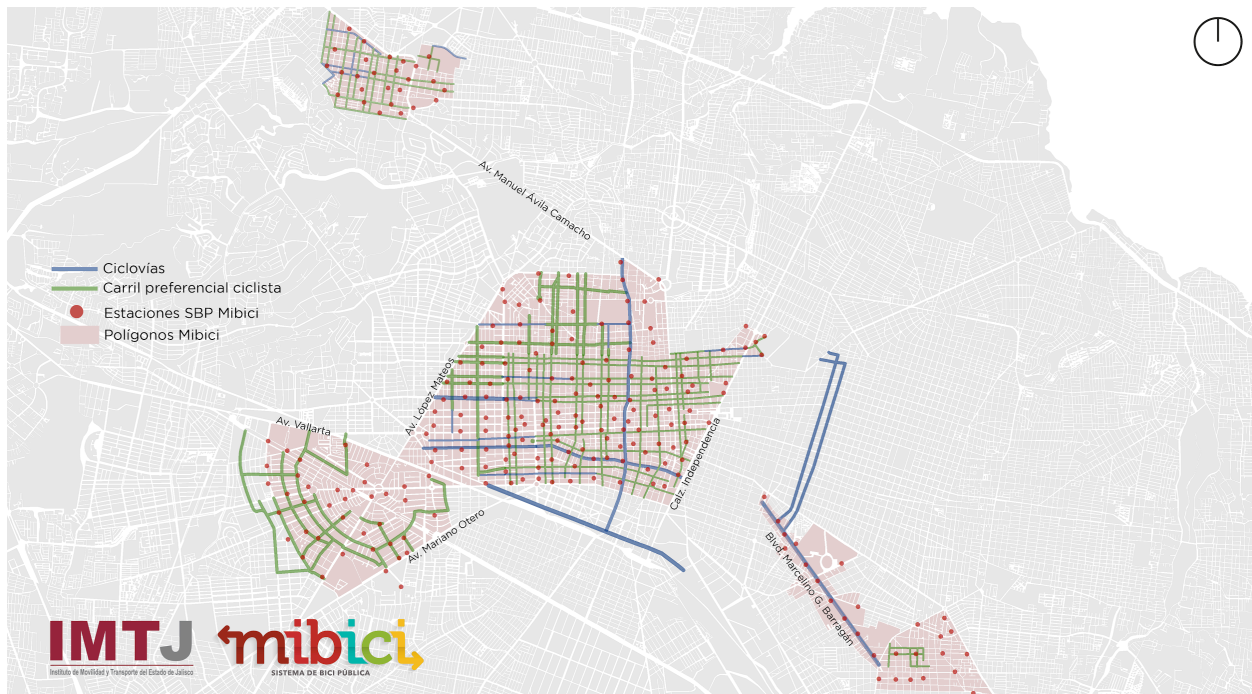


FIGURE 3: Map of the current existing bicycle infrastructure and MiBici stations in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area. Source: Instituto de Movilidad y Transporte Jalisco (IMTJ), 2017.

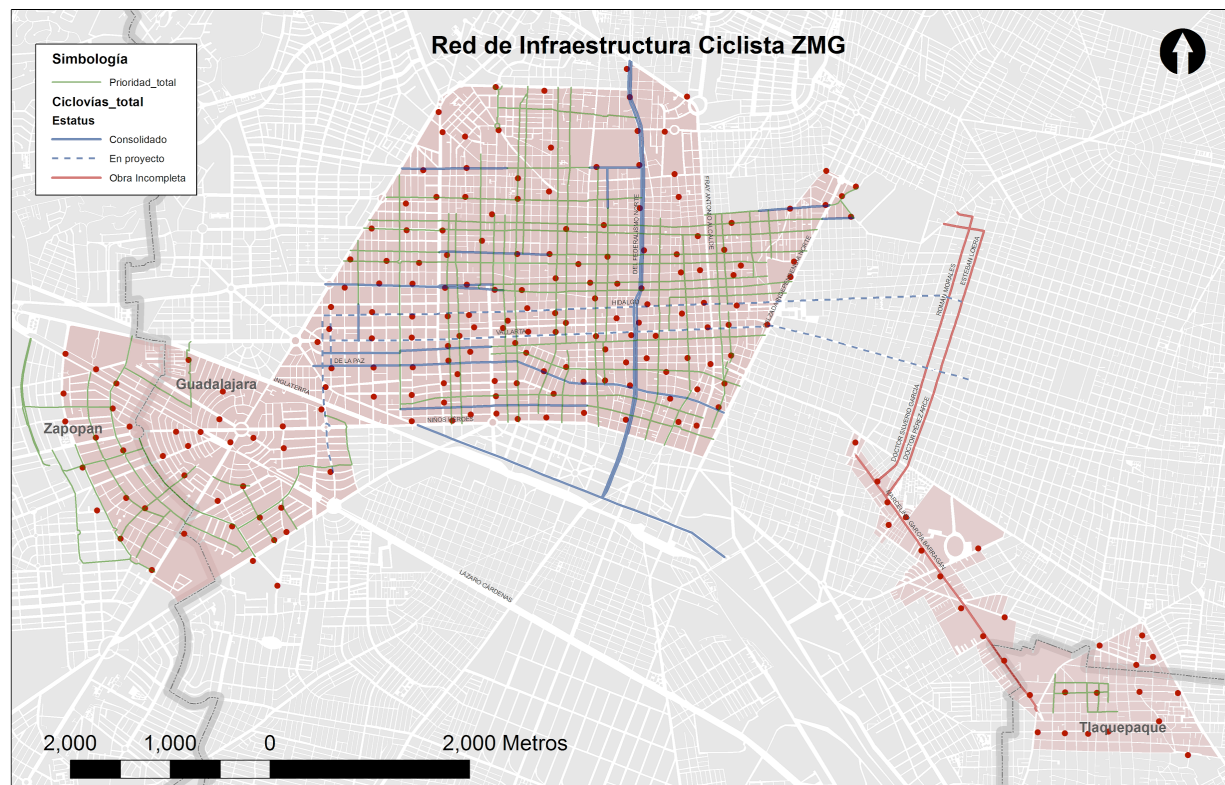


FIGURE 4: Map of current existing bicycle infrastructure and MiBici stations in the municipalities of Guadalajara and Tlaquepaque. Source: Instituto de Movilidad y Transporte Jalisco (IMTJ), 2017.

Introduction



The sky looks blue and the trees look green. A girl who wears a backpack, an unsleeved top, and shorts rides a bicycle over the *Avenida Federalismo*.² She is in an inclined position and pedals continuously in the middle of the right lane, while some cars in the two lanes left of her pass her by. To her right is a ramp that creates a path that is at the same level as the sidewalk. Next to the path is a blue sign with a white bicycle drawn on it. Behind her, a low-pitched voice is heard that says: “Because of this person... [Over there is a] bicycle path, and [those cyclists] go over the avenue. Over there is the bicycle path, over there it is.” Twenty minutes after recording her on his phone while driving, he uploads the video on a Facebook group that reports about current traffic information. The caption reads: “I have nothing against [male or female] cyclists, but you’re kidding me, putting their life at risk.” For the next days, the page gets filled up with more and more comments. One of the comments says: “When there is a bicycle path and one doesn’t use it, it is 100% the fault and responsibility of the cyclist like in this video.” Another text reads: “The law gives you these two options, you can go over the bicycle path or over the right lane, if you go fast it is more dangerous to go over the bicycle path.” A comment below says: “I run him over. You are warned,” while the last one reads: “Everybody, look at me being environmentally friendly! Everybody, watch me riding a bicycle! Everybody, watch me being anti-system!”³

This discussion shows the story of the polemic, everyday presence of cyclists in the car-dominated urban environment of the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area (GMA), the second most populated metropolitan area of Mexico.⁴ It shows the struggle of marginality, the struggle of the rights of being present, the struggle of road education, the struggle of bicycle infrastructure and of associations with a person on top of a bicycle. Also, it points to the importance of the virtual dimension within everyday life understandings, the dimension of a new the era where representations of physical movement (Cresswell 2010) and its corresponding normative

² *Avenida Federalismo* is a busy avenue that partially goes through the center of Guadalajara. Both directions consist of three car lanes, while on the outer sides a bicycle path is on the same level as the pavement.

³ Personal diary. For the video, see: <https://www.facebook.com/yeshai.vdlt/videos/10154683562324069/?pnref=story>, published on April 11, 2017, accessed on June 27, 2017.

⁴ Although we are aware of the inconsistency of our words, we will refer to Guadalajara instead of GMA for aesthetic reasons. Only in case of that we speaking about the municipality of Guadalajara or Guadalajara's city center, we will mention the GMA otherwise.

understandings are discussed online.

Mexico deals with a variety of problems such as obesity, traffic accidents, traffic jams, air pollution, and deplorable road conditions (Salcedo-Torres 2016). Although the gravity of health, environmental and economical issues are alarming and the bicycle has the potential to alleviate these kind of problems, there is little public interest of the promotion of bicycle use nationwide. The bicycle does not pollute, nor does it produce a lot of sound. Rather, it could improve the physical and mental health, it barely takes up space on the roads, it is usually cheap and the traffic accidents it may cause are less fatal. Hence, the bicycle can be viewed as both a physical and symbolic instrument that is able to change the way how individuals and society experience life (Vivanco 2013). In Guadalajara bicycle paths have been present since thirteen years, yet in a limited amount and restricted to certain areas. Gradually more and more initiatives are attempting to stimulate bicycle use (Salcedo-Torres 2016).

In some Latin-American cities like Guadalajara bicycle use is growing. That, while bicycle use has probably been more common in the past (Torres Barragán 2015). Until the nineteenth century, people in cities mainly moved themselves either by feet or with a horse-drawn carriage. During an evolutionary succession of industrial ideas and actions, the introduction of the car and bicycle became a fact. Both the car and bicycle did not need the same care as horses and seemed to be much more convenient (Vivanco 2013). The emergence of the bicycle gradually created more demands for infrastructure. Road conditions were improved and bicycle repair shops were a booming business. The development of the bicycle benefitted the advance of the car industry (Vivanco 2013). Streets turned out to be dangerous with everyone crossing in all kind of directions and though it took a while before traffic rules started to work, over time people started to get used to the presence of motorized vehicles. The car gradually became cheaper and more convenient for an increasing amount of people, while bicycles were perceived as obsolete. The spatial organization of the urban environment adapted a car friendly design, that needed to avoid congestion as much as possible (Schaefer 2011).

More and more current debates speak of an “environmental” crisis that is marked by an acceleration of the amount of emission gases released by cars and trucks today (IPCC 2013; National Academy of Sciences 2014). Certain environmentalists seek for a different relationship

between human society and environment (Horton 2009). One of the ways they do this is by looking at cultural or social factors that cause environmental problems, their impacts, and solutions. For some of them, the bicycle might be a tool that affords a slow-down or opposition to this crisis, while striving for a green, and sustainable mobility.

Many Latin-American cities are dealing with growth and expansion, as well as a larger breach between both socio-economically and spatially advantaged and disadvantaged people, that has been accompanied with an increasing demand for efficient and fast mobility (Sanabria 2007). Torres Barragán (2015) points out that historical studies on cycling in Latin-American countries are scarce, wherefore it is hard to interpret how cycling exactly has developed. Pictures nevertheless suggest that bicycles have definitely been present. The lacuna of studies might be explained due to an association of the bicycle as a means of transport of little value (Torres Barragán 2015). That said, infrastructure for motorized vehicles dominate in Latin-American cities as well as many other countries in the world, but the last two decades the bicycle has made a comeback. Cities such as Bogotá and Quito gradually seem to take over and adapt bicycle infrastructure models (Torres Barragán 2015; Oleas Mogollón and Albornoz Barriga 2016).

And as we have seen in the introduction, so does Guadalajara. An increasing number of bicycle groups tries to tackle the daily mobility struggles. In order to find out how bicycle advocacy initiatives in Guadalajara promote bicycle use, we have conducted ethnographic fieldwork from February till April, 2017. Interested in the ways people utilize the bicycle in the Guadalajara, we both focused on the bicycle as a practical and instrumental urban transportation mode, and a symbolic “tool” that translates political voices and expresses a “right to the city” (Lefebvre 1967; Vivanco 2013). We depart from social movements theories from Juris (2008) and Castells (1983), who have extensively written about “new” social movements, such as anti-globalization and environmentalism. By claiming the right to a clean, sustainable, and liveable city accessible to all its inhabitants and future generations, bicycle movements in Guadalajara have started to take (back) public space.

This has led us to the question: *In what ways is the bicycle as transportation vehicle used and perceived as political tool of social change?* Elaborating on the building blocks of cultural anthropology, we gradually have developed an understanding of how individual and structural

factors related to the decision-making of mobility takes place, identities are shaped, and networks are formed. These three themes (individual and structural factors related to decision-making, identities, movements) form the core of our research and are translated into chapters each analyzing its relation to mobility, cycling in particular. We define social change as an alteration in social structures that leads to different perspectives and attitudes towards the claim of public space, social interactions and humans' relation with the natural environment. As a matter of course, change is an ongoing process in any way. Nonetheless, we refer to the specific social change in terms of bicycle-related agency and bicycle-related identities, in which the bicycle is a vehicle that could be understood twofold: firstly, as a daily vehicle and transportation mode, which subsequently serves as a political vehicle or tool that tries to alter the current social structures of society. We explore personal experiences and understandings of bicycle use through Aldred's definition of "cycling citizenship" (2010), that looks at the individual's relation with the local, natural and social environment. We expand Aldred's concept by including individuals' perceptions of bicycle-related social inequalities and stigmatizations.

By zooming in on personal experiences and understandings of bicycle use in everyday life, we have tried to expand the existing information. Firstly, most anthropological research on cycling is based on European or North-American contexts (see Aldred 2010; Horton 2009; Vivanco 2013). Secondly, in the case of Guadalajara the researches on cycling are mostly from political science or sociological approaches (Pérez Viramontes 2013; Salcedo-Torres 2016), lacking personal experiences, and the embodied and performative character of movement which is so fruitful for a holistic understanding. We also tried to contribute to the "lived experience" of cycling in Guadalajara; a holistic account that not merely takes conceived visions of urban space from the view of urban and structural planners in account, nor space as it is "lived" by bicycle groups or movements (Lefebvre 1974), but includes an integrated whole of individuals, bicycle advocate groups and the institutional sector.

Methods and techniques

In this case study, we have used a qualitative research design. We employed the method, technique, or approach of participant observation to get to know the daily lives of various

individuals. Our research population mainly consisted of people who used the bicycle on a frequent basis, as well as people involved in bicycle groups and bicycle advocacy movements and governmental actors involved in the planning and management of non-motorized mobility. Other individuals we have met were people either reluctant or unable to cycle as a daily mode of transport.

We have mainly met these individuals and groups through the “purpose” and “snowball sampling” methods. This means that we either asked people if we could meet other people, but often we met them just by “being there”, hanging out in cycling hubs, and having conversations with the people around. We also met many of them through events, *paseos*, and through other daily activities that were not related to cycling.

During the beginning of our fieldwork, we have created an oversight of urban transportation in Guadalajara in order to map the scene. Thereafter, we have put these data together into a clear description of the several dimensions of local forms of mobility as defined by Cresswell (2016) (see Chapter 1). Consequently, our focus shifted to an understanding of the integrated whole of urban mobility in Guadalajara.

We included the approach of “embodied” and “sensory experience” of the use of transportation within the urban environment, for movements are always mediated and carried out by bodies (Pink 2013; Spinney 2009). It helped exploring how people used their bodies and space while cycling, how they interacted with others on the road, and how it affected their perceptions of identity, mobility and safety (Johansson and Liou 2017; Vivanco 2013). Furthermore, visual techniques such as taking pictures and filming, e.g. bicycle rides or how participants experienced daily activities considering transportation, contributed to a better understanding of the local visual and sensory experience of mobility (Spinney 2009). In addition, we have collected our data mainly through informal conversations and interviews, but also news articles and reports, and the Internet to explore how mobility advocates – both individuals and groups – connect themselves through online networks (Juris 2008). Interviews have provided us opportunities to ask more in-depth questions or questions that were not able to come up in a natural matter, but we have mainly obtained valuable answers through conversations. In the beginning our interviews were both semistructured and open, in the end we have had more

structured, directional and detailed interviews.

Investigating in a setting raises ethical issues applied to all subfields of anthropology, though the complexity of cities touches upon specific necessities. Firstly, for both of us have lived our whole lives in cities, we might have taken certain urban processes for granted others immediately would question. However, we believe that the dynamics within our familiarity with Mexico and Guadalajara (for Tirza, it has been the fourth visit; for Nina the first) have created a balanced, constant assessment of methodologies, techniques, and our anthropologist' roles. At all costs we have tried to avoid to cause any direct harm, and as little indirect harm as possible (AAA 2016). Another issue deals with the acknowledgement of our researcher role. In between the swarming crowds of urban Guadalajara, a onetime explanation of our intentions of studying the society was not enough. Therefore, we repetitively addressed our intentions – both within groups and in our interactions with individuals.

Our role as anthropologists has inevitably left an impact on our participants, whether it be positive, neutral or negative. Admittedly, we have sometimes unsolicitedly responded with our opinions or thoughts, even though we claimed to stay as neutral, not to mention objective, as possible. Yet, it also led to a more participative role of our participants, which we believe has helped us to get a better emic understanding of their views.

Despite of the size of Guadalajara, its sphere has seemed to be a “*pueblo*”, as many of our participants would say, where everyone knows each other. As a consequence of Guadalajara's intimate sphere, we have chosen for pseudonyms protecting our participants' anonymity. Rather than fully anonymizing we have chosen for different names, so we do not have to censor and are still able to honor their first hand accounts that – mediated by our words – let their voices speak.

Thesis outline

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter includes our theoretical underpinnings of how cities and its inhabitants congregate in the concept of citizenship, as they move through the urban domain. We unravel the concept “cycling citizenship” by shedding light on people's identities, lifestyles and consumership, that take part in the eventual decision-making of transportation. Thereafter, we explain in what ways mechanisms of social inclusion and

exclusion can take place in regard to bicycle advocacy and the practice of cycling with an intersectional lens. Lastly, we analyze structures and tactics of social movements, and especially how bicycle movements try to tackle mobility issues. The second chapter depicts Guadalajara's setting. In the third chapter, we analyze how Guadalajara's mobility landscape is defined and how various factors may influence people's decision-making of mode of transport and which daily social inequalities play a role, as well as are created. Chapter four zooms in on cycling and identities. It looks at its relations with urban space and its understandings of progress and consumerism. The fifth chapter provides an overview of movements involved in bicycle advocacy and how these movements try to put cycling on the map. In the conclusion we come back at how the bicycle as transportation vehicle and political tool could make a cyclist Utopia of Guadalajara by presenting the main points of our findings, our unanswered questions and our suggestions.

1



Theoretical Framework

1.1 Cities, citizenship and mobility

Cities are spaces where people, objects and ideas continually move, or as Wirth (1938, 8) stated: “a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals”. Greek philosopher Aristotle confirmed that difference is a fundamental condition for the city, since similar people could not cause a city to exist (Clayton 2017). Since Ancient times, what it means to be member of such a settlement has been the concept of citizenship: the membership in, and belonging to, a politically defined community based on certain rights, status, and participation (Finley 1977; Holston and Appadurai 1996). Since it includes the right to participate in the political arena, as well as cultural, civil and socioeconomic rights, citizenship can be defined in terms of legal, political and identity issues. However, as a larger share of the global population lives in cities (Rodrigue 2017) and nation-states lose their importance on the political stage, the 18th century understanding of nationality as the core identity of full membership in society has been changed (Holston and Appadurai 1996). Cities attach significance to the enormity of citizen rights and kinds of (political and civil) liberties, and have become a promising arena where citizenship and global cultural “flows” of ideological views about a city’s status, democracy and welfare rights are personified (Appadurai 1996; Sassen 2010). Nevertheless, the concept of citizenship also has been criticized for not being fully inclusive. That is, in theory citizenship grants full access to freedom and rights, whereas in practice formal membership does not show to be a sufficient condition (Holston and Appadurai 1996). For example, citizens with little power on a socioeconomic level formally do have rights, but are often excluded from full participation and certain rights.

The increasing dichotomy between the city and the nation has led to a growing interest in other connections with citizenship, such as consumption and environmental issues, and

contributed to a diversity of citizenship models (Aldred 2010). For example, Lefebvre (1968) criticizes post-war consumer society, due to its bureaucratic implementation of programmed consumption that mainly focuses on the recognition and manipulation of the individual's needs. In order to reclaim a place for citizens to play a role in the production of space, Lefebvre (1968) introduced the slogan "the right to the city" (Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2009):

The right to the city is, therefore, far more than a right of individual access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart's desire. It is, moreover, a collective rather than an individual right since changing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanization. (Harvey 2008, 1)

In *The production of space* Lefebvre (1974) expanded on this idea by stating that the production of space is not limited to planners and administrators (conceived space), but also in everyday activities and desires of inhabitants and users - the former called perceived space, the latter lived space. In this perspective, "the right to the city" reclaims conceived and lived space, for it does not focus on the ideological view of city planners, but on urban space how it might be and how citizens want it to be. In Lefebvre's (1968) critique on the consumer model of citizenship, he claims that both citizenship and the right to the city are related to individual needs that fulfill an intrinsic social desire. Hence, citizenship becomes a social practice that underlines participation and a collective identity.

In dense and expanding "modern" or "global" cities where the general distances of traveling become larger (Vivanco 2013), mass mobility consequently becomes one of the primary urban necessities (Rodrigue 2017). In order to be a full participant in the urban society, one needs to have the ability and access to travel. In response to the acceleration of movement and increased distances, a growing number of infrastructure projects that ought to increase mobility and accessibility can be found in urban arenas (Hjorthol 2016). What it means to be mobile, however, has by social scientists in the 20th century mainly been analyzed from a "sedentarist" assumption that viewed people's binding to places as the norm (Jaffe and De Koning 2016). In order to understand how people are connected through movements, flows and networks without neglecting their immobility and fixity, research in the last decade has called for

a mobilities approach (Cresswell 2010; Jaffe and De Koning 2016). In this sense, mobility can be defined as physical movement from place A to B, as well as the “the potential for undertaking movements (motility) as it is lived and experienced” (Cresswell 2016). Apart from observable physical movement and one’s ability to move, mobility also covers the meanings encrypted in it (Vivanco 2013), or *representations of movement* (Cresswell 2010): how people view, distinguish, and judge different ways of moving. From a Lefebvrian perspective, the need or demand to travel is a way of practicing the right to travel or freedom of movement (Lefebvre 1968), and a way of expressing or claiming citizenship (Holston and Appadurai 1996). The ability to travel is sometimes even understood as a basic right in a democratic society (Hjorthol 2016). It should be mentioned that apart from economic obligations such as commuting trips, daily mobility also comprises a desire to change places or simply because one enjoys to (Hjorthol 2016).

The reasons for travel – bound to obligations, suitabilities and desires – are often interrelated and all require access to time, money, a collective transportation system or private transportation mode (Hjorthol 2016). Nevertheless, the successful implementation of motorized vehicles and a growing car technology has brought about a number of mobility issues (Rodrigue 2017; Vivanco 2013). Even though car lanes are expanded in an attempt to decrease traffic, it often leads to increased road congestion (Schaefer 2011). This road congestion and general growing traffic in urban areas causes environmental externalities, an increase of accidents and fatalities, a less safe feeling on the streets, increasing commuting time, and a public transport system that becomes either over- or underused. On a more individual level, increased traffic impairs the mobility of pedestrians and cyclists, and causes a loss of public space by impeding social interaction and street activities to take place (Rodrigue 2017).

1.2. ‘Cycling citizenship’ and identity

The city is a huge production machine; cities produce knowledge and industrial goods and unique ways of organizing their inhabitants in the form of laws, markets, and cultures. Cities produce images and stories of the realities they engender (Schipper 2014, 21–22).

Building on Cresswell’s (2010) notion of the embodied and experienced nature of mobility,

urban mobility can be understood as a shifting vocabulary that shapes one's identity and performance. Following Schipper's (2014) words, cities' identities are socially produced through individual identification processes and by the ways in which we act collectively in cities (Harvie 2009). That is, the city is produced by performances that create city identities in the same way as (gender)identity is constructed. Rather than a fixed, or universal given, it is open to perform otherly than expected (Butler 1990). From a constructivist and situated approach, one's choice for a mode of transportation then could be seen as a performance in public space (Gutiérrez 2005), during which an individual on the move influences the *production of space* (Lefebvre 1974). Everyday mobility, then, is one of the ways that show how production of space takes place on all the levels (urban planning, physical movement, and people's stories) simultaneously. This includes motorized vehicles, such as the bus, car, motorcycle, and metro, or non-motorized modes of transportation, such as walking or the bicycle. Even though it may look natural or easy to an individual to choose to take the car or bicycle to travel, the actual options he or she has may turn out to be limited due to conditions that precede decision-making. As Vivanco (2013) demonstrates, at a more abstract level, political and economic actors and institutions shape the structure of an urban mobility system; these planners and administrators *conceive* space (Lefebvre 1974). At the same time, geographic conditions, such as the topography, the scale, the density, and the climate of a city, play a role in the structure (Vivanco 2013), as well as how it is *conceived* during everyday activities of inhabitants and users (Lefebvre 1974). Hence, the way in which the urban mobility system is shaped results in an ambit of economic, geographic, political, and social divisions that create a "social competition, struggle, and the exercise of social control" (Vivanco 2013, 130). That is, all these preceding processes generate a need to consume a specific means of transportation.

Wickham (2006) discusses the relation between citizens' rights, participation, belonging and motorized transportation. He argues that public transportation may have the capacity to contribute to social cohesion, by creating common public spaces, and to social inclusion by enabling all inhabitants of the city to move around the city. However, this negates economic issues and issues related to social status that may play a role, since an increase of the use of public transportation does not automatically mean an increase of an even distribution in the

diversity of the population that would use it.

Aldred (2010) elaborates on Wickham's article, but takes it to a more individual level by looking at cycling and creates the concept of "cycling citizenship". According to Aldred (2010), cycling individuals define cycling citizenship through the relation between the body, perception of the self, and the local natural and social environment. Sometimes this citizenship also includes a concern with social issues and strains on a global scale. The demand of transportation is a way of practicing the right to travel. The practice of cycling is thus a specific expression of citizenship. Cycling, as other modes of transportation, influences practices of identity, as practices of identity influences cycling. These processes produce and reproduce cultural meanings. Apart from the cycling citizens, actors involved in marketing also attach cultural meanings to cycling, for its publicity reveals "matters of relationship, identity, social positioning, and the creation of cultural meaning" (Vivanco 2013, 51). As cycling requires the consumption of a bicycle, cycling can also be seen as an expression of consumership (Jaffe and de Koning 2016). The consumption or non-consumption of a bicycle may reveal issues surrounded by citizenship (Aldred 2010), as they can be seen as a manner "through which people develop a sense of self and relationship with others, even striving at times to overcome the opposition between themselves and the objects they possess" (Vivanco 2013, 53). That is, the more or less conscious choice to consume also discloses the ambiguous relation to not consume. The consumption of a bicycle to save money, for example, indirectly points to the non-consumption of other modes of transport that may cost more money, such as car use.

Additionally, cultural meanings of riding a bicycle may reveal hierarchical social systems. It may carry symbols that ascribes qualities to the cyclist such as self-reliant, inconsiderate, environmentally responsible, poor or rich, or advanced or unadvanced. In certain places it is more common that among new riders there are more men and it then may be used as tool of emancipation among women. That is, these symbols may reveal gender, ethnicity, or class constructions (Aldred 2010; Vivanco 2013). It is important to consider these cultural meanings as various and dynamic in order to understand its complexity. The ascriptions vary across age, economic position, ethnicity, gender, moral, nationality, political, and social positioning boundaries, and they might be interpreted as positive or negative.

The creation of cultural meanings is also shaped by the experience of riding a bicycle. Fournel (2003) and Horton (2009) state that cycling is an embodied experience, whereby the body is challenged both physically and mentally. Cycling also creates a distinct awareness of the rider's surroundings, such as the traffic, wherein they are relatively more vulnerable than motorized vehicles are (Aldred 2010; Vivanco 2013). Experiences such as being cut off, physical confrontations or accidents may emphasize their vulnerability. Riders may not only reconsider their routes due to the corresponding traffic or road conditions, but also due to the perceived conditions regarding to criminal related events (Vivanco 2013). The distinct awareness of the surroundings as well as the distinct perception of time can be demonstrated by the fact that riding a bicycle allows cyclists to stop at any given moment, to chat with other traffic users, to modify their route or to visit a place (Aldred 2010).

1.3. Cycling, social inequalities and agency

The expanding urban domain and increased distances travelled in cities (Schaefer 2011), above all “megacities”, affect social geography not always positively: “social groups that have less access to cars, or choose not to use them, including the elderly, poor, youth, disabled, non-car owners, and members of immigrant groups and ethnic minorities, are endangered or experience inhibited mobility because of automobile domination” (Vivanco 2013, 5). Apart from physically limited mobility, social exclusion also takes place through symbolic forms: in the 1890s, for example, some cyclists labelled themselves as “progressive and modern”, attaching new meanings to the bicycle as upper and middle class status symbol (Vivanco 2013). Others approach cycling as a liberating activity, a form of self-empowerment and independent movement (Johansson and Liou 2017) that shows mastery of the self and the machine (Vivanco 2013).

Moving back to the late Victorian era, cycling citizenship was only reserved for men: bicycle clubs governed by men stimulated the interpretations of masculine morality (Mackintosh, Gordon and Norcliffe 2007). While some rejected the possibility of women's cycling – for example, fearing that the physical effort of cycling would burn up energy necessary for their reproduction, supporters suggested that women's cycling could reinforce feminine virtues and

strengthen notions of the traditional family (Strange 2002). Actors from the nineteenth century women's rights movement refused to accept normative conventions of femininity and took a more radical approach (Strange 2002). Announcing the bicycle as a tool of emancipation, American suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton related cycling to a decline in the public-private sphere distinction and religious liberation. Cycling gave certain women the opportunity to travel the streets by themselves, without the problematic aspects of traditional conventions female pedestrians had. That is, cycling women could partially escape being the object of "the male gaze" (Oddy 2007; Mackintosh, Gordon and Norcliffe 2007). The bicycle questioned the principle of separate spheres by providing women an opportunity outside the private sphere, hence speeding up "women's emancipation by liberating them from patriarchal social norms" (Strange 2002, 611).

Countries that have a low number of people using the bicycle as a mode of transport usually have an uneven distribution of the diversity among users. Cities that have a car-oriented infrastructure usually have cyclists who are mainly young, middle-aged men (Beecham and Wood, 2014). One might think that when cycling is more common-seen diversity among users eventually increases. However, an analysis of the relation between increased bicycle use and the gender and age among users showed that this idea cannot be confirmed (Aldred, Woodcock and Goodman 2016). This might be explained by the fact that the image of cycling in coexistence with vehicles and a lack of a supporting cycling environment are obstacles for the groups of people that are underrepresented as bicycle users, such as women, older people and people that are less able-bodied. The assumption that certain groups are physically less capable of cycling further impedes a greater diversity among bicycle users (Aldred, Woodcock and Goodman 2016).

The HERA SINGLE project provides case studies from non-Western contexts. An interdisciplinary research project that analyses geographies of gendered urban space in cities as Delhi and Shanghai, HERA focuses on new biographies and spaces created for 'single' women (HERA 2016). It argues that city spaces manifest gender norms built around heteronormative standards, and contests the level of safety for women in accessing the urban domain, as well as inequalities in spatial use in both private and public domains.

While the literature on cycling and urban mobility mainly focuses on gender, less attention is paid to the relation between cycling, citizenship, ethnic, class and other identities. In many large cities in Latin America, spatial organization is related to class: upper and middle classes live in enclaves, spatially segregated from the poor. Contrary to the historical importance of the city as meetingplace, presence on public streets is a marker of social class in so-called “divided cities” (Vivanco 2013, 63). While the more wealthy move around in private vehicles, the rest travels afoot, by bicycle, or with public transportation. In London, cycling turns out an efficient transportation mode for autonomous individuals striving to maximize their future health and minimize their dependence on others (Steinbach et al. 2011). While some professional, largely white male and female citizens mark their identity by cycling, people with other class, gender and ethnic identities do not seem to support this symbolic interpretation of cycling as much (Steinbach et al. 2011).

Other studies related mobility to social exclusion by focusing on transportation policy, and the role the bicycle has in avoidance of “transport poverty”: a lack of resources, or access to key opportunities such as employment, education, health and social support networks that can result in transportation-related social exclusion (Martens 2013; Van der Kloof, Bastiaanssen and Martens 2014). Martens (2013) showed that for some low-income households in the Netherlands, the bicycle moderated transport poverty, though it did not serve as a means that enhanced access to the labor market.

In Amsterdam, scholars have analyzed the impact of bicycle lessons for immigrant and refugee women. According to Van der Kloof et al. (2014), many non-Western immigrant and refugee women experience problems with accessibility and, hence, transportation-related social exclusion. Their research has shown that for some of these women, the bicycle offers the opportunity to increase mobility, by improving feelings of self-esteem and confidence.

As these examples show, in many cases the right to the city is denied by power relations either in the private or public sphere (Fenster 2005). Consequently, from a gender-sensitive point of view Lefebvre’s conceptualization of the right to the city pays too little attention to commonplace patriarchal power relations and their presuming normative ethnic, cultural and gender identities. In order to define the full context in which cycling citizens’ rights, privileges,

and participation in urban public space takes place, a serious discussion of power relations must be taken into account. Thus, an analysis of the right to the city should include social structures, whether it be patriarchal, matriarchal, or otherly defined, “both at the private and at the public scales and the extent to which they harm the realization of the right to the city for women and people of diversity” (Fenster 2005, 229). The way in which cycling citizenship takes place in the public domain, is not just a matter of power relations and also involves the effort of bicycle advocates who actively mobilize their aims, as we will see in the next section.

1.4. Bicycle networks, movements, and practices

In contemporary social movements “the right to the city” has made a comeback, serving as an umbrella concept for all sorts of political and social demands addressing problems in the urban sphere (Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2009). When citizens feel that they are oppressed or limited in their right to the city, they can perform actions both at individual and at collective level that take place in mundane as well as unusual moments in everyday life. They may intend to reinforce, negotiate or resist processes, nevertheless, it may have different results than is desirable. Social movements contribute to expanding the understanding of citizenship by claiming rights for citizens who are not able, or denied, to speak up for themselves (Holston and Appadurai 1996).

Social movements comprise individuals who assemble together as a collective, and deal with issues that are related to cultural meanings, ideas, moralities, symbols, identities and power relations (Vivanco 2013). However, a social movement consists of all kind of different people, all with their own ideas and motives that brings them together as a collective.

The purpose of a movement is to create a space to discuss the prevailing norms, values, and practices, while looking for alternative ones. This does not imply that their actions nor the results within a movement are unanimously shared. It is important to consider such collectives as a heterogeneous spectrum that consists of people with not only shared, but also competing and contradictory ideas (Castells 1983; Juris 2008; Vivanco 2013). Juris (2008) states that movements consist of overlapping networks, each with their own history, political vision, and organizational forms. While these networks are fluid processes, they still have corresponding

cultural logics beyond it in common. These networks can be constituted both vertically and horizontally. Networks that are vertically constituted imply hierarchically and centrally organized orders. Networks that are horizontally constituted, on the other hand, imply a decentralized organization (Appadurai 1990; Juris 2008).

Consequently, bicycle movements cannot simply be regarded as movements that advocate a higher rate of bicycle use. Rather, bicycle movements share a common ideology that aims at using the bicycle as a tool to try to change the symbolic meanings of the contested city streets. Through collective action, they believe, that everyday bicycle use could be accepted (Vivanco 2013). For example, in Los Angeles mass bicycle events have attained great popularity (Johansson and Liou 2017). During these events, participants regularly stop cars to allow thousands of bodies to move together through the city. Hence, these events can be seen as “shared physical practices which function as a form of embodied political deliberation and in doing so create public spheres” (Johansson and Liou 2017, 70).

Bicycle advocates may associate bicycle use as a tool to be self-reliant, independent, or to be more in touch with the environment. They may plead that it contributes to the economic competitiveness of the city, and that it alleviates issues such as air pollution, noise, or obesity (Aldred 2010; Gardner 1998; Schaefer 2011; Vivanco 2013). Sifting through the diverse motives of social movements, Horton (2006) states that bicycle movements employ cycling as part of broader projects. The practice of cycling can be “an embodied articulation of their political concerns” (Horton 2006, 19), whereby cycling is not necessarily an isolated purpose, but can also be used as building block of a particular future that bicycle advocates desire.

Nevertheless, even though bicycle advocates claim that the practice of cycling is beneficial for a lot of people, others disagree with this idea. As we have mentioned before, this has to do with the symbols that the various kinds of modes of transportation carry, the urban mobility system, and the corresponding decision-making. It also has to do with disagreements about the government investing in an issue that is not regarded as important as other issues might be. This perception might be emphasized by the idea that it is only appropriate for a minority of users (Vivanco 2013). It can also be due to the fear that it has negative outcomes for them as users of other modes of transportation, such as that cars are going to be charged or that bicycle

lanes lead to less car lanes, thus more congestion. In other words, the practice of cycling can be experienced as a tool that results in both positive and negative social change.

Initiatives of social movements that promote urban cycling usually occur in the urban domain and various approaches can be applied. These social movements do not necessarily have to be involved in the practice of cycling mainly, as the demands of bicycle use can emerge from other domains as well. Furthermore, initiatives are not necessarily limited to take place in the urban domain. More and more they are present on online social networking platforms, through which they communicate and organize themselves (López León 2016). The digital material and images online produced, can be viewed as having biographies that “move between and through new contexts or situations, although their content may remain unaltered” (Pink 2013, 143). Hence, images represent movements send into and throughout the world - that become part of a continuum of interwoven narratives of new viewers and materials (Pink 2013). Although thoughts and images are often expressed virtually via digital media platforms such as Facebook, objectives aimed at urban mobility also take place via real life events. According to López León (2016, 66), activities can generate more “life” when events are put online: events realized in the ‘cybercity’ are lived through previous experiences, in real life, and afterwards in the virtual realm. In order to understand urban bicycle networks fully, we also have to understand emerging proposals for the redefinition and renewed experience of the city, as López León (2016) suggests. Yet it is important to consider that partly through unequal mobility systems many people are impeded to have access to information on the Internet as well.

2



The Setting

Guadalajara is a city located in a valley with a mean elevation of 1540 meters in the West of Mexico (Kanda et al. 2016), and characterized by sharp contrasts. The city center consists of a relatively well developed infrastructure, where the economic, political and commercial hearts are located. From a bird's-eye view, the high office buildings, big shopping malls, and apartment complexes stand out, which are mostly surrounded by one to two store buildings. Most of the poorer zones can be charted at the outskirts, but they are also sporadically located inside the city. Ironically, some of these neighborhoods stand out when they are next to a higher-class gated community. Notwithstanding its geographic, social, and economic differences, the electricity cables metaphorically show the city's interconnected function.⁵

Mexico is a country with an estimated population of 127 million inhabitants (The World Bank 2015b). It is located next to the United States of America, Guatemala, and Belize. As many other Latin-American countries, it has experienced a history of mass migrations to urban areas and an enormous population growth. Its economy employs a neo-liberal free market and with the entry of the North-American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, the supranational commerce has risen. As a result, however, the economic welfare is distributed unequally. Still there has been some change since the 1990s, whereby most of the population belongs to the growing middle class (The World Bank 2015a). However, the amount of people that lives in moderate or extreme poverty continues rising as well: in 2010 it was 46% of the total population (CONEVAL 2010; OECD 2010). In regard to politics, Mexico's government is a so-called democratic federation, of which the constitution consists of a federal Union, state governments and municipal governments. The country has been ruled for 70 years by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), "a monopolistic political grouping infamous for imposing a clientelistic and patronage-based social order" (COHA 2011). Although the Mexican constitution

⁵ Source: fieldwork research data.

of 1917 officially called for democratic institutions, the elections held in July 2000 marked the first time the opposition (PAN) defeated the party in power. However, PRI maintained strong influences behind the scenes; the corruptive practices that the new, legitimate democracy needed to outrule still “perpetuated by PRI players through clientelism and voter manipulation” (COHA 2011). In 2012, PRI officially came back to power as Enrique Peña Nieto got elected president.

Guadalajara has known an absolute increase of population since the 60s (Arroyo 1994) and it continues growing. Not only does it increase by population, which is up to 1,495 million inhabitants (United Nations 2010), but it also expands by size. The Guadalajara Metropolitan Area with its population of 4,24 million inhabitants (INEGI 2010) nowadays consists of the municipalities Guadalajara, Zapopan, Tlaquepaque, Tonalá, Tlajomulco de Zúñiga, El Salto, Ixtlahuacán de los Membrillos, and Juanacatlán (Arroyo 1994). Just as there is a broad range of notions of sexuality and gender relations present, plentiful religious traditions and rituals can be found. Although most of its people affiliate with Catholicism, it is also home to a large number of followers of other Christian affiliations, as it is to Buddhist, Hinduist, and relative recently existing religions (The World Bank 2015a).

Whereas the city of Guadalajara has been governed by the PRI for three following terms, and Aristóteles Sandoval (PRI) still is governor of the state of Jalisco, the municipal presidency of Guadalajara is now governed by Enrique Alfaro, member of the *Partido Movimiento Ciudadano*.

Due to the urban planning by the government of the State of Jalisco in the 70s, the roads and streets of Guadalajara have mainly been arranged for the use of motorized vehicles, whereas other modes of transportation have been neglected. Nowadays, the municipalities are investing more into Guadalajara’s public transportation system. It consists of buses, trolley buses, macro-buses and metros.⁶ According to a study in 2008, Guadalajara had almost a number of 1,8 million cars, which means almost a car for every two inhabitants (Steer Davies Gleave 2011b, 10 *in* Konnerth 2013). According to another study of 2008, 27.2% of all the trips in Guadalajara are made by car, 28.3% by public transport, 37.4% on foot, and 2.2% by bicycle (Steer Davies Gleave 2011a, 4 *in* Konnerth 2013). Konnerth (2013) points out that even though the amount of

⁶ Source: fieldwork research data.

car trips may not seem significant, it has a large impact on the city as these cars trouble the traffic flux, and it has led to an increase of traffic fatalities, a loss of public space, air pollution, produce a lot of noise, and so on (Salcedo-Torres 2016; Konnerth 2013, 4).

Whereas certain street scenes in the world are characterized by people who move themselves by bicycle, such as Amsterdam, Copenhagen, and Beijing (Vivanco 2013), in other places in the world the car is a vehicle that is fundamental to many people's everyday lives to a greater extent. In the case of Guadalajara, this has resulted that certain citizens, who choose not to or are not able to choose to travel by a motorized means, have less facilities and opportunities in their mobility. Hence, this results that they are partially socially excluded in their citizenship, in the sense that their ability to participate in the urban space is impeded.⁷ While Guadalajara's street scenes nowadays are dominated by motorized vehicles, the bicycle has had its eras of fashion as well. Salcedo-Torres (2016) demonstrates that the bicycle used to be a more common mode of transportation until the 70s. The government initiated then to gradually impede that by forbidding bicycle use in the city center. Despite of protests, circumstances did not change. In 1988, the first citizen collective that demands rights for cyclists is born. From that time, more and more collectives have emerged (Salcedo-Torres 2016).

The first bicycle path was constructed in 2002, yet due to petitions it was deconstructed half a year later. The appearance of the *Vía RecreActiva Guadalajara* in 2004, a municipal initiative, seems to have stimulated the emergence of the first *paseo popular ciclista*, or popular cyclist ride (Salcedo-Torres 2016).

As a response to the increasing motorized spatial environment of the Metropolitan Area of Guadalajara, citizens striving after a more collective transportation and complementary mobility have joined together (Salcedo-Torres 2016). In 2007, various urban organizations arose – amongst which citizen collectives, universities and bicycle networks, starting to realize activities in favour of the use of the bicycle as transportation mode. They visualized the lack of cyclists' access to the streets and tried to reclaim the right to circulate in a safe and worthy manner (Salcedo-Torres 2016). Announcing the problems related to the city's mobility, these organizations tried to influence the urban planning and structure so that it became more humane

⁷ Source: fieldwork research data.

and sustainable. In 2011, the first citizen bicycle track was realized, an action of *Ciudad para Todos* (City for Everybody) and *Guadalajara en Bici* (Guadalajara on the Bicycle), who joined their forces in order to paint a bicycle lane on Avenida Santa Margarita in the municipality of Zapopan (Salcedo-Torres 2016).

Politicians started to use bicycles symbolically as part of their campaign. Universities and other organizations, some of them human rights based, brought about actions with the bicycle as symbolized instrument. Lastly, the state and municipal government invested through programs such as Vía RecreActiva Guadalajara in infrastructure in the Metropolitan Area of Guadalajara (Salcedo-Torres 2016).

Although the total of 28.099 kilometers of bicycle paths and 129.778 kilometers of roads where cyclists have priority (see Table 1) is a big difference with how Guadalajara used to be ten years ago in regard to its cycling environment, the roughly about 50 to 80 bicycle groups still search for their recognized position in Guadalajara's contested city streets, something we will elaborate on in the next chapters.

Datos Infraestructura Ciclista Implementación al 2017

Polígono	Estaciones
Polígono Central	182
Zapopan Centro	27
Tlquepaque Centro	12
Corredor Atlas	15
Total	236

Infraestructura	Total_m
Ciclovías total	28099
Prioridad total	129778

TABLE 1: Current existing bicycle infrastructure in the GMA. The upper table shows the number of *MiBici* stations per neighborhood. The lower table shows the total of meters of bicycle paths and roads where cyclists have priority in the GMA. Source: Instituto de Movilidad y Transporte Jalisco (IMTJ), 2017.

3



Everyday Cycling in Guadalajara: From Structural Conditions to Personal Experiences.

It is Monday afternoon and the sun goes down. While the air turns purple, red car lights gradually illuminate the streets. Following a line of exhaust gas coughing and noising cars, I pedal continuously in the middle of the right lane, while some cars in the two lanes left of me pass me by. Looking to the right, I see some cyclists dodging pedestrians, while going up and down over the paving slabs of the sidewalk. In front of me awaits a traffic light. Just before the traffic light turns red as the car lights and the engines start grumbling, I move up to the front and rapidly cross the streets, leaving the line of cars behind.⁸

The traffic jam, air contamination and the situation of contested streets depict a daily experience for many people in Guadalajara (Salcedo-Torres 2016). Although almost everyone wants to resolve these kind of mobility problems, there seems little appeal to use an alternative mode of transport among car-using participants. “I really need to use the car for my daily life,”⁹ was the standard answer I received. Why is it that so many people in Guadalajara opt for the car, and why do other people prefer alternative modes of transport, the bicycle in particular? Furthermore, what encourages or prevents people to ride a bicycle? This chapter looks at the decision-making that influences daily mobility in Guadalajara and at what kind of daily social issues are involved in urban bicycle transportation, related to social, gender, age, and economic inequalities.

⁸ Personal logbook. February 13, 2017.

⁹ Carlos. Conversation. January 30, 2017.

3.1 Structural barriers to mobility

One of Guadalajara's struggles of mobility is related to the city's expansion (Konnerth 2013). A contributing factor are the constructions of *fraccionamientos*.¹⁰ Often they lack a variety of local shops, facilities such as shopping centers are not spread proportionally throughout the city, and work and educational facilities are often not next-door, causing that people have to travel larger distances. It contributes to creating a high demand of cars, while car lanes and parking places are continuously expanded. Apart from distance, the perception of time also played a role in the decision-making of many participants. Many participants perceived motorized vehicles as the fastest way to transport oneself, despite the continuously mentioned traffic jams. This causes an increase of travel time for participants using motorized vehicles as well. Moreover, many participants traveling by motorized vehicles were not aware of the small timeframe needed to travel from place to place, via bicycle. But the car is not only described as something that serves as a mode of transport. It can also function as a status symbol enhancing prestige, as something that opposes to "transport poverty" with the car empowering people economically (Martens 2013; Van der Kloof, Bastiaanssen and Martens 2014) (see also Chapter 4). All this together makes the car a more appealing option (Vivanco 2013).

On the other hand, recent events such as the substantial increase of gasoline prices and the deconstruction of car lanes have made the car a less attractive option. These deconstructions have been accompanied by the constructions of a macro-bus lane, the metro line and bicycle paths, which should promote these alternative modes of transport. Not everyone agrees with that, however, since it was sometimes perceived as disadvantageous among car-using participants:

Before there were three car lanes, and now they removed one. Before the traffic was fluid over there, and now it has only caused traffic jams.¹¹

Diana, a fervent cyclist, pointed out that this sort of comments underline a relation between normalized car use and people's corresponding lifestyle: "[Car users] don't believe that fellow

¹⁰ A *fraccionamiento* is a type of neighborhood in Mexico in which the buildings are similar in style. They are divided by fences or walls with the neighboring areas, and sometimes they are guarded.

¹¹ Manuel. Conversation. April 5, 2017.

citizens would make use of these alternative options, knowing that it would require a change in their lifestyle, just like it isn't convenient for themselves either".¹²

Gender also plays a role in the decision-making of mode of transport, such as that many female participants sense a higher degree of vulnerability. This sense of vulnerability can take many forms, but a very common one was the sense of vulnerability of harassment. Catcalling seems to be one of the many factors that contributes to women experiencing an overall feeling of unease in public spaces. It makes them aware that it differs in the way they dress: "They yell more at me when I wear shorts than when I wear pants."¹³ Several female participants have expressed that this feeling has led to an adjustment of the way they dress, the roads they take, and the mode of transport they take. I have not found this sense of vulnerability of harassment among the male participants I have spoken to.

Something that I have heard among both male and female participants is the sense of vulnerability of a criminal incident. Among non-cycling participants it was a reason to not take the bicycle. The bicycle-using participants, however, said that they adjusted the roads they take or the bicycle they took with them depending on the time and place. Some male participants have also told me that they took pepper spray or brass knuckles with them: "to defend me, you never know".¹⁴ In some occasions they preferred another mode of transport.

Another key factor that participants took into consideration in regard to their choice of mode of transport was convenience. How convenience was defined, however, depended on the participant. Convenience could be defined in terms of (seat) comfort, of efficiency, of effort, of amenities, of the travel experience in relation to the direct surroundings, or the reliableness of the mode of transport. Public transport for instance, was often seen as unreliable because particularly buses tend to be unpredictable to tell when they come.

Not everyone has the option to even consider their mode of transport, since many people cannot afford the corresponding costs. Participants additionally suggested that public transport is generally regarded as expensive as well. Another problem that comes with public transport is that

¹² Diana. Conversation. February 23, 2017.

¹³ Nuria. Interview. April 7, 2017.

¹⁴ Roberto. Conversation. April 17, 2017.

not all routes connect in a direct way, which results in a higher price as well as a longer travel time. Various cycling participants stated therefore that economic motives were the leading factor to choose the bicycle.

That said, due to Guadalajara's hilly complexion and elevation (Kanda et al. 2016), cycling requires a certain degree of physical effort. It has not only turned out that less of our participants were apt to make use of the bicycle, but that is has also been a barrier for able-bodied participants to seriously consider the bicycle. Moreover, as Guadalajara most of the year has a relatively warm climate, some participants explained they did not choose for the bicycle because they would arrive sweaty on their destinations, which would make them feel uncomfortable. This suggests a certain image that they did not want to be associated with (Vivanco 2013). This might be the association that various participants have mentioned, namely that the bicycle typically used to be related to the "baker" or someone that was not able to afford another mode of transport. Moreover, sometimes the bicycle and bicycle facilities have been associated with "first" and "third" world images:

Ernesto: Some of the city problems that we have in Mexico, in particular Guadalajara, is that with the [implementation of] bicycle paths or MiBici that they are saying that we are returning to the third world, like: "Are we going to a *rancho bicicletero*¹⁵ or what?" That's what the people say over here... When in the first world it is like that, right, because in Europe, well, it is full of bicycle paths.

Nuria: And the other way around too, right, that is, they will tell you...

Ernesto: "We are not in Europe. We aren't in Amsterdam."

Nuria: "No, this works in Europe, here in Mexico it doesn't work."¹⁶

These comments show that the objection of the bicycle can be related to the process of "Othering" and a sense of that the bicycle does not fit in the perception of local realities.

In addition, various participants have argued that the bicycle might not be ideal when one has to carry a lot of stuff, however, this implies that one has the option to consider alternative

¹⁵ In this context, the "bicycle ranch" refers to a mocking image of cycling associated with obsolete. For a further explanation, see 4.3.

¹⁶ Ernesto and Nuria. Interview. April 7, 2017.

modes of transport. Most of the bicycle advocates stated that due to the physical effort cycling is a healthy way to move oneself, although Rodolfo, an environmental bicycle advocate, criticized this claim. As the contamination is so high, he said that cycling is as “a green juice with contaminated water”.¹⁷ Andrea, a cycling participant, added to this claim that it was inevitable to cycle and not notice the dirt in the eyes, nose, and skin.¹⁸ Some bicycle users therefore use facemasks to protect themselves for the hard blow of gasoline, although Diego, a bicycle advocate, admitted that he used it to draw attention to make him look tough in a criminal way: “You have to shock people.”¹⁹ This way he felt more visible and respected.

3.2 Urban governance and promoting bicycle use

As some countries may have a clearer distinction between cycling as a mode of transport, as sport and as something recreational, in Guadalajara the distinction is less clear. Running small errands was also not always considered as a way of transporting oneself. These unclear boundaries were also demonstrated by the way the bicycle as mode of transport was promoted by the government. The *Via RecreActiva* (RecreActive Road), for instance, is a municipal, social initiative in which motorized vehicles are temporarily restricted on a number of determined roads on Sunday mornings. By allowing the movement of non-motorized modes of transport, such as walking, cycling and skating, and the opportunity that people from all different backgrounds come together, it aims to recover public space by recreative activities on a normally car-dominated road. Hector has described cycling in the *Via RecreActiva* as “an opportunity to exercise, get to know the city and have fun without motorized vehicles getting in the way.”²⁰ A few realized through the *Via RecreActiva* that distances in the city were shorter than they thought they were. In the case of Guillermo, a participant who mainly uses the car, the *Via RecreActiva* inspired him to even buy a bicycle for his daily life.²¹

In recent years Guadalajara has been trying to alleviate some of the mobility problems

¹⁷ Rodolfo. Conversation. February 24, 2017.

¹⁸ Andrea. Conversation. February 27, 2017.

¹⁹ Diego. Conversation. February 24, 2017.

²⁰ Hector. Conversation. February 13, 2017.

²¹ Guillermo. Conversation. April 5, 2017.

with all sorts of implementations. One of these is the recent foundation of the department of Non-Motorized Mobility in the local and federal governments of Jalisco, which deal with non-motorized mobility, such as walking and cycling.²² Their aim is that Guadalajara's inhabitants choose their mode of transport in a more "rational" way, with which they refer to more sustainable ways of mobility based on the mobility pyramid.²³ It also promotes to combine modes of transport, called *multimodalidad* or *intermodalidad*. These terms, often intermingled, refer either to the use of several modes of transport during one trip, based on the idea or condition that these modes of transport interconnect and try to improve mobility jointly, or refer to the personal decision to make use of the most efficient mode of transport, depending on the kind of trip one makes. The bicycle-sharing program MiBici aims to stimulate people to integrate bicycle use within their daily movement. By focusing on short trips, this state project is an example of a non-motorized mode of transport, that promotes the choice of transport in this more "rational" way as well as *multimodalidad*. Until so far, this state project seems relatively successful, as it enjoys more and more trips every day. Currently, the project is moving towards the Southeastern area named Tlaquepaque, inviting people to take the bicycle when transferring distances shorter than 30 minutes. Juan for instance explained that *multimodalidad* was more practical for his daily routine: for the first part of his trip he used the car and then changed to MiBici to get into the city center for the last part of his trip, since it was faster than it was with the car.²⁴ Nevertheless, Daniel, who normally either walks or uses public transport during the day, said that he was willing to use MiBici at night, but since it has no availability of 24 hours a day, it was not a convenient alternative mode of transport for him.²⁵ Furthermore, Patricia said that in some neighborhoods many people cannot afford a car and the routes of public transport that pass by are scarce, as a result of that the municipalities have given less attention to these

²² The department of Non-Motorized Mobility (*Movilidad Non-Motorizada*) is part of the Institute of Mobility and Transport Jalisco (IMTJ).

²³ The mobility pyramid is an hierarchical illustration of a pyramid of traffic, that depicts the priority position assigned to different transportation modes: first walking, then cycling, followed by public transport and lastly private vehicles. For an illustration, see Appendix III.

²⁴ Juan. Conversation. February 28, 2017.

²⁵ Daniel. Conversation. March 31, 2017.

neighborhoods.²⁶ Public transport is also regarded as expensive when one has a low income. Moreover, due to the scarcity of routes that pass by, it often implies that they have to take various buses, that are extremely full, which makes it even more expensive and less comfortable. The local and federal governments argue therefore – among other reasons – that the arrival of *MiBici* has made cycling an alternative mode of transport that is also accessible for people with a lower income as it is relatively cheap.²⁷ However, to date the bicycle stations of the bicycle-share system are only available in a limited area, namely the wealthier neighborhoods. Furthermore, *MiBici* is only available when one is in the possession of a specific credit or debit card and a specific form of identification.²⁸ Not everyone is able to obtain an identification card, debit or credit card and agrees with the use of an identification card, debit or credit card. *MiBici* is therefore not so accessible to everyone as it claims to be.

Lastly, other examples of the promotion of *multimodalidad* are bicycle parking facilities at metro stations and the possibility to take your bicycle in the metro, the latter only available on a limited number of hours a day.

3.3 Perceptions and motivations surrounding cycling

Most of our participants who ride their bicycles as adults have had their first cycling experience when they were a child. Nonetheless, being able to ride a bicycle is not a matter of course for everyone. Some other participants started riding a bicycle at a later age; sometimes inspired by other people who ride their bicycles; sometimes they figured it would be more practical, efficient or cheaper to ride a bicycle instead of taking other modes of transport. Because Guadalajara is a relatively big city and not all bicycle paths are connected to each other if they are present at all, riding a bicycle as mode of transport also requires a certain knowledge of the streets accompanied by skills and confidence to ride in daily traffic situations.

Cycling and non-cycling participants often regarded bicycle paths as useful to start riding

²⁶ Patricia. Conversation. February 23, 2017.

²⁷ Interview with Cristóbal, Ignacio, and Jeronimo of the municipality of Guadalajara on March 14, 2017; interview with Hugo on March 26, 2017; interview with Ernesto, Lorena, and Nuria of the IMTJ on April 7, 2017.

²⁸ See <https://www.mibici.net/es/preguntas-frecuentes/>.

a bicycle as a mode of transport. Mónica's narrative illustrates this.²⁹ At the moment that a bicycle path appeared on Mónica's way to work, it granted her the security and autonomy to grab the bicycle that she did not consider before the bicycle path was there. Since she did not have to share the road with motorized vehicles, she could eliminate the biggest part of her perception of insecurity that impeded her to ride the bicycle. After that, she gradually got more confidence to share the road with motorized vehicles. Even though Mónica still experiences a lack of road education among all sorts of traffic users who do not always notice her presence on the bicycle, she now developed skills to handle the several kinds of traffic situations and does not perceive cycling in the daily traffic as impossible anymore.

Mónica's narrative also shows how the perception of vulnerability plays a role in the decision-making. Many of our non-cycling participants claimed not to ride a bicycle because of the perception that physical safety is at stake. While Víctor explained that he had seen a friend falling because of poor road conditions, most of our participants seemed to be most scared of sharing the roads with motorized vehicles.³⁰ Rodolfo suggested that non-cycling people might see cycling as something revolutionary or crazy, and as something not worth risking their life.³¹ Javier confirmed this idea by how he interpreted the objective of Bici Blanca. The objective of Bici Blanca is to remember bicycle users who have had a fatal accident in the traffic and to make traffic participants to be more aware of to avoid this in the future. But Javier highlighted that it may reinforce the perception of physical vulnerability on the bicycle.³²

Bicycle-using participants often had overlapping motivations to continue riding the bicycle. Often, the bicycle was described as a tool that helped cycling participants to feel good (see also Chapter 4). It made them mentally feel good because of the movement and because of that they felt it was good for their physical condition, and that they felt it was good about that they were not bothering others too much. Some bicycle-using participants, such as Arantza, also described the bicycle as something liberating, as they perceived that the bicycle have led them to

²⁹ Mónica. Conversation. January 30, 2017.

³⁰ Víctor. Conversation. February 15, 2017.

³¹ Rodolfo. Conversation. February 24, 2017.

³² Javier. Conversation. April 12, 2017.

a higher degree of autonomy and independence.³³ Arantza also added that every time she was on the bicycle, she was happy to not be in an overcrowded bus. Many bicycle advocates highlighted the societal benefits of the bicycle, such as not causing traffic, as well as occupying less public space. Ricardo summarized a lot of these ideas:

If I ride the bicycle, I save money. I improve my health and I don't produce pollution, or only a bit. And when I'm good, my family is good, and if my family is good, it relates to other people as well. ... Since I did not have to buy a car, ... I am not causing traffic. And besides that, I'm not occupying a parking place in front of my house ... or in the city. And because I am not in my car, maybe it will help to let the ambulance go more fluid through the traffic. ... Or I will let someone, who needs to use the car, like seniors, go easier through the streets, because I'm not using my car without necessity.³⁴

In addition, some bicycle-using participants believe that cycling can be used as a means to increase social cohesion. This is illustrated by claims as that they find it more humane than car use, that the visibility of a person on top of the bicycle leads to more direct interaction, and that it brings one more in touch with the surroundings. As Roberto puts it:

I grab the bike to where I want to go. I like to see places, to contemplate, to see that everything's beautiful. The tree, the desert, the mountain, the river. Right? You go where you want to go on the bike and you take notice of the streets, you take notice of the houses. I think I like to look when I go on my bike to something far. The nature. Breath fresh air.³⁵

3.4 Bicycle culture and road education

An often heard argument, which was made by all sorts of traffic users, is that there is no “bicycle culture” in Guadalajara. These participants usually refer to the perceived absence of ideas, customs, and social behavior that are associated with a cycling-friendly environment. The absence of bicycle culture includes the potential danger to be run over by a motorized vehicle,

³³ Arantza. Conversation. February 12, 2017.

³⁴ Ricardo. Interview. April 3, 2017.

³⁵ Roberto. Interview. April 18, 2017.

since the perception is that to date a high number of people is not used to look out for cyclists or does not respect to share the roads with cyclists. Also, many of the participants, including cyclists themselves, are not aware that cyclists have certain rights and obligations, similar to other people who participate in the traffic. The municipal official Ignacio explained it is most likely related to the fact that the rules for cyclists, often referred as *Bici Ley* (Bike Law), have only been established in *La Ley de Movilidad* (The Law of Mobility) since 22 September 2016.³⁶

The absence of bicycle culture actually points to an overall issue of the lack of road education that seems to be applicable to all traffic participants. The chaotic experienced traffic situation has led to place the guilt of traffic imprudence on the “Other”. On websites such as Facebook pictures, videos, or accounts of “imprudent” pedestrians circulate, crossing avenues while walking bridges are present or “imprudent” cyclists who hit pedestrians. Or in my case, as the vignette in the introduction showed, it resulted in a video, uploaded by a car driver which he took on his phone while driving, since I was cycling in the right lane of an avenue.³⁷ According to him and some other Facebook users, I was “imprudent” because of not making use of the present bicycle path. It generated a discussion about if I was in my right to use the lane in the way I was using it, about the current conditions of the bicycle lane over there, about the imprudence of car users, cyclists, and pedestrians, about the ignorance of “Other” people, and even about if I was making a statement about being ecological, communist or against the system. It also showed that nowadays the Internet is a common space to discuss these type of daily social issues: “There are more people involved in this, there are more opinions, so there is more discussion.”³⁸ Moreover, it showed the polemical aspects of road education, bicycle infrastructure (see 3.6), and cycling imaginaries (see Chapter 4).

Many participants have additionally stated that the people in Guadalajara are used to traffic laws being given little importance, for instance in the case of a traffic offense in a car the road police will either bribe them or the people will bribe the road police:

³⁶ Ignacio. Interview. March 14, 2017. For more information, see: Ley de Movilidad y Transporte del Estado de Jalisco, published on September 22, 2016, accessed on April 17, 2016, http://info.jalisco.gob.mx/sites/default/files/leyes/reglamento_de_la_ley_de_movilidad_y_transporte_pdf.pdf.

³⁷ Personal diary. For the video, see: <https://www.facebook.com/yeshai.vdlt/videos/10154683562324069/?pnref=story>, published on April 11, 2017, accessed on June 27, 2017.

³⁸ Ricardo. Interview. April 3, 2017.

The police is very corrupt over here. When I was 16 and driving under influence, I was really scared of them. I was afraid they would put me in jail or that my parents would find out. When they pulled me over, I was like: “No sir, please, I give you 100 pesos.” And it worked. Because they knew that kids were scared for them. Now I more or less know where the traffic officers carry out breathalyzer tests and I just take a detour to avoid them.³⁹

So even though there are many rules and laws that participants are aware of, since neither inhabitants nor authorities do always respect them, impunity and unsafe traffic situations augment. The combination of impunity, distances, and the reality and perception of the affordable limited options for mode of transport at night aggravate the unsafe traffic situation even more:

I mean, yes, you have no idea how many lives they [traffic officers] save every night. They actually do a good job. But to be honest I don't have another way to return home at night, you know how far away I live from here. And I only drink one, two beers maximum. Maybe three. But no more than that.⁴⁰

Thus, a lack of road education and the impunity of traffic offenses suggest an increased perception of physical vulnerability, in particular can be caused by motorized vehicles.

Nonetheless, not everyone is in favor of road education, in particular not in regard with the bicycle, as some fear that it will lead to more restrictions. Diego, for instance, stated that being on your bicycle you are able to have more visual contact and be in contact with your surroundings, and you are more flexible to stop and go where you want to in contrary to car drivers.⁴¹ This way cycling was described as an unfettering activity. He sees this flexibility and visual contact as particular advantages of being on the bicycle. Juan and many other bicycle advocates see obligations such as wearing a helmet, a bright-colored vest or having lights on the

³⁹ Víctor. Conversation. February 15, 2017.

⁴⁰ Carlos. Conversation. January 30, 2017.

⁴¹ Diego. Conversation. February 22, 2017.

bicycle at night is counteracting the promotion of bicycle use.⁴² Juan, Diego, and others not only claim that rules and obligations that are associated with road education make cycling less appealing, but also that it is unfair toward people who choose the bicycle out of economic reasons. In other words, it is imposing an extra price on a mode of transport that these people have chosen justly because of the affordability. It is sometimes added that even though these obligations should increase an individual's safety, this safety should be enhanced by the government in the first place:

How do you want to have a law if you as government have not done your work, if you have not provided road education in the first place? Why do you want to fine people for that? No to a mandatory helmet. [It is] recommended.⁴³

The absence of “bicycle culture” also refers to the lack of bicycle infrastructure and bicycle facilities. Several participants have told that they would be keen to ride a bicycle though they often felt impeded by the absence of facilities. Arantza, for instance, told me most of the times when I saw her that she did not go with her bicycle, since she was not sure if there was a safe place where she could park her bicycle.⁴⁴ I will go more in depth about bicycle infrastructure in 3.6.

3.5 Gender and age differences and cycling

In Guadalajara, women seem way less likely to opt for the bicycle than men are.⁴⁵ Andrea believes that women are less seen on the bicycle, because of that either themselves or their relatives see cycling as something “brave”,⁴⁶ due to a combination of the perceived physical effort, road conditions, traffic circumstances or safety issues. This points to gender assumptions that being brave is not typically associated with femininity.

⁴² Juan. Conversation. February 28, 2017.

⁴³ Aron. Interview. March 13 2017.

⁴⁴ Arantza. Conversations. February 12, 2017; February 22, 2017; March 9, 2017.

⁴⁵ To our knowledge, official data about the distribution of gender among cyclists in Guadalajara is absent or unpublished. Based on their own counts, the bicycle group *GDL en Bici* estimates that 95% of the cyclists is men.

⁴⁶ Andrea. Conversation. February 17, 2017.

The distribution of age among bicycle users is also noteworthy.⁴⁷ Mónica, a school teacher, suggested that it is related to the idea that both children and seniors as well as women are perceived as more vulnerable groups, and therefore they should be more protected.⁴⁸ She said that it is not uncommon to ride a bicycle as a child, however. Although some children often use the bicycle as something recreational, others start to use the bicycle as a mode of transport for school when distances are short. However, many children stop using the bicycle during their school career or when they quit school, because of bigger distances. Also some parents do not allow their children to go by bicycle, as they believe it is unsafe for them to go by themselves, either because of the traffic conditions or safety issues related to violence. This does not apply to all children, though, as some have adopted cycling as a normal and efficient way to transport oneself.

The federal and municipal governments said they did not have any policies or programs that were focused to close age and gender gaps.⁴⁹ They believed that the unequal distribution of gender and age is due to a small cycling population, but that as soon as the cycling population grows, irregularities will be less.

The only initiatives that try to tackle gender differences directly are Rila Libre and FemiBici. Rila Libre organizes talks and workshops to learn to repair a bicycle exclusively for women, while FemiBici organizes *paseos* (bicycle trips), classes to learn to ride a bicycle, and talks as well.⁵⁰ Both initiatives aim to create a space where women can feel comfortable. These spaces could partially take away the fear of being seen in public, wherein people can be scared to be humiliated by appearing inept or by falling off a bicycle (Horton 2007). Arantza and many other female participants said that they found it inspiring to see other female cyclists, and stated that having female cycling acquaintances has helped them and others start cycling on a more

⁴⁷ To our knowledge, official data about the distribution of age among cyclists in Guadalajara is also absent or unpublished. Based on their own counts, the bicycle group *GDL en Bici* estimates that 40% of the cyclists is between 20-29 years.

⁴⁸ Mónica. Conversation. April 9, 2017.

⁴⁹ Interview with Cristóbal, Ignacio, and Jeronimo of the municipality of Guadalajara on March 14, 2017; interview with Hugo on 26-03-2017; interview with Ernesto, Lorena, and Nuria of the IMTJ on April 7, 2017.

⁵⁰ While FemiBici has a more focused objective to tackle gender differences, Rila Libre does it next to their regular activities.

frequent basis.⁵¹ These findings suggest that specific attention to striking differences of gender and age could be crucial to make a change in an uneven distribution among cyclists (Aldred, Woodcock, and Goodman 2016). As a matter of fact, it seems that many cycling participants who did not ride a bicycle as a mode of transport in their youth started due to being accompanied by a known person.

3.6 Bicycle infrastructure

Whereas in some neighborhoods infrastructure that gives one the feeling to ride a bicycle in a safe manner, such as bicycle paths, bicycle priority lanes, paved roads, roads that do not allow motorized vehicles to drive high speeds, in other neighborhoods it is not. Hence, the access of moving oneself on the bicycle becomes geographically, unequally distributed.

As is the case now, the existing bicycle infrastructure is in and around the city center of Guadalajara and it tends to be connected where wealthier people live and more tourists are seen. Hugo, a federal official who is active in the Non-Motorized Mobility department of the IMTJ, stated that the geographic distribution of bicycle infrastructure is related to the highest degree of economic activity.⁵² The municipal official Ignacio, however, explained that its municipality tries to normalize the meaning of the bicycle by putting bicycle infrastructure and facilities in wealthier zones, due to the traditional association of the bicycle with “being poor”.⁵³

Additionally, different municipalities are occupied with different tasks and a close cooperation between these municipalities has not been mentioned as a primary occupation. This division of labor could result in an unbalanced division of infrastructure that promotes the use of the bicycle unevenly. Therefore, the current bicycle structures mainly seem to improve the mobility conditions of people who already have a more stable access to mobility in general.

The implementation of bicycle infrastructure has not been an easy task. A recent and ongoing example that illustrates this polemic debate is the construction of the bicycle path in Marcelino García Barragán in Tlaquepaque. Manuel, a taxi driver who passes this street daily in

⁵¹ Arantza. Conversation. February 12, 2017.

⁵² Hugo. Interview. March 26, 2017.

⁵³ Ignacio. Interview. March 14, 2017.

the car, argued he was generally not against bicycle paths, but that he was against them when planned poorly.⁵⁴ According to him, the deconstruction of the car lane and the construction of the bicycle path in Marcelino García Barragán have caused more traffic. Though he did not oppose to the environmental impact of car use in general: he said he was worried because of the perceived increasing congestion, that subsequently increases the amount of emission gases and therefore causes more pollution. The construction of the bicycle path was also a bad timing, because of all the closed streets due to roadworks and the construction of the metro line in this area. He suggested that the bicycle path on the pavement would be a better idea. He added that he found the construction of the bicycle path non-democratic. Firstly, because he claimed that the government never informed him nor his neighbors, and therefore he felt he had no voice and that he was reduced in his rights. Secondly, because of cyclists being a minority and therefore he believes it is in the disadvantage of a majority of people, namely the car owners. Manuel's opinion highlights that not only car infrastructure is the norm, but also that the fluidity of motorized vehicles should be given more importance. Consequently, the focus on car infrastructure and the negligence of non-motorized infrastructure and facilities are at the expense of the safety and convenience of people who do not use motorized vehicles. This could also be illustrated by Ricardo's opinion. He was not in favor, because of personal motives: he liked to cycle in the current conditions, including the confrontations with motorized vehicles. He expressed that he was not in favor of bicycle paths, but nor that he was against it:

I don't want that for instance my sister goes through the street and some guy honks her and be rude to her and that my sister can't do anything. Because she will feel defenseless, or just because she doesn't want to, or whatever. I feel more secure if someone that is not that skilled to ride a bike that this person goes through the bicycle paths. Like a 10 year old kid, I am not seeing that he would do the same I do. ... For me the ideal would be that there wouldn't be bicycle paths, that everyone who uses a car they use it in the right way. But I know this is not going to happen in a soon future at all. So I am not in favor of bicycle paths, but I know they are necessary for many people.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Manuel. Conversation. April 5, 2017.

⁵⁵ Ricardo. Interview. April 3, 2017.

Ricardo's opinion suggests that justly not constructing bicycle lanes is non-democratic, at least given in the current situations. His reasoning is also in accordance how many other bicycle advocates and officials in the Non-Motorized Mobility department of the IMTJ ideally see it: various sorts of traffic users sharing the roads. They believe that cyclists and car users are able to share roads in a respectful manner, as well as cyclists and pedestrians sharing pavements or bicycle paths. This is illustrated by the answer of an official of the IMTJ, after we asked why people who had to take the bus or go out a bus had to use the bicycle path:

It has to do with the mobility pyramid: the pedestrian is always first, the cyclist is second. In Barragán we have put the bicycle paths on the same level of the pavement, so that the pedestrian continues walking, so he or she does not have to go down, go up, instead of having to go around a cyclist. This is only on bicycle paths where public transport has to make stops.⁵⁶

Something that could be questioned, however, if this is realistic:

Once I was cycling on the bicycle lane and [I noticed that] the [pedestrians] who are waiting [for the bus] don't notice you.⁵⁷

It rather seems to be based on an ideal of sharing spaces than on people's safety. In case of an accident, it is not very likely that one of both parties will look positively to the other:

A Sunday I was going over the bicycle path. There was someone with headphones waiting for the bus on the bicycle path. I was going down, looking down to the bicycle, since I had to make some adjustments to the bicycle. I didn't notice that a person was in the middle of the bicycle path and then I hit him, *no?* "You son of this and that, why don't you pay attention, dumbass?!" "You are on the bicycle path" I told him. "Ah, fuck your mother!" But it was because I didn't see him because of looking down while he was waiting for the bus on the bicycle path.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Nuria. Interview. April 7, 2017.

⁵⁷ Lorena. Interview with her and two other officials of the IMTJ. April 7, 2017.

⁵⁸ Roberto. Interview. April 18, 2017.

So even though the ideal of sharing spaces is meant to increase social cohesion, it might create greater conflicts among the various sorts of traffic users.

This chapter has looked at current structures that define Guadalajara's mobility landscape. Perceptions of distances, travel time, lifestyles, social statuses, and physical efforts are often barriers for participants to grab their bicycle. The perceptions of convenience, vulnerability of harassment, criminal vulnerability, and physical vulnerability, and someone's economic situation, all influence the choice of mode of transport as well as the perception on road education. Moreover, not everyone is able to ride a bicycle. Projects such as the *Via RecreActiva* or *MiBici* have been new ways that attract people to grab the bicycle, either be it in a recreational way or as a form of *multimodalidad*. However, both *MiBici* and bicycle infrastructure have not been fully inclusive yet, related to social dimensions such as age, class and gender. The participants who chose the bicycle as mode of transport often continued due to the experience of seeing it as liberating, healthy, and it makes them feel autonomous, in touch with their surroundings and good about themselves. In the next chapter, we will zoom in more on the relation between cycling and consumption patterns, lifestyles and their respective ideas about belonging.

4



Bicycle imaginaries

In order to explain the relation between cycling and cyclist identities in Guadalajara, this chapter looks at the way mobility affects perceptions of the self, socioeconomic and environmental standards and beliefs, and cultural symbols related to identification. In this chapter I argue that the reasons to decide on bicycle use (decisionmaking) have evoked different types of cyclists, though the way these types are perceived also depend on yet existing cultural and social imaginaries. First, it will zoom in on the cycling individual, by looking at self-perception and -expression through cycling as a performative practice. Thereafter, the relation between cycling identities and urban space will be discussed through a focus on (understandings of) progress and consumerism. Lastly, I will connect the cycling ‘self’, the cycling ‘(non-)consumer’, the ‘local/global’, and ‘modern’ cyclist to corresponding cultural understandings and national symbolism in Guadalajara, and Mexico in general.

4.1 The cycling ‘self’

!Vamonos! Three people with yellow-reflecting overalls and black t-shirts revealing their name and the logo of *Rodantes Nocturnos* (the cycling group), lead as we drove towards the end of Andador Escorza. I ended up cycling next to Luisa, a woman with short silver-dyed hair, silver hoop earrings, wearing a helmet and pink sportswear. We drove on Avenida Vallarta and turned right at Chapultepec. I wondered if she had been cycling for a long time, and decided to ask straight away. “Do you cycle every day?” “Yes”, she answered. “Every day I cycle towards work. I had a car, but then it broke down. That’s when I decided to buy a bicycle to go to work.” “Does it take you long?” I then asked. “It’s only fifteen minutes. It’s faster [than going by car], and I can go at my own pace, arrive without hurrying.” And then, without asking, she added something I immediately felt would become an unforgettable phrase: “When I go on my bike, I decide”.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Field diary. February 17, 2017.

During this talk with Luisa while participating in a *paseo*⁶⁰, it became clear she understood the bicycle not just as a transportation mode, but as one that enables her where, when, and how to move. Although Luisa uses the bicycle on a daily basis, many others from *bicycle groups* seem to understand practice of cycling as recreational; an exception within a ‘mobilized’ life during which they let go of stress, or feel liberated (from daily structures or routine). Yoltzin, a young woman who mostly opts for the bicycle and occasionally uses a car, appreciated this ‘liberating’ aspect for she considered it inherent to ‘human’ movement, though she could not express why exactly it made her feel so comfortable:

Well, I really like the bicycle, but I don’t know why, I don’t feel comfortable saying it. I think it feels useful. But I don’t think I feel comfortable saying I like the bicycle. I do like feeling comfortable. I don’t know.⁶¹

Surprised that someone talking non-stop for hours suddenly got entangled by a set of mixed feelings, I asked if her enthusiasm about the bicycle had anything to do with its instrumental use or material aspect:

Could be, could be. It’s material. But at the same time I can love trees. That time I planted lettuce and I ate it, I felt at the top of feeling good, *no?* Or going out to run, feeling the sweat, I love it. But the bicycle? I don’t know. But it surely is a positive feeling. Something useful. Beneficial. Inclusive. ...Perhaps I like the bicycle, because of sweating, because I can move my legs, very strongly, feel the force of my feet. I like the bicycle just because I need more phrases [to express myself]. Because it allows me to do a lot of things.⁶²

Yoltzin’s comment underlines the complexity of self-realization in terms of movement.

Physically, the bicycle puts the will to exercise or move one’s body into action, making it a

⁶⁰ *Paseos* are in Guadalajara’s cycling communities generally understood as (nocturnal) bicycle rides. Though the term is mostly utilized as synonym for a wider range of bicycle groups called *paseos ciclistas*, it can refer to the act of cycling as strategy or tactic of bicycle movements, or simply a cycling event (see also next chapter). To avoid confusion, I use the term *paseo* when referring to organized bicycle ride events, and the term bicycle groups when speaking about *paseos ciclistas*.

⁶¹ Yoltzin. Interview. April 14, 2017.

⁶² Yoltzin. Interview. April 14, 2017.

“tool” that enables human muscular force to be actuated (Vivanco 2013). In this sense, cycling is an “embodied practice” that transforms bodily energy into movements and actions, reflected by ‘immaterial’ or temporal meanings (Spinney 2009). In line with the idea of cycling not just as a practical outcome of ‘rational’ or practical transportation decisionmaking (Vivanco 2013), bicycle user Momo mentioned not to identify with the label “cyclist”. “Cycling”, he said, “is the means to an end, which is how we relate with our whole environment”. He supported the idea that the bicycle causes people to be more aware of the performative character of (autonomous) movement through urban space (Butler 1990; Johansson and Liou 2017):

You change the whole relation with the environment, because you ride on a bicycle. Ecologically, socially, culturally, a little bit of everything. And also organically, I mean, because the bicycle is like your heartbeat, no, because every part of it has a rhythm. At the moment you go out cycling, the whole relation with the environment changes. It is like you decide, no. Why.. through which street, via what place? At which velocity? It makes you stay alert, and it makes you move with her [the bicycle]. That why it seems such an interesting instrument to me. From how we take ourselves to survive in today’s cities.⁶³

In an “automobilized” society that is organized economically, socially, and spatially around mass flows of cars (Vivanco 2013; see Chapter 2), people like Momo see bicycle use as a tool that generates a “slower” mobility contrary to daily (car) structures. Hence feeling “freely” within daily movements. Simultaneously, through the pace of movement and constantly required attention, it changes the perception of one’s environment, becoming more aware of their performance and surroundings.

4.2 Lifestyle and consumption

As stated in Chapter 1, consumerism often represents both a form of politics and a site of imaginative self-expression, that is also central to the context of class hierarchies (Aldred 2010). Apart from the “embodiment” and performative character of cycling discussed above, personal and political identification through cycling is also connected to markers that reveal consumerism

⁶³ Momo. Interview. March 21, 2017.

and lifestyle practices (Jaffe and De Koning 2016). Juan experienced how a change within outfit during cycling made him realize that cyclist clothing not only allows bodily comfort and rapid movement, but also comes with a social consequence:

In the beginning, I was cycling a lot with my *bicicleta de ruta*, and I trained, but it was like using *lycras* and *jerseys*, so it was very weird to see that when I went in my training outfit, I received respect, such as “look those are professionals” and everything, but attaching to the same bicycle with normal clothing, I was having these conflicts or situations of feeling at risk by automobiles coming very close. From thereon the idea rose, well, “why do I need to wear it [a tracksuit], why do people simply only see and respect a person on a bike when it looks professional?”⁶⁴

The professional outfits and bicycle riding styles of most *bicycle groups* and *sport* and *recreational* bicycle users can be seen as a marker of a serious – hence respected – cycling environment. Cycling practiced for fun or as a sport is taken seriously, and visibly expressed through sport outfits and behavior. Use of space is then reflected in the reproduction of social interactions.

More experienced or non-conformist cyclists rejected the idea of having to behave in a certain way - sometimes even rejecting the idea of bicycle lanes, which felt as an imposition of how bicycle users need to behave on the road. By cycling on the roads, they simply claimed their right to the road (Lefebvre 1968). Momo extended this idea by providing with an anti-capitalist critique: the consumption of *bicis bien y bonitas* creates passive consumers that “exploit the earth, in order to make cities more comfortable cages”.⁶⁵ Momo and Diego, a bicycle advocate who rejected the use of traffic lights as well, projected this critique onto occasional bicycle users. They go to “*paseos* once every week, only to mount their bicycle afterwards onto the rack of their car, and readjust to comfortable capitalist mechanisms”.⁶⁶ The bicycle, in this sense, is the symbol of a “green capitalism” (Illich 1974) that under the denominator *eco-friendly* tends to promote market-based goods and leads to gentrification rather than urban regeneration (Harvie 2009). In contrast, people adhering to environmentalism support bicycle use within a “green”

⁶⁴ Juan. Interview. March 3, 2017.

⁶⁵ With *bicis bien y bicis bonitas* Momo referred to “good looking bikes” only used for cycling occasionally by people who do want to cycle, but are not looking for a change of (capitalist) structures. Interview. 21-03-2017.

⁶⁶ Diego. Conversation. February 24, 2017.

lifestyle without necessarily rejecting capitalist consumption⁶⁷. For them, cycling embodies an environmental concern, and the bicycle symbolizes a tool promoting local and fair trade products, though still touching upon “do it yourself” ideologies contradicting Westernized (over) consumption models. As an extension of its green and “humane” potential (the latter mentioned in the first paragraph), bicycle advocate Ricardo explained how the practice of cycling also becomes a moral critique of technological society and the wish for a more genuine everyday life (Horton 2009):

So for me, by using the bicycle everyone wins. There are persons who still might not be able to utilize it every day, or use it for transporting themselves, but with the fact that those who can, do it, everyone else not being able to practice has the benefits... If I save money, I can spend it on food, food of a better quality, organic food, that is vegan, or fair trade. And that will help my surroundings. In other words, it's an indirect consequence of me using the bicycle. Because I don't have these other expenses, I can buy better things, in an environmental sense, *no?* Also, I then do it [cycling] in a conscious way and I do it because I don't want to leave a more shitty world to my cousins, my sons, the smallest children; so then I help everyone.⁶⁸

Cycling in this sense is not a lifestyle merely benefiting one's own life, but an act that goes beyond the “ego”. Through the inclusion of future generations within the moral spectrum, cycling contributes to a “cyclical” way of thinking and to perceiving human life on earth as an integrated whole. Whereas for Momo the bicycle enables an articulation of an anti-capitalist vision, environmentalists are already contributing to their version of a sustainable society with the act of pedalling itself (Horton 2009). Moreover, it should be mentioned that most of the environmental cyclists in Guadalajara perceive cycling as part of a green lifestyle that promotes *inter-* and *multimodalidad* rather than just cycling. The perception that car use “sabotaged” authentic green identities (Horton 2003) was not always confirmed, and especially justified in the case of large distances unbridgeable by bicycle or public transport. Juan explained how his diminished – but not completely abandoned – car use metaphorically nuanced his former “good” and “bad” representation of movement (Cresswell 2010):

⁶⁷Although here I emphasize a separation of anti-capitalistic and environmentalist visions on bicycle use and consumption, in reality anti-capitalist, anarchist and environmentalist tendencies much more often intertwine.

⁶⁸ Ricardo. Interview. March 31, 2017.

Right now, well, I have my car, but no, I don't think it defines my happiness, nor my way of being depends on it. Rather, it is a form and necessity of expanding myself, and move towards other cities.⁶⁹

Apart from concerns with the environment, consumerism and lifestyle also demonstrate the dynamics between the “local” and “global”. Consuming the a “right” bicycle and expressing the “right” cycling lifestyle then seems the prove of being as ‘modern’ as the world’s prime cycling countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands, and for some even a way to escape temporarily from the ‘third world’ image of Mexico. On the other hand, it also serves as a justification for non-cyclists to continue promoting automobility: “In Mexico we live in the ‘first’ world, the use of a bicycle does not fit here”.⁷⁰

Although these interpretations of cycling identities and modernity might seem incompatible, differences can be bridged by a more nuanced reflection. Yasmin and Maria, two participants from a communitarian feminist bicycle *colectivo*, during an interview emphasized the constructedness of such “first” and “third world” imaginaries, confirming the dynamics between locality and global influences (Appadurai 1996):

I feel a lot more anti-capitalist when we are in these feminist networks, than when we go to cyclist reunion. No because they speak of it, I mean, there is always this Eurocentric idea, of Europe, the future; ideas that in the end do not leave the construction of societies and the ways in which we relate ourselves.⁷¹

When Yasmin said “the word Holland was even mentioned ten times” during an international meeting, María emphasized that appreciation of foreign successes not necessarily need to ignore the local urban context: “one time we went to a Colombian *charla* that mentioned how we *not* going to be *Dinamarca* (Denkmark), because we are in *Cundinamarca*.”⁷²⁷³ Their identification

⁶⁹ Juan. Interview. March 3, 2017.

⁷⁰ José. Conversation. April 8, 2017.

⁷¹ Yasmín. Interview. March 11, 2017.

⁷² Cundinamarca is a department situated in the centre of Colombia; its capital city is Bogotá, also capital of the Republic of Colombia.

⁷³ María. Interview March 11, 2017.

with anti-capitalism and feminism are hence related to dynamic consumer and cycling identities, for they depend on the interaction between the self and (ideologies of) other groups, rather than simply trying to imitate “modern” or successful cyclist cultures.

4.3 Cycling symbolism and ideologies

As seen in the previous section, bicycle imaginaries are to some extent based on shared assumptions of the “local”, the “global”, and the “modern”. Although some bicycle users justify car use, processes of personal and social identification with the bicycle are often mediated by a disapproval of “car ideology”:

In an automobilized society, people become automatized as well. You get into a car, put on a mask, and you turn aggressive and inhumane. It is here where the social process starts, and cyclists should take care of an improvement of this environment.⁷⁴

As we saw in Chapter 2, during the second half of the twentieth century Mexico started to adapt mass automobilization similar to that of the United States (Vivanco 2013). Although the bicycle used to be more present in Guadalajara’s streets, the unprecedented expansion of the city created a demand for faster mobility (Salcedo-Torres 2016). The automobile came to occupy a central position within Mexican society, whereby changing streetscapes changed the personal and collective memory, reflecting the way people not only think about their nation, but also how they view their social relations:

After all, however, the ideology of imitating cities from the United States results in believing that the solution to traffic issues is putting up *pasos a niveles*, making tunnels, widen roads. The expansion of the roads started in the beginning of the twentieth century. They destroyed a lot, a lot of architectural heritage. And there the idea that everyone should have a car came into existence, so it was the challenge of removing from the mind that other kinds of solutions could be applied to the city.⁷⁵

These statements confirm the claim that the car influences one’s worldview, including how to move, spend money, and what kind of future dreams one has and challenges and risks one is

⁷⁴ Gustavo. Conversation. February 24, 2017.

⁷⁵ Juan. Interview. March 3, 2017.

willing to take (Aldred 2010; Vivanco 2013). The position of the automobile in Mexican society reveals both a physical privilege in terms of occupying public space, and an ideological privilege of emotional attachment to the car. Although global cultural flows of ideas about cycling can promote its sustainable potential (Appadurai 1996), cycling to a large extent remains absent in the local minds. The ideological belief in the car, then, is not just a matter of habit, but involves a intergenerational ideological and cultural transfer that gained governmental support for years and became normalized within the imagined national and local community:

[I]n reality, we are living in a society that during 50 years ideologically has been bombed by the car industry, and it has taken roots of the theme by saying “if you have an automobile, you are successful. If not, you’ll be worthy of nothing”. One could even say that [how] a man seduces a woman depends on the type of car he drives.⁷⁶

Mentally, or spiritually, it [the bicycle] helped me to drop the attachment to the car, [the idea] that when I was fifteen I was like “no, I need to have a car”, or else “I won’t get a girlfriend, I won’t marry, I will be a nobody”.⁷⁷

Consequently, both a car privileged infrastructure or traffic model and a “car ideology” (Vivanco 2013, 5) became the point of departure within Mexican cities’ modern lifestyles, as opposed to the image of the “poor” cyclist whose lifestyle still belongs to the *Guadalarancho* or *pueblo bicicletero* Guadalajara used to be, and other country villages still are.⁷⁸ These statements also show how that social success and status are linked to gender assumptions that associate car possession with masculinity. Yoltzin, a participant of a feminist bicycle collective, described the patriarchal tendency of “car privilege” as follows:

(...) non-motorized transportation and feminism is like a synonym. Because there is a patriarchal reign of the automobile, and of the contaminated motor within the cities. It is like: he [the car/man] already has all the infrastructure before himself. I mean, that is super patriarchal, whereas in

⁷⁶ Hugo. Interview. March 26, 2017.

⁷⁷ Juan. Interview. March 3, 2017.

⁷⁸ *Guadalarancho* and *pueblo bicicletero* are both used to mock Guadalajara’s intimate sphere and to laud the joy of moving slowly. The practice of cycling either indirectly supports the image of an obsolete city or refers to the peaceful archaic character of a small village (Pino 2011).

the [ideal] pyramid there should be a person walking, no?⁷⁹ Or a lot of persons walking. But no, within the [real] pyramid there is a pickup truck of the latest model that has gigantic wheels for all the terrain and all the streets, which is like having all the privilege.⁸⁰

This statement confirms the claim that cultural meanings of transportation reveal hierarchical, social systems (Aldred 2010; Vivanco 2013). In other words, the car may function as a symbol of social power, that reveals a gender construction based on masculinity. The bicycle is often presented as the car's "Other"; a self-governing way of moving oneself forward, not dependent on dominant power structures of the car. Consequently, bicycle users understand cycling as a way of changing how people relate to each other (Aldred 2010; Vivanco 2013), for cyclists lack the "mask" automobilists carry and are more often in contact with each other.⁸¹

4.4 Cycling communities

Just like a bicycle using individual may adhere to personal cycling identifications and bicycle riding styles, there are several bicycle groups (*paseos*) and collectives (*colectivos*) in Guadalajara that have their own normative logics considering bicycle use, behavior and (political) visions. The aims, actions, and outcomes of such collective identities aside (these will be discussed in Chapter 5), the creation of a sense of belonging also seems an important identification marker within bicycle communities.

After cycling for about half an hour next to Luisa, who cycled everyday to work, the group stopped. We lifted our bikes and crossed the pedestrian bridge. Afterwards, I cycled next to Miguel, a university teacher who told me he was cycling for about a year now. "I got my first bicycle on my birthday last year". "Have you been cycling before?", I asked. "Yes, but only once in awhile". Later he mentioned: "It was only until I decided joining this group and started cycling on a weekly basis, that I felt safe enough to cycle to work".⁸²

⁷⁹ For an illustration of the mobility pyramid, see Appendix III.

⁸⁰ Yoltzin. Interview. April 14, 2017.

⁸¹ Gustavo. Conversation. February 24, 2017.

⁸² Personal diary. February 17, 2017.

Miguel’s statement, confirmed by other interlocutors as well, shows that *bicycle groups* offer a sense of belonging enabling inexperienced cyclists to feel safe enough to practice cycling on a busy road. Though practice can also take place during events like the *Vía RecreActiva*, some cyclists find this too massive or too chaotic to be able to connect. By acknowledging one’s fears and insecurities, bicycle groups create a sense of shared humanity contributing to social cohesion (Aldred 2010). Raúl, another participant, explained me later that “everytime something happens - when someone falls or has a flat tire, we stop and wait until the problem is fixed. No matter what time it takes. This way no one falls behind.”⁸³ Bicycle groups thus constitute a sense of personal identification that makes the participant feel included within a certain cycling community. The sense of community within bicycle groups, more than by people cycling just as mode of transportation, is also expressed through strong cycling identities. Most people spoke enthusiastically about belonging to an “urban”, “road” or “mountain” bicycle group, and told how they partake in organized bicycle rides on a regular basis. Nevertheless, the boundaries between the groups were not always fixed; that is, a person belonging to a “mountain” cycling group could switch easily to “urban” cycling groups during the week.

These labels aside, both within *paseos* and *colectivos* it was above all considered important to ride on the roads together, sustaining their “commitment to cycle in the face of local indifference or even hostility” (Horton 2011). Within *colectivos*, bicycle movements with an emphasized political vision, the sense of personal belonging was not only confirmed through the practice of cycling, but also through cycling related activities such as talks (*charlas*) during bicycle rides:

FemiBici makes me feel like I have a network I belong to as well as a place where I have affinities and I can talk in different ways.⁸⁴

When Yoltzin referred to this “network”, she mainly pointed to real life events. Yet it is important to mention that social networking sites contribute to the (re)affirmation of online and offline cycling identities (Juris 2008), where individual as well as group identity is negotiated:

⁸³ Raúl. Conversation. February 20, 2017.

⁸⁴ Yoltzin. Interview. March 11, 2017.

[The rise of online bicycle platforms] is a consequence as well, of these new forms of communicating, which are the social networks. Before they also used to [comment on bicycle behavior], but then in *paseos*. You would go and say: “Dude! Wow! It’s so cool that you are riding your bike everyday, Nina”.... But within these [real life] groups, already these kinds of things happened: “Listen, Tirza, don’t go on the sidewalk, stay on the street, the sidewalk is for pedestrians.” But we would say it directly, in the *paseos*. Whereas now, you go to GDL en Bici [social media platform] and put something online: “*ay*, these *bicis banqueteros*.”⁸⁵ [And a discussion starts:] “I don’t agree. I don’t agree.” “Well, I do agree.”⁸⁶

Ricardo’s example shows how performances and normative ideas about cycling behavior of “offline” individual and group identity are extended to the virtual domain through a (re)creation and (re)negotiation of both existing and new images (Pink 2013). Social media platforms then do not merely serve as informational sources of the organization of bicycle-related events (Lopez-Leon 2016), but increasingly have become spaces where personal and political identities and preferences intertwine, and local and global images and struggles are networked. As this chapter has shown, individual decisionmaking involving bicycle use is not merely based on practical or rational reasoning, but also involves embodied experiences. Also, we have seen that the lifestyle and consumption modes corresponding with certain cycling behavior link personal expressions to political ideologies, and that cycling communities respond to individuals’ needs. In the next chapter, we will explain how such cycling images, identifications and ideologies are mobilized collectively within various bicycle movements that aim at social change.

⁸⁵ The terms *bicis* and *ciclistas banqueteros* (sidewalk cyclists) refer to bicycle users who cycle on the pavement rather than the road or bicycle lane. Whereas some of our participants utilized the term to mock or discredit cyclists taking up space meant for pedestrians, or a sign of ‘bad’ bicycle behavior, others understood it as a safe way of cycling.

⁸⁶ Ricardo. Interview. March 31, 2017.

5



Bicycle advocacy in Guadalajara: from visualization to consolidation

Surprised that my first encounter with a bicycle advocate occurred during an ordinary bicycle ride – and that this person invited me for a *paseo*, I asked my housemate Rosana if she was familiar with a bicycle initiative called *Rodada Libre*. She laughed, and acknowledged she had never heard of it. “Every time there are more and more initiatives”, she explained. “The bicycle movement keeps on growing, meanwhile it’s getting more normal as well”. When I visited this *paseo* and got invited for two other bicycle ride events, I became enthusiastically confused. How could I ever possibly understand all these distinctions within the bicycle movement?⁸⁷

In this chapter, it will become clear that the dazzling amount of bicycle advocacy collectives and groups existing in Guadalajara are to a great extent the result of former attempts to combat transportation issues (Salcedo-Torres 2016). In order to understand how bicycle advocates promote, practice, and experience cycling, an understanding of its development is necessary. Before turning to the historical progress and results of bicycle advocacy, this chapter firstly provides an overview of movements that are involved in bicycle advocacy, focusing on *colectivos* and *paseos*. Through a comparison of their aims, practices, strategies, and outcomes, it will become clear that bicycle advocacy in Guadalajara has passed the stage of visualization and direct action. The former focus on (re)claiming physical space in the urban domain (Lefebvre 1968) has shifted towards an emphasis on the public agenda and other collaborative tactics that consolidate the struggle for an equitable and sustainable city.

⁸⁷ Personal diary. February 2, 2017.

5.1 Typology of bicycle advocacy

The large number of bicycle-promoting initiatives in Guadalajara can be divided into civil and student initiatives either independent or supported by the local or federal government, informal bicycle groups, and (inter)national networks. The civil initiatives, also *colectivos*, are similar to Juris' (2008) anti-corporate globalization movements, since they constitute networks of organized citizens with a local and global scope, shared networking technologies, organizational forms, and political norms.⁸⁸ Influenced by their own specific origins, there are essentially two labels that cover the ideologies of these *colectivos* in Guadalajara: environmentalism and communitarianism (see Table 1). The biggest difference between these two is that the first perceives the bicycle mainly as a practical object or tool in daily use that has the potential for sustainable mobility. The latter understands the bicycle mainly symbolic; a tool of political discourse, participation, and negotiation aiming at emancipation through mobility.

Next to these *colectivos*, there are various bicycle groups that organize bicycle rides in and outside of Guadalajara, also *paseos ciclistas*.⁸⁹ The bicycle rides in Guadalajara our participants mentioned to be the biggest and most famous, the monthly *Paseo de Todas y Todos* and weekly *Paseo Popular Nocturno* both arose as civil initiatives. However, the former was organized by the environmental non-motorized mobility collective *Ciudad para Todos* as part of the celebration of public space and demand for safer cycling conditions, and later adapted by the environmental bicycle collective *GDL en Bici*. The *Paseo Popular Nocturno* started as an informal bicycle group that subsequently gave rise to the creations of other informal bicycle groups that organize weekly *paseos*. Although some are formally recognized by the government or subsidized by (local) enterprises, the majority is informal. Their organizational form mostly corresponds to those of bicycle enthusiasts during the early 1900s, who approached bicycle use not primarily as autonomous or sustainable, but as a playful way of escaping from daily routines

⁸⁸ Important to mention is that the bicycle advocacy movements we analyze do not share the aims of the anti-corporation globalization movements Juris (2008) investigated. Rather, their technological and organizational processes and forms that bear resemblances.

⁸⁹ Estimations of the amount of bicycle groups vary from 50 to 80. On <https://gdlenbici.org/paseos-en-gdl/> an overview of *paseos ciclistas* in Guadalajara is provided, though not fully representative. Whereas some of these *paseos* do no longer exist, new groups tend not to appear on the list.

within the city (Horton 2009). Lastly, there are bicycle networks (*redes*) that exist on national and international levels.⁹⁰ The whole of pro-bicycle actors is also named the *sociedad civil*.

TABLE 2. Bicycle advocacy movements in Guadalajara⁹¹

Sector	Backgrounds actors	Perception bicycle use	Political orientation	Organizational structure / Decision making
<i>Informal</i> bicycle groups (<i>paseos ciclistas</i>)	People from all ages, families, children, some are daily car users	Recreational or sporty means enabling of escaping routine for pleasure	Apolitical; non-party (<i>apartidista</i>)	No formal membership, although a clear representative structure / Little or no meeting facilitation
<i>Communitary</i> bicycle advocacy collectives (FemiBici, Rila Libre, <i>talleres mecánicas</i> , etc.)	Younger and older middle-class activists, (ex-)students, some with stable jobs	Playful and sometimes political tool enabling freedom from (patriarchal) control	Non-political; (local) autonomy and <i>autogestión</i> (self-governance); feminism;	No formal leaders; horizontal structure / Consensus decision making; frequent meeting facilitation
<i>Environmental</i> bicycle advocacy collectives (GDL en Bici, Ciudad para Todos, RUM, etc.)	Younger and older middle-class activists, some students, others have stable jobs	Symbol of environmental visions, vehicle for <i>inter-</i> or <i>multimodalidad</i>	Ecology; technocracy, majority with an reformist orientation	No formal leaders; spokespersons; emphasis on decentralization / Consensus decision making; frequent meeting facilitation
<i>Institutional</i> (political parties, municipal governments, IMTJ)	Middle-class bicycle and car users in their thirties, some are former bicycle activists	Symbol of green citizenship; vehicle for healthier and efficient mobility	Reformist orientation; democratic foundations emphasized on citizen participation	Decision through voting; directors make daily political decisions

Source: fieldwork research data.

5.2 Visions and aims

It was the year 2007. The government of Guadalajara had decided to construct a *puente atirantado* (cable-stayed bridge) in the middle of the city, a 23 kilometers and four tracks counting fly-over above Guadalajara's railways, connecting the east of the city to the west.⁹² Fed

⁹⁰ Since we have focused on *colectivos* and *paseos* in Guadalajara, they will only be mentioned in relation to local bicycle advocacy and are not included in the table.

⁹¹ For practical reasons – a list of names of all the initiatives existent would simply be too long, we have chosen not to mention all the initiatives by name, and only the ones most often mentioned and understood as most significant.

⁹² Cable-stayed bridge. The *puente atirantado* in Guadalajara, called after its architect Matute Remus, is the first viaduct in Guadalajara without water flowing underneath built between 2009 and 2011. The bridge permits the average car speed to rise from about 20 km/h to 50 km, while the waiting time changed from 11 to 4 minutes.

up with the umphtheenth infrastructural plan promoting automobility, my housemate Juan and other students, neighborhood activists, environmentalists and concerned citizens decided to mobilize themselves:

This was simply an aesthetic [government action] for the city, yet they cut down a lot of trees, it was a very costly bridge, the biggest narrative being ‘why constructing this infrastructure?’. México has little budget, little money, and why invest this little money in infrastructure for the car, that at the end of the day costs 450 millions of pesos. Why not leave behind the investment in the car, and invest in public space, schools, hospitals?⁹³

Juan and the others viewed the *punte atirantado* as a project too costly, “only constructed so that 200 thousands of vehicles could pass without having traffic lights, in a zone located in public space, where a lot of trees were cutted”.⁹⁴ The *colectivo* arising from the protest against the *punte atirantado* aimed at a different, more equitable, narrative of the city in which all transportation users are benefitted:

So [we wanted to] remove the thought from the mind that, first, public space is not only for automobiles. Infrastructure for automobiles no longer is viable, because from 1970 on, they stopped investing in public transport; in more metro lines; in the focus on collective transport. All in order to accommodate passages and tunnels only for automobiles. And the argument that we put in motion is that firstly, the rest of the population is moving with public transport. Well, other modes of transport [than the car].⁹⁵

According to *environmental bicycle advocacy collectives* the car does not benefit the “majority of the population that needs to go by public transport or by bicycle”. Their emphasis on bicycle use, less or “rational” car use or promotion of public transportation are all part of “broader projects” (Horton 2006) of integral and viable transportation. Influenced by environmental concerns, they strive for an alternative everyday, green, and sustainable mobility underlined by the belief in an equitable city and sustainable growth. Consequently, bicycle movements focus on social and cultural transformations of current transportation understandings and habits they

⁹³ Juan. Interview. March 3, 2017.

⁹⁴ Hugo. Interview. March 26, 2017.

⁹⁵ Juan. Interview. March 3, 2017.

consider unhealthy or irrational, by providing alternative ways of moving oneself forward and trying to change lifestyles (Vivanco 2013).

Aron – a bicycle advocate participating in Guadalajara’s first bicycle *colectivo* - told me that the current existing bicycle *colectivos* are to a great extent “created out of one [initiative], that split up because of conflicting, or at least different visions. And out of those initiatives, others came into being”.⁹⁶ *Communitarian bicycle advocacy collectives* are examples of such subdivisions, that aim at extending the belief in a sustainable and equitable city to a focus on accessibility to and participation within public space in terms of equal gender and socioeconomic relations. Participant of a feminist bicycle collective Maria explained that even within anti-capitalist spaces, she did not experience enough recognition for gender struggles, hence leading to the mobilization of her own initiative:

Before, it used to be a place of *machistas*. We were working in a lot of mingled spaces and we wanted to have a *colectivo* with women to have a link we couldn’t find there.... There were super anti-capitalist people, but as soon we told them we wanted our own place [for women only], they did not understand. So we needed a systematic transformation...⁹⁷

It is like a necessary space. But is it different, because FemiBici arose out of the bunch of guys doing *paseos*, which are visually, publically, unconsciously repeating [structures]. The guys taking care of the women, children. ... You can’t say to women they ‘simply need to participate as well’. ...”they can always join if they want. But they simply do not come”. FemiBici is an opportunity, I am sure, where people can ask: “who wants to participate, or which *woman* wants to participate, [can]”, so we have will various [women participating].⁹⁸

To some extent, these *communitarian bicycle collectives* arose as a reaction to other *colectivos* and bicycle groups (*paseos ciclistas*) by some perceived as dominated by men and patriarchal. Through a focus on autonomy and *autogestión* (self-governance) they seek for more independent mobility (Horton 2009), which they consider necessary for changing the structure of both the automobile and patriarchal system, together with the creation of safe spaces where

⁹⁶ Aron. Conversation. February 7, 2017.

⁹⁷ María. Interview. March 11, 2017.

⁹⁸ Yoltzin. Interview. April 14, 2017.

underrepresented people can be empowered (Vivanco 2013) and are granted their “right to the gendered city” (Fenster 2005).

Whereas both environmental and communitarian bicycle collectives focus on the visualization of the benefits of bicycle use within the social and political domain and the necessity of bicycle (infrastructure) space within the city, *bicycle groups* mostly aim at visualization of cyclists self without having a clear political claim. “The *paseo* was like the most playful invitation of animating to mount their bicycle”.⁹⁹ As demonstrated by Miguel’s claim about belonging at the end of Chapter 4, bicycle groups stimulate bicycle users to gain confidence in traffic and visit parts of the city they otherwise wouldn’t because of fear of distance (see also Chapter 1). On the other hand, they try to demonstrate that cycling can be fun, and that cyclists need to be respected on the city streets. Although these bicycle groups also focus on less car use and to some extent strive for independent mobility, the significance of the bicycle is mostly placed in a recreational context where visions on daily mobility and political views are not necessarily shared, nor mobilized.

5.3 Strategies, tactics, and activities

As seen in the last section, bicycle advocacy *colectivos* involve distinct configurations or norms and forms which are influenced by their own specific origins (Juris 2008). Beginning with mass demonstrations against administrative practices, bicycle *colectivos* started their struggle with confrontational tactics. Examples are the tent camps organized during the protest against the cable-stayed bridge, and the earliest mass bicycle rides inspired by Critical Mass.¹⁰⁰ During these bicycle riding street protests verbal appeals sometimes turned into direct, violent confrontations with car users, though bicycle advocate Juan mentioned he saw this as an exceptional case. Nevertheless, most bicycle rides, both organized by the bicycle groups and bicycle *colectivos* nowadays are no longer Critical mass alike; lots of them have little or no confrontation, and

⁹⁹ Aron. Interview. March 13, 2017.

¹⁰⁰ Critical Mass is a bicycle event during which a group of people moves through the city or town streets on bicycles. Originating in San Francisco in 1992, the event now is being held in hundreds of cities around the world.

some opted for police escorts in order to protect bicycle users. Apart from some violent incidents, *colectivos* thus seem to aim at non-violent action.

During a bicycle ride towards a university in the northeast of Guadalajara, Alejandro and Isa – two students and activists from an environmental bicycle *colectivo* – told me how self-governance tactics (*autogestión*) have become a necessity within their struggle:

The students cycling towards university, workers cycling from Nextipac [Northeast Guadalajara] towards the *fabricas* in the east, and all families returning back [from the centre/workplaces] have been ignored for years. With the arrival of more *fraccionamientos*, there suddenly seems to be an interest for the construction of a bicycle lane. However, this bicycle lane will stop right at the end of the *fraccionamientos*... So we will do a counting in May.¹⁰¹

A lot of people are going to Nextipac by bicycle, and a lot of people are coming by bicycle [from there] towards CUCBA [University] or even more [far away]. We simply want the bicycle lane to extend towards there.¹⁰²

Conteos, countings of the amounts of cyclists, are to a large extent carried out by bicycle *colectivos*, “because they [the government] lack the information and experience needed, nor possess of the credibility”, Alejandro mentioned. Although countings and other “direct actions” such as constructing own bicycle lanes were mostly organized in the earliest years of the bicycle movement, they are still important today.¹⁰³

Alejandro’s comment also underlines the general lack of trust in the government based on non-transparency of governmental plans, a lack of communication, and perceived corruption (COHA 2011). The lack of trust, combined with a lack of recognition of social movements’ struggles has made mainly *communitarian* bicycle collectives reluctant to negotiate with governmental bodies:

¹⁰¹ Alejandro. Conversation. March 17, 2017.

¹⁰² Isa. Conversation. March 17, 2017.

¹⁰³ In 2011, one of our participants constructed together with other bicycle advocates their own bicycle lane as a form of protest against the lack of political willingness to grant cycling infrastructure: *pues que nuestros políticos no hacen nada, es hora de hacerlo* (because our politicians aren’t doing anything, we will). For a lively description of the event, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFUbrme9V0M>.

Now, we can maintain this separation which gives us the freedom of how to do it...

Unfortunately, here in Mexico we also have the problem of people who are always caught by *el partidismo* (politically biased). So, everything I would say to them, almost always means taking a picture with them, and almost always means that it will be used as “political capital” to block the other [political] color... Or well, if they would gather to make agreements, it would be good, but the problem is going to all these talks, and afterwards nothing ever happens.¹⁰⁴

Although the choice to remain a non-political collective was largely based on the government’s focus on social capital rather than qualities, María’s comments also underlines notions of independency of not wanting to adjust motivations to governmental criteria, nor to “professionalize” autonomous strategies. The notion of independency and individual empowerment within *communitarian* bicycle collectives are reinforced during *talleres de mecánica* (mechanic bicycle workshops) and bicycle schools where participants can learn how to ride a bicycle. Apart from their “do it yourself” mentality, to a large extent they are also meant as “community building” activities.

Another important strategy which counts as *communitarian* activity both used by bicycle *colectivos* and the government is “socialization”. During socialization events, bicycle advocates generally go onto the streets to inform, connect, or mobilize the local neighborhood mainly about urban plans. An example can be found in a protest of an environmental student bicycle *colectivo* that collaborated with local neighbors against governmental plans to transform a local park into a car parking space. After riding a nocturnal *paseo* with a network of universities, a festive reunion with neighbors followed. *Piñatas* in the form of cars were put up to be smashed down by children, directly showing the positive and celebrative character of the use of public space, as well as an underlying critique of hegemonic car presence in public space. The presence of the people, their bicycles and bodies rejected the governmental claim that public space was not being used sufficiently, and reclaimed public space that tends to be privatized (Harvie 2009). In short, in the case of socialization most *environmental* and *communitarian* bicycle movements make use of a mixture of tactics that combine festive or carnivalesque connotations with symbolic critiques (Juris 2008).

¹⁰⁴ María. Interview. March 11, 2017.

Influenced by the global circulation of images, ideas, and tactics related to a sustainability and environmentalist ideoscape (Appadurai 1996), bicycle *colectivos* in Guadalajara exchange tactics, practices and knowledge with movements on national and international levels. Next to the inspiration from the Critical Mass, an American ‘Ghostbike’ initiative led to the project *Bici Blanca* (white bike), an initiative that honors and visualizes bicycle users that have passed away cycling in the streets. Whereas these examples underline the connection with and influences of foreign struggles, Aron underlined that they are always adapted to local understandings and meanings: “The original idea was Ghostbike, and here we add flowers and a cross, that adds the meaning of death to the bike”, emphasizing the importance of a local touch by means of cultural understandings of death.¹⁰⁵ Some bicycle movements are connected through national networks such as *BICIREDA*¹⁰⁶, whereas others prefer not to operate in accordance with national logics, and others form international connections by inviting bicycle “activists” from around the world.

The organization of all these events mostly takes place through mass media such as Facebook and Twitter. At the same time, these media are also used as a tactic to inform bystanders about mobility issues and sustainability, consequently promoting bicycle use among a wider, to some extent uninformed or not yet “socialized” public. Most bicycle advocates argued that the Internet helps to the speed, reach and effectiveness of their communication as well as their mobilization efforts (Lopez Leon 2016).

As opposed to *communitarian* bicycle *colectivos* like María’s one, some bicycle *colectivos* are trying to influence ideological thought via institutions. Influenced by Mexico’s transition to democracy and the emergence of environmentalist social movements (Horton 2009), they generally seek passage or better enforcement of particular laws, or replacement of corrupt or incompetent officials (COHA 2011):

¹⁰⁵ Aron. Interview. March 13, 2017.

¹⁰⁶ BICIREDA tends to be a national, plural, and horizontal umbrella network that incorporates local and national civil organizations and collectives active in the promotion of bicycle mobility. For only its organizational structure is relevant to describe the relation with bicycle advocacy in Guadalajara, we have not included this *network-based movement* within the table.

Firstly, a lot of them [bicycle collectives] are *paseos, paseos, paseos*. Then, others do work with the government, like GDL en Bici, or have mobility policies, but are not necessarily anti-system.¹⁰⁷

As Yoltzin mentioned, some citizen and student *colectivos* focused on sustainability form part of federal and municipal Citizens Councils that try to influence government policy. This ‘coordination’ or ‘partnership’ (*asociación*) with governmental institutions, according to bicycle advocates has led to a number of modifications within the strategies of bicycle activism:

There [...] is when we went with Citizen Councils, afterwards we went to university because they started to invite us; later we went to congress - the first urban cycling congress in 2008 in Mexico City. It only has been a year... last June it was the national congress. And then BiciRed was born, and it was where we carried out the second congress [of urban cycling]. So we started to provide technical advice [about cycling], got involved with political positions. And from there on, competitions, conferences, inviting people from abroad. Finally, we set up the Casa Ciclista one year after the congress.¹⁰⁸

In a city still marked by a deep distrust towards the political establishment, the ease emanating from Aron’s words when explaining how a former independent collective decided to get involved in politics, got me bewildered. I asked how they came to this decision:

“I don’t believe there is a city, developing, that can grow without the powers of the government. Socially [it can], with a social dynamic, but we are within a political system, an establishment we thought we could not totally keep ourselves out of. We are not caught in it, but it’s a necessary part as well. We are giving it more pressure, well, now, [though] it depends. Yes we are more tied to the government. Yet we are even more tied to home and less to politics. It is like saying: “keep your friends close, and your enemies even closer.” “So, is it more like a strategy?” I asked, still puzzled at this seemingly contradiction. “This work consumes the biggest part of my energy”, Aron responded.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Yoltzin. Interview. April 14, 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Aron. Interview. March 13, 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Aron. Interview. March 13, 2017.

Although not partaking herself, María understood why bicycle *colectivos* like those of Aron opt for government collaboration:

The new government did not [yet] have these people for these kind of things [mobility policy], because no one participated from the citizenry. So we have a lot of partners who are not just in government positions, but in very important government positions. They really have room for manoeuvre. So, it has been a challenge, because on the one hand you cannot benefit from the [market] conditions, and on the other, you have to be careful with those relations. Normally, it is people you have worked with. Still you have to make clear that they are in another position right now, that you could criticize, no matter if you're friends or not.¹¹⁰

5.4 Outcomes, results, criticism

Whereas in the case of the first action at the cable-stayed bridge bicycle advocacy *colectivos* did not succeed in detaining the project, they did in the case of the Via Express: a government's plan to construct a 23 kilometers and four tracks counting fly-over above Guadalajara's railways, connecting the east of the city to the west. Due to an intense collaboration ("socialization") with local neighborhoods, the bicycle advocates could create a park for local inhabitants that showed the media and government that public space indeed was being used. Finally, they succeeded to put the issue on the public agenda:

[After the Car Free in 2011] we succeeded to position the theme of sustainable mobility in the political class, the business class, students, of the people, so that everyone could see the problems this city was facing.¹¹¹

After putting the issue on the public agenda, the bicycle *colectivos* in Guadalajara have throughout the years succeeded in *visualizing* the presence of the cyclist on the streets, as Aron said:

There are people who are caught up in their mind by the chatter of the city that much that they do not longer see. Well, the paseos nocturnos did that. It was not inside the urban imagination; now

¹¹⁰ María. Interview. March 11, 2017.

¹¹¹ Hugo. Interview. March 26, 2017.

the image of the bicycle is. By now visually the brain registers it. An image of a bicycle, and [one thinks]: “Hey, a cyclist!” That’s how it went.¹¹²

Hugo confirmed that there are some significant changes, though he mentioned there still needs a lot of work to be done in order to change the structure of public space and make Guadalajara a bicycle-friendly place:

In reality, not much has changed. [Guadalajara] remains a city dominated by automobiles, but we do have won some terrain. Of participation. There are a lot more organizations. Before we had only Ciudad para Todos and GDL en Bici, now there are more than 80 groups of cyclists in the Metropolitan Area of Guadalajara. Outside of the city, there are own bicycle groups riding their *paseos*, visited by 2000 people. It’s difficult to map all the organizations that exist. We do have positions in the government... to generate bicycle infrastructure. Nowadays the law has changed, a modifications within the Law of Mobility has made. The bicycle has a juridical position to circulate on the streets that it first hadn’t. They are working on transportation routes to generate integrated routes. There are plans, no realities. And in the case of bicycles, a program... [to make integrated routes]. And maybe the most significant: we now have gotten a metropolitan budget to drive a public bicycle since 2014.¹¹³

Whereas there are some significant changes, bicycle advocate Bernardo mentioned that the promotion of bicycle use by environmental bicycle *colectivos* like most governmental implementations seems to be rather focused on the city center and the Northwest, Zapopan. Although Bernardo acknowledged activism from the city center, he missed the “activation” within neighborhoods themselves.¹¹⁴ He criticized both the government and bicycle advocates, who limited their focus only on certain neighborhoods within the ring road, while peripheral neighborhoods were usually completely ignored. He therefore pleaded that activists should go to these communities as well and give them “the tools” or information in order they can start their own projects:

We have to activate communities. We need to share with the people who do not have access. We have to activate children and to get beyond that. We have to search for people, instead of making

¹¹² Aron. Interview. March 13, 2017.

¹¹³ Hugo. Interview. March 26, 2017.

¹¹⁴ Bernardo. Conversation. April 5, 2017.

a Facebook event and waiting on them. We have to search for communities and not wait until they arrive.¹¹⁵

Bernardo's critique also depicted that bicycle advocates and the government build on existing ideas and theories, instead of looking for new ways. Ricardo, who used to be active in a bicycle movement, commented on the focus within the ring road:

It is pointless for me to go to a neighborhood like that and distribute a magazine about cycling in a place where a lady perhaps cannot even read. Or perhaps she will say: "Alright, and what am I supposed to do with this? It does not help me that you tell me to use the bicycle if it is not my priority. My priorities are that they do not kill my child or that I have food for tomorrow. Or that I am not getting sick every time because I do not even have a sewerage. I have to throw my excrements in a hole that's in the canyon over there."¹¹⁶

Even though fiercely expressed, Bernardo said these types of comments are based on the common thought that this is unsolicited information in "poorer" peripheral areas, since they also deal with other structural issues, or that bicycle use would not benefit in their daily life.¹¹⁷

Bernardo pointed out that bicycle advocacy is mainly focused on – young – adults and should focus more on children. By providing road education to children without favoritism of a certain mode of transport, it would precede a large part of decision-making. "Then", he said, "as a future generation they could decide in a less subjective way what mode of transport they would prefer."¹¹⁸ Aron, Alejandro, Isa, and some others involved in environmental bicycle advocacy collectives responded to this critique by acknowledging they are not fully inclusive. Their collaboration with the government and particular aim at sustainability has made cycling mainly an attractive option for socioeconomically powerful citizens willing to participate in governmental solutions. One of the *colectivos* recently quit with the organization of their monthly *Paseo de Todos y Todas* (Bicycle Ride for Everyone), in order to focus more on people with disadvantaged backgrounds, less familiar with the concept and importance of sustainable

¹¹⁵ Bernardo. Conversation. April 5, 2017.

¹¹⁶ Ricardo. Interview. April 3, 2017.

¹¹⁷ Bernardo. Conversation. April 5, 2017.

¹¹⁸ Bernardo. Conversation. April 5, 2017.

transport, or indifferent towards cycling. If this decision will lead to a more cycling friendly urban environment in which the bicycle serves as a tool for social inclusion, however remains to be seen.

CONCLUSION



The Bicycle as Vehicle of Social Change: Towards a Two-Wheeled Revolution?

By cycling, activists issue cultural and political challenges and generate conflicts at the level of the everyday (Melucci 1996), and thus reproduce progressive political identities. The bicycle is not the object, but the vehicle on which these social movements travel in pursuit of their objectives (Horton 2009, 36).

Concerning the decisionmaking of bicycle use as an inhabitant of Guadalajara, Chapter 3 has shown that dominant car infrastructure and its respective lifestyles impede the option to consider the bicycle as serious transportation mode for lots of people. Although the continuously expanding city frontiers require an efficient mode of transport (Vivanco 2013), the corresponding increased distances, traffic congestion, and experienced traveling time seem a physical barrier to considering the bicycle as a practical daily transportation mode. Moreover, the lack of bicycle infrastructure, facilities, and the perception of high physical insecurity (Horton 2007), have turned out to be mental obstacles to daily cycling. Nevertheless, a growing part of citizens considers the bicycle a practical alternative to mobility issues, some attempting to overthrow the economic stigmatized symbolism of the “poor” cyclist, others focusing on the physical effort and mastering the skills of road survival. Apart from personal motivations, structural social and spatial exclusion also seems to influence the experience of bicycle use. It has become clear that spatial differences such as unevenly distributed bicycle infrastructure, together with a lack of top-down and – to some extent – bottom-up interest in socially underrepresented groups in terms of gender, age, and class have resulted in inequitable opportunities of bicycle use amongst citizens of Guadalajara.

In Chapter 4, we argued that individual decision-making of cycling and the performance of cycling have evoked different “types” of cyclists all attaching different emotional values to the embodied practice of cycling (Spinney 2009). Cycling is by some individuals, for instance, experienced as liberating practice that emphasizes independent and self-generated movement (Vivanco 2013). Liberated cycling “selves” seem to form the upper hand amongst all types of

cyclists, whereas cycling “non-consumers”, “economized” and “green” cyclists seem to form the foundations of environmental bicycle advocacy (Horton 2009; Jaffe and De Koning 2016). The dynamics of the global flow of cycling images and local cycling identity, consequently has resulted in the ascription of “modern” cycling identities revealing larger cultural understandings and social symbolisms carrying stigmatisation of local and traditional bicycle use. Finally, the whole of personal and collective cycling identities converge in different cycling communities that both celebrate the joy of cycling and try to tackle normalized beliefs.

In Chapter 5, we elaborated on the shared ideologies of bicycle communities in terms of cycling for recreational, environmental, and communitarian reasons – often with a political aim. Through a comparison of these views, we distinguished between cycling in four domains: *paseos ciclistas*, environmental and communitarian bicycle advocacy collectives and responses to bicycle advocacy of the institutional domain. The different political ideologies correspond to a variety of tactics, such as tendencies of independency or direct action as opposed to governmental collaboration, though they are often mixed. We argued that the process of visualization of bicycle use within the public domain largely has shifted to a focus on information and socialization with the people of Guadalajara not yet used to the idea of bicycle use as vehicle of transport, nor its potential for a societal and environmental change.

Throughout our thesis it has been argued that bicycle advocates promote bicycle use simultaneously practically and symbolically. Firstly, they constitute a sustainable and “lower” mobility opposed to increasing speed and distances and, the automobility of urban space. Symbolically, the bicycle is the car’s “Other”, that simultaneously represents a critique on postwar-consumerism (Illich 1974; Lefebvre 1968), a tool of political activist practices, and a symbol of a social emancipatory and environmental struggle (Aldred 2010; Horton 2009; Vivanco 2013).

The bicycle advocacy collectives in Guadalajara thus approach the bicycle as “tool” that tries to change intergenerational ideologies and cultural paradigms, though its inferior position mirrors the continuous challenge of creating a bicycle city scene. That is, cycling is still only normal to a minority of bicycle users and bicycle advocates. Cycling as a mode of transport itself still is a marginality in Guadalajara that – except for successes within the bicycle advocacy scene

and some inspiration for the (automobility) mass – still can be seen as a subculture or something abnormal (Horton and Parkin 2012). On the one hand, this “abnormality” has brought about stronger cycling identities – most of them accompanied by a negotiation or negation of car use; on the other, the difficulties and dangers ascribed to cycling have produced more repulsive attitudes to cycling (Horton and Parkin 2012) amongst the majority of citizens.

Governmental initiatives such as the public bicycle sharing system *MiBici* and the car free *Via Recreativa* have responded to this scepticism by making cycling more accessible to the grand public, though some bicycle advocates view them as the cause of a less radical bicycle scene losing its alternative political and environmental potential. The same applies to a number of bicycle advocacy collectives, who according to some have gone conformist – though they mostly are still viewed as partners in a joint struggle with “simply another way of doing it”.¹¹⁹ That said, most of the bicycle collectives that work with institutional sectors, view their collaboration as a tactic that helps promoting the bicycle amongst a wider public. In their attempt to make cycling more a sustainable and equitable alternative appealing for – a mostly car driving – middle-class, bicycle advocates use different strategies (Juris 2008) to influence public politics focused on bicycle infrastructure and cyclists’ rights. In parts of the city where bicycle lanes are constructed, the upgrade of public space has led to an urban regeneration (Harvie 2009); especially the city’s centre and economic hubs made more attractive. Within the production of public space, these geographic and societal imparities reflect a difference between “bicycle culture” as *conceived* by the municipal and state governments (Lefebvre 1968), *perceived* by a majority of citizens with limited access to it in everyday life, and *lived* or imagined by civic bicycle advocacy collectives. For one thing, the adaptation of global “flows” of cycling imaginaries in the local bicycle advocacy community seems to grow (Appadurai 1996): Guadalajara’s bicycle scene incorporates ideas and tactics of international acknowledged bicycle struggles, and some collectives also attach stronger virtual connections with other bicycle movements on a global scope (reference). Alternatively, bicycle advocates up until now not have been able to attract a wide range of people into its local community. The spatial exclusion of Guadalajara’s outskirts, and neglectance of social groups including women, children, and the

¹¹⁹ María. Interview. 11-03-2017.

elderly, also stimulate the reproduction of “elitist”, “sportist”, “environmental”, and “modern” cycling identities, accompanied by certain lifestyles and consumer practices. Hence, bicycle advocates face the challenge of not merely reproducing imaginaries they themselves want to abandon, and transform the mentioned stigmatizations into an all including, intersectional, and environmental ideology.

According to *communitarian* bicycle advocacy individuals and collectives, the adaptation of social movements’ strategies and ideas has resulted in the appropriation or “cooptation” of ideas and images of an alternative way of practicing cycling citizenship by mainstream society. In this sense, Aldred’s (2010) approach of ‘cycling citizenship’ – focusing on personal ascriptions such as independence and freedom, and relations with the natural and social environments - might be too narrow-focused. Cycling not only is an alternative forms of citizenship practiced from ‘below’ (Aldred 2010), but also a mixture of ‘bourgeois’ and top-down appropriation. As ‘cycling citizenship’ in Guadalajara more and more tends to be defined in terms of legislative rights and duties, bicycle advocates can easier practice their “right to the city” (Lefebvre 1968), however tied to the rules of political dominant institutions. Whereas understandings about allegedly commodified political cycling differ, the various structures of bicycle movements have resulted in an ambiguous type of citizenship: a ‘conformist cycling activist’ that obeys the political system through their collaborative strategies, and disobeys in term of direct action. All in all, the bicycle seems to generate a green and sustainable cycling citizenship by representing a critique on current models of urban growth or progress (Aldred 2010; Lefebvre 1968); striving for less (auto)mobility (Horton 2009); resolving traffic questions with unsustainable social, economic, and environmental costs (Gutierrez 2005; Vivanco 2013); and seeking for solutions on the long run.

In order to become a democratic practical vehicle and symbolic “tool”, the bicycle needs to be integrated within the lives and imaginaries not only of bicycle advocates, “green” and “global” lifestylers, and the “new global elite” (Horton and Parkin 2012), but also adapted by the majority of inhabitants of Guadalajara – irrespective of their residential environment, social position, economic power, and the kinds of attitude to sustainability. Hence, we believe that both grassroots bicycle advocacy collectives and top-down urban planning and transport policy could

be more inclusive by taking an “intersectional” approach. Although it has been mentioned that a bigger cycling population automatically will lead to a more equitable representation of bicycle users, these gaps only can be closed if the very reasons for these gaps are tackled (Aldred, Woodcock, and Goodman 2016). But before being able to substantially confirm the need for a more intersectional approach, future research into the relation between cycling and gender, age, social class and status, and able-bodiedness in Guadalajara needs to reveal the bicycle’s intersectional potential for social change.

A shortcoming on our side concerns another intersectional identification. The data we have gathered suggests that daily bicycle use for people with a visual impairment or disability is more difficult due to a lack of special infrastructure and road education contributing to a safe environment. Nevertheless, subsequent research into the relationship between cycling and physical and/or visual impairments needs to reveal its potential relationship with social change. The same observation applies for religious identification: the fact that we have not found any significant relation with bicycle use or advocacy, does not take away its possible importance. Though we believe ethnic boundaries might be present, we neither we have taken an ethnic scope into our focus of analysis, nor have found them to play a significant role within bicycle advocacy.

With an seemingly ever expanding city in sight and an ecological crisis in mind, the question remaining is to what extent the bicycle as a vehicle and as political tool in Guadalajara has brought about social change. Concerning bicycle use, most bicycle groups (*paseos ciclistas*) have contributed to a playful understanding of cycling, and have achieved small-scale and short-term changes in terms of personal benefits and transformations. Nevertheless, they have not transformed underlying societal structures nor realized the demand for a sustainable city. Bicycle advocacy collectives extend the focus by becoming political actors with a voice in public policy concerning sustainable infrastructure. However, whereas small changes are easier to achieve, social change does not take place from dusk to dawn. Rather than a process of mere willingness or progress, a successful “bicycle revolution” requires a change of customs and norms, (the invention of) infrastructure techniques and technologies aimed at sustainability and benefitting all transportation users, and a change within current power and societal relations. In order to

become a vehicle within a “bicycle system”, the heterogeneous, extended and colorful city streets of Guadalajara await an ideological paradigm shift of its people, in which environmental worries of the future are understood as the mobility issues of today. Until then, bicycle advocates in Guadalajara will continue to claim their space, in order to make Guadalajara the cyclist Utopia they have in mind: “Ten years ago, I couldn’t have imagined Guadalajara as it is right now. All these [bicycle] signs, [cycling] infrastructure, and even the respect that exists nowadays. In my opinion, we are already in a cyclist heaven.”¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Ricardo. 05-02-2017.

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Movilidad como un Derecho a la Ciudad: Defensores de la Bicicleta y la Ciudadanía Ciclista en Guadalajara

Desde inicios de febrero hasta finales de abril 2017, nosotras – Nina van Belzen y Tirza Noach – hemos realizado un trabajo de campo en la ciudad de Guadalajara, Jalisco, para investigar el uso de la bicicleta. Esta investigación forma parte de nuestra licenciatura en antropología cultural. Por lo tanto, durante nuestra estancia en Guadalajara hemos utilizado los métodos principales de la antropología, entre ellos la observación participativa enfocada a las prácticas diarias, entendimientos y experiencias principalmente de gente involucrada en el movimiento ciclista. Además, hemos incorporado la técnica de “encarnación” (*embodiment*) (Pink 2013; Spinney 2009), que nosotras terminamos llamando “ciclismo encarnado” (*embodied cycling*), así como prácticas audiovisuales desde un ángulo multisensorial, y por último, pero no menos importante, consultando a diferentes actores por medio de entrevistas abiertas y semiestructuradas.

En la ciudad de Guadalajara, que confronta una congestión de tráfico cotidianamente, el uso de la bicicleta hasta ahora no se ha normalizado. Debido al tamaño de la ciudad que se sigue extendiendo cada día (Konnerth 2013), una movilidad sustentable y eficaz se muestra necesaria más que nunca. Aunque la infraestructura de hoy en día se ha adaptado a modelos provenientes de los Estados Unidos de América enfocados en el uso de los coches, no ha resultado ser apta para una movilidad eficaz y accesible para una mayoría que no se transporta en automóvil (Salcedo Torres 2016).

Tomando como base de teorías enfocadas en “el derecho a la ciudad” (Lefebvre 1968) y una “ciudadanía ciclista” (Aldred 2010), hemos formado un cuerpo de literatura que trata el derecho a la ciudad tanto como una práctica “desde abajo”, como una visión de planificación urbana y arquitectura técnica “desde arriba”.

Poco a poco hemos desarrollado entendimientos sobre cómo ocurre el proceso de la toma de decisiones sobre la movilidad tanto en un nivel estructural como un nivel individual, cómo las

usuarias y usuarios de la bicicleta construyen identidades en cuanto a su movimiento, y cómo los paseos ciclistas y colectivos practican la promoción del uso de la bicicleta y forman redes. Esto nos ha llevado a la pregunta: *¿en qué maneras la bicicleta está usada como vehículo y percibida como herramienta política de cambio social?*

Los tres temas mencionados (la toma de decisiones en un nivel estructural e individual, identidades, movimientos) forman el núcleo de nuestra investigación y se traducen en capítulos, cada uno analizando su relación con la movilidad, el ciclismo en particular. Haciendo un acercamiento a las experiencias personales y la comprensión del uso de la bicicleta en la vida cotidiana, hemos tratado de ampliar la información existente. También hemos tratado de contribuir a la “experiencia vivida” del ciclismo en Guadalajara; un relato holístico que no se limita a tomar visiones concebidas del espacio urbano desde la visión de los urbanistas y los planificadores estructurales en cuenta, ni el espacio como es “vivido” por los *paseos ciclistas* o *colectivos* (Lefebvre 1974), sino que incluye un “todo integrado” de individuos, grupos de defensores ciclistas (tanto los paseos ciclistas como los colectivos involucrados en la promoción del uso de la bicicleta), y el sector institucional.

Uso de la bicicleta

En cuanto a optar por el uso de la bicicleta siendo habitante de Guadalajara, la infraestructura dominante de los carros y sus consecuencias (distancias prolongadas, congestión incrementada de vialidades, y tiempos de viaje alargados), se experimenta como barreras “racionales” para considerar el uso de la bicicleta como medio de transporte cotidiano. La escasez de infraestructura ciclista, ciclo-instalaciones, y la inseguridad física (Horton 2007), a su vez han resultado límites emocionales. No obstante, la cantidad de personas que eligen la bicicleta aumenta, ya sea por razones prácticas, o por estar dispuesto a cambiar los simbolismos del(a) ciclista “pobre” o “vieja”, todas se enfrentan a los esfuerzos físicos y aptitudes que requiere una supervivencia en la calle.

Desde la visibilización hasta una consolidación

Tras tres meses de investigación en el “campo”, hemos terminado por distinguir entre una promoción del uso de la bicicleta que resulta tanto práctica como simbólica. Es decir, el movimiento ciclista intenta generar una movilidad más ‘lenta’ en contrario a las distancias y velocidades incrementadas que llevan la “automovilización” del espacio urbano (Horton 2009). Simbólicamente, la bicicleta es la ‘Otra’ del carro, que al mismo tiempo representa una crítica a los modelos de infraestructura estadounidenses (Illich 1974; Lefebvre 1968), una “herramienta” de prácticas políticas activistas, y un símbolo de una lucha emancipatoria y ambiental (Aldred 2010; Horton 2009; Vivanco 2013).

La mayoría de los colectivos ciclistas que trabajan con sectores institucionales, ven su colaboración como una táctica que ayuda a promover la bicicleta entre un público más amplio. En su intento de hacer el ciclismo una alternativa más sostenible y equitativa que atrae a la clase media, en particular a las y los que manejan un coche, los defensores bicicleteros utilizan estrategias distintas (Juris 2008) para influir las políticas públicas, centradas en la infraestructura ciclista y en los derechos de los ciclistas.

En la producción del espacio público, las imparcialidades geográficas y sociales reflejan una diferencia entre la “bici cultura” como *concebida* por el gobierno o los planificadores infraestructurales (Lefebvre 1968), *percibida* por una mayoría con acceso limitado a ella en la vida cotidiana y *vivida* o imaginada por colectivos cívicos que promueven el uso de la bicicleta.

La adaptación de los “flujos” globales de imaginarios ciclistas en la comunidad local parece estar creciendo (Appadurai 1996): la escena ciclista de Guadalajara incorpora ideas y tácticas de las luchas ciclistas, reconocidas internacionalmente, y algunos colectivos también adjuntan conexiones virtuales más fuertes con otros movimientos ciclistas en un alcance global. Alternativamente, hasta ahora los defensores ciclistas no han sido capaces de atraer a una amplia gama de personas en su comunidad local.

La exclusión espacial de las afueras de Guadalajara y la marginación de grupos sociales como las mujeres, los niños y los ancianos también estimulan la reproducción de identidades ciclistas “elitistas”, “deportistas”, “ambientales” y “modernas”, acompañadas de ciertos estilos de vida y prácticas de consumidores. Por lo tanto, los defensores ciclistas enfrentan el desafío de

no sólo reproducir imaginarios que ellos mismos quieren abandonar, sino transformar las estigmatizaciones mencionadas en una ideología global, interseccional y ambiental.

¿Ciclo-ciudadanía?

El ciclismo no sólo es una forma alternativa de ciudadanía practicada desde “abajo” (Aldred 2010), sino también una mezcla de apropiación “burguesa” y de arriba hacia abajo. A medida que la “ciudadanía ciclista” en Guadalajara tiende a definirse cada vez más en términos de derechos y deberes legislativos, se hace más fácil practicar el “derecho a la ciudad” (Lefebvre 1968), no obstante vinculado a las reglas de las instituciones y colectivos políticos dominantes.

Teniendo en cuenta que los entendimientos acerca de la presunta mercantilización del ciclismo político difieren, las diversas estructuras de los movimientos de las bicicletas han resultado en un tipo ambiguo de ciudadanía: un(a) “activista ciclista conformista” que obedece el sistema político a través de sus estrategias colaborativas y desobedece en términos de acción directa.

En resumen

Con el fin de que la bicicleta se convierta en un vehículo dentro de un “sistema bicicletero”, las calles heterogéneas, extendidas y coloridas de la ciudad de Guadalajara esperan un cambio paradigmático e ideológico de su gente, en que las preocupaciones ambientales del futuro se entienden como los problemas de movilidad de hoy. Hasta entonces, los defensores bicicleteros en Guadalajara seguirán reclamando su derecho al espacio público, a fin de que Guadalajara se convierta en la utopía ciclista que tienen en mente.

APPENDIX II | Reflections

Reflections on fieldwork in Guadalajara

Tirza Noach

A year ago we were informed that we had to think about a topic for our fieldwork research. It raised questions as: “What is doable in only three months?”, “Are these topics ethical to carry out as a student?” and “Will *I* be able to do this fieldwork?”. You can read as much as you want to about cultural anthropology, but doing fieldwork is just like cycling: you only learn it when you do it and you inevitably will make mistakes.

Two and a half years ago I visited Guadalajara for the first time, at that time as an exchange student. Being dependent on friends bringing me back by car at night, I felt very immobile in Guadalajara’s urban jungle. This led me to buy a bicycle from Ricardo, who turned out to be one of our key informants. I remember him telling me about the collective he was active in, but my understanding of Spanish was so poor at that time that I translated it as: “a group that is into cycle competitions”, even though he repeatedly told me he was not. I sincerely did not understand that people who used the bicycle as mode of transport would gather for that very reason, as for me it was something so common to transport myself by bicycle within the city, despite of the distances. My understandings of cycling gradually changed, as I often felt put in danger by people who used motorized vehicles to cut me off and I was not able to continue cycling in the way I was used to. Reflecting on this change of understandings, it made me realize that all that time I was not so familiar with cycling as I thought I was. The process of adopting and internalizing the unknown as the ordinary, made me want to enrich both the unknown and the ordinary and enlarge it by new impressions. This led me to the decision that I wanted to do my fieldwork about cycling. In hindsight, my fieldwork had already started by the first time that I visited Guadalajara.

Coming back to Guadalajara was feeling like arriving home. Even though I have lived less time in Guadalajara than I have in my “new” city Utrecht, I am very aware of that I know much more about Guadalajara than I know about Utrecht in many aspects. Many things that I

used to consider special in Guadalajara had now become banal. That said, I have also been aware that I am an outsider anyway, that several times has explicitly or implicitly been highlighted when I learnt that I made some “cultural mistakes”. The collaboration I had with Nina was therefore – among many other reasons – enlightening, as we were complementing each other constantly. We also reflected constantly on all kinds of issues, which helped to fathom some of our biases. Still, I acknowledge that both being an outsider and my familiarity with Guadalajara have contributed to an indelible bias from my side.

A research on cycling requires a lot of cycling as well. After a day of constant struggle with traffic over hilly and unpaved roads and highways, initially I got both physically and mentally tired. Eventually it was just another day cycling 60 kilometers. I employed the “embodied experience” of cycling and the mental and physical change as an extra dimension to reflect about the whole experience of mobility. I also tried to remember my first times cycling in Guadalajara as well as my first times cycling in the Netherlands, so that I could empathize more with our participants.

Being in the “field” is actually *living* and it rarely felt like working. The only difference was I was aware that I was looking for some answers, even though it was sometimes not even clear what our questions were exactly. But so many times these answers came up at unexpected moments. That is, even though I sometimes thought I was “off duty”, fieldwork appeared to be a continuous process.

Another odd thing about fieldwork is the way we have written about “participants”. As I obviously do not feel the people we have met were objects, it has been strange to write about them that way (at least the word “participants” sounds really impersonal and cold to me). I therefore found it challenging to write in name of so many different individuals to express their many opposing and at the same time also similar thoughts, and phrase it in a way that all of them had their own voice. It is nonetheless inevitable that they are not mediated by Nina’s and my own voice. That said, I hope that their voice will be louder than ours and I am very grateful to each of them for all the memorable and wonderful experiences we have shared.

Reflecting on Fieldwork in Guadalajara

Nina van Belzen

When I first met Tirza and heard she wanted to conduct fieldwork on urban cycling in Mexico, I was surprised by the originality of this concept. Coming home and telling my roommates about this idea, their first questions reflected my unspoken insecurities: “Cycling in Mexico? Aren’t there any topics of greater importance?” In the reflection below, I shortly touch upon this and some other issues I experienced during my fieldwork in Guadalajara.

Much later after my first encounter with Tirza, I came to understand my somewhat reserved response was not due to an allegedly superficial subject. Instead, my judgment about another culture’s cycling practices and understandings came from my deep-rooted, normalized, and never questioned bicycle standards anthropologists called ethnocentrism (Kottak 2014). That is, growing up in a “cycling country” like Netherlands, where the urban cycling environment is not characterized by any turbulent mobility issues (anymore), I had never problematized this normality. The subsequent research into urban cycling in Guadalajara, hence consisted of a personal challenge of de-normalization of cultural practices, that went hand in hand with a mixture of feelings:

Leaving on Ricardo’s bicycle I felt a bit silly, not used to such a road bicycle with thin wheels, a low front frame and a top tube so high. Once we were on our way, it felt liberating to finally be able move ourselves independently. The wind blowing through my hair and my feet pushing the pedals. On the other hand, riding a bicycle and participating in traffic caused me stress. What to do with all the holes and bumps in the road? And with the cars, buses and motors that didn’t stop although the signs on the road pointed at a “bicycle priority”? Feeling, hearing and smelling that a bus was behind me and might not stop, I experienced a constant switch between a rush of adrenaline, frustration, and a slight panic.¹²¹

Moving myself forward in Guadalajara was a challenge for I did not know the local customs, habits, and appropriated behavior on the bicycle and on the road. Hence, it resulted not a mere

¹²¹ Field diary. February 1, 2017.

practice of ‘embodiment’ during which I felt deliberated (Johansson and Liou 2017), but indirectly also a “skilled” practice (Pink 2013). By observing, visiting, and participating in bicycle rides, I acquired a way of looking and using my body within traffic that helped me understand how our participants viewed and experienced cycling.

The mixture of feelings I experienced during this bicycle ride in Guadalajara to a great extent reflect the kind of emotions I felt while doing fieldwork. After being taught in class-room for years how experienced anthropologists conduct fieldwork as, it felt scary and also conflicting to simply approach ‘our participants’. The spontaneous attitude of our participants and the informal character of bicycle events, however, helped me realize that fieldwork is not something you simply ‘plan’, and data not something you simply ‘detract’. Fieldwork, like everyday life, is ‘alive’ and continuously changing, stimulating an open-minded attitude that takes into account unplanned and unexpected events or situations. During this discovery, I frequently bumped into a question surrounding my role as researcher. How could I legitimate my presence, and to what extent needed I to stay within my role as anthropologist? I found my answer in what Rabinow (2007, 79) calls the dialectical spiral of observation and participation. This means that no matter how hard I tried to participate in the situation in order to not “Other” my participants, I needed to understand that I could not become one of *them*, and always stayed an *outsider* and an *observer*.

When coming home and trying to squeeze all our findings into an understandable, holistic wholeness, the biggest challenge was not to lose all the details and narratives of our participants. Read (1965) argues that in order to understand the lives of the people we have studied, we must show their lives through the *particular* (events), and not merely talk about them in generalities. The question I faced involved a legitimate translation of their narratives into what would become *my* “thick description” of *their* lives. In our thesis, I have tried to voice the views of our participants as much as possible. After all, doing fieldwork is a double mediation (Rabinow 2007, 119). That is, the data we collected first was mediated by our own presence, and secondly by the kind of self-reflection we were expecting from our participants. My collaboration with Tirza to a great extent has helped to mediate my own presence. Our constant reciprocal reflection on both personal and research issues helped me to reflect on my own methodological choices, personal behavior and my role as fieldworker. For our interpretations often differed, it gradually

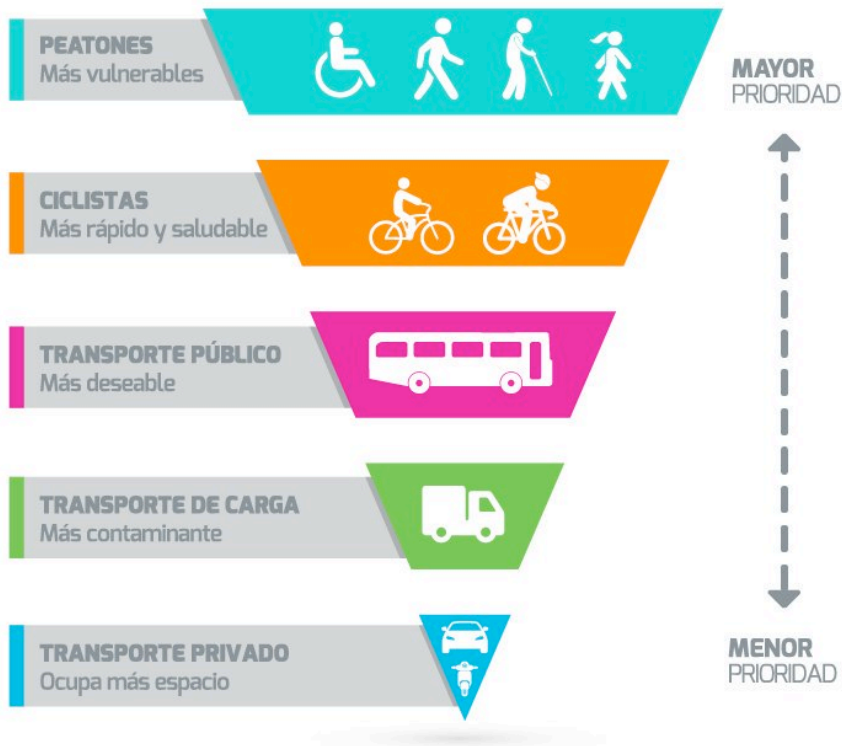
became easier to uncover how my experiences were ‘colored’ or biased, and how we could complement each other’s thoughts and analytic interpretations.

Being the student of our participants lives, I have learned that there is no absolute perspective, and not one way of doing fieldwork. The always dynamic interaction with Casio, Chio, Jorge, Izhak, Luis, and all the others, created an interesting dialogue in which “the strange became familiar, and the familiar a bit stranger” (Kottak 2014). Being back home cycling in an old and familiar environment, I will carry this heartwarming experience with me.



APPENDIX III | Mobility pyramid

CONOCE Y RESPETA LA PIRÁMIDE DE MOVILIDAD URBANA



Cambia la ciudad

#BANQUETASLIBRES



APPENDIX IV | Division of writing

Division of writing

Paragraph	Author
Introduction	Tirza
1. Theoretical frame	
1.1 Cities, citizenship and mobility	Nina and Tirza
1.2 ‘Cycling citizenship’ and identity	Tirza and Nina
1.3 Cycling, social inequalities and agency	Nina and Tirza
1.4 Bicycle networks, movements and practices	Tirza and Nina
2. The setting	Nina and Tirza
3. Everyday Cycling in Guadalajara: From Structural Conditions to Personal Experiences	Tirza
5. Bicycle imaginaries	Nina
6. Advocating bicycle use: from visualization to consolidation	Nina Tirza: section about critiques on bicycle advocates
7. Conclusion and discussion	Nina
Appendix I Resumen en español II Personal Reflections on the research - Tirza - Nina III Mobility pyramid IV Division of Writing	Tirza and Nina