

# Incorporating the Everyday: Pedalling Towards Citizenship and Belonging.



Oliver Blake



# **Incorporating the Everyday: Pedalling Towards Citizenship and Belonging**

Oliver Blake (5936047)  
Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship  
Utrecht University, 2017  
Supervisor: Luc Lauwers  
Word Count: 21, 686



**Universiteit Utrecht**

## Incorporating the Everyday: Pedalling Towards Citizenship and Belonging.

**Abstract:** As a cycling nation, the bicycle makes up a key part of daily life for many Dutch citizens, truly an object of the *everyday*. However, riding a bicycle is a skill that not all living within the Netherlands possess. For people in this position, those with a non-Dutch background, the provision of cycle lessons intend to make this skill available. Through ethnographic research I have come to understand these lessons as a liminal period in which students learn a skill, moving them from one state, that of a non-cyclist, to a cyclist. This period of change teaches them to cycle; an aspect of social citizenship in the Netherlands, aligning them closer to a sense of Dutch identity and belonging within society.

This process teaches more than riding a bicycle. The journey students travel through liminality fosters bonds between themselves and the teachers. Both parties mix and learn from each other, creating a two-way process of integration. Teachers learn about those they share their city with. Students learn language and knowledge of Dutch society through interaction with the teachers, extending the lessons potential for integration beyond becoming part of Dutch cycling culture. Upon learning to cycle, the student's new ability allows exposure to the environments which they inhabit, creating the potential for a deeper sense of belonging to be created as they experience place from two-wheels.

**Key words:** *Cycling, Bicycle, Citizenship, Belonging, Integration, Liminal, Learning, The Netherlands.*

## Acknowledgments.

The contents of this thesis are the product of over three months' field work, in addition to much preparation and writing either side of that period. I would like to thank everyone who was involved in this process. From the people who have listened to my ideas to those who have read my work. Although, some actors deserve a specific mention.

Luc Lauwers helpful and considered comments across the project were instrumental. The working relationship we forged made the projects undertaking an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Without his supervision, this thesis would not be what it is today.

Harten Voor Sport's cooperation enabled this research to happen. The organisation consistently sought to help my requests and provided support throughout. The teachers of the cycle lessons welcomed me, and for this I would like to thank them too. Jette deserves a specific mention; her willingness to act as a translator helped me gather much of the data included in this thesis.

The students of the lessons are whom I would like to thank most. They taught me more than is possible to put in the following pages. During my fieldwork, they became so much more than 'research participants'. Each student - whose efforts to cycle I did all I could to assist - showed a determination which was inspiring. I hope they go on to use the skill they worked so hard to acquire, taking their bicycles to navigate their lives. I wish them all the success in the future.

Finally, my parents, Sandra Clegg and Andy Coupe. Each has, in very different ways, made my academic achievements possible.



## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	5
<b>Chapter I - How Do You Ride a Bicycle? .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Methods, My role, Location. ....	12
Structure of Argument. ....	15
<b>Chapter II - Cycling: A National Habit.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Utrecht .....	17
Cycling Society .....	19
Cycling Identity and its Formation.....	22
<b>Chapter III - Setting Off.....</b>	<b>26</b>
A Journey of Change.....	26
The Passengers and Their Guides.....	28
Coming to the ‘Classroom’. ....	30
The Bicycle.....	33
Using the Bicycle. ....	35
Control.....	37
<b>Chapter IV - Moving On, Pedalling Out. ....</b>	<b>39</b>
Stepping Outside. ....	39
Language and Nation.....	40
Speaking Cycling.....	43
Learning the Language of the Cycle Lanes.....	45
Breaking the Rules, Leaving Liminality. ....	48
<b>Chapter V- Finishing One Journey, Beginning Many More. ....</b>	<b>51</b>
Goodbye. ....	51
Beyond the Liminal. ....	52
Cycling Towards Belonging.....	55
A Route to Incorporation.....	57
Summary.....	59
<b>Bibliography. ....</b>	<b>61</b>





## Chapter I - How Do You Ride a Bicycle?

*I know how to bicycle or swim and yet do not know how to coordinate the complex pattern of muscular acts by which I do my cycling or swimming. I both know how to carry out these performances as a whole and also know how to carry out the elementary acts which constitute them, though I cannot tell what these acts are.*

(Polanyi 1966, 4)

Within the Netherlands it is almost impossible to miss the presence of bicycles. These two-wheeled machines line the streets of city centres, be it moving up and down with their owners or leant stationary against signs, railings and buildings: it seems they are everywhere. And, where there are bicycles, there are people able to ride them, their owners. For those born in the Netherlands the bicycle is a vehicle you grow up around. You see it, you ride it, you learn about it in school. The bicycles visible presence, widespread use and its practical mundanity make it an object of the *everyday*. The everyday is inescapable, they are everywhere to be seen, even if you do not ride one.

Modes of transportation shape the possibilities of daily life. What destinations can or cannot be reached, the time you must set off, and what objects may be transported, for example. What makes the bicycle different to other means of travel is that it is a learnt skill. Walking is something universal, developed at a young age by everyone of able-body. Trams, busses, boats and planes move passive passengers, totally dependent on the skill of the person behind the controls. Beyond a monetary transaction for your ticket and reading a timetable, little skill is involved. Cycling on the other hand, needs a bicycle and ability acquired through practice and perseverance. Those living in the Netherlands who are unable to ride a bicycle will surely be aware of how common a method it is for travel, yet lack the skill to utilize the country's accommodating infrastructure. I can recall my own childhood amazement when faced with mastering a seemingly impossible task, bemused at how you could possibly balance on two-wheels?

Some living in the Netherlands may be unable to ride a bicycle, unable to engage with the *everyday* norm of cycling. For such individuals cycling lessons create a space to learn this skill. My involvement in these classes subsequently found that not one of the students hoping to

learn were Dutch-born, which makes this group, whom will be referred to as *nieuwkomers*<sup>1</sup>, outsiders in a society where cycling is second nature to so many. Removed from social and historical context, the quintessential non-citizen is the foreign migrant (Lazar 2013, 15). When residing in a country, which is not your nation of birth, where cycling is common practice, what does the process of learning to ride a bicycle do? This question, in part, is about the influence of an object on people's lives. Adopting an everyday norm in a country which is not your nation of birth arouses questions of citizenship and belonging; areas in line with current anthropological inquiry. The provision of cycling lessons within the Netherlands provided sites to explore ethnographic answers to such questions.

The central question that I will answer throughout is as follows; *Can adoption of a culture's everyday norms and embodied practices create a sense of citizenship and belonging?* Situated within my research location of the Dutch city of Utrecht this question becomes; *How can learning to cycle create a sense of citizenship and belonging for nieuwkomers?* When a *nieuwkomer* goes through the process of learning this skill I explore what it does for their incorporation into the Netherlands and how it allows them to experience the environments they inhabit. In what way is the bicycle a vehicle for integration? Such questions lay an intriguing path to explore the relationship between the bicycle, cycling, and integration; a path which will be trodden across the course of this thesis.

The following chapters closely follow those learning to ride a bicycle as they progress through the cycling lessons. The anthropological concept of liminality will frame each student as a passenger on a journey of transition, moving from one state, of a non-cyclist to that of an independent cyclist. To complete this journey students must pass through five phases of learning. First you interact with the bicycle and learn how it works. Second, you must use it by pedalling for yourself. Then students refine this skill by learning how to control the bicycle during the third stage. Upon doing this, student and bicycle venture into the surrounding area, practising and exploring together. The fifth stage involves becoming competent in the language of the cycle lanes and understanding the rules that accompany them. Then, students are ready to transcend the liminal state and become an independent cyclist. After undergoing this transition, students may incorporate the bicycle into their everyday, ending the liminal journey,

---

<sup>1</sup> Newcomers.

through which an alignment with the Dutch *everyday* is achieved. Thus, joining the social citizenship practise of cycling.

What underlies the coming discussion is political approaches to immigration and citizenship. As many Western societies become increasingly diverse and accommodate migrants from a range of backgrounds, states have begun to take a more active role in promoting a common citizenship (Kymlicka 2003). This change has arisen partly in response to a backlash against multiculturalism. Notably, the 2000 publishing of Paul Scheffer's "The Multicultural Tragedy" in Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad is widely acknowledged as a moment that resonated with segments of the public, bringing the immigration debate to the fore (Entzinger 2006). As well as discussing the failure of multiculturalism, it specifically singled out the growing Muslim population as a cause for the undermining of social cohesion. Political and media discourse towards migrant groups, particularly Muslims and other non-western immigrants, in the Netherlands has been growing in hostility for some years (Siebers & Dennissen 2014). It has been highlighted how stricter immigration policy after the turn of the millennium is rooted in fears that new arrivals would disrupt Dutch social order (Rath 2009). The 2017 general election saw the far-right, anti-immigration party PVV (The Freedom Party) come second in national elections, headed by Geert Wilders who has previously pledged to "de-Islamise" the Netherlands (Henley 2017). Such changes within Dutch politics are interesting considering the general perception of the Netherlands as a tolerant and open society.

The so-called "fall of multiculturalism" has placed new emphasis on issues including nation-building, citizenship and identity. Despite this, it is important to remember that Western European countries are currently granting more powers to groups within societies; the Frisians in the Netherlands, the Scottish within the UK and the Catalans in Spain (Kymlicka 2010). Therefore, when discussing this issue, it is vital to remember that only the external migration aspect of multiculturalism has caused a backlash.

Such backlash ignited debate regarding the integration of migrants into society. In the Netherlands, state policy has conflated integration and citizenship, creating a situation in which formal, legal citizenship, is different to moral citizenship (Schinkel 2010). My ethnographic exploration will show how learning to cycle in the Netherlands can help integration and offer a route to achieve non-legal citizenship. Yes, students learn a practise of Dutch social citizenship by becoming cyclists, but the interaction of Dutch teachers and non-Dutch students

creates a space in which *nieuwkomers* can learn more than the bicycle; language, nation based knowledge and their environment. Yet, this is not simply a learning experience for the students, the teachers also learn about people they share their neighbourhoods, city and nation with. The cycle lessons are sites in which integration is a two-way process. Much like a two-direction cycle lane; traffic comes from both directions passing each other without collision, respecting one another's space in the road.

#### Methods, My role, Location.

Between the 28<sup>th</sup> of February and the 7<sup>th</sup> of June, I conducted field work on the process of learning to cycle within the Netherlands. Harten Voor Sport (Hearts for Sport) are a non-profit organisation working within the city of Utrecht promoting active lifestyles, as part of this they run cycling lessons. After Utrecht hosted the Grand Depart of the Tour De France in 2015 the municipality wanted to invest and create a cycling legacy in the city, money was made available to do this. Harten Voor Sport set up cycling classes working with the municipality.

Across the city of Utrecht there are 13 cycling lessons a week, initially I was granted access five cycling lessons. Each lesson would contain a different set of pupils, based on lessons I attended the average group size was seven pupils per lesson and the lessons would run for ten weeks. Some lessons I attended went on for up to 13 weeks to accommodate for those who came late to the course or were still unable to cycle independently after ten lessons. Eventually, I dropped two of the initial lessons I attended due to low turnout and non-recurring pupils and added another two lessons specifically for refugees<sup>2</sup>. Although, these two lessons for refugees do not feature heavily in this thesis as their purpose seemed less focused on transition to everyday cycling, more an opportunity to use the bicycle for fun. Three particular lessons, which I attended from the first to the final week, provided the basis for most of this thesis. Across my field work I attended 45 lessons in total.

To address my central research question the cycling lessons presented the perfect site to properly understand the process people go through when learning to ride a bicycle in a country where it is the *everyday*. Those learning this skill would make up my primary research population and therefore my main research participants. They will be referred to as students or pupils, which reflects my position in the lessons as a cycling teacher. Their words and stories

---

<sup>2</sup> Both lessons were taught in a refugee and asylum seekers' centre.

will be recounted to document the process of learning to cycle. The names of all students have been changed to respect anonymity. The characteristics of this group will be discussed further in chapter three as the lessons are introduced.

To gain, detailed, inside and emic knowledge of the students going through this process, I made use of participant observation. This qualitative, ethnographic research method has been essential to the anthropological study since first pioneered by Malinowski and Radcliff-Brown (Nader 1972, 306). Lessons are about learning, understanding this could only be achieved by being there; observing the pupils and interacting with them. Being there allowed data collection in a naturalistic setting, where experience of the tacit meanings of the learning process was possible (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 1-2). The duality of participant observation is pointed out by DeWalt and DeWalt (2011), it is not simply a method of collecting data but it also is an analytical tool. Allowing me to collect data from the frontline and analyse it from a position of deep understanding.

To increase my interaction with pupils I accepted Harten Voor Sport's offer to act as a cycling teacher within the lessons, this role had a large impact on my chosen method. Participant observation presents an oxymoron to the ethnographer who hopes to use it. Malinowski discussed how participation takes some form of "*emotional involvement*" while observation "*requires detachment*" (cited in DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 28). Practically, these contradicting positions complimented one another. Teaching meant I was interacting with the students constantly, actively participating in the group. To teach, one must also observe, assessing what students struggle with and what should be improved to progress. I would regularly talk to other teachers about which students needed to practise what aspects of cycling based on our observations. The role of teacher was the perfect vehicle to build rapport with students and fellow teachers, providing opportunity to participate and observe.

Teaching may have helped overcome the contradictions of my chosen method of data collection but it also affected my position within the lessons. Instantly, I had a level of authority over my research participants, a voice to be trusted, someone to be learned from. It also helped me overcome some of the language barriers I encountered with the students. Interactions with them could be based on demonstrating activities, setting up obstacles and cycling together on the roads. These connections built a type rapport with students that our differing language abilities could not.

However, I differed from the other teachers. The pupils and teachers were aware that I was a student researching cycling lessons, but perhaps most distinctly I could not speak Dutch, which all the other teachers could. This distinguished me from the rest of the teachers but it did not harm my ability to participate with the practical teaching of the lessons, only at times I was unable to explain things. All the cycling teachers could speak English, my inability to speak Dutch only hindered verbal communication with students.

This dual position of teacher and researcher presented an interesting marriage of interests. To address my research question and watch transition along the process it was clear that students would have to get to a point in which they could cycle independently on the roads. The aims of teacher were not clearly defined, but the intention was to help pupils progress as much as they can towards being an independent cyclist. In this sense, getting students to cycle on the roads benefited them, fulfilled my duties as a teacher and my ability to address my research question. In addition, I was attending up to five lessons a week, meaning I quickly became very experienced at teaching cycling. This allowed me to share knowledge and methods between lessons to help the students. Again, rather accidentally, the goals of my research and the goals of the lessons intertwined in a way which benefitted each other, just as way my role as a participant observer complimented the position of teacher.

Like the students I taught, I am also an outsider. I am not Dutch, I do not have a Dutch background and I live in a society different to the one I was born in. If the students are understood as *nieuwkomers* then I am also a *nieuwkomer*. But I can cycle. The teaching of cycling will be framed as a form of integration for the students, yet, despite my role as an outsider, as an EU citizen and international student, I am not expected to integrate in the same way they are. Thus, I occupy a unique position between teacher and students. The duality of researcher and teacher, *nieuwkomer* but cyclist adds complexities to my role but its results were beneficial. The balancing act of being an insider and outsider is what leads to a distinct and rounded understanding of social events (O'Reilly 2012, 106).

Not only did I participate actively, through teaching the lessons, I also participated “*passively*” (Diphoom 2013, 208). My time spent cycling around the city, observing the streets and behaviours of other cyclists helped me gain insight and understanding of the culture that exists in the cycling lanes. The culture the students are trying to become part of.

Additionally, I used a range of different interview styles. O'Riley (2012) correctly points out that the ethnographer's work of interviewing and listening occurs throughout fieldwork and the lessons themselves were sites of multiple conversations and discussions with students. As well as these informal conversations I also conducted formal, in-depth interviews with eight students from the lessons. Five of these were conducted with translators, four in Dutch and one in Arabic. The four which were conducted in Dutch were re-translated to verify the data gained. As well as conducting interviews with the participants who make up my primary research population, I interviewed four cycling experts, three cycling teachers and two international students who had learned to cycle since moving to the Netherlands. This provided a rounded understanding of Dutch cycling culture, verified my experience of teaching with others in this position and gave retrospective views on what learning to cycle changed in the Dutch context.

The Dutch city of Utrecht, which is also the city I have been living in since September 2016, is home to the cycling lessons I attended. By population Utrecht is the fourth largest city in the Netherlands, behind Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, with 334,000 inhabitants. The city is located in the centre of the Netherlands positioned at an intersection of transport routes. It acts as a major transport hub; the outer ring-road faces problems with traffic congestion and the train station is busiest in the country, all regions are accessible from its platforms (Gemeente Utrecht 2008).

Ethnically the city is 67 percent Dutch, 22 per cent are of non-western descent and 11 percent are non-Dutch of western descent (Gemeente Utrecht 2015). The three lessons which most of the proceeding discussion will focus on are in Overvecht to the north of the centre, Lombok to its east and Rivierenwijk in the south east. 46.8 percent of Overvecht's residents have at least one parent not of Dutch birth, Lombok's figure for this category is 25.4 percent. Rivierenwijk sits at 18 percent, this neighbourhood is found next to Kanaleneiland which has the highest number of residents with at least one non-Dutch parent, 66.6 percent.

### Structure of Argument.

The following chapters will take the reader on a journey with the students through their liminal phase in which they attempt to learn how to cycle, whilst investigating how this can play a role in integration into nation and environment. The next chapter presents the world the students are trying to enter, offering a picture of cycling in the Netherlands as well as a brief historical

overview. Cycling will be established as the *everyday*, a widespread norm and practise within the Netherlands, a component of social citizenship within the nation. Chapter three enters the liminal phase, documenting the groups who make up the lessons and the processes of learning that take place within the ‘classroom’ to teach the bicycle. Chapter four follows the students as they leave the ‘classroom’ and advance into the roads and environment, applying their skill. Advancing through the steps of becoming a cyclist will be twinned with debate around how engagement with one’s environment can create attachments to place and belonging. As progression through the liminal phase is discussed, it will be shown how interaction between teacher and student creates a space where integration is a two-way process. Finally, the last chapter disembarks from the liminal journey and discusses what the fresh state of a cyclist can mean for the students, displaying its potential to create a sense of belonging. At this point it will be clear how the cycling lessons can be viewed as a form of integration which connects the students with a practise of social citizenship, the bicycle. The object, thus, becomes a vehicle for integration. A vehicle which, in turn, helps other forms of integration such as language and national knowledge. Closing discussion will focus on integration and citizenship, assessing the pathway towards social citizenship that the cycling lessons pave as opposed to civic integration exams as a route to legal citizenship.



## Chapter II - Cycling: A National Habit.

*As Salma holds the bicycle for the first time, my question of why she wants to learn to cycle elicits a simple response: “It’s what everyone does here”.*

### Utrecht.

An onlooker does not need to conduct a close examination of Utrecht to notice the bicycles. The objects themselves and the facilities needed to accommodate them are inescapable features of Dutch cities and Utrecht is no exception. Visible traces are everywhere amongst the city’s spatial and material layout: segregated cycling paths, road signs, parking facilities, bicycle shops, specific traffic lights. The streets are designed for bicycles, providing users with a network that allows easy access by two-wheels. The Copenhagenize Index has acknowledged this, ranking the city as the second most bicycle friendly city in the world because of its infrastructure and on-going efforts to improve cycling conditions (Copenhagenize Index 2017).

The prevalence of bicycles in the city centre is extraordinary for someone witnessing it for the first time. As you walk the streets bicycles pass from all directions. A student described to me that when she first visited the Netherlands from South Africa she took pictures of bicycle parks out of amusement. I can relate to this as I did the same when I first visited Amsterdam. The biggest bicycle park in the world opened in August 2017 in Utrecht which reportedly holds 12,500 bicycles (Gemeente 2015). This figure may seem large, but within the city centre a further 6,000 places are still needed. According to the Bicycle Accessibility Program Manager<sup>3</sup>, despite recently agreeing space for an extra 700 parking racks, the historic centre is struggling to cope with the demand for parking spaces.

The visible infrastructure can only tell half the story, bicycles and their owners must tell the rest. Utrecht is home to the busiest cycle route in the whole of the Netherlands. This is a series of three streets forming the main route from east to west across the city. An average of 22,000 bicycles pass along this road per day. The sheer quantity and variation among the bicycles and their riders is worthy of note. Each machine is more than just two-wheels and array of metal

---

<sup>3</sup> Frans Jan Van Rossem has worked as Utrecht’s Bicycle Program Manager since 2013. He oversees all cycling projects in Utrecht. Formal interview conducted 7/04/2017.

tubes, each is accompanied by a passenger, who doubles as the conductor, controlling the vehicle, progressing towards a destination.

*As I walk through the streets of Utrecht I turn my attention to the cycle lanes all around me. A pair of women riding closely beside one another sit upright, relaxed, talking hurriedly between themselves as they move slowly down the cycle path. Moments later a young male directs his bicycle with one hand, whilst his spare hand grips a plastic crate of bottled beers against the rack on the back of his bicycle. A folding bicycle with small wheels flashes past, its rider checking a smartphone, glances up from the screen to survey the road. Again, someone talking on a phone comes by. A young couple ride beside each other, holding one another's hands as they carve a route across the city. Riding a sleek racing bicycle, an elderly female glides by wearing a helmet. At one section of traffic lights I count 28 people sitting poised on their bicycles awaiting the change from red to green. Towards the back of the queue, two large shopping bags dangle from an elderly man's handlebars as he slows and joins the waiting pack.*

*Yet, bicycles do not only carry cargo they also carry extra passengers. The rack which sits above the rear wheel on many bikes doubles as a seat. A woman passes by with two small children. The first cycles cautiously between her and the kerb. In front of her handle bars is a large rectangular wooden box for transporting cargo where the second child sits. Another infant passes by, no more than four years old, sitting in a special seat between the rider and handlebars. From this position children watch the city unfold before them, able to take in the behaviour of other cyclists before they can cycle themselves. A woman holding a lead cycles slowly with her dog who keeps pace beside her. These examples are some of the more notable scenes. After cycling daily in Utrecht for seven months, none of these sights seemed shocking or strange to me, they are things I see everywhere, everyday.*

I do not wish to pretend that cycling is unique to Utrecht, or the Netherlands for that matter. Bicycles are found in all corners of the world but the frequency with which they are used makes the Dutch situation unique. In a nation home to more bicycles than people (Boffey 2017), 2009 figures show 26% of all journeys in the Netherlands are taken by bicycle, this figure rises to 34% when specifically considering journeys under 7.5km, rising again to 43% in Utrecht. To contextualise these figures: in the United Kingdom only 2% of journeys are made using a bicycle (Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat 2009). The 29,000km of cycle paths found

across the country (Wardlaw 2014, 245) certainly make for an environment where cycling, no matter the destination, is always an option. Interestingly, such high rates of cycling do not correlate with more accidents. Studies have proven the Netherlands to be the safest place on the world to ride a bicycle (Schepers et al 2017).

Recent figures show the bicycle's prominence in day to day life is likely to continue. Use of the country's national rental scheme, OV-Fiets, has doubled since 2010 and the growing popularity of electric bicycles has increased the number of kilometres travelled on cycle lanes since 2004 (Department of Infrastructure and the Environment 2016). Although it may seem the Netherlands has achieved all it can in terms of bicycle usage, efforts are continuously made to promote cycling, the city's Bicycle Accessibility Program Manager, Frans Jan Van Rossem, explains:

*We are still trying to make it better. To get more people to cycle. That is mainly because the city is growing. We have been growing recently from 270 thousand to 340. So, we already have, in a couple of years' time, 70 thousand extra people living here and we are predicted to grow further to 400 thousand people in the city. And it's quite a dense, a densely-built city, a lot of people in one place, so we think the growth, we cannot facilitate it with a car and not with public transport either. We really need the bicycle.*

In this sense, people's choice of the bicycle is important for a sustainable future for the city and the ability to ride a bike is essential. In a city where 61% of trips are made to the city centre by bicycle it is clear cycling makes up a large part of the mobility culture in Utrecht. Differing cultures of mobility form different kinds of society (Urry 2007) and the way people choose to move creates "distinct local social relationships, identities and cultures" (Vivanco 2013, 12).

### Cycling Society.

Personal experience of cycling, conversations with Dutch citizens and my research participants has established that cycling is simply the norm: citizens grow up cycling and continue to do so. People who use a bicycle to get from A to B do not even consider themselves to be 'cyclists', this initially surprised me. In the UK, use of a bicycle comes with the added label of 'cyclist', upon moving to the Netherlands, despite using a bicycle more, this identity was removed. I was no longer a cyclist, I was just practising a norm as most other people do. Being so normal that no categorisation so necessary.

Cycling is picked up from a young age. In addition to organising cycling lessons, Harten Voor Sport run cycling activities in schools educating children about behaviour on a bicycle. They provide cycling exams for children and around 80%<sup>4</sup> of the schools in the province of Utrecht run a cycling exam for those aged 11-12 years old. This involves cycling a route whilst being watched by examiners at different points along the course who grade the students, deciding if they either pass or fail. By this age, it is normal for children to cycle to school by themselves. A student of the cycling lessons told me she expected her son, who is ten, to be cycling unaccompanied through the city in the next few years.

Gellner (1983) noted in his analysis of the nation state that a pivotal instrument to create national solidarity is a standardised education system. Implementing a national curriculum provides the next generation a collective experience which moulds them in a way that allows expression of a collective moral citizenry (1983, 29-34). The effect a state school system has in formatting citizens and aligning them with a nation has, more recently, been acknowledged by Bauman (2004, 2). Cycling plays a role in the schooling of swathes of Dutch children, not only as means to get to school but also something incorporated into the curriculum. This cements the bicycle as something integral to the upbringing of children, making it an object of national *togetherness*, part of the collective experience of growing up in the Netherlands. It has a role not only in daily life but also in school, the curriculum helps people become cyclists. By cycling people can act out an aspect of citizenship.

For those who have grown up in the Netherlands, Kuipers states, *“If you want to go somewhere, you just take the bike. Everybody cycles. You wouldn’t know any better”* (2012, 25). This is echoed by Rolando<sup>5</sup> when talking of himself: *“Cycling is like walking for me. I get out of my house and it’s what I do”*. A conversation with a Dutch friend revealed that he best understands distance in terms of how long it would take to cycle there. His sense of space and time is closely linked to movement on two-wheels. Kuipers (2012) goes on to argue that, despite acknowledging changing attitudes, cycling is a key part of the Netherland national habitus. Use of this concept is deployed to explain why similar behaviours are displayed by people of the same nation.

---

<sup>4</sup> Lex Van Dalfsen explained this information during an interview on 29/03/2017. Lex works for Harten Voor Sport, focusing children and education.

<sup>5</sup> Rolando, cycling teacher, Rivierenwijk lesson, interviewed 11/03/2017.

Here, Bordieu's concept of habitus is useful for the analysis of social norms and practices within a setting. He places emphasis on the body's "*mechanical learning*" of activities of the everyday, through such bodily engagement the social meanings and norms of a society can be acquired (1997, 87-88). Cycling as a skill of the body, for those able, it is done without thought. Often teachers would explain how hard it is to teach someone to cycle, having to question how do you do it? For this reason, two teachers insisted that we use the same style bicycles as the pupils to show them how to do things. Explaining habits from memory is often very difficult, for example, how would you explain putting on a t-shirt? While teaching I often found myself having to break down things I do everyday whilst riding a bicycle, analysing what my body does before explaining it. Jette<sup>6</sup>, who teaches cycling, on one occasion said: "*the bicycle is like my body*". After playing an integral role in her life for so long, Jette has come to view the bicycle as an extension of herself.

Cycling is so widespread that it can be viewed as part of a collective embodied practice across the nation. Skills and shared understandings which are not verbalised also act to create and recreate culture, these "*rest in the body rather than the brain*" (Ehn and Lofgren 2010, 387). For those cycling in the Netherlands, pushing down through the foot onto a pedal, whilst simultaneously lifting the opposite foot onto the remaining pedal and balancing with the handle bars as the initial push begins to move you forward, occurs in a second without a thought: an activity truly of the body not the brain. In the Netherlands, this process occurs multiple times a day for the majority of the population. Cycling has been described as a "*national habit rather than a consciously chosen lifestyle*" (Stoffers 2012, 110).

An experienced cycling teacher recounted a time when some students in a previous lesson had cycled down a small slope before making a sharp right turn. It was obvious to her you must break before attempting a tight corner yet the students did not know this and took the corner too wide, exiting the bridge into oncoming traffic. It seemed so natural she would have never considered explaining this. Upon hearing this story and realising how thoughtless the ability to cycle is, I began to question what I was doing whilst riding. Quickly, I became aware of my constant adjustments, fine tuning things based on the situation and how it unfolds as you move: your speed, your position in the road, your eyes, your thought process, your hand position on the breaks, your legs. All of this happens automatically. A change of road surface impacts your

---

<sup>6</sup> Cycling teacher, Lombok lesson. Interviewed formally 10/04/2017.

speed. Pulling a break lever coincides with your legs stopping their rotations. Putting my mind to this whilst cycling resulted in a sense of confusion, the natural process almost lost its fluidity. My body worked better without my brain's analysis.

Cycling is a habit for Dutch people, a habit beyond body language, gestures, social norms and tone of voice, it includes access to equipment, skill and some risk. All these things, for someone who cannot cycle, exceed the simple realm of observation and repetition. This habit is a skill which must be practised and perfected. Within the Netherlands it is clear cycling is the *everyday*, but how did this situation come about?

### Cycling Identity and its Formation.

In discussing cycling culture in the Netherlands, Kuipers states "*the history has been forgotten because cycling has become second nature*" (2012, 25). I would agree, many people seem to be unsure exactly how the bicycle became such a vital part of everyday life in the Netherlands. Even experts in the field of cycling policy were sometimes unable to explain the bicycle's rise to prominence. It's been suggested that the lack of historical awareness amongst the Dutch is due to the fact that cycling is far too mundane, not worthy of close examination (Stoffers 2012, 95).

Anne-Katrin Ebert (2010) explains the success of the bicycle within the Netherlands with the notion that it was established as an object to promote and encapsulate national identity. After the 1900s the bicycle became widely available due to cheap manufacturing and American imports. By the 20s and 30s the Netherlands was internationally viewed as the cycling nation of Europe. Historians Adri Albert de la Bruheze and Frank Veraart conclude geographical conditions do play a factor in the bicycle's popularity in the Netherlands but the most important one was '*the image of the bicycle*'; influencing both the cyclist and the legislation towards cycling (De la Bruheze and Veraart; in Ebert 2010). Individuals could be their own master whilst using a bicycle, utilizing strength and independence, moving with speed yet remaining calm. In a sense this was a sign of coping with modernity (2010, 352). Once the right to vote was extended to all males in 1917 many groups sought to educate people on how to use their vote correctly and act as good Dutch citizens. The bicycle played an important role in this as "*It taught independence, self-reliance and self-control, it helped to form a bond with the nation and the national heritage; in short, the ANWB proclaimed the bicycle 'the horse of*

*democracy*” (2010, 362). Ideas of democratic values are deeply engrained as an established truth for all citizens in the Netherlands, historically the bicycle has been paired with this onset giving it a special place in society.

However, the path to the cycling infrastructure found in the Netherlands today was not always a smooth one. The trend whereby many countries prioritised fast, high carbon modes of transport over walking and cycling (Urry 2012) was also seen in the Netherlands. Between the end of the Second World War and the 1970s car ownership increased and use of the bicycle fell. The 1973 oil crisis, combined with a stark increase in the number of road deaths, especially amongst children - highlighted by campaign group “Stop Child Murder” - swayed opinion back to the bicycle (Stoffers 2012; Warldlaw 2014). Frans Lueb<sup>7</sup>, is contracted by the Fietsersbond (Cycling Union) to give training on how to teach cycling lessons, explained that as a “*cycling nation*” the Netherlands was quick to realise the bicycle’s position was changing in relation to the cars, leading to the creation of the Fietsersbond in 1975. From this point bicycles and facilities for them, have held an integral position in policy making (Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management 1999).

Distinct focus on the bicycle has led to a point where the nation is known around the world for this very feature. The Dutch Cycling Embassy are an organisation based in Delft who deal with international requests seeking Dutch expertise and advice on cycling. Often their work involves going on excursions to other countries to share knowledge, or the reverse of this, bringing policy makers to the Netherlands to experience cycling here. The organisation use a distinct, cycling related brand of “Dutch” knowledge and export this around the world. In June 2017, the Velo City cycling conference, the biggest event of its kind, was held in the eastern city of Nijmegen. The meeting, which was opened by the King of the Netherlands, is aimed at a range of policy makers and experts within the field of cycling policy. The CROW institute is a Dutch organisation which publishes a manual on cycling infrastructure, a manual considered the gold standard of urban planning for bicycles around the world. Their website claims “*The Netherlands has the highest rate of bicycle use, provides the widest range of cycling know-how and is famous worldwide for its cycling infrastructure.*” (CROW 2017). Furthermore, browse the gift shops of any Dutch city and you will find - among the cannabis, tulips and windmill

---

<sup>7</sup> Frans runs a company called RedactieFiets. Dutch Cycling Union, the Fietsersbond, hire him to give training courses on how to teach cycling lessons. Interviewed formally on 20/03/2017.

merchandise - bags, t-shirts and fridge magnets with bicycles on. The image of the bicycle is part of the national branding. Examples such as these make it clear that cycling, both consciously and unconsciously, is linked to Dutch national identity, as well as to the Dutch national story and its biography (cf. Anderson 2006, 204-206). Something of the everyday is normal for those inside the society, yet it is the extraordinary for those outside the society. The extraordinariness for the outsiders allows those inside to internalise it as their identity.

University student, Vincent, recounted an occasion when he was in the United States and was asked by two people, who were involved with promoting cycling routes, about Dutch road signs and cycling infrastructure. In this sense, his nationality is associated with a field of knowledge which people seek to learn from, they presumed an expertise. I experienced something similar but in reverse: cycling teacher Nels<sup>8</sup> twice likened me to a Dutch citizen because of my use of bicycles. Firstly, when he asked if I could cycle with two bicycles, confirmation that I could led him to say: “*like a real Dutch guy*”, again this happened when my two bicycles both had flat tyres he said I was: “*already like a Dutch student*”. I was described as: “*so Dutch*” by a classmate when I explained to him how I had to take a bicycle back to one of the lessons. Even if these comments were made with a level of jest attached to them its telling how my interaction with bicycles across my fieldwork resulted in an association with *Dutchness*.

This pairing of the bicycle and nationness (cf. Eriksen 2002, Anderson 2006) or *Dutchness*, displays how the vehicle, as a cultural artefact, is linked to an idea of national identity. Due to its mundanity, the use of a bicycle may not be an overt identity which Dutch citizens would claim defines them. Yet, as has been shown, it is part of a wider national identity, one so normal that it is not acknowledged. The complexity of the notion of identity in a changing world, in which the nation state is no longer the unchallenged entity it once was, is widely acknowledged (Bendle 2002; Eriksen 2016). People find the bicycle such a non-extraordinary *everyday* object, they may not even realise its link to nation and identity.

Additionally, a Dutch friend states that she can: “*tell if someone’s Dutch by the way they cycle*”. I probed a little further and it became clear that if someone is not comfortable on a bicycle she can safely presume they do not have a Dutch background. The skill of cycling is so closely

---

<sup>8</sup> Cycling teacher, Lombok lesson. Interviewed formally 19/04/2017.



associated with an upbringing inside of the nation's borders it leads to an assumption of nationality.

Of course, not every Dutch citizen cycles. I have heard of those of Dutch-birth, of able body, who do not cycle. But it is undoubtedly a vital component of everyday transport for many people in a way it is not in other countries. The embodied language, spoken in the cycle lanes is one which not all people are fluent in, it must be learned and practised. Those living in the Netherlands who are unable to cycle cannot engage with it, they may lack the confidence to cycle on the roads or have not attempted to ride a bicycle. What effect does the process of learning to cycle in the Netherlands have?

Citizenship of a nation is, as Marshall describes “*a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community*” (Marshall 2006 [1950], 34). Being a *full member* comes with responsibilities of individual rights and duties to a community in which you belong. Yet, citizenship is now understood as more than simply legal status (Lazar et al 2013). Considering this, Isin and Wood's (1994) dissection of citizenship proves helpful in relation to the norm of cycling. Their two components consist of, first, rights and duties; as civil engagement and political rights. The second includes norms and practices, the cultural, symbolic and economic actions of a certain citizenry (1994, 4). This second element, the social, non-legal, aspect of citizenship, will be drawn on, as cycling has been shown to be a widespread Dutch norm, a practise of the *everyday*. In no way can adopting a practice associated with social citizenship bring you closer to obtaining legal citizenry: laws and policy dictate this. However, no guidelines exist on how the adoption of an embodied practice of the habitus can foster social citizenry. The cycling lessons present a structured opportunity for people to engage with this intrinsic aspect of social citizenry.

The proceeding chapters will follow the journey students go on as they progress across the lessons, moving closer to the state of an independent cyclist. With the bicycle, as a national symbol, they begin to learn to cycle offering a tangible skill they can relate to and understand as their identity. A position which just so happens to be in line with the Dutch majority and wider component of national identity. Students start the lessons on the brink of the world within the cycle lanes, a zone they hope to enter. The embodied language they begin to learn places pupils in a state of liminality working towards a destination: the ability to cycle. Now, their journey of through the liminal phase is about to begin.

## Chapter III - Setting Off.

*I unlock my bicycle as the rain pours heavily on this grey Wednesday morning. I use my sleeve to dry my saddle, hoping to avoid an extra unnecessary damp patch on my person. How many people would attend the first lesson in this weather? Despite the weather, I pass many cyclists, equipped with waterproofs and umbrellas. It seems rain will not deter the Dutch from their bicycles.*

### A Journey of Change.

Over the course of the lessons the students undergo a period of change as their abilities with the bicycle develop and improve. This chapter outlines the early stages of learning to cycle as students meet weekly, in a car park, park, or open space which acts as a ‘classroom’. Here, they set out to learn how to ride a bicycle. Together the students’ progress along the path to cycling, moving through a phase of liminality (cf. Van Gennep 1906; Turner 1967; Getz 2007). The journey is not uniform as each student forms their own route depending on their ability, motivation and access to a bicycle. My understanding of this period will rely on Turner’s conception of the liminal period experienced when one transitions between states (1987), originally built from Van Gennep’s (1960) work exploring rituals. Van Gennep explains these rites of passage as “*rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age*”. Students of the bicycle hope to pass from one a state of being to another: from being unable to cycle to being an independent cyclist. Upon entry to the lessons they are neither one nor the other. They enter a period of learning and change as transitional beings undergoing a shift in state (Turner 1987, 5). The phase of liminality “*is not a mere acquisition of knowledge but a change in being*” (Turner 1987, 11). Yes, they will acquire knowledge, but if they end the liminal phase they will acquire something more: a new way to move and experience daily life. Through teaching the lessons I both helped people along the journey and tracked the progress of the participants. This positioning allowed first hand observation of over 50 students, each a passenger on a liminal journey.

Those *liminal subjects* I encountered were extremely heterogeneous in terms of age, nationality and socio-economic status. They shared only two uniting features: all born outside of the Netherlands and all female. Students originated from Columbia to Canada, the UK to Sweden and Egypt to the Philippines. Despite this broad spread of nationalities, most students originate from Turkey, Morocco, and Egypt. Pupils who attended the lesson at the refugee housing

complex were almost entirely Syrian. The differences amongst them had no impact on the lessons, the group are equals, each at the start of the liminal journey which lacks hierarchy or structure (Turner 1987, 11). While cycling is widespread in the Netherlands and people of all backgrounds have taken to two-wheels, inhabitants with immigrant backgrounds are less likely to cycle than those with Dutch backgrounds (Harms; in Kuipers 2010, 28). This fact builds on the argument made in the previous chapter, that those brought up experiencing the inescapable cycling culture will have been raised fluent in the language of the cycling lanes.

The criteria to attend the lessons is simply the desire to cycle, no further specifications are made by Harten Voor Sport. However, I only encountered female students. Cycling lessons set up specially for men in Amsterdam proved unpopular (Van Der Kloof et al 2014), which suggests men are not interested in learning to cycle, or they already know how. Rates of cycling amongst non-Western women are lower than this group's male counterparts, women are more likely to take the bus or walk (Harms 2008, Kennisinstituut 2012; in Van Der Kloof et al 2014).

I discussed the gender of the students with Dennis<sup>9</sup>, who is responsible for coordinating the cycling lessons. His explanation seemed to show that this question had no concrete answer but he could point to a few possible, rather stereotypical, explanations: men are brave enough to try for themselves, they may prefer the car and there could be a cultural difference at play. Student Kaira explained:

*for Asian families it wasn't really seen like the girl should be cycling. When I was young my bike got given to my cousin who's a boy, so that was why I never got off the stabilisers<sup>10</sup>*

This shows that views of gender could play a role in the likelihood of women from other cultures being able to cycle. Assumptions are also made that males from migrant backgrounds may prefer motorised transport. This point of cultural difference and preference for transport is shown by Kuipers (2012), in the media bicycles are often positioned as a national symbol and are pitted against the scooter, a vehicle often associated with Moroccan youths. He cites the national newspaper *De Telegraph's* frequent use of the term *scoortuig* (scooter hoodlum) to highlight how assumptions about cultural background in relation to transport exist.

---

<sup>9</sup> Dennis Schoonhoven works as a Project Leader for Harten Voor Sport. He is responsible for all the cycling lessons. Interviewed formally 29/03/2017.

<sup>10</sup> Taken from formal interview, conducted 03/06/2017.

Why only women attend the cycling lessons is a question to which I can offer no definitive answer. The fact the classes were made up only of one sex did not affect the intent of my research but it offers an interesting historical angle to contextualise the lessons within. Shortly before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American women's rights activist Elizabeth Candy Stanton championed the bicycle as a tool for female liberation (Strange 2002; Schultz 2010). Writing in 1896 American civil rights leader Susan B Anthony proclaimed the bicycle has:

*done more to emancipate women than any one thing in the world. I rejoice every time I see a woman ride by on a bike. It gives her a feeling of self-reliance and independence* (Anthony; in Dawson 2011).

Likewise, the suffragette movement in the United Kingdom used the bicycle to further their cause. Of course, the bicycle did not directly win any political battles, but its role in changing perceptions was important. It allowed women to be free and independent, a position which differed greatly from their perceived traditional role in society (Bathurst 2011). The bicycle's connection with women's rights is not exclusive to Western women's movements. Reports of how riding a bicycle has helped female emancipation can be found in Turkey, Yemen, Iran, Egypt and Mozambique (Overton 1994; BBC 2011, Tali 2016; The National 2017; Oxfam 2017).

### The Passengers and Their Guides.

Over the following account of the cycling lessons four students' individual passages through the liminal phase will be tracked closely, their stories and voices will reoccur at different stages in the process of learning.

Having moved to the Netherlands from Egypt aged 26, Salma set out to learn to cycle only four months into her stay here. After being offered a job as a software developer in Amsterdam she took the chance to move away and knew that it was likely she would have to learn to cycle. She is highly educated, having attended university in her home city of Cairo. Her ability and determination meant she was one of the quickest learners I encountered and I watched her progression from the first lesson where she was unable to cycle, until the end of the process.

I met Shanice at the lesson I taught in Overvecht. She moved to the Netherlands from South Africa 14 years ago. She lives in the city with her husband and her ten-year-old son. Having only lived in the Netherlands, her son has grown up with his bike, some mornings Shanice jogs alongside him on the way to school so that he can cycle. Shanice holds a Dutch passport, as it makes travel easier. Despite being a citizen in a legal sense she is yet to learn to cycle competently. Her job in Amsterdam and her city centre residence mean that cycling is not as essential as it is for some students but her desire to cycle is still strong as being unable to do so creates difficulties in her daily life.

Although Farah has lived in the Netherlands for sixteen years, she had never tried to cycle before coming to the lessons. When I first met her she seemed shy and reserved, but over the weeks I saw not just her ability with the bicycle change but also her personality. Originally from Egypt, she has found adapting to life in the Netherlands hard. The fact that she is still learning Dutch and caring for her son full time has made integrating to life here difficult. Farah could not speak English which meant the relationship we formed was based on cycling and translations, yet this did not hinder my ability to see her movement and change across the liminal process.

Kaira, 33, was born in the south of England after her parents had migrated to the UK from India. Her educational background in medicine meant she moved to the Netherlands for work and has lived in Utrecht since 2014. In the past Kaira had tried to learn to cycle through courses in the UK and her boyfriend's tuition. In spite of her previous attempts, Kaira came to the lessons lacking the confidence to cycle alone.

The liminal passengers are only one component of the lessons, the teachers act as the other: the guides who steer them through the journey. All twenty-one of the teachers I worked with were Dutch-born, except for myself, one woman who was German and one woman who was Surinamese. However, both could speak Dutch and both had lived in the Netherlands for many years. The teachers embody the position the students are trying to move towards, as competent cyclists. This group, in Turner's language, act as "*elders*" whom gain obedience from the students based on a self-evident authority (1987, 9). Each teacher wears a jumper with "Fietsmeester"<sup>11</sup> branded on the back, a visible mark of their position. Whereas border guards

---

<sup>11</sup> Bicycle-master.

and bureaucratic officials can be viewed as “*gatekeepers*” of the nation state, guarding legal citizenship (Ticktin 2011), the teachers are *enablers* of social citizenship. They offer their free time to facilitate, assist and break down the skills needed to cycle. In this role, they act as liminal servants, becoming aware of the pupils’ abilities, seeking to unlock their potential (McLaren 1987). As teachers, helping the women towards the Dutch *everyday*, we attempt to smoothen their liminal journey towards this social aspect of active citizenship. Once a week, teachers and students, come together to form one group which works towards a shared goal.

### Coming to the ‘Classroom’.

Those who step into the ‘classroom’ do so out of their own free will, paying €15 in hope of learning to cycle. In understanding practices of citizenship, Ong’s (1996) study of immigrants in the United States developed the term “cultural citizenship”, which is used to explain a dual process which combines self-making and being-made within the power structures of a given society. The combination of these two-sides of the cultural citizenship coin create the parameters in which people can engage with a society’s culture. The widespread use of the bicycle within civil society and policy, put in place by the government, can be viewed as the external forces, Ong’s power structures. These factors make cycling possible. On the other hand, the students take an active decision to exercise “*self-making*” in paying to join the lessons. This approach acknowledges their agency as they begin to engage with this aspect of social citizenry. These two forces act together to set them on the path to engaging with the *everyday* activity of cycling. The practice of self-making is paired with a certain rationale. The reasons why people come to the ‘classroom’ to learn are insightful as they show what value is placed on the bicycle before one can use it.

Each student has a different combination of motivations for wanting to learn how to cycle, but some commonalities can be seen. When questioned, students would mention their current means of transport, most often the bus, and compare it to the bicycle. For many the bus was associated with an inflexible, awkward and expensive means of mobility; everything cycling seems not to be. After living in the Netherlands for five years, Amaal decided to try and learn how to cycle because the bus could not always get her where she needed to be. I spoke with another woman who was determined to cycle after four months in the Netherlands, she was surprised at how expensive public transport was and disliked waiting for the bus, cycling would free her from the rigidity of timetables and predetermined routes. Having only recently arrived

in the Netherlands, Salma found the bus impractical as she tried to become acquainted with the city. A bicycle would be a better way to see the city and get to know where things are. This way, she could better engage with her environment and Dutch society as a whole.

The bus, like many other modern modes of transport, has changed the ways we move from “*an experience of movement in which action and perception are intimately coupled into one of forced immobility and sensory deprivation*” (Ingold 2011,152). Ingold notes how walking engages you with the route before you, senses open to your environment. Walking allows spatial knowledge, as encounters with others enable a full interaction with place (Middleton 2010; 2016). Cycling can be likened to this, as an active mode of transport it maintains a connection between perception and movement, which is absent on the bus. Cycling provides the ability to explore in a way bus routes and train tracks restrict, giving independence to the cyclist, allowing one to explore and experience the environment around you. Increasingly the responsibility to integrate is placed on the *nieuwkomer* (Joppke 2007, 2005). In line with this, the ability to ride cycle can extend this notion, making the individual responsible for their movements, not being reliant on others.

Another common reason for learning to cycle I encountered was that many of the women’s children, having grown up in the Netherlands, could now cycle competently and they wished to accompany them. A former student of the lessons who had lived in the Netherlands for eight years after moving from Somalia, described how comfortable her son is on a bicycle and knows that her daughter, aged two, will also be. Similarly, a factor influencing Shanice to cycle is her son, she wants to be able to cycle to school with him. At one lesson a pupil from Turkey brought her two children to the cycling lesson as they had a day off school, I sat with them and through gestures and use of the word “*fjets*”<sup>12</sup> I learned they could cycle. The frequency with which having children appeared to be a motivating factor for the students shows that not only practical reasons make people want to learn to cycle, but ones out of principle too. As mothers, students feel they should be able to accompany their children for their safety and to spend time with them.

Moroccan student Hanane thought cycling here was very important for her to adapt to life in the Netherlands, overtly stating that being able to cycle is important for her integration into

---

<sup>12</sup> Bicycle/ Cycle.

society. On another occasion, a student said that it felt “*necessary*” to cycle here. Not only do students associate cycling with something important for their new lives, I have also heard them directly associate it with freedom. During my interview with Shanice she repeatedly referred to freedom achieved through riding a bicycle. One Syrian student commented that once you can cycle “*You are free, free in everything*”. The notion of freedom is a potent one with historic links to the bicycle and even before being able to cycle the students stress the emancipating potential it has. They would no longer have to rely on someone else, be it a bus or a driver, to travel too far for their feet. A bicycle lets them become the conductor. They take the course of their travels and thus their lives into their own hands.

Despite the motivations to learn, some approached the lessons with a feeling that cycling was beyond their grasp. When I asked Farah to reflect on the process of cycling she recounted, “*First lesson I didn’t (cycle), I thought I will never learn*”. Salma echoed this view, admitting she thought she would not be able to ride a bicycle. Upon embarking on the liminal journey, Turner explains this process involves “*undoing, dissolution, decomposition*” (1987, 9), suggesting that the students’ assumptions that cycling is beyond their grasp would leave and be replaced with feelings of “*growth, transformation and the reformulation*” (1987, 9) as they begin to learn. Across the process of learning I will show when these features emerge.

Students come to the designated ‘classroom’ space in spite of their self-doubt, the motivations to cycle clearly overpowering the perceived difficulty of the task. These zones of learning provide safe areas for the pupils to interact and learn the objects they wish to use. They furthermore present important ethnographic sites to study the (re)construction of participating, belonging and senses of nationness or Dutchness (cf. Gellner 1983; van der Pijl & Guadeloupe 2015). They are spaces situated within the societies the students inhabit, visible to passers-by, open to the society the students are expected to become part of.

‘Classroom’ space is designated so that the students and teachers understand the boundaries of where we initially practise. Education is closely linked to the formulation of citizenship (Lazar 2013), but unlike in standard classrooms the walls in this case are porous: people can look in and pass through this area of teaching. The students are the visible “other” - distinguished by their appearance, their inability to cycle - but people see their attempts to learn to cycle. On one occasion, I witnessed a passer-by assisting a student. This individual walked through and contributed to the process of learning, the outdoor nature of the ‘classroom’ allows for contact



between the transitional beings and those who have already achieved the state of cyclist. On other occasions people would walk by and give tips or comment on the lessons. Often liminality is associated with a period of separation, here it acts a period of inclusion. The outdoor nature of the 'classroom' places students in public spaces around the city. Cycling is an outdoor activity so naturally it must engage one with surroundings and society. Hiba from Morocco found out about the cycling lessons because her friend had seen them happening from her house and told her about them. Similarly, Anneke who teaches the lessons had also looked in through the 'classroom' walls during a cycling lesson. After this, she set out to discover how she could assist with teaching the lessons. Traditional classrooms, in a school for example, bind students to chairs, sit them behind desks and exercise only the mind. Forced to sit, hunched over a desk, your movement restricted, means the body is a docile site (McLaren 1987, 79). The outdoor 'classroom' of the cycling lessons provides exercise for both the body and the mind, the two must be paired and work together to learn a skill. Initially, the mind is at work but once the skill is learned it has potential to become as thoughtless as the *everyday*.

### The Bicycle.

Initial contact with the bicycle is the first stage of the liminal process which every student must go through if they hope to undergo the transition to the state of a cyclist. The bicycles used to teach the students were all, besides a few children's bicycles for smaller students, the upright 'Dutch style'. Notably, this style of bicycle, by its design, forces the rider to sit with a straight back and encourages a relaxed pace. From this position, it is easy to have a conversation with another cyclist, make eye-contact with passers-by, observe the city, read advertisements or look into passing shops (Brommelstroet et al 2017, 8). These machines are what the women will transition through liminality with.

Before taking to the saddle, watching the way the students interact with the bicycle in the first lessons is telling: how alien an object a bicycle is to them is painfully clear. For example, students attempt to remove them while the wheel is still locked. One student, after realising she had tried to walk the bicycle away with the stand still down leant over to push it up with her hand, however her efforts to push it up towards the front wheel were in vein because the design does not allow this. I stepped in and showed her how to push the stand up the correct direction with your foot to save yourself bending over. She then tried this with success, looked at me,

“*dank je wel*”<sup>13</sup> she smiled. Bicycles can have different meanings within different settings (Vivanco 2013). In this setting the bicycle means not only a tool to move but is connected with an everyday norm of social citizenship. At this early point, students interact with a national symbol, they become acquainted with its design and mechanisms like they once, or in some cases still try, to become acquainted with a new life in a new country.

Students, as they begin to understand the bicycle’s particularities, discover the machine can be adjusted and altered to cater for their needs. Seats may be adjusted, different style bicycles are available. This object is not rigid and one dimensional: objects “*may act as key metaphors of embodied identities, tools with which to think through and create connections around which people actively create identities*” (Tilley 2006, 23). Students begin interacting with the bicycle which, in the Dutch setting, is so closely entwined with the nation’s branding, historic identity and everyday life. A tool of transport which they are about to learn and create connections with, connections which may help them create identities and understanding. This is the start of a relationship between liminal subject and the object, an object which will act as their partner in passage.

The object itself is made up of a set of different parts each with a name and purpose. During one early lesson, while talking to two students, another teacher joined us and began to point to the different parts of the bicycle and then point to myself or one of the students asking us for the name of the part in Dutch. At this moment, my role as a teacher changed, I became a pupil, a *nieuwkomer* in a foreign country unacquainted with the language. *Trapper, stuur, zadel, wiel*<sup>14</sup>; I learned these words and so did the students. Throughout the lessons Dutch natives interact with the students, in turn this teaches them language skills. Learning the language of a nation is viewed as a key way to integrate (Bjornson 2006) and this incident shows how even at this early stage in the journey of liminality the lessons begin to educate students about the Dutch language, as well as cycling. The ‘classroom’ places a group with many different backgrounds together and an exchange takes place in this space, one that extends learning to cycle.

---

<sup>13</sup> Thank you.

<sup>14</sup> Pedal, handlebar, saddle, wheel.

### Using the Bicycle.

To progress along the path of the liminal journey, students must be able to pedal the bicycle unassisted. As they begin to understand the object they move closer to the point of pedalling and transition from the first stage of understanding the bicycle to the second: being able to use it for themselves. To arrive at this point we encourage them to sit on the saddle with both feet on the floor and push along the ground, getting used to the bicycle and practising balancing. This action takes something the students know, walking, and attaches it to something they are yet to learn, cycling. Once this movement is exercised in a steady way, the teachers encourage students to put one foot on the pedal, pressing down through it whilst trying to lift the other foot off the ground to incorporate balance with the pedals.

Initial attempts to cycle can be a frightening experience for students and can result in injuries. Yana, a primary school teacher from Syria began the lessons after living in Utrecht for one year. During the first lesson, she fell badly and ceased to attend. Falls did not always result in the end of the process; Yana's example is the only time an injury can be linked to a student stopping the course. One student from Turkey named Nermin consistently struggled to cycle by herself. She required a lot of help and week after week the teachers would take turns assisting her, observing and instructing. On countless occasions, I would show her how to set off and pedal by herself, I counted to three in both English and Dutch to show her she needed to build up more momentum when pushing the ground to balance and I would cry *trapper, trapper*, as her foot hovered above the pedal almost at the point of successfully pedalling. Across the first five lessons I witnessed her fall off the bicycle multiple times during her failed attempts to pedal. This all changed during the sixth lesson.

*I turned and across the park I saw Nermin cycling alone, with Nels, who was assisting her, trailing behind. I catch his eye and we both raise our arms with joy! She cycles quickly towards me, balancing shakily, her head down, face covered with excited concentration as she tries to stick to the path before her. After trying to cycle for so long, attending every week, clearly being the worst student in the class, having hours of one to one help from the teachers, she finally got past this obstacle: taking a big step and cycling independently for the first time. Mary and Jette approach the park from the opposite side of the path. They too see Nermin's breakthrough, smiles and amazement clear. As she reaches the corner of the concreted path she stops, choosing not to tackle this turn just yet. Dismounting, her facial expression made clear how proud she was. Previously she had struggled onto both pedals once or twice to*

*quickly fall off or put her foot down. She had genuinely grasped how to do this and for the rest of the lesson continued to do so, taking the second step in her journey to cycling. At the end of the lesson the group is absorbed in a buzz of conversation, teachers and pupils amongst one another. Being unable to speak Dutch, I sit back and feel the energy from the group. Everyone had spent the lesson cycling with a smile on their face. Nermin's achievement had been felt by all. Speaking as a teacher, this is the best lesson I've taught.*

Closely associated with the liminal phase is the concept of *communitas* (Turner 1969; Turner 2012). *Communitas* emerges in the liminal phase where social structure is not present (Turner 1969, 371). The students' joint submission to the authority of the teachers means hierarchy among the group vanishes creating a bond between the liminal subjects. The closeness and sense of community created amongst the students was evident in the lessons, often I would see students sat helping each other and discussing cycling, pushing one another over, laughing and talking together. Yet, the teachers became part of this community too as liminal servants. Students and teachers are placed within a group where they can make friends and learn about one another, thus expanding their social network and increasing understanding of those with different backgrounds to themselves. It is this group dynamic which sets the stage to make integration a two-way process. If the liminal phase is completed, cycling has the potential to further this exposure to people by moving them through society and exposing them to others who live there (Brommelstroet et al 2017, 1-2).

Cycling independently for the first time is a moment in which the students understand, how their body must interact with the bicycle and how it can help them as a form of transportation. I asked Kaira to reflect on the time she first got both feet onto the pedals:

*It was a really amazing feeling because it was like nothing I have done before . . . a moment like your flying. It really feels like somehow everything comes together. At first you are trying to do the whole balancing thing . . . then when you pedal and you're not having to put your foot down all the time, it's like your free.*

This sensation seems to be shared, given the facial expressions of many of the students when they first accomplish this feat. Turner draws attention to the positives of liminality, the growth, transformation and reformulation (1987, 9), experienced as a change in states begins to take place. The first time a student pedals alone is extremely important as it is a point where they *grow*, they dismount with a smile and stand with new confidence. It is a moment when students

add something to themselves, their understanding of what they can achieve is expanded. I have joined spontaneous rounds of applause and taken pictures of students who are overjoyed by their new ability.

Once having overcome this key stage of the process the students begin their growth to the state of a cyclist. Now it must practice and perfected through repetition. Perfecting this can be related to Tim Ingold's (2011) position that "*skilled practice involves developmentally embodied responsiveness*," showing how the repetition involved in perfecting a skill is a way in which we can truly learn. Knowledge is not just something of the mind it is also coupled with the body. Arguably at this point they can cycle, if cycling is understood as the basic ability to move oneself forward whilst sat on the bike. Yet this basic understanding is insufficient if the student is ever to cross the threshold of the 'classroom' onto the roads.

### Control.

Before leaving the 'classroom' students must learn to control the bicycle: the third stage of the journey. Whereas the second stage, of learning to ride the bicycle, elicits a large reaction in the students this stage is subtler. Mastering the machine is what must be achieved prior to venturing onto the roads. Practically, this means breaking, steering, setting off, indicating. Techniques with which these skills were taught varied greatly amongst the lessons I attended but generally cones and chalk were used to mark routes and places to break.

*I stand with the teachers and watch the students cycle in a clockwise motion around the concrete track. One pupil makes her way around the course in a frantic, almost uncontrollable, way, narrowly avoiding collisions and overtaking other bicycles. With each near miss, her mouth widens with excitement, as if she enjoys her lack of control. One teacher turns to another student and asks the Arabic word for 'slow down'. Although the student and teacher can both speak English, the teacher begins to call out to the student "shway" (شوي)<sup>15</sup>. This instantly catches her attention. Myself and the other teachers pick up on this and begin to follow suit. The students were visibly amused, perhaps due to our bad pronunciation, but clearly our small effort was appreciated.*

---

<sup>15</sup> Syrian colloquialism.

Another teacher told me that she had picked up a few Arabic words from teaching the lessons including, break, slow, pedal. Just as I and other students learned the Dutch words for the parts of the bicycle, now the teachers were also learning the language of the students. Given that this lesson was primarily for Syrian students, Arabic was spoken widely, so it may be easier to detect language. Nevertheless, this example displays the cycling lessons create a forum in which knowledge can travel both ways. Each party learning from one another. Allowing integration to become a two-way street.

As students begin to master the machine, they come to a point where they grow confident in their ability and can control the bicycle. Cones, chalk and different exercises can be deployed to mimic the environment beyond the 'classroom' and improve the student steering and breaking for example. Salma explained this point of the process, you become "*able to control the bicycle, you move it, and not the other way around*". Now having tamed the bicycle her view of the machine and her own skill has been reshaped. Here a sense of "*reformation*" (Turner 1964, 9) is achieved: instead of being a strange machine which moves in ways you cannot control, you arrive at a familiarity and confidence when riding it. The students eventually gain control over the object, asserting their independent, confident usage of the bicycle.

As teachers, we observed the students as they attempt these obstacles and cycle until it is clear if the students can calmly control the bicycle. Those who bend over the handle bars, tense and awkward, not yet at ease on the bicycle can easily be distinguished from those who sit upright, relaxed and calm, holding the bicycle straight in a sturdy manner. Based on these signs, the teachers, who have enabled progression up to this point, decide which students have somewhat mastered the machine and can move out of the 'classroom' and onto the surrounding roads. They recognise the third stage has been adequately passed and the next step awaits.

At this early stage, before venturing into the surrounding streets, it is evident that the liminal journey the students travel has benefits beyond cycling. Slowly, they progress towards a destination which will allow engagement with an *everyday* element of social citizenship. During this journey, the interaction between the predominantly Dutch *elders*, teaching cycling and *nieuwkomers*, learning to cycle, creates a close group where both parties can learn from one another. This two-way exchange will continue as the teachers open the door to the environment outside the 'classroom' where students can deploy their skill in a new situation.

## Chapter IV - Moving On, Pedalling Out.

*Jette stops Farah as she pedals towards us and hands her a high-visibility jacket. With this, Jette pushes open the 'classroom' door and invites Farah out with her to the roads. The next step key step of the liminal journey awaits.*

### Stepping Outside.

Beyond the 'classroom', teachers lead the students on different routes (cf. Clifford 1997) around the city. These routes are cycled for experience, they are neither here nor there, nor going anywhere. Students who pedal onto the roads have been selected by the teachers, signalling they feel they are ready to interact with other traffic. This first journey on the roads marks the fourth step of the process, one of the most important stages along the path to becoming a cyclist. Beyond the walls of the 'classroom' the teachers cannot determine what happens, they can merely supervise and reassure, guide and instruct the students. Focus shifts from the bodily act of cycling to the surrounding environment; approaching traffic lights, junctions, other bikes, cars and corners. During these excursions students begin to learn the language of the cycle lanes as they move closer to the end of the liminal phase, to a point in which they can cycle unaccompanied, making cycling their *everyday*.

Cycling on the roads exposes the students to neighbourhoods, streets and the city they share with the teachers who guide them. Initially, I let other teachers lead these journeys as I was often unfamiliar with my surroundings as a *nieuwkomer*. Each route cycled is an experience lived, a trail travelled, which may act as a potential site of attachment for the students (Maliki 1992, 38). Travelling through Utrecht on two-wheels exposes students to the city they inhabit; aware of the sights, sounds and smells along the way. Areas they can begin to form connections with and build identities around. Indeed, the link between place and identity is profound; Tilley (2006) states that place and locality are unique elements of an ever-changing world as they are static sites to identify with, hence helping people create identities. Cycling allows students to experience environment in a new way, in which their body engages with it. However, many students were anxious at the thought of cycling beyond the 'classroom'.

At first, cycling on the roads places students out of their comfort zone, the familiar safety of the 'classroom' is left behind. When Kaira was invited onto the roads by a teacher she was very reluctant, but the teacher's reassurance eventually helped her take the step. During her first trip, she feared: *"the noises of the cars wishing past . . . whenever I saw a car anywhere I would*

*freak out a little*". Kaira acknowledged the teacher's encouragement made her take this step, after three or four times on the roads her fears eased. Slowly students adapt to the new challenges the environment brings, as they previously adapted to the bicycle. For Shanice to take the fourth step, I had to assure her I thought she was ready to cycle outside of the 'classroom' as she initially refused. After returning from the roads, Shanice admitted that going around the car park was inadequate if she wanted to learn to cycle, stating she must be brave and practise with other traffic. Leaving the 'classroom' helped Shanice on the journey to becoming a cyclist, it was a clear shift in her experience of liminality.

Cycling the roads, as opposed to the 'classroom', allows students to see how the bicycle can be practically used as a means of transport, something they can deploy in their daily life. An elderly student from India named Deena wanted to learn how to cycle to make getting to her job as a cleaner easier. Being employed is linked to what is described as active or good citizenship, a concept closely associated with dominant neo-liberal ideology which involves self-reliance (Lazar 2004; Kennelly & Llewellyn 2011). The ability to cycle will make Deena self-reliant and simplify her access to employment, allowing continuation of her active citizenry. When she returned from her first trip on the roads I had never seen her so animated, she got off the bicycle smiling and raised her hand in the air with happiness. The crowd, both students and teachers, gave her a round of applause.

This vital stage of learning can be viewed as a point of "*reformation*" (Turner 1987, 9) in the process of liminality. Students, some of whom thought they would never ride a bicycle, travel through their environment. Briefly becoming part of the cycle lanes, a mover in traffic, an individual piece of Dutch cycling culture. Their self-view has changed, re-imagined as something they thought might never be. For those who have passed the fourth stage, the end of the process starts to move into focus. The fifth stage finalises their transition of states. It involves practise, experience and learning the roads and their rules. Throughout this final stage, students continue to learn more than only cycling. Interaction with the teachers continues to transmit knowledge of the Dutch language and culture.

### Language and Nation.

Despite the Dutch Government's fetishisation of language (Mosher 2015, 29), which translates practically into obligations for non-EU migrants to learn Dutch (Bjornson 2007), cycling a skill



which can be taught without a common language. Myesha could not speak English and the other teachers had difficulties communicating with her in Dutch. On our first encounter, she approached me, spoke to me in Dutch, and pointed beyond the ‘classroom’. I presumed she wanted to cycle on the roads. This was confirmed to me by a Dutch-speaking teacher. Having already attended some lessons, Myesha could cycle and had her own bicycle. Over the course of the lessons I took Myesha onto the roads most weeks, teaching her and guiding her through the final stages of her journey. My grasp of *links*, *rechts* and *kijken*<sup>16</sup> helped the time on the roads but a non-verbal communication is what our relationship was based on. She would watch me go around a round-about, imitating my outstretched right arm as I indicated to turn. Copying how I stopped at road markings, as I pointed at them to make clear why we stopped. Learning by watching the way I checked over my left shoulder and pulled out to overtake slower cyclists, doing the same. Over the weeks, I felt I became to know Myesha. Language didn’t get in the way of our relationship, it didn’t hinder her learning or the development of a mutual trust between us. We shared a bond over a skill we practised together. Through cycling, Myesha actively participated with an element of social citizenship in the Netherlands She integrated into a societal norm and language was not needed as a prerequisite to do this. However, the lessons allowed the cycling teachers to become unofficial, accidental, educators on topics besides bicycles.

A by-product of the lessons for the students was increased confidence in speaking Dutch. I asked Farah what she had learned during the lessons: *“I have learned a lot. I am less afraid to speak more Dutch, which I didn’t used to be. I was always shy”*<sup>17</sup>. Her reluctance with language is exhibited in the fact that she worried about buying a bicycle as it would involve speaking Dutch and she wanted her husband to help her. Perhaps the cycle lessons create a space where it does not feel like language abilities are being scrutinised. On another occasion, Farah had to fill out a government document and asked the teachers to help her as she struggled to properly understand the form. As I interviewed another pupil after the lesson, I watched, from the corner of my eye, as Farah and Anneke worked through the document together. The group this liminal period creates, of teacher and student, allows bonds and links to be formed, the native teacher can help the students with things beyond cycling, navigating not just the roads but other aspects of life.

---

<sup>16</sup> Left, right, look.

<sup>17</sup> Taken from formal interview, conducted 20/04/2017.

As a cornerstone of current integration policy, the lessons impact on the teaching of language must be emphasised. After one lesson, Ineke<sup>18</sup>, mentioned she had asked a student in Dutch: “*What did you learn today?*”. The student could not answer because it was not a question she normally encountered. Ineke had to explain and teach the student about the sentence before she could get an answer. She seemed to be shocked by the student’s inability to understand a simple question, despite having a grasp of conversational Dutch. A *nieuwkomer*’s inability to speak the language is considered by many in Dutch society as an obstacle to integration (Bjornson 2007; Ghorashi & van Tilburg 2007). Once someone can communicate, they are thought to be able to actively participate in society by working, studying or volunteering (Mosher 2015, 24), activities that will fulfil an active role in society. The cycling lessons helped the student’s language, whilst also teaching cycling. I contend that riding a bicycle will make active participation in society easier by your ability to be mobile.

Often, as well as teaching language, teachers would inadvertently offer information and insight into the students adopted nation. Pat<sup>19</sup> used a large poster displaying around 20 different road signs to teach the rules of the road. In a group where first languages ranged from Arabic, Dutch, English and Kurdish, Pat would primarily speak Dutch, occasionally English, encouraging the students as they responded to her questions. On the wall behind Pat, hung a photo of the Dutch Queen Maxima, showing the moment she opened the community centre<sup>20</sup>. A student pointed this out to Pat and she began to talk about the Dutch royal family and Maxima’s Argentinian background. This symbol of banal nationalism (Billig 1995), symbolically looked over a group of people trying to establish a life in the country the Queen so closely represents. Myself, and a few interested students, listened and learned a little about the royal family. Formalised civic integration courses teach historical and national knowledge, information seen as important for *nieuwwkomers* to become citizens in society (Hurenkamp et al 2011; Mosher 2015, 24-25). The multi-dimensional learning that the lessons induce is perhaps accidental but nevertheless, it educates students about more than just bikes. The information passed on in this example, in the states eyes, is important to become a citizen. During this lesson, the students acquired both language and knowledge of the Dutch nation.

---

<sup>18</sup> Cycling teacher, Overvecht lesson.

<sup>19</sup> Cycling teacher, Rivierenwijk lesson, interviewed 11/03/2017.

<sup>20</sup> We would meet before the lesson in a community centre where the bicycles were kept.

Events in both teachers' and students' lives created a dialogue and exchange of knowledge between both parties. The lessons had a two week break for Kings Day<sup>21</sup> and Liberation Day<sup>22</sup>, the teachers told me about these holidays and some of the students also asked questions about them, especially the newest arrivals yet to live here for the events. Mosher's ethnographic field work shows how volunteer language teachers in Amsterdam act as unofficial citizenship educators for *nieuwkomers* (2015, 29). This is true of the teachers in the cycling lessons, teaching students, accidentally, about their nation and traditions. Although, this exchange of knowledge did not just work one-way. As most of the students were Muslim, the coming of Ramadan<sup>23</sup> - which overlapped with the end of the cycling lessons - involved an exchange between teachers and students regarding if the lessons would continue over this period. This event gave room to develop cultural understanding and awareness of the lives of the *nieuwkomers* by learning about their daily routines through this period of fast. Knowledge of events in one another's lives is shared between people from distinctly different backgrounds during the lessons, teachers become unofficial citizenship educators and the students can unofficially educate the teachers about their culture and traditions. Making integration a two-way process.

### Speaking Cycling.

Throughout the lessons Dutch language skills were inadvertently developed through working with native teachers. Although, the language they intend to learn is silent; the language of the cycle lanes. As an unspoken language of the body, one which different language ability - and often the inability to speak the same language - are not obstacles to learning. Those spending the lessons out on the roads were fast approaching their destination, refining their skill and ability on the bicycle. Each rider must learn to negotiate with traffic and objects around them. Experience and practise are required to lean this unspoken language and becoming versed in it is essential for completion of the fifth and final stage.

Journeys that encounter other traffic involve negotiations with other moving objects around you. Cycling is about more than interaction between rider and machine, it engages the rider with space and those around them. A non-verbal dialogue takes place between yourself and

---

<sup>21</sup> Currently celebrated on the 27<sup>th</sup> April. National holiday marking King Willem Alexander's birthday.

<sup>22</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> May national holiday to commemorate the end of occupation of the Netherlands 1945, during World War Two.

<sup>23</sup> The ninth month of the Islamic calendar is celebrated annual by Muslims through daylight fast.

others which sets the conditions of riding. Traffic, be it cars, busses, bicycles, scooters, pedestrians, trams and so on, will each offer clues and signals of how they may act. Speed, direction, hand signals and lights speak to the rider. Those used to the environment and cycling will understand the language. When a car sees you, it may slow, allowing you to pass first. In this, you interact with a metal object, unable to see its conductor clearly as they sit passive behind glass. Whereas with bicycles and pedestrians there is a social interaction at play; a glance, a gesture or body language can be read to navigate the streets safely. You may negotiate with other movers but you obey signs and traffic lights, hanging over the road dictating the rules of what can be done. However, these rules are often bent by the road's users, particularly by people on bicycles.



Kanaalweg, Utrecht: 17/05/2017

The above image shows six cyclists navigating a crossroad style junction, this illustrates the processes involved in road negotiations described heretofore. Road markings<sup>24</sup> indicate that traffic approaching from two opposite sides should stop, however, from the picture it is clear the rider on the right of the image has not done this; they move out slowly intending to pass the junction without stopping. Safe navigation of the junction hinges on the rider's perceptiveness and bodily reactions: their ability to speak the language of cycling. Each will have looked ahead and assessed the junction and the others moving towards it, whilst considering those around them. This tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1966), involves reading the

---

<sup>24</sup> White triangles to the right of the image.

situation and reacting accordingly with a change of speed, road position and breaking. All functions of the body, carried out mechanically without thought. The riders observe and negotiate with one another. When shed in this light, negotiations become a non-verbal communication between the road users. Seconds after taking the photo each rider had passed the situation safely, moments later the situation happened again, and again after that. All riders joined the “*complicated dance*” (Mapes 2009, 61; in Pelzer 2010) and all knew which steps to take. This unspoken language of the cycle lanes, practised between users of bicycles, can be taught with experience of the roads, not speech.

### Learning the Language of the Cycle Lanes.

Teaching *nieuwwkomers* the unspoken language of the cycling lanes acts as integration through engaging students with a social citizenship norm, whilst more deeply emerging them in their environment. Experiencing the roads with the teachers intends to help students feel at ease doing so alone, preparing them for life after the lessons, after liminality. Students become competent cyclists by learning how to handle traffic situations, which road signs correspond to what behaviours, which routes to take. Readyng them for a future in which this mode of transport is theirs to deploy as they wish, exposing them to the cities social and spatial diversity (Brommelstroet et al 2017). Training them in the language of the roads, builds their confidence so they may speak it by themselves and progress past the fifth stage of the process.

By following the teachers’ behaviours students learn how to reply and respond to different situations. The following instances display the types of interactions with other traffic and environment the students are faced with. Whilst cycling down a narrow road, a large lorry approached from the other direction. The road could not accommodate both parties, as I lead the group I slowed and spotted a chance to cycle up onto the pavement, the group followed my lead and we navigated our way around the obstacle, finding a solution to the problem before us. Whilst moving down a cycle path, on another occasion, I rode beside a student who cycled to my right, from behind us we heard a bell chime. I looked across to the student who could not speak English and she began to speed up as I slowed, falling back behind her into single file. As the elderly man who was responsible for ringing the bell passed us he spoke in Dutch, the high-visibility jackets with “Fietsles” printed on the back revealed our purpose. The student spoke back to him with laughter as he overtook. On one journey, our route was interrupted by a set of road works which meant the entire street was closed, in response to this we had to turn

around and carve a new path. Students of any language must practise accent and pronunciation to become competent. Practise on the roads slowly builds students confidence to go and speak it alone.

Experiencing such situations, negotiating with the cities geography and other inhabitants, creates exposure on many levels; to people and place. Experience of place can be powerful in creating a sense of belonging. In a study of Ecuadorian migrants living in Italy, belonging is understood as an acquired feeling brought about through a set of practices and ways of inhabiting a place. The term “*practise of place*” is used to conceptualise the process when an outsider inhabits and interacts with a locality to achieve a sense of belonging there (Raffaeta and Duff 2013). The bicycle allows “*practise of place*” in two ways; practising the bicycle as an object and practise of the environment you move through. The students practise place simply by riding the bicycle, they carry out the *everyday*, a common practise in the country they now inhabit. What is unique about practice of the bicycle in the Dutch setting is its links to national branding and identity, it’s a vehicle with connotations beyond transport. And second, they practise place with the way they move through and interact with their special environment, by being in it, being a part of it. In this sense, the act of cycling around the roads is a double practise for the students. This dual process is powerful, their liminal passage, has the potential for students to foster a sense of belonging as they become more deeply emerged in, and develop greater understanding of their own environment.

At the lesson in Lombok many of the students lived in the neighbourhood so often teachers would ask them where they would like to cycle during our journeys out of the ‘classroom’.

*I take to my bicycle, pedalling out of the park. Ahead of me cycle Hannahe, Farah and Rita. And ahead of them, Cecile<sup>25</sup> leads the group. With outstretched arms, we turn right onto the Kanalstraat<sup>26</sup>; the road never failed to intimidate students. After a brief, and eventless, encounter with this busy street, I follow the group left and we join a quiet road next to an adjacent canal. The sun shines strongly upon us. We pass a group of workmen, also in high-visibility vests, who warmly greet us as we pass. The sunlight shimmers on top of the water, which distracts me from the students. I pedal calmly, confident in their abilities. Hanane and*

---

<sup>25</sup> Cycling teacher, Lombok lesson.

<sup>26</sup> Main street running through Lombok. Many people dislike cycling on the street. National newspaper De Volkskrant reported on the traffic problems and cycling issues on the street 30/03/2017.

*Farah cycled beside one another, speaking in Arabic. Farah rocks her head back as she laughs, now relaxed on her bicycle, at ease, moving with confidence. In this moment, the pair seem truly free. Only eight weeks ago I met shy and reserved women, now they appear open, lively, warm people. People who I will to succeed on the bicycle and in their lives here.*

*I observe and take in the area; one I was experiencing for the first time. Together we turn off the canal into a residential area and swiftly dismount on Hannae's instruction. She hurries inside her house and emerges with a stack of plastic cups and jug of water. The sun's heat makes this a welcome refreshment. I take a drink, enjoying this moment, smiling as the four women speak together in Dutch. I cannot properly understand the conversation but with their laughter and smiles I join. After this break, we get back on our bicycles and make our way back to the 'classroom'.*

Incorporating Hanane's house into our journey does not only give students agency to shape their lessons, it also has potential to foster a geographical awareness, showing students what routes to take and how the bicycle can be fitted around their lives. Vitaly, students learn their local language and practise *their* place. "Wayfinding" within your own neighbourhood is important, some women may not be used to going places alone in their own neighbourhood (van der Kloof 2015, 97), Farah certainly was not but I will return to this in the following chapter. The trips on the roads also help the students' geographical exploration and understanding of place.

To experience their local areas from behind the handlebars is new for students, interacting with space as the conductor of the bicycle. Interactions and feelings towards certain localities play a role in creating a sense of identity (Lovell 1998). Cycling in their local areas can create links to the place where they live, making it more familiar, ultimately more like home. Cycling is a way to interact with the space they inhabit, opening the door for identities to be created based on this form of interaction with their environment. With the bicycle students can go further, be more flexible and discover their neighbourhoods. The process of learning the language of cycling, practises place, engaging students with, integrating them into, their urban geographical surroundings.

At this point I must take a slight diversion to briefly discuss a key part of the process students must take if they wish to complete their liminal journey and make cycling their *everyday*:

buying a bicycle. Those who don't have access to a bicycle generally buy one at this point, when they start to cycle on the roads, a point in which an end to liminality seems possible, their reformulation is tangible. This may feel like a de-tour and that is because there is no uniform point in the process this will occur. Some women come to the lessons having a bicycle at home, or borrowing a family member's bike, for example. Bicycles can influence and change people's experience of daily life (Vivanco 2013, 9), students can use it outside of the allotted weekly lesson and start to make cycling their *everyday*. To leave liminality and align yourself closer to the Dutch cycling norm, a part of social citizenship, a bicycle is necessary.

### Breaking the Rules, Leaving Liminality.

As the fifth and final stage of liminality nears its end, students begin to experience and deploy the language of cycling and some start to learn and observe behaviours of other cyclists. Earlier, when discussing rules and road signs it was suggested that cyclists often break these. Well this suggestion is certainly true. One teacher described the cyclists in Utrecht as anarchists, people with no regard for the rules. Of course, this is not true of every cyclist but it doesn't take long to encounter someone in Utrecht going through a red light, not giving way to traffic from the right or using a smartphone - a behaviour that's frowned upon. The realities of Dutch cycling culture cannot be hidden from the students, they happen in plain sight. Indeed, the lessons train students the rules and how one should cycle but incorporation of the frowned upon norms shows that a passage to the *everyday* is taking place. If citizenship involves acquiring the norms and practices of a certain citizenry then imitating other behaviours is to be expected, students begin to incorporate these behaviours into their own practise of place.

For example, within the lessons the teachers teach the rules of the road and act in a responsible way but act another way out of the lessons. This is true of myself and certainly some of the teachers. When cycling home with two other teachers after a lesson, we rode past two of the students whom were walking. We stopped at a red light and one of the teachers spoke to them as they passed us on our right. After the light changed to green and we cycled away, we joked amongst ourselves that we stopped at the light only to exhibit exemplary behaviour to the students. On numerous occasions, I had cycled home with the teachers and cut this light because it's a very quiet crossing, often you sit and wait for the green light for a few minutes and see no cars pass by. My own, sometimes illegal, behaviour when cycling can be described



as actions carried out in a similar vein to Gertz's "when in Rome" (1972, 3) attitude, the students I taught are also in 'Rome'.

As the final lesson approached, I would meet Salma prior to the class as I passed her apartment on my journey there, giving her extra opportunity to practise.

*I cycle closely beside Salma, engaged in conversation. The sleepy Saturday morning means we encounter almost no traffic as we make our way south towards the lesson. Together we slow as the approaching traffic light turns red. Once at a halt, we sit and wait - impatiently on my part - for the inevitable change to green. No cars pass. "Shall we break it?" Salma asks, turning towards me with an inquisitive look. I scan the road right, then left. I push down on the pedal and lift my standing foot off the floor, moving past the red light. Salma follows.*

Salma had seen multiple riders do this around the city. Embodied norms and practices of the *everyday* are visible by their very nature, as students adopt them and move closer to this aspect of social citizenship they will, in some cases, imitate them.

Here, I faced a dilemma which I was required to quickly resolve. As not only a teacher, but also a researcher, was it right to use my position of authority to display, and in doing so condone, a behaviour which can result in a fine? During a lesson a teacher told me that she feels it's much better for people to look at a junction, using their eyes and judgment, and break a red light than it is for them to blindly follow a green light. With this in mind, it seems wrong to mask the everyday practises of cycling here from a student who was becoming aware of them, making effort to become a cyclist.

At this stage, the ten-lesson course nears its end. Around 13 students of the 30 I regularly encountered were coming to a point where they had passed all stages of the liminal period. This group have cycled regularly on the roads and learned the language of cycling, the rules of the road and in some cases what rules are often broken. They own or are planning on getting their own bicycles. Across this journey, the students have learned more than just the bicycle, acquiring knowledge of language and nation. The teachers have also learned about their students. Previously the teachers held the key to unlock the roads. Now, to step beyond the lessons, and finalise completion of the fifth phase, and make cycling part of their lives, the students are on their own. The very nature of independent cycling means that no one can take

this step for the students. Alone, with the skills and knowledge gathered they must go onto the roads and begin to incorporate the bicycle into their *everyday*.

*“I think it’s now up to me, I mean I feel more confident but it’s up to me to take it a step further” - Shanice<sup>27</sup>*

---

<sup>27</sup> Taken from formal interview, conducted 17/05/2017.

## Chapter V- Finishing One Journey, Beginning Many More.

*I wait for a friend in the centre of the city beside Utrecht's main landmark, the Dom Tower. I bring my gaze down from the impressive building and to my right two cyclists approach. One of them waves and greets me as she pedals past. I return the gesture. I smile to myself and remember the last time I saw her leaving the 'classroom' as I said goodbye to my students.*

### Goodbye.

As the lessons end, some students have passed through the five stages of liminality and must say goodbye to the teachers who have guided them on their journeys. The lessons have taught them the skill of cycling and now they must deploy it independently, taking this step by themselves, beyond the lessons. This point, where students disembark from the journey, is where this chapter begins and liminality ends. Completion of this journey hinges on passage through the five stages. First, they interact with the bicycle and become familiar with its parts and acquainted with its particularities. Second, students pedal for the first time, which is a key event in student's transition. Upon doing this, control of the bicycle must be practised for the third stage. The fourth step is vital, the learners step out of the 'classroom' and apply their cycling to the road. The final stage of liminality is one where practise and repeated experience allows students to learn the language of the roads, rules and often the unwritten ones. However, the real journeys, the journeys of the *everyday*, are just beginning.

The final lesson was accompanied by some form of celebration, this laid bare how much an important experience the process had been for some of the students. The most notable 'graduation' involved the teachers signing postcards for all the students and some emotional words of gratitude were exchanged; students thanking teachers and vice versa. At this final ceremony, one of the students bought each teacher a box of chocolates to thank us for our efforts. This touching gesture made me realise how much our time had meant to them. When I interviewed this student, Nadia<sup>28</sup>, from Morocco, commented on how much she liked the teachers. Similarly, Rita, who also attended this lesson told me: "*The volunteers are very sweet . . . really nice people*"<sup>29</sup>, she went on to say it was a shame the lessons had come to an end.

---

<sup>28</sup> Interviewed formally 18/05/2017.

<sup>29</sup> Taken from formal interview 25/05/2017.

Each goodbye was met with an exchange of hugs and handshakes. The journey teacher and student shared had ended.

Closeness between students and teachers can again be linked to the concept of *communitas* (Turner 1969; Turner 2012), a feature of liminal periods, as subjects are collectively remoulded into a new state. However, what seemed clear is that this bond was not just between the liminal passengers, it extended to the teachers guiding the students. Speaking as a teacher, after watching and assisting the student's progression, it was as if their journeys became our journey. Like a fan watching a sports team; you do not play the match, but you cheer for your players and celebrate when they win. The teachers, as liminal servants, "*are often closer to their students than to their profession*" (McLaren 1988, 82). Teachers volunteer their time, becoming *enablers* of social citizenship, unofficial educators, and in doing so they form bonds and connections with those they teach. In conversation, Mary<sup>30</sup> explained to me that she likes to teach the lessons as it allows her to get to know the people she shares her community with, she remarked that she often sees women she has taught in the streets and stops to speak to them. McLaren notes that "*liminal servants teach not because they wish to share available answers, but to discover meanings for themselves*" (1988, 83). Mary enjoys the chance to meet people and become more integrated in the society inhabits. The lessons create a space where integration occurs for both parties, native and *nieuwkomer*. Each travelling the two-way street of integration.

### Beyond the Liminal.

Leaving liminality hinges on the coming together of three factors: owning a bicycle, using it for everyday purposes - not recreationally - and being comfortable cycling unaccompanied. These three factors encompass the Dutch 'norm' and once the students triangulate these components they completed a change which aligns them with an element of social citizenship. The lessons can prepare students to feel confident cycling alone, but to acquiring a bicycle and using it for daily activities is down to the student. Cycling in this way can result in a big change in the student's lives.

---

<sup>30</sup> Cycling teacher, Lombok lesson.

Now able to cycle, students can use their bicycles to navigate the city and their lives as they choose. Hiba,<sup>31</sup> whom originates from Morocco, began attending the cycling lessons 13 years after first moving to the Netherlands, having made no previous attempts to learn. She described how she looked forward to each lesson, gaining a great sense of achievement from riding a bicycle. I asked her how cycling would change her life and she explained how she must take her son to the hospital regularly, being able to cycle with him would be easier, faster and cheaper. The same questions provoked Nadia to tell me it would make everything simpler because she intended to make it her primary form of transport. Cycling allows easy, cheap, flexible mobility and can have numerous benefits, for instance Salma said that when she moved to Utrecht early in 2017 she felt restricted when looking for somewhere to live because of transport. Her job in Amsterdam meant she needed to be within walking distance to the train station for her commute. Now she can cycle she told me that she would consider living outside of the city centre which would save her a significant sum on rent.

Beyond the lessons, it is hard to state how using a bicycle begins to change the student's day to day lives due to the time constraints of my fieldwork. However, I would like to take time to talk about Farah and how cycling could, and in some ways, has already, begun to change her life. Farah normally only leaves the house with her husband, but recently he has been ill and she needs to be more independent and not reliant on his car. Her eldest son is 18 and has a disability which means she cares for him full time. Her younger son is eight years old and at the time of our interview she hoped to be able to cycle beside him. This aspiration happened; I learned her son had been giving her advice whilst they practised together. I asked her how cycling would change her daily life and her response was expansive: "*everything*" would change.

Although Farah has lived in Lombok for many years, she had a poor knowledge of her surroundings. During the first lesson, she asked a teacher where the park was in which we would practise in. It was ten minutes walking distance from her house and she had never been there before. On one occasion whilst cycling on the roads, we offered her the chance to decide the route we would take. She declined the offer due to not being sure of the surrounding area. When I asked Farah if many of her family and friends cycled, she told me that she doesn't have any friends and only her immediate family live in the Netherlands. I took from this that Farah

---

<sup>31</sup> Interviewed formally 06/05/2017.

lives an isolated life. The caring for her son is based mainly in the home and her lack of a social circle has hindered her exploration of the area.

Farah attended Dutch lessons in tandem with the cycling lessons. As I stated in the previous chapter, Farah lacked confidence speaking Dutch but the cycling lessons gave her a space to practise and grow more confident. She hoped to cycle to her Dutch class which was on the opposite side of the city from her home. Later, when she bought her own bicycle, a teacher lent Farah a high-visibility vest so she could try and cycle to her language lesson. Come the next week, Farah had cycled to the Dutch lesson alone. Here, the bicycle is literally a vehicle for other forms of integration.

This shows how the bicycle can complement other aspects of integration, allowing *nieuwkomers* the freedom to access the society they are expected to become part of. This vehicle of integration empowers its rider, allowing “*opportunity to stop at any given moment and the freedom to navigate the narrowest of streets*” (Brommelstroet et al 2017, 8). The cyclist can also determine their speed. *Nieuwkomers* are expected to integrate quickly into Dutch society by taking exams and language classes. If the bicycle can simplify and speed up access, other aspects of integration will benefit. Getting to and from language lessons, employment, volunteering, meetings, collecting children from school; are all things a bicycle can enable. The cycling lessons teach a skill of social citizenship, integrating students into an *everyday* norm. Once the skill is learned, it can be deployed to help *nieuwkomers* become active, or even legal citizens.

Building on the point of accessibility, an international student<sup>32</sup>, and *nieuwkomer*, who learned to cycle upon arriving in Utrecht in September 2016, encapsulated what starting to ride a bicycle can do. Cycling made: “*the whole city become smaller*”. His personal abilities grew through learning a skill, yet simultaneously this shrunk his conception of space through his ability to access it. In the case of Farah, she can now access Dutch lessons in a cheaper way that suits her, whilst concurrently engaging with social citizenship: cycling. This benefits Farah through simplifying her transport decisions, whilst also connecting her with an object closely associated with the Dutch nation. If the bicycle was previously declared a “*horse of*

---

<sup>32</sup> Mykolas, from Lithuania. Learned to cycle with the help of friends. Interviewed formally 02/05/2017.

*democracy*” (Ebert 2010, 352), and a tool for female liberation, now it may be reformulated as a vehicle of integration.

During the final lesson, Farah was ready to make cycling part of her daily life. Over the back wheel of Farah’s bicycle were two large paniers<sup>33</sup>. I pointed these out and she proudly told me in Dutch where she bought them from and for how much they cost - this much I could understand - she added, in English, “*shopping*”. When I said bye to Farah it was clear her liminal phase was over. She stepped back over the threshold of the ‘classroom’, unaccompanied by a teacher, without a fluorescent jacket on, clutching her own bicycle, as a cyclist. She had the means, the ability and the experience to make cycling her *everyday*. When I spoke to Edward of the Dutch Cycling Embassy, I asked him if he thinks people who move to the Netherlands should cycle:

*If you want to experience the true Dutch life then cycling is part of it, I don’t know, go to the shopping centre by bike and get your groceries, a couple of bags and try and manage to get them home. These kind of things are kind of part of the Dutch life I think<sup>34</sup>*

This encapsulates the mundane, non-extraordinary nature of Dutch cycling culture. Yet for Farah, who was clearly proud of her new bags, this was not mundane, this was something quite new and extraordinary. As the conductor, she is empowered to set the route and schedule, placing travel on her terms. She prepares for the *everyday* use of the vehicle with her paniers. Just as she incorporated cycling to her abilities, she now goes on to incorporate herself into a social norm so prevalent in the Netherlands.

### Cycling Towards Belonging.

The nature of the lessons allowed me to witness the process of learning and how this can connect *nieuwkomers* with a social citizenship norm. However, the use of the bicycle beyond the lesson, as the *everyday*, embodies the potentiality to create a sense of belonging. Across disciplines within the social sciences, many conflate the concepts of citizenship and belonging with little attempt to distinguish between the two (Antonsich 2010). Belonging has been linked to a sense of inclusion which is formed through practises and experiences that offer a stake or

---

<sup>33</sup> A type of container, bags or boxes, which can be attached to a bicycle to carry goods. Commonly over the bicycles rear wheel.

<sup>34</sup> Project Coordinator, Edward Douma, works for the Dutch Cycling Embassy. Taken from formal interview, conducted 28/02/2017.

acceptance within society (Anthias 2006). In this light, belonging is closer to Isin and Wood's (1994) social citizenship, as opposed to citizenships legal dimensions.

To belong, is to be within the social fabric of a situation; to feel like a piece of a bigger picture. A feeling which runs deeper than citizenship (Anthias 2008). Riding a bicycle competently in the Netherlands positions the rider as one piece of a greater whole. A whole which works on many scales: the street, the neighbourhood, the city and nation. Feelings of belonging are associated with a sense of feeling "*at home*" (Yuval-Davis 2006); home is about a sense of familiarity, the more you experience something the more familiar it becomes. After leaving liminality, the students can form a sense of belonging to the localities they journey through. In turn, they become more familiar with their neighbourhoods and city as they travel within it. Familiar in a way the bus or a car would not allow as these modes of transport limit connections with the environment. From behind the handlebars you silently speak the language of cycling with others around you; interacting and negotiating with your environment. Whilst also becoming familiar with the bicycle itself. Gradually students may feel at home on their bicycles. Belonging can be displayed in certain practices (Fenster & Vigel 2006; Bell 2008), in addition to experiencing surroundings, the very act of cycling - practising the national habit and speaking the non-verbal language - has the potential to become an act of belonging, itself an ability to identify with.

The *postnational* situation is one which alters notions of home, belonging, rootedness and identity, as Hedetoft and Hjort (2003) have explained. For them, traditional stories of nationhood, which presume cultural homogeneity, have become outdated, hiding the existence of distinct cultures within nations. Ideas of globality, by their very nature, alter the original landscape of national belonging. Nationhood, therefore, is threatened by forces that are incompatible with the original nation state frame work. Yet, even if one rejects traditional nationalism and claims belonging to the global, it is argued that affiliation on this scale will not create a sense of rootedness (Hedetoft and Hjort 2003, xix). If the global scale is a factor in altering belonging then it is just as valid to acknowledge smaller scales. Isin (2007) suggests that the city should be a site of focus when looking at construction of identity and belonging. This relationship between place and citizenship (Aminy 2002) is something which, through cycling, may foster localised attachments and create a sense of rootedness. You cannot experience a whole nation from two-wheels, but exploration of a city the size of Utrecht is



possible. Students got to *know* the bicycle in the lessons, now they can use that skill to get to *know* the city. A space which may induce a feeling a rootedness.

The impact the bicycle has on the students' lives beyond the lessons cannot be fully known due to the parameters of this research, but cycling's potential to create a sense of belonging is evident. The lessons themselves can act as integration. For the teaches as they learn about people they share society with. For the students, by connecting them with a societal norm, whilst accidentally passing on cultural and language based knowledge. The continued use of the vehicle will reap benefits through its potential to induce feelings of belonging.

### A Route to Incorporation.

The benefits of the cycle lessons and riding a bicycle are clear, they offer a route to integrate *nieuwkomers* into society. Having established this, focus will shift to the Dutch state's current approach to integration. The 1998 Newcomer Integration Law (Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers, or WIN) obliges non-EU migrants to take up to six-hundred hours of language teaching, civic education and labour market preparation. The law placed responsibility on the individual and for the first-time renewal of a residency permit was tied to integration, creating a link between migration control and integration (Joppke 2007, 250). Amendments to the law in 2007 made the course compulsory and introduced a fee for the course and exam, threatening sanctions if the exam is failed (Gysen et al 2009). The tests display an attempt by the state to formalise the process of integration through control of citizenship in effort to assimilate migrants (Ong 2003).

The right to differ from dominant norms of a nation whilst still having legal rights is understood by Rosaldo (1994) as cultural citizenship. Achieving this position is made difficult as the state promote exclusive definitions of national identity. The culturalist discourse that many European countries adopt on the issue of new migrants is crucial. These assumptions are "*founded on a static and essentialist approach to culture, in which cultural content is considered the determining factor for all actions of individuals*" (Ghorashi et al 2009, 4). This approach to integration has been widely pursued throughout Europe, creating exclusive, one dimensional understandings of how to create citizens. From experience of the cycling lessons it is clear within the Netherlands there are alternate routes to integration, beyond the one-size fits all, citizenship test based requirements.

The teachers, as the *enablers* of social citizenship, do not only allow mobility, they pass on knowledge of language and culture inadvertently. As a *nieuwkomer* I also learned things about the Dutch language and Dutch nation because of my interaction with the Dutch teachers. How my status of *nieuwkomer* is so different to many of the women in the class was made blatantly clear in one instance where after interviewing Hiba she asked me via the translator why I was not learning Dutch, explaining she had been expected to do this when she arrived. My passport differentiates my position, exposing the disparity in citizenship status and expectations placed upon different groups of migrants. For those not from the EU, as many of the pupils I encountered were, language and cultural knowledge must be learned to pass such tests as a standardised measure of integration and a process through which to achieve legal citizenship. Knowledge of a nation's history and royal family is completely devoid from the everyday, whereas to cycle, despite its banality, is quintessentially the *everyday* in the Netherlands. What is more essential, mobility? or understanding historical and nation based information?

Civic integration courses have received much criticism within academic and societal debates. Integration tests can be seen as an exercise in symbolic politics and a way of controlling immigration as oppose to establishing citizenship (Etzioni 2007; Permoser 2012). These formal integration exams are conducted in classrooms hidden from society, whereas the 'classrooms' of cycling lessons place students in the environments they are expected to become part of, visible to the population. As oppose to learning the Dutch language, the lessons teach an embodied language of the Netherlands. Mosher's (2015) ethnographic research studies language teachers and explains that they see a difference between civic integration and actually being integrated. She argues that civic integration courses did not offer *nieuwkomers* a "way in" (2015, 25) to society, allowing no space for connections with native Dutch neighbours or Dutch members of society. The lessons provide a space for students to make connections with Dutch born citizens, providing a "way in", unlike in integration courses. Furthermore, the cycling lessons also provide a *way to* society, via the bicycle, as a means of practical access.

Transfixion on one channel of integration is short sighted and insufficient if it fails to provide people with a *way in* to society. The debate should be broadened, looking for routes to help *nieuwkomers* for *ways in* and *ways to* society. The cycling lessons are one clear example of how this can be achieved. Glick-Schiller et al (2005) use the phrase incorporation as oppose to integration. Dominant discourse on integration revolves around cultural change as the key route

of integration, yet this ignores the transnational identities that are often constructed. Glick Schiller et al (2005) highlights the multiple *pathways of incorporation* into German society to show there are multiple routes to form connections with a new nation. The cycling lessons present another pathway to incorporate *nieuwkomers*, one which differs from the standardised language tests and integration exams. The concept of *incorporation* is also deployed to put greater focus on the process of incorporation instead of the mixing (erasing) of culture and identity as an end goal (Essed 2002). The *two-way street* dynamic of the cycling lessons creates an arena for understanding and the incorporation of both parties, teachers and students.

Civic integration tests are framed by some as a two-way process; a contractual agreement between the new arrival and the society they step into. However, this idea of a reciprocal arrangement is false. Integration of this kind is a one-way process that relies on an “*artificial homogenisation*” (Kostakopoulou 2010, 933) of the *nieuwkomer*. What became clear in the cycling lessons, is the group established bonds and links through the sense of *communitas* shared between students and their closeness to the liminal servants, the teachers. This setting allows integration to become a genuine two-way process. Teachers learn about the students and students learn about the teachers. This two-way street is travelled by both parties, each incorporating one another. As happens within the cycle lanes; you negotiate and respect one another’s space, moving to avoid collision and ensure safe passage.

### Summary.

This thesis has presented the path students travel as they attend cycling lessons and learn the bicycle. This passage of change is helped by the teachers who seek to enable social citizenship by teaching cycling. Students with the ability, pass through five stages of learning, moving towards the end goal of becoming a cyclist. A practical skill, non-offensive by nature, which holds the potential to make students’ lives easier. This state, after liminality, aligns students with a social citizenship norm within the Netherlands, as cycling is a practise of the *everyday*. This process alone acts as a form of integration for the *nieuwkomers* who attend the lessons.

Yet, during this journey towards an aspect of social citizenship, other forms of integration are assisted as the teachers and students mix and form bonds with one another. The coming together of these two parties creates a dynamic in which multi-dimensional learning can take place. The students set out to learn the bicycle. They come away having become acquainted

with Dutch citizens, with knowledge of language and society. Not only does this further the student's integration, but he teachers learn about *nieuwkomers* in their neighbourhoods. This process of integration is conceptualised as a two-way street; both parties travel this street, learning about one another.

The bicycle's potential as a vehicle for integration are far reaching. By cycling students embody a social citizenship practise, speaking the language of cycling. Practically, cycling, as transport, can be used as a vehicle to access employment or Dutch classes; behaviours considered important to be an active citizen. In addition, they may use their new skill to move through and explore their neighbourhoods, getting to know them, building attachments and connections to them. Integrating into their environment, an experience with the potential to induce belonging. Importantly, after liminality, cycling empowers students to travel as they wish, making navigating their lives simpler.

What becomes evident, when compared to current methods of integration, is that the provision of cycling classes offer another pathway to incorporation. One in which integration is not simply a one-way process. The lessons teach a practical skill to make students' lives easier, whilst offering them contact with Dutch natives. Providing *nieuwkomers* a path which makes *ways in* and *ways to* society possible. A society they are expected to become a part of.

## Bibliography.

- Aminy, Ash. 2002. "Spatialities of Globalisation". *Environment and planning*. 34(3): 385-399.
- Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of Nationalism*. Verso: London.
- Anthias, Floya. 2008. "Thinking through the lens of translocational positionality: an intersectionality frame for understanding identity and belonging". *Translocations*, 4(1): 5-20.
- Anthias, Floya. 2006. Belongings in a globalising and unequal world: rethinking translocations. In: Yuval-Davis, N., Kannabiran, K. and Vieten, U. (eds) *The Situated Politics of Belonging.*, pp. 17–31. London: Sage Publications
- Antonsich, Marco. 2010. "Searching for Belonging – An Analytical Framework". *Geography Compass*, 4: 644–659.
- Bathurst, Bella. 2011. "Bicycles: The Chains that set Women Free" *The Telegraph* website, March 31. Accessed [June 25, 2017]  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/wellbeing/diet/8419028/Bicycles-The-chains-that-set-women-free.html>
- Baumann, Gerd. 2004. Introduction: Nation-state, schools and civil enculturation. In W. Schiffauer, G. Baumann, R. Kastoryano & S. Vertovec (Eds.), *Civil enculturation: Nation-state, school and ethnic difference in the Netherlands, Britain, Germany and France* pp. 1-19. New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- BBC. 2016. "Egypt girls launch cycling equality campaign" *BBC* website, November 21. Accessed [June 25, 2017] <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-38050810>
- Bell, Avril. 2009. "Dilemmas of settler belonging: roots, routes and redemption in New Zealand national identity claims". *The Sociological Review*, 57: 145–162.
- Bendle, Mervyn. 2002. "The Crisis of 'identity' in High Modernity". *The British Journal of Sociology* 53 (1): 1.
- Billig, Michael. 1995. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bjornson, Marine. 2007. "Speaking of Citizenship: Language ideologies in Dutch citizenship regimes". *Focaal*, 49 65-80.
- Boffey, Daniel. 2017. "World's biggest bike parking garage opens in Utrecht – but Dutch dream of more" *The Guardian* website, 7 August. Accessed [8 August 2017].  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/07/worlds-biggest-bike-parking-garage-utrecht-netherlands>
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Brommelstroet, Marco, Anna Nikolaeva, Meridith Glaser, Morten Skou Nicolaisen & Carmen Chan. 2017. "Travelling Together Alone and Alone Together: Mobility and potential exposure to diversity" *Applied Mobilities*, 2(1) 1-15.
- Clifford, James. 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Copenhagenize. 2017. Copenhagen Index. *Copenhagenize* website. Accessed [June 25, 2017] <http://copenhagenize.eu/index/about.html>
- CROW. 2017. Design Manual for Bicycle Traffic. *CROW* website. Accessed [June 25, 2017] [https://www.crow.nl/publicaties/\\_nieuw-design-manual-for-bicycle-traffic](https://www.crow.nl/publicaties/_nieuw-design-manual-for-bicycle-traffic)
- Dawson, Louise. 2011. "How the bicycle became a symbol of women's emancipation" *The Guardian* website, November 4. Accessed [June 25, 2017]. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/bike-blog/2011/nov/04/bicycle-symbol-womens-emancipation>
- De Walt, Kathleen & Billie De Walt. 2011. *Participant Observation: A guide for fieldworkers*. Plymouth: AltaMaria Press.
- Department of Infrastructure and the Environment. 2016. *Bicycles are rapidly taking the lead*. Website. Accessed [25, 2017] <https://english.kimnet.nl/binaries/large/content/gallery/kimnet-english/attentie-afbeeldingen/160216-kim-netherlands-institute-for-transport-policy-analysis-infographic-cmyk-300dpi.jpg>
- Diphorn, Tessa. 2013. "The Emotionality of Participation: Various Modes of Participation in Ethnographic Fieldwork on Private Policing in Durban, South Africa". *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 42: 201-225.
- Ehn, Billy & Orvar Lofgren. 2010. *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.
- Entzinger, Han. 2006. "Changing the rules while the game is on; From Multiculturalism to assimilation in the Netherlands." In *Migration, Citizenship, Ethnos: Incorporation Regimes in Germany, Western Europe and North America* 112-144. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2002. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2016. *Overheating*. London: Pluto Press.
- Essed, Philomena. (2002), "Cloning Cultural Homogeneity While Talking Diversity: Old Wine in New Bottles in Dutch Organizations". *Transforming Anthropology*, 11: 2-12.
- Etzioni, Amitai. 2007. "Citizenship Tests: A Comparative, Communitarian Perspective". *The Political Quarterly*, 78: 353-363.
- Etzioni, Amitai. 2007. "Citizenship Tests: A Comparative, Communitarian Perspective". *The Political Quarterly*, 78: 353-363.

- Fenster, Tovi & Ilan Vivil. 2006. "Globalisation, sense of belonging and the African community in Tel Aviv-Jaffa". *HAGAR studies in Culture, Polity and identities*, 7(1): 7-24.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1972. "Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" *Deadlus*, 101(1): 1-37.
- Gellner, Ernest. 2008. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell Press.
- Gemeente Utrecht. 2008. "Utrecht, The Netheralnds: Traffic Transport and the Bicycle in Utrecht" *Gemeentee Utrecht* website. Accessed [June 25, 2017]  
[http://blog.zeit.de/gruenegeschaeft/files/2010/05/2008-06-11-utrecht\\_city\\_document-ditewig.pdf](http://blog.zeit.de/gruenegeschaeft/files/2010/05/2008-06-11-utrecht_city_document-ditewig.pdf)
- Gemeente Utrecht. 2015. This is Utrecht 2015. Accessed [June 25, 2017]  
[https://www.utrecht.nl/fileadmin/uploads/documenten/2.concern-bestuur-uitvoering/Onderzoek\\_en\\_cijfers/Dit-is-Utrecht-2015-engels.pdf](https://www.utrecht.nl/fileadmin/uploads/documenten/2.concern-bestuur-uitvoering/Onderzoek_en_cijfers/Dit-is-Utrecht-2015-engels.pdf).
- Getz, Donald. 2007. *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*. Elsevier: Oxford.
- Ghorashi, Halleh, & van Tilburg, Maria. 2006. "When Is My Dutch Good Enough?" Experiences of Refugee Women with Dutch Labour Organizations. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 7, 51-70.
- Ghorashi, Halleh. Eriksen, Thomas. H. Alghasi, S. 2009. "Introduction" in *Paradoxes of Cultural Recognition: Perspectives from Northern Europe*" eds Ghorashi, H. Eriksen, T. H. and Algasi, S.1-18. Surrey: Ashgate.
- Glick Schiller, Nina, Boris Nieswand, Gunther Schlee, Tsypylma Darieva, Lale Yalc, in-Heckmann, & Laszlo Foszto. 2005. "Pathways of Migrant Incorporation". *Transit* 1(1). Electronic document, Accessed [1 August, 2017] <http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1010&context=ucbgerman/traansit>
- Gysen, Sara, Henk Kuijper, & Piet Van Avermaet. 2009. "Language Testing in the Context of Immigration and Citizenship: The Case of the Netherlands and Flanders (Belgium)". *Language Assessment Quarterly*. 6.98-105.
- Hedetoft, Ulf & Hjort, Mette. 2002. "Introduction" *The Postnational Self*. Public Worlds: London.
- Henley, Jon. 2017. "Dutch PM Mark Rutte sees off election threat of Geert Wilders" *The Guardian* website, 16 March. Accessed [August 8, 2017].  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/15/pm-mark-rutte-set-to-beat-geert-wilders-in-dutch-election>
- Huntington, Samuel. P. 1997. *The Clash of Civilizations and The Remaking of World Order*. Penguin Books: India.
- Hurenkamp, Menno, Evelien Tokens & Jan Willem Duyvendak. 2009. "Citizenship in the Netherlands: locally produced, nationally contested. *Citizenship Studies* 15(2): 205-225.
- Ingold, Tim. 2011. *Being Alive*. Routledge: New York.

- Isin, Engin & Wood, Patricia. 1999. *Citizenship and Identity*. Sage Publications: London.
- Isin, Engin. 2007. "City. State: Critique of scalar thought". *Citizenship Studies* 11(2): 211-228.
- Joppke, Christian. 2007. "Transformation of Immigrant Integration in Western Europe: Civic Integration and Anti-discrimination Policies in the Netherlands, France and Germany". *World Politics*, 59(2):243-273.
- Katrin Ebert, Anne. 2004. "Cycling towards the nation: The use of the bicycle in Germany and the Netherlands, 1880- 1940". *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*. 11:3, 347-364.
- Kennelly, Jacquelline & Kristina Llewellyn. 2011. "Educating for active compliance: discursive constructions in citizenship education". *Citizenship Studies*, 15(6-7); 897-914.
- Kostakopoulou, Dora. 2010. "The Anatomy of Civic Integration". *The Modern Law Review*, 73: 933-958.
- Kuipers, Giseline. 2012. "The Rise and Decline of National Habitus: Dutch cycling culture and the shaping of national similarity". *European Journal of Social Theory* 16(1): 17-35.
- Kymlicka, Will. 2003. "Immigration, Citizenship, Multiculturalism: Exploring the Links". *The Political Quarterly*, 74: 195-208.
- Kymlicka, Will. 2010. "The rise and fall of multiculturalism? New debates on inclusion and accommodation in diverse societies". *International Social Science Journal*, 61: 97-112.
- Lazar, Sian. 2004. "Education for credit: Development as Citizenship project in Bolivia". *Critique of Anthropology* 24(3): 301-319.
- Lazar, Sian. 2013. "Introduction" In *The Anthropology of Citizenship*, edited by S. Lazar, 1-23. Wiley: West Sussex.
- Lazar, Sian & Monique Nuijten. 2013. "Citizenship, the self and political agency". *Critique of Anthropology*. 33(1): 3-7.
- Lovell, Nadia. 1998. *Locality and Belonging*. Routledge: London
- Marshall, Thomas .H. 2006 [1950]. "Citizenship and Social Class" In *The Welfare State*, edited by C. Pierson & F.G Castels, 30-49. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- McLaren, Peter L. 1988 "The Liminal Servant and the Ritual Roots of Critical Pedagogy." *Language Arts* 65(2): 164-80.
- Middleton, Jennie. 2010. "Sense and the city: Exploring the embodied geographies of urban walking". *Social & Cultural Geography*, 11(6) 575-596.
- Middleton, Jennie 2016. "The socialites of everyday urban walking and the "Right to the City". *Urban Studies*, 1-20.



- Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat. 2009. Cycling in the Netherlands. Accessed [June 25, 2017] <http://www.fietsberaad.nl/library/repository/bestanden/CyclingintheNetherlands2009.pdf>
- Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management. 1999. "The Dutch Bicycle Master Plan: Description and evaluation in an historical context". Accessed [June 25, 2017] <http://www.fietsberaad.nl/library/repository/bestanden/The%20Dutch%20Bicycle%20Master%20Plan%201999.pdf>
- Mosher, Rhiannon. 2015. Speaking of Belonging: Learning to be "Good Citizens" in the Context of Voluntary Language Coaching Projects in Amsterdam, the Netherlands". *Journal of Social Science Education*, 14 (3) 20-30.
- Nader Laura. 1972. "Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from Studying Up". in Dell H. Hymes (eds) *Reinventing Anthropology*. Pantheon Books: New York 284-311.
- O'Reilly, Karen. 2012. *Ethnographic Methods*. London: Routledge.
- Ong, Aihwa. 1996. "Cultural Citizenship as subject making: Immigrants negotiate racial and cultural boundaries in the United States." *Current Anthropology* 37(5): 737-762.
- Ong, Aihwa. 2003. *Buddha in Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Overton, Karen. 1994. "Women take back the streets: Overcoming gender obstacles to women's mobility in Africa" *Sustainable Transport* 3: 6-8.
- Oxfam. 2017. "Yemen: Women get on their bikes for their rights." *Oxfam* website Accessed [June 25, 2017] <https://www.oxfam.org/en/yemen/bicycles-and-bombs>
- Pelzer, Peter. 2010. "Bicycling as a way of life: A comparative case study of bicycle culture in Portland and Amsterdam" Paper presented to the 7th Cycling and Society Symposium, Oxford, UK.
- Permoser, Julia Mourao. 2012. "Civic Integration as Symbolic Politics: Insights from Austria". *European Journal of Migration Law*, 14(2) 173-198.
- Polanyi, Michael. 1966. "The Logic of Tacit Inference" *Philosophy*, 41(155): 1-18.
- Raffaeta, Ronerta and Duff, Cameron. 2013. "Putting Belonging into Place: Place Experience and Sense of Belonging among Ecuadorian Migrants in an Italian Alpine Region". *City and Society*, 25: 328-347.
- Rath, Jan. 2009. "The Netherlands: A reluctant country of immigration" *Economic and social geography*. 100(5):674-681.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1994. Cultural Citizenship in San Jose, California. *Polar* 17(2): 57-63.
- Schepers, Paul, Divera Tisk, Elliot Fishman, Aslak Fyhri and Annie Jensen. 2017. "The Dutch Road to a High Level of Cycling Safety" *Safety Science*. 92: 264-273.
- Schinkel, Willem. 2010. "The Virtualization of Citizenship" *Critical Sociology*, 36(2): 265-283.

- Schultz, Jamie. 2010. "The Physical is Political: Women's Suffrage, Pilgrim Hikes and the Public Sphere". *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 27(7): 1133-1153.
- Siebers, Hans & Dennison, Marjolein,. 2014. "Is it Cultural Racism? Discursive exclusion and oppression of migrants in the Netherlands." *Current Sociology* 63(3): 470-489.
- Stoffers, Manuel. 2012. "Cycling as Heritage" *The Journal of Transport History*. 33:1, 92-114.
- Strange, Lisa. 2002. "The Bicycle, Women's Rights and Elizabeth Cady Stanton" *Women's Studies* 31(5); 609-626.
- Tali, Didem. 2016. "Thousands of 'Fancy women on bikes' defy intimidation to claim the streets of Turkey" *New York Times* website December 31. Accessed [June 25, 2017] <http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2016/10/31/thousands-of-fancy-women-on-bikes-defy-intimidation-to-claim-the-streets-of-turkey/>
- The National. 2017. "'Girl on the Bike' in Iraq pedals for women's rights". *The National* website February 10. Accessed [June 25, 2017] <http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/girl-on-the-bike-in-iraq-pedals-for-womens-rights>
- Ticktin, Miriam. 2011. *Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Tilley, Christopher. 2006. "Introduction Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage." *Journal of Material Culture* 11 (1-2): 7.
- Turner, Edith. 2012. *Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Turner, Victor. 1987. "Betwixt and between: The liminal period in rites of passage." In *Betwixt and between: Patterns of masculine and feminine initiation*, edited by Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster, Meredith Little. 3-19. Illinois; Open Court. First Published 1964.
- Urry, John. 2007. *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Urry, John. 2012. "Does Mobility Have a Future?" in *Mobilities: New Perspectives on Transport and Society*. Edited John Urry, Margaret Grieco. Ashgate Publishing limited. Surrey England.
- van der Kloof, Angela. 2015. "Lessons Learned through training immigrant women to cycle in the Netherlands" in *Cycling Cultures*. Eds Peter Cox 78 -105. University of Chester.
- van der Kloof, Angela., Joroen Bastiaanssen, Karel Martens. 2014. "Bicycle lessons, activity participation and empowerment" *Case Studies in Transportation*. 2, 89-95.
- van der Pijl, Yvon., & Guadeloupe, Francio. .2015. "Imagining the Nation in the Classroom: Belonging and Nationness in the Dutch Caribbean". *ERLACS*, (98), 87-98.
- van Gennep, Arnold. 1960. *The Rites of Passage*. London: Routledge.

- Vivanco, Luis. A. 2013. *Reconsidering the Bicycle: An Anthropological Perspective on a New (Old) Thing*. New York: Routledge.
- Wardlaw, Malcolm J. 2014. "History, risk, infrastructure: perspectives on bicycling in the Netherlands and the UK". *Journal of Transport & Health* 1, no. 4: 243-250.
- Yuval- Davis, Nira. 2006. "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging" *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40(3): 197-214.