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What beyond tactical urbanism? First lessons of a cross-cultural project analyzing the creation of Corona cycle-ways

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Birth of a project

- A double crisis:
 - Sanitary
 - Ecological
- Needs:
 - Distancing
 - Decongestion of public transport
 - Counteract the fear of a modal shift (in particular from public transport) to the automobile
 - Limitation of greenhouse gases and particles
- Answer:
 - Around the world: “corona bike lanes”
 - In France: le coup de pouce vélo (the bicycle boost)



Covid, accelerator of a process in transition: cycling recognized as a full displacement

- Cycling, a public issue: answering to climate issues and urban
- Cycling, a technical issue: a slow progression of prerogatives of mobility services
- The bicycle, a political issue: a means of transport recognized by all, become an electoral issue



The question of the research

- Which political decisions originated the creation of the tracks?
- What are their uses?
- Who are the users?
- To what changes in social practices are corona cycle ways and the cycling boost contributing?
- Are these changes reproducible?



Project's objectives

- Compare cities in France and abroad in order:
 - To cross socio-political contexts,
 - To bring out constants and variants.
 - To contribute to the knowledge on:
 - Tactical town planning and its various variations
 - The change in social practices
 - Velonomy
 - Feed reflection on public policies
 - Help policy makers



How?

- An international comparative project:
 - 7 cities in France: Besançon, Grenoble, Lyon, Montpellier, Paris, Rennes, Saint-Etienne
 - 3 international comparisons: Colombia (Bogota), Switzerland (Geneva, Lausanne), Canada (Montreal)
- Interdisciplinary: geomatics, planning, geography, political science, sociology and anthropology
- Partners: ESO, EVS, LAET, LAGAM, LVMT, ThéMA, Unil, Uquam
- 3 lines of research:
 - Analysis of public policies
 - Spatial and statistical approaches to bicycle use and facilities
 - Analysis of change in practices





Spatial and statistical approaches to bicycle use and facilities

- Goals:
 - Objectify the knowledge on the use of the bicycle and the conditions of development
 - List the types of arrangements implemented
 - Visualize their changes over time
 - Carry out spatial and temporal analyzes of changes in the use of bicycles and the cycling facilities put in place
- Difficulties:
 - Numbers not always reliable
 - Heterogeneity of the concept: A wide variety of cycling facilities
 - The measures were taken in record time, therefore the monitoring of the policy in the early days and its genesis are more complicated to describe precisely.

Temporary cycling lanes in Rennes



Cycling facilities

- Cycle lanes
- Bicycle racks installed after the 1st containment
 - 2 - 3
 - 3 - 4
 - 4 - 5
 - 5 - 10

1 km

Sources : Rennes Métropole, OSM, Université Rennes 2, ESRI

Realisation : Atelier M1 Géomatique Rennes 2021



Public policies analysis

- Methodology:
 - Mapping of stakeholder networks
 - Semi-structured interviews with key players
 - Press and social media scrutiny



First results

- Various emergence contexts
 - Swiss: French-speaking Switzerland is known for its lack of cyclability with a low cycling modal share: 6.8% in Geneva and 1.6% in Lausanne against 17.1% in Basel in 2015 (Rérat et al, 2019)
 - France: except in Strasbourg (13%) French cities also have a low modal share
 - In most cities it has been a major element of discussions during the 2020's local election
 - Bogota:
 - Modal share is high (10%)
 - A political willingness and a strong element of discussion during the 2020's local election



Unequal development methods in French-speaking Switzerland: explanatory factors

- Political factors: between projects led by “political champions” (Wilson and Mitra, 2020) and lack of ambition
- Institutional factors: coalition of willing actors or fear of experimentation
 - Pro cycling associations, “itching powder” and actors determinants of bicycle policy
- Opposition of actors and values: parking, an issue that crystallizes the oppositions between soft mobility and automobility



France: first very large statements

- The pandemic has been profitable for the promotion of the bicycle
 - It accelerated the implementation of previous projects;
 - However the maintenance over time happens mostly in territories that have started developed a policies measures before the pandemic.
 - Elsewhere, the acceleration has been counterproductive by:
 - revealing competitions between modes (with public transport, not only with the car) insufficiently thought out upstream,
 - radicalizing political oppositions which had seemed to fade with the crisis (a temporary unanimity)



Bogota: the uncertain futures of corona bike lanes

- They extend over axes of several kilometers (the longest measure nearly 14 km)
- They absorb the flows which were previously dispersed on the surrounding axes.
- The temporary tracks have increased the security and improved of the routes of “commuter” cyclists,
- Some have become "highways" for cyclists.
- However:
 - They have created a strong conflict with motorized vehicles;
 - Since the end of 2020 there is a gradual abandonment of temporary tracks;
 - They have all been temporally dismantled since the demonstrations that started in April 2021.
 - Cycling has been accompanied by major safety issues (bicycle theft and increase of the number of accidents involving cyclists);
 - They are only designed for long distance journeys;
 - They are located in the middle of the street, which makes difficult the entry and exit of these tracks.





First statements

- Tactical urbanism raises:
 - tensions and political barriers, relating to resources to the oppositions of actors who could slow down a development (Aldred et al, 2019)
 - Highlight
 - the opposition forces: small traders, voters curators and cyclists not consulted for developments (Wild et al, 2018)
 - The driving forces: the “political champions” (Wilson et Mitra, 2020)
 - The cultural dimension: automobility (Urry, 2004) vs bicycle culture (Cox, 2015)



Are temporary cycling facilities redefining planning practices?

- Corona bike lanes have:
 - Been an opportunity to develop improvements
 - Speed up measures already thought about
 - Allow to paly with laws, standards and recommendations: rapid actions that escape the principles of consultation
- A redefinition of tactical urbanism



Thank you for your attention !

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<https://cyclops.hypotheses.org/velotactique>

Crédit photographie: Marion Boulestreau, mai 2020, point de rencontre Bobigny/Noisy/Pantin



L'école de l'aménagement durable des territoires



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