

Care, Commons, and Uncontrollability: Cycling as Transformative Interaction

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My project brings together a series of analytical frames that I have been exploring over the past 15 years, focussing on active mobilities as a mode of interaction with the more-than-human.

In the context of the anthropocene and the pressing need to transform high-carbon economies indicated in the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), changing mobility practices play an important role. This writing project examines current practices of cycling and walking to see how they can provide resources to develop skills and sensitivities for anthropocene citizenship.

The book is designed to allow an understanding of the possibilities inherent in active mobility for sensitisation, not simply as an individual but through shared and collective practice. Care, commons, and uncontrollability are the key concepts developed in a framework for understanding human-environment interaction. These elements are explored for their political implications in a broader context of the political and social implications of degrowth. As more than just an economic schema, the politics of degrowth requires repositioning and rethinking the experiences of relationship. Using these analytical frames allows a secondary aim of the study—to move away from individualised and psychologised approaches to experience and to place human/more-than-human relationships into a framework indebted more to Ubuntu than Freud. Simultaneously, it aims to shift the focus of human-environment interaction narrative from the extraordinary and sublime to the quotidian and mundane.

The project places cycling and other forms of active mobility as having a potentially dual transformative role in the context of the search for degrowth. The first dimension, measurable gains from modal shift away from private motoring (and not just its valuable emphasis on carbon reduction) is well-mapped in the literature. The less tangible dimension, and that to which this study contributes, is the potentially transformative work that regular active mobility performs in relation to shared reconnection with the more-than-human and other-than-self. Here we consider issues of the sociology and politics of the body, and the kinesthetics of bodily exertion, not in isolation as self-performance, but as interaction with natural and built environments.