Later life transitions and velo-mobility: Maintenance and meaning

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Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference 2015
University of Exeter, September 2nd-4th
Cycle Boom project

Ageing, mobility, built environment and technologies

Understanding cycling amongst the UK’s older population and how this affects independence, health and wellbeing

(Oct 2013 – Sep 2016)
Mixed methods research

Urban design and architecture  ageing | built environment
Geography                       governance | mobility and affect
Transport                       understanding travel behaviour
Neuropsychology                 physical activity on ageing brain

University of the West of England
Cardiff University of Wales
Oxford Brookes University
University of Reading
Cycling in later life

- what enables some to continue?

when and why do others give up?
Cycling across age groups

Bicycle share of trips (%) in England, 2013

Source: NTS
Different story elsewhere...

Cycling is an important method of transport in older age in other parts of Northern Europe.

Share of journeys by people aged 65+

- **UK**: 1%
- **Denmark**: 15%
- **Netherlands**: 23%
- **Germany**: 9%
Research objectives - Biographical methods

Understanding engagement with cycling through mid and later life

- change and continuity in relation to life transitions and events
- evolving social and physical settings

Narrative biographical accounts
individual perspective on how cycling status has arisen
“dynamically as the consequence of past experience and future expectation as well as the integration of internal motive and external constraint”

(Giele and Elder, 1998)
Interviews

life history grid
semi-structured interview
  Current
  Past
  Future outlook
  Ageing

Maps
Cycling timeline
View bicycle(s), equipment, storage, immediate context
## Life history grid

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<td>ADOPTION</td>
<td>MOTHER to 1980</td>
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<td>BRISTOL, 1883</td>
<td>WESTBURY, THYM</td>
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<td><strong>Household</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Activities/hobbies/leisure</strong></td>
<td>FOOTBALL ADVENTURES WITH FRIENDS</td>
<td>FOOTBALL BASKETBALL (SCHOOL+UNIV.)</td>
<td>ACTIVE HOLIDAYS</td>
<td>WALKING WITH KIDS, FRIENDS 5-A-SIDE</td>
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<td><strong>Transport</strong></td>
<td>KIDS BIKES IMMEDIATE AREA</td>
<td>1975 'REAL' BICYCLE 5-SPEED BICYCLE</td>
<td>USE OF CAR</td>
<td>BOUGHT 1981</td>
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<td><strong>Cycling - owned or had access to a bike</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Cycling - activity</strong></td>
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Mobile methods

- Naturalistic videoed ride
  - Route chosen by participant

- Review footage
- Participant commentary
  - Experience
  - Purpose
Participants

Regular, occasional and rare cycling

no longer cycling

Gender balance

50s | 60s | 70+

Index Multiple Deprivation

Spatial context
Data processing

- Biographical interview + ride + post ride interview
- Life history grid, recordings, timeline
- Case summary

Compendium of cases
DATA: CASE SUMMARIES
Reginald (70s)

Retired public servant living inner suburbs
No longer cycling
Cycled intermittently through career
Attempted cycling for recreation in retirement

“there has always been a purpose, to get somewhere to do something else...having got the bike to go to school, a bike was then a mode of transport, an efficient and cheap mode of transport which I was happy to go on doing but it wasn’t something that took my interest in its own right.”

“...then it went in the garage, I used it occasionally, I used to go up to [volunteering], having retired and got time so I did that but anything else local, Tesco’s or to the shops just walk. just once or twice I went out for a cycle ride for exercise, to keep fit because not being on my feet every day, I consciously wanted to keep fit ......but me bum hurt...it was so, it was uncomfortable and it was more stressful than walking and trying to find different routes for interest because I didn’t like going there and back again for fun, it’s ok for commuting but if I’m doing something I like to do it in a circle....then I stopped doing that and it’s stopped now for the last couple of years....About a year ago was the last time I used my bicycle...on holiday last year when we hired bikes...”

“Golf and grandchildren”
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<td>Fulltime cleaner</td>
<td>“I go across the crossing but to be honest <strong>at that time I could cycle down the middle of the road – there is no one about</strong>….Its not very nice I must admit (on her cycle to work). My eyes are everywhere in case there is anybody lurking. <strong>You get the occasional juggernaut or Royal Mail van to watch out for</strong>”</td>
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<td>Urban fringe, didn’t drive</td>
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<td>resumed cycling to work following break up and move</td>
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<td>Cycles daily to early morning shift and to retail centres</td>
<td>“<strong>No, No, I wouldn’t dream of doing it now</strong> [cycling into city]…there’s another cycle run I did, Bristol’s Biggest Bike Ride, the one they close the Portway for, I’ve missed that one for the last few years, <strong>again I’ve got no one to go with</strong> and well I really <strong>don’t know how I’d get down there</strong>, I’d have to cycle, it was a lovely ride….<strong>my son came with me on that one as well, good fun</strong>”</td>
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<td>Son showed her routes and did charity rides together</td>
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<td>Wouldn’t cycle in to Bristol and no one to cycle with</td>
<td>“Basically I’m on my own, <strong>there is no one I know who cycles</strong>, they all seem to have cars now”</td>
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Angie (60s)

Part time self employed, inner suburbs

Cycling on weekly basis but cycling had diminished

In London until age of 40, bike was main mode of transport

Moved to Bristol and got car, cycling declined, uses car and walks

Thinking about bike upgrade

“My cycling life has really shrunk actually, not because I can’t or don’t want to, for some reason, particularly at the moment, because I’m doing a lot of things to do with work I have needed to the car to go and buy stuff”

“I used to go on the roads more, I think that I am less confident and I think that’s partly to do with I don’t do it so much, and also an age thing .... you feel more vulnerable, you know turning your head to see what’s coming and you use a lot of peripheral vision when your cycling and hearing, those things tend to become a little bit less acute....also to do with moving your head, balance and move, checking to see, and all those things combined they are not quite as good as they were.”

“I have been thinking it would be nice to have a decent bike, a sort light weight, with lots of gears ....something more user friendly thing in terms of hills to do some more leisure cycling,.....although I’ve been thinking it would be nice to have one with a motor {laughs}....it seems to be creeping up, that sort of thing, anyway”
Part time local job
free-standing town

Cycles “as and when”

Work, parents, skittles

Intimidated by traffic
on main routes

Drove bike to cycle
path

Wife’s hip replacement

“...it’s just sort of as and when, I don’t do any extra, perhaps when my wife wants to get going again perhaps she might...but I can’t see us doing anything more.”

“the only thing I worry about is the roads now, there are cycle lanes but if I wanted to get to the Bristol to Bath one I’d have to get to the Westerleigh by the motorway and getting from Yate to there is a nightmare it really is [shows on map] it’s the stretch of road from Yate to Westerleigh, but that road is so busy it’s frightening really.....I have done it but the last time I did it I put my bike in the car and went to that point then, parked up and then went from, because it is an enjoyable ride but it’s just getting there that you know and that’s a general problem with traffic, nowadays, that’s why I go through the houses”

“When you’re on an estate like this its not too bad there are ways through, its just the bigger roads”
Wilfred (70s)

Retired business owner,
urban fringe

No time or opportunities for cycling while running his business

Knee curtailed other sports

Wife was doing long distance charity rides

Family encouraged him to cycle again,
twice weekly routine

“about 2008 the kids bought me a bike cos [wife] was biking ....I’d already had a half [knee] replacement ....They bought me a bike and I started just doing a little bit of biking cos I was working still, just out with the kids and that....

I: the bike was bought for you? Yeah just to do something [laughs] encouragement to do something ....as I say I was so embedded in work, my focus was work, building up the business and early retirement”

“Um probably since I retired, 3 years been doing it all the time, cos I’ve been sporty all my life and competitive, you know if I do something I want to win kind of thing, and of course I couldn’t do nothing, so I started cycling and I didn’t enjoy it greatly to begin with if honest, I’d go out with my wife and thought “aww gawd 12 miles cycle ride yeah I’ll do it if it keeps her happy, keep her, you know”... it’s just cycling’s boring,...but then gradually you appreciate what’s around you, the scenery and that and going out and stopping in a café...and they’ve stopped now so it’s just Chloe and myself.”
DISCUSSION
Development trajectories of later life cycling

- **Continuing**
- **Expanded**
- **Restored**
- **Diminished**
- **New**
- **Curtailed**
Development of cycling through mid/later life

**Mediators:**
Physical and social contexts
| Resources | Intrinsic motivations |
| Perception of capacity to cycle | expectations of ageing |

**Events:** Relocations, Roles, Relationships, Health

Antecedent cycling experiences

continuity or change

cycling outcome
To conclude

Opportunities and constraints can change through life events and transitions associated with mid and later life

working life – retirement transition
  flexibility to avoid unpleasant times and spaces for cycling integrated with volunteering, caring, other activities

Ageing-related changes and health episodes (self + partners) concluded
  Changes in fitness, flexibility, sensory and motor abilities
  Rehabilitation, management of conditions/ageing process
  adherence to a ‘healthy/active’ ageing regime
  Contraction of cycling – diminished comfort and confidence ageing bicycles

Proximate cycling environment

Accumulation of advantages and disadvantages through the life course
## Supporting cycling in mid and later life

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<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>Retirement and down shift rearranges temporal opportunities and constraints</td>
<td>Travel plan measures later career employees Retirement preparation</td>
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<td>Ease of local functional journeys</td>
<td>Ease of storage and set off Ease of arrival and cycle parking</td>
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<td>Accessing routes for leisure</td>
<td>links to key routes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ageing bicycles</td>
<td>loan, pool (e)bikes, tax-efficient purchase, trade-in, recycled</td>
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<td>Company for cycling</td>
<td>training, formal, informal</td>
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<td>Differentials in fitness /confidence</td>
<td>Age-inclusive image of cycling Promote inter-generational aspect</td>
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<td>Seeing cycling as age appropriate</td>
<td>Encouraging patients to resume or initiate active travel as part of recovery/ management of condition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Onset of health conditions changing capability, confidence and motivation</td>
<td>Design and maintenance of spaces for cycling</td>
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<td>Ageing infrastructure</td>
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