

Masterarbeit

Cicloscopio, a strategy for the representation of the bicycles in the collective discourse.

Ausgeführt zum Zwecke der Erlangung des akademischen Grades eines Diplom-Ingenieurs unter der Leitung von:

Ao.Univ.Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Mag.phil. Dr.phil. Peter Mörtenböck

Institut für Kunst und Gestaltung - E264
Abteilung Zeichnen und visuelle Sprachen.

Eingereicht an der Technischen Universität Wien
Fakultät für Architektur und Raumplanung

von:
Juan Carlos Carvajal Bermúdez
0827320 - Goldschlagstrasse 52 / 30

Wien, am 24.Jänner 2012

© 2012, Juan Carlos Carvajal Bermúdez



Thanks to
all the people who supported me in this process



Cicloscopio

1. Theory	17
Space in between	19
Collaborative strategies	25
2. Negotiations	31
Lantern Parade	33
Dandy Horse	35
Bone Crusher	35
High Wheels	39
Safety Bicycle + Pneumatic tires	45
20 th Century onwards	49
3. Strategy	55
Cicloscopio	57
Platforms	67
The technique	81
4. Appendix	97
Bibliography	99

Es wäre die Aufgabe für Kulturproduzenten bzw. Künstler, die Forderungen der Teilöffentlichkeiten durch spezifische Visualisierungs- und Umsetzungspraktiken öffentlich zu repräsentieren, ihnen Zugang zum Herrschenden öffentlichen Diskurs zu ermöglichen und partizipativ Möglichkeiten zur Schaffung alternativer urbaner Räume einer heterogenen und gleichberechtigten Interaktion zu entwickeln.

Uwe Lewitzky, *Kunst für alle?*

The reversal of the nostalgia for a lost community into the consciousness of an “immense failure” of the history of communities was linked for Bataille to the “inner experience”, whose content, truth, or ultimate lesson is articulated thus: “Sovereignty is NOTHING”.

Jean-Luc Nancy, *The inoperative community*.

Introduction

Cicloscopio is a strategy for the representation of the bicycles in the collective discourse, that is, a strategy to participate in the construction of the consensus by means of which the allocation of the public space takes place. As it can be deduced from the very definition of the project, the theoretical framework which supports this strategy embraces the approaches taken by different disciplines. More accurately, Cicloscopio juxtaposes the development of three subjects, namely, the mechanics with which the collective discourse is formulated, the way in which the cultural producers might empower the construction of this discourse, and finally the historical representation of the cyclists in this public formulation.

The overlap of the three mentioned subjects shows the importance that the Cicloscopio has both for the bicycle collective and for the diversification of the public consensus. The conceptual evolution of the public discourse can be followed parallel to that of the community, which has gone from the concept of a state bundled with a cultural narrative, to the collective construction of discourse by the members of the plurality. The participation in such process can be fostered by the cultural producers through the creation of strategies, which allow the members of the community to represent their common issues. While the cyclists have participated historically in the elaboration of public consensus, their accustomed way of participation might not be completely suitable for current mechanism of discourse construction. Cicloscopio provides the necessary means for the participation in the collective formulation of public consensus.

The first issue addressed in this work is related to the formulation of the collective discourse. At this respect Jean-Luc Nancy argues that the current construction of discourse is being oppressed by the presence of a parasitical narrative in the sovereignty of the states. The presence of such narrative rejects the existence of those who are excluded from it and therefore thwarts the participation of the plurality in the public dynamics. Consequently the collective construction of discourse is hindered by the imposition of an idealized conception of the community.

The origin of this imposition is traced back by Nancy to the establishment of the society of individuals and the consequent disarticulation of the divine from it. The isolation to which the individuals were intentionally subjugated, led them to the search for an ideal common being. In the course of this search, they formulated an ideal narrative by means of which they could overcome, at least imaginarily, their loneliness. This nostalgia for a lost community, that is, an idealized narrative, is identified by Nancy as a common illness of the western societies.

To overcome the pitfalls of a society based on the conception of the individual and its resulting idealized narrative, it would be necessary to imagine a new form of singular being, whose definition or identity is defined and limited only through the contact with other singularities. This contemporary conception of the singular beings would disarticulate automatically any parasitic narrative of the sovereignty of a state. Such conceptual shift would avoid the imposition of an idealized narrative and so, allow the plurality to participate in the formulation of the collective discourse.

This is how we can define the construction of the public consensus as an exchange process about topics which remain controversial: gender, health, mobility, and so on. This is the dynamic behind the contemporary formulation of discourse: rather than being an idealized, exclusive and imposed narrative, this last is constructed collectively through negotiations. Only to the degree that more singularities and their negotiation topics get to participate in the formulation such narrative, the community will become aware of its truth, that is, an endless plurality in a constant effort to redefine itself.

The representation space that would be freed by the elimination of the sovereign narratives should be filled by the expression of the plurality. The task of

the artists, architects, film makers, and so on, would be to participate in the formalization of the collective discourse. We may point out that this process has a dynamic which will slowly alter or erase the representations placed there, that is to say, the representation of a plurality changes just as this last evolves.

After clearing to some extent that the task of the cultural producers is to empower the plurality to participate in the formulation of the collective discourse, it remains the question on how to do it. Just as the parasitic narratives of the states are formalized and disseminated among the individuals, the collectively constructed discourse should be concreted and communicated by the cultural producers. If the collective discourse is constructed through negotiations, the task of the cultural producers would be to bring into an expression such negotiations. The results of such ventures, however, should not be seen as a conclusion, they are just milestones which let the discussion go further.

While the task proposed here is somewhat clear, the cultural producers which pursue objectives similar to it, are involved in a difficult discussion in which the aesthetics, the aestheticism and the very artistic methodology are confused. This confusion places the cultural producers in a difficult situation in which the formalization of a negotiation topic is seen and condemned as a continuation of the art system which broke the connection of the art with the social realm, namely the aestheticism.

This situation configures a rather strong paradox: the inclusion of a collective and its topics into the formulation of the collective discourse is obviously a first step towards the reintegration of the aesthetics and the social topics, yet such attempts are criticized because they translate a negotiation topic into an aesthetic form. The idea behind such criticism is that the solely formalization of a social issue would affect the social meaning of the work, that is to say, an aesthetical work loses immediately every social value, because the aestheticism would only take into consideration one of both.

In the same way that the formalization of a social negotiation is criticized, the lack of it is defended, without taking into consideration that precisely this hinders the participation of a collective in the construction of discourse. The idea that supports this is similar to that mentioned before: a collaboration

which does not formalize its negotiation topic, does not support the aestheticism and so, its social value remains untouched, though, invisible.

This is why targeting the aesthetics is missing the point. Instead of narrowing the spectrum available to the cultural producers by misidentifying aesthetics and aestheticism, we should see in the aesthetics an opportunity to participate in the collective construction of discourse. According to Walter Benjamin the right question is not whether the cultural producers criticize their production environment but how do they stand in them. The task of the cultural producers is to articulate the aesthetics in the negotiations of the community and so, enable their formalization.

Still, the question on how the aesthetics should be articulated in a collective process remains unanswered. While we overcame the confusion concerning the aesthetics, it is still necessary to analyse the practical obstacles of establishing a collaboration. The presence or the absence of aesthetics, that is, artworks, are directly related to the way in which the cultural producers implement a given collaboration.

The approach that we found to tackle such problem is not the simple condemnation of the aestheticism, nor the relation of aesthetic form and social content, but the way in which the aesthetics means, that is, the composition elements, are articulated in the creative process. In this way, we can identify the pitfalls of the situations mentioned before in the unequal relation of the artist and the collectives, in which the first is in possession of the tools which enable the formalization of a social topic.

To overcome such deadlock Benjamin suggested the functional transformation of the means of production. We interpret this proposal as the invention of collaborative strategies which enable the collectives to formalize their social issues and so, participate in the construction of the public discourse. Such strategies should enable the formalization of the different social issues and so, the presence in the collective narrative.

The third process observed in this work is related to the historical particularities that the presence of the bicycle has had in the public discourse. The apparition of this means of transport engaged the community in a series of negotiations about it, where its legal status and its place in the public space,

needed to be defined in a series of public transactions and exchanges. As this negotiations have been largely influenced by the technical evolution of the bicycle and later by that of the auto, it results important to follow those different technical stages to comprehend their repercussions in the urban space and the collective discourse. Before the bicycle reached its current development, there were three important technical milestones, each one with different levels of adoption, perception and conflicts.

The first model presented, the Draisine, had serious technical disadvantages which rendered it unpractical for the use as a means of transport. For this reason it was seen as a toy rather than a functional machine and it fell quickly into oblivion. Nevertheless, the first conflicts in the public space emerged timidly, as the early users invaded the sidewalks. Moreover, this model enjoyed a considerable attention of the public, whose interest was easily caught by the novelty of the machine.

The velocipede was the second precursor of the bicycle. Its design made it until some extend viable as a means of transport and it enjoyed a greater adoption even though it lasted just a couple of years. Its use fade mainly because of the uncomfortable riding experience caused by the hard wheels and the rough streets. With this second model it became evident that the public space needed to be improved and reorganized to accommodate the new machines. The quality of the streets hindered the use of the velocipedes and led once again to the invasion of the sidewalks, what awoke the fury of the pedestrians. Due to such disagreements the authorities of some cities forbid the use of the velocipedes. Parallel to these conflicts the first clubs emerged. While they were mainly concerned with the sport activities, they constituted the social basis for the representation of the bicycle in the public discourse.

To increase the speed and the comfort of the velocipedes, the manufactures created the High Wheels, the last model before the current bicycle. With this model the conflicts about the public space reached bigger dimensions. First of all the horsemen began to be involved in the discussion and teamed eventually with the pedestrians to forbid the bicycle transit. To act against such prohibitions, the bicycle clubs created new associations, which pursued first the legal recognition of the wheels and later the improvement of the infrastructure. This organizations were of key importance because they agglomerated the private interest of their members and represented them in public.

Since the very beginning this organizations adopted the parade as a way to present themselves in the public space. The participation of the bicycle in the public discourse was constituted by this organizations and their events, which in turn acted as the interlocutors of the private interest against the public administration.

The development that preceded the current form of the bicycle was decisive for its golden age. The work done previously by the clubs and the organizations enabled a faster, wider, and truly mind-numbing adoption of the bicycle. The existing organizations turned into large and powerful entities which could influence local and even national authorities. As the legal status of the bicycle was already cleared such organization could focus above all on the infrastructure improvements needed for the bicycles. It is precisely in this context where the bicycle parades turned into manifestations for the improvement of the public infrastructure. Such expressions enabled the participation of the cyclists in the collective discourse, and so, the authorities responded positively to the demands made by them. This last development is extremely important, as it demonstrates the relation between the construction of public discourse and that of the public space.

In the twentieth century the situation changed dramatically. The motorized model of transport conquered massively the public space in the cities, generating environmental and urban problems. To promote the use of the bicycle, similar strategies to those used successfully a century ago were adopted, yet the results were not as satisfactory. The authorities ignored the legitimate claims of the bicycle advocates for infrastructure and only when the manifestations started to be problematic they could catch the attention of the administration. This can be explained by the absorption of the public discourse by the mass media and the subsequent instrumentalization of this industry as a tool to influence the public discourse.

In the current context it is important for the bicycle advocacy to participate in the collective discourse about mobility and public space. To do so it is important to find strategies which enable these social organizations to participate in the collective construction of discourse. And exactly through this last ambition is how we establish an interdisciplinary relation among the three areas discussed in this work. Based on the historical and theoretical insights collected we can understand the dynamic that the project triggers both in the

bicycle collective and in the construction of the public consensus.

The reinterpretation of the historical bicycle parades through the implementation of a collaborative strategy of creation, enables their visualization and so, the participation of the cyclist in the formulation of the collective discourse which guides the distribution of the public space.

The project is called then Cicloscopio, a strategy for the representation of the bicycles in the collective discourse.

communication * local * state
p a r t i c i p a t i o n
means * representation * art
c o m m u n i t y
social * identification * urban
i d e n t i t y
plurality * self * sovereignty
s i n g u l a r i t y
intervention * culture * common
n a r r a t i v e
media * public * autonomy
e x c l u s i o n
aesthetics * strategy * channel

1. Theory

Space in between

The so called community art is commonly seen as the logical result of the art's evolution in the second half of the twenty century. Miwon Kwon let us identify a continuum in the development of those practices and the different ways in which they redefined the role of art in the society. As the artists started to note the natural limits of the White Cube, they begun to explore possibilities which enabled them to have a direct influence in the realm of society. The results of such explorations constitute a process in which we can see how different aspects or institutions of the art are being challenged: questioning the very walls of the exhibition space, crossing the boundaries of that space, placing artworks outside it, establishing a bond between the artwork and its site, intervening the site of the artwork and finally knitting the artwork and the inhabitants of an environment, were some of the strategies used. At the end of this process, which we may roughly describe as a slow transgression and independence of the white cube, the community (rather than the artwork) emerged as the focus of attention. While some artists finally sought the possibility to interact directly with the social realm, it became also evident that working with communities required approaches and strategies radically different than those used until that point. The contact with the society brought a bunch of questions whose origin was social rather than artistic. In other words, by finally bringing the art to the social realm, the scope and function of the art changed notably, yet not all the strategies were ready to answer the new situation. As a result, some of those practices have been accused of exploitation, neocolonialism or of being a rather bad executed social work.

The escape of the white cube can be rather interpreted as a social re-legitimation of the art. The direct contact with a collective may be the way in which many artists will find the possibility to intervene in the reality which is outside of the exhibition space. As we recognise the potential found in art practices related with collectives, it becomes urgent to answer some of the questions regarding this topic in order to create a suitable framework. The most evident, yet the one that remains (and will remain) largely unanswered is the definition of the community. «Indeed, the community, generally understood as a collective body that mediates between individual subjects and society, has become a highly charged and extremely elastic political term.»¹ This last quotation is symptomatic of the confusion regarding the “community”. Instead of idealizing it as a perfect form of human organization, we should remember that a community is political by nature, thus a reflection about the community is a political one. The contemporary community is far away from the idealized conception of a common being and it is rather shaped by the plurality in which it grows and its internal contradictions. At this respect I consider useful the conception of community developed by Jean-Luc Nancy and henceforth his thought will underpin this text.

Probably one of the most notably symptoms of the so called community-based art practices is the wish to reestablish the lost social bond in the society: «the creative energy of participatory practices rehumanizes—or at least de-alienates—a society rendered numb and fragmented by the repressive instrumentality of capitalism.»² While we admit that the opposition to the fragmentation of the western societies is not the only purpose of those practices it is true that such calls to restore the lost social bond swarm the texts related to the topic. The search for the lost community seems to be an acute symptom of the western societies and the community art is in part an expression of the same illness. «But it is here that we should become suspicious of the retrospective consciousness of the lost community and its identity. [...] At every moment in its history, the Occident has given itself over to the nostalgia for a more archaic community that has disappeared».³

According to Nancy the origins of this nostalgia can be traced back to the Christianity —or more precisely to its disarticulation from society—. The

dismantling of the divine which the society carries out leaves an open space which is filled by the notion of the community. The human being’s divine experience is slowly replaced by the nostalgia for the community of the individual, who —left to its fate in the society— throws itself blindly to the absolute communion. «Thus, the thought of community or the desire for it might well be nothing other than a belated invention that tried to respond to the harsh reality of modern experience: namely that divinity was withdrawing infinitely from immanence.»⁴ The community comes to fill the emptiness of the individual in the society.

Any call to restore the lost community should be rather seen as an attempt to refill a void created intentionally by the society. This is how Nancy realizes that the community isn’t lost: it is rather an invention which comes along with the formation of the society. «No Gesellschaft has come along to help the state, industry and capital to dissolve a prior Gemeinschaft. [...] So that community, far from being what society has crushed or lost, is *what happens to us* —question, waiting, event, imperative— *in the wake of society*.»⁵ The “wake of society” is at the same time (and this is the key topic) the birth of the individual. The abandonment of the individual (and its consequent isolation and loneliness) which takes place in the society, is what releases the fascination for the community.

Now, the processes described above took place along with other changes in the society. It was not only the rupture with the divinity nor the birth of the free individual, but also the appearance of a narrative in the state what modified the idea of the common being. The state started to take shape as the only entity which could satisfy the desire for a common being and so totalized the life of the individuals. The existence started to be articulated thoroughly in the terms of the community and the death (the end of the existence) could only happen in the name of it. «In this State, each member has its true in the other, which is the State itself, whose reality is never more present than when its members give their lives in a war that the monarch —the effective presence-to-self of the Subject-State— has alone and freely decided to wage.»⁶ The inclusion of a communitarian narrative in the state synthesizes the desires of the individuals under one and unique will. The conception of a community

1 - Kwon, Miwon. *One place after another*. p. 112

2 - Bishop, Claire. *The social turn*.

3 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 10

4 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 10

5 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 11

6 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 12

where all the interests of a subject are supposed to be represented in the state absorbs the life of the individual. «Generations of citizens and militants, of workers and servants of the States, have imagined their death reabsorbed or sublated in a community, yet to come, that would attain immanence.»⁷

We are in front of different processes which are nevertheless correlated. One is the rupture of the divinity and the society. Other is the birth of the individual and its consequent loneliness. The void left by this rupture was slowly filled by the narrative of the community. At the same time, the narrative of the community was simply incorporated in the conception of the state, as if it were naturally bounded with its sovereignty.

This blurry limit between the community, the state and the religious experience, can nothing but provoke the delirium of the whole. The release of the divine bonds, the limits of the human, creates a delirious community whose essence is unquestionable and whose communion can nothing but unleash the annihilation of everything that it excludes. «Fascism was the grotesque or abject resurgence of an obsession with communion; it crystallized the motif of its supposed loss and the nostalgia for its images of fusion. In this respect, it was the convulsion of Christianity, and it ended up fascinating modern Christianity in its entirety.»⁸ What we are witnessing is a political fervour which slowly spreads and imposes the unique and exclusive idiosyncrasy of the community. It oppresses the individual and let it only exist in its terms. This is nothing but a symptom of the divinization of the state. «It was not only the Sun King who mixed the enslavement of the state with radiant burst of glory; this is true of all royalty that has always already distorted the sovereignty it exhibits into a means of domination and extortion».⁹ As logical and at the same time as irrational as it may sound, the state replaced the divine power and set in its place the narrative of the community.

The communion of the individuals in the state opens the way for a distorted sovereignty which reaches the level of a credo. The faith in it leaves no space for questions, it exists in its own right. Its symbols manifest themselves unconditional, their acceptance is mandatory. Yet every credo needs a representation to announce its presence and the aesthetics are the space where this

communication takes place. «The fascism carries out logically an aestheticization of the political life. The violation of the masses, whom it forces to their knees in the cult of the führer, corresponds to the violation of an apparatus, which it instruments for the production of ritual values.»¹⁰ The formalization of a sovereign narrative takes naturally place in the realm of the aesthetics. It shouldn't be a surprise that, after removing the artwork of its sacral context and also after dismantling the divinity from the society, the state turned into an aestheticized deity, filling at once the emptiness left, thus gaining its absolutism. At the same time that the art celebrates its autonomy, the state celebrates its consummation as absolute, thanks to the declaration of a cultural narrative as sovereign.

This is how Nancy (together with Bataille) realized the following: "Sovereignty is NOTHING". The intromission of a unique narrative in the sovereignty of a state enforces its acceptance. Therefore Sovereignty can't be announced nor represented. It can only be understood as an inner experience. «The crucial point of this experience was the exigency, reversing all nostalgia and all communal metaphysics, of a "clear consciousness" of separation — that is to say of a "clear consciousness" [...] of the fact that immanence or intimacy cannot, nor are they ever to be, *regained*».¹¹ There is nothing to be done in the name of the community, it can not be consummated. The community is rather the place where the experience of sovereignty takes place, it is the outside which in turn defines the inside. «This is why the "inner experience" of which Bataille speaks is in no way "interior" or "subjective", but is indissociable from the experience of this relation to an incommensurable outside. Only the community furnishes this relation its spacing, its rhythm.»¹² This relation strives for the separation rather than for the communion, what avoids the absolutism of their consummation. The dependency is a general characteristic of this space, as no entity can exist in it without its relation to the others.

Nancy identifies another disturbing situation, namely that there is a deadlock in the evolution of the community. In spite of the atrocities committed during the war (or maybe because of it), no new formulations of the community

7 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 13

8 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 17

9 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 18

10 - Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Translation of the redactor.

11 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 19

12 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 18

have taken place. Parallel to the latter, the capitalism (with the individualism at its very hearth) has overtaken extensively the realm of politics and the community have been left behind without even realising it. «It is no longer even a question of community. But this is also because the techno-economical organization or “making operational” of our world has taken over, even inherited, the plans for a communitarian organization.»¹³ However the need to rethink the community is urgent if we are to counteract the forces of homogenization which flattens the plurality to their imperatives. Not only the totalitarian state but also the accumulation of capital steers toward the elimination of difference. A completely new formulation of the community is necessary if we are to change the course. However, to do so, there is one limit which needs to be surpassed. «This limit is itself the paradox: namely, the paradox of a thinking magnetically attracted toward community and yet governed by the theme of the sovereignty of a *subject*. For Bataille, as for us all, a thinking of the subject thwarts a thinking of community.»¹⁴

This is why Nancy redirects his efforts at the individual. He considers the individual as an obstacle for the constitution of the community because it does not recognize the presence of the other. «As an individual, I am closed off from all community, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that the individual —if an absolutely individual being could ever exist— is infinite.»¹⁵ It is the illusory universality of the individual what condemns it to a violent crash against other universalities. An individual, precisely because of its individuality, shouldn't have any kind of relations, still: it does have them, what turns it into an impossible concept. «Individuation detaches closed off entities from a formless ground —whereas only communication, contagion, or communion constitute the being of the individuals.»¹⁶ For an individual to be universal, all the other individuals should find themselves in the same space and admit the same universality. The finite space, where the individuals can spread their supposed infiniteness is what Nancy calls the formless ground. What constitutes this space may vary: a yearning for the past, the glory of the nation, the promise of a better future. Something to work for. We may define this as any global narrative which tries to comprise the plurality in only one, unique, mythical concept.

13 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 23

14 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 23

15 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 27

16 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 27

Opposed to the conception of the individual Nancy proposes the concept of the singularity. «A singular being does not emerge or rise up against the background of a chaotic, undifferentiated identity of beings, or against the background of their unitary assumption, or that of a becoming, or that of a will.»¹⁷ The space defined by the global narrative is not anymore available. If the every entity within the community is interrelated and exists only through its relation to the others, there is no space for individualism. The being can not anymore have an aspiration to the infiniteness, rather, it finds its limits in the other beings. «Singularity perhaps does not proceed from anything. It is not a work resulting from an operation. There is no process of “singularity” and singularity is neither extracted nor produced nor derived.»¹⁸ A singularity is to be thrown in the NOTHING of the sovereignty, where it is limited by the solely presence of other singularities.

Every attempt to totalize the identity with a narrative oughts to be resisted. «This is why community cannot arise from the domain of *work*.»¹⁹ Nancy goes so far as to say «Community understood as a work or through its works would presuppose that the common being, as such, be objectifiable and producible (in sites, persons, buildings, discourses, institutions, symbols: in short, in subjects).»²⁰ Now, we need to scrutinize this carefully. This inclement sentence to silence is definitely worrisome. That the community cannot come from the domain of work presupposes not only that it could be objectifiable but also that there is a global narrative which makes this objectification feasible. This is possible only when the modern confusion between sovereignty and a cultural narrative is present, what turns this latter into a global, sovereign one. In other words —and following argumentation of Nancy— it is thanks to the inclusion of a cultural narrative in the sovereignty of a state that the community can be produced, translated into works. This is a process which has two faces. On the one hand, if a narrative is attached to the sovereignty, the state is unconditionally sentenced to silence, because it strives toward communion. On the other hand if the state doesn't have any parasitic narrative in its conception, the plurality which is present in its interior can finally flourish.

17 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 27

18 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 27

19 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 31

20 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 31

The singularities —still left at its own fate—, can not recognize the sovereignty in anything but in the space of the community. From this point of view the community is “what makes us be”, what makes us equal, yet different. This is a similar concept to that proposed by Rancière. «The process of equality is a process of difference. But difference does not mean the assumption of a different identity or the plain confrontation of two entities. The place for the working out of difference is not the “self” or the culture of a group. It is the *topos* of an argument. And the place for such argument is an interval. The place of a political subject is an interval or a gap: being *together* to the extent that we are *in between* —between names, identities, cultures, and so on.»²¹ The community is not the process of unification, it is rather that of diversification. The resistance to the consummation is characteristic of this process.

What this would cause is an extensive dismantling or abolition of every narrative hidden in the sovereignty of a State. Very well. Certainly this imposition of an exclusive identity goes against the plurality of singularities about which Nancy talks about. Under this schema the state shall not execute an overall coating of the identities, nor it shall provide the channel through which the individual may find its death reabsorbed. Therefore, if there is no sovereign narrative to resolve our political life by means of its (future or past) greatness, we would have no other way but find our own narrative in the community. In other words, when any global narrative is extirpated it leaves us in an empty space, this is the space of the community. We need to find ourselves in the community through the communication with it.

This proposal should not be seen as an abstraction which remains at the theoretical level. We are constantly in an exchange process that shapes both us and the community. Such negotiations have generally a topic: gender, health, mobility, education, and so on. The community revolves around such topics but is not able to define them, they remain controversial. This is the reality of the community: a sustained effort to redefine itself. Is it possible to define one community or define somebody through the community? Definitely not. In this sense we can talk about a collective construction of a narrative in which we are constantly involved, making it heterogeneous.

Now, we may remember that the channel through which this narrative is communicated are the aesthetics. The formal translation of a parasitic sov-

ereign narrative is the aestheticization of political life which Benjamin denounced so vehemently. The space which the removal of the sovereign narrative left empty, is the space in which the plurality might be communicated. We should see this as an empty and mutating canvas were representations of every kind can be placed. It has however an internal dynamic which triggers the evolution and therefore a slow blurring and disappearance of whatever that has been moulded there. The one who wants this canvas to be static is the one who pushes for the totalization of the identities, their communion. It is the task of the artist to constantly modify and refill this canvas and so avoid its establishment as sovereign. Yet it should be clear that this is a process in constant evolution and whatever the result it may have, it will inevitably change or disappear.

If we are to think about something which could be called community art it would be an expression of the plurality that the singular beings embody. This plurality is constituted collectively through the negotiations carried out around controversial topics. The task of the cultural producers is to represent this collective construction of discourse by participating in the negotiations carried out around a topic. We may collect such practices under the term topical art, this is, an art which arranges negotiations in the community, an art which captures those moments in which we are *in between*.

21 - Rancière, Jaques. *Politics, identification, and Subjectivation*. p. 18

Social strategies

The contemporary conception of the community is that of a constant negotiation, rather than that of an absolute, sovereign imposition. The discourse then, is constructed through endless negotiations which revolve around controversial topics. If the challenge of the cultural producers is to participate in this collective construction of discourse, we may ask how such endeavour could be achieved.

This task might resemble the older and much discussed reintegration of art and life. We know, however, that such endeavour degraded into a ruthless yet sterile confrontation of the artists with the aestheticism. The task that we propose might be similar, yet it is different. It differs because the conception of the community that we sketched provides a different starting point. The main objective of the cultural producers is not to challenge the aestheticism nor its institutions, it is to participate culturally in the construction of a plurality, with their very means of work, the aesthetics.

This task might be even closer to the much older relation between form and content. Yet our content has a major problem, namely that its name is an impossible, an inexistent word. «Perhaps in truth, there is nothing *to say*. Perhaps we should not seek a word or a concept for it but rather recognize in the thought of community a theoretical excess (or more precisely, an excess in relation to the theoretical) that would oblige us to adopt another *praxis*

of discourse and community.»¹ There is no name for the community and it could not be defined but as a cluster of endless negotiations. We know this paradoxically for certain, that the community is an endless process of negotiation, whose definition remains controversial.

Such negotiations establish the communication between singular beings, and so, they constitute the community. They are the confrontation places where the singular beings coincide, they are controversial topics. The second thing that we know is that this negotiations have a topic, they revolve around some topics. The community is then constituted by a series of negotiations about topics which remain polemical. Yet they are not abstract, they are the everyday concerns: rights, gender, habitation, space and so on. All this disputes provide negotiation spaces, the spaces for the diversification of the community.

Exactly such topics have been mistakenly identified as communities. This is the inexistent, forbidden word: there is no communion in the community, there is no happy agreement around a topic. There are just ongoing negotiations about topics and the challenge is to formalize them. We can repeat once again that the task assigned to the cultural producer is to bring the negotiations of the community into a form. Yet such formalization does not represent a conclusion, it is rather part of the discussion, a frozen instant, a milestone which let it go further. Therefore its importance.

In spite of the importance of this task, the artistic attempts which pursue objectives similar to the task proposed here got stuck in a discussion flawed by misunderstandings. On the one side, the difficulties of working with a collective have been correctly identified, on the other side such pitfalls have been confused and mixed with the avant-gardist confrontation of the artists with the aestheticism and its resulting institutional configuration. We need to analyse first the confusion of the aesthetics with the aestheticism. Then we will analyse the difficulties faced by the artist when working with a collective.

The practices that involve collectives are commonly seen as a renewed effort to instigate a change in the institutional art, that is to say, they are challenging the aestheticism as the official art form by including (or trying to) a wider spectrum of the society in the production of art. However, in a somewhat

paradoxical way, when an artist tries individually to represent a collective, he or she faces accusations like taking advantage of both his position in and his access to the art institutions to impose the institutional aesthetics. Such accusations present the artists as representatives of the institutional art, which abusively portrait a collective, in a process which reinforces the institutional aesthetics, not to mention the possible cultural exploitation. Based on this argumentation the individual representations of a collective are criticized at once, narrowing the options available for the artists. A solution commonly proposed to overcome such a conflict is to achieve a collaborative process in which the artists, rather than showing themselves as part of a superior (high) culture, establish an egalitarian process and avoid the imposition of any kind of aesthetics. In this way, however, the artists narrow further the scope of their activity until the point that they can not formalize the negotiation in which they are taking part. Therefore they leave behind their very condition as artists and their work starts to be compared with that of a social worker. This lack of formalization or “aesthetics” of the practices involving collectives is then overlooked and the social engagement and the resulting collective process become the artworks.

According to Claire Bishop this rejection of the aesthetics does not only take place on the side of the artists, some critics concede as well more value to the attempt of the cultural producers to challenge the aestheticism, than to the aesthetics itself, this is, the artworks. «The social turn in contemporary art has prompted an ethical turn in art criticism. This is manifest in a heightened attention on how a given collaboration is undertaken».² From this point of view, the collaboration process becomes the backbone of the art practices and the lack of a formalization should just be ignored. «There can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of collaborative art because all are equally essential to the task of strengthening the social bond».³ Ignoring the nostalgia for the lost “social bond”, we can say that the “social turn” is the product of a huge confusion between aesthetics and aestheticism which led to negation, or displacement of the aesthetics. The opposition to the aestheticism, characteristic of the avant-garde, led finally to the plain negation of every kind of aesthetics in the practices which involve collectives. «When contemporary critics confront dialogical projects, they often apply a formal, pleasure-based methodology that cannot value, or even recognize, the com-

1 - Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The inoperative community*. p. 18

2 - Bishop, Claire. *The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents*.

3 - Bishop, Claire. *The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents*.

municative interactions that these artist find so important. The results are not surprising: dialogical works are criticized for being unaesthetic or attacked for needlessly suppressing visual gratification».⁴

The frontal rejection of the aesthetics can be framed within the avant-gardist logic described by Peter Bürger. In fact, it could be interpreted as a kind of avant-garde which rejects the aestheticism and tries to reconnect the art realm with the social one by involving a social collective, even if by doing this the aesthetic needs to be eliminated. «The European avant-garde movements can be defined as an attack on the status of art in the bourgeois society. What is negated is not an earlier form of art (a style) but art as an institution that is unassociated with the praxis of life of men».⁵ While there are some similarities between both approaches, there are two key differences. The first one is that the involvement of social collectives could turn this practices into artworks made through collaboration, rather than individual representations (a feature that was seen by Bürger as a major characteristic of the autonomous aesthetics). The second one is that some artists and critics tend to confuse the aesthetics with the aestheticism and therefore condemn confusedly the aesthetics while truly targeting the aestheticism and its institutional configuration, as pointed out by Bürger. This is the huge confusion which pollutes the whole discussion and avoids it from going further.

This confusion is the product of a distorted concept of the aesthetics, in which the latter are associated automatically with an art system which has successfully isolated the aesthetics from the social realm and has distorted the cultural value of the artworks, namely the aestheticism. According to Peter Bürger, the current isolation and self-reflection of the art have their origin in the autonomous art, whose autonomy, however, still represented the political ideal of the bourgeoisie. «Only to the extent that the bourgeoisie adopts concepts of value held by the aristocracy does bourgeois art have a representational function. When it is genuinely bourgeois, this art is objectification of the self-understanding of the bourgeois class».⁶ Originally the autonomous art incarnated in the deepest sense the political autonomy of the bourgeoisie (from the aristocracy), and it should not be considered as apolitical. It is only when this original political sense is lost, that the autonomy of the art turns into the

aestheticism, this is, an art which does not incarnate a political autonomy nor represents the social realm. «In Aestheticism, finally, where bourgeois art reaches the stage of self-reflection, this claim is no longer made. Apartness from the praxis of life, which had always been the condition that characterized the way art functioned in bourgeois society, now becomes its content».⁷ Once this process was completed, the art became effectively isolated from the social realm and the beauty became the only measurement to evaluate the quality of an artwork. It is precisely through this dislocation (by ignoring its cultural relevance) that the value of the artworks can be distorted. Only to the extent that the social and aesthetical realm could be articulated once again, this distortion can be counteracted. By working together with a collective, the artists have the actual possibility of reintegrating both realms, yet by misidentifying the aesthetics with the aestheticism they end rejecting one.

In short, the refusal of aesthetics is a paradox. As we saw, the practices which involve collectives, are also an attempt to reintegrate the social and the aesthetic realms, yet some ended in the denial of the latter by confusing the aesthetics with the aestheticism. Instead of reintegrating the aesthetics into the social realm, some pushed them apart. Therefore targeting the aesthetics is missing the point and ignoring the development which led to the current status. The frontal rejection of the aesthetics reaffirms their isolation and institutionalization by separating them further from the social realm at the same time that it diverts us from the central task, namely participating with them in the community. The actual task that we proposed was not to challenge the aestheticism but to participate in the collective construction of discourse by formalizing the negotiations of the community. We know now, however, that the artists willing to collaborate with a social collective face a difficult situation in which their very means of work, namely the aesthetics, are seen as the representation of an art system (the aestheticism), which distorts the meaning of the artworks by taking into consideration only the aesthetical value of them.

This is how we return to the task proposed at the beginning. We identified, however, that the formalization of the collaborative projects is influenced by the avant-gardist confusion of aesthetics and aestheticism. We did all this effort to diagnose the rejection of the aesthetics by the false association with the aestheticism, because exactly in it we can find the way to overcome the

4 - Kester, Grant. *Conversation pieces*. P. 10

5 - Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. P. 41

6 - Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. P. 47

7 - Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. P. 48

first bottleneck. Instead of hopelessly criticize the aestheticism, the cultural producers should try to articulate the aesthetics in the negotiations of the community. Instead of associating the autonomy of the art with the rejection of the social meaning of the artwork carried out by the aestheticism, it is more attractive to see in the autonomy of the art the liberation of the composition elements which support the artistic creation, this is, the artistic technique. This last formulation might resemble the approach taken by Walter Benjamin in his essay *The author as a producer*. «Before I ask: how does a literary work stand in relation to the relationships of production of a period, I would like to ask: how does it stand in them? This question aims directly at the function that the work has within the literary relationships of production of a period. In other words, it aims directly at a work's literary technique».⁸ Thanks to the avant-gardist discussion, we identified in the autonomy of the art, that is, the liberation of the composition elements, an opportunity to formalize the negotiations of the community.

The question now is not whether the formalization of a social topic is desirable or not, but how should this formalization take place. While this approach widens the possibilities that the cultural producers have, it should not be seen as a plain call to aestheticize any given social situation. The special attention on how any given collaboration is undertaken, that is, the process, shows as well the practical difficulties faced by the artists which want to work with a collective. To exemplify the pitfalls of such collaborations Claire Bishop opposes two well-known projects, namely the space ran by the artist collective *Oda Projesi* and Thomas Hirschhorn's installation *Bataille Monument*. Overlooking that the concept of "community" used in those projects differ from that elaborated by Nancy, we may take a look to the obstacles faced by such collaborations: «[Maria] Lind observes that Oda Projesi, contrary to Hirschhorn are the better artist because of the equal status they give to their collaborators: [...] "[Hirschhorn's] participants where paid for their work and their role was that of the 'executor' and not 'co-creator'." By contrast, she writes, Oda Projesi "work with groups of people in their immediate environment and allow them to wield great influence on the project."».⁹ This short comparison illustrates clearly the extremes that a collaboration with a collective might reach.

8 - Benjamin, Walter. *The author as a producer*.

9 - Bishop, Claire. *The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents*.

On the one side the approach of Oda Projesi is condemned because it is resembles a charity organization and therefore it values more the ethical values than the aesthetical ones: «there is little to distinguish their projects from other socially engaged practices that revolve around the predictable formulas of workshops, discussions, meals, film screenings, and walks. Perhaps this is because the question of aesthetic value is not valid for Oda Projesi».¹⁰ On the other side, the work of Hirschhorn is condemned because it configures a form of exploitation: «Lind goes on to argue that Hirschhorn's work, by using participants to critique the art genre of the monument, was rightly criticized for "'exhibiting' and making exotic marginalized groups and thereby contributing to a form of social pornography."».¹¹

This discussion can only lead to a pointless dichotomy which revolves around the aesthetic form and the politic content. This opposition is already known. In fact we could go further and say that Benjamin identified both extremes long ago. We can certainly contrast the criticism exercised by Bishop on Oda Projesi to that exercised by Benjamin on the Credo on activism. In the same way we can compare the rough comments of Maria Lind about Hirschhorn with those of Benjamin regarding the New Objectivity. The point here is not to repeat a familiar situation, it is to reformulate the problem in some terms which might be simpler, yet more useful than those used until now.

As we showed before, formulating the problem in the terms of the avant-gardist confrontation with the aestheticism is fruitless. It is also useless to formulate it as the opposition of the political content (ethics) against the form (aesthetics). We would rather like to inspect it according to the way in which the aesthetics, that is, the composition elements, are articulated (or not). In this way we can organize schematically the results of this artistic practices between two extremes, whose definition is neither aesthetical nor ethical but practical. In the first one, the composition techniques are systematically employed to achieve a representation, regardless of the degree of participation of the social organization. In the second the artistic technique is relegated and the process of collaboration turns into the artwork, regardless of its aesthetic value. While it is clear that between these two poles we can find many different approaches, they let us propose a different interpretation for the success or failure of the projects which involve a collective. The lack of an

10 - Bishop, Claire. *The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents*.

11 - Bishop, Claire. *The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents*.

aesthetic outcome pointed out by Bishop or the exploitation condemned by Lind can be clearly traced back to the unequal relation between the artist and the social organizations, where the first is in possession of a technique (the composition elements) which results hard to socialize. As long as the artist remains in possession of the composition tools, his very condition as artist will begin to sway, as he would be obliged to resign from his technique to establish an egalitarian process. The formalization of the addressed topic is under this conditions nearly impossible, because the appropriate means are either neglected or condemned. This unequal relation will persist, in spite of the efforts made by the cultural producers. «The activists and the representatives of the new objectivity can wave their arms as much as they please: they cannot do away with the fact that even the proletarianization of an intellectual almost never makes a proletarian».¹²

To go beyond this bottleneck Benjamin proposed the functional transformation of the technique in the direction of communism. «I would like to set forth the notion that transmitting an apparatus of production without—as much as possible—transforming it, is a highly debatable procedure even when the content of the apparatus which is transmitted seems to be revolutionary in nature».¹³ In our case, we may talk about the development of topical strategies which empower the formalization of the community's negotiations. Still, the translation of such a bold idea into a reality presents also a challenge. How should this functional alteration be done? Which is the practical result of such a transformation? If the artistic technique is a collection of composition elements, the cultural producers should find the way in which this elements might be shared among a collective, that is, they need to distribute the aesthetic techniques to establish a successful collaboration.

When the cultural producers approaches the community, they should have the tools which allow him to effectively engage its members to participate, and so, formalize a negotiation about a topic, that is, he needs to envision in advance the correct strategy: it is a collaborative strategy, a strategy whose functionality is collaborative by nature. This strategy is nothing but an allocation of the artistic technique in the community, by means of which the formalization of a social topic becomes finally possible. In this way the necessary means to formalize the topical negotiations of the community are liber-

ated, and the formalization of the negotiations become possible. This is what Benjamin coined as a mediated solidarity. A relation mediated by the composition elements, placed in the hands of the community in the form of a strategy.

The success of these social strategies will depend both on the artist's inventiveness as on the active participation of the community. Contrary to the conventional techniques the collaborative strategies should reject the individual usage. The collaboration should be intrinsic to them and only through the collaboration it will be possible to formalize the negotiation topics. A many-hands process is an essential requisite for its functioning and its result is aesthetic formalization of a negotiation topic. The artist need to appreciate the aesthetics of the collective negotiations and develop a strategy that formalizes an instant of this negotiations. Without this formalization it would be impossible to present to the community the negotiations that shape its identity. Therefore its importance.

This mediated collaboration, which results in a collectively made representation, opens the way for the participation in the collective discourse. Yet the way in which this discourse is constructed has varied significantly. What formerly enabled the imposition of an exclusive narrative to the community is what Benjamin identified as the violation of the representation apparatuses. This process has by no means come in our current situation to an end, on the contrary, it has changed its nature and reached a new dimension, namely that of the culture industry. The technical apparatuses which once gave birth to the mass media are not anymore subjected only to the abuse of the states but also to that of the industry. The ultimate conquest of the power (political or economical) is the identity of the community, which it shapes according to its interests. The canvas where the process of representation and identification takes place, is being distorted by the communication means of the power, for which the plurality is nothing but an annoying obstacle and hence strive to eliminate it. It is the task of the cultural producers to counteract this process by enabling the access of the community to the means of representation through collaborative strategies, and so prevent the communion of the entities denounced by Nancy.

12 - Benjamin, Walter. *The author as producer*.

13 - Benjamin, Walter. *The author as producer*.

space	★	influence	★	news			
b	i	c	y	c	l	e	
public	★	interest	★	parade			
u	r	b	a	n			
pedestrian	★	dandy	★	draisine			
s	t	r	e	e	t	s	
horsemen	★	crusher	★	velocipede			
i	n	v	a	s	i	o	n
wheelmen	★	association	★	legal			
m	o	b	i	l	i	t	y
league	★	mass	★	tires			
c	l	u	b	s			
roads	★	culture	★	media			

2. Negotiations

Lantern Parade

Although the bicyclists's negotiations about public space may appear as a contemporary issue, they are certainly as old as the conception of the bicycle in its actual form. The technical evolution of the bicycle determined greatly its adoption and the use given to it. The social status and the public discourse regarding the machines varied greatly during their development. While at the beginning they were relegated as toys, with the course of the years they became a realistic mean of transport for the everyday life and their adoption rose to levels never imagined. Together with their social evolution, their place in the public space needed to be defined in a negotiation which implied the pedestrians, the horsemen, and later the car drivers. To carry out this negotiations the bicycle interest groups came into being.

The massive rides through the city emerge naturally as the expression of the cycling collectives. While some might think that this phenomenon is contemporary, it has its origin in the 19th century. The character of such rides evolved together with that of the sports clubs and later with that of the bicycle unions. While at the beginning the massive rides were just an amusement for the riders and the spectators, they took eventually political connotations, which were linked with the negotiations of the community about the allocation of the public space.

It is important to explain with some degree of detail the technical evolution of the bicycle to understand the evolution of such phenomenon.



des PATENTEN des
Freiherrn Carl von Drais.
Am 28. August 1817 ist die erste Erfindung des

Left: Drais' printed description of 1817.
 Wilhelm Siegrist (1797-1843?).
 Wikicommons.
 Public domain. 1817

Dandy Horse

In the year 1817 Karl Friedrich Drais presented the first version of his Laufmaschine in Germany. This first design was basically a structure with two wheels, a saddle and a complex handlebar mechanism. At a first glance the machine showed the potential to become a realistic mean of transport for the everyday life and some considered it as a replacement for the horse, the main transport mean at that time. The frequent comparisons with the horses and even some horse-formed designs show in some way the public's perception of the machine.

Despite the initial enthusiasm, the limitations of the also called draisine became soon manifest. First of all the hard wheels couldn't roll softly over the streets of that time. This incited some early users to invade the space of the pedestrians. «Frequently riders had taken to using the sidewalks and footpaths, leading local legislators to prohibit the use of hobby-horses on sidewalks. Many riders refused to take responsibility for the accidents and injuries they caused, often blaming the machines rather than their own recklessness»¹. Although the fever for the velocipede was ephemeral, it still contained the seed of the conflicts which will follow.

The propulsion with the feet was rather inefficient and it could not actually surpass the efficiency of the horse. The technical limitations and the absence of adequate paths, rendered the draisine unsuitable as a mean of transport and it was quickly classified as a toy. The adoption of the machines was not comparable to the expectations that they awoke in the public opinion. However, this initial exposition to the public remained in the collective memory and opened the way for the coming versions. The American nickname "dandy-horse" summarizes pretty well the social status that the first machine reached: a still not complete replacement for the horse, which was in any case used by the early enthusiasts. The interest for the draisine faded substantially in the following years.

Bone Crusher

Although the initial machine fell in the oblivion for years, many experiments on means of transport powered by muscles continued in different places and

many designs were presented, including tricycles and carriages with pedals. Given the fact that the crank's mechanism was widely known at that time, it may be difficult to apprehend why it took about 50 years until the first *velocipede model with pedals* were built. The reason may be simpler than expected: at that time nobody dared to envision such a machine as feasible. Thinking that the feet could leave the security of the floor and still keep the balance seemed as physically impossible. «That a carriage or velocipede, with but two wheels, the one following the other, and propelled by the feet of the rider (by simple crank motions), should maintain an upright position is, to the superficial observer, one of the most surprising feats of practical mechanics»².

The miracle that the physics of the moving bodies made in the velocipede changed substantially its role in the society. The propulsion system with pedals was obviously more efficient and enabled the riders to travel longer distances than before, what let many people see and use the velocipede for the first time as an utilitarian vehicle rather than a ludic one. As a result, a real velocipede fever emerged in different cities in the late 1860's, starting in Paris and spreading quickly in England and in the U.S.A., with some acute cases in New York. «When in the spring of 1868, we heard how popular this invention was becoming in France, how much it was ridden in Paris; in its boulevards, its Bois de Boulogne, and on the smooth paths Champs Elysées; how it was employed for amusement in the garden of the Tulleries, and by the laborer in the suburbs going to his daily toil; how exhilarating to the gentlemen, how useful to the messenger and post-boy, we were again seized with the disease with renewed virulence»³.

In spite of the renewed enthusiasm with which the velocipede was received, it still needed to surpass some obstacles to become widely adopted as a mean of transport and overcome its fall in the toy's category. The velocipedes still had some technical limitations which made them difficult to manoeuvre. The first one was at the same its main innovation, namely, the pedals being placed in the frontal wheel, what resulted in an uncomfortable position to ride and a loss of control while turning. Furthermore the hard wheels in combination with the rough surface of the roads, resulted in an unbearable riding experience, which not even the early athletic adopters could withstand. «When riding his new Michaux, Witham commented, he had to stop after half a mile,

2 - Anonymous. *The velocipede*. p. 4

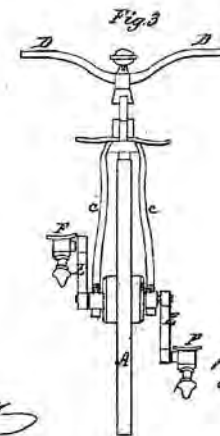
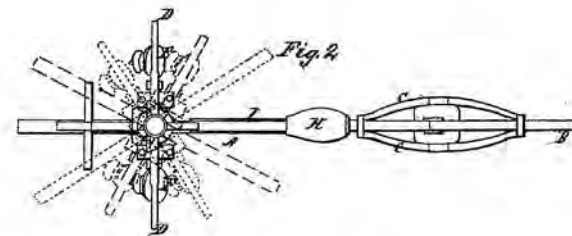
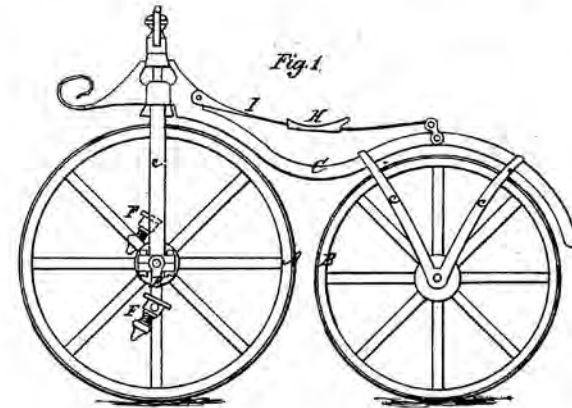
3 - Goddard, J. T. *The velocipede*. Preface, III

1 - Dodge, Pryor. *The Bicycle*. p. 20

P. LALLEMENT.
VELOCIPÈDE.

No. 59,915.

Patented Nov. 20, 1866.



US Patent No. 59,915. Drawing, 1866.
Pierre Lallement's original velocipede drawing.
United States Patent and trademark office.
Patent Full text-databases.
Public domain. 1866

Witnesses
Attest J. Little
John H. Shumway
Inventor
Pierre Lallement
John E. Earle

as his arms became paralysed from grasping the handles so tightly due to the jolting»⁴. Once again the North American nickname “Bone-crusher” outlines quite good the situation: the solid wheels and the rough street’s surfaces, accounted for a harsh, bone-shaking experience.

Already at this point it started to be evident that the velocipede required changes in the public space of the city and the new riders were asking soon their loudest question: Where shall we ride? «But one thing is likely to interfere with the bicycle campaign in our large cities and towns; and that is the difficulty of finding suitable places to ride in»⁵. The potential of the new machine was by far superior to the initial one and soon the cyclists became eager to ride everywhere, just to face an environment where they couldn’t fulfil their wishes. In spite of their anxiousness, the answer for their claims had to wait still some years.

The first reaction to the problem described before was the creation of special places where the new riders could amuse without risks and enjoy a soft surface. Soon after the introduction of the bicycles some riding schools emerged in the cities. These new infrastructures were not only used as a place to take lessons and master the technique, but also as riding tracks for those who already had endured the learning process and searched a suitable place for riding. Other scenarios like skating tracks or racetracks were adopted or open for the practice of the new activity. While such infrastructures calmed the anxiousness of some cyclists, it was still clear that they needed better paths in the outside world. The presence of those recreational centres doesn’t only tell us about the interest awaken in the society, they also show that the conditions of the streets where not particularly adequate for the bicycles.

The pedestrian paths were by far the softer surfaces available in the cities and once again the riders didn’t take too long to invade them. «Foot passengers, however, claim the sidewalks as their exclusive rights; and will hardly be pleased to feel in perpetual terror of – Bicycles right of them, Bicycles left of them, Bicycles front of them, Rolling and tumbling»⁶. While this problematic was shortly present in the first draisine fever, the grater adoption of the velocipedes by the end of the 1860’s made it grow stronger, awaking sometimes

the fury of the pedestrians. The velocipede riders were well aware of the situation and could foresee the negotiations needed to defend their right to the public space. «When velocipedes become as plentiful as blackberries, or even as dog-carts, it will therefore be necessary to have some rules adopted for their regulation. In the first place, it is perfectly certain that they must be kept off the footpaths»⁷.

Now, the quality of the roads was not bad everywhere; for instance, some American cities had already streets with concrete or wood pavements. However on such roads the bicycle faced the mistrust of the horsemen, who – accustomed to have the road for themselves – thought that the new comers had no right to the road. The swift new machines awoke some fears among the horsemen, particularly because they may have frightened some horses and caused runaways. While many considered such fears as groundless, the mistrust remained and the complaints didn’t take too long.

As a result of the described confrontations, the authorities prohibited the use of the bicycle in some parks and streets. These conflicts are the first signs of the ongoing and future negotiations about the public space. The word “velocipedestrians” used by Bottomley to describe the new riders, shows in part the contradictory status and perception that the velocipedes had: neither carriages nor pedestrians, they belonged neither to the footpaths nor to the roads. Where shall they ride? It became clear that the new riders needed a new, special place in the geography, separated from pedestrians but still with a smooth surface. This negotiation will become crucial in the years to come.

The introduction of pedals didn’t solely highlight the absence of suitable infrastructures, they also consolidated the machine as a recreational activity and the bicycle races emerged as a sport. The competitions were announced with enormous excitement in the newspapers and attracted large amounts of spectators, what contributed to increase the popularity and adoption of the bicycle. At this point the bicycle was an absolute novelty and it caught easily the attention of the media and we can say that such events constituted so far the presence of the bicycle in the early media society.

Together with the races some clubs emerged for a short time in different countries around 1870. While their activity was mainly related to the races,

4 - Dodge, Pryor. *The Bicycle*. p. 45

5 - Goddard, J. T. *The velocipede*. p. 97

6 - Goddard, J. T. *The velocipede*. p. 97

7 - Bottomley, Joseph Firth. *The velocipede*. P. 92

Bicycling / Hy Sandham
 Aquarelle print by L. Prang & Co. 1887.
 Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division
 Washington, D.C. 20540 USA
 Public domain. 1887



they acted also as a discussion platform and even —on certain occasions— as interest groups, challenging the prohibitions enacted in some cities. To some degree these clubs can be understood as an early institution of the public sphere, similar to those compiled under the term “town”. «The “town” was the life center of civil society not only economically; in cultural-political contrast to the court, it designated especially and early public sphere in the world of letters whose institutions were the coffee houses, the salons, and the Tischgesellschaften (table societies)»⁸. While the origin of the clubs is directly related to the sporting aspects of cycling, they will consolidate the social organizations needed to support the interests of the riders in the years to come.

At this point we can identify in an early stage the two ingredients which are characteristic of the bicycle social movements. On the one hand a social organization amalgamates the different actors and defends at the administrative levels the different needs of the cyclists. On the other hand the proper presence in the public opinion is also claimed through a media campaign, in this case, the club’s parades.

Regardless of the high point reached by the velocipedes, the interest faded once again in France, Germany and in America, due in part to the technical limitations, the lack of infrastructure, and also because of the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870.

High Wheels

The transition between the velocipedes and the high wheels can be summarized as follows. As Prussia and France were engaged in war, the production and the evolution shifted to and continued somewhat silently in England, where the technology necessary to produce larger wheels was developed. Rather than a breakpoint between the velocipedes and the high wheels, in England we can find a smooth evolution between the models. Oppositely, in America, the fever for the velocipedes had ceased by 1871, just to revive about five years later with the introduction of the “new” high wheels, whose newness was only product of the gap between models.

The unusual growth of the wheels can be easily explained through the use given to the machine. Enlarging the wheel to such extraordinary proportions

was the only way in which the speed could be increased, a feature that was specially of interest in the competitions, where soon the high wheels became the norm. Moreover, the larger wheels offered a better position for the rider, and a decrease in the jolting. However, if we compare the former models of velocipedes and the high wheels it is patently obvious that the evolution made them more dangerous to ride. «While intended as an improvement on the efficiency and safety of velocipedes, the enlargement of the front wheel also produced an unanticipated result, as it eventually led to dangerous machines which required enormous skill and courage to ride»⁹. The contradiction that this development presents, tells about the needs that the designers were addressing. Rather than thinking the high wheels as a mean of transport for everyone, they were meeting the demands of athletic and motivated users, who were ready to endure some training and saw the bicycle in part as a sport equipment.

Due to the growing difficulty and also because of the demands of other sectors of the population, the manufacturers started to produce and offer some tricycles. They didn’t require skill nor courage and offered speed, comfort and the most important: security. In fact the tricycles and not the bicycles were the first to be used as a daily mean of transport. «The tricycles entered the world of commerce, the professions, and the state [...] Doctors and businesses used tricycles, but so did food delivery services, milkmen, carrier boys, and national governments»¹⁰. It is interesting to see that at this point many tricycle designs had already chains connecting the pedals and the rear wheel.

In short, the different models attended the needs of different segments of the population. While the profile of the high wheels was related to the sports and a somewhat adventurous recreation, that of the tricycles was more functional and related to a more secure touring. The bicycle obtained the status of a serious and accepted recreational activity and the tricycles paved the way for a functional use. Each machine represented a particular social group and they entered eventually in conflicts.

In spite of (or because of) the growing adoption of the wheels they were still facing the opposition of the pedestrians and the horsemen. The problem by this point had progressed and reached a deeper legal level. As the wheels

9 - Dodge, Pryor. *The Bicycle*. p. 58

10 - Dodge, Pryor. *The Bicycle*. p. 72

8 - Habermas Jürgen. *The structural transformation of the public sphere*. p. 30.

BICYCLING. THE BICYCLE UNION.

A meeting of delegates of the most prominent bicycle clubs in the kingdom was held on Saturday evening at the Guildhall Tavern. Its purpose was to consider the advisability of forming a Bicycle Union. Mr. G. F. Cobb (Cambridge University) occupied the chair. The objects of the union were defined as follows:—1. To secure a fair and equitable administration of justice as regards the rights of bicyclists on the public roads. 2. To watch the course of any legislative proposals in Parliament or elsewhere affecting the interests of the bicycling public, and to make such representations on the subject as the occasion may demand. 3. To consider the existing relations between bicyclists and the railway companies with the view of securing, if possible, some modification of the present tariff for the carriage of bicycles, and greater security in their conveyance. 4. To examine the question of bicycle racing in general, and to frame definitions and recommend rules on the subject. To arrange for annual race meetings, at which the amateur championship shall be decided. These are the fundamental principles on which the union is based. Various propositions followed as to the constitution of the union, the most important, perhaps, of which were that every bicycle club having 25 members be entitled to one representative; any club possessing 100 members to be allowed two representatives, and one representative for every additional 50. Country clubs are empowered to nominate a resident in London as their delegate. A capitation fee of 1s. a member is to be paid for the first year by all clubs belonging to the Union.

The next meeting of the Union, to be held at the Guildhall Tavern, is fixed for March 14 next, at 6.30 p.m.

THERE appears to be some doubt as to whether a bicycle is a vehicle within the provisions of the Highway Act; or, on the other hand, whether those who ride bicycles are entitled to any protection whatever under the law. It was recently decided against a bicyclist that he had no more right on the road than a bullock. Yesterday Mr. BODKIN, in a case which came before him at the Highgate Police-court, stated that the magistrates were unanimously of opinion that a bicycle was a carriage. In this case the decision was also against the bicyclist. It is evident that both the decisions cannot be right. If a bicycle is a carriage, it is entitled to the same rights and privileges as carriages in general. If it has no more right on the road than a bullock, it must, we suppose, be inferred that it has no rights, and is entitled to no protection. Under such circumstances, it is satisfactory to learn that a deputation representing the bicycle clubs and trade throughout the kingdom had an interview on Tuesday with Mr. SCLATER-BOTH, to ask that the Highways Bill should be so framed as not to make its operation towards bicycle riders oppressive, and to get the bicycle declared a carriage within the scope of the new Act. The deputation stated that bicyclists were willing to conform to any reasonable law, and Mr. SCLATER-BOTH replied that a bye-law should be made such as would be satisfactory both to the public and bicyclists. He could not, he said, in the Highways Bill declare a bicycle a carriage; but if it became necessary a separate measure for the purpose might be framed and brought in. It is certainly desirable that the position of bicyclists in the eyes of the law should be more clearly defined than it is. At present no one knows what the law is, or whether, in fact, there is any law applicable to bicycles. It is desirable that the difficulty should be removed, and if the bye-law to be proposed by Mr. SCLATER-BOTH can have the force of law, it will no doubt be accepted by bicyclists and the public as a satisfactory, even though temporary, solution of the difficulty.

NORTH OF ENGLAND BICYCLE MEET.—The fourth annual North of England and Bicycle Touring Club meet took place at Harrogate on Monday, under very favourable circumstances. During Saturday, Sunday, and the early part of Monday morning bicyclists came into the town from all parts, the head-quarters of the Touring Club being the Commercial Hotel. Long before the hour arranged for the parade vast crowds of spectators lined the course, and the scene was one unprecedented in the history of the meet at Harrogate. Shortly after noon the parade commenced, the clubs taking the following route:—York-place, High Harrogate, and back; past the Queen's Hotel, Queen-parade, Victoria Park, and the Independent Chapel to the Concert Rooms, at which latter place a photograph of the clubs was taken by Messrs. Holroyd. The total number of bicyclists riding in the procession was upwards of 500, and the sight, to say the least, was a very magnificent one. After the parade, the clubs partook of luncheon in a large marquee erected opposite the head-quarters. During the afternoon races were run in the Spa Concert Grounds, which were keenly contested, the prize-winners eliciting much applause from the large concourse of spectators. The first contest was a four miles race, in which seven competed, when the prizes, value £5 and £2 10s. respectively, were awarded—1, J. E. Toleon, Huddersfield B.C.; 2, G. W. Blackburn, Leeds B.C. A slow race followed, run in heats, when the prizes were awarded—1, R. Slea, Harrogate B.C.; 2, —Fatterson. The judges were A. Albrecht and A. B. Perkins, Bradford. After the contests the annual meeting of the Bicycle Touring Club was held in the Concert Room, when a large number of members were present.

The Leeds Mercury, Weekly supplement.
August 7, 1880. P. 5
British Library
British Newspapers
© Gale engage Learning

Not before it was wanted have the council of the Bicycle Union (a body representing a majority of the larger clubs) issued a code of rules of the road. In the introduction they recognise the fact that bicycling, as a sport, has suffered much in the opinion of the public from the fact that some few riders have taken a delight in rushing noiselessly by, and thus frightening passengers; and have in various ways carried on their own amusement regardless of the feelings of others. The code provides that riders shall always keep to the left of the road, and pass any vehicle on the right side. At night a lamp is to be used, and due care always exercised in signalling foot-passengers and in approaching horses. If bicyclists will voluntarily share these simple and easy rules, which are very fairly drawn up, they will certainly win increased favour with the public.

The Leeds Mercury. July 25, 1878. P. 5
British Library
British Newspapers
© Gale engage Learning

Lloyd's Weekly London. July 7, 1878. P 8
British Library
British Newspapers
© Gale engage Learning

hadn't overcome their contradictory status (carriage or pedestrian) they were in a legal limbus, what led to controversies with the authorities, which were forced to take decisions without having any legal argument for or against the bicycle. Once the bicycles and the tricycles had reached a point where a new fall into the oblivion wasn't thinkable anymore, the urge to define their legal character and their place in the public space couldn't be postponed anymore. The social basis required to handle on such negotiations was already consolidated in the English sport clubs, which in 1878 created parallel organizations whose purpose was clearly political and social, respectively: the Bicycle Union and the Bicycle Touring Club. «The Project of forming a Bicycle Union among the different clubs, projected last November, has now taken substantial form, the representatives of thirty leading groups having met for that purpose on Saturday last at the Guildhall Tavern. The Object of the association is to watch over the interests of bicyclist as regards their rights on public roads, to watch legislation which may affect them, and to regulate the laws of bicycle racing»¹¹. The Bicycle Union amalgamated publicly the private interests which the clubs had assembled informally for a time. By no means it was a coincidence, the Bicycle union being founded in an English tavern, as it was finally in such places where the public opinion emerged.

As it had been predicted some years before, the negotiation about the public space started to take a legal form and the wheels started to be regulated. By 1878 the Bicycle Union released a "Code of rules for the road", not only as an autoregulatory act but rather as an answer to the growing worries and indignation of the public opinion. In fact, the same year the English parliament was evaluating an amendment to the Highway Act, which would restraint the use of the wheels on highways. The Bicycle Union acted as the representative body on the cyclists and earned an important victory for the wheels. This exemplifies the role that a public entity like the Bicycle Union played in politics.

The development in North America followed that of England. The Bicycle Touring Club and the Bicycle Union were admired by the North American wheel riders and articles about both organizations appeared in *The Bicycling World*, where the importance and the urgency of having a similar a body in the U.S.A. were stressed. «I want to say now that we cannot too soon prepare to follow in the footsteps of our English cousins and produce a Bicycle Union

and a Touring Club of our own»¹². Consequently the American clubs joined their efforts and created the League of American Wheelmen the 31th of May of 1880. The purpose of this association was similar to that of the Bicycle Union: «Its objects are: to promote the general interest of bicycling; to ascertain, defend, and protect the rights of wheelmen; and to encourage and facilitate touring»¹³. To understand better the scope of the League, it is certainly worth to stress the meaning of its acronym. «The L.A.W. means what it initials spell, in two ways, namely: just law for the wheelmen and just observance of the law by wheelmen.»¹⁴. In the years to come the League pushed successfully to give the bicycles the same rights that the carriages already had, and at the same time defined the rules that the bicycles needed to follow.

A detail about the L.A.W. that we can not left unattended is the appointment of Charles E. Pratt as its first president. This was not a big surprise, given that he was a recognized enthusiast, the editor of *The Bicycling World*, and even the author of a book about the velocipedes. What should call our attention is that he was at the same time the lawyer of the Pope Manufacturing Company, owned by Albert A. Pope, the so called "Father of the American bicycle". Their presence and influence are of key importance in the development of the League, not only because of their financial support, legal expertise, organization capabilities and commitment, but specially because their influence will grow together with the league and the scope of their functions and activities will change dramatically thanks to the L.A.W.

To show the League's scope of activities but also its perseverance and commitment we can shortly follow the struggle over the Central Park in New York. In the year 1879 the park's authorities enacted a prohibition which awoke the fury of the wheelmen for years and turned the park into a symbol for them. Despite of their discontentment, it will require patience and some law expertise for the prohibition to be changed. In 1881 the L.A.W. challenged the authorities of the park with a legal action whose main argument was that «the drive-ways of Central park are public streets for the purposes of travel pleasure at least; that all persons have a right to use the public streets with their own carriages; [...] that the bicycle is a common pleasure carriage; and that therefore the bicyclers have an equal right to use drive-ways of Central

12 - *The bicycling world*. Vol. 1 Nr. 5. January 10, 1880.

13 - *The bicycling world*. Vol. 1 Nr. 16. June 12, 1880.

14 - *The bicycling world*. Vol. 1 Nr. 16. June 12, 1880.

11 - *The Graphic*, Issue 430. February 23, 1878.

THE GRAND MEET AT NEWPORT.

THE PRELIMINARIES.

Small as compared with the Hampton meets of England, but large under the circumstances of its unofficial call, the wide distances between the places represented, and the yet limited numbers of the increasing army of bicyclers, was our first national assembly at Newport, R.I., for a convention and a parade, on Monday, the 31 May. Representatives from New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago, were on the ground as early as Friday the 28th, and on Saturday evening the 29th there were about 100 riders in the city, and more than 20 clubs represented. These numbers were augmented on Sunday morning and evening, until the Monday proceedings opened with 150 riders in the city, representing 32 clubs and the unattached. A few were without machines or costume, and therefore did not ride in the parade.

The 29th and 30th were passed without formal proceedings, in forming acquaintance, in taking quiet spins through the beautiful quaint streets of Newport, or around the ocean drive, or to Fort Adams; in witnessing fine fancy riding at the skating-rink, which Mr. A. H. Olds had generously placed at service of the bicyclers for storing machines, and for meetings, and in conferring and preparing for the proceedings of Monday. On Sunday many of the visiting wheelmen attended some of the different churches. In the morning a printed circular of the following purport was distributed at the hotels:—

"PROGRAMME.—Route of parade and rules governing the first grand meet of American Wheelmen, Newport, R.I., 31 May, 1880.

All captains and acting captains of clubs will report to Capt. E. C. Hodges, at Aquidneck Hotel, at 9 o'clock, a.m.

A convention, to which all wheelmen are invited, will be held in Skating-Rink, near Ocean House, at 10 a.m. But two votes will be allowed each club represented.

The parade of all clubs and all unattached wheelmen who have previously reported to the Secretary of the New York Bi. Club, will be in the afternoon. Line will be formed on Kay street, at 2 o'clock, p.m. Procession under command of Capt. Hodges, Boston Bi. Club, will move down Bellevue avenue to the boat-house road. A halt of half an hour will be made on the rocks at foot of this road, that the party may be photographed.

Procession will then re-form, return as it went, and will disband at Touro Park.

A bicycle dinner will be given at the Aquidneck House, at 5.30 p.m., to which all wheelmen are invited. Tickets for dinner may be procured at Hotel office, for \$1.00 each.

ROAD RULES.—Assembly and retreat will be sounded by the bugle; all other orders will be given by means of whistle calls, which will be as follows: One long whistle, mount.—One short whistle, single file.—Two short whistles, double file.—Three short whistles, dismount and halt.—Four short whistles, form fours. During the progress of the procession no bugle or whistle calls will be sounded except by order of the commander.

Per order Committee."

Promptly at 9 a.m., on Monday morning, the captains and acting captains met at Room 16, at the Aquidneck, and reported their men and organized for the parade, in form and order as given below; and at just before 10 a.m. signals by bugle were given at the hotels, and most of the bicyclers repaired to the Skating-Rink, just off Bellevue avenue, where ample accommodations had been provided for

THE CONVENTION.

Here the meeting was called to order by Mr. C. K. Munroe, who, after securing the quiet attention of the large audience, briefly stated the object of the meeting to be the formation of a national organization of the bicyclers of America.

On motion of Mr. Pratt, of Boston, Mr. S. T. Clark, of Baltimore, was chosen temporary chairman, and assumed the chair with a few appropriate remarks. Mr. K. N. Putnam, of New York, was then chosen temporary secretary; and the organization of the meeting was completed by calling the roll of the clubs, and recording the names of responding delegates, each club being allowed two representatives, with each a vote, or two votes by one representative where but one was present, as follows: Arlington, H. I. Carpenter; Baltimore, S. T. Clark; Boston, E. C. Hodges, C. E. Pratt; Brockton, W. H. Bryant,

G. C. Holmes; Brooklyn, J. W. Hunt, W. F. Gullen; Capital, H. S. Owen; Centaur, W. F. Baker; Chicago, J. M. Fairfield; Crescent, H. H. Duker, F. B. Cochran; Germantown, E. E. Denniston, J. Pennell; Hartford, T. B. Beach, G. H. Day; Harvard, R. G. Butler; Hawthorne, A. J. Philbrick; Clarence Murphy; Manhattan, H. E. Fickett, C. W. Minor; Marlboro, L. T. Frye, A. L. Atkins; Massachusetts, A. A. Pope, A. S. Parsons; Lynn, W. O. Faulkner, F. A. Winship; New Haven, F. W. Hinman, C. P. Wurts, Jr.; New York, J. C. Olmstead, H. C. De Rhun; Norwich, W. S. Williams; Philadelphia, H. A. Blakiston, T. K. Longstreth; Pittsfield, L. S. Atwood; Providence, W. H. Richmond, J. Howard; Rambler, E. C. Hunt, W. R. Proctor; Saratoga, W. B. Gage, H. L. Willoughby; Trenton, J. Y. Clark; Waltham, W. J. Farrar, C. E. Mulloy; Williamsburg, Joseph McKee; Worcester, H. W. Darling, E. K. Hill; Yonkers, M. C. Smith, F. Clarke.

These delegates then took seats together on one side of the hall, while the larger body separated toward the other side. The result proved that the enrolling of delegates was of little value except to give more formal club sanction to the proceedings, as all the gentlemen present voted on all questions, and the non-delegates entered as enthusiastically into the spirit of the occasion as if there had been no division.

On motion, the chair appointed as a Committee on Constitution, C. E. Pratt (Boston Bi. C.), C. K. Munroe (N. Y. Bi. C.), and H. A. Blakiston (Phila. Bi. C.); to which was also referred, on motion, communications received from the Cleveland, Elgin, and Essex clubs, and others, who were not represented by delegates.

On motion, the chairman appointed a Committee on Organization, consisting of J. M. Fairfield (Chicago Bi. C.), E. C. Hodges (Boston Bi. C.), and A. S. Parsons (Mass. Bi. C.).

The committees, having retired, found their work expedited and lightened by the deliberations of quite a body of representatives of the leading clubs the evening before, who had come together in a preliminary conference and agreed upon a name, constitution, and list of officers, to be presented for adoption or amendment in the convention. Returning to the meeting, the chairman of the Committee on Constitution prefaced his report with a few pertinent explanations and suggestions, and presented the following draft of a constitution, which was unanimously adopted:—

CONSTITUTION.

1. This organization shall be known as the LEAGUE OF AMERICAN WHEELMEN.

2. Its objects are: to promote the general interests of bicycling; to ascertain, defend, and protect the rights of wheelmen; and to encourage and facilitate touring.

3. Any amateur wheelman of good standing may become a member of this League, upon payment of an initiation fee of one dollar, and approval by the board of officers, or a committee thereof, after the publication of his name in a list of candidates in the official organ of the League at least two weeks previously: provided that the entire active membership of any recognized amateur bicycle club may be received at one-half the above-named initiation fee per member.

4. Its officers shall be a President, a Vice-President, a Commander, a Corresponding Secretary, a Recording Secretary, a Treasurer, and two Directors for each State in which there is a regularly organized bicycle club; and these officers shall form a Board of Officers, of which eight shall constitute a quorum, who shall direct and decide in all matters not provided for in this Constitution, and shall have power to fill all vacancies.

The chairman of the committee on organization reported the following names to the convention for

OFFICERS FOR 1880-1.

President, CHARLES E. PRATT, of Boston.
Vice-President, THOMAS K. LONGSTRETH, of Philadelphia.
Commander, C. K. MUNROE, of New York.
Corresponding Secretary, ALBERT S. PARSONS, of Cambridge.

Recording Secretary, J. FRANK BURRILL, of New York.
Treasurer, HUGH L. WILLOUGHBY, of Saratoga.

DIRECTORS BY STATES.

California.—George H. Strong, of San Francisco, and H. C. Sibley, of Santa Barbara.
Canada.—H. S. Tibbs, of Montreal, and ———.
Connecticut.—S. A. Marsden, of New Haven, and T. B. Beach, of Hartford.

Park with their bicycles.»¹⁵. However in 1883 the Supreme Court of New York decided against this action, what supposed a major setback for the wheelmen. The L.A.W. didn't give up and one year later its members got access to the park, with some restrictions still, what didn't satisfy the wheelmen completely. In 1886 they revived the Central Park Issue and managed to pass in the state of New York the "Liberty Bill", which truncated the power of the local authorities over the park's roads. This bill will be replicated in other states where the local authorities were restricting the use of the bicycle.

Parallel to its legal actions, the League evaluated the possibility of holding one of their yearly meetings in New York. The idea obtained a strong support, mainly because of the Central Park issue. «If the prevailing sentiment is in favor of New York for the League meet, it is to be hoped that the wheelmen of that city will endeavour to procure the freedom of Central Park.»¹⁶. This was anyway paradoxical because the meeting itself couldn't reach any immediate effects. What probably seduced many to push for New York, was that such a meeting would likely include a parade through the Central Park, for which the L.A.W. was trying to obtain a special permission. This rose the spirits of some members which even envisaged the impact of the parade. «We desire to overcome all prejudice in the minds of the public [...] New York papers are more widely circulated and probably influence public opinion more than any others published in this country [...] Curiosity is a powerful incentive to most people, therefore I think that the bicycle being new in New York (I mean in large flocks) we would thus be enabled to draw together a larger number of people»¹⁷. While the meeting will not represent the legal victory, the impact of the Central Park's parade in the public opinion would represent at least a symbolic conquer of the space and would help to push further for the freedom of the park. Although the meeting finally took place in Boston, the internal discussion of the wheelmen shows that they were not only gaining space for the bicycle in the legal arena but also in the public discourse.

This shows clearly that the League was already aware that the presence in the public discourse was as important as their legal struggle to achieve better conditions for the bicycles. Even in the day when the League was born, the parade had a place as important as the convention itself. The detailed de-

scription and planning of the procession show the importance assigned to it: the disposition of the different clubs was established, the route was described with detail, and it had even rules intended for the organization of the rows or the moment to dismount and halt. The local press was previously informed and its reviews were reproduced in the next issue of *The Bicycling World*. It is hard to think that this event was solely intended for the public's amusement, on the contrary, the particular interest for the newspaper's reviews shows that they were actively trying to win the public's favour, since the wheelmen could hardly achieve their political agenda without it.

Now, the parade held at the League's convention was certainly not the first one. The bicycle parade was frequently included in the events of every sport club and we can say that it was born just as a natural extension of their activities. We may remember that at that time the bicycles were something extraordinary and their solely presence caught the attention of the public, what could easily turn a club's ride into a "parade". The importance of the parade in the first convention of the League is that its purpose was not any more the exhibition of the machines and its owners but it was the actual representation of the activities carried out by an interest group. It provided another channel in which the wheelmen could articulate their interest with those of the state administration. «But by the turn of the nineteenth century, the public's involvement in the critical debate of political issues had become organized to such an extend that in the role of a permanent critical commentator it had definitely broken the exclusiveness of Parliament»¹⁸. The wheelmen were already part of the "reasoning public" and were in the position to influence in some ways the behaviour of the public administration, even if this influence was mediated. The parade came to represent precisely in the public space the recently created "popular voice".

What some years ago (in the times of the velocipede) was only at its beginnings, had by this point taken a clear form. Just as the genesis of the bicycle unions was hidden in the sport clubs, that of the bicycle political parades was found in the club rides. The scope of the new organizations was clearly that of an interest group and not anymore that of a sports club. They had clear legal and political targets to achieve and an agenda which included much more than recreational activities. The presence of such groups in the public opinion was achieved mainly through the parades. They were their opportunity to

15 - *The bicycling world*. Vol. 2 Nr. 26. May 6, 1881.

16 - *The bicycling world*. Vol. 2 Nr. 11. January 21, 1881.

17 - *The bicycling world*. Vol. 2 Nr. 17. March 4, 1881.

18 - Habermas Jürgen. *The structural transformation of the public sphere*. p. 66.

Reciprocity.

In winter's cold we closely cling
To clothes that warmth and comfort bring;
But when the summer's heat is shed
'Tis then our clothing clings instead.

THE European monarchs all want peace; but
each wants the biggest piece.

JAMES M. WAUGH, of Crawfordsville, Ind., was
"fined and costed" eight dollars for failing to give
wheelmen part of the road. He pleaded guilty.
The "Tally-Ho" wheelmen did it. Who'll be the
next road-hog to have his bristles singed?

"Throw physic to the dogs." Ride a wheel.

INTEMPERANCE in cycling worketh evil.

THERE is many a time when the pen is poor and
the ink well.

He who wheels a little way
Will live to wheel another day.

THE political bicycle parade is getting into line.

NO THOUGHTFUL man ever referred to a frosty
Boston girl as an old flame of his.

If any of our readers should be mentally
disturbed after taking the herewith deeply
to heart, they must bear in mind the
tribulations of the editor from whose
brain evolved or "revolved" this
peculiar circular and "Gothic"
statement. Hopes are still en-
tertained for the recovery of
the compositor whose duty
compelled him to stand
on his head part of the
time and to work as
a Chinaman reads,
—from the bot-
tom up. The of-
fice boy has re-
signed his com-
mission, after his
mental and moral
struggle with the
problem in justifi-
cation, and the
office cat — since
the first proofs
were exhibited —
has vanished, evi-
dently taking our
circular truth for
a Fourth of July
pin-wheel, with a
sunch of Chinese
fire-crackers at-
tached. So, after
reading, have ten-
der feelings — as
far as possible —
towards everyone
and work all the
harder for Good
Roads.

(Signed)
FOREMAN
OF COMPOSING ROOM.

**THE ERUDITE MISS.**

She came from Boston, so in speech
I sought her lofty plane to reach,
And to my words such figures gave
As "from the cradle to the grave."
But ah, I very quickly learned
Such common speech she must have spurned,
For life's confines she mentioned were
"From bassinet to sepulchre."

MERELY professing to be religious does n't sprout
wings.

WHEN the wild waves are n't saying anything
they are tongue-tide.

WHEN you ask a girl for a kiss and she turns up
her nose, it means you are to kiss her on the mouth.

THE difference between a dignified man and a
stupid one is — is so slight it does n't matter.

A WHEEL should always be thoroughly tired, but
its rider should never be so.

"Here's five cents for you, sonny," the parson paused to say,
"If you that nasty cigarette will promptly throw away!"
The boy, delighted, took the cash and said, "How kind you
are,
This nickel you have given me will buy a good cigar."

Next:
The L.A.W. bulletin and Good Roads.
Vol. 23 Nr. 26. June 26, 1896.
Archive.org
Contributor: Boston Public Library
Public domain. 1896

Next page:
The San Francisco Call
Vol. 80 - Nr. 56. July 26, 1896.
U.S.A. Library of Congress
Chronicle America Collection
Public domain. 1896

show the growing strength of the wheels to the public.

Safety Bicycle + Pneumatic tires

The bicycle still needed some technical improvements to reach its current development, be feasible as a daily mean of transport and therefore be adopted by a major percentage of the population. The first set of improvements was achieved in the so called safety bicycles (opposed to the dangerous high wheels). The cranks were placed beneath the saddle and linked with the rear wheel through a differential gear. The new gearing allowed a good speed with a moderate wheel size, what improved substantially the balance and eliminated the risks associated with the high wheels. An extended handlebar controlled the frontal wheel and improved the machine's manoeuvrability. This set up will remain almost unchanged until our days.

What still hindered a bigger adoption of the safety bicycles were the solid tires and the resulting rough rides. It was first with the introduction of the pneumatic tires that the bicycle reached its perfection. The novel tires absorbed the vibration better and were faster than the solid rubber ones. By 1890 the bicycle was uncomplicated, accessible, secure and comfortable enough to be used by anyone. In the following years the statistics related to the bicycle's production, sales, employment, investments and club membership certainly exploded. The bicycle reached gloriously its heyday.

Now, the golden age of the bicycle didn't appear out of nowhere. The grow took place on the fertile grounds prepared by the early enthusiasts. Alone the adoption would have been certainly much slower without the agitation and the expectative of the early days, which recorded the early models in the collective memory. The people who newly adopted the bicycle enjoyed a polished legal framework. Moreover they found the knowledge accumulated in the past years regarding the routes, training, technique, and political agenda. Finally they rushed to join one of the available social organizations which in turn welcomed the new comers and were ready to support and foster their activity. In this way the League of American Wheelmen turned into a powerful and well organized body, comprising the myriad of activities and interests which concerned the bicyclists.

But the new adopters found also an old issue: Where shall we ride? The big

question was partially answered thanks to the legal efforts of the L.A.W. but even if the bicyclists had the legal right, was the public space adequate to exercise it? Specially in North America the quality of the roads hindered heavily the use of the bicycle. While at the beginnings there was some conformism regarding to this topic, with the time it aroused the impatience and fury of the members. «No better object could be aimed by the League, than obtaining our good roads. Our rights to use highways have been established beyond a question, so now lets us turn our attention to securing a better condition of things so far as these highways are concerned»¹⁹. Such complaints swarmed the pages of *The Bicycling World* and the L.A.W. initiated some actions to solve the problem, yet it became evident that the roads issue could not be solved alone by the L.A.W. and the collaboration of other sectors like the horsemen and the farmers became crucial.

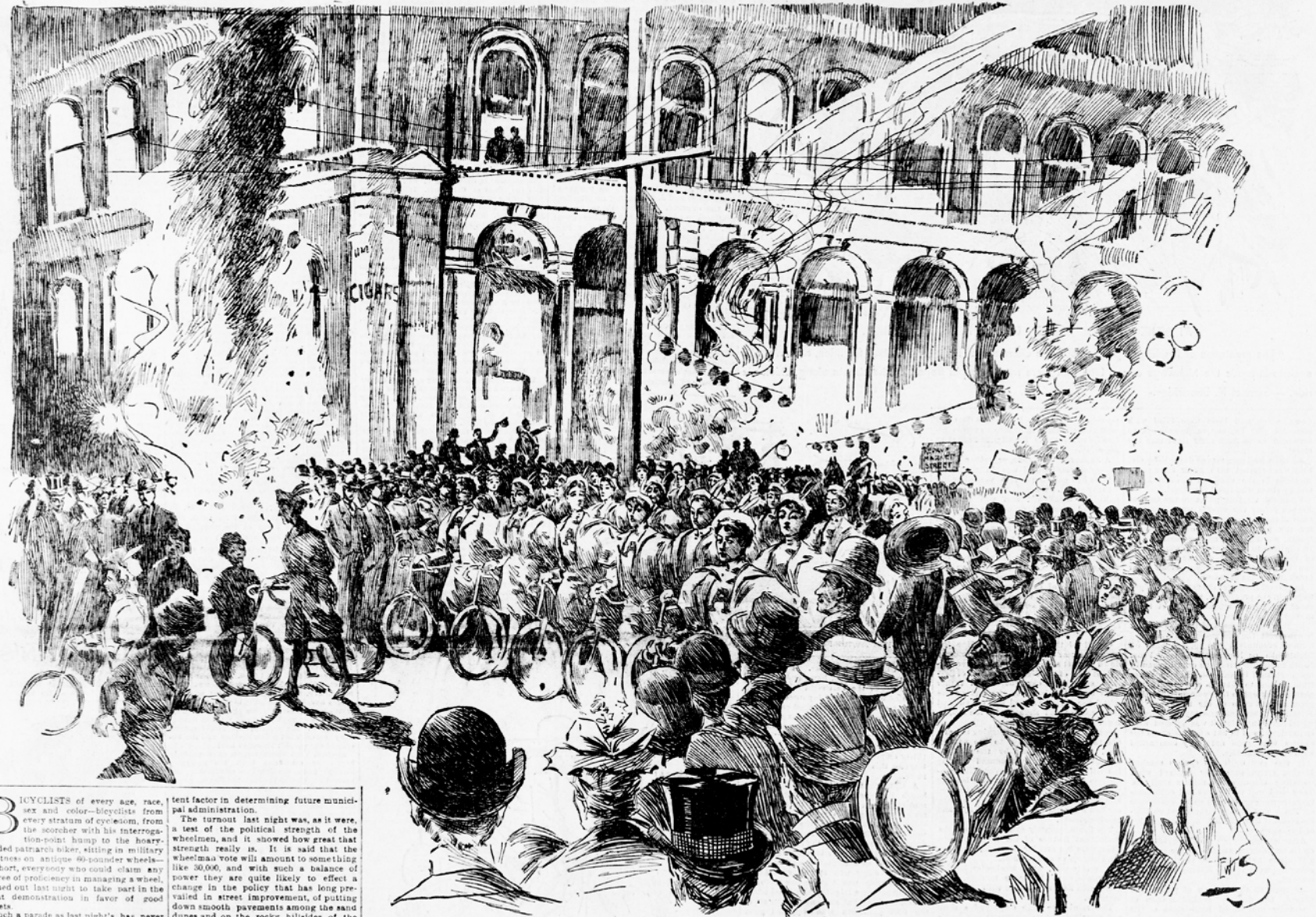
To tackle on this issue the L.A.W. teamed with the National committee on improvement of the Highway and published in 1891 the pamphlet called *Gospel of good roads, a letter to the American farmer*. In this document the practical and economical implications of the roads for the rural economy were extensively discussed, yet in an accessible prose which could be grasped by the farmers. It also included self-evident examples and pictures illustrating how a road in good condition could improve their productivity, save them work and time and increase their income. While it is clear that the L.A.W. pursued its own agenda, the wheelmen understood that they needed the collaboration and participation of the farmers to accomplish their objectives, therefore they undertook an education campaign to show the farmers the benefits that they will obtain. This overlap with other economical activities is an important step for the bicycle, as it shows the importance that the bicycle gained as a mean of transport.

Later, the L.A.W. created the Roads Improvements Bureau in New York, which in turn published the magazine *Good Roads*. The magazine followed the line of the pamphlet and invited regularly politicians and engineers, to give their opinion, publish technical procedures or show experiences related to the topic. With the course of the time the activities of the L.A.W. became more and more focused on the roads issue and the League is nowadays widely recognized as an important actor in the North American road history. The bicycles had gone from being relegated as toys to be the vanguard in the

19 - *The bicycling world*. Vol. 15 Nr. 5. June 3, 1887.

SAN FRANCISCO BICYCLE RIDERS AS DISCIPLES OF PROGRESS.

Enthusiastic Outpouring of Devotees of the Wheel Who Are Determined on Improving the City's Thoroughfares—Fully One Hundred Thousand Spectators Viewed the Parade.



BICYCLISTS of every age, race, sex and color—bicyclists from every stratum of civilization, from the scotchman with his interrogation-point bump to the hoarse-voiced patriarch biker, sitting in military rectitude on antique 60-pounder wheels—n short, everybody who could claim any degree of proficiency in managing a wheel, turned out last night to take part in the great demonstration in favor of good streets.

Such a parade as last night's has never before greeted the eyes of San Francisco and it was estimated that at least 100,000 spectators lined the streets. The number

tent factor in determining future municipal administration.

The turnout last night was, as it were, a test of the political strength of the wheelmen, and it showed how great that strength really is. It is said that the wheelman vote will amount to something like 30,000, and with such a balance of power they are quite likely to effect a change in the policy that has long prevailed in street improvement, of putting down smooth pavements among the sand dunes and on the rocky hillsides of the remote suburbs and leaving the principal thoroughfares of the City in a condition of comparative impassibility that would

A Brilliant Section of the Parade as It Appeared a Few Minutes After the Start.

transport means and what started as an invasion of the pedestrian's space, turned into a national agenda for the development of infrastructure.

Parallel to this development the parades continued being an important part of the L.A.W.'s activities and the scale and frequency of them grow together with it. The background however, changed. The voting potential of the League grew considerably and it was used as a mean of political pressure (where necessary). While the parades were held normally parallel to the meetings of the L.A.W., some were organized just for amusement and some others took clear political connotations. The lantern or illuminated parade during the night became a popular format among many clubs and it attracted large amounts of riders and spectators. We may note that regardless of their motivation, any parade could be considered as political as it presented the wheelmen's political strength in public space.

In the city of San Francisco, the 25th of July of 1896 a multitudinous bicycle parade took place. It was thoroughly reported by The San Francisco Call, which estimates that 5000 bicyclist and 100000 spectators took part on it. The streets and the bicycles were festively decorated with red fires, Chinese lanterns, red and white bands, umbrellas, and the whole event was escorted by music and the sound of the bicycles bells. Despite some delays caused by the bad conditions of the streets, the bicyclist and the pedestrians enjoyed the colourful spectacle. It was qualified as a success.

While the parade had a festival appearance, its motivation was rather political and definitely in line with the goals of the Good Roads movement. It wasn't even called as a Lantern Parade but as a "Cyclist's Good Streets Demonstration" by the San Francisco cycle board of trade. The main issues addressed with the manifestation were the completion of the Folsom Street and the repaving of the Market Street. These two streets are representative of the political sense of the wheelmen and their ability to negotiate internally and reach agreements which benefited the majority. According to the newspaper the wheelmen could have focused on some local reparations which will only benefit particular interests, nevertheless they stood up for the projects which could have a major impact for the community. Moreover, the interventions proposed would not only affect the local level but the regional one, letting the people who travel to San Jose take a direct route and avoid the deviation through Oakland. The parade can be qualified as a success by the fact that

two years later a new parade was organized to celebrate the repaving of the Market Street.

The parade of San Francisco is important to the degree that it demonstrated how the media presence focuses the public opinion towards a concrete issue and therefore places this topic in the political agenda. The success of this parade can be measured both by its visual impact and by the actual action taken to solve the issue addressed. This is, let's say, a common aspect of the demonstrations. Still, there is an aspect worth of being stressed about the bicycle parades or demonstrations, namely, that they present a political force at the same time that they *are physically in the space* that is being claimed. The interruptions suffered by the parade of the 25th of July due to the street's quality are symptomatic of this relation, because they are at the same time the problem which the parade intends to stress. This relation between public opinion and public space is important to the degree that it is, while just for a moment, the change that is being pursued.

Now, this parade was not anymore the planned, yet innocent expression of an interest group, but an instrument of political pressure. And this is where the presence of Charles E. Pratt and Albert A. Pope begins to be decisive. As the L.A.W. grew to such a degree that it got influence at the national levels of the administration, their representatives effectively were placed in the position where they could influence directly the policy makers. In fact Albert A. Pope published an address supporting the movement, where he exposed and compared the legislation and technical status of the roads in different states, yet he didn't mention the word bicycle once. It remains unclear if he was legitimately defending his private interest for the improvement of the roads or if he was pushing for the infrastructure that favoured his economical interests. Applying the benefit of the doubt, we can assume that he was pushing for both and leave him in an unclear position, in a private-public limbo. Exactly this position is an early symptom of the interference of private and public interests which later will blur the limits between them, transforming the public discourse into a diffuse show of private interests.

In short, we can affirm that the popularity of the bicycle grew together with its technical evolution and the consequent ease and comfort. When finally the bicycle reached the point in which it turned to be a realistic mean of transport for the everyday life, its popularity exploded and the calls for better infra-



Left:
The Roaring Road
Director: James Cruze
Perfs. Wallace Reid, Ann Little.
Paramount Pictures
Public domain. 1919

Right:
The Roaring Road
Director: James Cruze
Perfs. Wallace Reid, Ann Little.
Paramount Pictures
Public domain. 1919

structure emerged almost instantly. At the same time, a whole set of associations and clubs were already supporting the bicycle and were ready to push everywhere for “better roads”. The bicycle parade turned into a massive celebration that embodied both the euphoria of the riders and its struggle for the allocation of the public space for the mobility.

20th Century onwards

After reaching its golden age the bicycle was in some way victim of its own success. Unconsciously, the bicycle enthusiasts, the users and the industry, were clearing the way for the auto revolution. The technology developed for the bicycles was used and transformed to build the first automobiles. The bicycle manufacturers perfected the standardization to such a degree, that the different parts could be produced in different companies, a feature which will become essential for the automobile industry. The repair shops came into being thanks to the bicycle but were and are indispensable for the autos. Finally the bicycles literally paved the way for the massive adoption of the automobile. «By carrying on effective agitation for roads repair and construction, the cyclists rendered still another inestimable service to future autoists. Without good roads the auto could never have succeeded: the earliest autos had had to be put on tracks because they could not be made to run effectively and English highways of their day»²⁰.

The bicycle industry also showed the first manifestations of the mutual intrusion of the private interests of the transport industry and the administration of the public space. The active intervention of the L.A.W. in the national agenda for infrastructure forecasted the behaviour that the growing auto industry would have. The process, however, evolved into a much deeper intrusion of the industry in the geography, and led to a city planning entirely conceived to meet the auto's requirements. Parallel to this, the new industry grew together with the mass media and it inserted itself successfully in the system of the culture industry. The auto circulated in the different channels of the media and became a cultural icon and an object of mass consumption. In short, the growth of the auto was not only powered by its technical superiority but by the development of the culture industry and the consequent appropriation of the public discourse.

As a result, the use of the bicycle as a mean of transport faded substantially in the industrialized nations during the first half of the 20th century. The auto replaced both the horses and the bicycles and conquered massively the public space of the cities. In the United States this process went particularly fast and already in the 1920's the bicycle was used almost only for leisure. The development in Europe may vary by country but in general the bicycle continued being widely used until the 1950's, when the improved economical conditions allowed the population to buy autos in the same massive way of in the U.S.A.

It was only until the 1970's that the bicycle advocacy started to revive in the United States parallel to the environmentalist concerns. An important milestone was the trade embargo that the Arab countries imposed to the U.S.A. as a response to the military support given to Israel during the Yom Kippur War. This triggered an oil crisis in the years 1973-74 and highlighted forcefully the dependence of that country on oil imports. As we can imagine, the impact that this embargo had on the motorized mobility was huge and many were obligated to switch to the bicycle. While most of the population returned to the automobile after the crisis ended, it opened the discussion about the mobility and showcased the bicycle shortly and convincingly as a viable mean of transport for the city.

But not only the dependency on oil imports stressed the importance of the bicycle. The urban problems generated by the massive and unrestricted use of the automobile started to show their symptoms: traffic congestion, pollution, hostile urban environments, suburbanization, high energy consumption, contamination, and the usurpation of the public space are among them. The solution proposed to this problem vary by country and depend greatly on its diagnosis. For example, in England the planners saw an excess of automobiles in the cities, whereas the North American planners saw insufficient highways. The experience has demonstrated that the construction of new highways, instead of solving the problem, generates more traffic. In any case, such environmental and urban concerns constitute the basis for the renewed agitation for the bicycle.

In the 1970's the context was radically different from that of the 19th century. First of all the bicycle doesn't enjoy the recognition that it had in the past as the leading mean of transport. Secondly, in spite of the problems related to

20 - Aronson, Sydney H. *The sociology of the bicycle*.



Left: Critical Mass in San Francisco
 We are traffic!
 Director: Ted White
 Green Planet Films
 © 1999

Right: Critical Mass in San Francisco
 We are traffic!
 Director: Ted White
 Green Planet Films
 © 1999

the motorized mobility, it continued to grow together with the colonization of the public space. The appetite of the population to travel faster and farther seemed to have no limit. Therefore the enthusiasts faced a complex situation in which they needed to persuade the public and the authorities to open the public space for the bicycle, regardless of the practical and economical advantages of the auto. While the discussion whether the bicycle is the absolute solution for the problems of mobility in the cities is not our main concern right now, it suffices to say that choosing the bicycle as a mean of transport is as legitimate as choosing any other one. From this point of view, the claims for more public space made by the bicycle interest groups deserve the same consideration as those of any other mean of transport.

Although the context of the 1970's was different, the structure that the advocacy groups took was similar to those of the 19th century: they tried to exercise pressure both on the administrative levels and on the public opinion. This seemed to be the logical way to struggle for the public space, yet their success can by no means be compared to that obtained by an organization like the L.A.W.

The development in San Francisco is particularly interesting, as it allows us to compare the outcomes of two different bicycle manifestations in two different historical moments. In the year 1992 an event to call the attention of the public opinion was being prepared by The San Francisco Bike Coalition. Thanks to the suggestion of Chris Carlsson, they decided to stage a monthly event called Commute Clot, which first ride was held on September 27th. Soon after this first event took place the filmmaker Ted White screened a documentary about the bike culture overseas called *The return of the scorcher*. In one scene it is described how in China the traffic had certain rules despite the absence of traffic lights. Bicycles and tricycles waited in an intersection until they reached a "critical mass" which allowed them to cross. «It was a kind of critical mass thing, were all the cycles will pile up and then go»²¹. The organizers of Commute Clot adopted this term and changed the event's name to Critical Mass.

During the first years critical mass went just as a monthly meeting to ride together through the city. After a couple of years, however, the event caught the attention of the authorities because it interrupted the transit and awoke

the fury of some auto drivers. As a first measure to control it, the authorities let the police escort them. For the activists which supported the event, the presence of the police damaged the character and even the philosophy of it, nevertheless they still continued holding it. On July 25th, 1997 the mayor Willie Brown tried to crack down the event in a very unfortunate episode in which the police attacked the participants of the event and confiscated some bicycles. According to the documentary *We are the traffic* the whole episode was registered by Caycee Cullen on a videotape, who sent it to the television channels, which left her footage unused.

On the other side, the riot of 1997 didn't only awake the fury of the bicyclists. The monthly ride was blamed because the bicyclists ignored the traffic lights and also because they blocked the traffic until the whole mass have crossed, using a tactic called corking. The traffic congestion caused by the chaos exceeded the patience of many citizens, who were trapped in their autos in spite of their appointments. Moreover there were some accusations about attacks against cars and the police. «Now comes payback time, and the protesters, who had such a good time snarling traffic, won't like it. The mayor and police chief are considering keeping the bikes. If legal, this idea should be considered to immobilize the riders who maroon everyone in traffic to win respect»²².

As we can see Critical Mass has evolved into a highly controversial event. Some celebrate it as a monthly bicycle celebration, which revitalizes the public space, encourages social contact and pushes for a sustainable mobility. Others, including bicyclists, condemn it as an event which breaks the traffic law, blocks the natural flow, and finally damages the image of the bicyclists in the collective discourse. Both arguments can be supported with the development of the event in different cities. For instance, in New York, the event has triggered a real confrontation with the local police, owing to the presence of some anarchist riders, who engage the ride into heavy contraventions of the traffic law. Nevertheless judging the bicyclist as responsible for some kind of public disorder ignores that this event traverses many cities around the world without disturbances and that it has even got the support of the local authorities. Without making any kind of apology for violence, the raids and confrontations may be rather interpreted as the last resource left to bicyclists to reach the attention of the administration.

21 - White, Ted. *Return of the scorcher*.

22 - Editorial. *San Francisco Chronicle*. July 29, 1997



Left: Police riot in San Francisco
 We are traffic!
 Director: Ted White
 Green Planet Films
 © 1999

Right: Police riot in San Francisco
 We are traffic!
 Director: Ted White
 Green Planet Films
 © 1999

This outcome differs evidently a lot to that of the parade held in the 19th century. Alone a comparison between the number of parades done and the achievements, is disturbing. For the L.A.W. it took one manifestation to reach its purpose, for Critical Mass it took years just to get the attention of the authorities and a police riot. Moreover the reaction of the media was until some extend against the event and the bicyclists were judged by the media as being responsible for the calamitous result, at last they were the ones who were "invading" the public space.

The development of Critical Mass in San Francisco illustrates fairly well the new situation that the bicycle advocates were facing, namely the imposing influence of the private industry in the public discourse. The most evident symptom of this is that the administration started to take care of their demands only when their monthly manifestation became a problem for the city. In some way the bicycle advocates should thank the complaints of the motorized drivers for driving the attention towards them. The public controversy benefited the riders as they could finally participate in the public discussion. While the parades held in the 19th century enjoyed the recognition and complete attention of the authorities and the media, those after 1970 were largely ignored by both. In the 19th century the parade was nothing but the legitimate construction of publicness by the union of private interests. It was a genuine collaboration in the forum called public discourse and the opinion expressed obtained the attention claimed. The absorption of that forum by the mass media in the 20th century neutralizes the critical voice of the parades and renders them even counterproductive. If the reasoning public has been diluted in the world of media consumption it is important to find strategies which reconstruct the public forum.

If the public discourse is the channel to reach some consensus between private and public interests, it would be logical to think that the elevation of a critical voice in the public space will produce the necessary reaccommodation of the collective discourse, yet the public discourse has been distorted to such a degree that the critical voice is discredited without any argumentation. This is explained by the existence of a false consensus, influenced by the private interests, in which the decision about the most convenient mean of transport is taken in advance by the industry.

In the recent times the struggle for the public space has been largely disman-

tled in the public opinion. If the freedom of movement is a right of every citizen, the conception of the public space should embrace all means of transport chosen by the population. Therefore it is urgent to find strategies that effectively represent in the public sphere the communities which have been excluded from it.

parade	★	discourse	★	mobility								
p	a	r	t	i	c	i	p	a	t	i	o	n
night	★	meaning	★	streets								
u	r	b	a	n								
color	★	visibility	★	space								
b	i	c	y	c	l	e						
rhythm	★	art	★	collaboration								
m	o	v	i	n	g							
rotation	★	electronics	★	shape								
t	e	c	h	n	i	q	u	e				
media	★	light	★	pattern								
d	e	v	i	c	e							
wheels	★	circular	★	tones								

3. Strategy

The project proposed here, Cicloscopio, is a strategy by means of which the cultural producers can support the bicycle collectives in the construction of the public discourse about the mobility. The importance of this task resides in the influence that the collective discussion has in the allocation of the public space. In other words, Cicloscopio is a strategy for the representation of the bicycles in the collective discourse, and so, a strategy for the reallocation of public space.

Cicloscopio amalgamates both the theoretical and the historical approaches taken in the previous chapters. It conjugates the theory regarding the construction of the public discourse, the practical strategies that the cultural producer might conceive to empower the participation of a collective in such construction, and the historical presence that the bicycles have had on the collective discourse.

While the collective discourse involves a myriad of negotiation topics, the Cicloscopio is focused specifically on the mobility, more accurately, on the bicycle. The means of transport chosen by the members of the community are part of the construction of the public discussion. Therefore, ensuring the participation of them in such collective construction is essential to guarantee the equality of it.

Through the historical development of the bicycle and the negotiations that this means of transport triggered in the community we could identify the

massive rides through the city as the natural formalization of the cyclist riders's discourse in the public space. Such rides embody the claims of the bicycles concerning the allocation of the public space *in* the public space. In this way, they establish a complex relation between the collective construction of discourse and the development of the public space. In spite of that, we also identified that the contribution of the bicycle collective in the public discussion is being distorted by the massive influence of the industry in the means of communication, the channel through which the public discourse is presented.

We proposed that the task of the cultural producers is to participate in the collective construction of discourse. This should be accomplished by participating in the negotiations that the community carries out around a topic. Yet, to be able to participate in this discussion and formalize it, the cultural producer should be prepared with the correct technique, that is, a collaborative strategy.

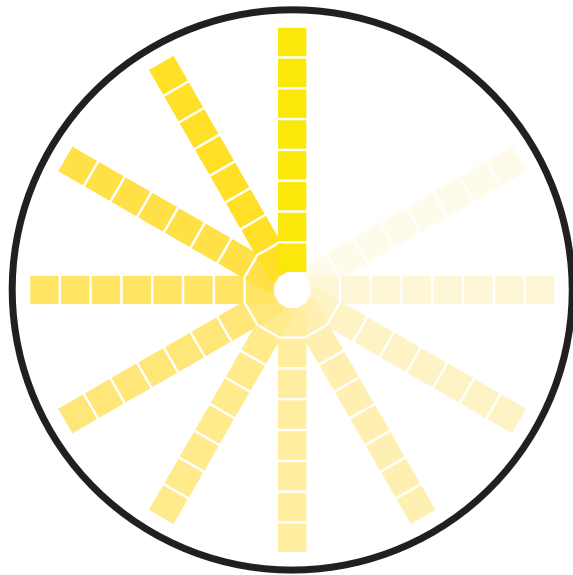
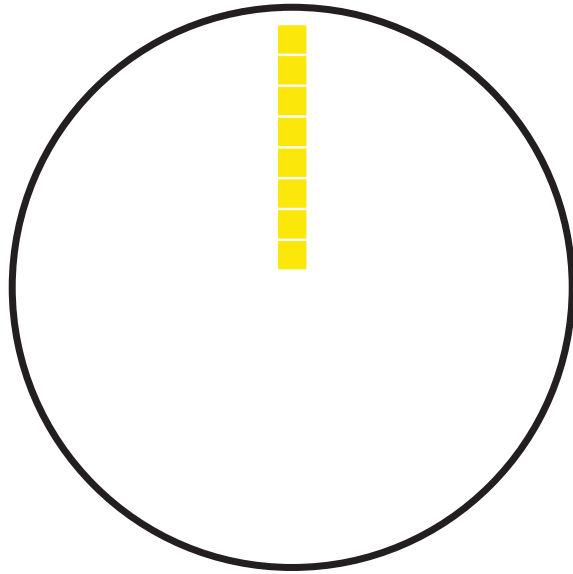
Therefore the project presented here, is a collaborative strategy that aims to employ the current aesthetic language to reinterpret the traditional massive rides through the city and formalize them in a contemporary cultural expression. We are talking about a collective urban intervention, in which the interaction of the riders is rendered visible, thus giving to the massive rides both a social and an aesthetic character.

The aesthetic character of the urban intervention is accomplished by making the composition elements available for the riders. An interaction of colours and patterns should take place between the bicycles, altering the visual dynamic of the massive rides and giving them a new character, namely that of a riding choreography. While this choreography might belong to the reign of the aesthetics, it is still the formal articulation of the bicycle in the public space.

The strategy proposed for the participation of the bicycle riders in the formulation of the collective discourse, follows the proposed idea of a social technique. In this sense the art's composition principles and elements, can be used at last by the plurality to achieve its self representation. Form, colour, rhythm and displacement, establish a dynamic when the strategy is being used collectively by the cyclists. The idea of the applied arts earns a new

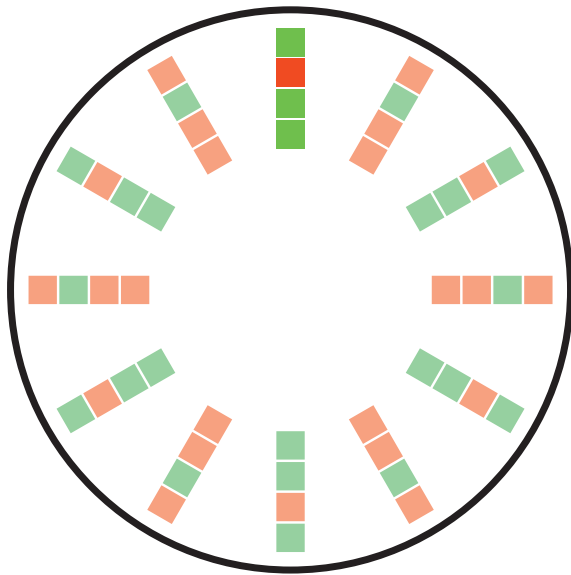
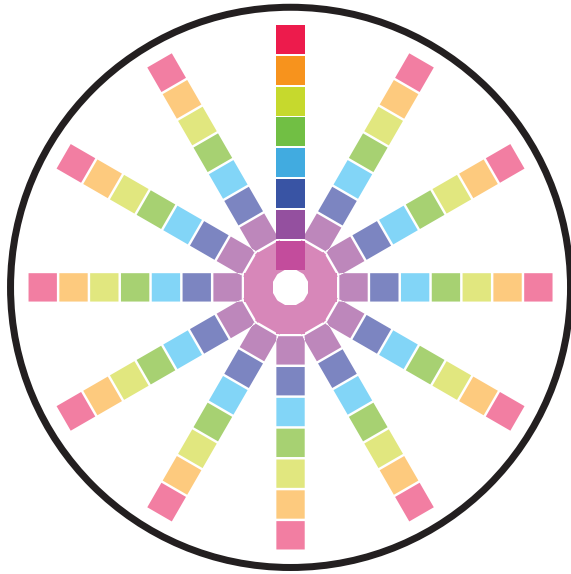
meaning when their application has a clear social purpose. In the same way the autonomy of the art acquires a renewed freedom, as finally the ideal of beauty is directly linked to a social issue.

An explanation of the aesthetic concept follows.



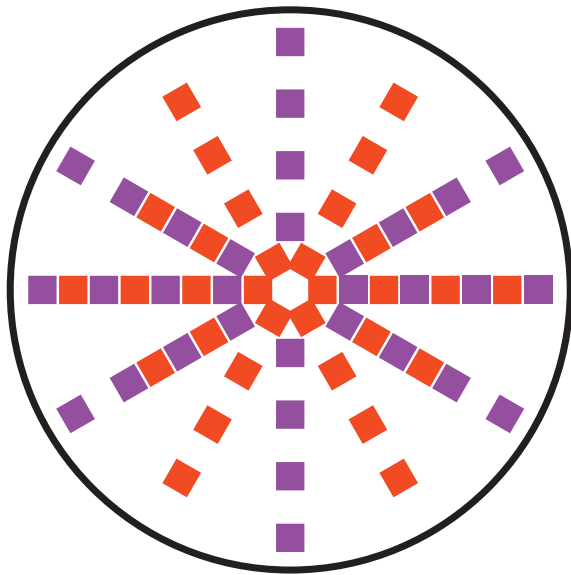
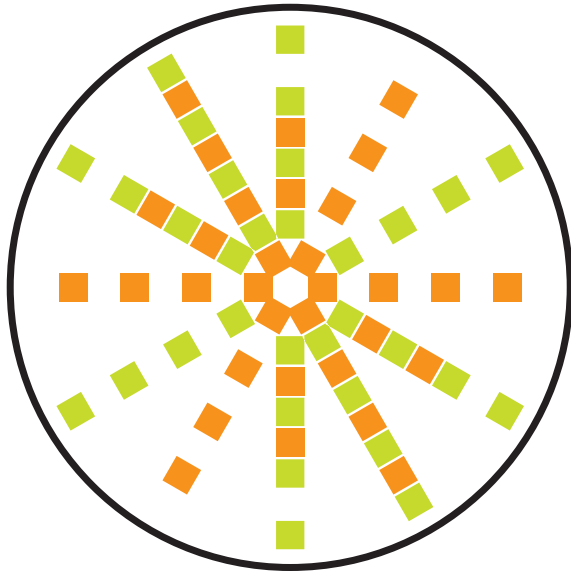
The basic composition element used to design the technique is a line, which in turn is formed by a row of points.

When the line is being rotated, the whole turns into a radial composition.

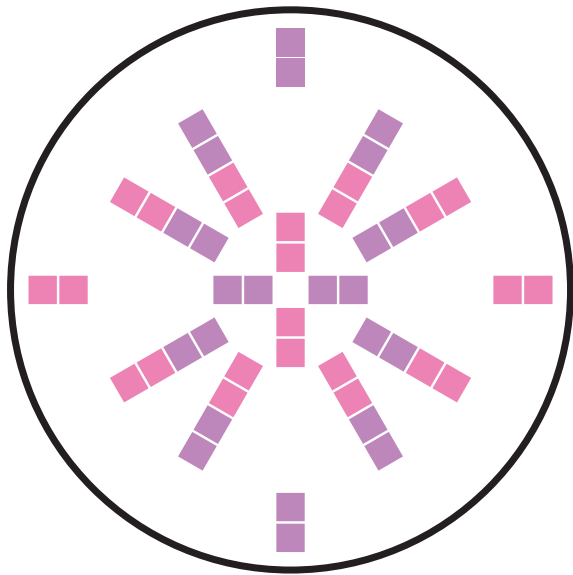
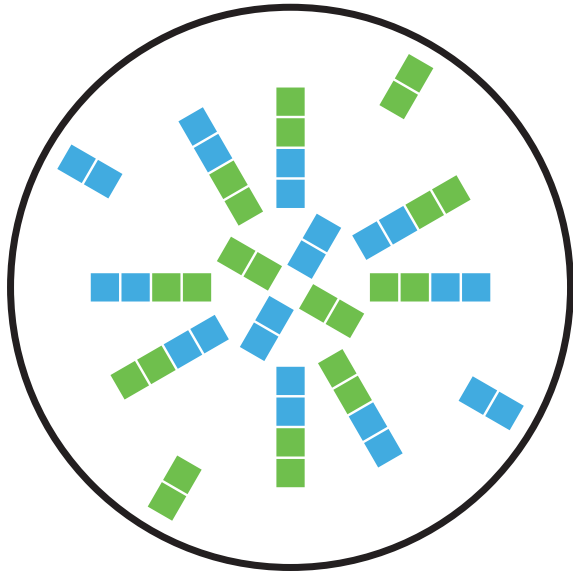


The colours of the line might be altered to create different shades.

By altering successively the colour of the points it is possible to generate different patterns.



The points and the colours might be altered together to achieve complex patterns.



By combining different patterns, this is, by having more bicycles riding together, an urban choreography is achieved.

The aesthetic concept is not enough to turn this project into reality. The targets pursued by the project as well as the activities and methods needed for its realization have already been formulated.

Tasks and activities

1. Further development

1. Construction of the final prototype

A first prototype of the device has already been developed and built. A second and final version with many improvements is already designed and should be tested before going to production. The cost calculation is based on the second version.

2. Development of software

The software comprehends the protocol of communication and the generation of patterns.

2. Production

1. Order of electronic components

2. Production of the PCB (Printed Circuit Board)

3. Assembly and soldering of parts

3. Organization

1. Publication and promotion

2. Selection of routes in Vienna

3. Distribution of the devices

4. Realization

1. Record the event

Cameras mounted on bicycles

2. Photograph the event

3. Edition of the video material

Targets

1. Assembly of final prototype

2. Assemble 100 devices of self representation

3. Organize at least 3 ridings in the city along the selected paths

4. Document the interventions in photographs and videos

Products

1. Prototype

2. 100 devices

3. Events involving 100 cyclists

4. High definition photographs of the choreographies

5. Documentation film including

1. making of

2. urban interventions

3. interviews

Beneficiaries

Limiting the beneficiaries of the project to a specific group ignores the multiple contributions that the bicycle transit carries for the community. In an ideal formulation the main beneficiary is the whole community. That being said, the following population groups can be suggested as direct and indirect beneficiaries.

The persons which participate in the event are the direct beneficiaries of the project. Not only the persons who receive a device can take part in the events. 600 persons should benefit directly from the project.

Branding

The project will be recognizable by a random, multilingual mix of the following words.

- Social, community, cycling, glowing, lighting, project, venture, experiment.
- Gesellschaftliches, radln, leuchtend, Unternehmung, Projekt.
- Bici, social, comunidad, ciclístico, lumínico, ardiente, proyecto, experimento.

For instance, a possible combination could be:

Gesellschaftliches cycling lighting proyecto

For the internet site a domain without a specific meaning was chosen.

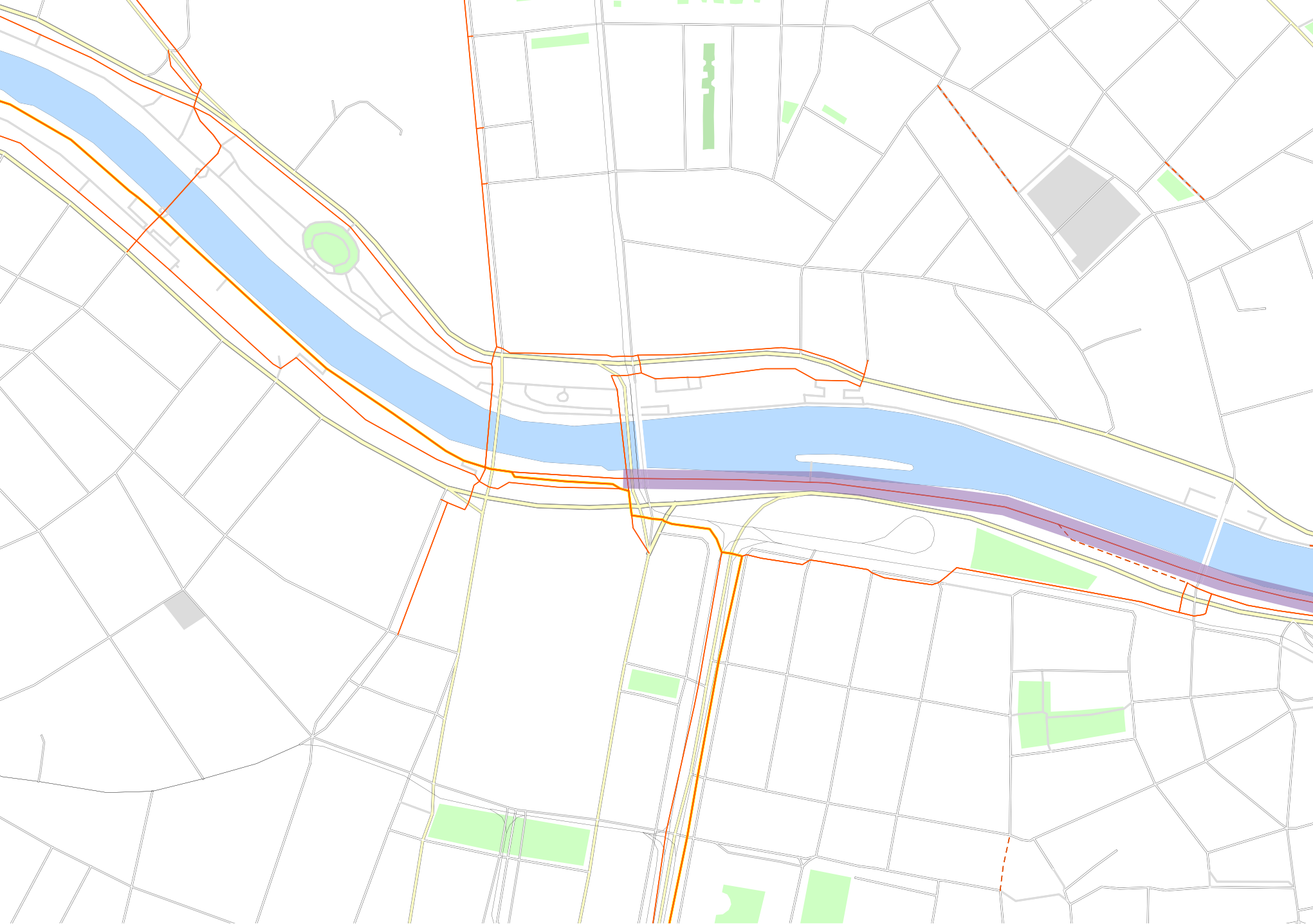
www.theprojectwithbicycles.com

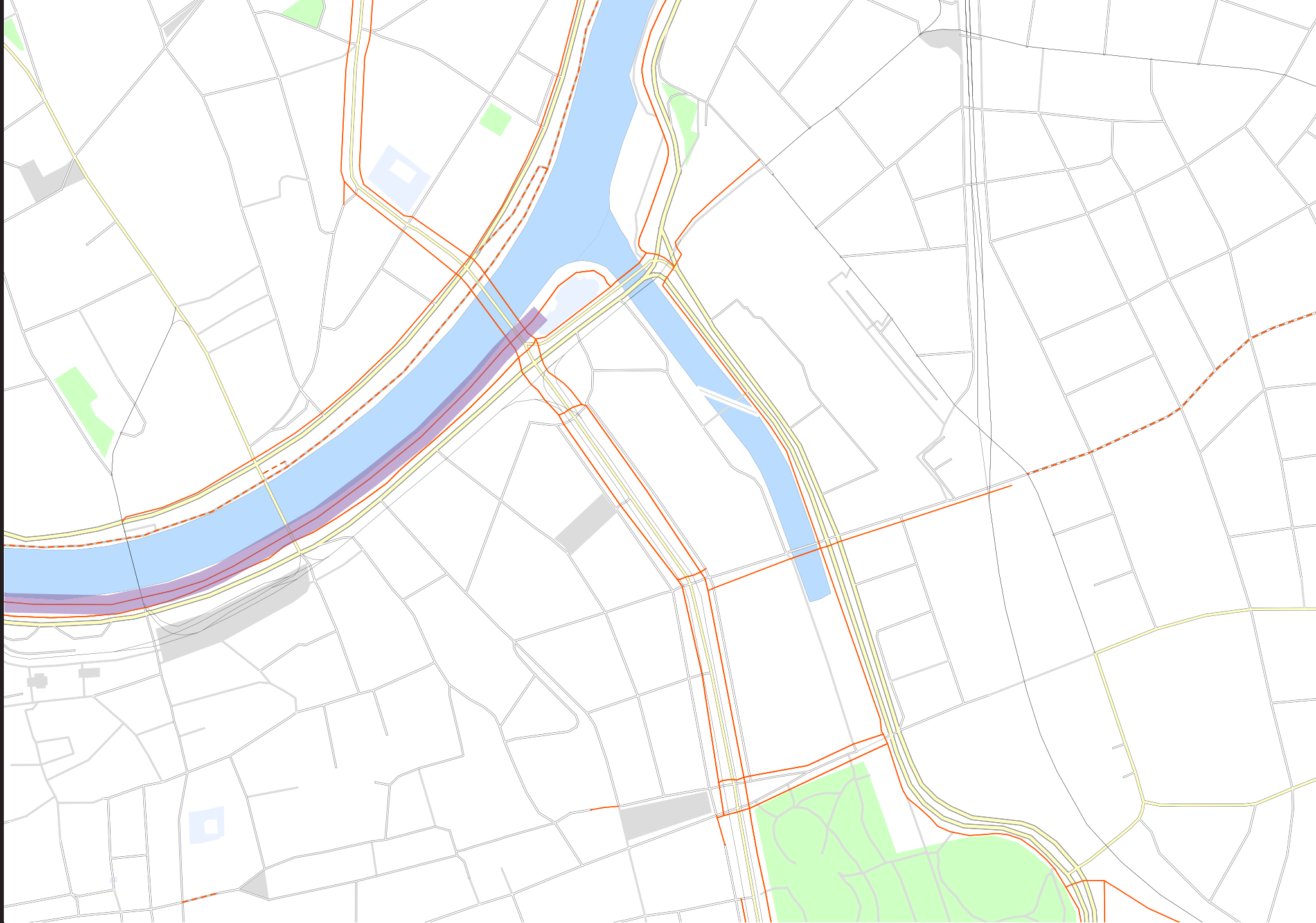
Relation of products task and activities

Task	Product	Activity	Technique
Further development	Prototype	Design	---
		Construction of final prototype	Soldering
		Software Development	C++
Production	100 Devices	Order of electronic components	---
		PCB Production	PCB etching
		Assembly and soldering of parts	SMD Reflow Soldering
Organisation	Events with 100 cyclists	Project Promotion	Internet, print media
		Coordination	---
		Distribution of the devices	On-site
Realisation	Documentation film	Photographs	High resolution Cameras
	Photographs of the interventions	Record the event	HD video Cameras
		Edition of the recorded material	DVD, Large format prints

The city may be considered both as the space where the collective discourse takes place and as result of the same. The discourse is constructed until some extend in the public space and at the same time the public space is defined in the collective discourse. If we are to talk about a “collective discourse of the mobility”, we should consider the paths and the streets both as the physical expression of this discourse, as well as the place where the discourse regarding them may be constructed. Therefore, they constitute the ideal stage for an intervention concerning this topic. Just as in the public sphere we can find voices stronger than others, the value given to the streets is also subjected to a social construction of meaning. The streets are involved in the in the same social process that designates a square or a building as emblematic or iconic.

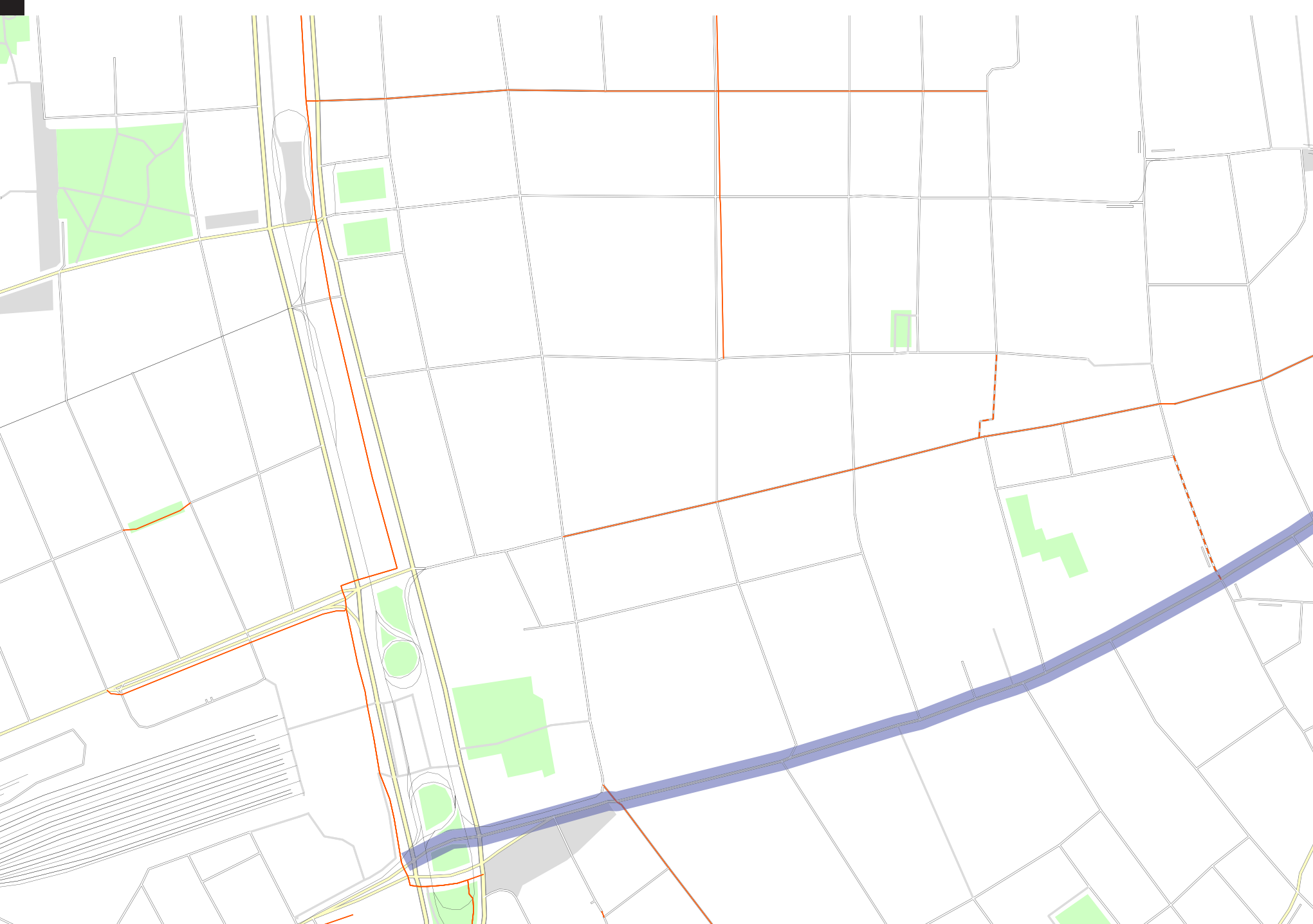
As the complex process which constructs the social meaning of the streets is not the central topic of our discussion, we dared to subjectively choose three of them which in our opinion have an special meaning in the city of Vienna. Regardless of (or because of) the subjective judgement, some streets have won notoriety in the society as the places where the collective discourse is presented. In Vienna we can find different urban landscapes whose social meanings and aesthetical value are relevant for this project. We can think about them as platforms where the riding choreographies take place.

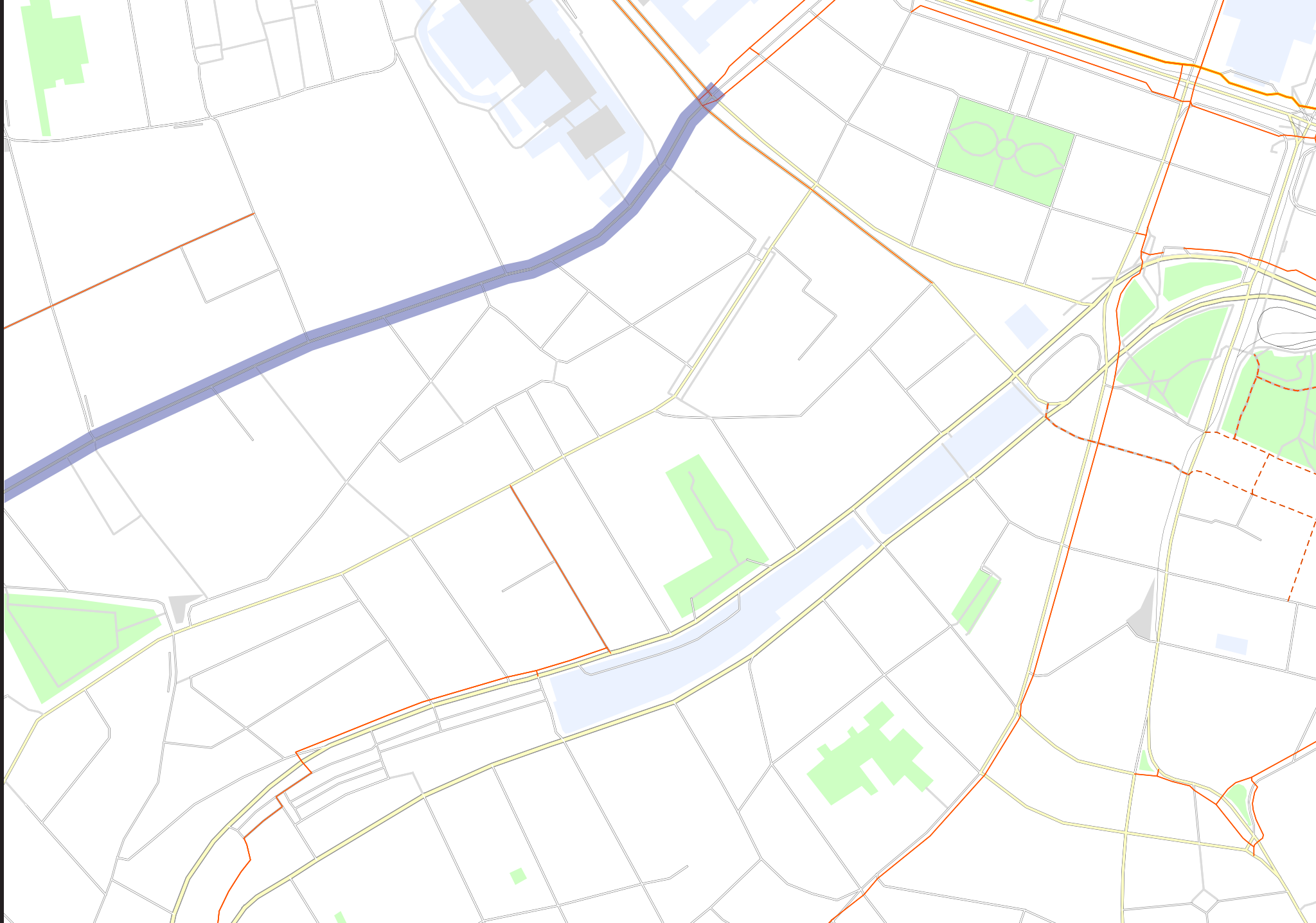








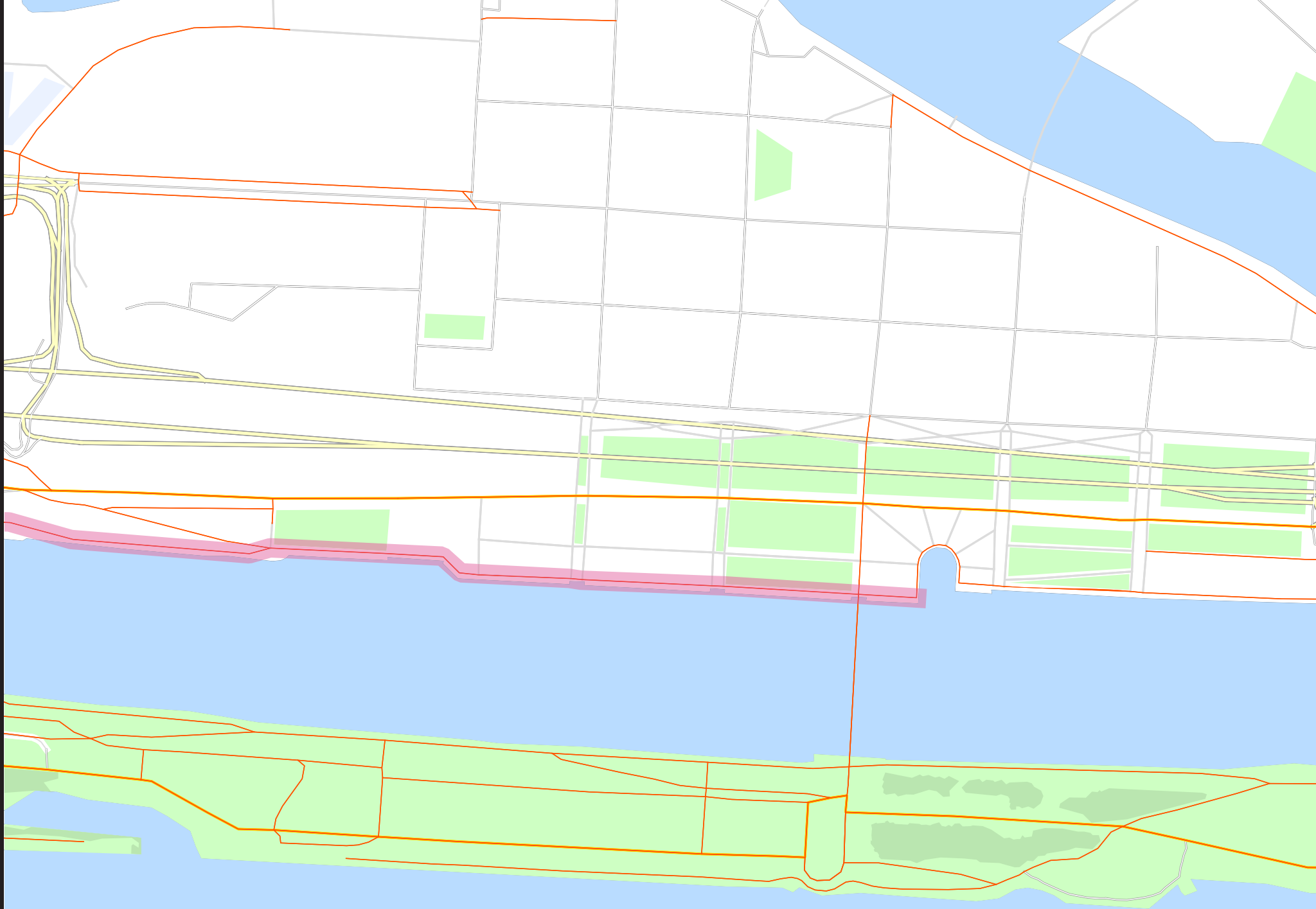
















The visual concept of the riding choreography has been concreted in a device which each participant should install in the wheels of the bicycle. Through this device it is possible to distribute the composition techniques among the riding collectives and establish a real mediated collaboration, which finally overcomes the difficult situation faced by the cultural producers when they work together with a collective. The system configures a strategy which enables the collaboration of a collective and the formalization of their social essence.

The tool is designed specifically to enable cooperation among cyclists and formalize their topic (the bicycle). It is to be understood as a social artistic technique which is intended only to work by social use (contrary to individual use).

The device follows the composition principles explained before and translate them into real constructive elements. The line is translated into a row of light emitting diodes. This diodes can change their colour and be turned on and off. In this way it is possible to create different patterns, by blinking the diodes or by altering their colour.

The device also has a Radio Frequency module which enables the communication among different devices. The communication allows complex interactions between the participants and is an important feature of the device.

Hardware

Thanks to the open source movement, the technology needed for the construction of this device became available. The hardware and the software were completely developed in the arduino environment.

The device operates in the following way:

A micro controller connected to a row of 8 or 16 lights and a radio frequency (RF) module are to be placed on the wheel of a bicycle. As the wheel turns, the lights will be blinking and a pattern will be generated.

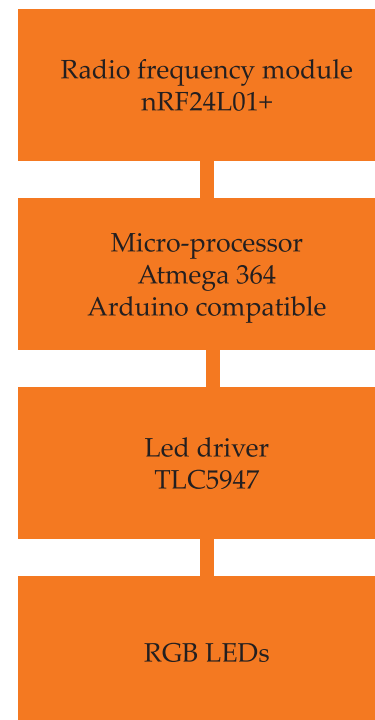
The micro-controller plays the most important role. It receives the information of the radio frequency module. Based on the information received, the micro-controller will send a new message to the other devices. The micro-controller stores also the patterns that can be displayed by the led driver.

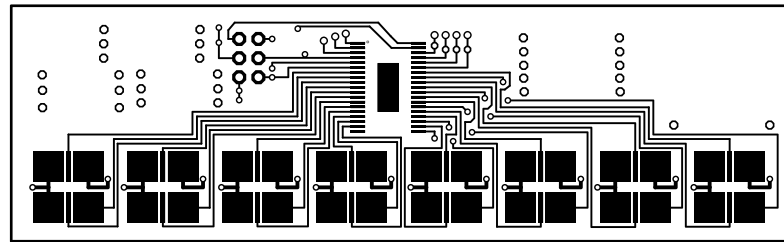
The led driver controls the current that flows through the leds. In this way it is possible to dim the lights of change the colour of each led.

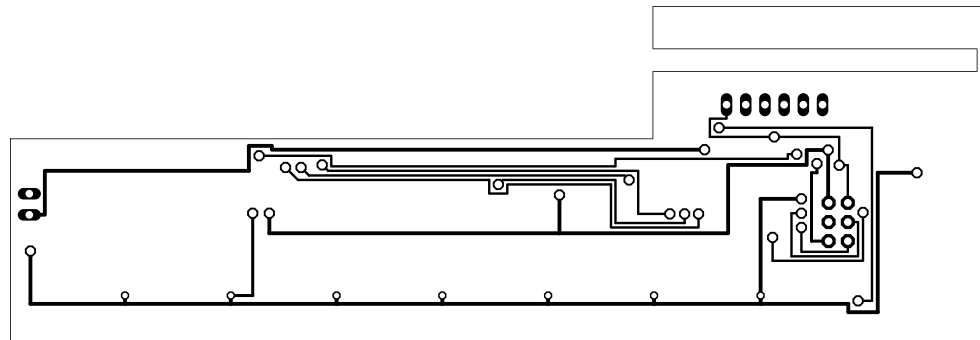
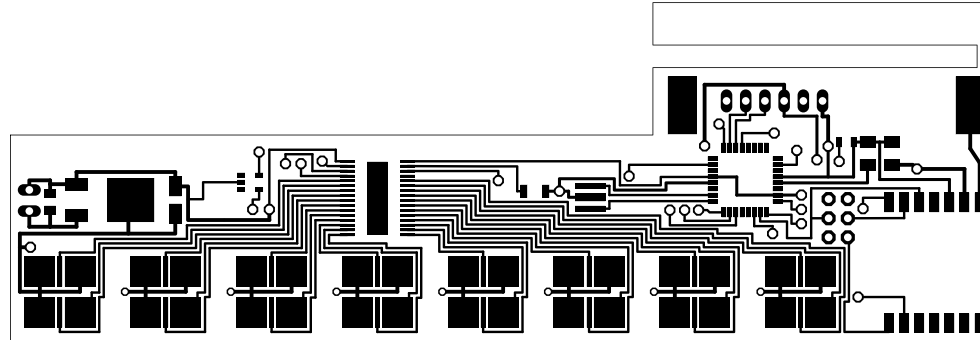
The radio frequency module enables the communication between the devices. Therefore through the RF module it is possible to coordinate the patterns among different bicycles.

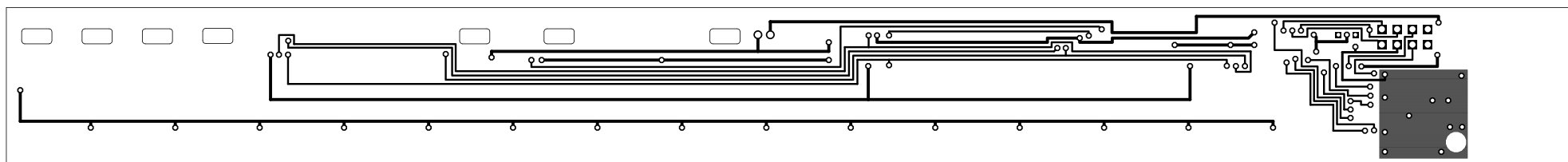
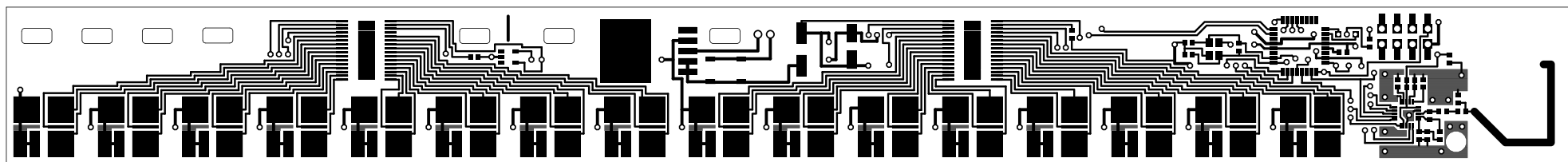
The device is entirely designed to be RoHS (Restriction of Hazardous Substances) compliant. All the components are to be assembled with surface mounting technology (SMT) in a re-flow soldering process.

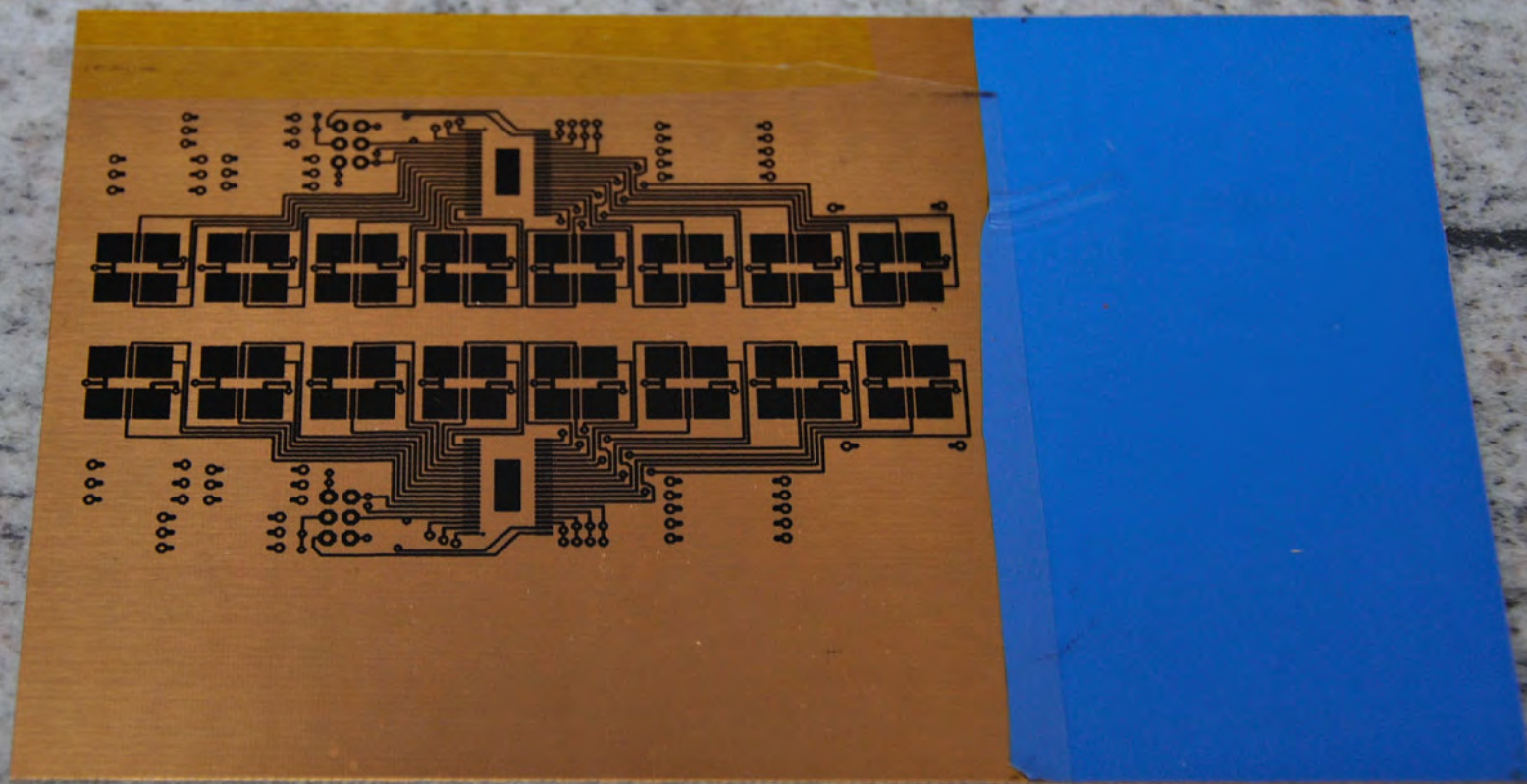
In the following pages, the technical plans and the construction process of the three prototypes can be seen.

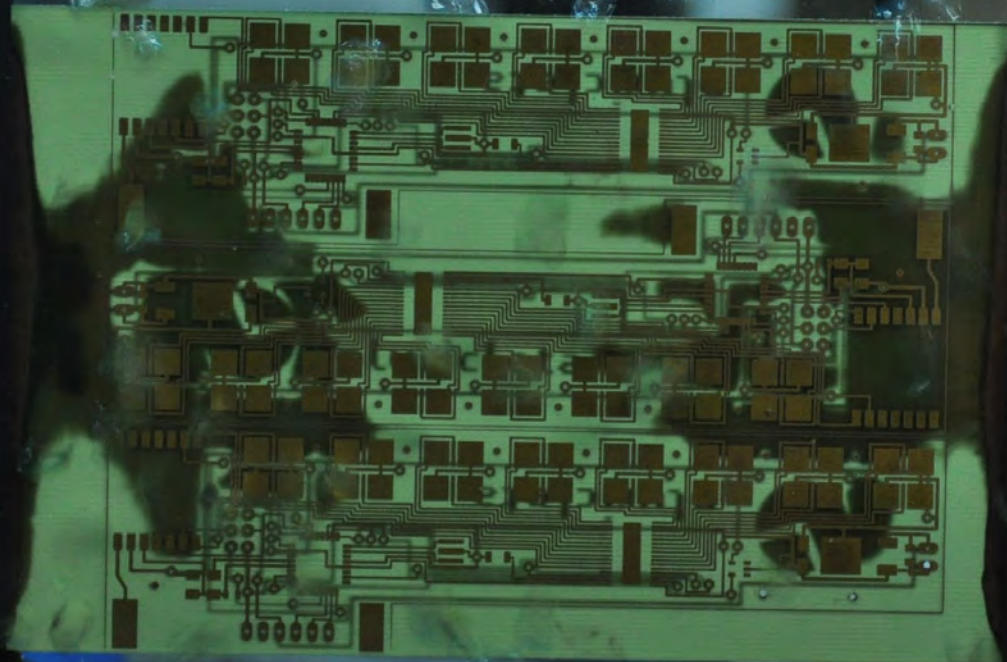


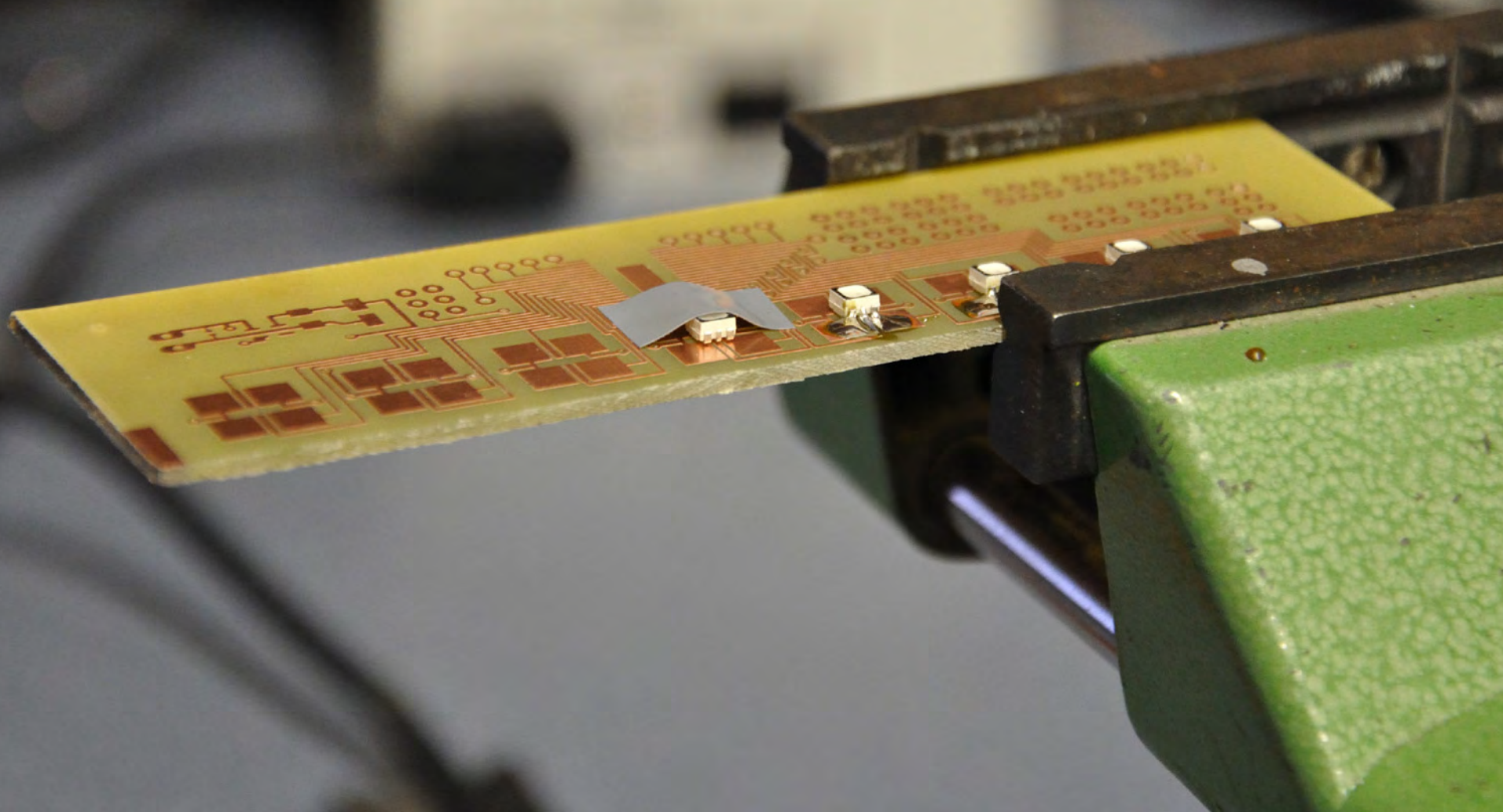


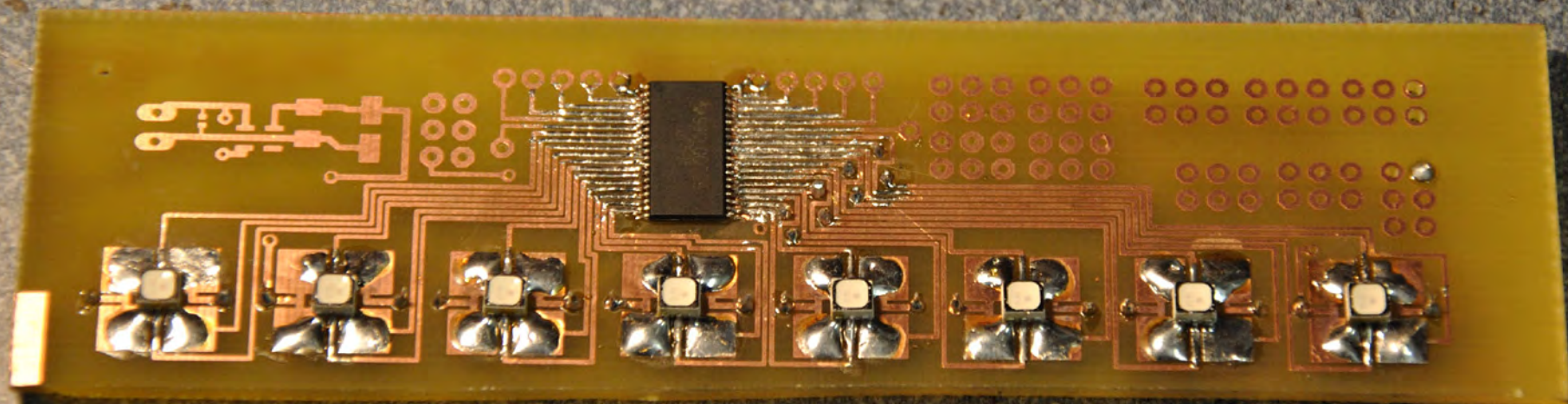


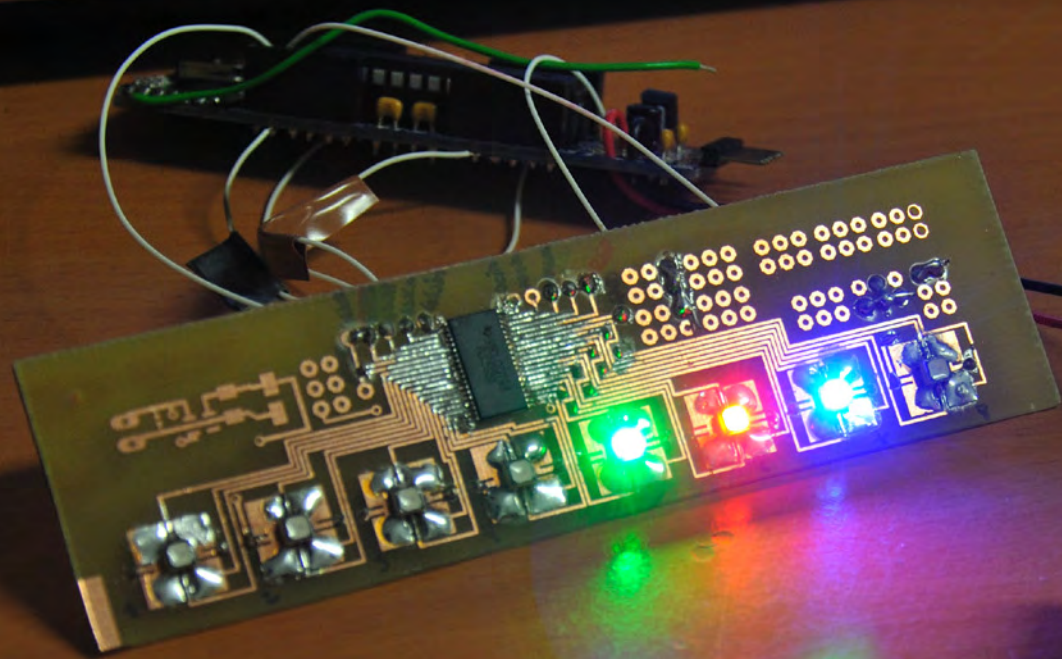


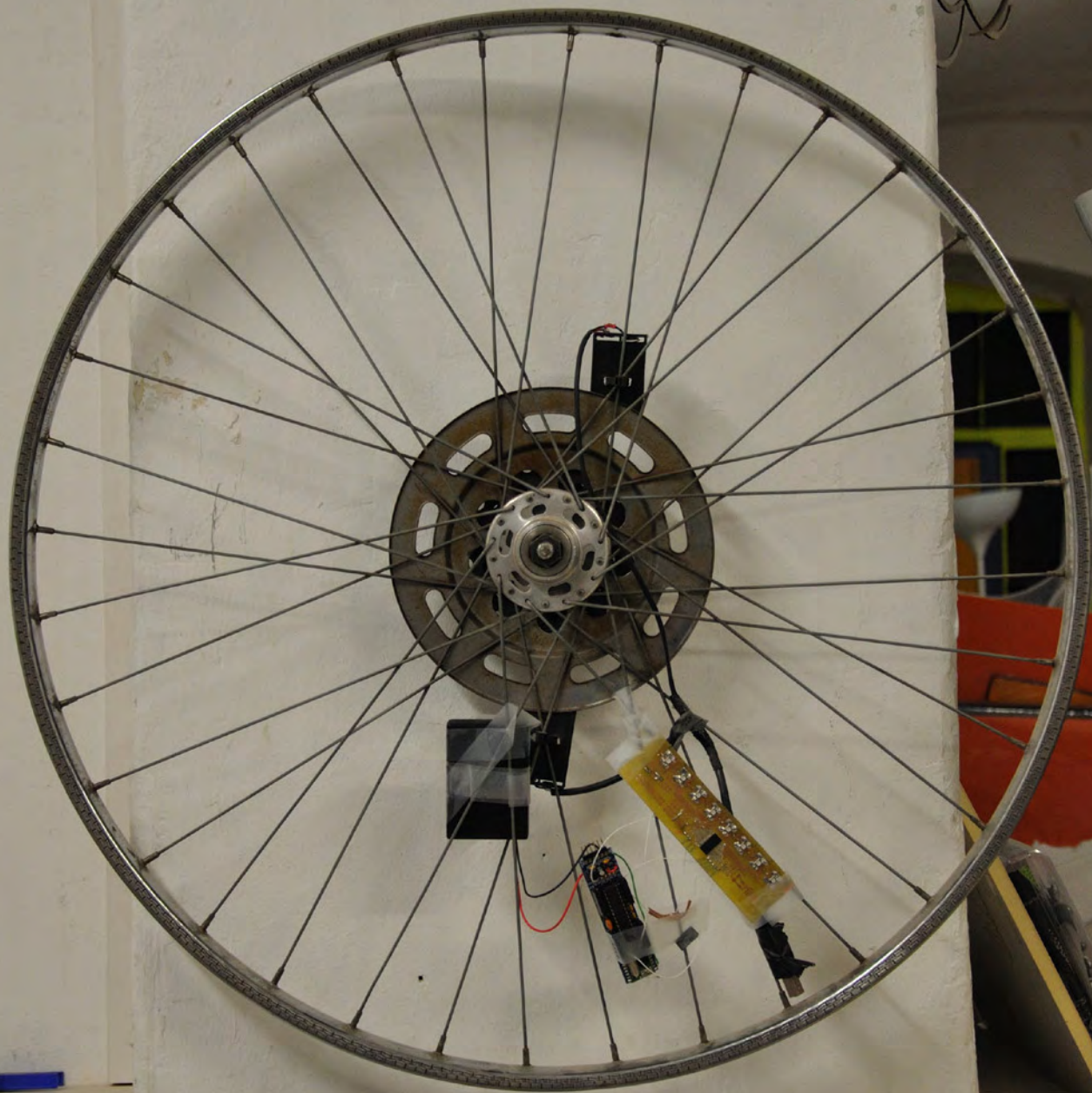


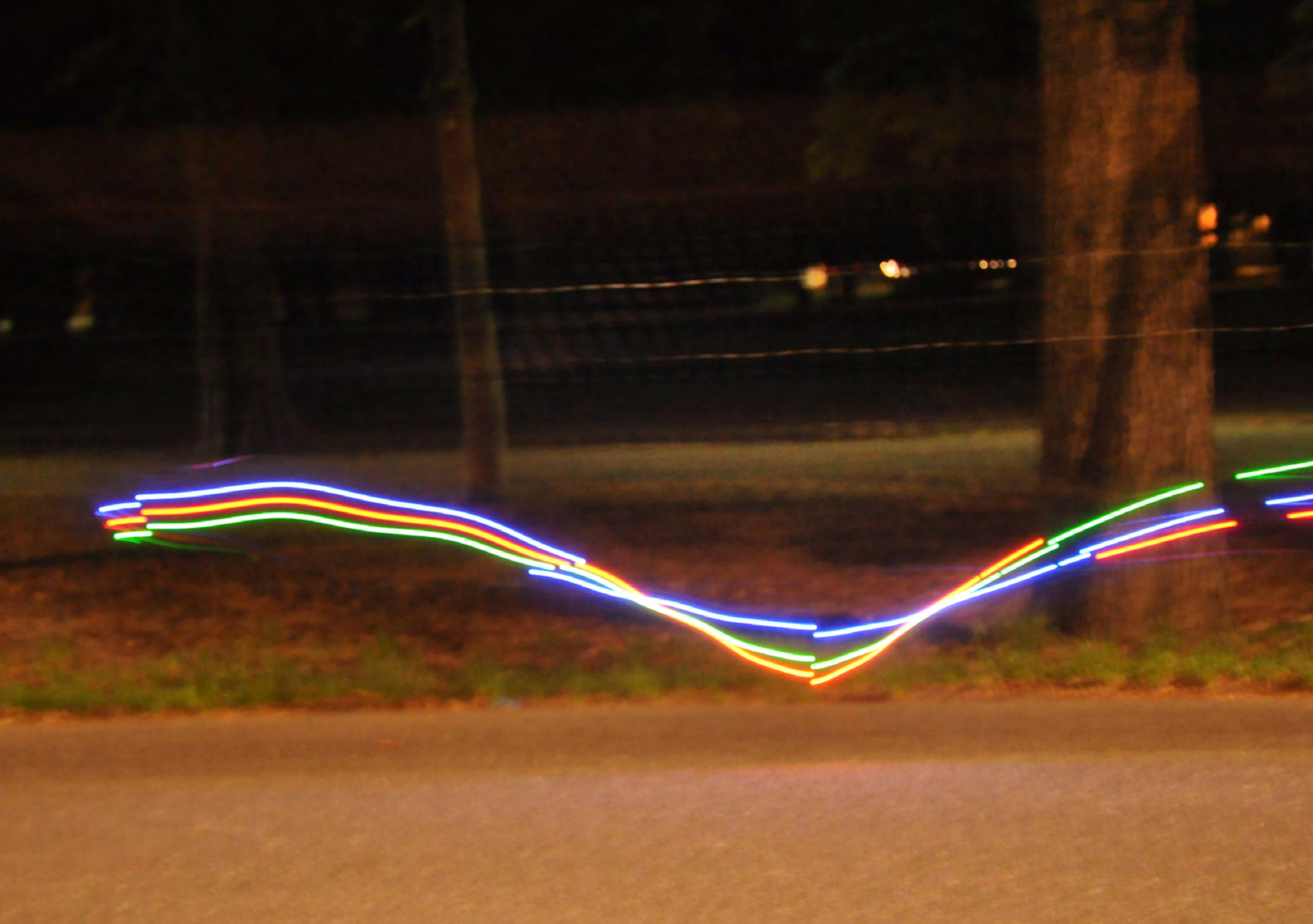




















4. Appendix

Bibliography

Theory

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined communities*. Verso. London. 2006.

Ashford, Doug & al. *A Conversation on Social Collaboration*. Art Journal, Vol. 65, No. 2. Summer, 2006.

Benjamin, Walter. *Der Autor als Produzent*. In: *Gesammelte Schriften II-2*. Suhrkamp. Germany. 2002.

Benjamin, Walter. *The author as producer*. New Left Review I/62, July-August, 1970.

Benjamin, Walter. *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*. Suhrkamp. Frankfurt am Main. Germany. 2003

Bishop, Claire. *Antagonism and relational aesthetics*. October. (magazine) Fall, 2004.

Bishop, Claire. *Participation*. Whitechapel Gallery & MIT Press. Massachusetts & London. 2006.

Bishop, Claire. *The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents*. Art forum. February 2006.

Bolton, Richard. *Enlightened Self-Interest: The Avant-Garde in the '80s*. In: *Art, Activism and Oppositionality*. Duke University press. USA. 1998.

Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Les presses du réel. France. 2002.

Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Postproduction*. Lukas & Sternberg. New Yor. U.S.A. 2007.

Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis, U.S.A. 2009.

Coulter-Smith, Graham. *Deconstructing installation art*. Brumaria. Madrid, Spain. 2009.

Guattari, Felix. *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. In: *Participation*. Whitechapel Gallery & MIT Press. London & Massachusetts. 2006.

Finkelpearl, Tom. *Dialogues in Public Art*. MIT Press. U.S.A. 2000.

Habermas, Jürgen. *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*. Hermann Luchterhand Verlag. Germany. 1974.

Horkheimer, Max & Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag. Frankfurt am Main. Germany. 1988.

Jameson, Frederic. *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Duke University Press, U.S.A. 1990.

Kester, Grant H. *Response to Claire Bishop 'Another Turn'*. In: *Art forum*. May 2006.

Kester, Grant, & al. *Art activism and oppositionality*. Duke University press. U.S.A. 1998.

Kester, Grant H. *Conversation Pieces*. University of California Press. U.S.A. 2004.

Kwon, Miwon. *One place after another*. MIT Press. Massachusetts, U.S.A. 2002.

Lefebvre, Henri. *Writings on Cities*. Blackwell Publishing. Massachusetts, U.S.A. 1996.

Lewitzky, Uwe. *Kunst für alle?*. Transcript Verlag. Bielefeld, Germany. 2005.

Manovich, Lev. *The language of new media*. MIT Press Massachusetts, U.S.A. 2002.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Inoperative Community*. University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis, U.S.A. 1991.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *La representación en el dispositivo ideológico del nazismo*. Psike-ba: Revista de Psicoanálisis y Estudios Culturales. N°. 7, 2008.

Rancière, Jaques. *Problems and Transformations in Critical Art*. In: *Participation*. Whitechapel Gallery & MIT Press. London & Massachusetts. U.S.A. 2006.

Rollig, Stella & Eva Strum. *Dürfen die das? Kunst als sozialer Raum*. Turia + Kant. Vienna, Austria. 2002.

History of the bicycle

Anonymous. *The velocipede, Its history, and practical hints how to use it*. J. Bruton. Cyclist Touring Club. England. 1869.

Aronson, Sydney H. *The sociology of the bicycle*. In: *Social Forces*, Vol. 30 No. 3. University of North Carolina Press. U.S.A. March 1952.

Batterbury, Simon. *Environmental activism and social networks: Campaigning for bicycles and alternative transport in West London*. In: *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 590. Sage Publications. U.S.A. November 2003.

Bottomley, Josep Firth. *The velocipede, its past, its present & its future*. Simpkin, Marshall & co. London, England. 1869.

Dodge, Pryor. *The Bicycle*. Flammarion. New York, U.S.A. 1996.

Garatt, H. A. *The modern Safety Bicycle*. Whittaker & co. New York, U.S.A. 1899.

Godart, J. T. *The velocipede*. Hurd and Houghton. New York, U.S.A. 1869.

Pope, Albert A. *The movement for Better Roads. An address*. Pope Manufacturing co. Boston, U.S.A. 1892.

Pratt, Charles Eadward. *The american Bicycler*. The riverside Press. Boston,

U.S.A. 1879.

Sharp, Archibald. *Bicycles & Tricycles*. Longmans, Green, and co. 1896.

Scott, Robert P. *Energy and Locomotion*. J.B. Lappincoot company. 1889.

Various. *The bicycling world & Archery field*. Vol 1. Boston, U.S.A. November 1879 - October 1880.

Various. *The bicycling world & Archery field*. Vol 2. Boston, U.S.A. November 1880 - May 1881.

Various. *The bicycling world*. Vol 3-5. Boston, U.S.A. May 1881 - November 1882.

Various. *The bicycling world*. Vol 6-9. Boston, U.S.A. November 1882 - October 1884.

Various. *The bicycling world*. Vol 10-11. Boston, U.S.A. November 1884 - October 1885.

Various. *The bicycling world*. Vol 12. Boston, U.S.A. November 1885 - April 1886.

Various. *The bicycling world*. Vol 13. Boston, U.S.A. May 1886 - October 1886.

Various. *The bicycling world*. Vol 14. Boston, U.S.A. November 1886 - April 1887.

Various. *The bicycling world*. Vol 15. Boston, U.S.A. May 1887 - October 1887.

Various. *The bicycling world*. Vol 16. Boston, U.S.A. November 1887 - April 1888.

Various. *The bicycling world & L.A.W. Bulletin*. Vol 17. Boston, U.S.A. May 1888 - October 1888.

Various. *The bicycling world & L.A.W. Bulletin*. Vol 18-19. Boston, U.S.A. November 1888 - October 1889.

The bicycling world & L.A.W. Bulletin. Vol 20-21. Boston, U.S.A. November 1889 - October 1890.

Velox. *Velocipedes, Bicycles and Tricycles: How to make and how to use them*. George Routledge and sons. London, England. 1869.