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# Cycling in time of tactical urbanism: First lessons of a cross-cultural project analyzing the creation of Corona cycle-ways

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# Birth of a project

- A double crisis:
  - Sanitary
  - Ecological
- Needs:
  - Distancing
  - Decongestion of public transport
  - Counteract the fear of a modal shift (in particular from public transport) to the automobile
  - Limitation of greenhouse gases and particles
  - In Montreal: Access to essential services, shops and leisure public spaces to help people stay in good health (physically and mentally)
- Answer:
  - Around the world: “corona bike lanes”
  - In France: le coup de pouce vélo (the bicycle boost)



## transition: cycling recognized as a full displacement

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



## The question of the research

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



## Project's objectives

- Compare cities in four countries in order to:
  - Cross socio-political contexts,
  - Bring out constants and variants,
  - Contribute to the knowledge on:
    - Tactical town planning and its various variations
    - The change in social practices
    - Velonomy to:
      - Feed reflection on public policies
      - Help policy makers

# How?

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





## Public policies analysis

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



## First results

- Various emergence contexts
  - Swiss: French-speaking Switzerland is known for its lack of bikeability with a low cycling modal share: 6.8% in Geneva and 1.6% in Lausanne against 17.1% in Basel in 2015 (Rérat et al, 2019)
  - France: except in Strasbourg (13%) French cities also have a low modal share
    - In most cities it has been a major element of discussions during the 2020's local election
  - Bogota:
    - Modal share is high (10%)
    - A political willingness and a strong element of discussion during the 2017's local election
  - Montreal :
    - Modal share is low (3%) / higher in dense and central neighborhoods
    - A political willingness and a strong element of discussion during the 2017's local election
    - New infrastructure in 2020 : REV (Réseau express vélo)



# Switzerland: a lively but short power struggle

About 7km of temporary bike lanes in Lausanne and Geneva

## Process

- Unusual way of proceeding in the Swiss context (slow and rather consensual)
- Play with the law (possibility to change road marking for 60 days for safety)
- Accelerator of existing policies
- Lively debates between proponents and opponents
- Most bike lanes will be made permanent (with a few adjustments)

## Lessons

- Pandemic => momentum for creating cycling infrastructures
- “Political champion” to support the measures (Wilson and Mitra, 2020)
- Power struggle that turned in favour of the measures (coalitions)
- Increased perceived safety for cyclists
- New proceeding: full-scale tests (with possible modifications)





## France: first very large statements

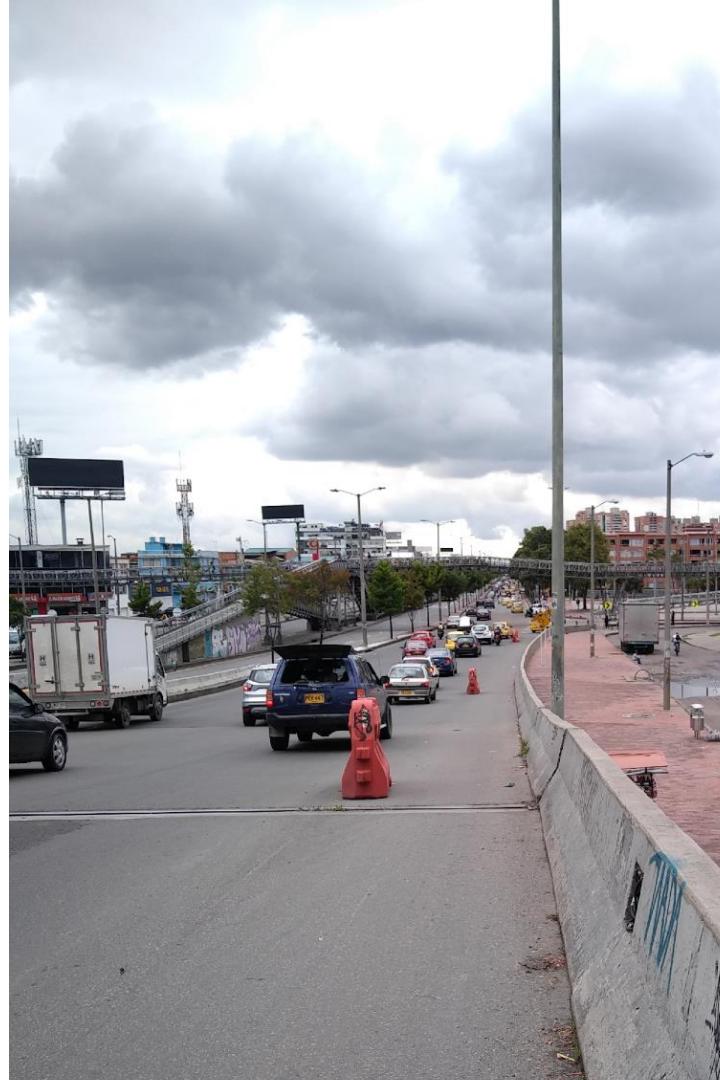
**The pandemic has been profitable for the promotion of the bicycle**

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



# Bogota: the uncertain future of corona lanes

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





# Montreal 2020 /21: experimentation for the future ?

- Summer 2020 : mobility considered as an emergency issue to deal with
  - diverse arrangements for safe active mobility
    - 28 km of temporary bike lanes
  - A good bargain for users and ... for planners : a **Momentum a of experimentation** leaded by the Direction of Mobility (City of Montreal)
  - A piece of strong contestations (lack of communication; decrease of parking lot offer, issues of universal accessibility etc.) but many adaptations all along the summer
  - and positive assessment and satisfaction survey results
  - But in a context of emergency measures : all was dismantled in fall
- Summer 2021 : new directions
  - 13 pedestrian and shared street projects implemented (no more temporary bike lanes)
  - Issue : local economic redevelopment to support (on commercial street in districts)
  - bottom up projects leaded by the arrondissement (district) and commercial development association - Coordination by the Economic development service at the central level (City of Montreal)
- New perspective too: municipal election in november
  - in 2017 Valérie Plante was elected as the future " mayor of sustainable mobility"
  - during the 2021 electoral campaign she now can promote both active mobility actions and recent economic development action
  - but cycling arrangements are still a delicate issue even controversial in a city where car user are still more numerous and car dependency still increasing





## First statements and open question

- Tactical urbanism raises:
  - tensions and political barriers, relating to resources to the oppositions of actors who could slow down a development (Aldred et al, 2019)
  - Highlights
    - the opposition forces: retailers, conservative voters, car lobbies and cyclists not consulted for developments (Wild et al, 2018)
    - The driving forces: the “political champions” (Wilson et Mitra, 2020)
    - The cultural dimension: automobility (Urry, 2004) vs bicycle culture (Cox, 2015)
- Open question: is the power struggle unavoidable when it comes to reallocate space from automobility?



# Are temporary cycling facilities redefining planning practices?

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



Thank you for your attention !

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

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



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