

Bicycling in Hong Kong: Boundaries, Experiences and Senses to Space

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Abstract: This paper shall discuss the nature and ecology of bicycling in Hong Kong. It digs deeper into the multiple roles of bicycles, presents how the bicycling activities represent people's pursuits and creation of meanings under the technologies and fast-changing society in the 21st century, and how the community finds its own space among the high-rise and traffic. In this research, the word "bicycling" is used rather than the connotation "cycling", so as to avoid confusion with "riding on a motorcycle", "unicycling" or "riding on a multicycle". Likewise, "bicyclists" mean "people who ride on bicycles". The paper will introduce the bicycling community, behaviour and analysis on their culture, obsession and devotion to the particular sport activity, eventually their perception and efforts in finding and opening up "bicycle-able" space.

My research started out with several simple questions: Why do people ride bicycles in Hong Kong? Why does bicycling remain as a sport and social activity instead of commuting for a bigger population? After having spent nearly a year living in Groningen, the most ‘bicycle-friendly’ city in the Netherlands during my exchange programme in 2017-2018, when I came back to Hong Kong, I felt uneasy and even displaced when I was travelling in a crowded, enclosed space with many other uncomfortable strangers trying to avoid unwanted physical intimacy and awkward eye contact. In comparison to public transportation, bicycling is freeing and private, occasionally, more efficient and empowering. Looking back to my time in Groningen, such mode of transport in Hong Kong which is seen as frustrating thus stirs my interest in seeking bicycles as the solution.

1. The Bicyclists and the Roads

Many cities in the world consider bicycle as an egalitarian means of transport, a competitive sport occasionally, or a choice of exercising while commuting. But bicyclists in Hong Kong are less fortunate because of the disadvantageous topography, busy traffic and a scarcity in bicycle infrastructure. Space is a luxury in Hong Kong. The city has only 30% of flat land and the other 70% is taken up by mountains and hills, therefore the city expands in vertical direction, with high-rises and skyscrapers but limited road space open for walking or bicycling. Among millions of Hong Kongers, only hundreds might brave the busy roads, congested traffic and scarce bicycling infrastructure to use bicycles to travel between home and work every day. Bicyclists can be briefly categorised into: daily commuters, competitive hobbyists who ride regularly and invest plenty of time and capital, and holiday bicyclists who only ride a bicycle occasionally.

The research mainly investigates and presents stories, fuels to satisfaction and motivations of respective bicyclists from the above three categories, of their persistence that overcome their fear and obstacles when bicycling. Particularly esteemed hobbyists who look

up to professional athletes represented in international tournaments, and cool, fit, energetic and young figures in popular culture, such as the 2015 Hong Kong movie starring Eddie Peng, 'To the Fore'. Competitive bicyclists or hobbyists tend to be grounded by their common interests and phenomenal experiences, and thus creating a stronger sense of identity and a visible "mutual community" (Dimond, Bartlett and Lewis, 2015: 2). While typology is created to categorise habitual patterns and cultures of bicyclists, it is crucial to bear in mind that not all bicyclists fit neatly in one single category, or any types specified in this paper, depends on availability and their accessibility to a "bicycle-able" space and time.

In order to capture different bicyclists' patterns and habits, fieldwork in various bicycling spots in HK were conducted: mainly along the popular route at Tai Wai to Tai Mei Tuk, through Tolo Channel to Tai Po, and Ma On Shan. My key group of informants for participant observation is 6-8 hobbyists aged between 50-60, who have started bicycling for 1-3 years respectively, on almost every weekend morning in the past year. Other than built bicycling trails, the inner city like Mongkok and Prince Edward, Tsim Sha Tsui, outlying islands including Lantau island, Cheung Chau, Lamma Island are also major fieldwork sites for different patterns of bicycling. I have also joined a semi-open Facebook group for over 21,000 bicycling enthusiasts where most information surrounding local and overseas bicycling trips can be found or questioned, where interactions within communities and rules can also be observed.

Other than bicyclists' attitudes, another significant aspect shaping the patterns and affecting decision-making process while bicycling, is the physical boundaries and physical conditions of these "bicycle-able" roads. Most bicycle trails in Hong Kong are designed in parallels with sidewalks, which greatly limits bicycles, as a means of transport, to only travel of relatively short distance via the trails. For example, the prohibition from entering highways and cross harbour tunnels can restrict bicyclists to travel across districts, unless one takes the

busy carriageways and narrow old main roads, or take off the front wheel to board public transport means. With the topography of Hong Kong, it only poses more difficulties for residents to travel to work every day entirely by bicycles. Traffic laws formulated and bicycle facilities provided, managed by the Transport and Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) shape the environment greatly. The more eye-catching and convenient tactics includes the layout of road grids and amenities like parking space, bicycle tracks identified by raised kerbs, different paving material and colours, directional arrows on the trail surface and road signs, physical barriers such as metal railings or plastic bollards and planters. The design of the bicycling environment follows an objective sense of safety by providing guidance and warnings through visual markers. In return, it is also the basis for behaviour and cultures of all bicyclists. Despite the efforts on material level, individuals' configurations of space have a different understanding on each element's functions, and are under various influences on senses, namely sufficiency of light, visibility, and shades provided by trees on two sides of the bicycle ways.

Edward Casey wrote 'place is the most fundamental form of embodied experiences' and the way to know 'how to be in place is to become aware of one's very consciousness and sensuous presence in the world' (Feld and Basso, 1996: 9). The space for bicycling shaped by the surroundings and infrastructure is as important as the hobbyists and their bicycles to bicycling. Moreover, the definitive factor to a bicycling experience is perception of the space formulated by individuals' sense organs, instead of external aids and an objective third-person perspective comprehension on bicycling. For instance, a thick layer of road marking painted may create bumps that startle sensitive bicyclists who ride on a bicycle prone to vibration. One's relationships and senses of place is subjective and hard to be recorded, but transcending effects are felt collectively or communicated. Riding on a bicycle is a production of phenomenological 'sense of place' and material and sensory realities that reflect performance

and imagination. As the surroundings provide stimuli to bodies apart from vision, through hearing, taste and smell, touch and temperature, kinaesthesia, feeling of balance, pain and vibration, et cetera. The differences in subjective understanding and conception of space leads to various choices of bicycling routes and roads, that could be understood through David Harvey's three-folded spatial-temporal matrix: absolute, relative and relational space (Harvey, 2006: 271; Stanek, 2011: 155-156).

Absolute space is the physical, material, timeless space that can exist independently. It is composed by objects like walls, bridges, doors, stairways, markings with no room for ambiguity and uncertainty (ibid.: 272, 282). Locations and places are limited by 'bounded territories in absolute space' (ibid.). Moreover, places and spaces perceived by human as external influences or settings would be internalized through individuals' perceptions and understanding, also known as the conceptualised space (ibid.: 273). While relative space means that each space or place cannot be understood independently, but by their connections and relations with other things or spaces and time, like the concept of an open space, displacement and positions. Whereas relational space is the lived space that is also a subjective way of measuring and interpreting space, and can only survive by the internalization processes that define it (ibid.). The relational way of thoughts 'dissolves boundaries between object and space' (Jones, 2010: 245). For instance, the values and feelings generated from living and experiencing the space. Processes and changes are key to creating a space, time must be understood to see the changes in a space, thus temporal-spatiality is important when describing and imagining a space.

Therefore, regardless of the uniform rhythmized leg movements and fixated body posture, one's agility and reflexes towards the shifting aspects of space is an important element of 'bicycling skill set', in addition to bodily strength, endurance, and skeletal muscular power and knowledge of their limits. One's immediate responses towards obstacles

and judgement of a safe or suitable bicycling route are based on perceptions built up on accumulated experiences and memories. For example, an unspoken intimacy is built between commuters on the bicycles and the daily routes by familiarity. Whereas a change of travelling means can bring a different perspective that contradicts the normalised feelings gathered from senses. Thus, phenomenology has been utilised as an empathetic approach in narrating and recording some bicyclists' first-hand experiences and perceptions towards the activity and their relation with the surrounding environment, in order to provide a fuller account to facilitate readers to understand the intricacy of a bicyclist's snap decisions made in seconds.

Phenomenological anthropology, broadly defined, seeks to understand the processes and structures of how the world reveals itself to us, **prioritizing “lived experience over theoretical knowledge”** (Jackson 1996: 6).

It examines **bodily experience and subjectivity**, seeing that **subjectivity** in terms of the **limits of individual perception and knowledge**, what we can and cannot know about the world around us, and the ways that both objects and theories appear to us in consciousness (Jackson 1996: 10).

2. Bicycling as a Sport, Hobby, Leisure and Bourgeois Lifestyle

‘Sport is good for you’ is an idea broadly transmitted and agreed across countries and continents, as it is associated with exercising improves and leads to good health (Dunning and Coakley, 2000: 408). But one of the motivations to attain ‘good health’ includes ideal body shapes and slimness, such an idea signifying ‘not only good health but also self-discipline and moral responsibility whereas fatness, in contrast, signifies idleness, emotional weakness and moral turpitude (ibid.: 410)’. Body shapes and fitness are as well associated with age and physical abilities. Sports as a leisure activity or hobby, is therefore, not at all relaxing and more than an interest in the activity itself, it can also be understood as an interest in physical abilities and proof of fitness, youthfulness and energy.

Bicyclists' great investment of time and capital into the sports reflect their visualisation of ideals of a healthy and productive, attractive body. Among my key informants, it is observed that there is an obsession and pursuit towards body shape, appearances, style and tastes, causal

associations between health, physical fitness, performance and energy, as well emerged and are often emphasised, discussed among themselves. These beliefs are also shared and desired among younger hobbyists and competitive bicyclists. Although most of them are not professional bicyclists, excellence is sought after for a sense of accomplishment. One of the representations of ‘fitness’ and capability is presentation and perceptions of bodies on the bicycle ways. Such pursuits for better results compared to former selves and other are in line with the biomedical ideals of bodies in nowadays:

Biomedicine focuses almost completely on the treatment of sick bodies, while sports are unquestionably practices by living and mostly healthy bodies. **Accomplished athletes are popularly seen as achieving a kind of bodily perfection**, and great sports performances even seem to extend the abilities of healthy bodies to **near-superhuman levels**. (Besnier, Brownell and Carter, 2019: 72)

What is sick or healthy is beyond biomedical diagnosis, or sometimes, stemmed by them. Such as obesity, one who is weighed above average should be more cautious of diet and exercise more, while being obese might be seen as a sign of idleness and unproductiveness, which contradict with the materialistic and result-oriented ideologies of a capitalist society. There has been a ‘cult’ on body forms representing the idea of ‘health’ promoted in popular culture, advertisement and desired by majority, for example, ‘the shape of the bodybuilder, the beautiful solarium-tanned girl, or the energetic ironman’ (Moller, 2000: 66).

Plus, the faith in the body and imagination of an ideal body form of well-being and healthy at the same time translates into our abilities of self-disciplining, superiority, vice versa. It thus can manage and control the deviant body shapes by disapprovals.

In our own increasingly “healthist” and body-conscious culture, the politically correct body for both sexes is the lean, strong, androgynous, and physically fit form through which the core cultural values of **autonomy, toughness, competitiveness, youth, and self-control** are readily manifest. (Pollitt, 1982, quoted in Lock and Scheper-Hughes, 2006: 501)

Conversely, **ill health is no longer viewed as accidental**, a mere quirk of nature, but rather is attributed to the **individual’s failure to live right, to eat well, to exercise**, and

so forth. We might ask what it is our society wants from this kind of body... In attitude and ideology the self-help and fitness movements articulate both a militarist and a social Darwinist ethos: **the fast and fit win; the fat and flabbily lose and drop out of the human race** (Scheper-Hughes and Stein, 1987, quoted in Lock and Scheper-Hughes, 2006: 501)

Sports is easily dismissed in sociological studies because it is often seen as a ‘trivial, pleasure-oriented leisure activity which engages the body rather than the mind and is of no economic value’ (Dyck, 2000: 4). Leisure and work have always been perceived as dichotomies, but ambiguity between work and play, the ‘non-play’ characteristic of sports is picked up by anthropologists in studies on ‘organized play’ and rituals¹, in terms of their resemblance in functions (Dunning and Coakley, 2000: 149). Although bicycling outdoor is not like a football game or most sports activity, where strict rules and roles of participants are imposed and sometimes reflective of social construction and roles, attitudes towards bicycling and its cultures are representative of a society. Bicycling relies more on morality to govern and maintain the order. Sports and leisure are often reflective of our social structure and are never independent from the mainstream social order and dominating values:

Sport and recreation practices were viewed as part of the process through which a structure in dominance was secured or reproduced. In this sense sport: provided a **stabilizing factor for the existing social order**; provided a basis for **reinforcing the commodity spectacle**; provided a basis for **reproducing patriarchy**; provided a basis for **regimenting and militarizing youth and reproducing a set of hierarchical, elitist and authoritarian values**. If competitive sport is condemned to the dustbin then forms of recreation fare no better since they were viewed as ideological ways of running away from reality. That is, leisure practices were viewed as false techniques of **escapism**. (ibid.: 315, quoted from Jarvie and Maguire, 1994: 96)

The above summary of Brohm’s thesis on sports as an ideological state apparatus argues that leisure and sports were portrayed falsely as an activity to escape from the reality. Bourdieu’s rationalization of games into modern sports is that sports are based on a set of ‘moral ideals’, forming ‘a class-based philosophy of amateurism’ (Dunning and Coakley,

¹ Sports in this case can be understood as a ritual which the society practices regularly and publicly as a collective like a religious expression, to glorify and celebrate the sacred, or important values by setting it apart from the secular world (Blanchard, 2000: 147, 150).

2000: 318). Even amateur athletes pursue skills and professionalism that serves as a ‘badge of social exclusivity and cultural distinctiveness’, in this case, hobbyists have the tendency to separate themselves from other less experienced amateur bicyclists on the roads (ibid.: 319).

On the other hand, bicycling as a leisure activity is also political in terms of town planning and road design approach, but not simply from the perspectives of government’s abilities and attitudes in maintaining sports facilities accessibility in overall. Unlike many sports activities, bicyclists travel in between places on public roads, to ensure equality and accessibility of the activity and bicycle-able space are not achieved merely by overseeing and managing roads, but also an education on legitimacy of bicyclists’ boundaries, territory and hierarchy of road users.

In Hong Kong, bicycling as a sport can be understood as what Bourdieu described as ‘bourgeois sport’. Other examples include horse racing, being regulated and enclosed by associations and institutions from the ‘peasants’ and ‘commoners’, as exclusivity is declared for upper class and upper-middle class people, while people of the lower class have limited access to the resources of the games (ibid.). Although in today’s Hong Kong, most sport activities are open in view of public sports facilities and sports education at schools, the professionalisation, virtues and result-oriented pursuits of certain sports activities like bicycling, still possess the qualities of Bourdieu’s bourgeois sports.

“You do not always see bicycling groups with an odd one out”, this is a common observation from several informants. What they were referring to was their outfits, protective apparatuses and bicycles. Hobbyists ‘check out’ other bicyclists’ outfits and bikes, then automatically differentiate the others and their own class or ratings in between amateurs and professionals. Tastes do not determine groupings, but they can in turn penetrate and affect all members within a group over time, etching into one’s *habitus*. *Habitus* is the socialisation of subjectivity, eventually carrying personal and social, collective history that guide our choices

and actions (Lawler, 2011). And therefore similar dressing patterns and bicycle types are always spotted within the same group, the common values and knowledge create sense of identities. It is the trend of popularising and professionalisation of sports activities under technological advancement, particularly in telecommunication in news and social media, which Weber classified as a form of rationalisation to be able to predict and calculate results of the sports (Allan, 2011: 90; Bourdieu, 1978: 833, 824).

“For Bourdieu, self-interested behaviour cannot be confined to the economic realm alone but must be theoretically generalized to cultural practice also. **People pursue scarce goods and maximise their profits not only in economic “fields” of contests employ “capital” resources that they have acquired or inherited in their efforts to maximize their “profits”.** But in cultural fields of struggle these resources are **“cultural capital” – symbolic abilities, tastes and goods – and the returns are “symbolic profits,” dividends of social honour or prestige.**” (Bourdieu, 1977: 177-183, quoted in Gartman, 2013: 35)

Through popularisation, commodification and technological advancement, sports and information ‘originally reserved for the ‘elite’’, amateurs who originally received limited information and knowledge about the sports could move up their social hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1978: 828) through professionalization such as adopting equipment used and designed exclusively for professionals. Hobbyist bicyclists care a lot about their apparatuses, in terms of their functions, technologies, towards a well-recognised standard of ‘excellence’ (ibid.: 830), which at the same time act as a form of symbolic capital (Lawler, 2011; Gartman, 2013), bringing a sense of prestige and superiority that set themselves apart from the ‘layman’, the inexperienced. Therefore, in Bourdieu’s discourse of class division and tastes, hobbyist bicyclists are and can subconsciously self-identify as bourgeoisie or aristocrats which symbolise and suggest them of a higher social and more powerful position in contrast with holiday amateur bicyclists (Bourdieu, 1978.:833).

3. What is a Bicycle?

Forms and meanings of bicycles vary greatly over centuries, across countries and cultures. From dandy horse, velocipede, the iconic Penny-Farthing bicycle with a huge front wheel and tiny back wheel, to the modern bicycle we see today, the rover or safety bicycle, the form and structure of bicycle vary according to technological developments at the time. Standardised form in the 1900s was diamond-shaped metal frame, pneumatic rubber tires, roller chain, gear, coaster brakes, metal and plastic pedals to reach a balance among four important criterion - “safety, speed, comfort and steering” (Bicycle History, 2019). Materials of the frame, tires, wheel rims, innovations of gears and chain wheels vary as technology advances, pursuits for more comfortable bicycling experiences and better performance increase. Bicycles may seem like a primitive form of travelling machine from a progressive point of view, but it is also its neat and simplistic skeleton that challenges engineers to find lighter materials and design smaller but more complicated parts. Bicycle is no doubt a product reflective of our cultural and technological development.

Bicycling as a hobby or sport often involves relations between the bicyclist and the bicycles too, in terms of performance enhancement and companion-like relations. Marvin Harris’ cultural materialism has emphasised the angle of viewing from the material perspective on its effects on cultures, and it has been a popular stream of ideology describing and explaining human’s relationships with materials, by (1) infrastructure: the materials serve as basis to human survival; (2) structure: materials allocation and distribution determined and determining social statuses, classes and hierarchies through kinship, political and social institution like market and government; (3) superstructure: religious, symbolic, intellectual structures and artistic efforts (McGee and Warms, 2013). The consumption pattern of bicycles and apparatuses can be reflective of the transition of human’s relationships with

materials in this era, in creating and re-creating the structure and superstructure, while infrastructure provides the fundamental space enabling the activity.

Another approach is Leslie White's understanding of the relationships between material and technological development and progress in human civilisation (White, 2006). His theoretical framework of 'energy times technology equals to culture ($E \times T = C$)' deduces production facilitated by technological advancement and better control of resources and capitals to increase production means leading to cultural progression. Moreover, constant growth in technologies and productions are not the only progress human seek for. There can be a limit to the satisfaction brought by materials and require the natural services to mediate and help meditate. In addition, materials also play an active role in improving or can even help reconnect human with their spirituality and consciousness when hobbyists go outside their daily routines and bicycling, rebuilding and re-discovering the knowledge of their surroundings and selves. In other words, the relation between bicyclists and bicycles are not merely owners and tools, but can take up an active role in transformative experiences and or companionship.

3.1 A Tool for Unique Experience

“What I like most about riding a bicycle is the speed. I feel like it is the best speed and way to sightseeing at places like Tibet and Nepal.”

— Arthur, a touring bicyclist explained his reason of bicycling.

To Arthur, a bicycle is a touring tool that he and his companions use when travelling to places where the attractions are often far and remote. Arthur is an adventurous university student who mainly ride his bicycle when touring abroad. The reason Arthur bought his bicycle was out of economic considerations. His friend spotted the second-hand mountain bicycle online and recommended it to him. It was a good bargain because the original price was \$10,000 and it was sold at \$6,000 together with a cargo rack, that facilitates him to tie his backpack and belongings onto the bicycle.

His most recent conquest was the Everest Base Camp, which was the first time he took his bicycle outside Hong Kong after having bought it. He thought it was a better option compared to renting one because he would not be restricted by the availability of rental services and it costs less financially in the long term. It took he and his friend 22 days to travel from Chengdu, China to Tibet and Nepal even at the speed of travelling for over 100km a day. A small accident costed him a brake and gear lever, and he could not change the parts until they came across a supply store along the way. In a long trip like that, they are expected to take care of themselves most of the time. The long distance and varied speeds of each bicyclist result in breaking up of groups or pairs in the journey, for instance, when Arthur climbed up slope faster than his friend, he would have to go alone and wait for him at a later point. Therefore one must be capable to protect oneself, like being your own scout to look out for the road situations, always carry important maintenance tools and knowing how to repair your bicycle. For Arthur, he could easily fix a chain fell off from the wheel, also snap a small connector to fix a broken chain. He learnt how to change tyres from the Internet and replace the broken lever under his friends' instructions.

While some of his friends take pleasure from speed and excitement, outstanding performances comparable to those of professionals', he finds greater pleasure from admiring beautiful sceneries. For Arthur, bicycling itself is not the ends but a means to travel from destination to destination, from point to point, while enjoying landscapes at any paces he desires, plus, free of constraints like bus schedules and availability of public transport or infrastructure.

“You see more of the landscape by bicycling. There is a flexibility in touring by bicycle in comparison with boarding a train or sitting on a plane, you may stop anytime and take pictures or breathe in the view better. If you are on an automobile or train, the sceneries are always changing and fleeting, you cannot admire them enough even if you spotted something interesting.”

Unlike many bicyclists who own their bicycles, Arthur is satisfied with his one bicycle and does not envy other more advanced bicycles, because he has a clear vision of wanting to enjoy sceneries and accompaniment of friends. A bicycle that supports him through his travels would suffice. He is not alone, but some contradict such opinion.

Bicyclists in my group often joke,

“When you have rid your bicycle long enough, and have recovered the monetary cost of the bicycle and storage rent, it would be the time to change to a new bicycle.”

In Hong Kong, bicycles are liquid commodities in the market. Many bicyclists own more than one bicycle or have changed their bicycles a couple times after a few years into this hobby. There is often an unsatisfying desire for something more advanced, innovative, something newer and cooler in the market to satisfy the growing demands. Bicycle has evolved from a basic tool of transport to a fast consumer good circulating quickly in the market. A new bicycle for someone means a new second-hand bicycle for another. This leaves many bicycles circulating in the online second-hand market, or sometimes, unattended, forgotten, abandoned and unwanted, chained on the streets.

3.2 Street Furniture Uncared For

Most people think very little about the bicycles lying on the ground or leaning on railings of the streets, since they blend into the streetscapes so perfectly well, which do not challenge the boundaries of private and public space. They are not seen as a private property and often become a part of the streets. There are not a lot of formal infrastructure for the bicycling community in Hong Kong, nor are there strict limitations or penalties on irresponsible bicycle parking, therefore most commuters chain their means of commute to the closest railings or hide them at discreet spots like under the bridge and kerbed islands in the middle of roads. This phenomenon draws a stark contrast to the image of expensive, precious road bicycles and mountain bicycles being stored in a mini storage space.

Naturally, a bicycle with lower value receives less care. For example, a hobbyist bicyclist may clean and add lubricant to their road, mountain or folding bicycles every time they finished riding them, not only because of cleanliness of their homes, but they would not want them to suffer a scratch or decay in quality. Therefore, hobbyists mount them to the ceiling or on the walls at home, or even rent a storage unit specifically for bicycles and other apparatuses. Since they cannot afford losing any precious parts of their bicycles, or adding extra weight by installing a lock, hobbyists always have to keep a close eye on their precious bicycles, like always park them at somewhere visible and within one minute's reach from their seats when taking a break in restaurants. In more extreme cases, some lone bicyclists bring their 'companion' into accessible toilet when necessary, while some give up his or her own personal space at home for their bicycles. Whereas many commuter bicyclists do not clean their bicycles as often, nor do they mind or worry as much about getting scratches and vandalised or their bicycles being stolen when parking them outdoor. It is also because their habits of parking bicycles outdoor, they do not get expensive bicycles, but heavier and durable ones that won't deteriorate too quickly after constant exposure to rain and sunshine, and thus they as well need and do not mind installing hefty locks and stands so they can park anywhere they want. Many frequent commuters reside in outlying islands, like Cheung Chau and Mui Wo, where the most popular parking space are rows of railings near the pier, outside their houses' door, or outside entrances of any stores or restaurants they visit. These are a major type of bicycle that create or easily turned into parts of the streetscape:

“It was a big deal when they do maintenance work on a row of bicycle rack at the pier. It was the biggest [formal] parking space with the most frequent rate of usage you can find at Mui Wo. Everybody has to find a new spot besides their usual place when there are repair works at their usual row, which disrupt others' pattern and cause some chaos at other rows too. Also, the authorities post clear notice to remind people of the regular maintenance months or weeks in advance.”

— Amy, a Mui Wo resident stressed how crucial parking space at the pier is for Mui Wo residents.

“They did not restrict parking space at the municipal complex and the pier before (a regulation started presumably at least 5 years ago). Regardless of their efforts to sort out the sea of bicycles at the promenade, most people don't pay attention to the signs and zone markers (there were signs aligned limiting parking hours at the area). Even if their bicycles got confiscated, they always know where to find them, because we know the place (island) well enough!”

— Crystal mocked the ineffective attempt on bicycling management by the authorities.

The behaviour of random and illegal parking is deep-rooted among the bicycling community. Plus, there is no strict law enforcement and penalising system against bicycle owners as punishment and incentives to eradicate it. It is normalised that one infringes boundary without getting caught, like riding bicycle down pedestrians' tunnel where passers-by are rare, without being seen or getting caught by police 90% of the time. Even if boundaries are drawn, the ultimate governing system is people's habits, convenience, their considerations for others and respect towards the spatial rights. Bicyclists can place their bicycles wherever they were as long as they don't cause much inconvenience to pedestrians or receive consent of the affected business owner, which is the same with the bicycling space they occupy on the streets. For instance, patrons of a restaurant would not park bicycles where they would block the entrance, nor do they bring them into the restaurant whilst dining, they would opt for a parking space that create the least inconvenience to everyone, which is likely to be along the walls at the outside of the place.

Similar patterns can also be spotted in the New Territories and in fact, almost in all cities. Such parking habits are omnipresent along railings at sidewalks even at inner city, sometimes temporary, sometimes forgotten and therefore quietly became a permanent component to the streetscape. Nonetheless, worn-out urban and humble load-bearing bicycles are not the only the street furniture seen in the city. Since GobeBike² and its competitors'

² GobeBike is founded in 2017 by a foreign entrepreneur who have lived in HK for over 6 years. It started out as an inspiring start-up company. The same vision and enthusiasm were shared by others. Other major shared bike operators include Ofo, HobaBike, Ketch'up. Ofo bikes even won the design award. (Abacus, 2018; Yau, 2018; Lui, 2018)

introduction to Hong Kong in 2017, numerous dockless shared bicycles have been sighted illegally parked or abandoned in poor conditions on the streets, many of them along bicycle lanes, and fell into water sometimes. The unpaid liability of the consequences brought by these shared bikes due to the unfixed their locations and no strict control and regulations by authorities, or weak follow-ups from providers.

Leaving bicycles outdoor overnight or a long period of time obviously put them at risks of theft and vandalism due to under supervision and maintenance, that is almost universal to every city. Moreover, a shortage of official bicycle parking space is not always the reason to this phenomenon, nor is it a new situation caused by the shared bikes. The influx of tens of thousands of shared bicycles only make bicycles' presences on the streets and their users' morality more visible. Shared bike companies' ambiguous claim of ownership and supervision encourage bicycle users' tendency to care less about their well-being. Despite that, even in Hong Kong, regions where bicycles are essential, they are still well organised by bicyclists who respect the order on the streets, the purpose of the bicycles and other people who may need them to commute back and forth workplace and home.

3.3 Intimacy with Bicycles

Bicycles are important representations of bicyclists on bicycle ways, particularly in Hong Kong, because of the varieties of bicycle types and ownerships, and these are perceived to be associated with one's expertise and status within the bicycling community. Your bicycle makes the first impressions of what kind of bicyclist you are.

“When you ride a bicycle, 30% of your performance relies on your bicycle and 70% relies on yourself.”

This is a common saying or impression established in the local bicycling community, or a similar ideal contributing one's speed to legs' energy and forces is as well prevalent. It has been established that a bicycle's quality and the bicyclists' physical abilities are both important when measuring bicycling performance. A bicycle's design and model have

considerable effects on a bicyclist's experience, maybe effectiveness in utilising all the leg energy in generating pedal power, perhaps comfort for long-distance trips that makes one more perseverant, or confidence that make one enjoy the speed and kinaesthesia better.

“Some people like to change parts of the bicycle to increase its value and look cooler. But no matter how much you alter your bicycle, it would not improve your speed, because that depends on your technique.”

— David, a middle-aged bicyclist who own a couple of folding bicycle commented on the importance of bodily capabilities versus material help.

Hobbyist bicyclists and competitive bicyclists often spend a lot time and hundreds and thousands' dollars into bicycling, which is comparable to time and effort a person invests in maintaining a personal relationship. The monetary investment ranges from the bicycle itself and the parts, accessories like light-weight waist or bicycle bags, water bottle racks, gadget such as cycling computers³, to uniforms, professional clothing, shoes and helmets. Bicycle has the advantage of a simple and slim outlook, but their functions and meanings embedded are not always so transparent. Like many consumer goods, the hobby has grown into a part of their self-identification they resonate to and sometimes, prefer. Occasionally the sports activity develops beyond a leisure interest, bicycle itself also has gone beyond an egalitarian transportation tool and technology, to a representation of lifestyles, taste, social status, capitals, even an extension of selves or an anthropomorphic existence.

3.3.1 Symbol of Taste, Social Class, Abilities

Veblen's leisure class (1899) and Bourdieu's bourgeoisie class (1984) describe lifestyles as a means to compete for honour brought by one's distinctions and feeling superior because of belonging to a higher class. Such hierarchical conceptions also inevitably exist in our capitalist society, especially significant among hobbyists and competitive bicyclists but are not limited to them. The class division and segmentation are maintained and are very

³ Bicycle computer is a small device that can be set on the handlebar, consisting of a built-in GPS, cooperating with sensors on wheels and sometimes with heart rate monitor, and usually gets an assistance from a mobile application, which users may analyse one's own performance and physical fitness.

visible on bicycle lanes. Expensive bicycles can signify privilege and abundance of their owners' economic resources and surpluses by ostentatious waste on unproductive production (Veblen, 1899: 43, Gartman, 2013: 37); whereas a modified bicycle can be a display of knowledge on bicycle technology and commitment to the bike at the same time.

As though it cannot be generalized that one's ownership over a valuable bicycle guarantees recognition of personal excellence and satisfaction be derived from it, or that one's procurement consciously serves this intention, the postulation of incessant pursuits for optimisation on capitals' return still serves the purpose as an example to the mass (ibid., p, 49). Very few would admit, but the minority group of aristocrat bicyclists' choices assert certain brands and designs' asceticism and tastefulness, where functionality is not always prioritised. Some say a few hundred is reasonable to buy a bicycle to commute, whilst some recognise a \$15,000 road bicycle is fair considering the quality and prices of the other road bicycles, some look up and desire to get a professional bicycle of tens of thousands. The existence of a streamlined, edgy, professional-looking bicycle on a bicycle way, regardless of its owner's age, occupation or appearance, is extremely eye-catching and of significant importance in engendering habitus within the community. Such bicycles' involvement in the community is a gradual process of objectification of personal taste (Bourdieu, 1984: 279-280). It is suggested that commodification and mass production eradicate class differences due to the increased accessibility and availability in the market for the formerly exclusive information and technology for the sport. Nonetheless, it is also throughout these processes, bicycles transformed from a humble, simple and egalitarian transport tool into a symbol capital one can choose to employ, to mark one's prestige of excellence over others, the 'amateurish and inexperienced laymen' in this case (Bourdieu, 1978: 830). Produced in corporation with the belief in professionalism and pursuits for efficiency, bicycles of lighter

materials, of more efficient or comfortable designs are introduced and more commonly used for both commuting and more competitive trainings within the dominant class.

Apart from social classes and prestige, bicycles and bicycling performances can be symbolic of novel qualities and markers of success, moral ideals notably ‘energy’, ‘courage’, ‘willpower’, not unlike virtues we seek from professional athletes and social leaders nowadays (ibid., p. 824). As the saying goes, 30% of the performance counts on one’s bicycle, while your bodily strength and steadfastness account for the rest of 70%. One’s prowess cannot be recognised solely by one’s ownership over a bicycle, but it requires physical abilities, skills and persistence to be recognised by the community, in spite of the age and gender.

My youngest informant, 16-year-old Tony professed his allegiance towards professionalism, famous brands and qualifications when he buys for bicycling. When he finally assembled his dream bike last June, a *Pinarello* aero road bike with the colour of chameleon, after spending half a year sourcing all parts, from saddle, handlebar, bicycle frame, pedals to wheels, he felt strong a sense of accomplishment and pride in himself and his bicycle. He associates coolness with images of professional bicyclists, no other than the Sky team⁴ and their equipment. Anything that does not look or perform professionally does not appeal to the young Tony.

“When you buy cheap helmets or a crappy bike, it’s almost like you are pretending that you know how to bike!”

“They (Tony’s close friends) said I only have eyes for things with Aerodynamic features, not purely for their functionality.”

“If I ride a crappy bicycle, I wouldn’t want to spend too much energy on it. But if I ride the one I have now, I would give my 100% to it.”

— Tony confided to me, about his thoughts on and reasons of his choices.

Tony’s comments may seem irrational towards bicycles and apparatuses of quality and rank beneath the professionals’, but his narratives represent the group of bourgeoisie class who

⁴ Sky team is one of the top and most famous bicycling team in the world, which its name has changed into Team Ineos. It’s based in the UK and has competed continuously in UCI world competitions. And Pinarello, the bicycle brand is their sponsor. UCI is the International Cycling Union (Union Cycliste Internationale).

admire the quality and sensation, as well as symbol of power brought by the ostentatious, conspicuous expenditure, and enjoy the gazes and approvals for the aestheticism. An UCI bicycle may perform better in some aspects, but a hobbyist may not need a bicycle with such high calibre for leisure bicycling. The perceived ownership of prestige affirming personal excellence and brings satisfaction to the small group of 'bourgeoise' bicyclists are necessities, as rationalised as functionality, to achieve good results such as time, to exceed one's own record but as well as to be contended with their fellow skilled bicyclists, or occasionally, professionals.

“It is perfect because I chose and assembled the parts on my own.”

“There are those show-offs who spend tens of thousands on their equipment but they ride no any faster than me. They rely on family money (□ □) instead of themselves, but I am not like them, I pay for my own bicycle, my equipment. Even when I ride on a bicycle with equipment lesser than theirs, I still managed to ride faster than them.”

Tony does not only take pride in owning a unique and attractive bicycle, but his own performance, his own effort of earning his money, buying and purchasing his bicycle are the major reasons contributing to his confidence and pride. He compares himself with his peers of the same age, who rely on their family money and high quality bicycle to build their own 'professional' image, while he already felt like a 'self-made man' receiving as much recognition as they do, with less resources and help. His attitude towards his bicycle and bicycling are eminently reflective of how he imagines and sees himself, and most importantly, where he attaches the concept of his selfhood with his bicycle. The bicycle's model, brand and condition have become projection of his imaginations and expectations towards oneself.

Aside from feeling proud, Tony also expressed that he feels a sense of belonging to it immediately after assembling, describing an intimacy developed as he financed, sourced and compare the components, and assembled the bicycle with his own efforts. The bicycle is not

just customised to his build and needs, it should be no exaggeration to say he knows his bicycle like the back of his hand.

3.3.2 Staying Youthful

A maintenance of a fit body shape implies and is a postmodern display of ‘health’ and meaningful production, and desirable modern cultural values like ‘autonomy, toughness, competitiveness, and self-control’. It is crucial to bicyclists to possess and present on the bicycle ways too. Possibly especially among middle-aged and older bicyclists because of their decaying bodies and health, since aging body is easily ‘associated with sickness and imminent death’ (Moller, 2000: 76). Besides body shapes and forms, consumerism can help aged bodies retain a “healthy and sporty look” (Povlsen, 2000: 80) against their decaying forms, by borrowing images and products of young, fit and super-human like professional athletes, helping them acquire a feeling of importance, against societal taboos and perceptions on life-stages by looking ‘cool’. By consuming sporty and youthful outfits like tight shorts, close-fitting T-shirts while exercising, which are supposedly uncomfortable due to the transmission of mixed signals of transgressions to their age, they continued a lifelong project of self-cultivation that give a sense of importance and relevance with the society (ibid.: 80-81).

“You see things, hear things, put your senses and both sides of your arms, hands and legs to work. For instance, you use your knees to ankles when pedalling (hips and entire body for balance, and your toes move to adjust to the pedals, mentioned earlier during the break).”

— Ben, a member in my group shared with me the benefits of bicycling.

Most sports activities require repetitive arm movements like during ball games, that can cause pain to arms like tennis elbow over time. It requires coordination of all body parts, from head to toe, from balance, sight to hearing, as a whole to move a bicycle. Unless one gets into an accident, a suitable bicycle size and adequate balanced use of bodily forces should not harm a bicyclist even if one rides on a bicycle every day. Other accessible

exercises like running, playing ball games and hiking are not always manageable or preferred for ageing individuals, facing the decaying of knees functions and muscle strength.

Throughout my weekly journeys with my regular bicycling group, I can feel a surge of youthfulness among my companions. Despite that some of them are already retired, they are still strongly competitive and determined in making progress on bicycling, committed to cultivating bicycle skills cultivating and improving themselves, and confident in their own bodily appearances and abilities. In fact, many hobbyists first engaged in bicycling because it is one of the few sport activities they could participate without being threatened by their ageing bodies. Many middle-aged or ‘young old’ bicyclists consciously or unconsciously compete with other bicyclists in terms of speed, skills, endurance, equipment and aesthetic styles, dismissing the assumption of being passive and conservative when reaching their life stage. A major share of today’s local bicycling community is composed by hobbyists approaching ‘young-old’, they are also dominating the group because they have plenty of time to spare, disposable income to invest on the hobby, and determination in developing and working on themselves while socialising.

“I was told that I look much younger from the back when I wear my grey fleece jacket.”
— Eason, another member in my group happily shared with me.

Once they get on their lightweight professional-looking bicycles, put on their sunglasses and helmets, tight and bright-coloured uniforms, they do not look so different from a younger man, because only their bicycles are so visible and representative of one’s calibre on the roads. In several interviews with other young bicyclists who join bigger groups sometimes, their experiences tell that there is no differentiation by age, but rather a blend of people of all age groups and from all backgrounds, and bicycle types. Bicycling groups are not usually discriminating, as long as one shares the same goals and is physically capable of following the group on the route.

Although leisure is supposedly relaxing, but “sports have become a transitional institution, neither work nor play, but somewhere in between” (Beisser, 1967: 232, quoted in Rowe, 1998: 143). Bearing such mindset relating sports and productivity, it is explicable that a lot of leisure bicyclists are result-oriented and always make records of their performance. It is my speculation that particularly among middle-aged bicyclists entering their 60s. Besides re-investing time and resources spare from family and work life, sports has become an alternative to generating productivity and embarking on new pursuits further forward in new aspects, say bodily attributes in this case, in order to recapture and earn the sense of fulfilment and meaning. Thus when entering a new life stage, the ‘Third Age’, where one continues the question of how to live through a ‘reflexive project of the self’, engage in active construction of a ‘post-work’ identity with deliberate planning (Giddens, 1991: 107-108) or Foucauldian control of self through ‘self-care’ and ‘self-control’ (Gilleard and Higgs, 2000: 61). Nonetheless, the subtle self-disciplining practices and productive trainings in bicycling is not exclusive to older bicyclists.

Together with Hannah Arendt’s depiction of human’s habits of seeking for ‘glorification of labour’ in *Human Condition* (1959), such mentality explains the group of competitive bicyclists who train regularly and keep track and close watch on their own performance and effectiveness, and have a bigger, further target of some bicycling competitions and sometimes trips. It is at the same time blurring the distinction between professional and amateur bicyclists. A competitive bicycle thus comes to its importance, to be a great factor to maximize a bicyclist’s performance, to push one’s physical potential to his or her peak, to attain a better result and a more intense sense of success. The variation in ownerships of lightweight road bicycle, aero bicycle, thickness of wheel rim, cleats clip on pedals for road shoes and etcetera, symbolises milestones of accomplishments attained or simply what speed and routes the bicyclist is aiming to challenge.

In-sanity sport⁵ is, ...**a way to rediscover one's own worth, one's own importance, and create own meaning.** It is **to take responsibility for oneself...** Instead competitors take responsibility for the risks that they run. In other words they take their fate into their own hands and build up increased self-confidence. (Moller, 2000: 68)

Though bicycling is not an in-sanity sport, the personal space created when bicycling provides room for one's spiritual development, provides time and moments of clarity to realise and 'rediscover one's own worth' (ibid.). Our abilities and images are derivative of our bodies, bodies are important in defining our identities, therefore, self-cultivation is a crucial, self-defining life-long project (Polvsen, 2000: 81). It is natural that one chooses to re-inject the excess of resources and energy into one's body and apparatuses that present a better image of the body, in this case, a bicycle, sometimes, their uniform and other equipment. In more than one way, bicycling as a hobby is and bicycles are representative of bicyclists' projections and desirable images of themselves, in the direction of retaining and re-capturing their energy against stereotypical prejudice and ageism, similar to the transcendence from repetitive mechanical leg movements to the feeling of success by conquers, described by Ethan:

"It is as if there is a transcendence from bicycling to feeling the sense of fulfilment and accomplishment. It is because of the speed and wind resistance, the collaboration with teammates to make the ride happen, the persistence and efforts of overcoming all hardships in the training make bicycling triumphant."
— Ethan, a competitive bicyclist in his 20s described the satisfaction brought by bicycling.

3.3.3 Trustworthy Companion with a Soul

Bicycles can be tools for both transport and competitions, some models are especially crucial tool to enhance a bicyclist' performance, but they can also be a companion with a soul, which is a spiritual relation felt by the bicyclist. In this section, I detail how interviewees describe perception, experiences and comprehension through their stories with bicycles, in order to understand their perspectives.

⁵ In-sanity sport is a total body workout that requires no gym or equipment. One may carry out such exercise at home, by using one's own body weight as resistance (Watson, n.d.).

“Having my name on the bicycle gives me a sense of belonging.”

— Tony responded to the golden sticker of his name on his bicycle frame.

The sentiments Tony expressed are not only out of familiarity or simply a sense of ownership, but it is rather like a description of a relationship between he and his bicycle. Since he built his own bicycle, he developed an attachment and satisfaction towards his bicycle, as he said it is ‘what he wanted for himself’. Tony admitted that the more time he spent on a bicycle, including riding on it and maintaining it, the more sentimental he feels towards it. To him, he likes to take his bicycle out whenever the destinations are possible to ride to.

“Once I got onto the *Bianchi* bicycle (the road bicycle given by his uncle), I could not go back.”

“It just feels like if I have to ride a bicycle, I should learn all about it.”

“I think the psychological effect is greater than the actual effects it [improving and lightening bicycle gears] brings. Although the slight change on the saddle did not have a significant effect on my performance.”

— Howard, a university student enthusiast, confided on the necessity to upgrade and make alterations to a bicycle’s structure.

Howard had just joined bicycling about a year before the interview. He did not particularly enjoy bicycling before, though he owned a small folding bicycle at home, until his enthusiastic uncle lent him his road bike. He enjoyed it immediately and now he wants to ride on the bicycle whenever he could because he feels like it is a most relaxing activity to take troubles off his mind. Howard does not only enjoy bicycling, he is also passionate and excited about learning every skill, every part of bicycle. He browsed through video tutorials online and read specifications on gears, watch the GCN (Global Cycling Network), borrow books on modifying and fixing bicycles. Sometimes his uncle helps and teaches him about modifications. He shared with me details about parts and gears of a bicycle in great extent, like materials, gear at the best grade, aero-dynamics, and introduced me to his ideal bicycle model. He finds fun in ‘playing around with his bicycle (□ □)’, as some bicyclists put it to describe the hobby of studying about road and aero bicycles. When we discuss repairing and

handling his bicycle, he could only trust someone he knows well. This is perhaps also the reason why he is so enthusiastic about learning the technique by himself.

Seeing Howard's devotedness and attentiveness to the hobby, his bicycle seems like a precious gem that he wants to know everything about bettering the bicycle structure so as to feel his bicycle channelling his legs' power to the road more effectively, which improves the sense of realness in mobilizing the bicycle. To him, bicycling feels real because you witness and enjoy the effort you pay by pedalling harder immediately.

“I once got into an accident when I rode along the shore near the TVB City (Tseung Kwan O), the inner tire was punctured and went flat. It made my heart ached.”

“After my accident, even though I got injured quite seriously, there was not even a scratch or dislocation on the bicycle. There were only scratches on the tapes on the handlebars. I know it sounds crazy, but it feels like my bicycle has a soul.”

— Leonard, a competitive hobbyist in his 20s shared.

Leonard is most enthusiastic and dedicated bicyclist I had come across. His worst accident was when he flipped and ‘flew’ out of his bicycle during his tour in Taiwan. He was in the lead and his other friends could not catch up with him when it happened. They only saw him lying on the ground. The accident brought him into a short coma, and he could not ingest solid food for several days. In spite of that, he and his friends still managed to continue their trip. Looking back to the incident, Leonard thinks a bicycle is extremely crucial when bicycling, because even if you fall off from your bicycle unharmed in an accident, you cannot continue if the damages are beyond immediate repair. In fact, viewing the situation of Leonard's accident and condition of his bicycle, it indeed feels like the bicycle has agency of its own, that is more active than an inanimate object to be utilised, and perhaps has a will of its own. Although bicyclists spend a great deal of time researching ~~for~~, investigating, polishing and cleaning their bicycles, they are not only an object.

He likes to collect pieces, souvenirs, record videos that remind him of ‘hot-blooded’ memories from his journeys. He had retired the bicycle he rode in Taiwan, but he still mounts it on the wall and put an *omamori* at his bicycle. Like many bicyclists, Leonard accessorises

the handlebars with intersecting two colours of tapes to design and create his very own pattern. Leonard's dream is to open a bicycle store on his own. He is so passionate about the sports that he does not only rent a mini storage space at the velodrome park, his bicycle supplies including extra tires, helmets, racks and other tools have conquered his room at home, leaving him a space of a mat to sleep on.

To Tony, Howard and Leonard, spending as much time on and with the bicycle as possible, such as gaining knowledge about bicycle and their technologies, accessories and trends, and working on it bring a sense of fulfilment to them, and from that they feel joy when they are able to understand and customise their bicycles according to their will and needs. Such passion and dedication are not as easily found among commuters because bicycles are daily necessities instead of an object great interest to temper and experiment with. They tended to see elements of humanity within their bicycles. And thus anthropomorphising them, as if it is a friend, a companion who can interact, gives not only mechanic, but emotional feedbacks. To them, bicycles are companions to rely on, their safety lies with them, hence, they must be treated with tremendous care and time. Even though the three young bicyclists always ride in groups, each bicyclist is bound to experience a transition from being in a social group into being by oneself. Then the bicycle would be the sole companion accompanying you all the way, through wide roads, strong winds, rain and hiccups. An article on Social Psych Online (2016) explains that human's anthropomorphism and intimacy with technological gadgets, particularly smartphones, are due to loneliness and the need of social contact to fill the void within us. But bicycling is different from using smartphones every day, since it may fill up free time and channel repressive feelings. They are not as portable, constantly available or provide high sociability. The subject of bicycle and bicycling themselves do not occupy one's mind on a journey.

There has been a long history of human anthropomorphising objects, such as carving stones into human statues, making dolls with humanistic facial features and expressions, artificial intelligence and computers. People's relations with things have been inseparable. Objects are being humanised, while human is sometimes idealised as subjects. Our ideas of treating 'things' and human are ambiguous and are not easily divided.

Sometimes we experience ourselves as having agency; sometimes we feel that we have none, or that inanimate objects and impersonal forces have more power over us than we have over them; sometimes we think intuitively; sometimes we have recourse to conventional beliefs. (Jackson, 2015: 294)

Our bicycles are special in moulding our perception towards ourselves, through the constructed body-world relation between us and the surroundings. We are intimate with bicycles we ride somehow because they always reflect a part of us, they are reflective of our aspirations and our positions within a group. Sometimes we too, maintain an anthropomorphic relation with our bicycles, as if it is a friend, a trustworthy companion on the journey.

3.4 Exposure, Power and Liberation

The more real insights we seem to have of reality, the less convinced we are its substance... **Experience seems no longer a guide but a goal in itself.** (Gillerad and Higgs, 2000: 5)

There are often romantic imaginations about bicycling. Some imagine about encountering new and friendly people, exploring cafes and small local grocery shops along the way; some imagine extraordinary, memorable journeys; some imagine a free and liberating experience from their dull daily life. Riding on a bicycle with all one's strength, travelling into the unknown fearlessly and high-spiritedly, and enjoy spontaneity with no regrets are polarised from the tamed, sane, and well-disciplined daily life; and thus is often seen as the ideal form of bicycling. But bicycling in high speed bears high risks and fatality rate in Hong Kong maintained at 11 deaths in 2018, with over a thousand injury cases reported. Being able to relax and feel liberated are the reasons why bicyclists pursue speed

and dare to ride challenging routes despite the inconvenience, risks and danger. Despite the pleasure, the fear of never be able to get up after a fall lurks in bicyclists' mind, however brave they may be. Nonetheless, unique and memorable experiences account more than pain and fear.

So where does the thrill and excitement come from? Compared to other sport activities like running, swimming, playing tennis, bicycles can bring us and travel far in high speed directly by our own bodily efforts, and riding a bicycle outdoor brings us constant exposure to new surroundings, creating new interactions and the lived experience instantly in every moment. The pleasure cannot be theorised but can only be experienced, subject to personal selectivity. It requires a sensorial, corporeal, interactional phenomenological account to understand their perspectives. Moreover, as Merleau-Ponty pointed out, "immediate experience" is actually "a mediated one" (Ram and Houston, 2015: 9). Bicycling is a major mediated presence that shape what feels like an 'immediate experience'. Like Howard, a lighter bicycle that facilitate him to spin in high speed became the turning point for him to get addicted to bicycling.

Besides thrill and excitement, 'freedom' and 'control' are two key words that have been repeated the most throughout all interviews among all kinds of bicyclists. The beauty of bicycling is that one does it independently most of the time, it is a sport you can do alone and it also facilitate one to converse with him or herself. Everything is highly flexible and controllable by the bicyclist. The two feelings go hand in hand with each other, in creation of satisfying and motivating trips for bicyclists. They are the results of a bicyclist's bodily interactions with the bicycle and the road. Their empowering and self-realising effects are what many hobbyist and competitive bicyclists feel when they ride on a bicycle.

"Bicycling keeps you sharp, makes you more sensitive and adaptable to environments, and it makes your senses on the surroundings more acutely."

This statement is agreed by almost all of the bicyclists I had interviewed. When I first got used to bicycling, I felt a rush of sensory feelings I had never experienced. My sight, hearing, and touching of my face and hands as I come in contact with the wind or anything that falls in my direction, all senses escalate and become twice or thrice more sensitive. The landscape and streetscape set before have so much more to take in compared to my experiences when walking and running through the same promenade. It was especially significant because I do not need to concentrate a lot on the road itself, my legs move mechanically that I only determine the rhythm but without feeling the need to find energy to continue the ride. I am more conscious than wandering in urban hubs, that I don't just let the senses fleet but I am able to realise, magnetise and reflect on them. Though such excitement of heightened senses can fade in time, but like most sports, bicycling keeps one sharp.

Bicycling is a continuous process of remaking one's spatio-temporality as a bicyclist advances through constant pedalling, travelling through places while the exposure and reliance on body movements in creating velocity. The activity and the surroundings build up one's sentiments and senses to a place (Tuan, 1977), which varies depending on individuals' subjectivity that 'precedes connected expression in language' (Ricoeur, quoted in Jackson, 1996:2; Ram and Houston, 2015: 5). Our perception of space can be understood in Harvey's spatio-temporal matrix (2006), meaning that on top of the metaphysical world composed with space and time, that constitutes the 'absolute space', our relationships with the space as 'relative space' and our interpretation as 'relational space'. The attraction of bicycling is not easy to put into words, but the phenomenological recognition of human consciousness within immediacy of lives and accumulation of place knowledge and familiarity in lived experiences is more helpful than theoretical elaborations.

3.4.1 Empowered by the Bicycle

"What I like the most about riding bicycle is that I can explore new places I could or would never go otherwise, not even by driving."

Giles, a bicyclist in his 50s in my group has retired not so long ago, who is also a driver himself agrees with the high flexibility and mobility of riding bicycles. Giles rides on a very light road bicycle, which one can easily lift with one hand. But when being asked of his favourite thing about bicycling, he felt like the freedom to adventure is the most precious experience.

It is interesting that especially in cases of urban bicycling, bicyclists feel like they are above other pedestrians and drivers because of their flexibility on roads and higher travelling speed compared to the former, or justified to be entitled to equal rights to share the road. Kinaesthesia, sight and touch, olfactory are determining senses make us feel strongly about a space and forming spatial qualities, that through the experience, creates realities of our worlds. Besides speed and perception of space through sight or smell, the intensified kinaesthesia and movements while travelling on a bicycle are important to explain why one will feel a different connection of space from walking and running (Tuan, 1977: 12). Meanwhile the direct contact with our spatialising sense faculties, for instance, smell, skin sensitivity and hearing make us register more information while one is more exposed and has more control over interactions with the outside world.

In Hong Kong, urban bicycling or commuting by bicycles are uncommon, bicycling community remains as a minority, and is sometimes oppressed on road usage equality. Bicycling, to urban inhabitants, is an exploration of the landscape we previously perceived as a whole untouched and blurred countryside but a network of possibilities (ibid.:16-17). The newfound routes constantly bring excitement as if one is adventuring like a tourist, and re-discovering the city's territories not unlike a brave frontier.

“We could travel on new routes without planning, or having visited them before, or knowing where they lead.”

“We can go to places we never walk to, by riding a bicycle. Like bicycling from Cheung Tung Road to Inspiration Lake at Disneyland on Lantau Island.”

— David, a middle-aged bicyclist told me about his journeys with his friends.

“When I ride on a bicycle alone at night, it helps me reflect on my life, so I could refocus on what are truly important in my life. I get the opportunity to rethink my priorities, that the troubles at work, being scolded and irritated, these things happened at work during the daytime will look so minor compared with the imminent danger I face out here. When I think I can die anytime out here, from a bicycle accident, they (the troubles) disperse in no time. I feel more alarmed when bicycling because of the heightened alertness, facing the immediate danger on the road, in the reality.”

David rides a folding bicycle for about 2-3 times a month. He sees it as a kind of exercise which he can spend quality socialising time with his friends at the same time. He sometimes rides at night after work and dinner, starts at around 9pm and returns home by midnight because there would be less cars on the road and riding through more rural regions and routes relieves him from the stress accumulated in daily life. Riding in the countryside and rural areas also feels like reconnecting to the nature, where most city dweller with intense urban lives are detached from.

“I normally feel unsafe walking around shady alleys and streets alone at night at districts like Sham Shui Po. But when I ride a bicycle, I feel much safer because I can ride faster and escape if I come across thieves or someone dangerous.”

David and his friend are not interested in pursuing and measuring his bicycling speed, instead their journeys are quite casual, they take pleasure from nice and rare sceneries and physical comfort is important in their journeys. Bicycling can be better than walking in exploring new, remote places that one can barely drives to, or notices when one drives. When you ride on a bicycle, the surroundings are not fleeting too quickly but you can look and take in the views and objects around you. There was one time they found a remote village at San Tin when they ride bicycles, the roads are so narrow and the village is so secluded that they would not spot it if they drive a car. Adventures as such revitalise the energy in him and make him feel alive.

Bicycling has the advantage of high mobility in contrast with automobiles that take up an entire lane, restricted by their drivers' licenses and punishments by laws. One can take his

or her bicycle out for a ride anytime, anywhere, wherever and whenever, at any speed he or is pleased with, only constrained by limitations of one's body's conditions.

“One of the most enjoyable things about bicycling is the velocity, because then that I could feel myself moving the bicycle and accelerating the speed with my own legs, totally rely his own efforts.”

“In comparison, motorcycles are too fast and dangerous, the weight and speed are too difficult to control (drawing from his experience of riding on a motorcycle once in Ludaο, Taiwan). Although (I) can get the same exposure from outdoor by running, the wind resistance makes it more difficult and it feels much slower and more difficult.”

— James, a bicyclist in his 20s described his bicycling experiences to me.

James started bicycling a few years ago to commute from home to work when he worked and lived at Shatin, but he has not ridden as much lately, since he moved to Kowloon and taking the front wheel off to board the MTR have become too troublesome. He took up the sport also because of the convenience of the infrastructure around as well as the influence of his friends and colleagues.

When I suggested whether he felt more sensitive and a heightened alertness after he started bicycling, he agrees that he did start noticing more things in the setting around him. Like when he goes hiking, he felt like he could hear the slightest sounds like leaves rustling, now when he walks, he spots cracks and uneven surfaces on the sidewalks.

Another enjoyable and rewarding experience about bicycling is to see amazing but private views at secret spots after overcoming challenging and bumpy routes. He once found a piece of bamboo forest besides the bicycle trail. He had never seen anyone posting any photos like that on social media, so he found it so secluded that as if the forest was exclusive for him only. It was like a secret haven hide away from everyone else. He imagined if he rides at Tsim Sha Tsui, he will spend a lot of time travelling through alleys and streets, exploring the area.

Many bicyclists shared a newfound curiosity about the city, not previously found by themselves while they were mass transport commuters and pedestrians. By starting to travel

in between places they rarely see or visit from a new angle and speed, it seems that bicycles have triggered a change in their senses and therefore the reality constructed in their minds. The more acute senses and heightened sensations are in fact a new perspective when travelling in a different speed and form, that stirs up some bicyclists' existing sensuous perceptions towards their surroundings. Therefore riding on a new bicycle, or riding on a new route can feel like an exploration of new physical power to overcome the barriers not yet imagined or experienced, and hence bicycle can feel like an empowering tool enabling one to travel faster and freer outside the transport grid. Though bicycles can be enabling when travelling through narrow roads and exploring new, unknown territory, it also has certain constraints to some less determined or passionate bicyclists.

“Seeing has the effect of putting a distance between self and object. What we see is always “out there”. Things too close to us can be handled, smelled, and tasted, but they cannot be seen - at least not clearly. (Tuan, 1977: 146)

“[S]pace expands and becomes better articulated as he recognises and reaches out to a more permanent object and places’. (ibid: 136)

Unless we conquer the obstacles and adventure the roads untaken, merely looking at the fearful challenges create distance and make them further away from bicyclists. For instance, we would always feel displaced and oppressed until we tried to ride on the busy roads along with automobiles.

3.4.2 A Break from Mundane Work and Life

One reason that bicycling, particularly in the countryside can be a break from daily life and ephemeral troubles is that when one rides on a bicycle, he or she can be easily soothed by the natural surroundings like a spiritual service. Bicyclists often find the activity different from their mundane daily lives because it has its own special rhythm that one can decide and change anytime. The expectations and results towards bicycles and bicycling can be handled by the bicyclist's own efforts instantly, while there are little restrictions on the behaviour, as long as there are no accidents caused.

“When I ride a bicycle, I can go as fast as I can without speed limits like driving. The speed and wind feel so good.”

— Jamie, a hobbyist in his 20s compared bicycling to driving and running.

In an experience like what Jamie had described, his bicycle seems to be a tool to help him break free from restraints and a ceiling. Jamie has been riding around Science Park and Ma On Shan on his loyal folding bicycle for over a decade. He used to ride with a couple of friends, but their overly competitive attitude and use of foul language offended him and he then, started riding alone instead. He finds the virtue of bicycling is that he could be free to ride his bicycle in his speed, with the distance he feels comfortable with, without needing to negotiate and accommodate a companion. On the bicycle lane, where Jamie usually rides on, there are rarely police or any forms of authorities. It is like he could devote all his energy to the monotonous leg movements and not afraid of consequences from rules and social formalities in daily life. It is almost like for once, he could give it all and take everything in the situation in his hands without needing to worry about others.

“When I ride on my bicycle, especially when I’m on holiday and particularly during the trip to Taiwan, everything has been magnified and slowed down.”

— Leonard recalled his feeling of being liberated in his bicycling trip.

Leonard’s account of his trip to Taiwan reflects how bicycling is clearly polarised from work and his life in Hong Kong. Aside from the adrenaline and feeling of his own physical power, bicycling is like entering an abstract boundary that detach him from ‘reality’ of his life by entering and contacting with the ‘reality’ of the outside world, while his bicycle symbolises the port key that leads him to relaxation. Once he sits on the saddle, like David, as mentioned before, worries and troubles melt away and he could focus on things he enjoys, namely the sceneries along the roads, the streetscapes, the local culture and small stores on both sides of the road, which he is usually too occupied to pay attention to at other times.

Such differentiation of normal daily city life’s mundaneness that operate in its own rhythm and the feeling of being freed and liberated from the dullness, explains the obsession

of bicycling, why some people want to get on the bicycle whenever they can, even without a destination in mind. Since bicycling is not a common means of transit, nor the perspectives sighted while sitting on the saddle is eye-opening for bored urban people. When bicycles and bicycling are attached with freedom, absence of a formal authority's management and control, bicycling transpires from a sport activity and becomes an entrance to an exclusive space with no rules and restrictions.

“Bicycling surely feels different from taking a bus or the MTR, you become more self-conscious about your own body. It is because you have to be aware of your body condition to make sure you are fit enough to ride through the route.”

— Ethan, the young competitive bicyclist illustrated the intricate changes in mindsets between boarding, travelling in mass transport and bicycling.

Being on a bicycle heightens your senses derived from surroundings and feelings within your own body, while sitting inside an automobile can enervate your senses comparatively. The feeling of being exposed to surroundings, or a newly discovered intimacy and connection with the nature and self, built up by experiencing and travelling through the space, is in great contrast with being buried in homogeneity and anonymity of urban life. Experiences of travelling in a metal box with hundreds of other busy urban commuters make a stark contrast with direct contact while travelling through space, the open environment provides an escape from the confinement in the enclosed space.

3.4.3 Travelling in between Private and Public Spaces

A bicycle does not only take a bicyclist to the destinations one has in mind, but also allows one to travel through the reality at the moment and visit priorities in one's mind, especially when bicycling on familiar setting, it becomes a natural reflex one does not need to focus on the process. All the attention is channelled into oneself rather than solely paying attention to the performance, mechanical movements, the fixed body posture and the potential barriers ahead. The experience itself creates the space to reflect on one's life under high consciousness while feeling being 'In the Zone'. For bicycling, the majority on the bicycle

ways and roads are not competitors, the consciousness is not focused on achieving a higher level of performance but an overview of life. Such revelations and transformation can make experience serve better as a guide but a goal of favouring self-cultivation.

“[Bicycling is the] only time of the week/ day where I can just not be disturbed! [It is] 1 hour where I can be with my thoughts, pray, listen to the bible, a book, enjoy nature.”
— Steve, a middle-aged informant shared his thoughts when riding a bicycle.

Like David and Howard, bicycling can be a social activity with your friends and teammates, a team effort, but at the same time, it also provides personal time for moments of clarity and conversation with oneself. Steve’s narrative is an example of seeing bicycling as beneficial to physical and mental health, on the other hand, he agrees with the importance of riding with others for training and moral support too. Bicycling can have restorative and healing effects on individuals, as they find privacy and personal space in the sparsely occupied routes and exposed outdoor space. The moments where transpiration of bicycling from a sport activity or commuting is ephemeral.

“When you bike, you are bicycling with yourself instead of competing and comparing with others.”
— A bicyclist in my group, Ben, referred bicycling as a personal training of skills, a kind of self-cultivation that is private and personal.

Ben has two bicycles, one small old folding bicycle that is rusted and some parts are already pretty worn out, another one is a mountain bicycle also with no specific brands, which he altered certain parts himself. Ben has retired and he takes up any chances possible to sharpen his bicycling skills and explore new bicycle-able space. To Ben, when he rides a bicycle, he describes that he enters a spherical space like flying where there are only he himself, his bicycle and the road ahead of him. He could make use of rows of individual stand at the bicycle parking space to train making turns in narrowest corners. In moments as such, one is fully engaged in bicycling but at the same time freed from worldly concerns and enjoys a personal, spiritual sphere for self-development. Many devoted bicyclists find

pleasure in developing skills such as being able to control the use of road shoes with cleats clip, 'harness' bicycles with thick wheel rims or lightweight bicycle.

“I like how bicycling is constantly transitioning in between private space and a group's communal space, from interactions with the others.”

— Tom, a bicyclist in his 50s in my group answered, when asked what is his favourite thing about bicycling.

Tom thinks the concurrent state of being independent and a member of a group is a special feature of bicycling. He referred to a flexibility in interchanging personal space and social space, where one can go back and forth between being alone and accompaniment of his friends. With an alternative to being in company, one actually rides alone and in a group at the same time.

In his university years, Edward experienced his worst accident in Taiwan, when he was conquering the Wulin Peak, the highest peak accessible by motorways, a popular milestone to challenge among the bicyclists community. In his three-days' trip, he got into two accidents. The first incident was when his bicycle got caught up at the small ridge between the grassland and concrete road surface, then he flipped forward, but he did not get hurt. But the second incident happened right before he headed up the last section to the peak when he encountered a puddle after rain, the wheels slipped and slid, he could not balance so he fell forward. His chest grazed on the ground and bled. But he still managed to finish the journey without help. His determination to finish the Wulin Peak on his own was not only fuelled by ambitions to succeed, but the empowering and enabling nature of a bicycle, the excitement of velocity that makes the experience feel wonderful. The wound hurt a lot, but Edward did not feel the pain once he sat on the saddle and resume the climb.

“When a man tools a staff in his hands, he increased the radius of his muscular energy... and was therefore able to apply it more usefully. By the use of a club he could accumulate his muscular energy in the form of kinetic energy and bring it into play with sudden force when the club aligned. By this means it was possible to perform work which could not have been accomplished by the unaided activity of his muscular energy in the form of pressure...” (Ostwald, “The Modern Theory of Energetics”, *The Monist*, vol. 17, p. 511, 1907.)

On many occasions, like David noted, we feel tied up and oppressed by uncontrollable variables and consequences in our life, our positions and progress in work and study, social relations, politics, they are all out of our hands. Bicyclists have direct control of the bicycle's speed and the distance travelled, like a man who holds 'a staff in his hands', one could experience the power of the energy concentrated on their legs, in order to accomplish, in this case, travel in a speed legs alone can never do without the aid of a tool. In which gives rise to the feeling of freedom and liberation in contrast to the repression and incapability or impotency we feel in our lives. It is how the thrill comes and bicycling becomes obsessive. It is impressive how a bicycle can differ travelling experiences spatial-temporal perceptions.

4. Liminality of the Bicycle-able Space

The state and process which is **betwixt-and-between** the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes of getting and spending, preserving law and order, and registering structural status. (Turner, 1979: 465)

In general, the environment in Hong Kong has not been favourable to the bicycling community. On top of the hilly reliefs and little flatland, the city plan is mass transport-oriented to handle a mass displacement or exchange of people across commercial-business districts (CBDs) and residential centres in commuting. Commuter bicyclists have little representations when it comes to transport planning. The roads of Hong Kong are not fully compatible to all users, but to cater to the minority of bicyclists, there are instructions and guidance released by the Transport Department on how bicyclists should share the public space with other road users.

Moreover, the classification and boundaries of bicycle-able space are fluid and sometimes ambiguous due to a lack of monitoring and law enforcement. Sometimes, the ambiguity gives bicyclists flexibility to travel more freely on the roads. They can take pedestrian's sidewalks or carriageways whenever they feel comfortable, as long as there are

no bicycle tracks in sight or policemen monitoring the traffic and road conditions. Bicyclists, like the ambiguous nature of and space occupied by bicycling, travels through liminality in time and road order, as Turner described, a 'state and process which is betwixt-and-between the normal', there is no one certain space or type of road bicycles and bicyclists should be limited to.

4.1 Overview and Attitudes towards Bicycling Infrastructure in Hong Kong

The nature of bicycles makes its role on the roads difficult to be defined. It can go as slow as a pedestrian walking, or as fast as motor vehicles under speed limitation; it is flexible in narrow spaces like walking, but can be fast enough to kill people it hits; it is slim like some smaller motorcycles, but it weighs not as heavy or not operating in stable speed. It is never either one or another, in terms of power and speed, size and room it takes. When defining bicycles in formulating transport guidelines and laws, it is difficult to find middle ground or form absolute terms. Most competitive and hobbyists' average speed range between 15-30km/hr, even within the group of more experienced bicyclists, the speed can vary from able to cause fatal accidents to stopping completely in 5 seconds. The kinetic energy bicycles possess makes it flexible but the rules to govern them ambiguous at the same time.

There are bicycling facilities including the trails, ramps, bridges, subways, plastic bollards on the tracks to maintain order, and public parking spaces around Hong Kong, mainly in the New Territories and outlying islands. While Hong Kong island and Kowloon have close to none of the above mentioned infrastructure, there are new direct trails slowly under construction to link up Lo Wu and Yuen Long. At the same time, urban bicyclists at the inner city or bicyclists who travel on carriageways would ride past the elevated kerbs and travel in between less busy roads and sidewalks regardless of the clear divisions, which should be supposedly prohibited. Still, as long as there are no injuries or fatal accidents, violators would not be penalised.

Bicyclists are obliged to follow most rules and advice as most drivers, since they are considered as a type of drivers in Hong Kong (Transport Department, 2000). Bicyclists have to follow instructions of traffic signs and observe general road rules such as keeping left unless overtaking, the need to maintain a safe gap in between vehicles, and never to U-turn or reverse the bicycle on expressways. However, bicyclists are restricted from major trunk roads like pedestrians, for example, highways and tunnels are off-limits for bicycle riders. Nonetheless, despite these information available online, only drivers who have passed a licensing test would have read through the safety guide document. Simplified road safety information are usually dispersed among peers and circulated within the community and to bicyclists always rely on road signs, banners ahead of them or along the way and their conception on traffic rules to learn their boundaries of the bicycle-able spaces. Although the authorities try to define and set rules for bicyclists, a clear-cut boundary is not always beneficial for bicyclists.

There is currently an absence of transport policies to maintain an allocation of spatial equality, but it is not possible to change unless there are more commuter bicyclists within the community to fight for a greater bargaining power. The Transport Department advices bicyclists “must not ride or wheel your cycle in a manner that endangers other road users or yourself” to avoid reckless and careless bicycling (Transport Department, 2019a). That seems to be the underlying moral compass underneath the constant challenge, share, expansion and negotiation of perimeters of bicycle-able spaces, that does not hinder enthusiastic and outspoken bicyclists from taking over the roads.

The general bicycling community shares a negative view on the current planning and bicycling infrastructure in Hong Kong. Some people are sympathetic towards the physical constraints while some inherently believe bicyclists share the same rights with drivers to use roads and it can be easily solved by mutual respect and communication.

During my interviews and fieldworks, many complains about a lack of awareness and a common set of knowledge as foundation for all bicyclists and road users. In 2018, there were 1,942 recorded accidents involving bicyclists, in which 11 died, almost 200 severely injured (Transport Department, 2019b). There are plenty of reckless and careless bicyclists , especially on weekends and holidays, who often pose threats to themselves by a lack of protective gear or sufficient skills to control their bicycles, and threatening the entire community because of their shortage of basic road sign knowledge. For instance, the broken white lines in the middle separating two-way lanes, and that one should always ride on the left and should overtake the bicyclists ahead of them on the right, double white lines mean one should not ride on the opposite lane, and one should always have a headlight and reflective board at the back of the bicycle. In some situations, there are variations in the ‘right ways’ of using carriageways, namely when to stay on left, how much proportion of the road should a bicyclist take up to balance between being visible to drivers from the back and not to alarm drivers on other lanes. Several informants evaluated and proposed that by issuing licenses, like automobile drivers’ can help educate and consolidate some universal rules on bicycle ways and carriageways. They often blame the informality and heterogeneity of road usage rules for posing danger and causing accidents to other bicyclists, like Jamie’s accidents:

“The worst accident I got into was the time when a guy in the opposite lane came up from a small, hidden lane at Twin Bridge. He rode on the wrong lane but I did not slow down, then he crashed right into me...”

“The plastic bollards [at the track’s ends] used to be metal railings [taking up the entire lane] and there were single broken lines when you go downslope and enter a cycle track tunnel... A lot of bicyclists got into accidents because of the inappropriate use of signs [on and along the road].”

— Jamie recalled his accident in one evening couple years ago, he compared and commented on the road designs of cycle tracks near Tolo Channel.

One of the more senior informants, Mr Chow pointed out that the more experienced group of bicyclists label those who rent a bicycle as ‘Jo-jo’. ‘Jo-jos’ are perceived to be

amateurs who are like a ticking time bomb on the trails, who are unable to observe the community's practices and safety rules. Some notorious acts include often stopping in the middle of the roads without properly signalling, attempting to U-turn too slowly in the middle of the road, or ruthlessly overtaking without paying attention to others coming from behind. Apart from 'jo-jos', presence of pedestrians on sidewalks parallel to bicycle ways are also risky. Mr Yeung shared that there was once when an older man who suddenly stretched his arms while walking along the border of the bicycle tracks and footpath, the act stunned a group of road bicycle riders spinning at a speed over 30km/hr who could not react timely, and therefore the entire group got hit and fell off their bicycles. The old man just took a glance at them, then continued his walk. Children are also 'ticking time bombs' on bicycle tracks, since they tend to fluctuate more and have a higher possibility of switching into abrupt turns or changing in directions anytime, or they could run into the opposite lane suddenly without warning, which the parents can hardly stop when it happens. Hence, some bicyclists criticised and even suggested that there should be an age limit to bicycling.

However, both licensing and imposing an age limit go against the egalitarian philosophy and nature of bicycling. Instead, some bicyclists take punishments of 'injustice and unrightful misbehaviour into their own hands. The more lenient warnings are like ringing their bells towards the offenders to remind them of their irresponsibility and carelessness, or telling them right in their face. Sometimes some impatient bicyclists swear and yell at the violators. With the widespread use of social media platform, some members would post them at respective bicycling groups for a virtual public trial and criticisms.

In spite of the formal boundaries drawn by numerous infrastructures, road markings, rules and laws, these superficial measures fail to ensure safety of the bicycling community. The alarming number of accidents calls for the authority's greater commitment in enforcing monitor on bicycle traffic and more persuasive public education about safety use of bicycle

ways, in order to create a safer, more inclusive bicycling environment for bicyclists of different skill levels.

4.2 Place Knowledge and Senses

What is often described as “immediate” experience in fact turns out to be a mediated one, with a secure place carved out precisely for the impersonal elements that are integral to the personal. (Ram and Houston, 2015: 9)

On the other hand, a place is a certain, particular area or space ‘in relation to other things or people’. When we ride bicycles, we constantly create a new spatial-temporality because we are seldom at one certain point or one spot. We travel through places in our own pace. Before we arrive in our destination, we often travel across unfamiliar places on our journey, entering temporary void in our spatial knowledge. When bicycling, our bodies travel in between spaces and boundaries, if staying on the trail is the compliance to existing rules and regulation, what seems to be an arbitrary, immediate, momentary decision to travel out of a bicycle trail, then entering a carriageway may seem like deviant. But the use of space when bicycling is not clearly separated into the appropriate and the inappropriate. Many drivers and sometimes, pedestrians regard bicyclists on the carriageway as inappropriate, inconsiderable and a violation of their own rights to use roads, because bicyclists slowly climbing up a steep slope can cause a congestion. Travelling out of the boundary is not necessarily morally wrong or causing obstructions to others. It may instead offend the legitimate, the more powerful and in this case, the majority with greater potential in causing harm and damage, which is the automobile drivers.

Given that bicycle lanes are incoherent and inconsecutive, to ride a bicycle pleasantly and smoothly in Hong Kong is often an experience of travelling in between legitimised territories and ‘unchartered’ lands. The moment of deciding whether to cross boundaries may seem brief, but the perception to the bicycle-able and non-bicycle-able space is built up by a series of place and spatial knowledge, memories, experiences, conceptions and impressions.

Each minor decision on the way determines the safety of the person and other bicycle riders passing through the tunnel. However, when you magnetise every detail, you realise that the feelings are not inherent but ingrained after accumulating experiences, observation and knowledge, skillsets developed or taught by others. You selectively take in the perceived important elements in the surroundings, like road markings of lanes or obstructions ahead, and interpret them based on your perception. What we give so little thought about, or regard as tacit knowledge, is in fact possibly explicit not too long ago, when you first ride on that route, or when you first ride on this bicycle. Place is one significant factor in bicycling performance and decisions. Therefore, when you ride at a different place, the appropriate boundary perceived to ride within differs. For instance, when you ride on a bicycle-friendly place like Tokyo, you can ride on sidewalks or carriageways; when you ride on Bicycle Skyway in Xiamen, stopping midway is inconsiderate but it is acceptable as the norm. Boundaries and rules of bicycling often have an ambiguity that makes it fluid in definition, and relatively free and flexible but full of uncertainties too. I would depict the senses of space from three different major type of bicyclists in the following section: commuter bicyclists on outlying islands, competitive bicyclists and hobbyists on the bicycle ways, and urban bicyclists in the city, to explain the range and existence of liminal space to different bicyclists, to answer why and where is a place bicycle-able?

4.2.1 Commuter Bicyclists on Outlying Islands

To residents living on outlying islands like Cheung Chau, Mui Wo, Peng Chau and Lamma Island, bicycling is the most common, efficient and effective form of daily commute. On Cheung Chau, there are neither separate bicycle tracks on the island, nor room for cars and larger vehicles. Village vehicle not wider than 1.2m and bicycles (including tricycles, trolley or cargo bicycles or family carts in this case) are the only two types of vehicles allowed on Cheung Chau. It is evident that Cheung Chau residents ride a bicycle to everywhere, maybe

with an exception when the destination is within 2-minutes' distance. There can be bicyclists swooping by from nowhere suddenly and most pedestrians ignore them quite easily. Bicyclists do not slow down at turns and almost never get off and wheel their bicycles even though there is no separate track to protect them from other road users. Bicyclists, truck drivers and pedestrians are users within the same roads who negotiate each other's equal rights to use the space respectfully and emplace each other on the road.

“People in Cheung Chau think that wherever you can walk, you can ride your bicycles there.”

— Crystal described her perspectives on bicycling culture of Cheung Chau.

Crystal grew up at Cheung Chau and left her childhood abode for the first time when moved to dormitory on campus. In her childhood, almost everyone she knows rides a bicycle. Certainly, there are some exceptions, some of her friends, who are also Cheung Chau residents, rejected learning bicycling completely and preferred walking back and forth the pier and home every day. But these are only few strange examples on the island. When they were toddlers, they sit behind their parents or any elders' backseats, practice on learner's bicycles occasionally; when they got into kindergarten, they got their own small bicycles; when they outgrew their bicycles, they might inherit an used bicycle from the family; perhaps when they became adults, they bought their own and used it until it was beyond repair. Bicycling is as easy as walking to them. They have mastered the techniques so well that they don't need to process each turn and street. Their bodies and senses are so accustomed to bicycling that it has become as natural as an instinct.

“When I am on a bicycle, I don't think about bicycling but anything else, just as if I am walking.”

“I remembered the only actual accident I have ever had happened when I was 5 or 6-year-old. It was late at night, around 11 o'clock. I was heading home from a friend's birthday and I was really exhausted. So I fell asleep on the bicycle then clashed into a wooden hut when the bicycle was going down a very mild slope.”

— Crystal recalled the one and only accident ever happened to her.

The memory of the accident has not deterred Crystal a bit from bicycling every day. Instead, she still thinks bicycling is more efficient than mass transportation in the city, because it eliminates unnecessary transitions like walking up and down to the MTR platform, or saves the waiting time for bus. Her parents did not fuss over the incident either, not only because she did not get injured, but bicycling is perceived as safe for locals. Currently there are restrictions on bicycles accessing the pier area on weekends and holidays, due to an usual influx of tourists. It creates great inconvenience for many residents like Crystal who walks the distance she usually bikes. To them, it is more difficult to estimate the extra time required to walk to the pier than bicycling to it.

Meanwhile, new bicycling facilities have been designed and put in use in Mui Wo as part of the face-lifting redevelopment for the place in 2017. The newly paved two-laned bicycle way mainly links the pier and only concrete path along Silvermine Beach. According to a Mui Wo resident, Amy, though the new lanes are popular and she feels safe to ride on most of the time, some rebels still prefer to riding on the carriageway parallel to the bicycle lane.

When being asked about the boundaries and safety issues of bicycling on carriageway before the trails were built, Amy answered,

“It is acceptable to wheel your bicycle on pedestrian’s way, but if you ride your bike on it, people will give you judgemental looks and even scold you...We used to ride our bicycles with other cars on the road, it was quite safe most of time, because other drivers are careful and polite enough to give ways to use. But the most dangerous case was that one time when a coach driver forgot to close the compartment door on the side, the door was so close to bicyclists’ heads at that time.”

Amy explained the moral order of maintaining exclusivity of sidewalks, especially when there are convenient alternatives for bicyclists. To her knowledge, bicycle shares the same power and poses as much threat to pedestrians as motorised vehicles, therefore should not infringe integrity of the pedestrian’s territory.

One big drawback of the newly paved narrowed bicycling pathway to the pier is that it is impossible to overtake bicyclists who are blocking the way, not unlike the kids in headphones, because of the incoming bicyclists on the opposite line. As she recalls riding on the carriageway, she only needs to keep to her left, be aware of the cars or buses, who are generally understanding and tolerant to bicyclists too. She was freer to overtake a slower bicyclist when she has to. The safer new trails have reduced the risks of bicycles' collision with automobiles by , but in turn, the differentiation of bicycles from other vehicles separates and condenses the space they could use.

To residents at Mui Wo and Cheung Chau, they are used to travelling amidst ambiguous territories between automobiles and bicycles, or bicycles and pedestrians. If the liminal space bicycle can travel on is being clearly defined and segmented, the freedom and bicycle-able space are only limited. Even if the distinction is made by infrastructure, it would not always be recognised, like getting caught for illegal parking on Cheung Chau, residents uphold the flexibility of 'disorder' for the sake of convenience and flexibility. After all, it is the purpose why they ride bicycles.

4.2.2 Competitive and Hobbyist Bicyclists on the Bicycle ways and Popular Routes

Competitive bicyclists can have a different perception towards their surroundings very different from commuters, not simply because of the physical attributes in the environment, but their relations with the material world and meanings created after having travelled on the same routes repeatedly (Harvey, 2006). Although such abstract conceptions and feelings of association can be too short-lived to express, they can also be very transparent.

“It is too dangerous to go bicycling alone [in HK].”
— A 56-year-old male hobbyist in my group, Eason remarked.

Eason's remark is a total opposite from Amy's and Crystal's perception on bicycling. It is perhaps a piece of fatherly advice to inexperienced group members. It may be due to his

experience of having gotten into accidents, maybe it is the occasional ambulance he saw on bicycling hotspots. Eason rides on a road bicycle. He is not always keen on keeping time and training, but he likes to spin along the Tolo Harbour when he rides. Although many hobbyists and competitive bicyclists may object his statement, among the 17 informants I have interviewed, almost all of them have got injured in the past.

His worries are not entirely unnecessary, because many enthusiastic hobbyists and competitive bicyclists often ride or encounter riders spinning at a high speed above 25-30km/hr, which increases stimulation and excitement as well as endangers the bicyclists themselves and others. When one rides in such a fast speed, the pumping adrenaline and fleeting surroundings easily make one simplify everything in the surrounding into potential threats, obstructions and clear way and an ideal slope to challenge and ‘fly’ through. Another experienced bicyclist, Ben told me when I bike, I should look further away from myself, look way ahead to better prepare myself for the route, like bends, uneven surfaces, railings and bollards, pedestrians and cars.

Some of the most popular routes among this group of bicyclists are Tai Mei Tuk, Tai Po to Luk Keng, Fei Ngo Shan and Tai Mo Shan in Kowloon, Nam Sang Wai at Yuen Long, or from Fan Ling to Lo Wu and Yuen Long, and the Castle Peak Road. They are often clearly marked by white dashed lines, white double lines and etcetera, and these markings are crucial in marking the boundaries separating bicycles and motorised vehicles or vehicles heading in different directions, and preventing collisions. Such objectively defined area can be understood as an absolute space that the basis of maintaining order and safety on roads by disciplining behaviours on the roads. The distinctions between bicycle trails and carriageways are usually made significant by planters, elevated kerbs, red colour tracks on bicycle lanes, and road signs signifying the start and end of a bicycle lane. Moreover, these symbols are still subjected to bicyclists’ interpretations and conceptualization. An easy

example is that when a sign says ‘Cyclist dismount Use pedestrian crossing’, most hobbyists or competitive bicyclists never dismount, some cross through the crossings by using the carriageway and avoiding the pedestrian’s refuge island, while some stays at a ‘ready position’ on the bicycle and wait for a green light. The former seek a smooth and unending journey, while the latter simply feel that they are skilful enough to get through the small space at the refuge island with their bicycles, therefore think that it is unnecessary to dismount. It is the same with hobbyists riding on the sidewalks. Bicycling on footpaths sometimes upset walking pedestrians, while slow and careless beginners learning how to ride a bicycle on the bicycle path irritates racers.

Bicyclists, especially adventurous bicyclists who long for a coherent, well-connected route would sometimes take the carriageway and stray away from the paralleling bicycle trails, because the lanes they stigmatised are bumpy and rugged, in contrast, motorways are wider and better paved, even if there are dents on the way, they would feel like that they have plenty of space to go around the potholes because they can see a wider environment ahead of them. For example, Yau King Lane and Chek Nai Ping are where regular training teams of bicyclists often occupy the long, steep slopes a couple nights a week. Viewing the more mainstream bicycle lanes like the nearby ones at Science Park, they can be undesirable because they are often filled with amateurs and ‘jo-jos’ that means uncertainty and greater danger.

More than once I have encountered competitive bicyclists training along the bicycle lanes at Science Park yelling at slower bicyclists, or anyone who stopped midway, to stay out of their way.

4.2.3 Urban Bicyclists in the City

“We share the same rights to use the road just like other drivers... I don't believe that no drivers in Hong Kong have not experienced encountering a bicyclist on road.”

— The owner of *Tokyobike*, an urban bicycle merchandiser for the Japanese bicycle brand commented.

“The first time when I followed my group and rode on carriageway in the big round, I was going to turn right and leave the roundabout, the taxi behind honked me rudely! Gosh of course I am slower than him, and honking at me doesn't help me leave faster.”

— Ethan described he and his bicycling group's habits and experiences on a motorways.

Above are two viewpoints shared by many in the bicycling community. However, non-occupational urban bicyclists are rare in Hong Kong, comparing the previous two types of bicyclists. It is because of the low position bicycles take up in the hierarchy of road users in urban areas. Bicyclists can be seen as an obstruction to drivers and pedestrians, particularly on crowded and busy roads. Riding on the sidewalk is also a popular choices at inner city at night or at segments where the pedestrian flow is usually low. One's constant proximity with cars can give stress some bicyclists and thus deterring them from attempting. Another discouraging reason is the fatalities of urban bicycling. Nonetheless, these have not diminished all bicyclists' confidence and curiosity in travelling through the inner city. For example, Beatrice, a former urban bicyclist in her 20s used to own and ride a mountain bicycle, and there was a time when she rode through Kowloon to get to social gatherings and even rode to Chinese University from Kowloon:

“It is not hard to ride a bicycle in Kowloon. I just ride on the narrower streets away from buses and main roads.”

In order to ensure a barrier-free and safe bicycling environment, the bicyclist has to resort to smaller secondary streets that have less traffic and pedestrians. To urban bicyclists in the city, large vehicles like buses, trucks, vans and cars are a constant in constituting the absolute space when bicycling. When one travels through places, one is much more distracted than when one rides at the New Territories and bicycle ways, because more vehicles and pedestrians mean more unexpected potential interruptions.

With limited space and narrow roads, and very few bicyclists along the way, it is uneasy for any experienced bicyclists to go through the city grid complicated like a walnut but easy to

feel displaced at first. As a minority at inner city, urban bicyclists have to observe ways of other drivers and pedestrians. For instance, when one rides on sidewalk, one has to ride so slowly like walking, while when one rides on the carriageway, he or she must abide to their order and sometimes speed and brave themselves to ride next to buses, to avoid being a burden that causes congestions on road.

From the illustrations of the three groups of bicyclists, it can be concluded that the conceptualization after having lived, travelled through the spaces vary with places, individual experiences and the norm of the region. Though it is not always realised, “places habituate our bodies as much as we inhabit them” (Ram and Houston, 2015: 14). Commuters on islands inherit their tacit place knowledge by following their peers and inheriting the habits from families; competitive and hobbyist bicyclists gain the knowledge by experiences and observing, learning from companions; urban bicyclists acquire the knowledge from other pedestrians or automobile to help them blend in without causing inconvenience from other. The ways of our ‘dwellings’- the rules obliged and behaviour of bicyclists are never spontaneous or instantaneous, but a result of ‘an ongoing synthesis across generations and across life cycles (ibid.).’ But before the fluidity and flexibility of bicycling are being legitimised, their status stays in between and betwixt categories of automobiles and pedestrians and bicycling in general, remain travelling in liminal space.

The liminal nature and space of bicycling occupies may irritate many in Hong Kong at first, but it is normalised at many ‘chaotic’ regions like Sham Shui Po, Mongkok, where boundaries of private and public space have been blurred for a period of time. It bears the function of encouraging ‘a deconstruction of society’s conventions and structural elements’ (Rowe, 1998: 129; Turner, 1985: 160). New rules arise as road users respect each other’s space on the road, allowing for liminality and ambiguity on road usage, with no need of

legitimizing the use of all kinds of space in every term and situation, eventually resulting in a new social order (Rowe, 1998: 129).

4.3 Empowerment of Liminality

The liminality of bicycle-able space has not only given freedom for one to travel in between places even without any adequate bicycle infrastructure. With the freedom of opting for alternating sidewalks and carriageways for a safer or more convenient ride, it enables bicyclists to discover and visit new territory away from the main roads. Bicyclists could visit places they have never been to before, places sometimes too far and uncertain to walk, and see views they often skip when they are inside enclosed cars or vehicles, for instance, you would not plan for a walk from Fotan to Luk Keng because you don't know for certain if there is sidewalk connecting all the way through, nor it is likely you would walk into unknown villages without knowing whether you have enough time to get back before sunset or whether you can catch a bus nearby. In a way, there are exclusive space reserved for bicyclists like the panoramic view to Shenzhen along the border at San Tin, villages in the New Territories, namely Tai Po, or behind narrow footpaths at Mui Wo, one would not be able to enjoy the sceneries with as much pleasure when travelling in cars. The experience of bicycling has given more freedom in enjoying and admiring the surrounding, exploring new unvisited paths not shown on the map without needing a destination as definite ends, but the time and space experienced when bicycling itself as its own means.

Although bicyclists enjoy less legal accountability compared to drivers, due to little control imposed by authorities, the same lack of regulation on bicycle ways pose dangers to bicyclists at the same time. Other users of bicycle lanes are motorised e-bikes, electric scooters, hoverboards, roller-skates, runners and pedestrians. Their usage of the segregated bicycle lanes is a loophole in the law enforcement system and is often criticised for intruding the space supposedly reserved for bicyclists. Police could usually only inspect bicyclists

behaviours at conjunctions of bicycle paths and less busy motorways. Like bicyclists, these road users also share a liminal space and blurred boundaries to travel, but only restricted to sidewalks and bicycle lanes due to their lack of protective gears and relatively lower average speed. Though they travel in a similar speed with bicycles, particularly electric scooter riders, their operation resembles more to vehicle-like machinery since riders do not rely on pedal power and cannot control the speed as easily as one does through pedalling. The outlaws can lose control and pose great danger to bicyclists and other road users. Thus, according to the definitions and regulations of the Transport Department, they need a third party insurance, a valid driving license and helmets, like motorcycle riders (The Standard, 2019). Arrests have only been made more frequently at west Kowloon and along Tolo Harbour Highway in the past two months because of a fatal accident of an electric scooter rider. While fatalities urge stricter law enforcement and penalisation on the deviant behaviours.

Due to the nature of bicycle and roads open to cycling, the measures of tackling and lowering accidents like collisions between motor vehicles and bicycles include to officially eliminate bicycle's access at the black spots, like the Tai Mei Tuk entrance to Bride's Pool where many leisure bicyclists still ride upslope, or previously, bicycles were prohibited at area around the Velodrome Park at Tseung Kwan O, disconnecting the indoor bicycle venue from the bicycle trail network around the site. Moreover, such approach adopted ought to be intended for bicyclists' safety only indirectly oppress bicyclists by shrinking their bicycle-able space and fundamental rights to roads and public space.

Other well-defined and monitored space, particularly in urban areas, are parks managed by Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), with some exceptions of bicycle parks in Kowloon and Hong Kong island. From the angle of 'public space', bicycles are targeted to eradicate any risks of collisions. Moreover, such absolute ban on bicycles access cannot subsist because it only attracts violation and challenges to such boundaries.

Loose classification sometimes is better than clearer boundaries, which restrict bicyclists from utilising public space. Liminal spaces, blurry territories and boundaries empower bicyclists while distinctions limit the territories bicycles entitled to share with other road users. To Victor Turner, *communitas* is the ultimate ideal form of society after having experienced phases of liminality, which is relatively structureless due to the dismantling of the old hierarchies and systems of orders (1969: 360, 373). Even re-establishments of new authorities and structures that rise amidst dismantlement shall one day face their own challenges of deviations, the cycle where liminal and grey areas challenge structures and classifications continue as new systems arise, always provoking hegemony and stagnation. In this case, bicyclists challenge the road order with their liminal state and nature, in fact slowly advocating for a more inclusive road order. In this slow process, bicyclists' bodies have been an active agent in expanding and negotiating spatial allocation, while some successful case is abolition on bans outside the Velodrome Park, some less desired results are complete ban on access on motorways and sidewalks. Active and fearless bicyclists play a role as a force of bio-power the constituted 'a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death', in contrast with the juridical power of authorities disciplining people in bio-politics (Foucault, 1978: 136, 138).

After all, the ultimate set of rules governing bicyclists are the morality established and agreed, transmitted and demonstrated within bicycling groups and the entire community. The imagined collective of bicycling community although diverse in background and physiques, habits and interests, there are benchmarks and standards that are not often spoken and circulated to people outside the community, namely weekend or holiday bicyclists.

In fact, many bicyclists would argue that a fixated guideline is unnecessary because it is believed that an experienced bicyclist can make the most adequate decision on the spot. However, the concern of ability to make a right judgement requires experiences and

knowledge, whenever one challenges a new, foreign route, the danger of unfamiliarity and recklessness lurks between excitement and thrill of uncertainty.

5. Conclusion

“I simply like everything with wheels, especially bicycles.”

— Mr Chow said in his questionnaire answer, as well as when we met.

“I cannot stop pedalling once I have sat on the saddle, unless I get off from it, that’s the only time I can stop a while.”

— Ben jokingly said, but he does do what he said. He almost never stops bicycling until he cannot.

“Biking is so many things — different things at different times. Right now, just fresh air, alive feel at work, fitness, mental health, being able to eat anything and don't care, coffee, buying expensive things to buy on bikes... all these things!”

— Steve thought bicycling is versatile and are beneficial in many ways.

Bicyclists’ fascination on bicycle is unique but not solely a fetishism or an obsession of materials. It is the simplest mechanism of gear tooth mobilising movements of chains, the basis of machinery, that particularly makes bicyclists feel most accomplished and rewarding, having receiving direct positive feedback from the travels on bicycles. Mr Chow and Ben, and several other of my informants are drivers themselves, too feel bicycling is more motivating and enjoyable. The pleasure brought by bicycling does not stop at the metaphysical level, the transcendence from a workout of bodies to the awakening of sensuality and existence in the world, through a new relation built up and established with self and or the surroundings:

“I feel less from the environment but more from the **motion and action of bicycling**. I usually enjoy the view at the end more than paying attention to the views on the way, it's rewarding like that. When you have a goal (or destination) in mind (with the group), you would want to go overtake others and go through with it more quickly. But riding on the same route over and over again can be boring, when I ride alone, I would go further and explore new roads.”

— Tony explains his sensuous experiences about his leg power and explorations as a competitive bicyclist

“Some of my bicycling pals are just too lazy, they prefer to play computer games rather than going out for a ride. It’s ‘toxic’, staying home playing games when it’s not even sunny or hot... It is easier to feel the **capacity of your legs’ strength** on a bicycle than running, because you can travel further.”

In the 21st century, after being introduced to globalisation accelerated by digitalisation for a little over a decade, centuries of capitalism and urbanisation, and centuries after industrialisation, we are no longer excited about or amazed by the simplest sensations in our daily lives, like travelling in between places, or feeling accomplished and complacent about using our bodily forces to complete tasks. We have grown more detached from selfhood, from our senses, our sense of existence in the world, our identities, to feeling what is ‘reality’ and feeling of liveliness more than ever. So much that we rely on technology and commodities to alleviate our unresolved Marxist alienations and social, spatial segregation, to help make the reconnection between ourselves and the world, and to make us feel alive.

At the same time, bicycling is a sports and leisure activity, as well as a work on self, for instance, body shape and fitness. Some bicyclists expressed that they started bicycling for improving their body shapes before they started enjoying the excitement and thrill of speed and bodily efforts. Although many pursue professional outlooks and attractive apparatuses, body-conscious bicyclists would consider jerseys and bicycle tights as overly revealing to their body shapes and feel embarrassed to wear them. The empowerment is not absolute in boosting one’s confidence while self-awareness becomes stronger. Bicycling as a social activity and a hobby is not only able to connect and reconnect human with other social beings, but also with the environment through senses acquired by utilising tools. Our relationships with tools and technology, are not simply reflective of knowledge and progress but our morality too. The rapid growth of technologies and abundance in the hobby and apparatuses does not imply an absolute positive cultural development. Instead, the hedonistic endless production and consumption, like the case of shared bikes, show a lack of responsibility that can only be governed by ethics. Likewise, the governing ethics is significant in maintaining order of the bicycle ways.

In addition, the liminality of bicycle-able space among urban, hobbyist, and commuter bicyclists portrayed in the paper proves that individuals' perception of safety and morality are more efficient than rules and restrictions. Bicycling has a high flexibility in boundaries, since the bicycles' occupancy of roads is always temporary, bicyclists can play the role like an excited explorer or brave frontier in finding new routes to travel, or trespassing boundaries of bicycle trails, sidewalks and motorways.

An international event, Ride of Silence⁶, remembering bicyclist victims is organised every year, gathering hundreds and thousands of bicyclists to make the community visible in the society and on carriageways. Bicyclists strive to raise awareness on bicycling safety and to urge the government on improving their safety protocols against accidents. As though liminality may give an edge for bicyclists on choosing their routes, the continuous casualty proves that rather than a passive and ineffective ban that does not deter bicyclists, a more inclusive road usage culture and acceptance legitimising emplacement of bicycles on all roads may be more effective.

In spite of rising trends and growing popularity of bicycling, many drivers in HK still hold grudges against bicyclists on the road. It is hard to blame them because even viewpoints and rules when riding on the motorway can vary a lot within the bicycling community. Whether to stick to one's left, when to ride closer to the central of the lane, shall we ride against the automobile's direction? What speed should one maintain at? What if I cannot finish the long steep slope and start drifting from a straight line? Unlike car drivers, there are no formal regulations to define one's proper behaviour, or a licensing system to unify education of rules to bicyclists. The behaviour of a bicyclist is not as easy to anticipate as drivers' and drivers may not share the same idea on road rules or conception of space with

⁶ Facebook page for event 'Ride of Silence':
<https://www.facebook.com/events/390348684880973/permalink/414429345806240/>.

bicyclists. There may be discussions on the morality among groups and friends, but they remain as informal supervision of conducts. Without a set of guidelines or strict monitoring and penalising system, there could be deviances and conflicts, and bicycling will stay as a leisure activity to majority of daily commuters.

Lastly, the sociability of bicycling is astonishing. The behaviour and influences of the members within the 'imagined communities' of bicycling in HK are more diverse and visible than ever, thanks to omnipresence of social media platform in the digital era. No matter it is the adrenaline, fetishism, thirst for competitions, common moral ideals aspired or simply the clear direction of 'Going Forward' beyond constraints of age, gender and background, that unify them, bicyclists, especially hobbyists in HK are imagined as a collective in solidarity who share passion, vision, and the same set of experiences, knowledge accumulated over time.

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