

# Where everyday mobility meets tourism: an age-friendly perspective on cycling in the Netherlands and the UK

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## ABSTRACT

Tourism is traditionally presented as an escape from daily life and located at places we do not normally visit. Against a backdrop of problematic pressures on (urban) tourist centres and mobility systems, some scholars have explored the possibility of tourism nearer the home. Such locations, however, are often perceived too mundane or are not sufficiently equipped as tourist destinations. In addition, the study of tourist experiences is often dominated by motorised transport, and with limited consideration of older age groups. This article combines different strands of literature to consider the role of active mobility among older people and its contribution to age-friendliness and more proximate forms of tourism. Two case studies in the contrasting mobility contexts of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom show how everyday mobilities contain implicit and explicit tourism elements. Commutes, local visits, and active travel itself may act as springboards for tourism close(r) to home. Using biographical and mobile methods, this article shows how local tourism roots in individual lifecourses, is shaped by the transport environment, and supports social and physical well-being. The findings provide much-needed empirical insight in the convergence between tourism and everyday mobilities and underline the growing importance of slower and more age-friendly approaches to tourism.

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## Introduction

Tourism is traditionally presented as an escape from daily life and located at places we do not normally visit. In recent years, however, a growing body of scholarship has formed around the incorporation of tourism into the fabric of everyday life (Hannam, Butler, & Paris, 2014; Larsen, Urry, & Axhausen, 2007). Already in 2001, Franklin and Crang (2001) observed that tourism studies have “often privileged the exotic and strange, reflecting anthropological legacies, to speak of dramatic contrasts between visitors and locals” (2001, p. 8). Subsequent attempts to de-exoticise tourism led to the exploration of tourist activity performed by people from within the region (Canavan, 2013), by people who visit a city for professional reasons (Den Hoed & Russo, 2017), and to the introduction of “slow tourism” (Fullagar, Markwell, & Wilson, 2012) and “proximity tourism” (Díaz-Soria & Llurdés-Coit, 2013). A research focus on more proximate alternatives in tourism could enhance our insight in how to reduce carbon footprints, local-tourist divides, and the perceived unattractiveness of the own region (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017).

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Despite these possibilities, the pressure on (urban) tourist centres continues to challenge the sustainability of tourism as it is (Hall, 2009). While some scholars have duly sought to reduce social and environmental pressures, not the least in this journal (Dickinson & Dickinson, 2006; Peeters & Schouten, 2006), these challenges centre on the mass effects of tourism in (distant) destinations and long-range transportation. They are produced by longstanding emphasis on the economic benefits of tourism, such as expenditure in situ and job creation. Meanwhile, consumption types, transportation needs, as well as spatialities and temporalities that strongly diverge from the local social fabric, may destabilise tourist cities and regions beyond the economic realm. This led Russo and Scarnato (2018, p. 455) to believe that tourism acts as a “colonizing and dispossessing force” to many communities. An alternative approach towards the short- and long-term effects of tourism seems therefore imperative.

Accordingly, the present article aims to provide an empirical example of tourism closer-to-home, recognising the value of seeing tourism as part of other mobilities. Doing so, tourism mobilities are “(...) bound up with both everyday and mundane journeys as well as with the more exotic encounters that have been the mainstay of much of the analysis in contemporary tourism studies” (Hannam et al., 2014, p. 172). This transforms the mainstay of tourism studies: instead of a sole means to reach a destination, transport is a contextual component (Lumsdon, 2000), arguably relational to the lifecourse, full of everyday obligations, social responsibilities, and based on a diverse set of (mobile) experiences (Manderscheid, 2014; Murray, 2015). This view supposes large changes to the traditional tourist experience away from obligations of work and care and everyday “thrif” (Cohen, 1972). In this perspective, tourism movements are easily wedded to plane and car travel to reach places away from the everyday, and policies often implicitly presume a wide availability of air or automobile travel to the prospective visitors.

Mobilities scholarship provides ways to cut through the entanglement of movement with trip purpose, destination selection, and transport mode, much of which relies on Urry’s (2007) work. By addressing the experiences of active transport modes, as well as multi-modal realities (Murray, 2015; Nixon, 2014), it connects travel modes that better suit the local level to the debate around tourism mobilities. Against a background of diversification of tourism and its attractions (Richards & Wilson, 2006), ageing populations, and the pivotal role of mobility in the well-being experiences of older people, this article explores the tourism and leisure elements in the quotidian life of people of different ages (Binnie, Edensor, Holloway, Millington, & Young, 2007; Cohen, Duncan, & Thulemark, 2015). Using both mobile and biographical methods, it advances tourism activities closer-to-home as a source of age-friendliness in contrasting mobility environments, illustrating the potential of integrating tourism in (active) mobility patterns.

## **Background: active mobility, well-being and age-friendly tourism**

Active modes of mobility such as walking and cycling are recognised to particularly fit the size and density of urban centres (Heinen, Van Wee, & Maat, 2010; Parkin, Ryley, & Jones, 2007). In addition, a growing body of literature highlights their contribution to personal health and reduction of negative environmental effects such as air pollution and congestion. Contrary to the private encapsulation of automobility, cycling and walking are travel modes that occur in public space and in close interaction with people and places (Gatrell, 2013; Middleton, 2011; Nixon, 2014; Te Brömmelstroet, Nikolaeva, Glaser, Skou Nicolaisen, & Chan, 2017). Air travel, in turn, is a large contributor of global emissions, being kept artificially inexpensive by deregulating airline companies and fuel tax, and may reproduce social and spatial inequalities, remaining an elite form of transport on the whole (Adey, Budd, & Hubbard, 2007; Beaverstock, Derudder, Faulconbridge, & Witlox, 2016; Cohen, Higham, Gössling, Peeters, & Eijgelaar, 2016). An improved understanding of tourism at the local scale, facilitated by non-motorised forms of transport, may thus lead to benefits at both individual and structural levels.

This article highlights the more proximate tourism experiences that are part of converging everyday mobilities, both in the spatial and temporal spectrum (Hall, 2005; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Following the mobilities paradigm, mobile daily life activities may carry physical and psychological events or interactions that correspond with tourism and leisure experiences. First, the outdoor nature of active mobility allows people to encounter urban and natural features that feed into the experience of psychological well-being. It is argued that lifestyles that have lost the link to the wider environment could benefit from such interactions, and thus enhance the quality of life (Dolnicar, Lazarevski, & Yanamandram, 2013; Gössling, 2002). This led, for example, to the emergence of geographical work on well-being through human-animal interactions in tourism (Fox & Gee, 2017; Markwell, 2015) and the coming together of tourism, nature, and well-being in an intricate nexus (Willis, 2015). Second, the appreciation of tourism embedded in everyday mobilities allows tourism studies to engage with broader mobility and well-being debates. For example, Smith and Diekmann (2017) conclude that tourism developers should account for well-being forms that are more diverse, meaningful, and lasting – to individual and destination – than episodic escapes.

The pursuit of meaningful activity, personal growth, and autonomy is what Nordbakke and Schwanen (2014) conceptualise as eudaimonic well-being. Mobility facilitates this pursuit, contributing to human flourishing by the places visited and by the act of movement itself (Cresswell, 2010; Jensen, 2009). A journey or an encounter, activity, or feeling while “on the move” can thus improve well-being (Cass & Faulconbridge, 2017). This relationship sharply contrasts the short-lived “pleasure-oriented” nature of hedonic forms of well-being and tourism (Smith & Diekmann, 2017). In Nordbakke and Schwanen’s (2014) conceptual framework, the role of mobility in well-being is particularly relevant to older people (Ziegler, 2012). For ethical, social, and economical reasons, this group is a core demographic in mobility research. As a population segment, they are more wealthy and healthy than ever (Banister & Bowling, 2004; Hjorthol, 2013), and the increasing number of people ageing in their usual living environment will affect the requirements of mobility systems and public spaces (Klimczuk, 2015; World Health Organisation [WHO], 2007). Their mobility may be unnecessarily reduced when simultaneously having to deal with “limitations on physical and sometimes cognitive functioning, as well as ageism by institutions and in interactions with other people in transport settings” (Nordbakke & Schwanen, 2014, p. 105).

Sedgley, Pritchard, and Morgan (2011) specify the concerns related to ageing for the tourism field. First, older people’s motivations and experiences are often premised on predicting travel behaviour of an entire generation. This leads to generalisation and stereotyping: older people are “a diverse group of complex individuals but in their case the sizeable age range (...) compounds this heterogeneity” (Sedgley et al., 2011, p. 424). In addition to the problematically large range of the upper age category, research on older people tends to prioritise people between 60 and 70 years of age, while older categories are the ones that display the largest relative growth across the globe. Similar concerns are pronounced in ageing studies, which emphasise the increasing heterogeneity of growing old and the empty meaning of biological age (Grenier, 2011; Klimczuk, 2015).

More recent, alternative forms of tourism, such as social tourism, also tend to be affected by an underrepresentation of older ages (Morgan, Pritchard, & Sedgley, 2015). Furthermore, market segmentation research tends to paint an overly homogeneous picture of older people (Klimczuk, 2015; see Ernst & Dolnicar, 2018 on the wider issue). For example, deterministic divisions between visitor types do not account for individual preferences, which tend to diversify over the lifecourse, and assume that each person can only represent a single visitor type (Tiago, De Almeida Couto, Tiago, & Faria, 2016). A similarly unfavourable representation of older people applies to active mobility and to wider urban transport planning: “the built environment and associated technology is shaped around notions of youth, efficiency and economic productivity”

(Jones et al., 2016, p. 1). Studies specific to older people's cycling tend to observe a largely artificial distinction between transportation and recreation purposes (Van Cauwenberg et al., 2018).

To counter the disadvantaging conceptualisation of ageing in tourism and mobility studies, this study employs the Age-Friendly City (AFC) framework to open the dialogue between recent, slower forms of tourism and age-friendliness. The AFC is a global agenda that envisages cities and mobilities with a primary position of the increasing older demographic (WHO, 2007). It is assumed that the liveability of cities increases for everyone when they are tailored to the needs of their ageing populations, and in which older people are seen as creative resources (Buffel, Phillipson, & Scharf, 2012; Gilroy, 2008). A general "slowing down the pace" would accommodate all ages in such environments (Knox, 2005; Murray, 2015), and echoes the principles of slow tourism. Fullagar et al. (2012) explain how slowness has consolidated in tourism and permeates the tourism imaginary. Crucial to this article, slow tourism includes the use of environmentally friendly transport means and consideration of local residents. Without necessarily leaning to the nostalgic side of slowness, or drawing a linear link between older people and slowness, it appreciates the assets that bring slow tourism closer to the mainstream of recent tourism studies.

A slower approach to tourism and mobility closely aligns with what Díaz-Soria and Llurdés-Coit (2013, p. 71) call proximity tourism. Instead of defining tourism along measures of distance and dissimilarity from "the usual" or "habitual," this concept foregrounds the (re-)development of everyday spaces as respectful and recreational environments (see Díaz-Soria, 2017 for a theoretical review). Canavan (2013) notes that local visitors self-identify their micro-level activities as touristic, in particular those related to community activity and social experiences. Places that are usually seen as mundane, close, or not equipped to act as tourist destinations may then come into play to find balance (e.g. in work-life) and increase the life quality within the everyday environment.

This article follows the notion that tourism and travel can no longer be understood in isolation from other forms of mobility (Faulconbridge, Beaverstock, Derudder, & Witlox, 2009), thus tracing tourist activities, experiences, and places in (active) everyday mobility. Cycling, for example, "provides older people the opportunity to recreate and socialise, and is an affordable form of transport" (Winters, Sims-Gould, Franke, & McKay, 2015, p. 59). At the same time, in many countries older adults rarely cycle, and are highly dependent on motorised travel (Pucher, Dill, & Handy, 2010). In line with slower approaches to tourism, this piece advances the lived experience of (tourism) mobilities as object of analysis (Russo & Richards, 2016; Urry & Larsen, 2011), and it introduces the role of non-motorised travel. While acknowledging that the utility function of mobility diminishes, new mobile purposes exist in older ages, such as feeling independent, "in control," or to "travel for the sake of travel" (Metz, 2000). The analysis further explores the interlinkages between age-friendliness, active mobility, and tourism activities in proximity of the local environment. The next section develops a methodology that is sensitive to the current experience of urban life, as well as to the biographical accounts that shape mobile practices in the long term.

## Research methods

### *Study design*

The data sample is part of a wider comparative study about cycling mobility among older people in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. It contributed to the MyPLACE project (Mobility and Place for the Age-friendly City Environment), which advanced the potential of Newcastle upon Tyne (UK) as an AFC. The comparative study developed a qualitative design to capture the long-term mobility experience of people of different ages in two contrasting cities in terms of mobility cultures. To understand the effects of biographical and mobile events on ageing, well-being, and mobility opportunities, the design is inclusive of both current mobile behaviour and the past lifecourse. Büscher, Urry, and Witchger (2011) developed a rationale for qualitative

studies to engage with the relational dimensions of everyday mobility by positioning the embodied mobile experience next to its material context. Various mobilities studies subsequently experimented with new “mobile methods” that “capture, perform, and even intervene in processes of movement as they happen” (Jensen, Sheller, & Wind, 2015, p. 5). This led to an abundant use of mobile methods when studying specific types of cycling, such as mountain biking, bike messengering, and commute cycling, but less so as a mundane, everyday form of transport for underrepresented groups such as older people (McIlvenny, 2015).

This study used the particular strength of mobile methods to aid more conventional types of data collection (Merriman, 2014). In particular, this involved (i) initial biographical interviews, (ii) mobile “interventions,” such as GPS tracking and accompanied cycle rides, and (iii) elicitation interviews using visual material of these interventions. Following Jensen et al. (2015), these methods by no means are “hard stages”: they are experimental, often engaged in at once, and overlap within a single data collection. The GPS tracking and the accompanied rides particularly allowed the researcher to engage with the mobile component of biographies, embodied experiences, encounters, feelings, and interactions with material worlds. During the rides, participants were stimulated to share these notions, allowing the researcher to respond with his own – synchronised – experience. In turn, the elicitation material informed the exploration of further health and well-being links and the transportation and recreational functions of everyday travel.

### **Study context**

Following the aims of the overall study to cycling mobility and age-friendliness in contrasting urban environments, the case study areas included the cities of Rotterdam (NL) and Newcastle (UK). Newcastle is the core city of the Northeast England Tyneside area, and features a persistently low cycling uptake, much like many other British cities. Rotterdam, on the other hand, is exemplary of an urban setting with high cycling uptake, across all ages and backgrounds, albeit relatively modest compared to other Dutch cities. Rotterdam’s population size and density are notably similar to that of Tyneside, and is precisely chosen because it is not often showcased as a Dutch cycling city (unlike Amsterdam, Utrecht, or Groningen). Rotterdam is the second largest city in the Netherlands, but its cycling rates are relatively moderate. In 2014, cycling made up just over 20% of trips, and 21% of its inhabitants did not own a bicycle (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2015). In the Netherlands as a whole, the cycling rate is 27%, with higher shares in most urban areas (Harms, Bertolini, & Te Brömmelstroet, 2014).

The study adopted a neighbourhood focus to establish a condensed picture of the role of the different local areas. The suburban area of Rotterdam Ommoord thus featured as “ordinary” high-cycling area, “the same as anywhere else” (Allen, Powell, Casey, & Coward, 2007, p. 252), to shed light on the lived experience of local activities and mobilities in Dutch urban areas. Participants indeed described the neighbourhood as commonplace, similar to other Dutch (sub)-urban neighbourhoods. Ommoord is situated between 7 and 10 kilometres from the city centre, and borders a semi-rural green space along the river Rotte (Figure 1). Rotterdam’s relatively dispersed layout and well-developed metro system seem to favour other transport modes than cycling as well. More recently, the city council has made active efforts to improve their cycle network, which now stretches into all parts of the city.

Newcastle’s low uptake of 2% and limited age and gender diversity of those cycling typify the city as a low-cycling context, despite the ambitions of its leadership. Regarding vehicle ownership, 64% of Newcastle households do not own a bicycle and 39% does not have car access according to the latest survey in 2006 (Dissanayake, 2017). In contrast to Rotterdam, the English city is considerably hillier, especially around the River Tyne, which lies generally 40–80 m below most other parts of the city. To mitigate for this limitation, the research focused on the flatter, less central areas. In addition, the focus on (sub)urban neighbourhoods replicates the



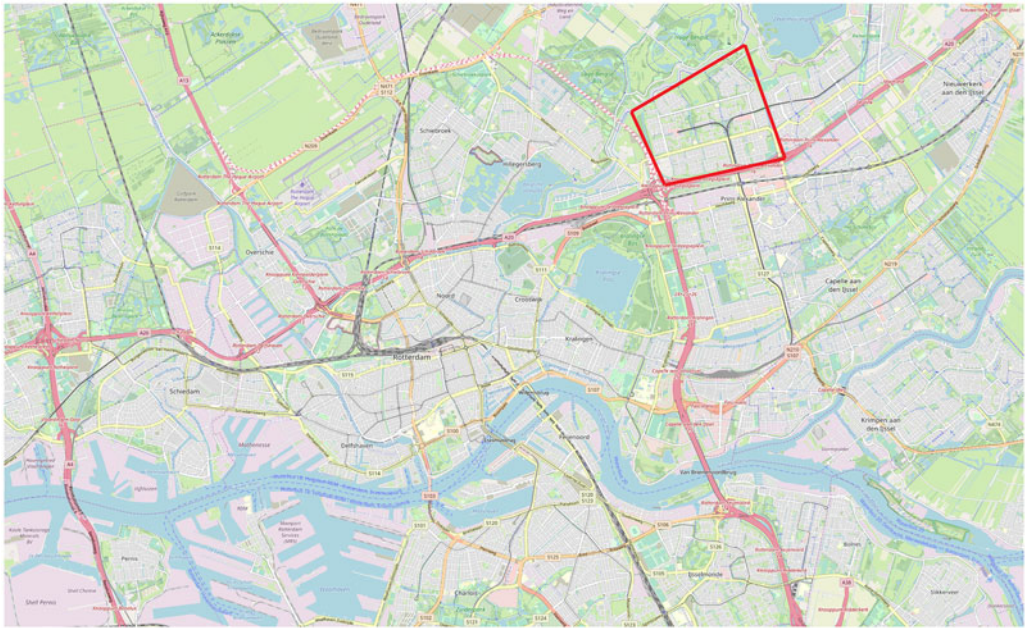


Figure 1. Situation of Ommoord (in red) in Rotterdam urban area (source: OpenStreetMap).

“ordinariness” of the study area in Rotterdam and avoids the reported underrepresentation of “mundane” residential neighbourhoods in mobility studies (Binnie et al., 2007).

### **Data collection and analysis**

The study set out to inquire into the everyday (cycling) mobility of, by large, those over 55 in these two cities. The majority of participants were invited to partake through community groups, including local civic groups in Newcastle and cycling organisations in Rotterdam. A smaller number were invited through snowballing, which aimed to diversify the sample in terms of demographic features and residential locations. Given this article’s focus on active mobility, the sample as described in Table 1 mainly includes so-called “resilient” and “re-engaged” cyclists (Jones et al., 2016), whereas the wider study also included those who quit cycling at young or later age. In both areas, resilient cyclists generally commuted by bike during part of their working life and had normalised views on using the bike as mode of transport for everyday undertakings. For most, the commutes had discontinued, and all had different modalities for local transport at their disposal, including bike, car (incl. lifts), public transport, and walking.

The full sample included 41 participants, who engaged in these three stages to different degrees. The large majority of the participants were aged over 55 ( $\mu = 60$ ), and 63% were female. This article reports from the twelve participants that completed all three stages of data collection, thus containing rich verbal, spatial, and visual descriptions of cycling mobility over the lifecourse. Table 1 shows the demographic variety and main mode of transport of these participants. Participants NL02 to NL15 were traced in Rotterdam, the Netherlands during the autumn months of 2015, whereas NCL01 to NCL19 were surveyed between April and October 2016 in Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom.

Participants first engaged in a biographical interview. This explored life and mobility events from the past, today’s mobility experience, effects of the ageing body, and future mobile aspirations. This interview usually lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and followed a semi-structured course in the first language of the participant (Dutch or English). Some shorter interviews were pressured by time and missed topics were pushed back to a subsequent interview. Shortly after each interview, the

**Table 1.** Participant characteristics.

	Pseudonym	Age	Household	Employment	Cycling trajectory <sup>a</sup>	Main mode <sup>b</sup>
L02	Karin (f)	74	Single adult	Retired (teacher)	Resilient	B
	Caroline (f)	66	Single adult	Retired (secretary)	Re-engaged	B
	Victor (m)	68	Adult couple	Retired (teacher)	Resilient	B
	Gilles (m)	44	Couple, 1 ch	Technician	Re-engaged	B
1	Kelly (f)	55	Adult couple	Volunteer/carer	Re-engaged	C
4	Sophia (f)	62	Adult couple	Retired (HR)	Re-engaged	C
6	Anne (f)	87	Adult couple	Retired (teacher)	Resilient	B
8	Richard (m)	56	Couple, 2 ch	Manager	Re-engaged	C
0	Danielle (f)	58	Adult couple	Volunteer	Resilient	B
4	Tess (f)	55	Couple, 2 ch	Higher education	Resilient	B
7	Mary (f)	66	Single adult	Retired (teacher)	Re-engaged	C
9	Olivia (f)	64	Adult couple	Retired (higher education)	Resilient	B

<sup>a</sup>Classifications follow Jones et al. (2016): 13. "Re-engaged" here means "restarted cycling after a multi-year hiatus at any time in adult life."

<sup>b</sup>B = bicycle; C = private car.

general atmosphere and course, coverage of the topic list, and other particularities were documented. Parts of the interview were transcribed in preparation of any follow-up meetings, before full transcriptions were included in the analysis. Second, mobile engagements took place in the form of geo-tracking transport activities using the smartphone application *Moves*© (Vich, Marquet, & Miralles-Guasch, 2019). This enabled the reconstruction of a current time-space pattern and reflection on its experience in an elicitation interview. Third, participants engaged in a video- and audio-recorded ride-along in a habitual journey of their choice. The researcher transcribed the mobile conversations and observations, before they were translated (if in Dutch) and imported into the qualitative analysis software NVivo, along with the interview transcriptions.

The design and analysis are similar to that of a small number of studies in which both mobile methodologies and lifecourse approaches feature. Jensen et al.'s (2015) methodological framework for relational mobility studies provided a useful angle to seek diversity in methods to triangulate everyday mobility experiences from different people, times, and places. The study committed to being "mobile with" in current everyday mobilities (Büscher et al., 2011), while at the same time aiding more conventional qualitative data collection methods. The mobile nature of the research resulted in multiple layers of data and ample "talking material" for subsequent interviews (see Lee, 2016). For example, participant's running commentaries or annotations in the smartphone application were frequently used for deeper inquiry into mobile and sensory experiences, social encounters, and choices of route and transport mode during follow-up interviews.

The analysis specific to this article was performed after the overall study finished. Even though the wider study initially focused on ageing-related narratives, inductive thematic analysis resulted in a number of themes closely related to cultural and proximity tourism literature features such as "social cycling," "positive ageing," closeness to natural elements, and feelings of well-being when being "out and about." These themes were then further explored by tracing their time-space arrangements, i.e. where these experiences occurred, as part of what journeys, and how they were embodied. The coupling of transcriptions of the video observations and participants' reflections on their mobile experiences with geo-information provided a more comprehensive picture of the mobile experience. The Results sections use selected GPS tracks and stills from the ride-along recordings to illustrate mentioned themes. Participants' home locations and recognisability are concealed when they indicated this in their ethics consent.

## Results

### *Local mobility and recreation*

A first theme recurring in the interview data is the strong engagement with the local area that cycling for recreational purposes brings about. Participants indicate that recreational values are

often part of transportation activities of an everyday nature, such as shopping, running errands, visiting friends or family, and care activities. The case of Caroline is exemplary of those with long-term cycling experience, and highlights the role of the mobile lifecourse. Although she stopped cycling during parts of her adult life, the experience and confidence she gained in younger years helped her to re-engage with cycling. In her 50s, Caroline became somewhat inactive and gained weight: due to health concerns she made cycling her main mode of transport since then. Now she is 66 and retired, she finds comfort in this for various reasons:

*I've always been a yoyo when it comes to weight, massively. But the last 4 or 5 years all this movement helped me to keep the same weight, and I'm happy about that. So that's also why I do [cycle], for your health, for your weight, because I find fun in it, and because you see so much more.*

In the past few years, Caroline overcame various disruptions to her mobility and in her life more generally. She lost her job shortly before official retirement and had to recover from injury. Moreover, her partner, with whom she frequently cycled recreationally despite his ill-health, passed away.

*[After these events] I started cycling a lot. To do some nice, let's say to get some fresh air into my head. I cycled a lot, walked a lot. I was looking for a bit of an outlet, having a nice ride, being busy. And today I have to say there's not a single day I'm bored.*

Currently, Caroline resides in suburban Rotterdam, about 7 kilometres from the city centre. She nearly exclusively cycles, e.g. to local centres, cafes, other parts of the city, and runs through a nearby park in her free time (Figure 2). Her overall activity pattern as recorded in the 10-day period of mobile tracking shows the mix of active mobilities she engages in. A particular highlight is the larger ride to the historic city of Delft that traverses through the northern Rotterdam suburbs and the countryside between both cities. She regularly takes this route (18–20km) to visit Delft's centre and a cousin who lives there. The quotes added to Figure 2 show how she, as she recounts the route in the elicitation interview, recalls places from the past, and explains her

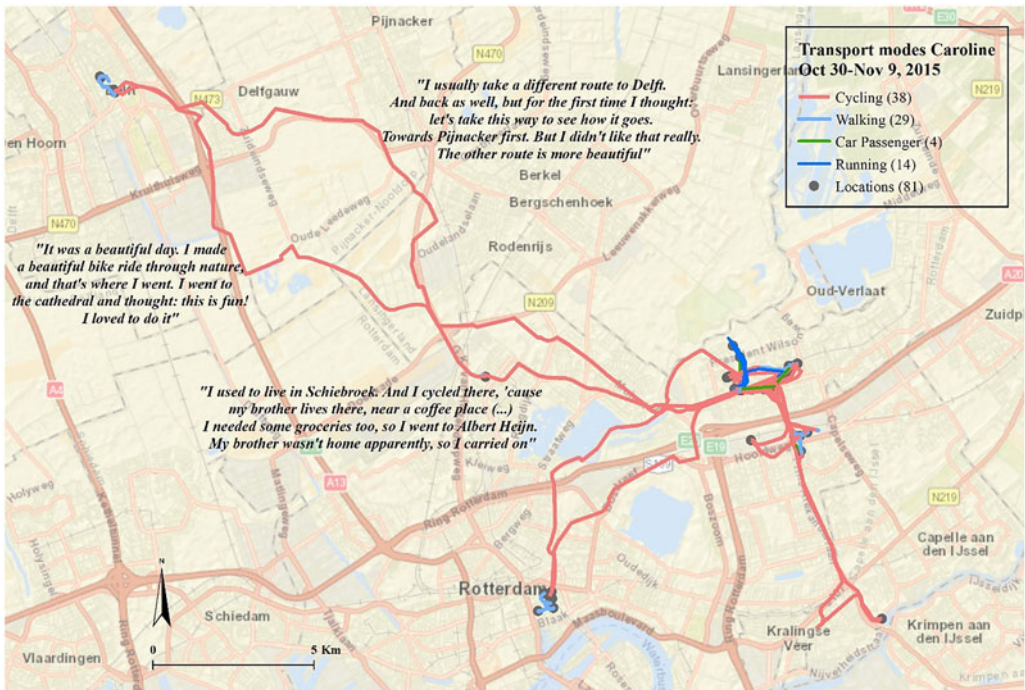


Figure 2. Recorded mobility Caroline (annotated with quotes about Delft ride).



micro decision-making (e.g. route choices) and feelings about the landscapes. An interesting mix thus arises between the “utility” of visiting relatives, the exploration of urban attractions such as Delft’s cathedral, and the enjoyment of natural elements.

In addition, she explains how she feels “being known” by others in areas where she used to live and her family still lives, and now seizes the opportunity to pick up some groceries (in “Schiebroek” in quote [Figure 2](#)). As such, the return journey from Delft’s tourist attractions not only takes her “down memory lane” but also carries the utility of shopping, and speaks to the senses of belonging and place that are so crucial in older age well-being (as in Gilroy, 2008, p. 147). She clarifies:

*There I always take a look at the [church], where we used to celebrate Christmas as children, I do that too. Sometimes I cycle to [a village east of Rotterdam], where I lived for a while, and I just cycle there to see if anything has changed, stuff like that.*

From this first example, it is clear that tourism and recreation are not always easy to distinguish from other mobilities, such as the more functional and spontaneous visits Caroline makes on the way back. Furthermore, Caroline’s example reflects the wider theme of finding well-being in her local activities through this flexibility. While leisure and tourism are usually situated away from functional routines, and in designated spaces, her cycling constitutes manifestations of tourism, allowing her to visit “places of interest” such as Delft’s city centre and various green spaces, such as parks, riversides, and open areas on the urban fringes. This highlights how everyday activities, tied together by mobilities at slower pace, can become tourist performances by reproducing social relations, finding authenticity (e.g. familiar urban districts), and adding the more mainstream sightseeing element (Larsen et al., 2007).

### **Tourism elements and well-being in utility journeys**

A second key finding is that seemingly functional rides, such as commutes, have strong beneficial effects to participants’ state of mind. For instance, Mark’s regular ride from work to home displays an extent of relaxation and stress reduction. He finds the ability to “switch off” and change the scenery, often associated with tourist activity, when cycling in between two cities in the northeast of England:

*When I started working in learning disabilities, I had sleepovers, so finishing a shift in the morning and getting on the bike in the morning. I would do an extra ride before I went home, just because it really cleared my head (...). It was a nice way to relax before I went home.*

Thus, participants find important recreational and well-being values in everyday transportation. They are even found to visit rather conventional tourist destinations such as historic urban centres and coastal areas (both research areas are located within 30 km of the North Sea), as demonstrated in [Figure 2](#) and in the next section ([Figure 3](#)). From Mark’s narrative, it appears that active mobility opens up important opportunities for restoration and relaxation from working life. This combination of utility and recreational functions seems to hold a particularly positive value, as several analytical themes speak to the experience of healthy living and well-being. Well-being is conceptualised relationally following Nordbakke and Schwanen (2014), thus including social, physical, and psychological elements, to which mobility opportunities are pivotal.

Primarily, the natural environment, and more precisely the presence of green spaces in and around cities, act as a major trigger of psychological well-being. Green spaces within the built environment are known to enhance well-being and reduce stress levels. For example, Tess (Newcastle) and Gilles (Rotterdam) pass by “green” local heritage sites during their commutes. On a daily basis, Tess cycles through a large area of protected common land with traffic-free paths and grazing cattle (bottom image [Figure 4](#)). Due to its adjacency to the city centre, this area attracts many commuter cyclists, as well as walkers and runners. The same applies to a small woodland valley, located in the midst of

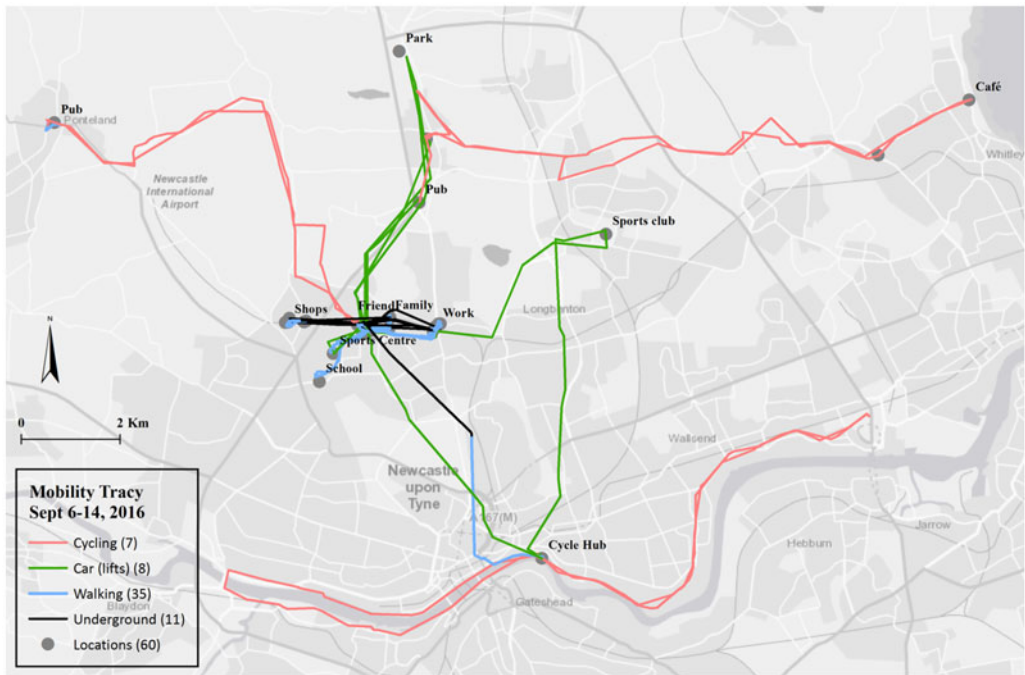


Figure 3. Recorded mobility Tracy. Source: Moves recording.

several residential areas, again with traffic-free paths, and hosting attractions such as an historical water mill, Victorian buildings, and a petting zoo. Figure 4 shows how an important part of Tess' everyday mobility runs through these green areas.

Tess's greener route choice is partly motivated by a lack of (safe) cycle infrastructure on more arterial roads. Yet, participants are willing to give up the directness of these routes for a "slower" option, even for utility rides such as commutes. This is exemplified by Gilles (Rotterdam):

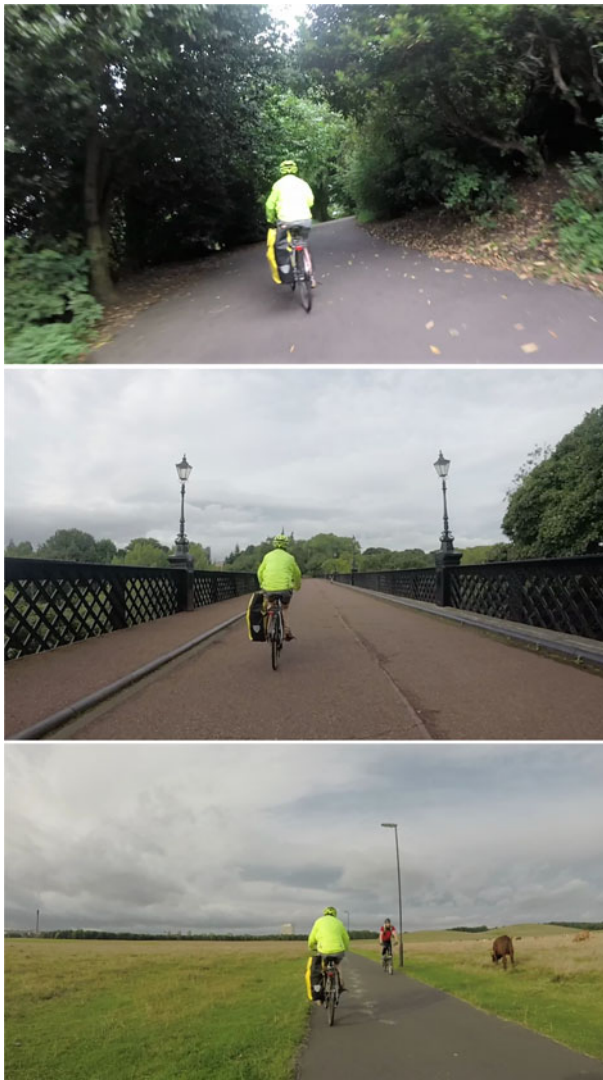
*This is what I like a lot (passing by mill). Are there any mills left in Rotterdam? Well yes, we'll see another one in a bit!*

*Here we cycle through a park, which I always like. It's green and varied, and it has good tarmac which is pleasant to cycle on.*

Gilles cycles to work every day about 14 km each way from northeast Rotterdam to a business park in the west (Figure 5). He chooses to take a "green and varied route, with smooth tarmac," that includes windmills and drawbridges, a stretch along the river Rotte, and passes through several (other) green spaces. The two routes marked in black (Figure 5) are up to one kilometre, five minutes in time, shorter than his actual route represented by the blue line. These alternative routes largely have dedicated cycling infrastructure but encompass less (or no) riversides and parks.

However, the enjoyment of local amenities, as well as the mere task of arriving at work, are not the only reasons for Gilles' mode choice. His cycling commute came about relatively recently, when he realised it was an ideal way to combine his fulltime job with some fitness activity. Since then, he feels considerably fitter and takes less sick leave than before. The increase of physical fitness not only affects his immediate sense of happiness (hedonic well-being), but also his long-term expectations of health and mobility (eudaimonic well-being). He anticipates to cycle until old age, simply by sustaining his active mobility:

*Cycling has really permeated my life now, it would indeed keep me independent [later]. (...) Provided that nothing strange happens, it would keep me healthy enough to be able to cycle. (...) I don't see myself sitting with my little walker in the shopping centre every day, I'm not up for that.*



**Figure 4.** Green spaces and heritage sites in commute Tess (Newcastle). Top to bottom: valley path; iron bridge over valley; traffic-free common land. Source: author's video.

The narratives of two older, female cyclists confirm that the well-being and recreational opportunities provided by active mobility are important tools to carry into older age. Living in suburban areas of Newcastle and Rotterdam, Olivia (mid-60s) and Karin (mid-70s) have had long-standing cycle commutes within their respective cities. Now they are retired, they explore the city and its surroundings in a more leisurely fashion, such as with her partner (Olivia) and with a group of new friends (Karin). In fact, Karin used her previous cycling experience to recover from an illness that seriously affected her fitness. The combined logic of a web of like-minded friends, acceptance of slowness, and her renewed ability to go out again make her feel fortunate:

*You know, it's nice to do this at my age. Many of my friends aren't able to cycle really, or even walk, well maybe a few kilometres (...), it's just a blessing that I'm more fit.*

Olivia, in turn, also finds a sense of privilege in the urban landscapes she traverses by bike. Initially, she uses her longstanding route experience to negotiate a "horrible bit," where she has to cross two successive roundabouts in busy traffic. Her ride demonstrates this as an arduous



Figure 5. Route options commute Gilles. Source: Moves recording; Google Maps.

effort that strongly appeals to her visual and motor skills. This segment however leads up to a lengthy traffic-free path where she encounters dog walkers, green space, flowers, and small animals. The contrast in urban landscapes leads her to explain:

*Isn't it lovely? I just felt so privileged to have this bit, so that I can put up with that horrible bit of roundabout.*

Importantly, most participants' reliance on longstanding cycling experience is accompanied by continued uptake for utility reasons. Anne (87, Newcastle), for instance, recalls how she cycled around the neighbourhood with groceries, chaperoning her grandchildren at the same time. Today, in advanced age, she continues to do so at her own pace:

*My bicycle just isn't a fast bicycle. It's a means of transport, not rapid transport. (...) Some of these fast cyclists would say I'm a pedestrian, you know, 'that's a pedestrian', and they [would] whizz past.*

### ***The embodiment of active mobility and tourism***

Victor (68, Rotterdam) summarises the recreational quality of cycling by exclaiming on his way to the shopping centre: "feeling the wind through your hair, it's bliss!" Such feelings, during rather mundane, close-to-home activities, implicitly contain the well-being and (proximity) tourism elements that may be part of everyday obligations (Hannam et al., 2014). Previously, Gilles' and Tess's vignettes underlined the physical and psychological well-being derived from recreational elements are engrained in their longer-term mobilities.

Participants who (re-)started their cycling more recently, however, often have less normalised views on cycling in everyday transportation. They explicitly express an experience of enjoyment and discovery, for instance when engaging with natural elements. They accompany cycling through parks and other green spaces in the city with excitement about the rabbits, squirrels, or birds they see. These experiences sometimes carry deep value, as Mary (Newcastle) highlights. In her mid-60s, she started to partake in organised group rides, having returned to cycling only a couple of months before. Her account of "sailing along" and "having a moment for herself" express the state of psychological well-being she perceives:



*There is something nice about when you're just cycling along. (...) And you just kind of think 'isn't this lovely, (...) kind of freewheeling and just sailing along?' Probably [I get] a feeling of well-being, of all is well in the world. I'm very lucky I can do this.*

Two important drivers of this “feeling well” are the senses of achievement and discovery. Although they are not confined to a single transport mode – those not cycling express similar feelings when exploring areas by car or foot – they contribute substantially to the psychological and social well-being of participants re-engaging with cycling. Sophia (Newcastle) recently started to cycle and describes how she constantly finds opportunities to explore new places, feels she has achieved something by visiting these, and connects to other people. For example, she speaks of a woodland located on the fringe of Newcastle, a city she lived in for decades, but never got to know about:

*We did a little look-round because it was a lovely little area that we've missed, and we said 'let's look around there', it was very ancient woodland, so we went through that.*

The (re-)engagement with physical activity, exploration, and nature is known to have a positive benefit for mental processes, as well as the executive functions (Jones et al., 2016). Moderate physical activity and deep or transient sensory experiences trigger these faculties in particular for those new to or re-engaging with cycling, and offers them an alternative to previously physically inactive lifestyles. In addition, regular interaction with everyday places and the neighbourhood provides important senses of belonging and continuity, which positively affect well-being in later life (Ziegler, 2012). This reiterates the connection between tourist activity at the local scale and active mobility as expressed at the start of the results section.

The renewed use of bodily functions as a result of a more active lifestyle also has important social effects. This ranges from interactions during rides to enhanced sociality in everyday life. Most of the re-engaged cyclists for example reconnect to family members and friends since they started cycling. For instance, they familiarise their young grandchildren with cycling, thereby fulfilling an active care role. In addition, they display a wider narrative of increasingly going out, meeting people, and (re-)participating in paid work and care activities that catalyse their social life. Kelly (Newcastle), in her mid-50s and re-starting cycling after 40 years, explains that this re-engagement is a collective rather than an individual process, and may spread to others around her:

*I've actually got my husband on the bike, and he'd never get on his bike. (...) Because he's ill and not very fit he went out on my electric one and I just went on the normal one. And he's always said 'no he didn't wanna go' (impersonates husband) and I've just left it and left it and then he said 'fancy a bike ride?', I said 'where do you wanna go?'*

As suggested in the Background section around local tourism alternatives and cycling studies, these findings substantiate the alignment between non-motorised, local mobility and opportunities for tourism and leisure. Cycling in particular seems well suited to facilitate the integration of tourism closer-to-home into wider everyday mobilities. Despite the benefits to older people and “re-engaged cyclists” that emerged thus far, this integration has clear constraints as well. The discussion of (cycling) mobility biographies with people from different ages also uncovers themes of fragility of and barriers to sustained transportation options. For some, the continuation of their cycling is under pressure. Both experienced and new riders, from both mobility contexts, prefer not to cycle at certain times or to certain places. They postpone rides when “having a bad day,” or having aching muscles. These barriers are often accompanied by safety concerns about the local transport environment: when this is not tailored to the cycling safety of older people, many find their sustained access to the opportunities above constrained.

Danielle (58), a Dutch participant who currently lives in Newcastle, further describes the cultural differences that persist between mobility contexts:

*Here in Newcastle I'd always say cycling in the Netherlands is a way of living, that's what you grow up with. For short distances there is your legs and for a little further there is your bike. That's hard to explain to someone who experiences that differently.*

These differences are an important caveat in participants' experiences of well-being and access to local (tourist) activities. Limited cycling provision and culture, particularly in the Newcastle case, highlights how local environments can also constrain active mobility. This not only results in less or no cycling, but also changes the experience of the rides that persist. For example, participants feel that the cycling environment does not allow for the combination of the functionality of transport with the leisure elements of the urban environment. Richard, who recently turned commuter cyclist in Newcastle, states that for most parts of his ride, he "just wants to get [it] over with" (see also Olivia's quote about a "horrible" roundabout). For some inexperienced cyclists, such negative sentiments were the main reason for not incorporating active mobility into everyday mobile patterns.

Tracy's activities clearly reflect the potential constraining effects of transport environments. Although she cycles to tourist destinations (the coast, a rural town, and the riverside), she is unable to combine cycling with functional elements of everyday mobility within her neighbourhood and the wider city. [Figure 3](#) displays her mobility pattern, in which cycling seems limited to dedicated leisure rides, away from the times and spaces in which everyday obligations, such as work, sports, and social visits, occur. This sharply contrasts with the more natural way in which participants such as Caroline, Gilles, and Tess negotiated leisurely elements within more mundane, functional mobilities. This strengthens the long-term effects of learning to cycle for functional transportation at young(er) age, as seen among the "lifelong cyclists" sample, while displaying the diversity in ability and convergence of mobilities urban environments may need to cater for.

## Discussion and conclusion

This article has studied the extent to which urban areas are a source of tourism activity, in particular for people who are local to these cities. Narratives of older cyclists, who traverse the city for a variety of interconnected mobilities, show that daily mobility in itself contains elements of tourism that are often overlooked in tourism literature. Tourist activity does not have to be an explicit trip purpose, but may arise within a nexus of social, environmental, and personal preferences and choices. Tracing everyday mobility patterns, tourism, leisure, social, and functional activities often intermingled and lacked clear boundaries. This provides empirical evidence for the more recent conceptualisations of tourism mobilities in proximity to the fabric of everyday life (Hannam et al., 2014; Díaz-Soria, 2017) and for clearer recognition that tourism mobilities occur within rather than away from the spatial and temporal arrangements of mundane obligations (Canavan, 2013; Hall, 2005; Larsen et al., 2007). In addition, it highlights a great diversity in tourist practices, as they are implicitly or explicitly performed as part of mobile lifecourses.

The nexus between these mobilities closely interacts with the practice of active and multi-modal travel. When cycling is a normalised and mature part of the everyday transport fabric, this opens various opportunities for more-than-functional activity at the local scale. The data showed that people may return to these opportunities in later life, also when they had not actively cycled for a long time. For instance, re-engaging with cycling helped them to stay healthy, to relax, to overcome bereavements and physical disruptions, or to enjoy the urban and natural environment. Importantly, these are features that are commonly associated with tourism motivations. Close links to tourism and recreation were also found during "purely" functional rides, such as commutes to work. Participants found relaxation and restoration (e.g. from work stress) in commutes, and actively looked for route options that include green spaces, parks, and local heritage sites. In both cities, these areas are primarily regarded as recreational or tourist spaces.

The findings demonstrate the pivotal role of mobility opportunities in (older) people's well-being (Banister & Bowling, 2004). The meaningful activity, social nature, and senses of exploration and achievement brought about by active mobility bring an eudaimonic form of well-being

to the centre of tourist mobilities (Morgan et al., 2015; Nordbakke & Schwanen, 2014; Smith & Diekmann, 2017). As a result, participants engaged in active mobility to sustain health and well-being opportunities in the long run. Importantly, the older demographic highlights that social aspects of (active) mobility and the “slowness” of non-motorised travel are key components of integrated local transport. This came to clear expression in the experience of older people who recently started cycling. They discovered new areas in their own city and visited other, more conventional tourist locations such as the coast, surrounding towns, and riversides.

The main contributions of this article centre on three main subjects: (i) the lived experience of tourism in the everyday; (ii) the alignment between active mobility and tourism closer-to-home; and (iii) the well-being and positive ageing qualities derived from mobility beyond motorised travel modes. First, following the performative turn in tourism research (Russo & Richards, 2016; Urry & Larsen, 2011), this article found a range of tourism activities embedded in everyday life. It showed that “tourists” may be “already there”, experiencing places similarly to conventional tourists, but preceded or followed by everyday (local) activities. As such, they may visit these destinations throughout the year, at their own pace and convenience, and without the disruptive force of mass influx from elsewhere (Russo & Scarnato, 2018). They add less negative external effects such as pollution and congestion, do not reproduce social and spatial transport inequalities, and do not have the dispossessive impact of (over)tourism on housing, retail, and the local fabric.

Second, active mobility, in this case bicycling with or without powered assistance, is found to be well suited to access local tourism activities. In fact, the findings indicate that active mobility facilitates the embedding of tourism into more mundane, functional mobilities. Partly, this can be explained by the inherent social and sensory nature of cycling, which is made explicit in transport studies (Nixon, 2014; Te Brömmelstroet et al., 2017; Winters et al., 2015), but less in the conventional tourism literature (Dolnicar et al., 2013; Gössling, 2002). Cycling has the qualities of flexibility, stop-starting, low speed, and sensory appeal that allow people to be in close interaction with others (in company or more spontaneous meetings “on the go”) at the (peri-)urban level (Fullagar et al., 2012). This resonates with the way in which “conventional tourists,” or even typical urban cycle tourers, may explore a city; however, in this instance as part of daily mobility routines. In addition, functional rides and new cyclists’ experiences revealed that active urban travel may contain meaningful interactions with flora and fauna (Markwell, 2015; Willis, 2015).

The case study locations in low- and high-cycling environments highlight the local specificities of successful alignment between cycling mobility and local forms of tourism. In the low-cycling case (Newcastle, UK), the local environment was found to strongly constrain active mobility. It excludes people from encountering well-being in everyday cycling mobility, such as during commutes, running errands, and caring activities, or impedes people from cycling at certain times or to certain places. In other words, cultural and environmental differences restrain people’s openness to tourism opportunities in everyday mobility, to elements of slowness and meaningful activity, or to being mobile altogether. An urban layout that caters for more conventional tourism, and for associated mass motorised transport, could thus actively increase the constraints to (tourist) activity at the local level.

Third, the potential of tourism as part of local (active) mobilities seems to particularly benefit older age groups (Sedgley et al., 2011). The lived experience of older cyclists indicates that well-being and positive ageing qualities are present when urban and semi-urban landscapes are not limited to traffic environments, and allow for a combination of interaction, exploration, independent mobility, and integration with recreational or tourist spaces. Despite spatial and temporal constraints, encountering this result in strongly differing mobility environments indicates that active mobility has collective qualities that allow for diversity in age, physical ability, and cycling experience. Changes in activity space, often associated with retirement and other life events, further support that transportation and tourist activity may be integrated at the local level, around transport modes that favour the local setting and a slower pace (Parkin et al., 2007;

Van Cauwenberg et al., 2018). This finding encourages the use of biographical and mobile methods in tourism studies, and locates individual lifecourses, embodied performances, and everyday mobility patterns at the root of tourist activity.

Together, the findings provide empirical evidence on the potential convergence of tourism and everyday mobilities, and of fixed distinctions between the tourist and the local (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017). Using the case of active mobility (bicycling), it is argued that later life well-being may be derived from connected rather than disconnected tourism mobilities. This holistic approach has fundamental effects on the tourist space, moving away from distant mass tourism, all-inclusive facilities, fast travel, and dedicated spaces, and going towards local familiarity, meaningful interactions, and integration with social and functional spaces. The lived experience of older cyclists adds that inclusiveness to all ages and abilities is very sensitive to individually embodied competences and transport environments. Older people's growing use of local tourist infrastructures, their diverse needs and preferences, as well as changing technologies (e.g. bicycle-sharing systems, electric assistance, non-standard cycles), highlight important implications for what we understand as sustainable and active mobility systems. The article concludes that a continued dialogue with slower and age-friendly approaches is fruitful in the pursuit of tourism futures that are sustainable for people and places.

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