

C Y C L O

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Dear Reader,

This book is being finalized as floods destroy parts of Bratislava and many other cities, villages, and landscapes across Central Europe. Scientists are certain that floods like this are a direct consequence of climate change – or, to be precise, climate catastrophe.

In times like these, when climate-related destruction occurs right at one's own doorstep, it becomes very hard to think about utopia. More than ever, utopia seems "unrealistic" or "naive".

At the same time, we are reminded that things must change. There simply is no alternative. Our lifestyles, cities, societies, and politics aren't yet sufficiently equipped to face the consequences of climate catastrophe considering local and global justice.

Acknowledging that it is a comfortable and privileged position to be writing these words with dry feet in an intact building, this book is an invitation to imagine the otherwise – not despite the climate catastrophe, but precisely because of it. What if we think of utopia not as designing a perfect world with all the answers ready? What if, instead, we think of utopia as a practice – a way to keep imagining the possibility of things being different?

More than anything, utopia can be a tool to identify what truly matters to us and to orient our actions accordingly. In this sense, there are large-scale utopias that not only negate the current conditions but also imagine a better future. At the same time, there are small moments in the here and now where we can bring utopia into existence – perhaps just for a moment, or perhaps a little more, day by day.

CYCLOTOPIA does not design a single utopia. Instead, it is a project that creates various moments (and modes) of conversation and collectively explores a broad range of utopias that envision cycling as a sustainable means of mobility, while also expanding on its potential to transform cities, societies, and individual lives in holistic and diverse ways.

In one way or another, the following contributions to this book reflect on questions such as:

What does cycling mean to our individual lives?

How does cycling alter our perception of our own bodies and those of others?

How does cycling create community?

How does cycling change the way we perceive the environments we pass through?

What needs and proposals does cycling articulate to anchor sustainability in the city?



And finally: What does a cycling utopia look like?

This project is based on the belief that the thoughts that arise and the conversations that unfold are shaped by the contexts in which they occur. In both the research and the making of this book, three modes have been explored:

Engaging in conversations that can only occur while actually cycling together;

Deriving individual interpretations from a collective thinking process;

Writing a collective manifesto.

CYCLOTOPIA documents what emerged from these encounters and activities. This book aims to take you on a little trip – a ride through different dimensions of cycling, loosely woven together like a conversation on bikes. It concludes with a manifesto voiced by Bratislava's citizens.

Enjoy the ride!

Bratislava, 2024

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CZECH CENTRES





THE

BODIES USED

UP

RELATIONS

DOWN

HIP

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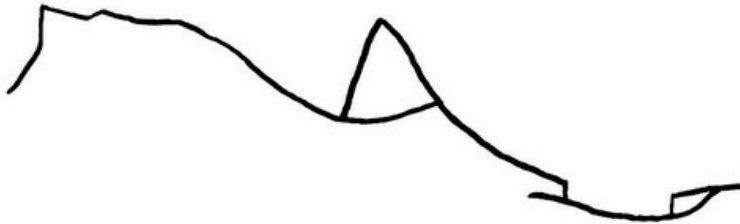
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GRAVITY



It's one thing to learn the physical coordination of cycling, but it's another to learn how to navigate the city and claim the necessary space as a cyclist.

I had friends who cycled a lot, and joining them gave me the confidence to explore the city in new ways. Watching them take on paths I would have been too afraid to use on my own helped me overcome my fear of cycling in the city. It's much easier to learn how to claim space while cycling when someone shows you, rather than figuring it out on your own.



eyes

wide open

soft

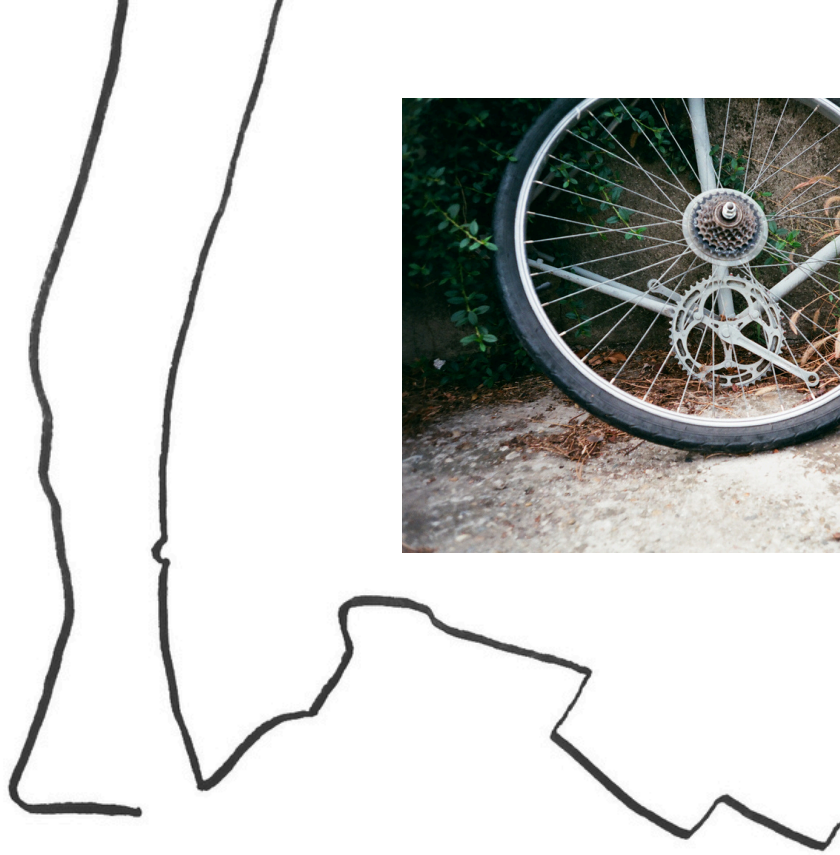
gaze





I love cycling for both the thrill and the chill: threading my path between cars at high speed in one moment, and moving through calm spaces and enjoying the tranquility in another.





Learning how to maintain, fix, and even build my own bike gives me a sense of independence. There is care in repairing and in following the mechanical logic of a bike.



I love cycling alone in the middle of the night. I race down the empty streets below the orange lights, and I feel free.

iam HERE

iam now

FEEL MY butt

we are ONE

Some parts of cycling culture are very patriarchal, but there are also other communities within cycling that are truly inclusive.







Knowing my way around the city by bike gives me a sense of home.

# HYPNOTISING

Clarity, Resolution

How are you feeling?



Passing through areas that, especially at night, don't feel safe as a woman or gender non-conforming person becomes much more manageable when you're riding a bike.







As a cyclist, you expose yourself to the environment. In the city, that means you see the cars, smell the cars, and get very close to them. Right in front of your eyes, they pollute and jam the city. But you also expose yourself to nature and become more sensitive to its condition.

FILLES! & MUND





Most processes involving the improvement of cycling infrastructure are not participatory but rather are decided upon by a few people. They're trying to do a good job, I guess, but there could be so many improvements. Usually, people who use bikes know best what is needed to make things better.

Cycling in the city depends so much on how space is designed. And this is really bad design. The very least it would take is to just change the traffic sign to make parking illegal here.



a N g e R

p r o d u c e s

P o w e R





Public transport and cycling are often treated as two different things. But actually, public transport is most effective in combination with cycling, or cycling is most effective in combination with public transport. Every commuting area enlarges greatly if you consider cycling as well.



If more people were cycling, the city would improve the cycling infrastructure. It's important that people join the critical masses and shout that cycling is a thing in Bratislava.



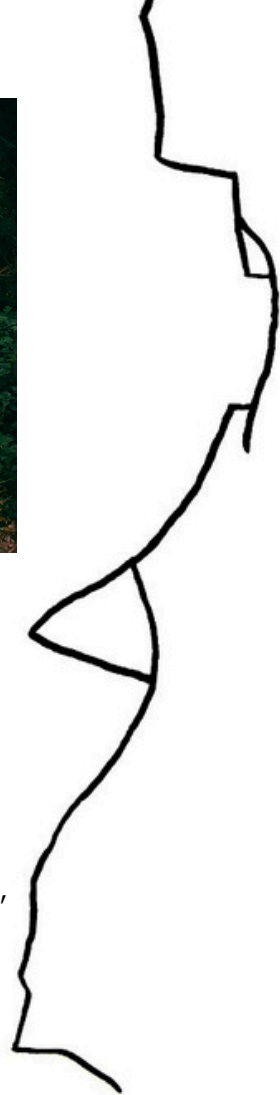
COLLECTIVE

body

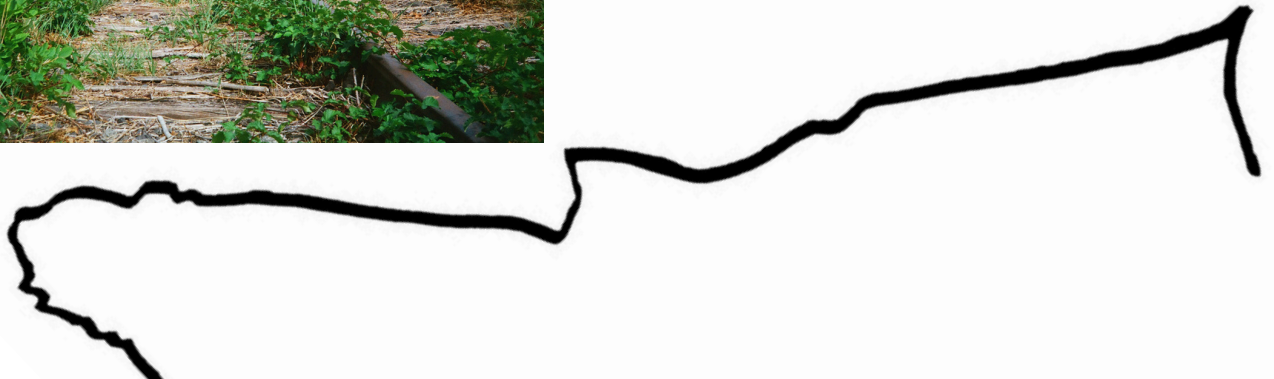




Two obvious and quick ideas that would make cycling safer and more accessible: Firstly, more bike lanes are required, and they need to be constructed in a way that allows kids to use them safely on their own. Secondly, there should be a general cycling course for kids in primary school so that they all learn how to cycle and build their confidence to navigate traffic.



There are these old train rails that haven't been used in decades. Imagine if this strip were transformed into a bike lane...



taking

back

public

**E C A P S**

**T O 9 E T H E R**



I'd love to see more types of bikes on the streets – bikes with training wheels, tricycles, tiny bikes for kids, recumbent bikes, cargo bikes, old bikes – basically anything that gets people on the road.

Bikes are cheap. And walking, which is a close cousin to cycling, is free. If you build your city for them rather than the most expensive form of transport, you create a much more equitable society. You can't have freedom without equality.



WEATHER

SOAKED

SKIN



99% of our problems can be solved by cycling:  
health, climate catastrophe, traffic, social inequality, ...





Imagine there would be governmental incentives for people to cycle, such as tax returns, free medical consultations, massages for your legs and butt, ...



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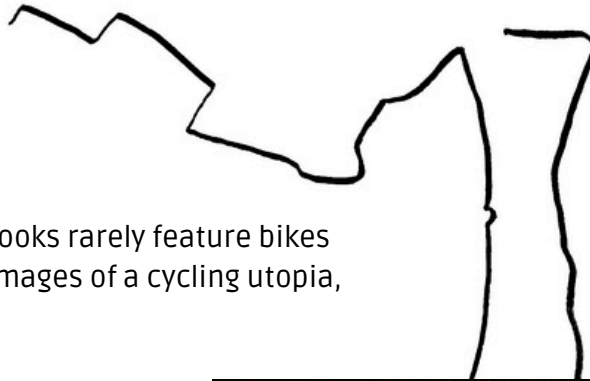
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I've noticed that sci-fi movies and books rarely feature bikes in the future. There are hardly any images of a cycling utopia, but we need them!



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MANIFESTO

BRATISLAVA: A CYCLING CITY

# CYCLING CLASSES AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

FREE CITY BIKES FOR EVERYONE

CARLESS DRIVERS,  
NOT DRIVERLESS CARS



PRIORITY FOR CYCLISTS IN TRAFFIC

# STREETLIGHTS ALONG BIKE LANES

# SECURE AND WIDESPREAD BIKE PARKING

CAUTIOUS AND RESPECTFUL  
CAR DRIVING

# LARGE TRAFFIC ISLANDS FOR CYCLISTS

BIKES = SYMBOLS OF COOLNESS  
RATHER THAN  
CARS = SYMBOLS OF POWER

VAJANSKÉHO NÁBREŽIE  
EVERYWHERE

POSITIVE NARRATIVE FOR CYCLING



# 3.5M BIKE LANES FOR SOCIAL CYCLING

# GREEN BELT AS A CYCLING NETWORK THROUGH THE CITY

LOWER TAXES FOR CYCLISTS

CYCLE HIGHWAYS FOR FAST,  
UNINTERRUPTED CYCLING  
BETWEEN MAJOR AREAS

# CAR-FREE ZONES

# STATE-FUNDED DIY BIKE WORKSHOPS

SAFE BIKE LANES

