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Long-distance cycling tourism:

an explorative study of flow in cycling experiences

Master Thesis, MA Tourism

Author: Jesper Krogh Nielsen

Supervisor: Szilvia Gyimóthy

Handed in: 17th April 2019

Abstract

The market for cycling tourism has in past years been growing and more attention has been drawn to this form of tourism. This attention has in particular been drawn to the potential for cycling tourism to support social and economic development in rural areas. Most academic research has been focused on this particular area, socio-economic impact of cycling tourism, and quantification of the cycling segment and market. However, less academic research has been done on exploring a long-route cycle experience from the perspectives of the cyclists. This thesis study is by applying an inductive approach and qualitative research strategy, exploring the influential factors that cyclists encounter in relation to flow during a long-route cycle trip. It was found that prevalent factors influencing flow of cyclist include thermal- & soundscape, materiality and social encounters. These factors are found to have the potential to influence a cyclist to both attain flow and to push a cyclist out of the flow channel. The results add perspectives to flow theory, by adding nuances to the variables skills and challenges, that make up the flow diagram by Csikszentmihalyi (1991). In relation to developing the cycling tourism market with a customer-centric approach, these findings are seen to contribute with perspectives on important elements to encounter in such process.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Cycle tourism has been a growing segment over the years and is an important niche tourism market. It is proposed that this market has the potential to provide economic benefit to an area, and further rural areas can be developed with a focus on bicycle tourism (Lumsdon, 1996).

Cycle tourism has vastly been a researched field in relation to articles and reports focusing statistics, products and development (Lumsdon, 2000; Vejdirektoratet, 2016). Less research of understanding the cycle tourism segment has been done.

To develop bicycle tourism, a gap within the research of how cyclist experience long-distance route has been identified. Although there has been an increase in the market of bicycle tourism, there has only been few studies about influential factors that affect a cycle experience (Faulks et al., 2008; Daugbjerg et al., 2011). These studies have mostly aimed at examining motivational factors influencing a good cycling experience. The gap in research of influential factors of a long-route cycling tourism experience, will in this study attempted to be covered by exploring factors, which influence the sense of momentum when cycling.

As limited research have been done within this area, this study will take on an inductive approach in response to limited theoretical concepts. To develop an analytical framework, grounded theory will be applied as method to ensure quality criteria are upheld and to support for data coding and a thick description. The study will apply a qualitative research strategy to explore the phenomenon of cycling tourism in depth, including interviews and own observations. The role of the researcher is to understand influential factors on flow and hereby interrelate with selected informants.

As in line with applied research paradigm being interpretive, the inductive examination of sensing a momentum when biking will theoretically be supported by applying flow theory as guiding theoretical backbone of the thesis. Supportive theoretical aspects will be based on the data coding be applied for supporting flow theory, including materiality, social encounters and sound- and thermalscape.

The outlined background and aim of this thesis study lead to the following research question:

1.1. Research question

What influencing factors in relation to flow are cyclists encountering on a long-distance cycling route?

1.2. Personal motivation

The personal motivation started years ago, but not with the intention of writing about cycling tourism, instead of the passion for cycling as a hobby. Over the years the interest in cycling has grown steady and cycling trips have become a way to spend my holidays. The cycling trips have been limited to Denmark, where shorter and longer trips have been completed.

Before I started my education, I had not any major considerations about cycling tourism and what initiatives that were within this area. However, I did have some talks with my girlfriend about routes, planning and other related things to consider when going on such kind of holiday, but It was first when I took courses in Tourism and Projects that connected the practical elements with the more academic from the education. In connection with Tourism, I have now written several papers within the field of bicycle tourism.

The interest about the tourism aspect of cycling grew, which also led to an internship at Naturturisme for a half a year. During this internship I was working on tasks within cycle tourism. The internship gave me a good insight into the processes and tasks there are in cycling tourism as wells as the different aspects and partners involved in cycling. In my internship assignment, I wrote about a concept called BikeFriends which basically is about offering simple equipment that cyclists can use for free during a cycle trip.

After my internship I become more interested in cycle tourism. I see this area very interesting as this is growing market with big potential, especially in rural areas. I also saw a lack of studies about a good cycle experience from a bicycle tourist's perspective. Instead I have seen many quantitative studies been focused on what socio-economic impact bicycle tourism can have for an area as well as about the cycle tourism segment in general. Nonetheless, few qualitative studies about people's experiences have been made, which I see as an important prerequisite to understand this form of tourism. Therefore, I decided to write about this topic in my thesis.

1.3.   Structure of the thesis

The structure of the thesis is displayed in Model 1, Structure of thesis. The presentation for structure includes introduction, methodology, theory analysis and discussion & conclusion. Sub-chapters are presented below, under relevant chapter.
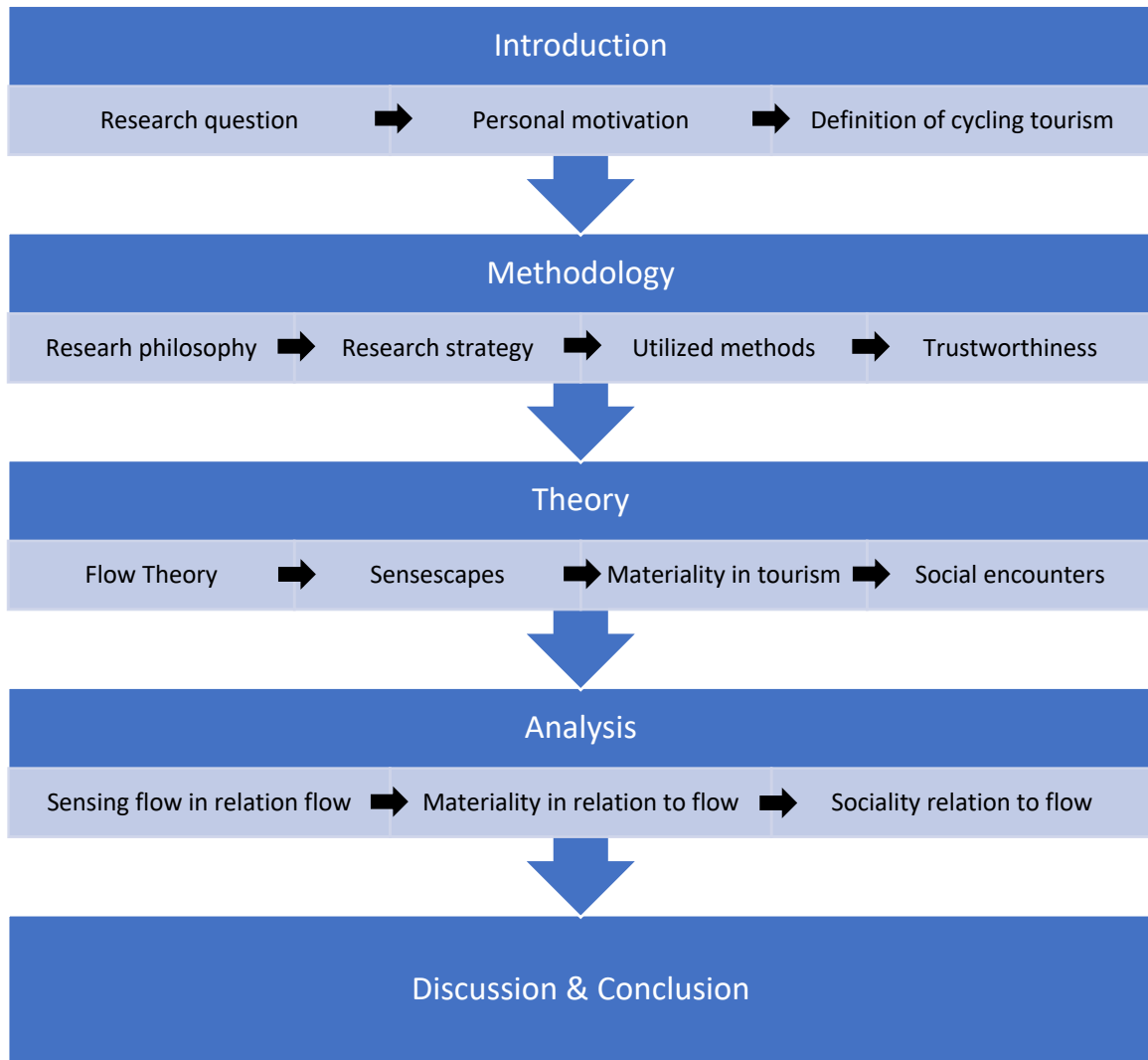
Model 1: Structure of thesis

1.4. Definition of cycling tourism and long-distance cyclists

This chapter will introduce a definition of cycling tourism, where relevant academical literature and reports in relation to this thesis will be presented.

The definition of cycling tourism has been defined differently in several research studies and developed over the years. In 1996 Lumsdon described cycle tourism as following:

> "Recreational cycling activities ranging from a day or part-day casual outing to a long distance touring holiday. The fundamental ingredient is that the visitor perceives cycling as an integral part of an excursion or holiday, i.e. a positive way of enhancing leisure time." (Lumsdon, 1996)

This definition has been developed over the years by other researchers, that have modified the term of cycling tourism. One of the concerns about definition, was presented by Lumsdon. He defines bicycle tourism as a strictly recreational or leisure purpose may be overly limiting (Lamont, 2009). In 1998 Simonsen and Jørgensen (1998) developed the following definition of bicycle tourism:

> "A person of any nationality, who at some stage or other during his or her holiday uses the bicycle as a mode of transportation, and to whom cycling is an important part of this holiday. Short trips to the 'corner shop', etc. are not included." (Simonsen & Jørgensen, 1998)

The definition from Simonsen and Jørgensen is a very broad definition and target basically everyone who cycles during a holiday. To encapsulate the definition of bicycle tourism and a cycling tourist, the thesis will use the definition from Lumsdon and investigate a tourist's activity on a long-distance holiday. From the annual report from Danish Cycling Tourism it is seen that they work with two segments of cyclists. First segment is called "cycling tourist". These are cyclist who have chosen cycling as the primary way of transportation and the holiday itself is cycling experience. Cycling activities for this group are an essential element of their holiday.

Second segment is called "tourist on a cycle", which are people who have planned cycling among other activities on their chosen holiday. Hereby are cycling activities included in their holiday, but is not the primary activity (Vejdirektoratet, 2016).

This thesis is applying the on the definition of the first segment, focussing on cycling tourists, who have cycling as their sole primary activity on a chosen holiday where their main focus is to cycle, and furthermore can be considered as a nomad cyclist. They do not have a permanent base, but instead they are moving to a new place every day.

2. Methodology

Considerations of the methodology of the thesis will through this chapter be presented. The chapter will start out by outlining chosen research philosophy followed by applied research strategy and after that utilized methods. Finally, the quality criteria of qualitative research will be outlined in relation to this thesis.

2.1. Research philosophy

A research philosophy is a belief about how data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analysed and used. Further, one's position of how nature of the social can be seen. A research philosophy is the first part of the methodology, where the researcher draws the big lines and formulate the beliefs and assumptions that form a study (Saunders et al., 2009). To clarify a philosophy, there will be considerations about the ontological, epistemology and methodology positions that will guide the methodology in this thesis. Johnson and Clark (2006, in Saunders et al., 2009) notes that "... as researchers we need to be aware of the philosophical commitments, we make through our choice of research strategy since this has a significant impact not only on what we do but we understand what it is we are investigating".

As a researcher, it is important to consider what reality you are in, what you can say about the social world, and how knowledge about this world is collected and selected. To understand the approach in this thesis, the following sections will provide an overview of the research paradigm, ontology, epistemology and methodology considerations (Saunders et al., 2009).

2.1.1. Research paradigm

In a research project, it is important to relate to which paradigm you work from as a researcher. A paradigm is considerations of beliefs that inform how the world can be understood (Kuhn, 1962, cited in Tribe et al., 2015). To structure a research in tourism Phillimore and Goodson argue that there are four different paradigms, and each of them can be dictating a project in a specific direction: positivist, post-positivism, critical and interpretive (Phillimore et al., 2004). A brief overview of the paradigms will be presented in the following section, with a separate section presenting and arguing for the selection of the interpretative paradigm for this study.

Positivism, post-positivism and the critical paradigm

Positivism relates to the existence of one reality, independently of the human and their consciousness. This world is seen as observable. This also means conducting studies using a theory that explores the empirical data. As a researcher you see the world as objective and only in this way can you understand the world according to positivism (Phillimore et al., 2004).

The post-positivism paradigm accepts that theories, background, knowledge and value from the researcher can affect the research on the observed. The objective perspective is still the position, but post-positivism accepts the researcher's biases in research (Phillimore et al., 2004). The critical paradigm has another approach compared to the first two. The critical paradigm position distances itself from positivism and post-positivism by refusing the others 'one' world social reality. In this paradigm the researcher is in possession of attitudes, knowledge and values that one cannot be ignored in a given research. These are attitudes that have influence on approach and findings of a selected research area (Phillimore et al., 2004).

Interpretive

The Interpretive paradigm sees a complex social world that is only possible to be examined by being present in it. The researcher can only get an impression and understanding of this world by looking at people as social individuals. As a researcher who wants to investigate a given phenomenon, this is only possible if a researcher participates actively with the social actors that are part of the given social context. In contrast to positivism, interpretivism acknowledges that it is not possible nor the goal of research to unfold the reality of "one" real objective world, as "one" real objective world does not exist (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). Further, based on the nature of the research question, the premises of this study are understood as being of social character, and different perception of the experience of being in flow when cycling is possible depending on the interpretation of the socially constructed reality. Accordingly, the ontological position in this study points to constructivism in opposition to objectivism. Given the aim of understanding the reality of how a cyclist experience flow on a long-distance route and its embedded mechanisms, the chosen position emphasises that actors play a role and are co-creators of the social reality. Thus, this study does not attempt to capture one universal truth. Instead, this study acknowledges subjectivity as an

undeniable factor and that the social reality is a result of interpretation and contextually embeddedness, leading to the epistemological position the research approach.

In this thesis, the paradigm of interpretivism is taken to investigate the field within cycling tourism. The study will be based on information that has a personal and subjective character. This will affect the approach applied in this study, including methods for collecting and analysing empirical data. By applying an interpretive perspective on the social world being explored, it will not be possible to consider the social world objectively. Thus, the research approach to the social world is associated with a pre-understanding, and therefore it is not possible to make an objective observation (Saunders et al., 2009). In line with the ontological position, the epistemological position taken in this study is characterised by being interpretivism, rather than positivism, which is predominant in especially the paradigms positivism and post-positivism. This position emphasises that the experiences of flow on long-distance routes are a socially constructed phenomena, that for each actor is up to interpretation based on different perspectives on, e.g. challenges, influences from external environment and personal preferences. As a guiding principle of a the interpretivism paradigm, the aim is to understand rather than explain behaviour, which entails an individual approach for collecting and analysing empirical data. In terms of the preunderstandings the researcher has, it is essential to incorporate a transparent data method, so the reader can trust the choices that are made and how it is unfolded (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). Thus, thick description method will be applied, which will be elaborated further in the collection methods chapter

As according to Bryman (2012), the outlined interpretivism paradigm as well as ontological and epistemological positions, emphasise a qualitative research design. As Bryman proposes as fundamental differences between qualitative and quantitative strategies, a qualitative research strategy emphasises constructivism and interpretivism, ontology and epistemology respectively, as well as an inductive approach. Furthermore, characteristic for qualitative research strategy is the study of commonalities examined by many aspects or features of a relatively small number of cases in depth (Ragin et al., 2011).

2.2. Research strategy

In the research strategy, the researcher had the purpose of exploring circumstances that lead to how cyclists are experiencing flow during cycling. In this thesis, the researchers aim to cover a real-life phenomenon about cyclists and to trace links between happenings along a cycling trip.

In order to investigate the field, the researcher applied an inductive approach where participate observations and semi-structured interviews were the primary sources of evidence for this thesis.

The researcher follows a path through the empirical discovery field and then has been able to make a scientific conclusion. With an inductive approach, the researcher does not have any theory to work from, but instead a grounded theory approach where the empirical data was conducted and then a general theory, where unfolded (Andersen, 2010). This kind of exploratory study is based on relatively few people's information and knowledge, and their experiences to say something more generally about the subject. It also means, when a researcher is working inductively, after repeated studies it can lead to an actual theory about a research area.

However, it must be suggested that in a scientific research project it may be difficult only to work from an inductive approach. The deductive method is weave into each other and take place simultaneously in an investigation process. The researcher has been aware of this the circumstance throughout the investigation and has made reservations so that the inductive process is able to unfold in the best possible way (Andersen, 2010).

In social constructivism, the inductive approach is relevant to apply, because it lets the researcher interpret the human's social world, and accept that conclusions will be made out of the empirical data (Saunders, 2009). In the collection of data, a social constructivist is not focusing on the quantity and amount of data, but rather the quality of it (Saunders, 2009). In terms of this focus, it gives the researcher tools and opportunities in the collection of data, where in-depth interviews with informants will bring deep and usable knowledge about the field.

2.3. Utilized methods

2.3.1. Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a research method developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967), which is based on the method where the qualitative data will create the theory. In the strategy of collecting data, it gives the researcher strong modification possibilities, where different methods and the researcher can

collect data can change direction if needed. That gives the researcher a high level of flexibility to change and summarise the data in the researcher process (Charmaz, 2014).

Grounded theory is derived from the studied phenomenon and patterns before anything else. It is in direct contrast to the hypothetical-deductive method, where theories are generated from repeated tests and improvement of previously constructed hypotheses (Glaser, 1978). In the construction of grounded theory, the researcher is aware of having an open-minded approach, where there are no pre-formed notions in mind. According to Glaser (1978), he mentions sensitivity as a theoretical process, where the researcher develops and obtain knowledge about the field. Theoretical sensitivity is often referred to as a creative aspect of grounded theory, and it implies that the investigator stays and works in that specific area to gain experience and expertise. By achieving theoretical sensitivity, the researcher can recognize and identify essential data and formulate a theory that is conceptually founded. In the process of gather data and the sensitivity, the researcher cycled two routes in Denmark to achieve knowledge and inspiration. Through field research, the researcher had the opportunity to change attention and setting multiple times to gain deeper knowledge.

The purpose in grounded theory is to create so-called middle-range theory, i.e. a theory that is situation specific and deals with a smaller part of a given subject area. The area of this subject is also a smaller part of the whole cycling tourism. Slightly simplified, the investigation process can best be described as a constant movement between empirical and theoretical work. The actors are subjects or "witnesses", who communicate their stories or impressions to the researcher. The researcher is responsible for creating the theory and adding its final interpretation of the phenomenon (Glaser, 1978). The focus is narrowed down to long-distance cyclist's, where a selected number of informants is chosen to contribute with valuable and adequate knowledge. By using a small range of informants allows the researcher to have curious accession to every informant and find unexpected meanings and thoughts in the material.

2.3.2. Unstructured observation

In the collection of qualitative data for this thesis, one of the methods that have been used is unstructured observation where first-hand impressions of the scene of cycling have been obtained (Veal, 2011). In an unstructured observation the basic idea is to gain insight into cultural

environments by observing without any limitations to the activity (Andersen, 2010). One of the purposes by using the method, unstructured observation, is that it gives the researcher several advantages in order to obtain knowledge about the research area and results that can be difficult to cover in a qualitative interview (Veal, 2011). When a researcher is involved in the setting, it gives opportunities to watch and talk with the people that are involved. Furthermore, the knowledge from the unstructured observation can subsequently be used to make the questions in the qualitative interviews more relevant and contribute with significant insights about the empirical context.

The unstructured observation took place in Denmark over two times. The first part of the observation went on from 1st of October to 4th of October, where the route from Gedser to Helsingør, N9, was investigated (Appendix 1). From the 15th of October to 18th of October the researcher carried out the second investigation, where the N6 route, from Esbjerg to Copenhagen were covered (Appendix 2).

Regarding the selection of the cycling routes, the researcher made some considerations about the route before the fieldwork. First, the researcher only had the possibility to do it in Denmark. Second, the two routes have to be different in terms of landscape and surroundings, to see contrasts. Third, it should also be placed, where it could be a probability to meet other cyclists.

Before the field research was accomplished, the researcher was aware of bias were some circumstances such as season, the volume of cyclists and availability that could influence the research. When the fieldwork was in process, the researcher also encountered some challenges that affected the fieldwork. The fact that the fieldwork was conducted in October, it minimised the change to meet with cyclists because it was out of high season. It turns out that the researcher only had the opportunity to speak with five people at the fieldwork. However, it should be mentioned that the main focus in the fieldwork was not interviewing, instead, it was to sense and experience a cycling route.

Informal conversation

In connection with the researcher's observation along the two cycling routes, it was an aim to make informal conversation with other cyclists along the routes. Being present with the informant in a

relevant context allows associations between the interviewer and informants, who contribute with in-depth insights and first-hand impressions (Veal, 2011).

The persons there were interviewed under the observation were on a break, so it was a bit easier to stop and talk with them. The conversations were short, where the researcher first identified himself and then asked basic questions about their tour. It should have the purpose to be an informal talk, where the person did not think he/she was interviewed. The challenges in this kind of data were to remember what was said in the conversation, because the interviews were not recorded. Instead, written field notes where applied after the conversation, where keywords and lines were written down, which can be found in Appendix 3.

Use of technology

In the field research, visual observation was added to the research, to make first-hand observations that the researcher experienced along the routes. The aim with the visual observation is not to prove and conclude a particular situation, but to contribute with knowledge about observed themes. The aim was to contribute with a version of a situation the researcher experience at that moment and to prove the field research's founding's (Pink, 2007). The researcher took a lot of pictures and videos during the observations to gain as many impressions as possible. After the field research, a process began to select the most relevant recording and shootings, which will be used in the analysis.

The conducted visual observations will be used in the thesis, where it makes sense to use it. The visuality can assist the argumentation in terms of proving a point to the reader how it could look like in a real situation. The further point is that all the visual observations are made by the researcher himself at his field research tours, that means it is subjective observations where the researcher found it relevant to him and the surroundings. The researcher observes it from his point of view, but another individual could observe it in a different way (Veal, 2011).

The visual observation was conducted with several electronic devices that contribute to various visual effects. The following electronic devices were used during the active observation:

Video – A GoPro action camera was used at different locations, where both recordings were made. The recording could document several accidents during the observation, where words were insufficient. The videos will not be in full length in the thesis. Instead, it is an edited version, where the highlight will be present.

Still photography – an iPhone was used to take photos of elements at the route, which the researcher thought was relevant.

GPS – a Garmin Edge 810 cycling computer was used to track the routes, where the researcher went.

2.3.3. Semi-structured interviews

To answer the research question in this thesis, semi-structured interviews are one of the primary data that contribute with knowledge about the subject. Semi-structured interviews are applied in this thesis, due to the wish to gain personal and in-depth considerations about the subject (Veal, 2011). The purpose of semi-structured interviews is that the research wishes to have a personal response, where the informant is requested to answer truthfully and freely (Kvale et al., 2015). Seven of the individual semi-structured interviews have been prepared, as personal and in-depth interviews. One of the interviews was made as a group interview, as they were a couple. The interview with two informants gave a different dynamic and conversation, where the informants not only answered the researcher's questions but also discussed the subject with each other.

To gain as much information from the informants, the researcher prepared an interview guide with themes about the subject, so there was a guideline to follow. An interview guide can either be rigorous, where the researcher follows the prepared question chronological and do not differ from the structure, or a loose structure, where the prepared questions, will be backed up by new questions during the interview (Kvale et al., 2015). The interview guide can be found in Appendix 5. The interviews in this thesis have a loose structure, where the informant's answer leads to a follow-up question and open for another perspective (Kvale et al., 2015). Semi-structured interviews were applied in this thesis as the researcher seek to do the interview in a flow, where it is possible to navigate the interview due to the answers from the informants (Altinay, 2011).

Before the researcher began interviewing informants, a pilot interview was conducted on a family member to test the order of questions and to see if some of the questions were similar (Kvale et al., 2015). In the pilot interview, the informant was asked the same questions, without being able to answer them correctly, but rather not intended. The purpose of conducting such an interview was to see how the questions complement each other and whether there was someone who reminded too much about each other and then removed them.

Sampling and presentation of informants

It was necessary for the quality of the data that it was experienced cyclists, that had been on some long-distance cycling tours and have tried different countries and landscapes. So it could cover a broad knowledge about how to be a traveller on a cycle and bring different aspects into the material. The researcher found the informants via a post in the Danish Facebook group, *RejseCyklisten*, which is a group for people who are interested in cycling holiday. All the informants are from Denmark, and the interviews were held in Danish. After the researcher got responds from the Facebook post, a selection took place and the researcher selected informants, where it was possible to meet face-to-face, and they had been on some long-distance trips.

All the interviews were held "away" from the route, which means the interviews held when they were in their professional and private life. In terms of the circumstances, where the interview where hold "away" from the route, the researcher is aware of some circumstances that affect the interviews. The interviews must be seen in the perspective, that they are made "away" from the route, which means the answers were not "live" and with fresh memories of a route and its experiences. There may be, for example, some reflections an informant have at the moment but are difficult to recall a while after. At the same time, it should be said that they have the opportunity to think about experiences and thus be more reflective after they have returned home.

In the table below there is a description of every informants, selection and location.

Who	Why	Where
Sara, private person. Long-distance cyclist	She has been on three long-distance cycling trips by herself in Europe and USA.	The interview took place at the researcher's private home, 10th September 2018.
Michael, private person. Long-distance cyclist.	He has been cycling with a group and by himself in Asia, South America and Europe.	The interview took place at the researcher's private home, 12th September 2018.
Hanne & Jan, private persons. Long-distance cyclists.	They go on cycling holidays together and have been in New Zealand and Europe.	The interview took place at their home, 30th September.
Ida-Marie, private person. Long-distance cyclist.	She has been cycling with a group and by herself in Asia and Europe.	The took place at the researcher's private home, 5th October 2018.

Sebastian, private person. Long-distance cyclist.	He has been on several Long-distance trips by himself in Denmark and Europe.	The interview took place at Aalborg University, Sydhavnen, 29th October 2018.
Thorkild, private person. Long-distance cyclist.	He has been on several cycling holidays in Europe.	The interview took place at Thorkild's office at Aalborg University, 31st October 2018.
Helle, private person. Long-distance cyclists.	She has been on several cycling holidays with herself or with her husband in Europe.	The interview took place at her office, 1st November 2018.
Anna Eva, private person. Long-distance cyclist	She has been on two long-distance cycling trips with a friend in Europe and USA.	The interview took place at Aalborg University, Sydhavnen, 6th November 2018.
Two German men from Magdeburg. Cycling from Magdeburg to Copenhagen	Talked with them a while about their trip and their cycling experiences.	The researcher met these two men, when he was doing field research from Gedser to Helsingør. 1st October 2018
Host at Slangerupgård Hotel & Conference Center	Had a small conversation by the host at the hotel about cycling and tourists.	The researcher slept at the hotel one night when he was doing the field research from Gedser to Helsingør. 3rd October 2018

Table 1: Informants

Information about each informant

Sara:

She is a young lady and has been on three cycling trips. Her first cycling trips were in USA, where she cycled for two months along the Pacific coast from north to south with some loops in between. The following trips have been in Europe, where she cycled along Elberadweg and Kattegatleden in Sweden. She has been alone at all her trips.

Michael:

Michael has been on several trips with, one in Asia where he cycled with an organised group tour in Asia for a period, and then he went by himself for the rest of the time. He has also been in South America and Europe, where he cycled by himself. He has always been into cycling and has chosen that kind of holiday in many years.

Hanne & Jan:

The researcher was invited to Hanne and Jan's private home 30th September. It was more of a conversation than a real interview, where the word flow directed the interview. The interview went in many directions, and the subject changed many times. They had many things to share and did also ask the researcher questions. The interview went on for almost two hours. Hanna & Jan was the informants that had cycled in the longest period, for almost eight months where they were self-sufficient.

Sebastian:

Sebastian is only in his late twenties, but have done a lot of small trips, as well as some long-distance trips in Europe. He is really into cycling and the adventure the trips give to him.

Thorkild:

The informant had a lot of different aspects to talk about because he has always been interested in cycling and outdoor activities, so the interview went in many exciting directions and last for almost one hour. Thorkild is a real cycling personality and uses his cycle almost every day, that means he has much knowledge about the mechanic as well. His cycling trips are now with his wife, Helle, where they travel all around Europe to cycle a certain distance. He has also been cycled alone is his young age.

Helle:

Helle is a well-experienced person when it comes to cycling and has been on many cycling trips, by herself and with others, but never as a group tour.

Anna Eva:

Anna had been on two cycling trips: one from Italy to Greece and the second was in USA from the east coast to the west coast. Both trips were with the same friend.

Two German men:

At the ferry from Rostock to Gedser the researcher met two German men that were on a trip from Magdeburg, Germany, to Copenhagen. They were following the Berlin – Copenhagen cycling route. The men and researcher had a conversation about cycling trips, gear and their expectations to cycle in Denmark and it was their first time they cycled in Denmark. They were also very interesting in the field work and the whole thesis as well.

Host at Slangerupgård Hotel and Conference Center:

At the hotel, the researcher had a conversation about cycling with one of the hosts. The host told about their experiences with cycling guests, where they during the summer season have many cycling guests staying with them. She also told that they really do not do anything to attract them and they usually book one or two days in advance. Most of the guests are either on their way from Berlin to Copenhagen or the opposite way and following the route.

2.3.4. Transcription

Transcription means transforming oral into written (Kvale et al., 2015). The qualitative research process is able to convert reality and oral into the text from observation or conversations. In this thesis, one of the conditions is that the material is summarised into text in an accessible and comprehensible way. In that way, the material can be used in this thesis analysis.

The researcher used a dictaphone in each interview to secure a high qualitative voice recording, which also according to Kvale and Brinkmann is the best device (Kvale et al., 2015). To transcribe the interviews, Expresscribe was used which was very suitable and easy to use and had some features that made it the process much easier.

After all the interviews had been transcribed, it was listened through to correct if there had been some errors in the transcription (Kvale et al., 2015). The researcher is aware of the translation from English to Danish and that the meaning from one language to another might can change in that process. In the transition from speech to writing, something happens to the rhythm and the way it appears. In order for the written language to be so easily readable and understandable, it has been chosen to remove words that can be disturbing in a written context. It can be a word such: øh, hm, a laugh, etc. That is made to give the written material a better-written language that there is more understandable for the reader (Kvale et al., 2015).

2.3.5. Secondary data

In this thesis, the majority of the data is from primary data that the researcher has conducted by himself and is new information. But also secondary data is considered in this thesis. There are questions about a project that can be answered by using data made for a different purpose. (Veal, 2011). In this thesis, the secondary data will mainly be from previous research data, studies and articles where cycling and tourism are involved. These data will either be originated from researchers or organisations that are involved in cycling. The researcher has to be critical about existing research because the proposed material is not directly formed to this thesis. Instead, it might start some reflections and idea that will provide new thoughts about the thesis (Veal, 2011).

2.3.6. Data coding

Data coding is a process where the researcher read the transcript interviews and codes relevant material into categories (Kvale et al., 2015). In that way, it gives the researcher an overview of the complete material. In the coding process, the researcher is not looking for any specific themes, but instead, it is an open coding, where the text leads the coding. The coding process is an essential aspect in grounded theory, where the researcher finds the ground stones for the theory in the material (Kvale et al., 2015). The purpose of this approach is to generate categories, that gives a complete description of actions and experiences the informant's presents (Kvale et al., 2015). In the following sections, the coding process will be presented.

Overall impressions

In the first step of the coding of data, the transcribed material is read through to form an overall impression of the data set. The importance of this process was to get an understanding and be familiar with the data. Therefore, the researcher put his pre-understanding in brackets (Kvale et al., 2015).

Meaningful units

In the second step, meaningful units are identified from the impressions to create relevant units (Kvale et al., 2015). In this process, it is decided whether the themes still can be represented in the material, or whether some of the themes must be erased. The narrowing of categories is a method that assists the researcher to
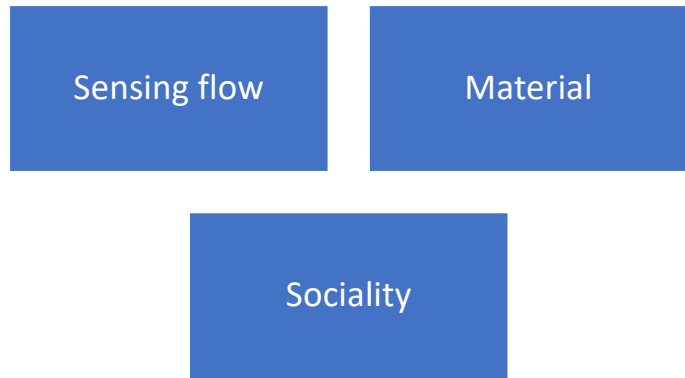
Ficture 1: Meaningful units

focussing on units there will form the analysis (Kvale et al., 2015). In Appendix 14 all the themes are categorised, and the ones that are not included in the thesis.

Sub-groups

I n the third step it is necessary to systematically retrieve the meaning from the text by condensing the contents of the meaningful units. It is a process were the researcher go through the material again and condensate the material under each category (Kvale et al., 2015). The condensation is characterised by a rigorous approach to the material, and only the most essential material will be used and are repeatedly reassessed and re-aligned. The final code- and subgroups are illustrated below in figure 1.
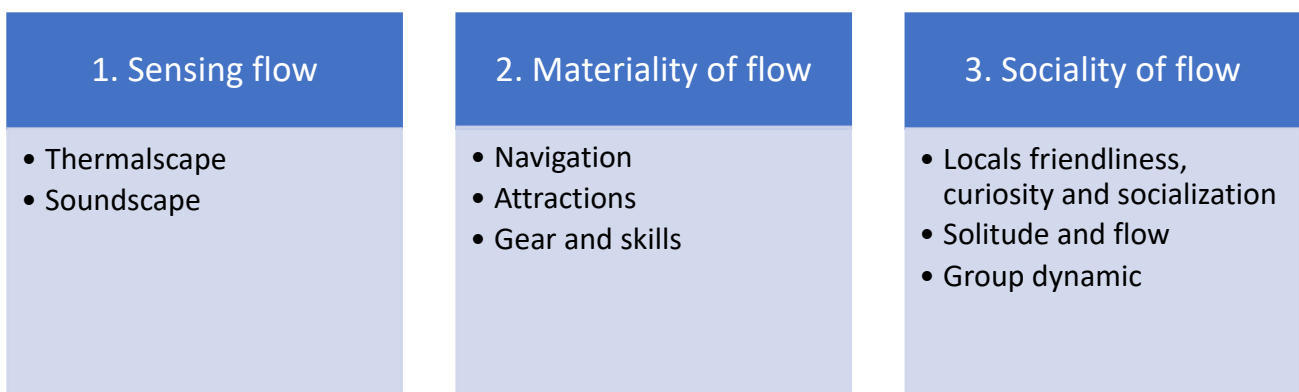
Figure 1: Meaningful units with sub-groups

2.4. Trustworthiness of qualitative research

In qualitative research, there will be questions about its trustworthiness and the establishment of it. To secure and answer those kinds of questions the following section goes in-depth about each

aspect of trustworthiness, by discussing these four elements: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability.

2.4.1. Credibility

One of the most important aspects to establish trustworthiness is to create credibility in research (Shenton, 2004). This is because credibility essentially asks the researcher to clearly link the research study's findings with reality in order to demonstrate the truth of the research study's findings. To create this credibility, there are some techniques available to establish it, so the researcher can make sure everything was made with a high level of trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004). These techniques should establish trustworthiness and credibility triangulation, and member checking will be the ones you find most often in qualitative research (Shenton, 2004).

The researcher in this thesis influenced the selection of informants because the selection of informants should be diversity and informative. That is why there are not many informants, but instead, people who are passionate about cycling and had been on some long-distance trips, so they could unfold the feeling of being on a cycling trip. At the same time, the researcher selected informants at different ages and gender. In the interviews, it was important for the researcher that the informants were relaxed so that they could open up about their experiences. To do that, the researcher involved himself by talking about his field research and earlier cycling trips. It gave an equal communication where the informant could see and hear that the researcher is an experienced cyclist as well.

2.4.2. Transferability

When discussing the subject of transferability in qualitative research, it depends if the results can be transferred to other contexts or settings with different informants (Shenton, 2004). The researcher is aware of the utilized method in this thesis, which can affect the transferability. To accomplish transferability, it is important that the researcher through the whole thesis proves a full description of the decisions that are made. So it gets clear for the reader what choices there is made and why (Korstjens, 2018). It is essential not only to describe the research field, but the context between method and theory as well. In that way the reader can reflect on the choices there have

been made during the process: transferability judgement. As this thesis have a qualitative approach, it is acknowledged that it will be difficult to applying or generalisation the results (Shenton, 2004).

2.4.3. Dependability & Confirmability

To secure a high level of dependability in a project depends on a strategy, a so-called audit trial (Korstjens, 2018). In qualitative research, it is about reliability and makes the research process rely on reliable decisions. The researcher is aware of the consequences by studying in a field that is constantly changing, and where the social interactions and context will be connected to this specific research. As a qualitative researcher, the understanding of the social world is subjective, and humans make reflections in a specific setting (Shenton, 2004). To make sure this thesis is dependable, there is a strict line and explanations to make sure that the reader can see choices there have been made and understand the process. The researcher argues about decisions made during the research process, reflective thoughts, sampling, research method, the emergence of the findings and information about the data. That enables the reader to study the transparency of the research path. There is an acceptance from the researcher if another qualitative researcher is trying to do the same project, the results and findings can have another outcome. Due to the social context and interaction, another researcher will have a different view and understanding of the material (Shenton, 2004).

2.4.4. Ethical reflections

In connection with a research project, it is essential to take ethical precautions and considerations when investigating a particular area. Additionally, it is essential to follow some ethical guidelines, that will reflect on the choices the researcher make in the research (Saunders, 2009). It is crucial to make these reflections concern the topic you want to investigate, and the people that are interviewed must take into account or the way you tackle field research, that is not all you can afford.

During the semi-structured interviews, it was very important to have ethical reflections on what the informants were saying and have an acceptable distance if it was a topic they did not want to talk about. The researcher experienced that in one of the interviews an informant told a sensitive and personal story about a person, which is not included in the transcription. Each informant gave the

researcher permission to use their full name in the research, but the researcher decided to hide the surname, so there would not be any problems forward. It is due from an ethical point of view that the researcher does not want to exhibit the informant with their full identity, if there could be some withdrawals that could cause some form of damage. Further restrictions, e.g. covering a name with a synonym, was not necessary because the information and conversations were not confidential.

At the route, the researcher made some recordings during cycling, and at some points, the researcher was filming other people on a cycling trip. These recordings are not included in the thesis because the researcher did not present himself and get any approval of the recording. When the researcher was making the semi-structured conversation, he presented himself and let the auditor know what his attention was, and then a conversation could develop, and the informants could tell as much that he or she would like to share. In that way, there is no hidden agenda, and the informant was aware of the purpose.

2.4.5. Limitations

Another consideration was how it was possible to get in touch with cyclists while they were biking. As a researcher, you do not want to them in their element, and there should be a natural occasion to interview them (DeWalt, 2002). As the participation was unstructured, the researcher tried to be a natural element in the scene and act as the participants. Therefore there was no identification of the researcher identity before the contact was made.

There has also been a limitation in the selection in the category of people who cycle. As a report from Danish Cycling tourism has published, cyclists can be categorised in many ways (Vejdirektoratet, 2016), where each categorise have specifications. The researcher is aware of that he cut off some people, who could have an interesting point of view, but the focus in this thesis has been in the cyclists, where cycling was their primary purpose.

3. Theoretical chapter

3.1.   Flow experience

In this thesis, a flow theory will be outlined as an analytical backbone to study the situated experiences on long-distance bicycle trips. The backbone of this thesis is the flow theory that will frame the elements that influence a cyclist's flow experience during trips. At the beginning of flow literature Csikszentmihalyi define flow as a state of existential well-being determined by a balance of challenge and skills without any indication of anxiety, boredom, or worry (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). The concept of flow has been developed over the years by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and several other researchers, who studied the psychological conditions of happiness. This study is based on the flow theory, where flow is defined as:

"A state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it."

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1991)

It is a given activity that captures an individual's attention and gives an optimal sense of ease and automatically to control a situation. The flow experience is often associated with forgetting time and place and with an intense sense of meaning, satisfaction and strength, and Csikszentmihalyi describe the experience with six characteristics as a framework to flow experience: a union of action and awareness, a centering of attention on a limited stimulus field, a loss of ego, a personal control of action and environment, coherent demands for action and precise feedback, and an autotelic nature (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). This experience is not linked to a solid formula and way of experiencing it, which means that flow occurs in many aspects of life and can help to describe many different activities. Flow is also an essential feeling for the cyclist when they are on a trip, as one informant state the experience of flow is a unique feeling you are looking for as a cyclist:

"We do not go on a cycling vacation to see museums, we go to experience flow on the bike. It is really amazing to obtain flow when you are cycling." (Appendix 11, l. 324-326)

In the diagram flow experience are characterised by Massimini and Carli (Cedric, 2011) as an optimal level of arousal (OLA), seeking to balance boredom and anxiety within challenges and skills, which Csikszentmihalyi did not refer to. Optimal experience depends on the ability to control what happens in consciousness moment by moment,
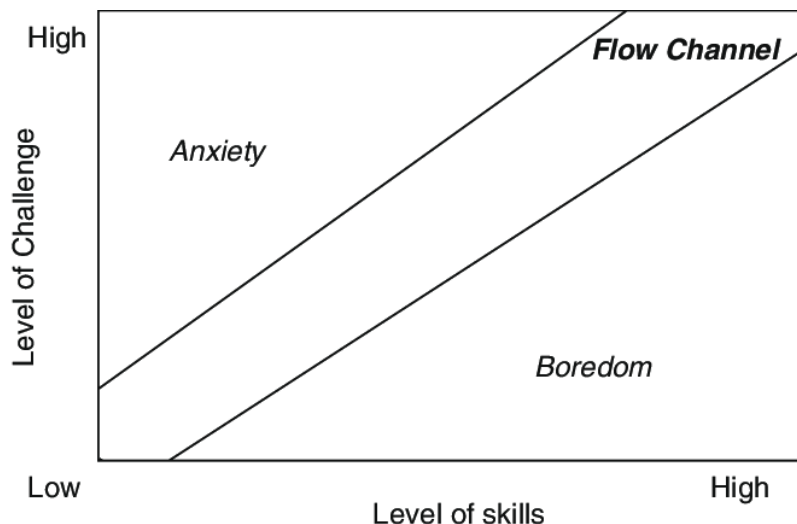

Diagram 1: Flow Channel (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991).

and each person must reach it by their effort and creativity. In the diagram, the optimal experience is illustrated by the Flow Channel, where flow occurs when perceived challenge and skills are corresponding to the individual's level (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). According to Csikszentmihalyi anxiety occurs when the challenges are above an individual's skills, and boredom occurs when skills exceed challenges (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). The Flow Channel is a dynamic field where an individual stays a certain time, but after a while moves out of it again.

An example is that person a does have an amount of skills that are equal to the challenges, but after time the person experience two things, either skills exceed the challenge, or the challenge exceed the skills. The dynamics in the flow model lead a person to growth and discovery. Either we grow bored or frustrated, which will be an unpleasant situation to be in, so the person will be motivated to return to the Flow Channel again (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991).

In this project, Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory will be used as an umbrella theory, under which additional theories will contribute to analysis flow within cycling. There will be analysed coincidence from the informants, where they experience a flow condition or a situation where they are out of a flow state. As mentioned earlier, the author sees flow theory as a comprehensive and not specific theory to explain individual events and experiences. How is sensed and embodied? What is the materiality of flow? What objects are central in sensing and/or disrupting flow? What is the sociality of flow? How are social interactions affecting the optimal level of arousal? Those are unclarified questions Csikszentmihalyi flow theory do not have a clear answer too. To support these states,

further theories are intended to analyse the overall flow theory which is outlined in the next chapters.

In the following sections, conceptual insights will be outlined, supportive of evaluating the factors that have an influence on elements of flow. This section will explain how additional concepts will support the analytical application of the flow theory and which part of the concepts that will be connected to the different elements of flow.

3.2. Sensescapes

From a tourism performance perspective, Crouch argues that the performance is taking place in and through multidimensional spaces: "We live places not only culturally, but bodily" (Crouch et al., 2001). When a tourist travels, they bring their bodies with them, it means that they inescapably see, hear, smell, touch and taste the landscape they are travel in and through (Haldrup & Larsen, 2006). The bodily experience of heat, wind, rain and different landscapes is an important factor that has an impact on how the body reacts to these circumstances. The body is a sensuous element, where places and experiences are physically and poetically grasped. This means that both anxiety and boredom will be felt on the body, and the physical stimuli will affect our sense of flow.

One of the two sensescapes that will be examined in this thesis, is the thermalscape and how the weather affects the cyclist in a cycling situation. In present studies, the focus on temperatures have been limited and have been a focus on mainly on travel decisions (Trandberg, 2014), but Trandberg et al. argue that the thermalscape is an element that always is emplaced. In tourism, the thermal environment is always a factor where the bodies, materials and practices are influenced and affected by temperatures. (Trandberg, 2014).

The other sense scape that will be unfolded is the soundscape. Soundscape is a less researched area of tourism and experiences, where the visual dimension has attracted more examine attention. Previous studies of soundscapes conclude that it has a crucial role in cultivating a positive visitor experience, and the natural quietness has a positive impact on people (Aili, 2018). An essential aspect in soundscape that is important for the tourist is that sound could be an element of the experience where the tourist establishes a sense of place and improve the understanding and view of a destination (Aili, 2018).

To understand the soundscape of cycling, soundscape will be analysed based on the concept of noise pollution and its influence on tourist's experience (Benfield et al., 2009). Noise has based on the data coding of empirical data been observed as a common element influencing flow. Noise pollution is a term where a natural setting is disturbed by noisy and often load sounds, as from an aircraft or vehicle. In this thesis, the noise pollution will be presented with argumentations for that soundscape affect a cyclist's flow experience.

This thesis will combine the flow theory and body engagement to examine how cyclist is sensing flow during their trips. By using the two terms, there have been used in studies before, the researcher will argue how soundscape and thermalscape influence the flow experience. These two elements of a sense scape are developed by Martin Trandberg et al. (Trandberg, 2014), who argues that both scapes are central elements of lived experiences.

3.3. Materiality of tourism

Material objects do have an important effect on the tourism experience (Haldrup & Larsen, 2006). Places and landscapes in tourism cannot be seen as a 'naked' area, there are technologies and objects all around that influence the area and for the people who enter the area. These elements are essential for how places are encountered and perceived (Haldrup & Larsen, 2006). A landscape should be seen as a 'scene', where tourists enact corporeally and step into the 'scene' and engage in bodily and with sensuous.

Objects help to frame an atmosphere of tourist places and also help to create a post image of the experience. Objects and technologies help to engage the bodily sensuous, to which, as a human being, forms an impression after that (Haldrup & Larsen, 2006). As researchers have argued the materiality and objects cannot be avoided in terms of understanding tourism experience, therefore the analysis of cycling experiences will unfold a section where materiality and objects will be defined and analysed to the flow channel. The analysis will contribute to examinations of different material and objects the data coding unfolded.

3.4. Social encounters

According to Argyle, Furnham and Graham (1981), a social situation is defined as a type of social encounters with which members of a culture or subculture are familiar. In a social situation, there

are nine features: goals and goal structure, rules, roles, repertoire of elements, sequences of behaviour, concepts, environmental settings, language and speech, and skills and difficulties (Murphy, 2001). In a social setting, people are in the conviction of achieving a goal that helps to relate an individual form of motivation. The social encounters a person enter in a certain situation will be followed up by using the flow theory to explain a social setting and how the social situation is influencing the flow experience.

The nine features are situations that describe a certain situation and helps to understand the motive there is underlined in a specific social experience. Especially the features "roles" and "sequences of behaviour" are seen relevant in the thesis seen relevant to support the analysis. Roles are seen relatable to local friendliness, as roles changes depending on the environment cyclists encounter on their trip. Sequences of behaviour are seen relevant when evaluating solitude and flow, as behaviour often changes in different social settings that cyclist may be exposed to during their trip. To explain a social situation all of the other features can be described functionally in terms of supporting the primary goal of a social setting. Such as cyclist's they to attend in a social situation many times. Situations can be direct or indirect and accidental etc. and happens everywhere. One of the features there will be investigated regarding cyclist, is role. A role in a social situation is associated with some duties, obligations or rights. Some situations are related to a particular behavioural pattern in which roles are very clear. It can be a seller-customer or teacher-student, where it is quite clear who holds what position and the relationship between each other. In another form of role, there may also be informal roles where there are no clear patterns (Murphy, 2001).

4. Analysis

The point of departure for this chapter will is based on chosen research question: *What influencing factors in relation to flow are cyclists encountering on a long-distance cycling route?*

The Flow Experience by Csikszentmihalyi will be a theoretical frame in the analysis, and will be supported by three analytical under sections designed from the informant's data. The first part in the analysis will outline how cyclist senses flow through the, terms sound, and thermalscapes. The second part the aspect concerns the materiality, and how these elements can be seen in relation to the flow experience. The third and last part of the analysis will outline social encounters in relation to flow.

4.1. Introduction

At a cycle route many things influence the experience, and two persons will probably not have the same experience of a route. This makes cycling to a completely unique way of travelling. The diversity and unpredictable experiences are something that are quite unique.

Several examples, from the informants used as empirical data in this thesis, explain how cycling is a unique and special experience. These experiences are not something that can be planned or purchased in advance, they arise spontaneously and are very individual. A statement from Michael, who travelled around Vietnam for a period, gives an interesting perspective on the difference experiences people have, when travelling by cycle versus bus or car. The statement from Michael encapsulates the meaning of travelling by cycle well, according to most of the informant's:

> "My point is that I met them from the boat in the capital, where the 4 days we had spent cycling had gone. We talk a little about it and I asked if they also didn't think it had been a fantastic trip down there from there. He says: "*Well, no, I don't think so".* He had driven in the bus at night. And for me, the 4 days were the coolest experience of the 5 months." (Appendix 7, l. 121-125)

The statement points to that the informants that cycles have a totally different view of the movement from a to b. It means that the goal is not the main focus, but instead all the happenings in-between. It also indicates that cycling experiences can happen everywhere, and you never know what is around the next corner.

Throughout the analysis the aim is to unfold the essential elements that have an influence on how flow is experienced, and thereby give a better picture of how cycling tourist are experiencing a cycling route.

4.2. Sensing flow

4.2.1. Thermalscapes

The thermalscapes influence on flow is a central element of cycling due, as cycling is an outdoor activity. The thermalscape can change very often, and the cyclist has to adjust to the circumstances unfolded; wind, rain, sun, cold, heat etc. The thermalscape is a factor that most often do not get ignored by the cyclists, it is an element that cyclists encounter all the times. It is a dynamic factor that impacts the cyclist's behaviour regarding to movement and travel journey. In the following section of thermalscapes, different cycling scenarios will be presented in which thermalscape influences the flow experience.

From the empirical data it is seen that weather conditions are important factors for reaching flow. As stated by Michael, weather has a lot to say about the cycling experience (Appendix 7, l. 331-332). The rest of the informant's support Michaels statement, by pointing out that these have an influence on flow experience. However, weather conditions are not a stable parameter and something a cyclist can influence. What they can do, is to adjust to the circumstances and prepare for different scenarios. E.g. by bringing different clothing and gear, and planning different approaches to the route, such as timing and number of expected stops. Anna's statement in relation to weather adjustments is a good example of this:

> "We were cycling through the Mojave Desert in the middle of July, in 40 degrees, it was so stupid. But it went well, and we cycled into Las Vegas through that desert landscape and we had to get up at 3am in the night, to get some hours when it was not 45 degrees. And then just cycle 80 km and then stop at. 10.30am and then just chill the rest of the day." (Appendix 13, l. 44-47)

Based on this statement weather conditions are argued to influence flow, as skills and challenges are affected by this. In this case temperature is causing a negative influence on flow, as the body is challenged physical, as well as disturbances the momentum of the route. Warm conditions cause hydration challenges, as the heat makes a body sweat more and thereby leading to faster

dehydration. Hereby the challenge is to drink enough water and to take in needed nutrition to perform your best or feel comfortable. Further, sun burning is a challenge as this leads to an uncomfortable body, which increases the challenge. In this case Anna and her friends had to adjust their planning to attain flow.

It is argued that the weather conditions are a challenge cyclist are facing, which require them to adjust their skills to the given situation in order to attain flow.

As well as hot weather conditions, cold weather conditions cause the same challenges for maintaining flow.

> "So, whether it is heatwave, when I went on the Kattegat route the first time it was at Easter and it was ice winter and it was completely unbearable to cycle because it both blew and was ice cold. It's also something. Then I think there is something about using his body while experiencing, yes it makes one more receptive to impressions and more influential." (Appendix 6, l. 171-174)

Sara's statement points to that extreme cold weather temperatures as wells as extreme hot weather conditions, stated by Anna, which increase the level of challenges. As Sara states, extreme conditions make a cyclist more vulnerable to external influence as weather. Therefore, it is argued, that middle-range temperature has the highest potential to influence flow positively, as adjustment of skills in relation to challenge is easier under "normal" conditions. Nonetheless, preferred weather conditions are very subjective factor. People looking for extreme challenges might see extreme temperature at positive influence on flow, as skills might be correspondingly higher. However, this study aims at defining flow for the average cycling tourist with middle-range skills, reflected by selected informants. As none of the informants mention extreme weather conditions to affect them in a positive way.

Another influential factor on thermalscape is wind, as the informant Jan states. The empirical data shows that headwind has a negative influence on flow.

> "We had a very good trip anyway, but then we also had headwind and you are cycling on a dike where there is just nothing to take the wind, so you have it right in your face from morning to evening, I want to say there is not much flow over it. It's not just plain fun. It's hard physical work. It is also what you do not feel you come far enough and would like to have it

over in some way. You do not come far enough, and you work out and are tired and it is

monotonous and all such things." (Appendix 8, l. 364-269)

This statement is backed up by the informants Ida, Thorkild and Helle. Headwind is an experience where the cycling become a challenge, and affects the performance heavily, of course depending on speed of the wind. Cyclists are physically challenged in headwind, where the cycling pace becomes slower. The wind affects the body's physicality as it requires higher muscle performance to overcome the headwind, which leads to earlier exhaustion. The effect of wind influences the flow experience as the need for skills increases as well as the level of challenges will rise. From the researcher's own observations, the opposite happens when cycling in tailwind. Tailwind influences the cycling pace, as less energy has to be used for impetus compared to no wind and especially tail wind (Appendix 3). Tailwind has that affect that the speed goes up and there is less forces in the cycling. Thus, tailwind is influencing flow positively for especially cyclists with middle and low range skills, as according to the flow diagram.

Further the cyclist has to adjust their mindset, reducing expectation to a route and they just have to get through a certain thermalscape. Nonetheless, the below statement from Sara, points to that cyclists over time increase their skills in relation to encountered challenges, leading to thermalscape becoming a less influential factor on flow.

"In Germany there I had 3 days of constant headwind, and then you keep up with and consider

it or so. Then it was no longer a challenge, but more just a condition." (Appendix 6, l. 135-137)

As Sara states the thermalscape of wind is initially a problem, but as times goes with the same condition, the more cyclist will get used to it and it becomes a more natural element. It is argued that the thermalscape provoke the behaviour of cycling, that cycling simply become too hard to overcome that influence the distance for a cyclist. It means that wind is an element of thermalscape that requires a certain amount of skills.

4.2.2. Soundscapes

The central element of cycling is moving across a landscape or cityscape. During that movement, auditory sensing can be distorted by the objects a cyclist passes by or being passed by. A prevalent element in soundscape from the empirical data is traffic (Appendix 8, l. 188-190). It becomes

obvious that traffic noise is an inconvenient aspect in the cycling experience. Several circumstances that affects the cyclist are observed. One of the informants recalls:

"There were times when I got into something terribly "shit", in order to cycle somewhere, where there was a lot of traffic. It was almost the worst". (Appendix 9, l. 240-242)

This statement from Ida is backed up by informant's Thorkild, Sebastian, Jan and Hanne.

To clarify the statement from Ida, traffic is seen as an issue in relation to the cycle, here emphasized in a strong word as "shit". The relation between a car and a cyclist is markedly, where the car can do damage on the cyclist. One concern in regard to traffic is safety, were cars drives close to the cycle.

In this recording the researcher is cycling on a main, road where there was not any cycling path[1].

It shows that the vehicles are passing by very close, and the researcher had to move to the right to feel secure at some point. To be seen and feel secure is a challenge that occur in traffic situations, and interrupt the flow experience. From the empirical data the informants mention that they are doing different measures to protect themselves and to be more visible (Appendix 6, l. 97, Appendix 8, l. 384-386, Appendix 10, l. 207-208, Appendix 11, l. 310-311). It indicates that traffic causes some challenges, where they are reacting in terms of be more visible to feel secure. These elements have a negative effect that influence the flow experience for the cyclist. When cars passing it automatic create a physical reaction against the cycle. The puff of wind from the vehicle disturb the balance, and the sound can be very noisy.

Further, Ida mentions traffic noise as a "shitty" element (Appendix 9, l. 252-254), which makes it interesting to look into the role of soundscape in a cycling experience and how a traffic/no traffic experience differ from each. As exemplified in the following two recordings the impact of traffic creates a significantly different experience of the setting.

The first recording is from a typical country road in Denmark where it shows the effect the cars have on the soundscape[2].

I am cycling into the main road after I have been cycling on smaller countryside roads, where the sound immediately brought my attention. I start to hear the sound of cars. Something

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[1] First recording: https://vimeo.com/330115468

[2] Second recording: https://vimeo.com/328138668

significantly changes! I moved from silence to noise. It is immediately noticed how the sound level and intensity increase. The sound is very variable, never monotonous. You can hear the cars from behind come closer, and suddenly they are there, drive past, noises, and the second after it is gone again, creating a more attentive and stressed mindset. The motor sound arises, when the car passing by and the sound of the wheels is shrilling in my hers. It is a very intense sound. The sound is not pleasant, the sound from the cars makes me fully focused, when the next car is driving by, how fast it drives and when it is gone again. The sound is an indicator of danger. There is no rest in my body mindset at any time, I always have my senses activated, focused on the sound of cars and when the next comes. Besides, the sounds are not the same, each car has their own sound. A flow experience is very difficult to obtain, I never had a moment of silence where I could focus on the cycling experience. The traffic stole the experience.

[Impressionistic tale, October 2018]

As Haldrup and Larsen points to, that a tourist experiencing the landscape they are travelling in with their bodies, and especially a tourist on cycles. The inconvenient relationship between the cycle and the car is even more confirmed by the sound from the motor and its sovereignty towards the cycle. One has the feeling it is a battle one cannot win, and a feeling of anxiety is produced, that leads to a situation where the flow is disturbed by anxiety.

In the next recording of a soundscape it is the totally opposite experience. Here the researcher records at the country side with clean asphalt and no traffic[3]. In the recording there is a summing from the cycle, which becomes the prevalent soundscape present in this situation. The sound of the cycling wheels rolling over the asphalt gives a very clean sound. What does that tell us? First, it makes the cycling very easy. A humming has a meditative effect with a silent background sound. It is very calm and not interrupted by any objects. Second, the humming change noise level according to drive and speed. It is not a monotonous voice, but it changes along the way, and gives the cyclist an indication of speed and movement. You can hear from the sound if you are cycling slow or fast, it is an indication of a certain amount of physicality skills a cyclist is in possession of. The soundscape

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[3] Third recording: https://vimeo.com/327887763

in this recording points that the researcher has a flow experience, the wheels against the asphalt creates this humming that are a mediator for good efficient cycling.

Everytime the tempo changes, the sound does as well. This change of sound gives the cyclist an indication of current rhythm. In the recording the sound is very "clean", as the road is in good and clean condition as well. The sound is therefore very susceptible from other conditions and could change immediately.

It is argued that the sound is an indication of a good flow experience, where the noise influences the cyclist's atmosphere of the surroundings.

The last recording of a soundscape comes from the cycle[4]. In this recording the cycles chain creates a monotonous sound frequency. The sound from the chain and cassette caught the attention from the researcher, the cycle "tells" him something. Something that needs to be investigated. The sound in this situation helps the researcher to find out that something was wrong with the cycle. The indications show that a sound helps the researcher to solve the problem before a challenge arise. This observation is backed up by Sebastian, who also recognise the sounds from his cycle. He explains it as the cycle has to get some love:

> "Then I also try to notice whether the cycle needs some love. So sometimes I stop and fix it quickly." (Appendix 10, l. 172-173)

4.2.3. Sum up

Based on presented empirical analysis it is argued that thermal- and soundscapes are conditions are highly influential for sensing flow during a cycle experience. Thermalscapes such as heat, cold or wind increase the challenges, where the cyclist has to adjust their behaviour to the circumstances. The thermalscape have a physical impact on the cyclists, where they have to adjust their way of cycling regarding the condition. On the other hand, they do always find a way to overcome the challenges and find solutions to get through.

Soundscape can have a positive and negative impact, and be an indicator for challenges. There is always an element of sound in cycling, regardless of how the movement is. Sounds can have positive

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[4] Fourth recording: https://vimeo.com/328371166

effects on flow, if they give the cyclist a sense of relaxing and meditative condition, if moderate and natural in character. Sounds can have negative effects on flow, if the cyclist is exposed to noise pollution from outside elements such as vehicles, as this creates interruption to the flow.

4.3. Materiality of flow

4.3.1. Navigation

An essential element in a cycling experience is to navigate while you are cycling, as you as a cyclist has to know, where you are going. As a cyclist you always have a plan, where you cycle from and to. To reach a place it requires some kind of navigation. A cycling trip will most of the times be limited to a certain period, which means that the cyclist has a route to follow. There are several ways a cyclist is able to navigate during a trip such as GPS-computer, physical maps, Google Maps, app's and signposting. All these navigation options create a material dependency for achieving flow and influence the experience. In the following section a flow experience will be unfolded by look at the materials, that are present in a cycling experience.

An interesting observation from the collected empirical data is that cyclists appreciate a route, where there is good signposting's and the route is "fixed" for them. This means they do not have to make any choices. Nonetheless, there have to be synergy in the combination between the technology and signposting's to attain flow. A combination of different navigation material can create an incoherent navigation output with different suggestions, influencing the flow by increasing challenge. The picture below is a snapshot from the researcher's field research, showing an episode from Kolding where the route confused the researcher. The GPS-track shows one thing and the signposting another route. It is an element where some challenges arise, and the cyclist have to relate to a given situation and make some decisions. This example underpins that cyclists experience to move out of the flow channel because of increased level of challenge, due to a mismatch between the material in the navigation.

Incoherent and misleading navigation, as known above, can cause that a cyclist gets confused and thrown off the route. When a cyclist uses materiality in the navigation, there is an exclusive belief that the material can be trusted, therefore when something is wrong, unnecessary mental forces are utilised to find out where to go. There is in some way a mistrust of navigating: are you on the right track? Which material should be trust? This create challenges in the experience.

Navigation is an important element of a cyclist's cycling experience and a potential source of doubtfulness and as well as a feeling of frustration. If the navigation fails, the feeling of momentum is disturbed influencing the flow negatively. It is a situation, where a cyclist become distracted by the materiality that are involved and evoke the flow experience. Those situations where the navigation fails leads to a situation where challenge occur. On the other hand, navigation material can support a smooth ride, if navigation is frictionless supportive for attain flow. A statement from an informant points to that signposting is highly supportive for flow. This includes a positive influence on a cyclist's attitude, when the local community has given thoughts to cycling experiences, reflecting positively on the general flow experience along the route.

> "I was amazed by a bicycle route that had been made alongside the river, which I was surprised by the fact that some have chosen to spend money on it. To make signs and everything, I think it was great to see". (Appendix 9, l. 229-231)

As argued by Haldrup material objects function as mediator, connecting the cyclist with the external environment (Haldrup & Larsen, 2006). This statement underpins that a good signposting and well-working navigation material have a positive effect on the flow experience, as it makes the cyclists' experience more positivity and makes the route easier, by reducing the challenges related to navigation. In Appendix 4 there are three pictures of good signposting's displayed, derived from the researcher's own field research. Signposting's on a route requires standardisation of how the signs should look, be located and accessible for a cyclist. It will mean that every time a cyclist come to a place where a traffic decision arises, there must also be a signpost. This keep the challenges low and prevent the cyclists in move out of a flow experience. It feels like sliding through the landscape while cycling. Cycle signposts should not be significant as such but be adapted to a "bicycle landscape". It is also very informative for the cyclists, if the signposting includes short information sections about the next city, kilometres and accessible route options. A cycling route can be seen as a scene a cyclist enter, and on that scene material objects helps to shape a belonging (Haldrup & Larsen, 2006).

The example from Kolding is a good example of how the GPS-track showed one way and the signposting's another. In the following statement Jan explain his view of using a GPS at their cycling trip:

> "When we cycled in Asia and did not know better, I think it was quite fascinating that an app as Mapsmee, as we used, it is totally user-friendly and tells very accurately where to go and how far. In a way, it was much more relaxing that it constantly told you when to turn and how far you should drive." (Appendix 8, l. 221-223)

From the statement the use of technology, when navigating, is argued not to interrupt the visual view much. The navigation is giving short and precise commands while cycling, and the cyclist do not have to stop and then look at a GPS. It is a floating interaction that takes place all times. The informant's statement points to that materiality gives a freedom in a cycling experience. Freedom to enjoy the route, to internalize impressions from the landscape, and to minimize the disturbances related to cycling, as technology will show the way. This indicates that materials help reduce the challenges when following a route. But also they are depending on the material. There is an aspect of trust connected to the material, that as it navigates them the right route. It is argued that cyclists rely on the fact that to experience this freedom, their route has to be predetermined to obtain these elements and material. This points to that technology is prerequisite to experience flow.

4.3.2. Attractions

As outlined in chapter 3.3, attractions are in this thesis seen as part of the landscape cycle tourists encounter during a cycling route, and seen as co-shaping the surrounding landscape. From the data coding of collected interviews it becomes obvious that attractions are seen as many things. Description derived from data coding shows that attraction, that cyclists experience along their trip, is as varying from small to big objects, till natural to constructed elements. Attractions are thereby ascertained to be a subjective term, meaning attractions influencing cyclists could be anything from a little stand to a historical monument that functions as directly or indirectly as mediator between the cyclist and the external environment. Thus, this section of materiality regarding attractions aims at outlining a nuanced picture and attempt to find generalities of how attractions have an influence on flow.

From the empirical data it shows that attractions have a different impact on cyclist, whether you are cycling alone or together with others. It shows that people cycling alone tend to focus more on the cycling itself, rather than focusing on attractions (Appendix 9, l. 131-133, Appendix 6, l. 58-59, Appendix 7, l. 110-112). The solo cyclist is seen to be more focused on the cycling, instead of attraction, as these are seen as distractions, interrupting the flow. Based on the empirical data it is argued, that attractions have a different function as mediator to achieve flow, whether you are cycling alone or in a group. One important argument for this is, that attractions do not have the same impact on people, if they cannot share the moment with another person.

> "It is a lot about what focus you have. There I think if I had been with others, it would have made more sense to experience something. You get a bit into such a bubble, where you are just driving and it's about getting from a to be and being very focused in that way." (Appendix 9, l. 116-119)

This statement indicates that solo cyclists do not have an interest to experience those attractions, and it impacts the state of flow, as these would not be an element that is important for the solo cyclist.

Some informants also point to that by travelling alone you downgrade activities and stops at the route. They were not focusing on attractions along the route, as stated by Michael:

> "Things just got so reinforced. When I drove over these steep mountains, I got the feeling that I was the only one who experiencing this. If you go to Angkor Wat, 10.000 people are standing and looking at the same. For me, an experience shared with 10.000 is also 10.000 times inferior.

So, if you are experiencing something out of the way, but only you see it. Then it just gets much more amplified." (Appendix 7, l. 344-348).

However, this quote does also point to that attractions are seen to have a different function as mediator for flow for solo cyclists, if they do not have to stop up to explore it. Rather, the attraction is a part of the route and adds to the scenery they are passing by. It indicates that attractions are not a materiality that provide flow, instead it is object in the landscape a cyclist tries to avoid, because of the circumstances Michael outline in the statement.

Looking at cyclist cycling together with others, attraction is seen to have a bigger positive influence on flow, compared to solo cyclists. The positive impact of attraction as mediator to flow, is for group cyclist both seen along the route without stopping, but also when stopping to explore attractions.

"However, conversely, I cannot see where we should save those 3 hours because we do not bother to get up much earlier, because we are the types that always stop if there is a temptation or something we want to see. A fun little museum or a quirky shop or a beautiful view, so we are not such a few to reach 100 km. So, we stop and take the time it takes." (Appendix 7, l. 273-276)

This quote from Jan shows that for cyclist cycling together with others, attractions in the landscape has a positive function as mediator to flow. The positive influence on flow is argued to stem from the people, who are cycling together and have each other to share the attraction with. They can discuss it and enjoy it together. Altogether, this points to that people cycling solo and people cycling in a group have different approaches to the attractions they see along the route and that attractions have different influence on cyclists. It could indicate that boredom is a factor in regarding to how these two groups experience an attraction.

4.3.3. Gear and skills

From the empirical data it is seen that cyclists get a close relation to their cycles, whereby this connection will be explored in relation to flow. Informants refer to their relation to their cycles as becoming one with the cycle and having a high degree of feeling the condition when cycling.

"And suddenly, my friend's spokes go off and she is cycling on a racing cycle, also an insane idea when we were driving so far, but she loves her cycle, so "he" has to come along. At that time, we had a very personal relationship with our cycles." (Appendix 13, l. 142-144)

This statement from Anna indicates that the cyclist develops a personal affection to a material object, which almost becomes a "living" thing. Haldrup and Larsen argue that people are sensing objects, as Anna, pointing to the cycles becomes essential part of the experience. The cycle change from the cyclist's perspective, characteristic where the cyclist's express emotions to their bicycle. In relation to the flow channel it indicates that the relationship between the cyclist and the cycle do have force a unit, that can overcome challenges. The cyclist needs to cycle at that specific cycle to be prepared for the upcoming challenges. The connection between the cycle and the cyclists become a skill, where the cyclist experiences a larger material solidarity, that can overcome certain experiences.

A cycle is a dynamic material object, which means the condition of the cycle are varying when used. When a cyclist is closely attached to the cycle, the cyclist thereby knows if their cycle is performing perfect or have any defects. The higher degree of functional perfection to a cycle, can be argued as skills, the higher potential for achieving flow. It is required for a cyclist to have a certain level of skills to fix and maintain the cycle to get the highest performance out of it. As one of the informant's states, the condition of a cycle can be a source of concerns:

> "Nothing happened to my cycle either, I did not puncture once. And that was perhaps also a fear
> I had before, what would I do if something happened". (Appendix 9, l. 65-66)

It is argued that the cycle, is no longer a passive material. It becomes a dynamic material the cyclist has to be aware of, if something should happen. By this argumentation it is necessary for a cyclist to be in a position, where skills are required to be able to handle challenges that could happen. When a cyclist is in a position of a high level of skills regarding the material, it will have a positive effect in the flow experience.

In the next quotation points to material accidents in is considered less of a problem, as long as the skills is are equal to the challenge:

> "But a good and quick change of tire, that is good flow as well." (Appendix 10, l. 242-243)

This statement from Sebastian is backed up by Thorkild (Appendix 10, l. 348-349) and Anna (Appendix 13, l. 246-248).

Anna points to that her friend and herself made up a game, every time a puncture happened (Appendix 13, l. 252-253). This statement, supports the quote from Sebastian above, pointing to that accidents are of minor concerns, if they cyclist's skills are in place. It is thereby argued, that

accidents have less negative influence on flow if skills are correspondingly high, as according to the flow diagram. Moreover, if the rights skills are in place, challenges as a puncture is argued to have a positive influence on flow.

4.3.4. Sum up

In the previous chapter of materiality that influence flow it has showed that objects have an influence on the flow experience and is something that are included. A cyclist can be thrown out of the flow channel if there is to many navigations stops, that could be caused be using more than one object to navigate and those two was not aligned in the navigation, which means the challenges increase. On the opposite hand, good navigation such as signposting's are a factor that creates high flow experience. A cyclist experiences a freedom and easiness in the cycling, where the cyclist can focus on the cycling.

Another finding from the analysis was the attractions in the landscape have different importance for cyclist. It showed that solo cyclists were not that interested to see attractions, and it became a distraction in the flow channel, where cyclists cycling together used the attractions a lot more and was a mediator for flow.

The last theme of materials and probably the most important one, is the aspect of the cycle itself. The analysis shows that cyclist have a human relationship to their cycle, they don't see it as a dead object, but they see it as an object that have to be taking care of. In relations to the object of cycle, the analysis revealed that cyclists have to been in possession of a certain amount of skills to handle challenges regarding the cycle, then challenge will let influence the flow experience.

4.4.   Sociality of flow

4.4.1. Locals friendliness, curiosity and socialization

One of the social dynamics the informants express in the interviews, is the huge amount of curiosity from the local people they meet along the tour. There seems to be a different way of how a community look at people who cycle. The informants have strong memories and experiences, where locals direct and help them as wells as showing interest in their trip. Anna who cycled together with a friend across America had a very unusual experience with the natives from America:

> "It turns out that there are two Navajo Indians who are just such "hey". I then explained what happened and how, but they usually never talk to white people, it is a very separate society, but of course we need a lift and do a lot of telling us that they are not dangerous. And then they are: "Do you want to see our country?". It ends with them taking us on a trip through their land, we were visiting one of the two men's old father, who lives such a traditional tradition and we are some holy places" (Appendix 13, l. 153-158)

In this quote, Anna points to that locals have a positive influence on the flow channel as they help Anna bring down challenges and thereby also her worries. The locals positive influence on flow channel is also seen present in most other interviews, which support the argument of locals having an influence on the flow of cyclists (Appendix 7, l. 129-130 & Appendix 9, l. 68-69). The specific social role a cyclist adopts in the social situation, indicates that locals do also have an influence on challenges in relation to the flow channel, and in some situations an important factor that contributes to the state of flow. They are an element that can provide assistance to the cyclists that are challenged and helps them to get back into the channel. The informants are overwhelmed by how the locals help them during their cycling trips, further supporting the argument of local's having a positive influence on the flow experience.

The informants have a lot of stories about locals and how they interact with them and explain different kind of experiences they go through. It seems to be a very important socialization process they are doing while they are on their trips, especially those who are cycling alone.

> "Helpfulness, people who offer an overnight stay in their garden for they are not even at home, they were heading the other way. I thought, "Where does it come from?" I think maybe it has something to do with I am cycling alone, I do not believe it had happened if you were two." (Appendix 9, l. 360-363)

It is from this statement argued that social situations have an influence on being cyclist. From the experiences of both Ida and Anna's, they both have perception that the locals are more welcoming when you are alone. This kind of social situation indicates that there are some patterns in the role feature, where the locals are looking after them and want to protect them in different situations. Every situation is different, but it shows us that there is a high element of empathy for cyclists from the locals. It is something that arise in given situations, where cyclists and locals interact with each other. The empathy may come from the fact that a cyclist is on an adventure, where limited

resources are available. Moreover, cyclist can be exhausted when stopping, which could be a essential reason the locals willingness to help in a given situation.

4.4.2. Solitude and flow

To be on a cycling trip is not always easy. There are all kind of situations that can arise where the cyclist has to make a decision. When a cyclist is going on a cycle trip alone, some interesting issues arise compared to them who are cycling in groups. It is a process where they have to work on learning and adjusting themselves during a cycling trip. A cyclist has to find out how it is to be alone, and in situations where they are responsible for themselves.

"It is clear that being alone, it was my own responsibility and it was me who had to find the way and it was me who was taking care of everything." (Appendix 9, l. 92-93)

As pointed out by several informants, being alone you don't have anybody to talk with about issues, challenges etc., leading to informants struggling to find solutions and explanations to overcome these issues. Sara had problems when cycling cycle as she got bored and couldn't find a good flow when cycling.

"Yes, as I said, I had such bad days first on the routes. It takes some time to get into it, but when I cycled in the US, I actually had a day when I took myself to constantly stop. Then I should just hear some music, then I should just eat a snack, then I should just one or the other. Then I reflected on what was happening here and now. Then I realized I was bored, I was just bored on the cycle. It was because it was just off the road and away from the ocean, and a relatively hot day. It was just boring landscape." (Appendix 6, l. 114-119).

This statement indicates that people who are cycling alone have to spend some time adjusting their mind and body to be on the cycle. It is very individual what kind of problems they experience, but a commonality found is that people cycling alone, boredom is an issue they have to overcome and find solutions to solve it. In terms of cycling alone it is also a question of the individuals' skills and subjectively experience of challenge. After certain period, the situation changes and they find their way into the flow channel. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1991) flow is also about mastering these skills to a situation, so that a person is able to move around in the flow experience. From Ida and Sara's statements, cycling is a process of mastering their own body and situation to the

circumstances, they have to be aware of a situation and adjust it to a certain level. It's all about mastering their skills, which are the way they move around in the flow channel.

For the the informants who drove alone, the social aspect means a lot, and the socialization process happens through interaction with the people they meet on their way. When people are cycling alone, the purpose is more to challenge yourself and your own power of will to get through obstacles. During the route they make conversations with the locals and fellow cyclist's they meet, which means a lot to them. They also talk with and other cyclist they meet on their way to have a small chat about cycling. For Ida she can experience some kind of restlessness while she is alone.

> "Also, to be alone, of course it was sometimes a challenge. As long as I was on the cycle, everything was fine. Then I was in a good mood and I was fine, but as soon as I had camped, the restlessness and thoughts and all that came, so for me it was there to be on the cycle that was the coolest" (Appendix 9, l. 139-142).

An additional statement from Michael also indicates that solo cyclist does have a shortage of social engagement while they are driving. They simply miss someone to share the experiences with.

> "As a starting point, I will always choose to drive alone, unless I had a girlfriend and or a good friend. It must be a person I knew, one you knew you could be with 24/7, that could be great. Then you have someone to share it with. That's the second thing, you don't really have someone to share it with. You often stand and think that this experience you would like to have shared with XX, you often have the feeling there." (Appendix 7, l. 274-278)

At one point they prefer to be alone and have the freedom by themselves, but at the other hand they also reach out to social engagement. The social aspect changes clearly when the person is not cycling, as the social demand here arise. Most of the time they spend on their cycle and not speaking with anybody, so when they get of the cycles it was important to have somebody to talk with.

> "You can't stop at a vantage point without all those people with their camper coming and asking about all sorts of things. The fact that they are interested and somewhere has also meant that I had contact with other people." (Appendix 6, l. 266-269)

In a social situation with other people there seems to be an open-minded behaviour to have a generally conversation about cycle related subject. Conversations are often initiated with superficial discussions on where people have been and where they are going, but for the cyclist it is a key

element in a social situation to have conversation along the tour and to hear about others experience their sharing of knowledge, but also to share their own experiences. The social conversation is an element that have a positive impact, decreasing the level of boredom. It is interesting to note that the content of conversations do not really matter, its more about how much or with who they are talking with that influences the state of flow positively.

Boredom can appear for solitude cyclist in different settings, but it is a condition that appear when they are "off" the cycle. At these moments their objective is gone, and they have to adjust to a new setting. There seems to be an indication of flow is negatively impacted for people cycling, when they are stopping and standing off the cycle, and when the given situation is not about cycling anymore. There are indications of loneliness, which can be an issue they have to deal with. The loneliness is often seen to be source to boredom at some point during their trip. To change the status of this boredom, the locals play an important role for cyclists to overcome this experience.

4.4.3. Group dynamic

Indications found from informants cycling in groups, showed that the relation to each other is very important and that the best dynamics are present when cycling with persons you trust, such as a friend or family.

To cycle in groups, you have to know your partners strength and weaknesses to make it work. A group formation is most cases arranged before going. From the empirical data from 4/5 interviews, the cyclists didn't find a partner along the route to follow with, instead that rather wanted to continue cycling on their own.

In regard to the group dynamics, trust and confidence to the partner is two importance things that must exist to overcome a trip successfully. One of the informants, Thorkild mentions weather as a influential factor that can be tough to go through without knowing each other.

> "We once drove from Esbjerg to Hamburg and we should have turned around. It was in an autumn holiday and there was the wind just in our faces all the way down. It was so long, and hard headwind and I do not really know who could make it work if you do not know each other really well or agree that this is a good idea, even if it was wildly hard." (Appendix 11, l. 209-213)

Cycling trips isn't just about good vibes and beautiful sceneries all the way. It can also include tough weather conditions, where it is not enjoyable at all. In these circumstances the empirical data indicates that people who are cycling together shall have a strong relationship and know each other, to be able to help and understand each other. This is argued, because people experience situations where they are on their limits and do not have energy. Another informant, Anna do also indicate that the relationship between the riders are very important to keep up the flow and help each other whenever one has a bad day.

> "You know there is one who has your back if you can't do more and you can move on. It was a strange mechanism. If one had a bad day, then the other was just automatically super fresh and you got the energy of helping your partner." (Appendix 13, l. 86-89)

To cycle with a partner still requires skills to manage the challenges, but the main feature of cycling with a partner is that you are with a person you can rely on and can help that you can help each other out obstacles are encountered (Appendix 13, l. 79-81). An argument for this, is that cohesiveness between the cyclists is a factor that makes a skills and challenges less prevalent factor to attain flow in cycling experience. The partnership helps the cyclists to overcome challenges by using the skills from the partner. It is argued that partners do help each other in difficult situation to provide and obtain flow. It also means that they will experience less challenges, as they have someone they can lean on, compared to cyclist cycling alone. For this to partnership to be an asset, the informants point to that connection between the cyclists has to be strong and that they have to know each other well.

To be in an arranged group is a different experience, where some of the cycling elements are pushed away, and other elements, such as the social element, become more important. Two of the informants have experienced both an arranged cycling trip and share the same thoughts about the contrast of cycling alone and in groups.

> "After all, you have to adapt. When you drive yourself, you decide when you want to start when you want to stop and pace and all these things. When you are with someone else, you have to compromise on all these things." (Appendix 7, l. 269-217)

These thoughts are shared by Ida, who states as you as a participant in a group tour have to fit into the rules and plans that are made in advance.

"There we also made some stops at sights and we sometimes stopped just long enough and stopped for lunch or to swim, there was a bit more enjoyment inward." (Appendix 9, l. 198-199)

From the informant's statements, it indicates that people can experience less flow when cyclist participate in group tours arranged by external parties, as encountered challenge and needed skills are considered relatively low. There are some conditions, such as the route is planned by a tour guide, making their experience less demanding. In relation to the flow channel, it is argued that in such situation they are placed in the lower left corner of the flow diagram. They do not face any big challenges, since they are with a guide, and skills, such as planning and repair, is also in the low end, as someone is always there to help them out. These conditions make freedom and flow limited, because there is a fixed setting for the trip. According to the flow diagram, they are simply not challenged enough compared to possessed skills to experience the same kind of flow, such as those who either cycle alone or in groups were the tour is planned and carried by themselves.

An interesting indication prevails, when comparing a solo and a group ride, is the sequence of behaviour the cyclists show. It is argued when people cycling in a group, they are in some sort of bubble, where the internal social dynamics are weighted higher than external dynamics. In a group ride there is a behaviour of internal focus, where the social elements between the participants are important and appreciated. Whereas solitude cyclists have an external focus, which can be seen in a greater engagement with locals among their trips. It is therefore argued, that there is a bigger social curiosity for solo cyclist to engage with the locals and bigger potential for reaching a high of level flow.

4.4.4. Sum up

There is a clear indication of flow channel being different, when you are cycling alone versus in a group in relation to social encounters. People who are cycling alone experience a different kind of challenge compared to them who cycle together as partners or part of arranged tours.

Through the analyses of social encounters, it is found founding that the local community possess great empathy for cyclist. The analysis shows that locals have an impact on cyclists' flow channel, as they are a factor that can help the cyclist in a certain situation, sort of

"pushing" them back into the flow channel. The fact that people are travelling by cycle and with limited aids, indicate that locals are more accommodating in their presence. The flow experience especially points to that solo cyclists are mostly affected by the locals and their helpfulness, which is an important element of their social encounters on a trip.

From the analysis of solitude cyclists, it is found that there is a demand for skills as they are cycling alone and are responsible for themselves. Compared to people who are cycling together with somebody else, they don't have anybody to lean on or to get support from. It requires a higher level of skills to mastering challenges when cyclists are cycling alone. Besides of skills, the analysis shows that solitude cyclists have a strong need for socialization, where the random conversations with people are a key element of their trip and indicates that it reduces challenges. From the analysis, it becomes obvious that the demands for skills are that not high when travelling in pre-arranged groups with guides, as everything is arranged, and the freedom becomes limited. Instead the social aspects of socializing with the rest of the group on such tours are seen more important than cycling it itself.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to answer the following research question: *What influencing factors in relation to flow are cyclists encountering on a long-distance cycling route?*

The data coding of the empirical analysis showed three main topics; sensing flow, materiality and social encounters. The empirical analysis based on these topics in relation to outlined theoretical framework, showed that all these topics have an influence on flow, both in relation to attain flow and to pushed out of the flow channel. It is found, that most influential factors relate to the variable challenge in the flow diagram. Some factors influence the balance of skills and challenge, supporting the potential for attaining flow, and some affects the state of mind towards anxiety or boredom, as according to the flow diagram.

The influential factor of sensing flow was coded into two sub-topics; sound and thermalscapes.
The influence from soundscape on flow is found to derive from the cyclist's movement on the cycle and unnatural external factors. The soundscape deriving from the cyclist movement on the cycle, referred to as "clean" sound is found to be mediator, positively associated with attaining flow as challenge is seen to decrease as a clean sound support the state of focus of cyclist. Unnatural external factors, referred to as noise pollutions is found to be a mediator, negatively associated with attaining flow as challenge is seen to increase due to disturbances in the state of focus of cyclists.
As thermalscape is a natural constant element, this was found to constantly influence the flow of cyclists. It was found that in extreme temperatures, both low and high, this was influencing the flow negatively, as skills decrease and challenges increase. Further is was found, that middle-range temperatures were positively associated with attaining flow, as skills and challenges were better balanced.
Thermalscapes & soundscapes are both seen as supportive for explaining factors that influences flow. Thus, the application of thermalscapes & soundscape is argued to add nuances to flow theory. However, generalization of the influence of these concepts are difficult to generalize, as the influence of these are very subjective. Nonetheless, the collected empirical data supports the importance of thermalscapes & soundscape in relation to attain flow.

Under the topic materiality, three sub-topics derived from here; navigation, attractions and gear. Navigation is seen to be influencing flow positively, when different navigation tools are used in combination and hereby complimenting each other. It was found that this creates an undisturbed cycle experience, with the effect of a low level of challenge. In this case, the potential for attaining flow is increasing. On the other hand, if different applied navigation tools are not coherent and mutually complimenting each other, this influences the potential of attaining flow negatively.

Attractions were found to have a different influential factor on flow, depending on whether you are a solo cyclist or in a group. It is found that solo cyclist does not value stopping for attractions to attain flow as much as cyclists in groups. The general picture drawn by selected informants, was that stopping for attractions are merely done if you are able to share the experience with others. Thus, attractions are for cyclists cycling in groups seen as a mediator to attain flow, as such experiences are seen as adding a positive impact to the overall cycle experience.

Within the sub-topic gear, is was from the empirical analysis found that cyclists build a personal relationship to their own cycle as they are getting more familiar with its functionality. Some cyclists refer this familiarity of their cycle, as a feeling where the cycle feels like an extension of their body. This relationship is found to have a positive impact on attain flow, as this increases the skill level and decreases potential challenges.

Materiality is argued to be a supportive element to explore the flow on long-distance cycle tours and is argued to expand the concept of flow. However, it is argued that to expand the contribution of this concept, a greater emphasis on the mentally impact of materiality on flow can be taken, e.g. how a great sign-posting leads to an increased positive state of mind.

In relation to the topic social encounters, it was found that the majority of locals in local communities encountering along the route have a positive attitude toward cycling tourist. From the empirical analysis, it found that locals show much inclusiveness, curiosity and helpfulness toward cycle tourist. Thus, locals engaged with along the route are seen to have positive impact on attaining flow, as they assist with potential challenges, and in some cases support an increased skill level.

Further, is was found that skills required for solo riders are higher than cyclists in groups, as less support is present when cycling alone. The skill diversification is thereby limited, as opposite in groups where each individual can possess different skills which together add up.

These finding adds perspective to evaluating flow, as cycling alone and in groups entail a different perception and anticipation of what flow is.

The research shows a very diverse picture of influential factors in relation to flow. Common for all influential factors is that each can impact the potential of flow positively or negatively, depending on given settings and conditions. Nonetheless, it is found that when cyclists are challenged their level of skills increases which entails that flow is a dynamic factor of a cycle experience.

6. List of references

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7. List of appendices

The Appendix documents are found attached in digitaleksamen.aau.dk

Appendix 1: Informal conversations

Appendix 2: Observation notes – Gedser to Helsingør

Appendix 3: Observation notes – Esbjerg to Copenhagen

Appendix 4: Pictures of signposting's

Appendix 5: Interview guide

Appendix 6: Transcription of interview with Sara

Appendix 7: Transcription of interview with Michael

Appendix 8: Transcription of interview with Hanne & Jan

Appendix 9: Transcription of interview with Ida-Marie

Appendix 10: Transcription of interview with Sebastian

Appendix 11: Transcription of interview with Thorkild

Appendix 12: Transcription of interview with Helle

Appendix 13: Transcription of interview with Anne Eva

Appendix 14: Meaningful units

8. List of table, model, figures and pictures

Model 1: Strucuter of thesis

Table 1: List of informants

Figure 1: Meaningful units

Figure 2: Meaningful units with sub-groups

Diagram 1: Flow Channel

Picture 1: GPS-track from Kolding