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Membership categorisation, category-relevant spaces, and perception-in-action: the case of disputes between cyclists and drivers

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1. Introduction

This article is concerned with the interactional organisation of disputes between cyclists and drivers. It focuses on two cases – instances where cyclists feel a motorist has performed a 'close pass' and instances where a driver comes to telling a cyclist to 'get in the cycle lane'. Specifically, this analysis describes how these traffic disputes turn on the relevancy and accomplishment of the cycle lane as a mundane technology[1] of the 'traffic system' (Goffman, 2010[1972]). The disputes are shown to be bound up with members' accomplishments of (spatial) rights and obligations in and through categorisations of road users and objects, their actions, and visually available resources. In this sense, a cycle lane is shown to be an available resource for members' local organization and accountability of the 'proper' use of the road and, thus, as significant for the categorial relation between and relevancy of cyclists and drivers. Such disputes thus offer a perspicuous setting for the examination of perception and categorisation as organised through and in relation to members' local and occasioned use of categorisational practices (Hester and Eglin, 1997a,b; Watson, 2015) and, specifically, the observer's maxim (Hester and Francis, 2003). Central to these disputes, are members' spatial categorizations – and the procedural consequentiality for the accountability of actions, the viewer's use of norms and so on. Such practices remain a central yet under-examined aspect of culture-in-action (Hester and Eglin, 1997a). As variously established by scholars who have developed this pillar of Sacks' work – and, notably, the late Stephen Hester – categorization practices are central to a wide range of interactional activities and contexts both within and without talk. Yet, as Watson (2015) has recently reminded us, membership categorization analysis (MCA) is often treated as a somewhat narrower concern – focused narrowly on 'person-descriptions' in talk – and is often loosed from its ethnomethodological moorings. A reconnection or restatement of the centrality of categorization practices to the organisation of situated, practical activities and their context(s) is necessary in realising the contribution of such an attention to current studies of embodied conduct, mobilities, and the development of ethnomethodology more generally. This article thus aims to describe how the selection and recognition of spatial categories ('cycle lane', 'road') is tied to object and membership categories ('bike', 'cyclist', 'car', 'driver') in ways that mirror practices that find actions and predicates to be seeable as 'bound' in the first instance. I conclude by revisiting the observer's maxim in light of the analysis, as an aspect of the categorial apparatus, observable in these disputes and presumably present in a whole range of other situations, through which members handle the mutually constitutive availability and moral order of spatial and membership categories and predicates in and as interactional context.

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[1] A useful term, borrowed from Weilenmann et al (2014)

2. Membership categorization, context, and perception-in-action

The reflexive and mutually constitutive relationship between categorization and context has long been a concern within studies of MCA (Hester and Eglin, 1997a, b; Fitzgerald et al, 2009; Greiffenhagen and Watson, 2009; Housley and Fitzgerald, 2002, 2015; Sacks, 1995; Watson, 2015). There remains much to do, however, in terms of the analysis of members' *in vivo* categorization practices within dynamic, mobile scenes. The 'traffic system' is an apt context for such investigations, not least because it is formally organized around the notion that categories of movers/vehicles should move in a particular way within allocated spaces and furnished with a range of mundane technologies such as traffic, bus and cycle lanes, pavements, other segregated pedestrian walkways, instructional signs and lights, road markings, and so on. What is, however, routinely overlooked by participants and, to some extent, analysts are the categorization practices and local work in and through which this describable system-ness – as an organizational context where one 'follows the rules' *mutatis mutandis* (Goffman, 2010[1972]; Lee and Watson,1993) – is accomplished. In this sense, the relevancy and invocation of categories from the 'traffic system collection' serves as an omnirelevant device (Sacks, 1995[1]: 314) in the disputes; that is, a resource for producing these as *traffic* disputes, and the categorisability of participants as 'road users' (in highly indexical ways) and not something else. Categorizations of space and objects are not only constitutive of but endogenous to the lived order of commonplace scenes, exhibit an inexorably local character, and are, as such, central to the interactional accomplishment of the 'traffic system'.

2.1 Spatial categorisations

Despite common misconceptions, non-person categories and, indeed, categorization practices beyond talk have long the concern of studies of membership categorization (Hester and Eglin, 1997). Indeed, spatial categorisations received attention in Sacks' (1995) original studies and teachings where, for example, locative and spatial categorisation devices were shown to be a 'neat' resource for the organisation of the telling of stories. Moreover, the selection of spatial categories also displays a reflexive orientation to the hearer, the setting of the event, and the telling (1995[2]: 15). The telling of a wreck on a highway, for example, was shown to orientate to assumedly common knowledge; that is, where the teller and hearer 'normally' are or frequently travel.

This attention to 'place formulations' in talk was, of course, later taken up by Schegloff (1972) in an analysis of members' selection of 'correct' place formulations (informal or geographic) and use of locational and spatial pro-terms ('in', 'there', 'here' and so on). Categorisations were shown to be made in relation to a 'correspondence test' that turned on the relationship between speaker and hearer, their current location, and what the action was at that point in the conversation. Importantly, the first two criteria have to do with members' treatments of 'context'; 'who we are' and 'where we are' are categorial accomplishments. Other analyses have attended to place categories in talk in terms of the accomplishment and display of geographical knowledge in institutional contexts (Drew, 1978; McHoul and Watson, 1984), focus group and interview talk (Myers, 2006; Myers and Lampropoulou, 2013; Housley and Smith, 2011; Smith, 2013), and disputes relating to neighbouring and territory (Stokoe and Wallwork, 2003). The categorizations

analysed in these studies can also be seen as producing and displaying the context of the courtroom, the classroom, the interview, or the focus group; they feature what we might call 'distal spatial talk' – that is, talk concerning a setting other than that in which the talk is being produced. The ways in which spatial categorisations feature *in vivo* in mobile scenes remains relatively neglected; few studies have attended to members' spatial categorizations that are regularly and routinely made in everyday interaction and particularly as found in interactions in which members topicalise space and mobility as immediate concerns (for good technical and practical reason).

In an ethnomethodological sense, the social salience of an object such as a bike lane, is a no-time-out accomplishment of members in and through their 'normal use'. Indeed, this was something noted, but not developed, in Ryave and Schenkein's (1974) classic treatment of the navigational troubles associated with doing walking on a pavement. Not only must members produce and recognise the practical objectivity of, for example, 'people walking together' as distinct from 'walking individually', they must also produce and recognize the understanding that the pavement is – for that cohort, here and now – tied to walking (and the situated specifics of that walking, including 'normal pace' and so on (Lee and Watson, 1993)) and is thus distinct from 'the road' as part of the contexture of *that scene* in relation to activities within it, as its staff (Garfinkel, 2002). Here, then, we might recognise the centrality of categories in accomplishing the 'glance intelligibility' (Jayyusi, 1992) of the commonplace public scene not just in terms of the 'category richness' of the cast of participants but also for and in relation to elements of the scene itself within and *as* a gestalt contexture (discussed in more detail below). The situational relevance being that for a given category of person and their moving there are both actions and spaces that 'go together' and incongruities – a man, walking in the middle of the road, for example – comes to be observable as a 'special event' (Ryave & Schenkein, 1974) against this locally organized contexture rather than through some notion of fixed cultural norms. It must, of course, also be recognized that such organisational phenomena, exhibits the reflexive and emergent relation between category and sequence (Watson, 2015) which is also central to the organisation of the commonplace scene in terms of a *moral* order (Jayussi, 1984; see also Housley and Fitzgerald, 2009); the next in line in a queue, for example, is a turn-generated-category that comes bound with privileges and obligations. Such a view also reminds us that such 'norms' – the next in line, a bicycle being ridden in the bike lane – are not *causes* of actions but, rather, are *used* by viewers in such a way that provides for the orderliness of what it is they are viewing (Sacks, 1995[1]: 260).

2.2 Gestalt contexture and perception-in-action
Underpinning notions of 'glance intelligibility' is the central but often neglected relationship between categorisation practices and gestalt contexture (Garfinkel, 2002; Gurwitsch, 1964; Lynch and Peyrot, 1992). As described by Watson (2015: 37), "a 'gestalt contexture' is a phenomenological conceptualization of context where the elements of in a given contextual pattern are said to exist through each other", moreover, "membership categorizations or categorization practices, when they occur, are without exception endogenous features of such contextures." In the case of traffic disputes, material elements of the scene – cycle lanes, bus lanes, vehicle lanes,

pavement, stop signs and so on form part of the contexture of the traffic scene, but only through members' actions. In this sense, they are contestable and remain only a potential resource – accomplished in and through matters of category incumbency, rights, and obligations – for the accomplishment and reasoning to do with the 'normal' and 'correct' use of the road and breaches as 'specially accountable' (Watson, 1978: 107).

Something of this is provided in Hester and Francis' (2003) discussion of the "observers' maxim". An analysis of a commentary of a walk to a supermarket revealed that descriptions of the visually available order perceived and perceivable when walking down a street displayed a categorial organization and orientation grounded in the recognition of not only person categories that 'belonged together' in teams, but also the 'ordinariness' of, for example, a family driving past in a car, is accomplished in relation to the gestalt contexture of an urban street during the day time. The observers' maxim thus contains three elements grounded in Sacks' original hearer's and viewer's maxims; namely:

> If the parties belonging to some observed scene or activity can be
> perceived as belonging together then see them that way… if the activity
> can be seen as one being done by the incumbents of a category to which
> that activity is bound in this context, then see it that way.

Sacks' original maxims are extended here to include participants finding actions to be tied not only in terms of category relationships and sequences of actions but also in terms of relational configurations that operate in and through the observability of a scene. Attention paid to the ways in which categories and actions come to be seen by members as 'bound' (Sacks, 1974: 25) in terms of the first and second viewer's maxims, also highlights a requirement for the further respecification of how 'actions done in conformity with norm' are view-able as such in an embodied and emplaced sense. 'Context' thus provides for "typical and expectable features", "perceived as a single observable scene by virtue of the fact that they are mutually elaborative constituents of a relational configuration." (Hester and Francis, 2003: 41). In this respect, the organisation of categories in talk *may* give insight to the organization of perception-in-action (p.45). And one reasonable way of following up this hunch is the analysis presented here; of members' handlings of relational configuration of actions (such as movements or positioning), objects (such as bicycles) and category-relevant spaces (such as cycle lanes) that provide for the initial noticing done by a participant that some breach of the 'usual' and 'normal' expected organisation of the scene. This perceptual work is then topicalised in and through the sequential organisation of dispute which, as will be shown below, turns on the invocation of emergent categorial relationships in a highly indexical manner. Thus 'perception', rather than bearing a linear or 'stagelike' organisation, is a continual and contingent accomplishment.

3. Notes on the data

The analysed data were 20 videos of disputes between cyclists and drivers uploaded to a public website. The emergent analytic use of the lay production and curating of video materials (see, for example, Lloyd, 2015) raises a number of issues discussed in a nascent methodological literature (Laurier, 2016). Such videos provide a means

in and through which relatively 'rare' social interactions – in terms of either occurrence and/or the possibility of capture – might be accessed (such as a study by Tim Smith (unpublished) of 'stop and search' interactions). The videos are produced by cyclists wearing helmet cameras and so the view of the action is from a single perspective of the mounted camera. This should not be taken as the participants' 'view' nor even a proxy for it, but simply what the camera can 'see' (as observed by Paul McIlvenny (ten Have 2004). As the camera is fixed to the top of the cyclists' helmet we can make inferences from gross turns of the head or nods in terms of embodied conduct and general orientation, but *not* what the eyes are settled on (and certainly not what that person is 'seeing'). Each video has been selected, edited and uploaded by the amateur filmmaker for their purposes and in line with an expected audience; often to 'shame' other road users as regards their actions preceding and during disputes. Such videos receive many user 'views' and the accompanying comments thread make for an excellent set of materials (to be considered elsewhere). The videos are framed through accounts of what is 'wrong' in the scene and are, obviously, selected from a broader corpus of 'less interesting' materials. The videos tend to be short, showing only the actions immediately preceding the dispute and (less often) those immediately following. This raises questions relating to 'self-selection' and, perhaps, whether the participants are 'purposefully' instigating disputes 'for the camera'. If, however, one's analytic question is *how* members accomplish a given phenomenon, rather than a concern with how often it occurs or how it is distributed (Drew 1989), the point is moot; a 'real' dispute relies on the same methods for its production and intelligibility as those that are 'staged'.

4. Membership categorizations of space and objects in accounting for a 'close pass'

In the following two sections, I examine two cases in which two cyclists treat an overtake as an occasion for complaint within an initial sequential category relationship 'overtaker – overtaken'. This general categorial relationship is subject to further work when the actions of 'overtaker' are seen to breach the expectations of 'overtaken'. As demonstrated below, the 'incorrectness' of the overtake, once raised, produces a dispute that displays a form of the common three-part organisation of disputes – 'claim, counter-claim, expansion' (Antaki, 1994) – wherein the counter-claim and expansions are done in and through non-person category work that makes directly relevant and topicalises the context of the traffic system. Importantly, it is the formal sequential organization of the traffic system, and stopping occasioned by red lights, that finds cyclists able to confront the faster moving drivers in the first instance.[2]

The first extract, below, shows a dispute arising between a cyclist (Cy) and the driver (Dr) of a lorry. The source of the trouble occurs when Cy, moving in the cycle lane, follows the lane as it moves out to the right to avoid parking spaces for cars and the cyclist (Cy) follows its course, moving out around the cars whilst staying in the lane. The lorry overtakes Cy at this point (Fig.1a), without visibly making an adjustment for the lane moving out to the right. Cy responds to the 'close pass' with a response cry

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[2] There is, of course, much to say about how the fact of the gathering gets organised. It certainly doesn't happen in any old way. Groups stopping at traffic lights would be topic enough for a separate analysis.

(Goffman, 1978) (Fig.1b) and an accompanying gesture of raised arm held with palm up (visible in the shadow, Fig. 1c).

Fig.1a-c

The focused interaction itself turns on a situational question of category incumbency within the 'road user' device and consequential moral matters.

Case 1_Extract 1

```
 4.Cy: what was that?
 5.Dr: what?
 6.Cy: you just cut right across me
 7.      turning head to lane and gestures with hand
 8.    you were so: close
 9.Dr: it's a road mate (.) for vehicles (1.1)
10.      hand gestures to road hand gestures inside cab
11.    y[ou      ]
12.Cy: [this is] a vehicle
13.Dr: yeah=
14.Cy: =ye[ah  ]
15.Dr:    [it's] not a v
16.    it's a bike mate
17.Cy: it's a vehicle
```
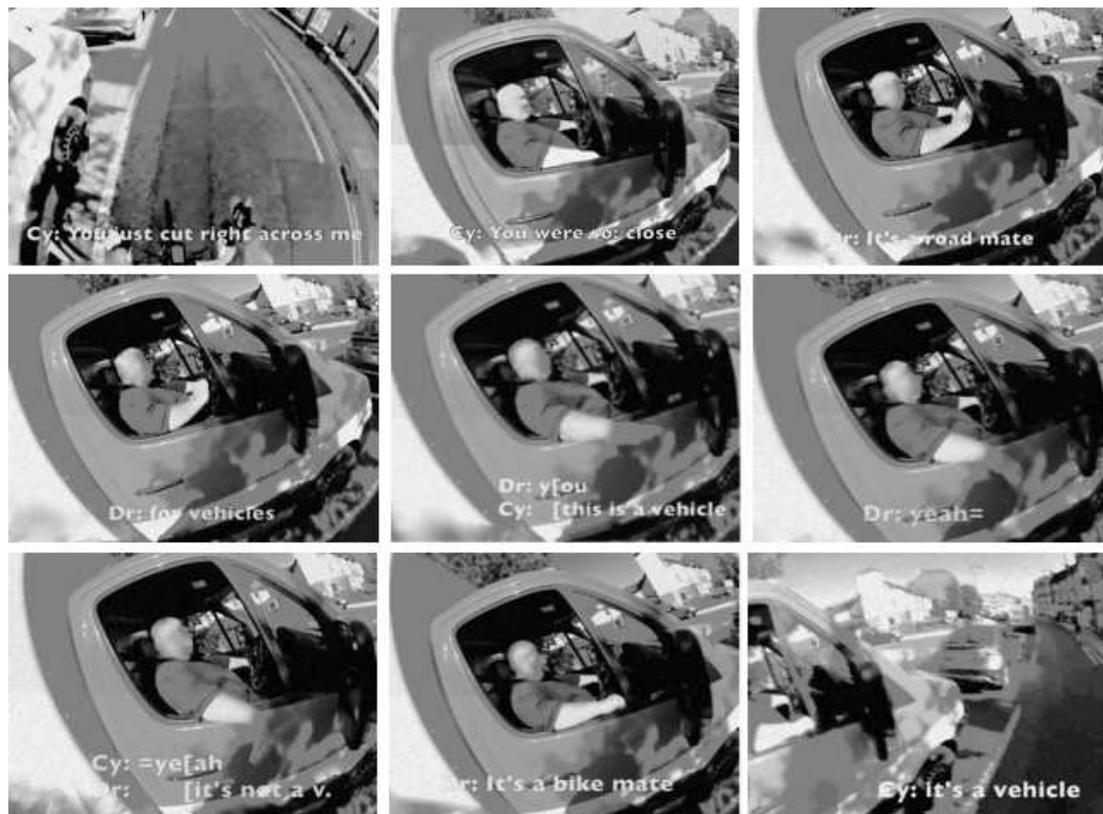
Fig2a-i

The initial turn of Cy indexes the pass by Dr. This accusation-as-question is a common opener employed by participants to get disputes of the ground. The 'unknowing' response (l.5) elicits an account and an assessment of the problematic action (l.6-8). The turn suggests a norm concerning 'closeness' has been breached and is, at this point, hearable as relevant for all categories of road user – that is that, vehicular units should maintain 'appropriate distance' from one another (l.8). Sequentially, this provides for the close pass as a breaching of the rule, and as consequential for the categorial relationship and status of the participants – as overtaker-overtaken – within a locally assembled 'traffic system collective'. The next turn of Dr (l. 9) invokes the spatial category 'road' as bound to the object category 'vehicles' which is thus heard and seen through the accompanying gesture in a more specific sense; as having to do with *this* type of vehicle, establishing bicycles as 'not vehicles' (a hearing displayed in the response from Cy (l.11)). In terms of the moral work of this category sequence (Housley and Fitzgerald, 2009), the first unit of the turn on l.9 suggests an inevitability of the close pass. The second unit, following the micro pause, avoids potential blame allocation (Watson 1978) by producing 'using/being in the road' as hearable as a predicate (and 'right') of incumbents of the vehicle device. The emergent category use of Dr can be heard as producing the trouble source as the presence of the bicycle within the 'road collective'. In following this categorisation, Cy reasserts the initial 'rule of road' in and through this sequential categorization by claiming incumbency for his bike (and thus for him in terms of rights) in the vehicle device (l.11). The emergent discrepancy is also sequentially produced in reference to Cy's embodied invocation of the previously visually available bicycle lane (l.7), contextualising the description of 'the road' as bound to

'vehicles', with the distinguishable other area (the cycle lane) hearable as being 'for bicycles'. The terms of debate thus turn on a membership problem concerning the status of 'bicycle' within the 'vehicles' collection (l.11-16) which emerges sequentially from a more general concern with 'appropriate distance between road users when overtaking'. The stakes of the categorisability of a bicycle as 'vehicle' are, here, bound up with the rights and expectations of being 'in the road' and the obligations of other road users to treat the bicycle as any other vehicle. The initial problematic pass is, thus, accountable for Dr in relation to the rights and obligations of 'non-vehicles' and their positional predicates within the traffic system.

5. Accomplishing spaces as category-relevant

The second dispute relating to a 'close pass' is taken from a video in which the cyclist (Cy) is holding a position to the outside of an area to the left-hand side of the road marked with a blue lane. The area is within the left-hand portion of a bus lane bordered by wavy broken lines. In avoiding potholes and parked busses (an account provided by the video commentary), Cy holds a position outside of the blue 'cycle lane' but inside the bus lane. A motorcycle (Mc) overtakes to the right-hand side in a manner accounted for as to 'too close' by Cy (l. 1-2). Again, stopping at traffic lights provides the possibility of proximity for the dispute; a dispute which turns on the attempted accomplishment of a 'bike lane' as a resource for the handling of the moral obligations of Cy to stay in it and of Mc's 'close pass' in relation to the position of Cy.

Fig. 2a-h

Case 2_Extract 1

```
1.Cy: watch how do you overtake me
2.    you need to leave more room
3.Mc: bike lane
4.    pointing to left hand of road
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 5.    bus lane
 6.    pointing directly down
 7.Cy: this is not a bike lane
 8.Mc: bike lane
 9.    nodding head left
10.Cy: [no ]
11.Mc: [bus]
12.    nodding head down (0.4)
13.Cy: don't be stupid
14.Mc: bike
15.    nodding head and leaning body left
16.    bus
17.    pointing to chest
18.Cy: I got that on camera
19.    and you'll be reported asshole
20.Mc: get me on camera
21.    who gives a fucking shit
22.    bike lane
23.    nodding head left
24.    bus
25.Cy: [I don't have to be in the bike lane]
26.Mc: [((unclear))                        ]
27.    bike lane
28.    you've got to fucking bike on it
29.    you're in a bike lane
30.    bike lane
31.Cy: you have another lane to overtake
32.    as[shole
33.Mc: bike lane
34.Cy. if it's empty move to the other one
35.Mc: bike lane
36.    bike lane
37.Cy: fuck off
```

The two-part complaint (l.1-2) invokes a general 'rule of the road' in relation to the 'overtaken-overtaking' pair (with 'you' heard as referring minimally to Mc, but also 'other road users'). Again, the issue of proximity is not dealt with in a sequentially direct manner through, for example, an apology or denial in the next turn but, rather, by making relevant the distinction between the 'bike lane' and the 'bus lane' (l. 3, 5) as a resource for the dispute. The distinction is accomplished multi-modally (Mondada, 2009) through gestures accompanying each utterance (l. 4, 6, Fig2a-h). The categorizations are also hearable and seeable as 'for you' and 'for me' through the relational configuration of visually available categories of objects and users (cyclist, motorcyclist) and category-relevant spaces (cycle lane, bus lane). The gestures are tied to the resources they invoke; in pointing directly down, whilst saying 'bus lane', the gesture aligns Mc's position in it as the 'correct' position and, thus, the 'bike lane' as the 'correct' space for the cyclist. Here, then, spatial categories are accomplished relationally with categorizations of populations, objects, and associated predicates (cyclists and cycling). The refutation of the spatial categorization (l.7) thus also rejects the potential spatial and moral incumbency to stay within it (as a category of mover and movement tied to *that* space). The categorization is repeated (l.8), accompanied by gestures with the head this time (l.9

and 12) and more emphatically when 'bike' is repeated (l. 14) with an accompanying movement of the body, leaning over to the left (l.15) displaying increasing 'agitation'. The 'correct' spatial position for a given category within the 'road user' device - 'bus' (l.16) – is accompanied by pointing toward the chest (l.17) (Fig2a-h). This action and the visually available position of the motorbike, treats 'bus' as duplicatively organised and, consequentially, 'motorbike' as rightfully incumbent of the 'bus lane'. This action is intelligible through the hearer's and viewer's maxims which find that 'motorcycle' is to be treated as organized within the 'bus' device which is sequentially organised as adequately referential for 'vehicles entitled to use the bus lane' (in this case, a motorbike). Cy later changes tack (l. 25), by acknowledging the existence of a bike lane, and changes topicalises the rules of the road in relation to the (now agreed as salient) presence of the bike lane through a claim to a 'new' rule that incumbents of the category 'bike' are not practically, morally, or legally bound to it. This shifts the dispute to a second three-part sequence in which the consequentiality of Cy being 'a bike' and thus having to be 'in the bike lane' is repeatedly reasserted as a maxim.

6. Spatial positioning as category predicate

The categorial status of bicycles in relation to the 'road user' collection and device is, as has been shown, accomplished relationally with the specific organisation of the scene in which the categorisations are made. Again, by this I mean the local organisation of the scene, by members, rather than as some *a priori* context as backdrop for or external to or 'influence upon' action. As demonstrated in this extract, there is the possibility for viewers to make resource of the 'cycle lane' not simply as a spatial category but as device through which to see that space as *the* space in which bicycles should properly be found. Indeed, a bicycle found not in the cycle can elicit aggressively negative categorisations from other road users.

Fig. 3a-b[3]

Case 3_Extract 1

```
1.Dr: horn sounds (1.1)
2.     get in the fucking cycle lane you moron
3.Cy: ((Reads number plate aloud))
4.     (15)((car is stopped at lights))
5.     ((Cy pulls alongside L hand window))
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[3] Only two screenshots are provided as the video is dark and the cyclist is talking through the window and across the passenger to the driver who is not visible in any detail.

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    6.Cy: what was that about a cycle lane
    7.Dr: get in the cycle lane
    8.Cy: what if I'm overtaking someone
    9.Dr: you're overtaking
   10.    well I'm going to fucking knock you off
   11.    your bi er bike
   12.    ((unclear)) that
   13.Dr. I'm overtaking someone
   14.Dr: do you want me to knock you off your bike
   15.Cy: why?=
   16.Dr: =then stay in [the fucking cycle lane]
   17.Cy:              [You've    got    two ]
   18.    lanes(.)you've got-
   19.Dr: and look how many how many cars there are
   20.    and there's four cyclists
   21.Cy: yeah I'm-
   22.Dr: jus stay behind each other
```

This dispute emerges on a dual-lane road. The left hand and right hand edges are marked with a double red line (indicating 'no stopping at any time') and a broken line demarcating the edge of an area marked at intervals with a painted cycle symbol (indicating a 'cycle lane'). A first 'overtaking-overtaken' category relationship emerges between Cy and the other cyclists. As Cy moves outside of the broken line, a second overlapping 'overtaking-taken' pair is formed as Dr moves past Cy in the faster moving car. The organizational trouble source has, in this instance, to do with Cy moving outside of the demarcated 'cycle lane', thus breaching the emergent locally assembled normative relation between category, action, and space (Fig3a shows the pass).

Dr sounds the vehicle horn (l.1), before issuing the instruction 'get in the fucking cycle lane' to Cy (l.2). The furnishing of the instruction with the insult category 'moron' displays the local moral consequences for the breach of assumed normative order, later upgraded in to a threat in later turns (l.10, 14). In the focused interaction (again produced by participants stopping at traffic lights) following the initial instruction/insult turn, Cy offers a first pair part (l.6) requiring further explication by Dr. The second part is simple repetition of the directive to Cy to 'get in the cycle lane' (l.7). The account of not being in the cycle lane (l.8) is formulated and hearable as a generalized question pointing to a practical problem for, and a possible predicate of, the 'road user' device and not only 'cyclists'; the navigation around 'slower' road users in the act of overtaking. Dr responds to the consequentiality of the 'overtaken-overtaking' pairing when occurring between cyclists – and the subsequent movement of a cyclist in to 'the road' (as distinct from the cycle) – by making a 'threat' (l.10) heard sequentially and categorically as a consequence of a cyclist being 'in the road' and restated as an action-consequence adjacency pair (if that, then this, l.14, 16). Here, again, we find 'cycle lane' and 'road' handled as categories (rather than potentially duplicatively organised) by both parties (l.17-18: 'you've got two lanes'). This turn establishes and displays local mundane reasoning in relation to the spatial organisation of the road and the category relationship organised in and through it as context. Specifically, a category-rule is suggested for cyclists – not just this member – in the final turn, sequentially developed in the context of the 'four cyclists' (l.22). The

category relevancy of the 'cycle lane' provides for asserted 'rule'. The import of this work is, then, in showing how the act of 'overtaking' – by some road users, in some ways and spaces – is accomplished as problematic in and through the relational configuration to the category of 'road user' and the category-relevant space in which it gets done.

7. The sometime seeability of the cycle lane

The preceding extracts find participants dealing with categorisational matters concerning the 'correct' use of space (as accomplished in relation to categories and predicates). They all, in and through this work, make resource of the existence of a marked section of the road as a 'cycle lane' available to and witnessed by all parties and turned on ascribable moral obligations of incumbents of the category 'cyclist' as tied to the category-relevant space of the 'cycle lane'. In the following extracts, we find a dispute turning on the available seeability of the cycle lane as a resource in the first instance. And whilst this may seem a straightforward matter – a cycle lane is, common-sensically either there or it is not – the analysis shows how such matters of the constitution of objects within an 'interactional ecology' (Nevile et al 2014) remain an inexorably situated and practical matter and, as such, 'up for grabs' in interactions which make resource of objects like cycle lanes. The dispute that develops across the extracts below between a cyclist (Cy) and the rider of a motorcycle (Mc), concerns a gestural display (of Mc) viewable as treating the actions of Cy as being in breach of expected 'normal mobilities' (Lee and Watson, 1993) of participants. The gesture also intelligible in and through the available resource of road markings, a 'cycle lane'. As the dispute develops, however, the accomplishment of the relevancy of the cycle lane, as a visual object in the first instance, is up for grabs.

The point from which the headcam video is filmed shows the cyclist aligning his positioning with motorcyclists, rather than with the group of cyclists gathering at the junction. The cyclist not joining the congregation of other cyclists (of which they are visibly a member) at the traffic lights can be read as displaying the intent to overtake. It also, however, positions Cy within a space with motorcycles (a predicate of which would be (the capacity of) accelerating and moving faster than the cyclists). As the lights change, Cy duly overtakes the group of cyclists, but holds the position outside of the line taken by other cyclists who arrange themselves within a blue strip painted on the left hand of the road. Not returning to what we might call a 'home position' for that category of mover, in this instance – the left-hand side of the road. Cy is subsequently overtaken by Mc, who takes up a position directly in front of the cyclist. As he accelerates away, Mc gestures (seemingly *to* Cy) by holding out his left arm at roughly 90° from the body and pointing for two seconds toward the side of the road (Fig.1).

12

Fig.4a-d: Positional predicates and mobility categories

The accountable gesture produced by Mc is witnessably designed *for* Cy through the viewer's maxim (that is, it is an action that follows that of Cy) and as, in a sense similar to the earlier extracts, invoking a 'rule of the road', in this case; that cyclists 'belong on the left-hand side of the road' or 'in the cycle lane'. The 'breach' and the 'rule' are witnessable in the timing and form of the gesture *in that context*, such that observers, and Cy, are to see the events as tied in a mutually elaborative manner. The lines on the road and spatial positioning are thus co-accomplished as morally relevant for the viewing of particular categories and tied actions. Such matters are displayed in the subsequent recognition of the gesture in opening the following exchange with the challenge-as-question 'did you have a problem?'(Cy).

Case 4_Extract 1

```
1. Mc:
2.     Extends left arm and points (2 seconds)
3. (Cy arrives at lights with Mc)
4. Cy: did you have a problem?
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 5.      (.9)
 6. Mc: do I: have [a  problem- ]
 7. Cy:            [did you have] a problem-
 8. Mc: do I have a problem
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Cy pulls up at the lights alongside Mc, decelerating and turning his head in a pre-sequence for the opening of interactional space (Mondada 2009). The initial turn of Cy poses the question 'Did you have a problem?' in the past tense (l.4). This, via the 'et cetera principle' (Garfinkel, 1967), and its sequential organization in relation to the pointing gesture of Mc (Fig. 1), ties the question to *that* gesture – that is, that gesture you and I know happened just then – and handles the gesture as a display of 'having a[n unspecified] problem'. The point here is not, of course, whether Cy does or does not 'really know' what the problem and preferred solution was, but that taking such a stance (similar to that used in the opening turns of the extracts above), in this occasion, requests further accounting, rather than confirmation and closure. This initial turn is followed by a pause (0.9) (in which Mc turns the head and leans toward Cy). Mc reformulates the challenge-as-question of Cy within a present temporal frame ('do I', l.6). The stretch and emphasis of the personal pronoun utterance, 'I:', (l. 6) can be heard as suggesting that the source of the trouble is negotiable and that it may not be the speaker who 'has the problem'. This can be heard in two senses; as suggesting that it is the behavior of Cy (both then and now) that is the trouble source, but also a reframing of the initial trouble (that is, other members could see the 'rules' were being broken too). The work of Mc on lines 6 and 8 – that is, avoiding immediately providing an account of motive for the action – elicits an account from Cy of the gesture (l. 9) that moves the dispute to a second phase.

Case 4_Extract 2

```
 9. Cy: you were pointing to the side of the road
10.     [why-]
11.Mc: [yeah] I pointed to stay in the cycle lane mate
12.     (.)
13.Cy: there's no cycle lane here
14.     (.)
15.Mc: err yes there is=
```

The turn (l.9-10) is a technically correct but 'neutral' description of the gesture, in the sense that 'the side of the road' is not hearable as tied to a particular category of road user. The description and question topicalises the gesture of Mc whilst avoiding introducing 'the cycle lane' as consequential for either of the initial actions preceding the dispute. The account of the gesture (l.11) introduces a category-relevant setting (cycle lane), thus suggesting a 'correct' reading of the gesture as an embodied instruction for that instance. The account also suggests the gesture, and this categorial work at this point in the conversation, be handled as a 'reminder' of a more general rule seen in the other extracts (that bicycles belong in cycle lanes). The cycle lane is thus made relevant as part of the scene in that the possible treatment of that area of the road as a cycle lane provides for the possibility of the account for the gesture; that the cyclist (Cy) was moving 'out of place'. The turns on lines 13 and 14

develop and formulate this matter in the clearest terms – 'there's no cycle lane here' against 'err yes there is'. The brief pause and 'err' before the alternative formulation (l.15) suggest difficulties with handling the calling in to question of what is visually 'obvious'.

Case 4_Extract 3

```
15.Mc: err yes there is=
16.Cy: =no
17.Mc: can you see this[blue line?
18.    can you see this can you see ]
19.Cy:                 [a cycle lane
20.    has to be <bordered by paint>]
21.Mc: >can you see this< [blue line ]
22.Cy:                    [<by paint>]
23.Mc: can you see this blue line
24.Cy: there's no paint on the side
25.Mc: can you see this blue lane
26.(.)
27.    yeah?
28.Cy: you should know better
29.    you've got a cam[era?]
30.Mc:                 [mate]
31.    you need to learn
32.    how to use the road
33.    mate
```

The ambiguity of the 'interpretation' of this visually available feature of the road – an area that is painted blue – and its categorisability as a 'cycle lane' is at stake. Of interest, here are the ways in which participants orientate to the ongoing production of the saliency of the cycle lane through the invocation of visually available order, in this case distinctions of coloured sections of the road as relevant for the order of the traffic system, and the dispute. The turn on line 17 is a first pair part of a yes/no question in which 'blue line' is positioned as referentially adequate for 'cycle lane'. The interrogative is responded to (l.19-20) with a 'non-conforming' answer (Raymond, 2003) that avoids a 'yes/no' response, upholds the possibility of seeing the 'blue line', and specifies terms through which what they are looking at is not describable as a 'cycle lane'. This matter – 'blue line' as duplicatively organised with 'cycle lane' – concerns the actions in the next turns with repeated statements of the 'obvious' presence of the blue line against the resisting account of 'an absence of paint'. On l.25 the description of the visually available feature shifts from blue line to blue *lane* (line 25) – with 'lane' a category of setting with the category-bound activity of guiding trajectory or position. Following the dispute concerning the nature and presence of a cycle lane, Cy accounts for the dispute in epistemic terms (also making reference to the presence of the camera mounted on Mc's helmet as a visually available predicate for someone who should know 'the rules of the road'). The final account from Mc is hearable as indexing not the specific knowledge to do with the appearance of cycle lanes but as returning to the original problem of breaching the normal expectable 'use of the road'.

The emergent 'reality puzzle' (Pollner, 1987) concerning the cycle lane – providing for the occasioned seeing or not seeing of the cycle lane by both parties to stand – demonstrates nicely the ways in which actions, categories of mobility, and category-relevant spaces such as cycle lanes are, in the context of the traffic system, and in just these instances, ambiguously available, contestable, handled and contested in and through members' categorisational practices.

8. Discussion

This article has been concerned with the ways in which members handle the gestalt relationship between membership category, bound predicates and spatial categorisations. Whilst previous work within the MCA tradition has addressed non-person categories in talk, few studies have analysed members' in vivo categorization in talk of the setting being discussed. And far fewer has explored how such analyses of the lived detail and local building of categorial order in talk might give insight in to the ways in which actions are produced and perceived. An exception, and the inspiration for this article, is found in Hester and Francis' (2003) analysis of a commentary of a walk to the supermarket, demonstrating how observations made by the commentator are demonstrably tied to the practical contingencies of their task at hand (Schutz, 1962). The authors speculated on the degree to which the organization of categories in talk might bear a resemblance – or, more radically, provide a foundation for – the moment by moment organization of the perception of the commonplace scene. Hester and Francis (2003) thus elaborated an 'observer's maxim'. It seems, through the cases presented here at least, that the seeing of actions in relation to spaces provides for the seeing of their 'belonging together' in mutually elaborative fashion where the space is made relevant through actions and categorisations of their doers thus displaying a context sensitive and moral contexture. For just as it is true to say that a scene is not populated by 'strangers' or 'people' but consists of a category rich arena and complex moral context (Jayyusi, 1984; Lee and Watson, 1993), it is also true to say that the 'scene' itself is comprised of categorisation devices for settings and material arrangements used and handled by the observer as tied to and relevant for the actions of those population categories and their predicates. For example, one way of handling 'road position' for members of the familiar traffic scene is to see, make sense of and use lines on the road as locative visual devices indicating understood in relation to categories of road user and bound predicates. 'Spatial positioning' is then not only spatial, but is accomplished ongoingly, in situ, as a category-bound predicate through the available, accountable and occasioned relational configuration of category, action and space. In this sense, the fluidity and flexibility of category practices, misconstrued as promiscuity, can be shown to be faithful to members' orientations to and accomplishments of visually available categories and context.

In the case of traffic disputes, categorization practices can be said to represent a social technology for the organisation of such configurations, provide for the ways in which incongruities, from the perspective of the observer, become available as sources of trouble for participants to the scene. We might also note, that whilst viewers and observers make use of particular resources to organize the 'seeing' of a given scene, viewers and observers are also and always engaged in

16

business of which 'observing' is a constituent part.[4] Here, then, the analysis of traffic disputes and similar instances, might provide evidential grounds to develop the hunch of Hester and Francis (2003) further in investigating whether observation practices bear out a "preference for organizational consistency, in a manner congruent with the operation of the "consistency rule" and "hearer's maxim" discussed by Sacks" (p. 45). In addition to the three elements of the observer's maxim, there will, it seems, be in operation a device that handles the organization of actions in configurational relation with spaces[5] in which they take place and accomplish in terms of their 'normal' organization. An addition to the observers' maxim might account for the organization of the observability of scenes, namely:

> *if an activity can be seen being done by incumbents of a category to which that activity is bound, and that activity can be seen as 'properly' being done in a category-relevant space, in this context, then see it that way.*

The 'context' of the traffic system is, then, handled by members as a multifaceted gestalt contexture comprising of actions, mediated communication, visual and material referents, embodied sensations, readings of speed (and so on). And, as we have seen, there are sanctions imposed for members who can be seen to be a member of category the actions of which can be seen to be getting done in the wrong way, in the wrong place. We could speculate that a good deal of 'road rage' incidents between cyclists and drivers turn on the 'complainability' of actions (Schegloff, 2005) viewed in relation to the categorial status of participants to the scene. More generally, observations and descriptions of context thus appear to relate to the relevancy of available materials and resources as occasioned and sequential and, as this analysis has aimed to demonstrate, categorially organized. These matters will require further investigation and refinement, but there would be certain reward in further studies of the locally invoked, applied, and modified category apparatus of perception-in-action in and through which members come to accomplish particular spaces in use, and see actions as been done 'out of place' without analytic recourse to an abstract or static schema. Moreover, MCA studies appear to offer key understandings for the further elucidation of the organization of perception-in-action (incorporating studies of sensory practices other than sight) as a members' practical concern and accomplishment within the commonplace, mobile, scene.

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[4] This holds for members who make a professional business of observing such as police officers, ethnographers and a whole range of other finks (Goffman, 1987). That they are active in constituting what is observable and observed is routinely overlooked. I also thank Paul McIlvenny for his useful comments in developing this element of the analysis.
[5] Or, rather, the visually and materially available resources for the practical production and organization of space. See Crabtree (2000).

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