

## *Brest – Kiel, 2 cyclables*

*NB : ceci est la version anglaise – et originale – de l'interview.*

### Interview with Nis

Nis is one of Hansa48 participatory bike workshop's permanent member. Hansa48 is one of Kiel's major associative, alternative and cultural place. During that interview, made in July 2017 at the workshop, we [Emma and Gwen – ed] freely spoke to ask these questions, that have also been elaborated together.

#### **What's your name ? [in French for this question and that answer – ed]**

My name is Nis. Same pronunciation as the city [the city of Nice – ed], but not the same writing. I speak French a little bit... A very little little bit.

#### **Our questions are very precise and... we hope it's not offending, but we may do it in English. Let's begin : for which main reasons do you ride your bike ? You've got only three answers !**

Ok... because it's faster, it's way more fun – because we have like "freak" bike, not normal bikes, we have two outstanding there, like [...] or swing bikes ; and it's also fun ; and third reason : why not ?

#### **You know that a few minutes, you told us that the first reason could be political ?**

Yeah of course, but... that's why I'm doing this ! Every time I take my bike, I'm political ! I'm riding aggressive, I try to take my place, but it's not easy...

#### **So you're against cars ?**

Yeah, I think it's just... not social that you take with your parking space a place of community, it's just your fucking own private room, you pay it but you don't use it. I think 95 % of the time people park their car there, and don't care of other people.

#### **And it takes a lot of space...**

Yes, but I'm not saying I'm going by bike because I want to show in a political way that's better, if I'm doing it I'm doing it.

#### **It's exactly the same for us.**

And I don't want other people to say like « uh, the bicycles guy comes and says bikes are better because [...] ».

**Yeah, no bla bla, just action ! What we'd like to say is that some people are riding their bike but they don't have this consciousness – in a political or ecological way... Where is the difference ?**

I think the difference is that if you think about it, bikes are better for environment or for the society, then you're starting to get political by bicycle driving. But if you're like « I have to go to work by bike, because I can't afford a parking, I can't afford a car », it's always this « I can't afford that, so i'm taking this ». In this way, it's not like...

**It's just you have no choice !**

« I want to live better with a car, but I can't afford it, so I have to take the shitty bike ! »

**Yes, we get it ! Well, tell us one special original anecdote [same word in German than in French – ed] that happened in your biker's life !**

Uh... most times it's way easier to drive your bike when you're drunk than to push it...

**Ok...!**

I think it's not one time, it's a lot of times, but... and because that's kind of... ...risky when you see the police but... normally, the police doesn't do anything, just like « Ok... », but if you're drunk and if you think about it, you're going faster, it's way more fun ! Kiel is a good city, right away from the police.

**Have you heard about the city of Brest ?**

Yes.

**How ?**

Paris – Brest – Paris...?

**Yes. Did you challenge ?**

Uh ? Oh no, I'm not crazy ! I know the challenge, but... no... I'm riding my bicycle for fun, with my old bike.

**One of my colleague did it...**

Yeah, like Julian [one of Hansa48' salaried – ed]. Crazy Julian. He went for the 20 hours green bicycle challenge, but he had the wrong saddle with him, he walked 2,5 weeks like a cow-boy ! I was like « he he he, you're stupid ! »

**Brest is one of the major cities in Britain, at the extreme west point. Did you know that Kiel and Brest are twin cities ?**

Yes.

**Ok. In your opinion, what representation do German people make about the use of bikes in France ? In another way : do you [you German people – ed] think that French people feel concerned with the use of bicycles ?**

I've been to France a lot... and there's a lot of like sportive bicycle drivers on the road, crazy, but I think normally it's quite dangerous to ride in France, because the scooters are driving like crazy, the

cars are driving crazier, and I think the most car drivers are thinking they have the right of way always. They're like « I've got the license for car driving », and they don't realize you're on a bike, that you don't have a lot of metal around you, and if you fall, you fall on the street. They seem they don't care, more than Germans... like without lights, driving fast 'round corners, that stuff... especially in the little villages...

**Do you think that most German people know that fact or think that France is...**

No I think most German people think that France has a not so nice structure because of the driving habits, but actually I think it's way lot of... German aren't pretty, I think it's pretty nice to drive in France because of the road-about stuff, normal traffic lights, but not all things are Ok. Can be kind of crazy going there too... I've got lots of bad memories... But it's the same in Germany... In holidays it's way way worse there than here !

**Ok ! So, first, for you, when you think France and bicycle, is it *Tour de France* ? For Dominic [another daily friendly customer of the workshop – ed], for sure, it is !**

Yes, I would also say *Tour de France* [while listening to Kraftwerk's *Tour de France* ! – ed].

**Do you realize that for French people, Kiel's cycling network is very valuable ?**

No. I know lot of this political stuff because I was born here, been in this project. My father is like *Burgsprecher des Stadtrads*, so it's like the spokesman for the city council for a big party, so I get a lot of this political stuff.

**Maybe we'll meet him, by the way, because next week we'll...**

No, he's in holidays... in France... with his bike ! Because of [...] stuff, it's always like pretty big and counselors are always like « ah, we're doing so much, it's going to be nice and awesome ! » But actually it's kind of 'in progress'.

**Ok. As we were saying one hour ago, it's cool but... in progress ! Still in progress !**

The project is very nice but it isn't finished. The bridge is almost complete... They could have finished it like half a year ago, but... they didn't.

**What bridge ?**

[Impossible to get the German name for that bridge, that's sad – ed] There's a bike lane... only for bikes, without pedestrians, without cars... it's going from south of Kiel to the north [the bike lane, not the bridge... – ed], but... it's only in parts. Right now. But the whole line is theoretically finishable, they have to put it on the street.

**We've heard of another project, a bridge, going from the Gaarden district, to link east part and west part of Kiel. But they never finished the bridge, it's like... broken, but there's stairs leading to a parking...**

Yeah, it's kind of it... they say they will do it but it's actually really broken and I think it's from the 90's, the first bridge. The second bridge is very special.

**The W bridge ! [*die Hörnbrücke*, the Hörn bridge – ed]**

Yeah, but it's not working. It's like the second bridge is there because the previous one, the fancy one, is always broken.

**From the point of view of bike users, how do you perceive the evolution of cycling in Kiel these recent years ? More, equal or less users ?**

I think there's more and more bike users, I think there's been a lot of change. But, a lot of people are like « yeah, Ok, that's fine, it's Ok » but a lot of people are also like « no, bicycle drivers are bad, they're driving where they want », and « every bicycle drivers are like... ». But in general, I think, in North Germany, cars are getting... there's less cars. The whole society is going to change, it starts.

**You can feel it...**

Kind of it... Sometimes, police is on the side of the bicycle rideway, and says “you have no helmet on – but I don't have to have a helmet on, so fuck off – but it's for your own safety, bla bla bla...”. But in general it's going to be more and more bicycle drivers and more and more bikes.

**As far as the urban network's development is concerned, what are the greatest advances for the last few years ?**

In Kiel generally there are more... It's kind of illegal [...], there are *Fahrradshubstreifen*, [...] cars are not allowed to drive, they can change and go away, and then there is a straight line and they are not allowed to cross it. They do it, but they are not technically allowed to cross it. Of there are more and more of this on the streets, and it's going to be more bike friendly on the streets.

**So, for you, it's one the greatest advances of those recent years in Kiel as far as the urban network is concerned ?**

Yes, kind of... because there are a lot of changes but we don't feel them that much. For example, when you're riding every day, you don't realize it...

**We understand ! [...] In your opinion, is there any urgent development waiting to be done ?**

Yeah, like cars getting toed away from bicycles lanes.

**For you, it's one of the most urgent...**

Yes! Because I don't like the thing that you have to tell people all the time like « you have to pay money for it ». But I think they won't get it other ways. It's normal for young families to park on the bike lane to get their children safe out of the car, and they don't realize that, maybe, two other children are riding the bike lane and they have to go to the street... stuff like that... and I think it's way easier if you put this message « now you have to pay 25 euros ». They are like « uhuh, I don't want to pay it », but they will notice they have to keep their car on the street and not on the bike lane. So don't make place for cars, but make place for bikes, and maybe that cars have to go around !

**Yes, I already thank about what you say, because I think that it's the most urgent thing to do in our city too. We call it *stationnement sauvage*.**

Wild parking !

### **Wild parking.**

Yeah, double parking...

**So, first, there are some municipal employees taking pictures of cars like this, parked on the pedestrian way. They may put some fine. So, the option I found is to say, when I see them, « Oh, I'm so happy to see you ! » and they are like « Ah ? » It's crazy because I don't have a car. « I'm a bicycle driver and it's so horrible not to have enough space to be safe in the street » and so on, and so I asked them if I can copy the piece of paper they put on the glass of cars that are wild parked. I don't have the right...**

But you do ! You just put it !

**Yes I just put it, and if the guy reads three or five times the same week that he's there because he just wants to drive his kids to school but he's on the bike lane.**

Yes, he just has to think about it...

**And the other option I was thinking about is that special blue line we have in France. It's for cars, and it means they can park their car here but only for 20 minutes, just to go to the bakery for example. So people who have a car can't stay for hours : one night is not possible. So there's always free places, because every 20 minutes it's « oh, I have to move away ».**

I don't really care that much about car drivers, I don't want them to park there for 20 minutes a lot, I just want them to go away. And of course I think the problem is how to approach car drivers. Maybe we have to think about it, and not only you, but that won't change a lot. I think it's the better way, but... Yes I know that they park exactly there at the same time again. Because « yeah I was such in a hurry », so they have to pay. Just make them pay and I don't care how but make them pay. That will change because I think in the cities it's more or less... young people don't want a car anymore.

### **That's cool, that's a good change !**

[...] On the village side, everyone has a car at eighteen. For most, they want to have a car at eighteen. And then they move to the city and you can go around here [...], a lot of cars somewhere standing there for weeks because they can't afford to pay [...]. And they don't want, because they go by bicycle and it's way more time efficient.

### **And how is it to get the driving license ?**

It's quite complicated in Germany... you have to take theory lessons, practical lessons, and it costs about at least 1000 euros and most of time above...

**It's the same in France. That's really hard to get it ! And you know that in France, there's also less and less people wanting to have their driving license ? That's a good point... We don't have our driving license, by the way !**

I have it ! But I don't care if you have driving license or not. You don't need a car : you live in city ! Of course, the public transportation is very expensive...

**There is one hundred reasons not to have a car... in my opinion...**

Yes, but I think public transportation should be way cheaper, because [when you're only on a three stations trip], you have to pay 2 euros and 70 cents or something, for one way. What ?!

**Yes, exactly ! If you loose your way...**

...or go by bike...

**Do you feel that your relationship with the municipality is good ? What are the best aspects ? Which ones could be improved ? Well, we don't know who we could ask those questions...**

Uh, that's hard...

**You can have a joker...**

...especially after Hamburg [the G20 meeting took place in Hamburg in July 2017, a few days before our arrival in Kiel. We saw dozens of police buses driving from Kiel to Hamburg, it was massive – ed], last week-end. At the moment, I don't think there's... I know there are a lot of people trying their best. Sometimes people are stupid, sometimes they aren't stupid. So, some things, especially going for traffic, in my opinion, there should be a lot of change, and I would do it more today than tomorrow, but maybe I don't have the whole visual complex in my sight, so... so, yeah, after Hamburg, I think there's a lot of things that need a kind of change... there are some people who are like more [...] the financial aspect – they are all money and stuff... in my opinion, they have to change but...

**That's the war nerve... often...**

Yeah, I think the city of Kiel is always comparing itself with other cities like Hamburg for the bicycle stuff, on a national level, and Kiel is kind of on the top, pretty well placed ; but comparing to the Netherlands, or Denmark with Copenhagen, it's like... fuck you, it's like there Heaven and here kind of Hell !

**Oh really ?!**

Yeah !

**So imagine France...**

Yeah !! Fuck, it can be worse ! On this level there's a lot of things and Kiel has kind of a very special situation because it was pretty much destroyed in second world war...

**Just like Brest...**

Yeah, but actually Kiel was lot more destroyed *after* the second world war because they said they want it to be the car city of the future !

**Ok... Oh !**

Because of that we have a lot of big streets, and kind of [...] places ; and in my opinion, there are some sweet streets or pretty big streets where there aren't that many cars, so you can just make one big bicycle lane. And some parts of the city are saying « Ok, that's a good idea », and other parts – mostly the conservative parts – are like « no, we have car drivers ». They are also important. So, parts

of the city counselors are not my type and I think some other parts are doing quite good work, or trying to do quite good work.

**Where did you get the hundred bicycles you're fixing at the workshop ?**

It's just people coming here and give their old stuff away.

**That's what we were thinking...**

*Spenden*, donations, yeah. I mean I think it's one of the oldest bicycle workshop in Germany since 1982 or 1983.

**That's leading us to the next point : do you think that Kiel bikers could do better as far as recycling is concerned ? I mean, instead of making a donation, maybe they could tell themselves « Ok, no, fuck, I won't buy a new bike, I will really fix my old one ! »**

First of all I think everyone who's going to use a bike should use a bike, it's always nicer than using a car, so I don't care where they get this new bike, but I think it's more like the whole community problem that there are still like cheap bikes at the supermarket which are more like crap, they're just not energy efficient. And then people are saying « Ok, I'm going to be healthy, I'm using my bike », they buy these supermarket bikes and then they think that bicycle driving is crap because it's not fun on these bikes. So I think it's more like the whole community, it should be like a global change more.

**Yeah yeah, they should be more aware of what is it to buy a bike, of what is a bike !**

It's not only in Kiel, it is also in Hamburg, or in France, or in Denmark. But I think it's more like political thinking of the person himself, like if you're capitalist or not capitalist, if you try to use your old stuff and recycle it or just buy a new...

**Yeah, that's the point : look at this wonderfull brand new smartphone... [it's ironic: Gwen's smartphone is totally overused – ed]**

Yeah... But if it works, it works !

**Exactly... Soon the end... [of the interview, not of the smartphone – ed] Bapav, the Brest association we belong to – *Brest à pied à vélo – Brest zum Fuss und zum Rad* –, has the following missions on a citywide scale : collaborative bike workshop, just like here, biking school for children and adults, school interventions, rides, cycling events, cycling information campaigns. Does Hansa48 have the same missions ? What are the commonalities ? What differences ?**

Yeah, of course... Hansa48 is like a whole project, a lot of different stuffs and people doing different things and who live here and I think it works. But I think it doesn't have to be like this project stuff... It's a good way of connecting people, having their own little workshop to make people think about their usage of bikes.

**Yeah, their life of bikers...**

That's not just more the way you make people use tools again. They know they can fix their own stuff and that's not a problem if you got a flat tire : if you learn yourself how to fix it, it's not that expensive to go by bike if you do it yourself.

**Yes, of course. It's very important.**

And I think it's a good way to show people that it's possible to learn things.

**Yes. So, as far as people who are in the workshop are concerned, it's only about fixing and repairing bikes ? No bike school ?**

No. In Germany, in primary school, there's always bikes stuff. They come with the police and you have to make a test and learn how to drive a bike most times. But I think it's also the primary mission for the project that people learn how to ride the bike. And also we don't want to take a breakaway from bicycle shops, 'cause they have also to live, it's more the aspect that we show people you can fix your bikes and because of that we don't have new bikes here, we also don't sell them, we don't want it, they can go out to another place.

**That's also the main point and mission for Bapav : first, and main, in fact, even if there is many fields we're involved in, the main point is the workshop, you learn how to fix !**

Yeah, and it's part of the project. We show them how to fix their bike or encourage them, and they just understand « Ok, I can do something myself ! »

**Exactly. By the way that's one another very important political point. You can do it yourself, don't wait !**

If you want to pay for it, you can go somewhere else, but here is for yourself.

**Do you, Hansa48, work with other associations in Kiel ? If so, in what ways ?**

Is it more for the whole project or just for this bicycle project [*i.e.* the workshop – ed] ?

**Let's say the bicycle project. We focus on the bicycle project.**

There are some connections between others projects, because of the people working – Julian is also in Critical Mass.

**But it's not official, I mean not official connections.**

We have official connections, but they aren't official ! It's more vitamin B stuff. [Probably a German expression turned to English as is ; whatever, it means to use official contacts for unofficial projects – ed]

**Ok.**

So, because of this whole project is expanding, people work together...

**Yeah, yeah, but just that. No picture with different logos, no bla bla...**

No.

**That's what I mean.**

No. I don't think so. On a personal level, there are also a lot of people who also work here are involved in official stuff, but it's not that the project is *that* official !



**I understand.**

It's kind of crazy, because if you're in a place where people connect and meet, of course you're kind of involved, it's not...

**It's not O.F.F.I.C.I.A.L, yeah. Let's imagine a sort of partnership between Bapav and Hansa48's workshop : what would be the main features ?**

I don't know.

**You have the right to say « that question is really crappy »... It's not a necessary question...**

Yeah, I think it's a good and nice question, but I don't think that you can focus on just one part of bikes, I think there's politic also, very interesting parts like feminism... [the question of the gender diversity in bike workshops is a very topical issue ; many approaches to reflection on this subject exist – ed]

**Yes, yes, exactly !**

...or leftism, or rightism, or nationalism... because of that there are thousand of fields, like music and bibles, stuff.

**Yes, and as we said, to make the fights converge.**

It's an understanding that you are not alone. I think bike and protest is a good combination, because in your daily life you can do it on demonstration – it's a good way! – and also to help each other, because if you know how to fix a flat tire, you can fix that tire and connect with other people, and I think it's kind of the same communication between Brest and Kiel. There's the official way with the partner city staff, or you can just come to Kiel and going around or maybe just to connect to some people and Critical Mass people and Critical Mass Brest, and Ride Along and Helicats [Probably other bike associations – ed] and stuff. So I think there's a lot of ways. How to say it in Trump's words... it will be great.

**I totally get all your points. It's a little bit formal, those questions, etc., because we may bring back some elements for a nice exhibition, but out of that I get everything.**

You have to make questions that are political on the first impressions because maybe you'll meet some people who are like « I'm a car driver and I hate bicycles », and you are like « I have to ask those questions ».

**Yes, maybe some people will access bike and biking through that kind of interviews, you know...**

**I don't know, many ways... there's many ways...**

I think it's positive to make people think about bicycling.

So as to objectify as much as possible our reportage, we also asked some other Hansa48 customers what was their global feeling about their biker's experience in Kiel. For cyclists, all is not well in Kiel, far from it : during the workshop' summer fest, a customer we've been discussing with told us about the following problems :

→ In Germany (or at least in Schleswig-Holstein, where Kiel is located), you can't always take the [regional? – ed] train with your bike ; and, when possible, it is very expensive compared to France where it is free of charge in regional trains (*Intercités*) and TGVs (for TGVs: as regular luggage if they are bagged or boxed as regular luggage), within the limits of available locations and without compulsory reservation.

→ The 'cyclists turn right' sign don't exist [in France, in the presence of the 'cyclists turn right' sign, any biker has the right to turn right when he's at a crossroad, even when the traffic lights are red, provided that other customers are respected – ed]. In our opinion, it seems understandable because it may blur the informations German car drivers are used to get. It's just a simple hypothesis.

→ Moreover, for that customer, cycling lanes separated from the road sometimes require cyclists to be more vigilant towards pedestrians, and are confusing for car drivers who sometimes do not expect to see a cyclist. Here, it must be said that these special cycling lanes he's referring to are these ones printed on Kiel's pavements. Thus, in that special case, that's right : car drivers can't see bikers properly, because parked cars prevent to see correctly. Moreover, it requires every pavement's users to be more vigilant, because they share the same space.

→ In the end, employers don't pay mileage allowances [capitalism obliges? – ed], which is a mark of non-motivation in regard of the use of a bike.

Therefore, many elements that make it possible to perspective in a non-negligible way the poetic representation that we make of Germany as the country of the bicycle. The base for comfortable riding conditions is there, unlike France, but a lot of moderation is to be brought. Germany is also the big country of cars, let's not forget it. Our interlocutor also points out that it would be interesting to compare Kiel with Hambourg and other German cities to be more objective.

Our interlocutor also points out to us that it would be necessary to be able to compare Kiel with Hamburg and other German cities to get a better idea of things. This is something to constructively modify our judgment !

And it's been mentioned during the conversation, there's a great project in process in Kiel : a 2 kms speedway for cyclists is supposed to be built all along the railway's route, until the railway line is operational. This kind of project seems all the more interesting that it is probably inexpensive and easy to set up.