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Géopolis 2137
+ on zoom

FREE ENTRY

was USSR friendly to bicycles?

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Olha Martynyuk

is a Professor at the National Technical University «Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute» and a scholar-at-risk post-doc fellow at University of Basel. Her dissertation, defended in 2017, explores history of Russian Nationalism in early XXth century Ukraine. Currently, her focus lays on History of Environment and Mobility, particularly on cycling in Ukraine between 1890 and 1990.

So long as the mass production of automobiles remained beyond Bolshevik aspirations, the bicycle continued to be the most widely available means of personal transport in the Soviet Union. Constantly working to increase the number of produced bicycles, the USSR, however, never developed an autonomous bicycle infrastructure in its cities and countryside.

The presentation discusses policies towards cycling and actual experiences of mobility. It shows that debates regarding whether a bicycle was a bourgeois privilege or a worker's tool, as well as World War II experiences, had a substantial impact on mobility patterns in the Soviet Union.

Using multiple examples from a wide range of archival, oral, and printed sources, I will show that the technological development was not predefined. Even in the country of fierce repressions towards independent thinking, alternative practices of micro-mobility existed outside the state-stimulated scenarios.

Discussant: Grégory Quin (ISSUL)

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