

Lancaster Lines

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Introduction

In response to the Event's aims this short experimental piece explores lines in Lancaster and their multiple relationships with and forms of connection to practice. It therefore addresses the theme of **'processes of connection'** and explores line-making as such a process. The piece of thought has two starting points. The first is Ingold's 'comparative anthropology of the line' (2016:1) in which he argues that the production and significance of lines should be a topic for anthropological study, and in which he provides some conceptual starting points for such a project. His focus on different forms and classes of line across practices including walking, weaving, storytelling, drawing and writing drew my attention to painted lines in the first place, and raised a question 'how do painted lines do work in the world?'. In this paper I am interested in how practice theory might offer conceptual starting points for answering this question.

As such, the second starting point is the idea of 'threading through' defined as one form of connection within *The Nexus of Practice* (Hui, Schatzki and Shove, 2017) which:

"... captures the idea that things, for instance, an object or a practice, can move or advance through the nexus of practices, thereby linking the practices through which they pass or to which they are connected" (Hui, Schatzki and Shove, 2017: 4).

In this paper I explore and develop the idea of 'threading through'. In contrast to the definition above, I am not interested in the threading of an object or a practice, but specifically the painted lines on the ground's surface in Lancaster. Similar to the definition above I begin from the presupposition that these lines somehow link and connect the practices through which they pass, or to which they are connected.

Figuring out what these practices are, and how the painted lines connect them, is the goal. By exploring this, I think I can begin to answer my question above (how do painted lines do work in the world?). To do this requires further thinking on their production and significance (as suggested by Ingold), but also on understanding how they thread through practice.

What follows is still just pieces of thought ...

About Lines

To get hold of the lines of Ingold's work, and for the purposes of this piece, I focus on two different distinctions which are pertinent to the questions above, distinctions of 'class' and of 'kind'. On the former he suggests that threads and traces form two major classes of line. Threads are defined as 'a filament of some kind, which may be entangled with other threads or suspended between points in three-dimensional space'. (2016:42) on the other hand traces are 'any enduring mark left in or on a solid surface by a continuous movement' (2016:44).

This second class of line (the trace) can be further subdivided into two kinds: additive and reductive. He explains 'A line drawn with charcoal on paper, or with chalk on a blackboard, is additive, since the material of the charcoal or chalk forms an extra layer that is superimposed upon the substrate. Lines that are scratched, scored or etched into a surface are reductive...' (2016:44)

From the conceptual definitions above, we can conclude that the class of painted lines is that of a *trace* and that in kind it is *additive*. It sounds rather rudimentary. But from this some initial questions

come to mind: What are painted lines traces of?, or are painted lines acts of *tracing*? (In which case what is being traced, and who is doing it?)

What are they traces of? As traces of the additive kind, painted lines have been created and added to the surface ('the substrate'). They are enduring marks left by the continuous movement of some painting implement or other (or more recently the laying down of some kind of plastic substance). They are the traces of practices of planners and transport engineers, they are traces of practices of governance.

In the case of painted lines, roads and other tarmacked surfaces form the substrate. But roads themselves problematize Ingold's categories. These too are additive traces, in that they are lines set down by planners, transport engineers and so on. However, in some cases they were originally reductive traces, becoming etched into the earth's surface by the movement of humans and their vehicles – the tracing and retracing of specific paths. In some cases then, roads, and the painted lines on them trace the etched paths of the generations before them...

[End thought 1]

Practice theory, travel demand and lines

My interest in painted lines is located in substantive debates on futures of mobility and sustainable transportation transitions (Marsden et al, 2018), and is based on a specific understanding of travel demand, that builds on recent developments in practice theory. Some of the different ways that practice theory contributes to understandings of travel demand, and thus potentially to understanding lines are outlined below.

1. Forms of mobility such as driving, cycling etc. can be conceptualized as practices. Each involves requisite skills, meanings and materials that are brought together in practice performance. *In this framing, painted lines might be materials of such practices (driving, cycling) which carry meanings (e.g. keep moving!, stop!), and require skilled performers to understand and interweave them in practice.*
2. The second flips the focus and sees travel demand as an outcome of interconnected end use practices. *What are lines now? perhaps a form of interconnection; or maybe the instantiation/reification of interconnected practices in a semi-obdurate material form. Lines as an attempt to somehow control or shape such interconnections.*
3. The third is to conceptualise mobility practices and end use practices as interconnected and shaping of each other. For example, Watson (2012) notes that: 'the shifting character of grocery shopping is inseparable from shifting patterns of personal mobility, with out of town supermarkets co-evolving with patterns of personal car mobility, and with broader restructuring of the temporal rhythms of daily life that are enabled by, and make necessary, the convenience of provisioning a household with a single shopping trip to one destination' (2012:491).

In other words, practices of mobility, end use and planning are unavoidably bundled. *Lines are one way in which planning bundles with mobility and end use, by governing connections of mobility and end use. In this sense, painted lines are a form of power. For example, emergent or less dominant mobility-practice bundles also have lines, however it is not possible for these emergent lines to leave their traces – they do not make reductive traces on tarmacked surfaces. These lines therefore remain unmarked and unpainted. Painted lines are therefore a form of power making some inter-practice connections more*

Connecting practices – piece of thought – Lancaster Lines.

legitimate than others. To disrupt such dominant interconnections would mean crossing, crossing out, erasing, making new lines.

4. Infrastructure as the outcome of practice interconnections, that through processes of planning for demand and responding to demand, become partly reified in material forms (Shove et al, 2015). *Focussing on painted lines draws attention to the fact that infrastructures are comprised of more and less permanent components. Lines are less permanent, and yet they are a very important part of how practices interconnect.*

As can be seen in my attempt to conceptualise painted lines in practice, painted lines thread through mobility practices and end use practices, connecting them together in specific ways. They thread through practices of planning, governance, connecting these practices to mobility and end use. Finally, the lines offer a potentially interesting site to study power in practice.

I might then make some empirical questions about painted lines.

[End thought 2]

Generating questions about painted lines

Some questions:

What is the work of the painted line in holding complexes of practice together? How do they connect practices? Which practices? How is this done? (practice to practice, mobility to practice) What different types of connection are exhibited and where?

Are there disrupted lines (e.g. in flood, in snow) and what happens when lines are disrupted? What does this reveal about the work of lines in organizing practices (connection, separation, organization)? And what does this reveal about forms of connection?

Given my substantive interest in tackling resource intensive travel demand: 'how are painted lines implicated in producing and perpetuating environmentally problematic forms and patterns of travel?' If we follow the lines, does this enable us to identify a nexus of practice that has not yet been made visible in such debates?

Are there new lines and old lines, reinstated and fading lines - what chronology of Lancaster lines can be observed? What do new, old and reinstated lines tell us about changes in planning, practices and priorities?

What invisible lines do painted lines cut across or impose themselves upon? Are painted lines imagined when they are absent? (e.g. breaks in parking at driveways), what are the implications? (e.g. lines for drivers, lines for bicycles, parking lines, bike parking lines, bus stop lines, ev charging lines); are the lines obeyed? where, when, where not, why not? Are all lines easy to understand? Are there random lines... ?

How do lines thread power through a nexus of practice?

Is it valuable to study **the nexus of the line**?

[End thought 3]

Following the Lines

A very small piece of fieldwork in Lancaster. As an experiment I stood outside my front door and looked for a line. I followed the line, and then another – not to see where they went, but rather to look at the lines inspired by the questions above.

Fieldwork rule: It is only painted lines that I am interested in. These lines can be any colour but they must be painted. The lines must be on the ground.

	<p>Double yellow. Insists on movement. <u>Connects</u> moment after moment of movement. <u>Connects</u> place after place of not stopping.</p>		<p>Is this a double yellow line? Left to fade - forgotten?, irrelevant? A weakening <u>connection</u> between governance, space and movement.</p>
	<p>Old lines. outdated language? Weakened or entirely <u>forgotten</u> connection of governance/ space? Or <u>reinstated</u> connection (in double yellow line)</p>		<p>? Random line stop here.</p>
	<p>Separating mobility practice from mobility practice. (driving and cycling). Can the bike stop?</p>		<p>Beware pedestrians. We are steps and not a ramp.</p>

 <p>Organization of dormant and moving vehicles. These clear zones – anticipate short durations of dormancy, regular movement.</p>	 <p>Organization of dormant and moving vehicles, clear zone for a wheelchair.</p>
 <p>Anticipated spatial interface of mobility and end use practices. Organised for peak.</p>	 <p>this space is not for any kind of use. Connection of governance practices and space in use.</p> <p>Triangular-shaped practices – a missed opportunity?</p>
 <p>No parking—preserving the line of a moving vehicle into driveway. Painted lines imply and legitimate certain invisible lines.</p>	 <p>Organization of parked and moving vehicles. Lines indicate anticipated interface of mobility and end use practices.</p>

A thought on the fieldwork experiment: The photographs above zoom into lines, it reveals their qualitative differences. Could we zoom out to see lines differently – the painted lines of the city and beyond? By doing this what might become visible? A nexus of practice threaded through with lines? A nexus governed and held in place by lines? How might invisible lines (not etched, not added) be made visible. Given that the traced and retraced path of a person, a bicycle no longer become visible of its own accord, how can the dominant pattern of lines be challenged or changed?

[End thought 4]

Conclusion

As a process of connection, the process of making painted lines is not so hard or permanent as the built infrastructure itself, yet they are produced – they exist – and they have multiple forms of significance when it comes to the workings and conduct of practice. Painted lines connect and separate, they insist on movement, and on stopping. They define blocks (of space) and organize. They are maintained, changed and left to fade. There are old (forgotten?, irrelevant?) lines, reinstated lines and new lines. Lines that connect mobility to dormancy, and dormancy to mobility. Dormancy alongside mobility. Dormancy embedded in mobility. Mobility alongside mobility. Lines tell us which side to be on. Where to go where not to go. Where to stop, pause, rest. Where to move. Lines form connections – between practices of governance and practices of everyday life. They reflect what is dominant, what has ‘rights’, by threading through they shape, create and perpetuate.

The future? Disrupting connections by disrupting the process of connection. The future as made up of new lines, or no lines at all? Constituted of different kinds of lines. Which ones? Lines being made visible and seen (even if not added, not etched). Transforming lines instead of infrastructure? Painting lines instead of making models?

[End thought 5]

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