Stakeholders, politics, and the media

Rachel Aldred

Forthcoming in Handbook on Transport and Urban Planning in the Developed World

Edited by Michiel C.J. Bliemer, Corinne Mulley and Claudine Moutou, Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies, University of Sydney, Australia

---

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores relationships between stakeholders, politics, and the media in relation to transport and urban planning, within the context of the need to move towards more sustainable mobility systems. It addresses these themes by discussing a case study of cycling in London, where the recent policy context has been shaped both by media and by cycling advocates. The chosen case study allows some broader conclusions to be drawn about social change and the prospects of moving to more sustainable transport systems. These relate to:

1. The role of the 'old' media in encouraging or blocking sustainable transport.
2. The relationship of 'old' and 'new' forms of media in transport policy debates.
3. How advocacy communities are seeking to overcome traditional barriers to change.
4. How current social trends are creating the context for political and policy change.

The chapter outlines briefly some key themes in the literature around 'participation' and citizen involvement in transport, including barriers related to institutional processes and to specific technical tools (transport modelling). It then discusses literature around transport and the media, which, perhaps surprising, remains relatively limited. The chapter then moves on to consider the specific case study of cycling policy in London, in particular focusing on 2010–15. This provides an example of change whereby the media has begun to play a much more positive role in relation to cycling, supporting a paradigm shift (however incomplete) from cycling as the concern of individual cyclists, to cycling as a system (see Aldred 2013b).

2 TRANSPORT, POLICY, AND PARTICIPATION

There is a substantial literature on stakeholder and public involvement in transport policy (or, in some cases, its absence). Bickerstaff and Walker (2001) found that in the UK, despite a growing emphasis on public participation, substantial challenges remain, including the

dominance of instrumental motivations for encouraging public involvement. They conclude: 'Current transportation problems conform to a severe collective action problem in that the costs of individual participation would greatly outweigh the benefits which are both uncertain and widely dispersed and thus conditions do not favour the development of public involvement' (Bickerstaff and Walker 2001, p. 447). While Bickerstaff and Walker (2001) identify a shift away from more formal and limited methods of involvement (such as consultations), they recommend caution about the use of newer and more qualitative participatory methods. They suggest that, while enthusiastically adopted, these may not be having substantial impact on the decision- making process.

Bai et al. (2010, p. 129), writing more generally about public participation in urban policy, point to 'scale mismatches'. This means that while 'urban policy has increasing relevance to regional and global environmental issues', existing institutional structures are not best placed to deal with these. However, they suggest that greater public participation at city-level, alongside better understanding of cities as complex systems and improved networking, can help mainstream environmental challenges into urban public policy.

Some writers have pointed to the strength of lobby groups (particularly related to car and oil industries) in blocking substantive public involvement in transport policy-making, which might enable movements towards more sustainable futures. In a case study of European scrappage schemes (Aldred and Tepe 2011, p. 1567) it is argued that the strength of European car industries (including effective collaboration at the European Union level) contributed to 'the limited impact climate change discourse has had upon [transport] policy frames'.

The European 'cars and CO2' policy process tended to exclude the 'social' in that transport system users and employees were barely represented. Consumer groups were marginal, while unions tended to fall in line behind employer representatives. Participation in the policy process was dominated by industry organizations, with environmental organizations also included. This meant that debates were easily characterized as 'economy versus environment' as the economic crisis developed.

Discussing prospects for change away from a car-dominated system, Banister (2008) argues that the public have been shown to be more supportive of sustainable transport measures than policy-makers have often assumed. He stresses the need for system change saying that 'it is only when there is sufficient public support for change, that action will take place' (Banister 2008, p. 76).

If participation in transport policy is often limited and/or blocked by institutional or corporate structures, the structure of transport knowledge can form another obstacle. Using a case study around cycling policy-making, Spinney (2010) argues that advocacy movements are limited by the need to participate in existing knowledge systems, which marginalize some forms of knowing while prioritizing others.

Modelling has often been identified as particularly problematic in its association with a now discredited 'predict and provide' paradigm (Næss et al. 2014). Tools developed in the post-World War II era to plan for an imagined future of greater and greater motorization have been adapted with difficulty, if at all, for more sustainable ends. One example of this is the failure of the UK's National Transport Model to predict rail use, leading to the development of a separate RAILPLAN model. Another is Næss et al.'s (2014) analysis of how, despite the concept of 'induced demand' being accepted by many professionals, it is still excluded from transport modelling and systematically biases the results. Models built to decide on where rather than whether new roads should be built continue to obstruct pathways to more sustainable futures.

Perhaps even more fundamentally, models of human behaviour used in transport modelling are derived from engineering paradigms (humans as mere appendages to trips made by motor vehicles) or economic paradigms (humans as rational actors making cost–time trade-offs). Both these paradigms certainly capture an important part of how transport users are currently constructed within policy, planning, and everyday life.

However, they systematically silence other concerns, such as local quality of life, which may be far more important to people than possible small increases in motorized journey times (CTS 2008).

While 'the public' may often be marginalized within transport decision-making processes, their actions in the form of emergent social trends are nonetheless having some impact. A collection in *Transport Reviews* (Goodwin and van Dender 2013) on the theme of 'Peak Car' established that in a number of countries, car ownership, licensing and/or use are declining, particularly among young males living in large urban areas. Alongside this, some cities have seen resurgence in urban public transport, and to a lesser extent cycling and walking.

London, for example, has seen a remarkable modal shift primarily from the car to public transport over the past 20 years, encouraged and supported by the Congestion Charge, but not solely due to it. City authorities, particularly Transport for London (TfL) are attempting to understand and respond to this shift. A report by TfL (2014b, p. 53) concluded that:

The decline in licence holding amongst the youngest generations of Londoners potentially has significant implications for future travel demand. If these groups maintain their lower level of licence holding as they age, car trip rates per person could fall in future, resulting in a continuation of the divergence between population growth and the volume of car travel.

3 TRANSPORT AND THE MEDIA: OLD AND NEW

Perhaps surprisingly, there is relatively little literature on the relationship between the media and public understanding of transport, and the literature that does exist is relatively focused around 'old' (for example, print) media. Road pricing has attracted some attention, with Ryley and Gjersoe (2006), Vigar et al. (2011), and Gaber (2004) studying three

different British schemes, and all concluding that media presentation of road pricing was selective and generally negative.

More positively, Winslott-Hiselius et al. (2009) discuss media representations of road pricing in Stockholm, showing that within the print media, there was a shift from neutral to positive portrayals after a trial of the scheme started, accompanied by a shift in public opinion. Winslott-Hiselius et al. point out that causality may go in either or both directions: the media may have responded to changing public views, and/or the changing media portrayal may have helped encourage more positive public perceptions. Similarly in 1999, Goodwin argued that the British media had 'widely (though not unanimously) accepted' the principle of abandoning predict-and-provide, with a shift in emphasis to the problems of implementation.

This goes to the heart of debates around the role of the media. Do the media lead public opinion, or follow it? The analyses of the British road-pricing proposals suggest the media might help harden public opinion against schemes, or at least, might form a barrier to public opinion becoming more supportive. Conversely, the Stockholm example suggests a more optimistic picture, with the media at least reacting to changes in public opinion or at best helping to shape it. Of course, media in different countries may have different reporting traditions and political stances, although all are likely to be experiencing the growing pressures on journalism described by Vigar et al (2011).

Referring to 'the media' is questionable in an age of increasing media fragmentation and diversity. While print and television media continue to play an important role, less 'official' forms of media communication are increasingly present. Social media are diverse, with Gal-Tzur et al. (2014) referring to seven broad categories of social media: (1) forums and messages boards, (2) review and opinion sites, (3) social networks, (4) blogging, (5) micro-blogging, (6) bookmarking, and (7) media sharing. In practice categories may be combined. Gal-Tzur et al. (2014, p. 122) conclude that information from social media 'is likely to be relevant to stakeholders in developing and delivering transport policy goals and the devotion of research effort in this direction is likely to reap further rewards.'

A range of stakeholders – and journalists themselves – communicate with each other and sections of the public through blogging and the use of sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Bregman (2012) categorizes public transport agencies' use of social media as follows: providing timely updates, providing more general public information, citizen engagement, employee recognition, and entertainment. For their part, members of the public can use the various forms of social media to question, challenge, and respond to official communication. For example, Golbuff (2014) found cycling policy blogs perceived as being increasingly important in countering 'official' lines, with city officials for their part paying some attention to social media critics. Some policy-makers and practitioners may use blogging themselves to use a less 'official' voice, for example, 'The Ranty Highwayman'[1] is a local authority transport engineer who blogs anonymously, both to express his frustration

with pro-car bias transport policy and politics, and to share expertise and knowledge with advocates.

Robinson (2002) argues that transport protests have frequently enjoyed at least tacit media support, even when disruptive or even violent. Robinson's case study, protests by hauliers against fuel prices in Britain in 2000, describes how the protestors learnt from their 'enemies' (anti-roads protestors) who had also used direct and disruptive action to great impact. Wall (2002) in discussing anti-roads protests, argues that the media turned protest into a spectacle in elevating the role of one individual ('Swampy'). Hence, Wall argues, the media made protest again inaccessible by transforming it from a collective movement into something individual and unique.

These arguments have some similarities with debates over 'old media'. To what extent can media (old and new) assist a shift away from car culture towards more sustainable transport, and to what extent do they block it? Many scholars of social media (for example, Fuchs 2008) have reacted against an initial boosterism by highlighting the extent to which the Internet, despite its potential for open-source models of knowledge, remains largely closed and commercialized. This implies caution and not assuming that social media provide an opportunity for marginalized voices to become more dominant. Like modelling paradigms, social media communications construct particular ways of being and of knowing, which may limit the scope of participation and involvement.

4 CYCLING POLICY IN THE UK

In the context of stakeholder and media engagement, cycling policy represents an instructive case study. Rather than demonstrating 'business as usual' in transport policy and politics, it illustrates the impact of changes in social trends, media interest, and policy approach. The rest of this chapter discusses the lessons that can be learnt from the London case. However, initially the chapter provides some brief background on cycling policy in the UK, to contextualize the example (for more, see Aldred 2012b).

Cycling in the UK declined dramatically during the decades following World War II. From 12 percent of all distance travelled in 1951, by the 1970s it had declined to 1–2 percent of all distance travelled. During this period, the total distance travelled per head roughly doubled. Since the 1970s, levels of cycling have remained low in modal share and absolute distance, while, until 2000, private motor vehicle travel continued to grow (Aldred 2013b).

It has been argued elsewhere (Aldred 2012b) that while the post-World War II welfare settlement moved many areas of life into the public policy sphere, cycling was placed in the private, domestic or leisure sphere. The 'problem' of cycling's rapid decline therefore hardly appeared as a policy issue, mainly remaining confined to the 'problem' of how to encourage children to cycle rather than watching the (increasingly popular) television, especially given many of their parents no longer rode. This has been reinforced by the assumption, traditionally popular among cycling advocacy communities as well as policy-

makers, that cycling does not require a 'system' of its own in the form of dedicated infrastructure (analogous to pavements for pedestrians).

Rather than a state responsibility (as with roads and rail), transport policy has primarily framed cycling as an individual choice – and an individual risk. In the post-war era, as risks per kilometre fell for people in cars, the risks for people on bicycles rose. Astonishingly, between 1951 and 1971 the risk of death per kilometre cycled roughly tripled (Keep 2013). Although it has fallen since then, the death rate per kilometre cycled still sits at around 75 percent of its 1951 level, against a broader picture where the risks for all vehicular road users are less than a tenth of the per-kilometre levels seen in 1951 (Keep and Rutherford 2013). Thus, just as in 1951 distance cycled and distance driven were fairly similar, and today hugely different, risk rates have also diverged: similar then, very different now. Hence, the 'cycle safety' problem. Rather than state action, the preferred policy response for many years has been to make the cyclist responsible. Cycling policy discourse continues to stress this, encouraging helmets and high-visibility (hi-vis) clothing, both unusual in high-cycling countries (Aldred 2012b).

Although cycling has become more prominent in official policy discourse, it has remained individualized. A broader shift towards 'active citizenship' in policy discourse saw cycling endorsed as a form of behaviour change generating health, environmental, and even economic benefits (for example, Hillman 1993). Since 1996, increasing cycling has been government policy, although funding remained very low compared to higher-cycling countries. During the 1990s and 2000s, many cycling groups were partially assimilated into local state organizations, through organization such as local cycle forums, participating in expert-led exercises often delivering relatively limited (if any) improvements (see Spinney 2010). For example, groups became involved in lengthy processes reviewing cycle routes, which in the absence of transformational ambition led to small changes such as the spread of advanced stop lines (also called 'bicycle boxes') allowing cyclists some protection at a junction, but only if they arrive when the traffic lights are red. Other effort was invested in promotional activities.[2] However, cycling levels continued to stagnate at a national level, with funding remaining low and any growth concentrated in specific areas (often from a low baseline).

In 2010, there was a dramatic shift in political regime: 13 years of Labour government came to an end, replaced by a coalition (unusual in the UK) between Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. This new government quickly moved to distance itself from Labour's 'sustainable transport' rhetoric. Its first Transport Secretary, Philip Hammond, pledged to 'end the war on the motorist', seen as signalling a switch back to road-building and increased motor subsidies. Official bodies responsible for promoting sustainable transport were abolished (for example, Cycling England, and the Sustainable Development Commission). Many cycling advocates and transport practitioners were dismayed at the direction taken by the new government, seeing this as a rolling-back of even the limited gains made previously (although, despite some limited increases in funding, levels of

cycling had stubbornly failed to increase on a national level). However, subsequent events have proved rather more interesting, particularly in relation to advocacy and the media.

5 CYCLING IN THE MEDIA

Transport in the media is generally under-studied, and within that, there is very little on cycling in the media. Rissel et al (2010) examined newspaper representations of cycling, comparing coverage in four metropolitan newspapers in Sydney and Melbourne over a 10-year period. They focused on whether cycling and cyclists were portrayed positively or negatively. Interestingly, they found a disjunction between 'cycling' and 'cyclists', with the former viewed much more positively than the latter. While a positive framing of 'cycling' was more widespread than a negative framing, the framing of 'cyclists' was more negative than positive. Melbourne had a higher frequency of positive reports about cycling which was argued to be due to increases in cycling levels in Melbourne. This suggests that increases in cycling levels might impact positively on media coverage.

This fits with research into perceptions of cycling and cyclists in the UK context (for example, DfT 2010), suggesting that the media are contributing to, or responding to, broader negative public perceptions of people who cycle, despite an overall positive framing of cycling as an activity. The department for Transport (DfT 2010) found negative stereotypes of cyclists; talk about driver behaviour by contrast did not exhibit systematic stereotyping. On one level this is surprising. Policy seeks to encourage cycling, while driving is at least not seen as an activity that politicians are actively striving to increase. However, the stereotyping and stigmatization of cyclists (Aldred 2013a) is congruent with cycling's ongoing marginalization within transport policy and the threat that mass cycling would potentially pose to current transport policy-making paradigms and tools. For example, Transport for London's guide to modelling (TfL 2010) acknowledges results may be unreliable where cyclist flow exceeds 20 percent of all vehicles (a condition met in 2014 on London's bridges in peak hour).

Busse (2012) conducted research into media portrayals of cycling in the UK, which supported Rissel's general conclusions. Focusing on Bristol and Leeds, she found cycling was portrayed as healthy yet 'dangerous' and 'difficult', while cyclists for their part were seen as 'keen' but 'irresponsible' and 'misbehaving'. Elsewhere it has been argued (Aldred 2013a) that cyclists in low-cycling contexts risk falling between two stools. Cyclists riding wearing everyday clothing are often cast as irresponsible (for example, for not wearing a helmet); yet wearing cycle clothing, protective gear, and so on does not help, because cyclists are seem as incompetent and problematic (Aldred 2013a). In a circular process, this is precisely because by definition road users are assumed to be motorized (Freund and Martin 2007).

Rissel et al. (2010) and Busse (2012) both argue that negative media coverage, for example the high proportion of articles about cycling that focus on collisions, could put people off cycling. There is, however, a lack of research into whether this is the case, although it sounds intuitively plausible. What might make a difference is the specific framing of any

collisions: for example, the type of blaming if any, and whether a campaigning/social justice framing is attached (Owen 2014). The issue is not as simple as it initially appears. It is also possible that articles might simultaneously dissuade individuals from cycling while encouraging decision-makers to make improvements in cycling safety, which might then encourage uptake.

The issue of framing has increased salience given the increasing media interest in cycling advocacy, with the most prominent being a campaign by *The Times* newspaper entitled 'Cities fit for cycling'. This campaign was unprecedented in being conducted by a mainstream, centre-right national newspaper, which hitherto had had little or no interest in transport cycling. The campaign was launched in February 2012, contributing to a significant amount of attention being directed towards cycle safety (Butcher 2012). The campaign began in response to a serious heavy goods vehicle (HGV) collision involving one of their reporters, Mary Bowers, and won the Best Media Campaign at the National Transport Awards in 2012 (Owen 2014). The campaign included an eight-point manifesto of measures demanded to improve safety. While *The Times* campaign may be the most famous, other newspapers including the *Independent*, the *Hackney Gazette*, and the *London Evening Standard* have conducted campaigns calling for infrastructure, policy, and legislative change to protect cyclists. Perhaps partly in response, the national cycle sport body British Cycling began to take a more active campaigning stance towards transport cycling.

Therefore, in relation to cycling and cycling policy, it seems fair to say that media representations are mixed and there has been recent change. Although the representation of cyclists often remains negative, it has been complemented by positive coverage of cycling and, perhaps more interesting, the rise of more advocacy-oriented journalism. While transport journalism may have traditionally revolved around the view from the steering wheel (such as transport policy-making, and represented in the naming of many peak time radio shows such as *Drive Time*) it may to some extent be supplemented by the view from the saddle. One possible reason for this might be shifts in the social composition of cycling, particularly noticeable in London where many national journalists are based. Put simply, more journalists and people 'like them' are cycling; alongside more prominent advocacy movements, this has contributed to something of a shift in the representation of cycling.

6 CYCLING POLICY AND THE MEDIA IN LONDON

These shifts have been most apparent in London, where the *London Evening Standard* has been – sometimes, if not always – supportive of campaigns for better cycling infrastructure (Owen 2014). It is in London where social trends supporting the prominence of cycling have been most noticeable. In one borough, Hackney, cycling to work has almost tripled over a 10-year period, and more people now cycle to work than drive to work. Other Inner London boroughs show related although less striking patterns, with driving falling and the use of more sustainable modes rising.

Moreover as mentioned above, the city has been undergoing a broader modal shift where journeys have been transferred from car to public transport. While not directly affecting cycling, this has involved (1) more provision of bus lanes, which cyclists are entitled to use, and (2) a growth in multi-modality among residents, in that people do not see the car as default for many trips, even if they own one. And many do not: the 2011 Census reveals car ownership per head falling and the proportion of non-car owners among Inner London households has now passed 50 percent. More recently, the growth of cycle hire – while in itself representing an insignificant number of journeys – has helped to 'normalize' the image of cycling (Goodman et al. 2014).

London is far from being a traditional 'cycling city' in the UK, historically having low levels of cycling. Cycling remains only 2 percent of all journeys although over the past decade it has grown sharply at certain times and places (commuting from Inner to Central London). But London is exceptional in other salient ways. It is privileged in political discourse; policy change and political contestation gain disproportionate coverage. It has relatively high levels of expenditure on public transport per head: in London, this figure was £774 in 2010–11, while the next highest spending region, the North West, only spent £337 (House of Commons Transport Committee 2012).

As cycling was increasing in London, the rise in interest among 'old' media was accompanied by a growth in social media activism. This latter was often highly critical of existing cycling policy and activism, arguing for a more radical approach focusing on the need for a transformation in cycle infrastructure (Aldred 2013b). Within London, three of the most influential blogs[3] have been 'Crap Cycling and Walking in Waltham Forest' (August 2007–August 2011; August 2012–October 2012), 'I Bike London' (September 2009–), and 'Cyclists in the City' (August 2010–).

Other forms of social media – including YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook – were increasingly used to share information and to organize off-line events. In a case study of pop-up organization 'Londoners on Bikes', Aldred (2013b) discussed the links between online and offline activism, and the use of social media to arrange meet-ups, plan actions, and crowd-source funding. A series of high-profile cycle protests took place in London in 2011 in response to (1) planned changes to speed limits and cycling facilities on Blackfriars Bridge, (2) two deaths at a roundabout at the end of a new 'Cycling Superhighway', and (3) a death at the King's Cross gyratory system. Meanwhile, along- side bloggers and new activists, the more mainstream London Cycling Campaign (LCC) organized protests, developing a high-profile 'Go Dutch' campaign calling for 'clear space for cycling on main roads'.

Golbuff (2014) has examined the policy impact of London cycling policy bloggers, comparing this with the impact of similar blogs in Paris and New York. Golbuff argues that while blogging is not inherently a collaborative activity, nonetheless London's cycle blogging community is collaborative in important ways. Writers link to others, share information and support each other (for example, on Twitter). The boundaries between

policy-makers and advocates are also more porous than is sometimes assumed; more official stakeholders may pass information to advocates for discussion on social media just as they might to traditional journalists (Golbuff 2014). Journalists use social media; they share information and collaborate with bloggers.

In the case of cycle deaths, journalists may hear about these first on Twitter from advocates who keep a close watch out for official announcements of such incidents (Owen 2014). A recent analysis of the *London Evening Standard*'s coverage of cycle deaths has found a substantial increase in the proportion covered (Macmillan et al 2016). Fifteen years ago very few cycle deaths were reported, while now, almost all are. This has gone alongside a growth in cycling over the same period; by contrast there was no increase in the coverage of motorcyclist deaths. Owen (2014) found some evidence of advocacy framing, expressed by a *London Evening Standard* reporter whom she interviewed:

I guess I am, I'm wanting things to get safer, I'm wanting more segregation and I'm wanting fewer cyclists to get, killed or seriously injured. Which is my primary motivation in continuing to report on it and . . . find stories on cycling. I'm not doing it because I think it's a good thing to read about a cyclist being killed, I think it's an awful read and if I haven't written it, quite often, well I'll probably still read it, but, I'm not, drawn as a reader to the story. (Quoted in Owen 2014, p. 55)

7 CHANGING A PARADIGM?

While debates within UK cycle advocacy communities are sharp and sometimes acrimonious, the overall picture is of an expanded and heterogeneous movement (Aldred 2012a, 2013b). Interestingly, existing advocacy organizations have been both strengthened and challenged by new groups such as 'Londoners on Bikes'. The London Cycling Campaign's 'Go Dutch' campaign has explicitly endorsed segregated cycling infrastructure in some contexts, a clear shift in position from the group, and a politically successful one, with all five main 2012 mayoral candidates endorsing the campaign.

The rise of groups such as 'pop-up' campaign Londoners on Bikes should be seen within the broader rise of 'new cycling advocacy' (Aldred 2012a). Blogging has played a key role in this, as has the sharing of data, reports, photos and video material, to highlight and comment upon policy, driver behaviour and/or cycling infrastructure. The growth of cycle blogging has created a new layer of experts, who usually advocate in a volunteer capacity, and so are perceived as different from paid representatives of campaign organizations. The separation is not complete but social media advocacy has helped generate space for new discourses, identities, and strategies. This has encouraged the development of a diverse range of time-limited and/or issue-based campaigns, which do not require significant identity investment from participants.

Londoners on Bikes had targeted the political arena, asking the public to 'vote with your bike' in the 2012 mayoral election. In London's 2014 local elections, the London Cycling Campaign followed up this and their own mayoral campaign with a ward-specific 'Space for

Cycling' question to every candidate. For many candidates and councillors, it may have been the first time that they were specifically asked to take a position on 'cycling' issues. The strategy can be seen as a response to the argument that policy-makers and politicians underestimate support for sustainable transport (Banister 2008). In many respects, London is politically advanced in a UK context. The Greater London Assembly has produced pro-cycling reports critical of the Mayor's actions on the issue, with cross-party support. However, support for cycling at other political levels is not a given and not all London Members of Parliament (MPs) and councillors are as supportive as are most London Assembly members.

One barrier to the growth of sustainable transport has been the assumption that car restraint threatens business and economic growth. Indeed, recent UK transport policy discourse has continued to cast car and air travel as 'economic' (benefiting the economy), public transport use as 'social' (for example, reducing inequalities), and cycling as walking as 'environmental' (Aldred 2012b). Hence much debate over sustainable transport has become stuck in an impasse, owing to the assumption that reducing car travel will harm the economy, even if it has social and/or environmental benefits (Aldred 2014). This is backed up by the assumptions embedded in transport appraisal, whereby schemes often appear beneficial or costly depending on the results of summing large amounts of often small time savings or losses for motorists (UWE 2008). The economic benefits owing to transport infrastructure are equated most centrally with travel-time savings, and not with changes in the use and value of land, often much more substantive in their impacts on local business and economic health (Metz 2014).

What this has meant is that often while cycling is seen as a 'good thing', a nice to have (Busse 2010), it continues to be seen as threatening business. It is therefore not surprising that the most recent manifestation of new cycle advocacy in London has targeted the economic arena. Faced with assertive business opposition (largely from Canary Wharf Group) to ambitious new cycle superhighway plans, pop-up group Cycling Works[4] campaigned to secure employer support for the proposals. Over 150 organizations had signed up by the consultation deadline, with many sign-ups coming from a small group of people handing out leaflets at key cycle commuting sites. The response and the diverse organizations supporting (from Deloitte to the Royal Opera House) indicated (1) the changing social composition of cycling, and (2) the growing confidence among people who cycle to call for substantially better infrastructure, including lobbying their employer at senior levels.

This confidence is supported by research by Transport for London, which shows that even after a large increase in funding for cycling, an overwhelming majority of all Londoners support maintaining or increasing the amount spent (TfL 2014a). At a recent stakeholder event discussing new infrastructure plans, senior TfL figures stressed early on that substantial changes must be made to accommodate or grow cycling, regardless of the details of the specific schemes. At the same time, the mainstreaming of cycling is still

limited: many schemes still go ahead with little consideration for the substantial changes in cycle provision acknowledged to be needed.

8 THE CASE STUDY IN NATIONAL CONTEXT

The London case study shows media representations of cycling changing alongside a growth in advocacy and political focus. Clearly, some location-specific factors have enabled this. Change does not primarily come through reasoned argument, particularly in an area as entrenched as transport policy. Rather, change comes about because things can patently not carry on in the old way as before. In London, a number of factors have enabled this:

- media pressure over cycle safety and cycle provision;
- increasingly vocal and confident advocacy;
- social trends showing a decline in car use and growth in other modes;
- evidence of public support for cycle funding and cycle provision;
- congested streets, with little scope for network expansion except at enormous expensive, alongside high levels of projected population growth;
- mayoral responsibility for transport, with an associated high profile for transport; and
- the use of social media to share images and videos of higher-quality cycle provision, and to discuss and campaign for better infrastructure.

In other UK cities, some of the same trends are present, and we can see some related developments. Bristol is probably the most similar case to London; cycle commuting rates have almost doubled in ten years, and pressure on road space also makes cycling attractive as an efficient mode. However, London is unique in having such low levels of car use, facilitated by a very good public transport system not enjoyed by other cities (although this in itself also potentially creates competition for road space). On the other hand, London's political prominence means that the experience there is being watched closely by other cities, some of which are now planning 'cycle superhighways' and stepping up the segregation of cycles from motor traffic on busy roads.

More broadly, the London case shows that transport policy discourses can and do change. Cycling is now seen as a political 'hot topic' where challenges are to be expected. The TfL consultation over North–South and East–West cycle superhighways had over 20 000 responses, of which four-fifths were supportive. Discourse around cycling in London has shifted substantially – as can be seen in *The Mayor's Vision for Cycling* (GLA 2013) which makes it clear that the main aim is to provide for new rather than existing cyclists, through

creating much higher quality and more pleasant cycling environments. From the primarily individualistic framing traditional to UK cycling policy, we now see a much more systemic framing where the transport authority is seen as having a responsibility to provide safer routes for cycling (Aldred 2013b).

Similarly, some sections of the 'old' media can be seen to have moved, in London, towards a campaigning stance that uses this systemic framing to challenge transport authorities. This is reinforced by the role of cycling-specific media (such as the 'pedal powered' online publication *road.cc* published by Farrelly Atkinson[5]) and by the use of social media by advocates and policy-makers. Of course, this is far from established or complete; for example, much coverage in the *London Evening Standard* has taken a broadly pro-cycling line, but its Transport Correspondent has written more negative pieces. However, cycling expenditure in London has increased twentyfold over a 10-year period (GLA 2012) albeit, from a very low base), helping to support the growing assumption among policy-makers, the media and the public that cycling is an important part of London's transport mix that should be funded accordingly.

In the UK more broadly, the picture is less positive. Nationally, funding for cycling is not guaranteed and instead government has continued to occasionally announce relatively small amounts of money, often prompted by campaigns and media pressure. In 2014, a £214 million investment in cycling in eight cities was announced, which might be put in context against an announced £15 billion road fund, or £100 million being spent by Transport for London on cycling in three of Outer London's town centres. Cycling still continues to be seen at a national level as a small-scale local responsibility, whereas in London it is seen much more as a strategic priority.

9 CONCLUSIONS

What does the case study tell us more broadly about the role of the media in transport policy-making? While the UK media has often been seen as obstructing sustainable transport (see the case studies of road pricing discussed above) London cycling shows a counter-example. London media coverage has not been focused around heroic individual actions, as was criticized by Wall (2002) in relation to coverage of anti-roads protests in the 1990s. Rather much of the coverage in old and new media has helped to move debate away from the focus on individual risk-taking and blame still endemic to many national debates (including among MPs) and towards a more systemic focus on potential infra-structural, legal, and policy changes.

The case study demonstrates ways in which transport advocacy communities are attempting to overcome historic barriers to participation and change. This includes discursive and conceptual barriers specific to cycling. While cycling in the UK may have been cast as a 'good thing', it has generally not been seen as a strategic concern (Aldred 2012b), nor as a major issue in relation to elections or economies. Advocates and practitioners in London have challenged this and sought to construct cycling infrastructure and policy as (1) a strategic concern for London, in the context of a range of challenges

including, for example, limited public transport capacity, (2) an electoral issue, which might affect political careers and elections, and (3) most recently, an area of concern to business (impacting staff and customer safety, for example).

Other barriers include institutional structures which continue to limit policy change and involvement by marginalized groups of users. In this, campaigning at a local ward level has helped to establish cycle provision as an issue to which local representatives may be expected to respond. Finally, tools such as modelling continue to be problematic for advocates, and have become a focus for media criticism of cycle scheme proposals, with forecast delays for motorists highlighted. Advocacy communities continue to be disempowered by such numbers, which may well not represent (1) the likely outcome or (2) the main outcomes of interest. Transport for London modelling is changing in response to the perceived failure to address key issues. A recent board paper (TfL 2013) discussing one cycle scheme concluded that it should go ahead despite the 'costs' outweighing the 'benefits', given other unquantified or unquantifiable benefits (including 'reputation', clearly a reference to the increased media prominence of cycling).

Finally, the case of London cycling also demonstrates the use that advocacy communities can make of social media tools. Twitter, blogging, Facebook and other channels have all been used to publicize consultations, events, and to share knowledge and information. Many London cyclists are frequent users of such technologies, but it is likely that other groups with different demographics will also become increasingly adept. While much social media use may fail to break out of a niche community (Golbuff 2014), this does not make it worthless. Social media can assist community-building and support those otherwise feeling isolated or marginalized by official discourse. It may also build expertise among newer groups of advocates, and allow practitioners and policy-makers insight into advocacy perspectives and a means of engaging (perhaps anonymously) with these.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to acknowledge collaborative work with Anna Goodman, Alex Macmillan, James Woodcock, Charlotte Owen, and Alex Roberts which has contributed to her writing this piece. She would also like to acknowledge support from the Centre for Mobilities Research (CeMoRe), Lancaster University, which awarded her a visiting fellowship allowing her to organize a Transport and the Media symposium, which similarly helped her think through these ideas.

NOTES

1. http://therantyhighwayman.blogspot.co.uk/ (accessed 6 October 2015).
2. For a satirical take on this process, see http://crapwalthamforest.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/minutes-of-crapburgh-cycling-campaign.html (accessed 6 October 2015).

3. http://crapwalthamforest.blogspot.co.uk/; http://ibikelondon.blogspot.com/; http://cyclelondoncity.blog-spot.co.uk/ (all three accessed 6 October 2015).
4. https://cyclingworks.wordpress.com/ (accessed 6 October 2015).
5. http://road.cc/ (accessed 6 October 2015).

REFERENCES

Aldred, R. (2012a), 'The role of advocacy and activism in shaping cycling policy and politics', in J. Parkin (ed.), *Cycling and Sustainability*, Bingley: Emerald, pp. 83–108.

Aldred, R. (2012b), 'Governing transport from welfare state to hollow state: the case of cycling in the UK', *Transport Policy*, **23**, 95–102.

Aldred, R. (2013a), 'Incompetent or too competent? Negotiating everyday cycling identities in a motor dominated society', *Mobilities*, **8** (2), 252–71.

Aldred, R. (2013b), 'Who are Londoners on Bikes and what do they want? Negotiating identity and issue definition in a "pop-up" cycle campaign', *Journal of Transport Geography*, **30**, pp. 194–201.

Aldred, R. (2014), 'A matter of utility? Rationalising cycling, cycling rationalities', *Mobilities*, 28 November, doi: 10.1080/17450101.2014.935149.

Aldred, R. and D. Tepe (2011), 'Framing scrappage in Germany and the UK: from climate discourse to recession talk?', *Journal of Transport Geography*, **19** (6), 1563–9.

Bai, X., R.R.J. McAllister, R.M. Beaty and B. Taylor (2010), 'Urban policy and governance in a global environment: complex systems, scale mismatches and public participation', *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, **2** (3), 129–35.

Banister, D. (2008), 'The sustainable mobility paradigm', *Transport Policy*, **15** (2), 73–80.

Bickerstaff, K. and G. Walker (2001), 'Participatory local governance and transport planning', *Environment and Planning A*, **33** (3), 431–51.

Bregman, S. (2012), 'Uses of social media in public transportation: a synthesis of transit practice', Transit Co- operative Research Program Synthesis 99, Transportation Research Board, Washington, DC, available at http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_syn_99.pdf (accessed 6 October 2015).

Busse, H. (2012), 'Healthy but dangerous: the representation of cycling and cyclists in the print media', MSc dissertation, University of Bath.

Butcher, L. (2012), 'Cycling: policy', House of Commons Library Standard Note, SN1097, briefing paper. Centre for Transport and Society (CTS) (2008), 'Making NATA fit for purpose: a submission for the NATA

Refresh Consultation', University of the West of England, Bristol, available at http://www2.uwe.ac.uk/facul- ties/FET/Research/cts/projects/news/making-nata-fit-for-purpose.pdf (accessed 6 October 2015).

Department for Transport (DfT) (2010), *Safety, Cycling and Sharing the Road. Qualitative Research with Cyclists and Other Road Users*, London: Department for Transport.

Freund, P. and G. Martin (2007), 'Hyperautomobility, the social organization of space, and health', Mobilities, **2** (1), 37–49.

Fuchs, C. (2008), *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age*, London: Routledge.

Gaber, I. (2004), *Driven to Distraction: An Analysis of the Media's Coverage of the Introduction of the London Congestion Charge*, London: Goldsmiths College, University of London.

Gal-Tzur, A., S.M. Grant-Muller, T. Kuflik, I. Minkov, S. Nocera and I. Shoor, I. (2014), 'The potential of social media in delivering transport policy goals', *Transport Policy*, **32**, 115–23.

Golbuff, L. (2014), 'Moving beyond physical mobility: blogging about urban cycling and transport policy', PhD thesis, University of Cardiff.

Goodman, A., J. Green J. and Woodcock (2014), 'The role of bicycle sharing systems in normalising the image of cycling: an observational study of London cyclists', *Journal of Transport & Health*, **1** (1), 5–8.

Goodwin, P. (1999), 'Transformation of transport policy in Great Britain', *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, **33** (7–8), 655–69.

Goodwin, P. and K. van Dender (2013), '"Peak Car" – themes and issues', *Transport Reviews*, **33** (3), 243–54. Greater London Authority (GLA) (2012), *Gearing Up: An Investigation into Safer Cycling in London*, London: GLA.

Greater London Authority (GLA) (2013), *The Mayor's Vision for Cycling*, London: Transport for London. Hillman, M. (1993), 'Cycling and the promotion of health', *Policy Studies*, **14** (2), 49–58.

House of Commons Transport Committee (2012), *Regional Breakdown of Public Transport Expenditure*, available at http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmtran/writev/regbreak/m03.htm (accessed 6 October 2015).

Keep, M. (2013), 'Road cycling: statistics', House of Commons Library Standard Note, SN/SG/06224.

Keep, M. and T. Rutherford (2013), 'Reported road accident statistics', Commons Library Standard Note, SN/ SG/2198.

Macmillan, A., Roberts, A., Woodcock, J., Aldred, R. and Goodman, A. (2016) Trends in local newspaper reporting of London cyclist fatalities 1992-2012: the role of the media in shaping the systems dynamics of cycling, Accident Analysis & Prevention, **86**, pp. 137–145

Metz, D. (2014), *Peak Car*, London: Landor.

Næss, P., J. Andersen, M.S. Nicolaisen, and A. Strand (2014), 'Transport modelling in the context of the "predict and provide" paradigm', *European Journal of Transport and Infrastructure Research*, **14** (2), 102–21.

Owen, C. (2014), 'Deaths in the media: the portrayal of cycle and motorcycle deaths in London and Birmingham newspapers, 1998-2012', MSc thesis, University of Westminster, London.

Rissel, C., C. Bonfiglioli, A. Emilsen and B.J. Smith (2010), 'Representations of cycling in metropolitan newspapers – changes over time and differences between Sydney and Melbourne, Australia', *BMC Public Health*, **10** (371), available at http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/10/371 (accessed 6 October 2015).

Robinson, N. (2002), 'The politics of the fuel protests: towards a multi-dimensional explanation', *Political Quarterly*, **73** (1), 58–66.

Ryley, T. and N. Gjersoe (2006), 'Newspaper response to the Edinburgh congestion charging proposals', *Transport Policy*, **13** (1), 66–73.

Spinney, J. (2010), 'Mobilising sustainability: partnership working between a pro-cycling NGO and local government in London', in M. Peters, S. Fudge and T. Jackson (eds.), *Low Carbon Communities: Imaginative Approaches to Combating Climate Change Locally*, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar, pp. 89–107.

Transport for London (TfL) (2010), *Traffic Modelling Guidelines v.3*, London: TfL, available at http://www.tfl. gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/traffic-modelling-guidelines.pdf (accessed 6 October 2015).

Transport for London (TfL) (2013), 'Item ten: cycle superhighways', *Board Paper 27th March 2013*, London: TfL, https://www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/part-1-item10-cycle-superhighways.pdf (accessed 6 October 2015).

Transport for London (TfL) (2014a), *Attitudes Towards Cycling*, London: TfL.

Transport for London (TfL) (2014b), *Drivers of Demand for Travel in London: A Review of Trends in Travel Demand and their Causes*, London: TfL.

University of the West of England (2008), 'Making NATA fit for purpose: a submission for the NATA refresh consultation', prepared by The Centre for Transport & Society, University of the West of England, Bristol, March, available at http://www2.uwe.ac.uk/faculties/FET/Research/cts/projects/news/making-nata-fit-for-purpose.pdf (accessed 11 October 2015).

Vigar, G., A. Shaw and R. Swann (2011), 'Selling sustainable mobility: the reporting of the Manchester Transport Innovation Fund bid in UK media', *Transport Policy*, **18** (2), 468–79.

Wall, D. (2002), *Earth First! and the Anti-roads Movement*, London: Routledge.

Winslott-Hiselius, L., K. Brundell-Freij, A. Vagland and C. Byström, C. (2009), 'The development of public attitudes towards the Stockholm congestion trial', *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, **43** (3), 269–82.