



CYCLING CULTURES

Summary of key findings and recommendations

June 2012



Cycling Cultures: Final Report

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Foreword

This is the final report for the ESRC-funded Cycling Cultures project. Based at the University of East London (UEL) the project examined experiences of cycling in four relatively high-cycling English urban areas. It ran from January 2010-December 2011 and was supported by a First Grant, RES-061-25-0390. The PI was Dr. Rachel Aldred and the Research Fellow Dr. Katrina Jungnickel. The report lays out the aims and scope of the project, as well as the research methods we used. It summarises some key findings across all of our fieldsites, also providing an insight into specific characteristics of each. Finally, it makes some policy recommendations based on the research and catalogues outputs so far. It should be noted that while this is the 'final report', new findings are likely to continue emerging through re-analysis of data.

Acknowledgements

This project could not have happened without large amounts of help and accordingly there are many people that Katrina and I would like to acknowledge, although most remain anonymous. Firstly the research participants: we formally interviewed over 150 people and we informally spoke to many more. People put up with us asking lots of questions; they allowed us to hang around, ride with them, watch what they were doing. Secondly, we would like to thank all the people who helped arrange access, hosted events, and put us in touch with other people. Thirdly, we are grateful to our practitioner group who attended our meetings, answered our queries,

and suggested areas of interest. And of course, we thank ESRC for supporting this project and UEL for supporting our work in this field.

More specifically, our colleague Dr. Justin Spinney has commented on paper drafts and offered advice. Professor Molly Andrews, the named mentor on this project, has been a calm and thoughtful source of advice throughout, and Dr. Penny Bernstock, the Sociology, Social Enterprise, and Innovation Studies Field Leader, has been helpful and supportive in helping me balance teaching and research activities. Laura Golbuff, a PhD student with our Research Group, researched and co-wrote a report on Cycling Policy, and Kim Kullman helped us to prepare data for archiving and researched and co-wrote a report on cycle training in London. Alix Stredwick and Mark Strong helped facilitate stakeholder workshops, and Alix carried out some of the documentary research drawn upon in this report. Eva Martinez, our 2011 research intern, carried out a related project on cargo bikes in Hackney, while Maria Bühner, our 2012 intern, is carrying out a project on cycling advocacy in London.

Rachel Aldred

University of East London

June 2012

Summary of Key Findings

As often happens with qualitative research, new findings will continue to emerge as we continue to work with the data. Fifteen current key findings are listed here and summarised below. These have been, are being, or will be discussed in more depth within published papers. It should be noted that all narrative interviewees (and many stakeholders) were current cyclists, so, this data does not seek to present the views of current non-cyclists, instead complementing other work studying reasons people give for not cycling. It provides an insight into cycling in English urban areas among people who are not mostly ‘hardcore’ or ‘proper cyclists’, and who cycle in areas where cycling is *relatively* normalised.

Findings have been grouped into three areas for the report: those dealing with cycling experiences, those dealing with meanings associated with cycling, and those dealing with policy and promotion:

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Aims and Scope

This project sought to examine experiences of cycling in four relatively high-cycling English urban areas: Bristol, Cambridge, Hackney (Inner London) and Hull. The areas were selected for their topographical, demographic, and political diversity. All in 2001 had cycle to work rates at least twice as high as the UK average. Cambridge and Hull have traditions of cycling: Cambridge is now described as the UK's top cycling city, with cycle to work rates of around 25%, while Hull was given that accolade in the 1930s and one in eight people in the city still cycle to work. Bristol and Hackney, by contrast, have emerging cycling cultures while - like other large cities in the UK - lacking strong traditions of cycling.

The project complements other research that, like *Understanding Walking and Cycling*, focuses on more typical low-cycling contexts. Our project was instead embedded in places where cycling was more 'normalised', seeking to understand how this happens within what has been an unfavourable national context. We wanted to find out what British¹ cycling cultures were like, what supported them, and what local and national factors continued to exist as barriers. We found differences between the four areas alongside similarities. When cycling is defined as something alien to national identity, unsurprisingly perhaps local identity looms large for those promoting, or participating in, cycling.

¹ Within the UK, areas with higher cycling rates tend to be in England, as are all our case study areas, but we think some generalisations to Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland may be made, as well as to some other low-cycling Anglophone countries.

Research Methods

We took a qualitative approach to the four areas, focusing upon meanings, experiences, and practices associated with cycling. This has involved conducting 129 interviews with cyclists in the four locations (121 individual interviews, 8 paired or group interviews) and 33 interviews with cycling practitioners and stakeholders (27 individual interviews, 6 paired or group interviews)². The former group were reached by leafleting cyclists, by leaving 'spoke cards' on bicycles, by online advertisements, and in some cases by leafleting events (such as the Lord Mayor's Parade in Hull in 2010). Hull and Hackney were covered in 2010, and Bristol and Cambridge in 2011 (plus some pilot data collected in Cambridge in 2008). Extracts from this data can be read in this report. Anonymised transcripts are being deposited in the UK Data Archive for other registered researchers to use. All participant names used here are pseudonyms.

Additionally, we studied documentary data from the four areas, primarily policy documents. Bristol and Cambridge have been recipients of Cycling City funding (2008-11) and some of this material relates to those policy processes, although we did not seek to provide an evaluation of these programmes. We collected ethnographic data in the four locations. The first type of ethnographic data related to non-participant observation: for example, we positioned ourselves at junctions, took photographs and made notes about how cyclists (and others) behaved. The second type of ethnographic data related to

² This includes pilot research carried out in Cambridge in 2008.

events in which we participated: so, for example, we attended group cycle rides, took photographs, recorded video and GPS, spoke to other riders and made field notes. We have interrogated our data using coding schemes (e.g. looking for themes related to the representation of 'cyclists') with the aid of NVivo software.

Disseminating our Findings

Throughout the project and afterwards we have sought to get findings out to a wide range of groups. Academics have been reached through invited talks (in the UK and beyond), conference presentations, our own events, and peer-reviewed publications. Cyclists and the wider public read our blogs (seven on www.cyclingcultures.org.uk/) and viewed the Bike Portraits (online, exhibited in Hackney and Bristol, and distributed as postcards). We targeted our series of 'research zines' towards the public, and have published several magazine articles in the popular press.

Practitioners and stakeholders have engaged with all the above and in addition, we have produced for them several reports (on cycling policy, on cycle training, and on cargo bicycles). We created a targeted practitioner blog, and organised a series of four meetings specifically for practitioners. We have spoken

at community meetings in three case study areas (Bristol, Hackney and Cambridge) and in related localities (Newham). In 2012 we have spoken to the Transport for London Pan London Behaviour Change meeting and been invited to speak to Scottish Government staff, while Rachel has been invited to join the Department for Transport's Cycle Stakeholder Forum.

We have always viewed this project as not just studying cycling cultures but also as contributing to them. The blogs, zines, portraits, reports, papers, and events are themselves artefacts of cycling culture and exist within a context where cycling continues to be a hot topic with the blogosphere increasingly important. Our website gets hits from all over the world, some of which can be identified as originating from academic or policy organisations. Some visitors are directed to us from other sites, or from individuals, while still others come via search engines. While many are specifically searching for material on cycling, some visitors have initially searched for something unrelated such as 'Hull trains', but decide to stay and find out about Hull's cycling culture. Although the project is finished, the website will continue to be maintained and will be updated, for example giving details of publications and links to them.

Our Fieldsites

Our four fieldsites differed in a variety of ways, which mattered for how cycling was perceived and experienced, and for the types of people who tended to cycle in each area. This section briefly summarises key differences, then for each provides some more context and gives examples of data.

While cycling levels in England remain low overall (under 3% cycling to work in the 2001 Census), levels vary dramatically: in the 2001 Census seven local authority areas had cycle to work rates over 10%, and twenty-nine had rates between 5% and 10%. Meanwhile, twenty diverse local authority areas had cycle to work rates below 1%. So while England is correctly seen as a low-cycling country in European context, it contains places where cycling is relatively normalised; and where cycling rates although lower have increased dramatically in recent years.

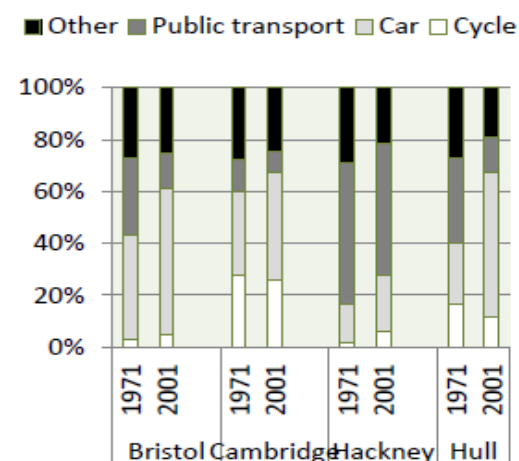
Cambridge and Hull both have traditions of cycling demonstrated in successive censuses; Cambridge leading the UK's commuter cycling league. The cities are very different in other ways; Cambridge is an affluent university city with a thriving 'knowledge economy' while Hull is a working-class city with limited employment opportunities, having lost its traditional industries decades ago. It is heavily reliant on public sector jobs. There are substantial differences in car ownership: in the 2001 Census Cambridge had 0.94 cars or vans per household (31.8% of households had no car or van), while Hull had 0.72 cars or vans per household (43.4% of households with no car or van). Across England in 2001 there were 1.1 cars or vans per household, 26.8% of households lacking a car or van.

Bristol and Hackney, our other two case study sites are places where cycling has risen recently: in both places, commuter cycling

rates were lower than the national average in 1971, but are now higher. Bristol is a large city and Hackney an inner-city London borough, and both have pockets of affluence alongside deprivation. Bristol's car ownership figures are similar to the English average, with 1.0 cars or vans per household (28.8% of households lacking a car or van). Car ownership in Hackney is low even by London standards: 0.5 cars or vans per household with 56.0% of households without a car or van. For Hackney interviewees the main perceived alternative to cycling is public transport. In Hull, it was sometimes public transport and sometimes the car, while for Bristol and Cambridge it was usually the car. Generally interviewees in all areas with the partial exception of Hackney perceived public transport as locally poor.

The table below illustrates key differences and changes in commuting modes between the four places. In terms of the latter, Bristol and Hull have become notably more car-dominated over the thirty-year period, Cambridge has become slightly more so, and overall mode shares in Hackney have changed relatively little.

Main mode of travel to work, 1971 and 2001
(source: Census Data; Crown Copyright)



(It should be noted that census area boundaries have not necessarily stayed the same during this period.)

While we were not aiming for statistical representativeness, the demographic balance of participants in the four areas was shaped by broader patterns of cycling. In Hull and Cambridge, interviewees tended to be older than in Hackney and to a lesser extent Bristol. The age distributions of interviewees in the four areas did not surprise us: in our ethnographic fieldwork, we observed a higher proportion of older people cycling in Hull and Cambridge, but fewer in Hackney and, to a lesser extent, Bristol. In Cambridge and Hackney our postcards attracted a relatively high proportion of female respondents; this was not surprising in Cambridge where the Census statistics show roughly equal numbers of male and female cycle commuters. In Hackney the official figures are less balanced but given our interviewee response and fieldwork observations, we think the gender

balance has shifted since 2001 to become more equal.

Our selection of stakeholders was also shaped by the area: in Bristol and Hackney we found a broader range of community, cultural, and business organisations related to cycling. This was linked to the more 'subcultural' nature of cycling in both places and in Bristol in particular, the broader existence of a professionalised volunteer culture. In Hull, most cycling organisations were more 'traditional' (often focused around sport or longer-distance touring); as were the bicycle shops, some run by families for generations. Bristol and Cambridge were recipients of 'Cycling City' funding between 2008 and 2011; in both places people were interviewed who had been involved with delivering these programmes. Hackney and Hull were not funded under this programme.

Bristol

Bristol has a population of approximately 430,000 within the City Council area. Located in South West England, it is the largest centre of culture, employment and education in the region. Renowned for grassroots creativity in art, music, animation and film, the city hosts cultural centres including Bristol City Museum, Art Gallery, Industrial Museum, Arnolfini, Watershed Media Centre and M-Shed. While the port and docks were once central to Bristol's prosperity, it is now regarded as having a leading knowledge economy. It has two large universities (the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England) and aerospace, defence, engineering, ICT and electronics, financial services and environmental industries.

While much of the city centre is located around the river and floating docks, the larger Bristol area is characteristically hilly. Yet because of its compact size, it is relatively easy to access the surrounding countryside. Bristol is served by a train service to London Paddington and other regional services. It has an Airport at Lulsgate and is connected to the M4 and M5 motorways. Public transport within the city is largely composed of bus networks, although there are some local train services. For such a large city personal car ownership and use is relatively high and the city suffers from congestion and parking issues.

Bristol was the first designated Cycling City in 2008 as part of central government's Cycling Towns programme managed by the now abolished Cycling England. Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council ran the programme until March 2011 when funding ceased. Government funding of £11.4 million was matched by the councils for a total spend of £22.8 million over three years. The level of

spending on cycling was up from the UK average of less than £1 per person each year to £16 per person per year.

Cycling modal share

It is noted in the Cycling City June 2010 report that between 2002 and 2008 cycling had risen by 37% - this is before the Cycling City programme. The current modal share of journeys is 5%, comparable with Zurich and Dusseldorf. The Cycling City programme reported cycling up by 44% on some routes, including some road bridges. During the first two years of the programme, cycling rose by 17%.

The average rate of people cycling to work in 2007 was 6.7%. The report on the Cycling City programme references figures from 2010, showing 9.8% of people cycling to work, with the Ashley area of the city showing over 1 in 4 (26%). Bishopston, Redland and Southville showed around 1 in 5 people cycling to work.

Themes from the Cycling Cultures project

Local retailers

Supporting and nurturing local culture and businesses is important for many Bristol interviewees. People talked about the need to keep independent shops alive and linked this to a sense of a wider Bristolian culture carrying through to other consumption practices.

There is probably somewhere I can get it cheaper but there is a really nice bike shop that's kind of pretty low key [...] and it's like a proper mountain bike type stuff but they are all really sound and it's an independent and in Bristol we like our independent stuff. (Seth, Bristol).

Cycling networks

There is a healthy second hand bike culture in the city, with many people interested in learning how to fix bikes and keep them maintained. In some cases this involved attended weekly bike maintenance courses, in others it was developing an informal network of people who could source parts and help fix bikes.

Well we used to have a guy who lived around the corner and his house was his bicycle workshop so he great I used to take the bike maybe once or twice a year for a service and he was very cheap but his whole house, it was fantastic. The front yard was full of old parts and then his front bedroom, his front room, was where all his bikes were put there. (Jan, Bristol).

Cycling places

The 13 mile Bristol to Bath cycle path is a treasured part of the cycling landscape. It operates as an important commute during peak work hours and as a prime leisure route for a range of people. People described it as providing a sense of countryside within the city and some spoke of choosing a new home by its closeness to the cycle path. Elsewhere Gloucester Road functions as a major but less enjoyable thoroughfare. Although hills at first appear formidable to a new cyclist, many talked about how their fear of these impediments lessened over time as they became fitter and learnt to navigate around them.

Grassroots culture

There is a strong grassroots cycling culture in the city, often with an arts and cultural focus. This includes specific bicycle festivals and parades, such as the Biggest Bike Ride and the Cycle Festival, while bicycles have also been prominent within other events, such as the 2009 St Pauls Carnival.

Yeah, I think it can be a really arty thing like erm... er... going on the Bristol Cycle Ride, that happened as part of the Cycle Festival... and loads of people dressed up and they transformed their bikes into all sorts of things. It was just really creative, really creative and it's a, you know, form of energy in terms of... alternative power. So, they were powering all the sound systems and I've been to, you know, film showings that were powered by bikes and things like that. (Joan, Bristol)

Workplace cultures

Some interviewees worked in places where cycling was relatively normalised as a mode of travel to work. One example was a small media company where bicycles sat on the mezzanine level acting as a constant reminder of the place of cycling within the company identity. Other examples included NHS bodies, where people referred to a sense that the NHS as a health promoting organisation ought naturally to support cycling. Within one NHS Trust an innovative scheme was providing electric (as well as traditional) bicycles for employees to use while visiting clients in the community. Clients would ask about the bikes and the health workers were able more easily to discuss health benefits of cycling.

Cambridge

Cambridge has a population of approximately 130,000 and is located in East Anglia. It is known as a University town, being home to the University of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin University, with a high number of high-tech businesses and science parks. It has a much higher than average proportion of people in professional, managerial or administrative jobs, at 32.6% compared with the national average of 23.5% (2001 Census). Likewise Cambridge has a much lower than average proportion of manual workers (27.6% vs. 40.2%) and more than twice the national average proportion of people with a higher qualification such as BSc, Masters or PhD, at over two-fifths of the population compared with under one fifth nationally.

As part of the East Anglia fenland, Cambridge is mostly very flat. The historic city has been protected from domination by cars partly due to the ban on Cambridge University undergraduates bringing a car. The city centre's streets have largely been preserved and are not conducive to high motor traffic levels or speeds. Restricting motor vehicles and speed limits combined with allowing cycle access through areas where motor vehicles cannot go (such as parks) have helped make this area relatively cycle-friendly. The centre has numerous green spaces that can be cycled through, such as Jesus Green and Parker's Piece. However, cycle access to some colleges is somewhat restricted. There is a chronic shortage of cycle parking.

Like Bristol, Cambridge was awarded Cycling City status in 2008 with a bid prepared by the County Council, in partnership with Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC). This provided £3.6m of additional funding, match-funded until April 2011 to total £7.2 million spending on cycle improvements in

Cambridge and surrounding areas. The main challenge to cycling's modal share, especially outside the city centre, is the continuing new developments of housing in the sub-region. If new estates follow the pattern of nearly all new regional housing developments in England they will be built with the car assumed as the main and essential transport mode and so will be car-dominated. The Cycle Cambridge programme initially aimed to target these developments; however the global recession slowed the pace of house building so its aim shifted to spreading Cambridge's cycling culture into surrounding villages and lower-cycling areas of Cambridge.

Cycling modal share

Cycling levels in Cambridge increased during the period of the programme with the modal share of cycling in the city rising to 21% from 18%, according to annual monitoring surveys carried out in October 2010. Overall cycling trips increased by 12%, almost exactly the target set at the outset (12.1%).

Themes from the Cycling Cultures project

Cycling 'makes sense'

People in Cambridge spoke of cycling being obvious and just 'making sense', marking a contrast to other places where even if cycling was described as having clear advantages, it was not part of the everyday culture in the same way.

[W]hen I moved to Cambridge there was no need to drive at all and I found myself arriving at places way before I knew I would arrive if I was driving there was just no sense in driving (Ruby, Bristol).

Cycling and the car

There was generally little association of cycling with poverty; if anything people argued the converse, that cycling was a choice made by people who were affluent enough to have other possibilities. Many of the people we spoke to also owned cars, although often saying that they used them relatively infrequently: for example, people cited visiting relatives or doing the 'weekly shop'. While owning a car is seen as normal, using it for short trips was often frowned upon.

Very occasionally [the car is used] for, you know, picking up other people's children, but even there, we try and cycle, or encourage them to cycle or, [the car is] not something we tend to offer, you know. (Victor, Cambridge)

Participation in cycling

People of all abilities participate in cycling in Cambridge: we also noticed high proportions of older people cycling, particularly compared to Bristol and Hackney. The flatness of the city combined with the relatively high degree of normalisation of cycling enables many who would otherwise be restricted by health problems or an inability to drive to maintain independent lifestyles. Over the period of the research we also encountered the growing visibility of cargo bicycles used to carry children.

Types of cyclists

Many people talked about two types of cyclists – locals and short-term students. The former know the rules and the city and the latter do not and are often seen cycling on the wrong side of the road. This creates some conflict with road users and locals who feel that these cyclists give all cyclists a bad reputation.

[T]here are people who live in Cambridge and who commute round Cambridge erm... who know the place fairly well, who are confident cyclists, who have good bikes, who, you know, have or have not got helmets, but they are confident cyclists, and you've got people who come here, you know, who use the bike hire schemes, or they are students coming here on crappy bikes. So, something will go wrong sooner or later with them, that they don't indicate, they do very foolish things. (Vickie, Cambridge)

But you still get these foreign language students and possibly some of the full time students disobeying the rules and still causing people, pedestrians to erm... feel that cyclists are a menace, which is a pity (Jean, Cambridge).

Hackney

Hackney has a population of approximately 234,000 and is an inner city borough of London. It is experiencing uneven gentrification and has high levels both of poverty and of cultural diversity. Every ward remains among the 10% most deprived in the country, with almost half the borough's children living in low-income households. There are relatively low levels of employment within the borough and many people travel into central London to work, around 4-5 miles away. While Hackney has improved overground rail links it lacks a tube station (except for Manor House at the extreme North of the borough, and Old Street at the extreme South-West), although bus services are relatively frequent. It has low rates of car ownership.

Hackney has 1300 listed buildings and 25 conservation areas, including Clissold Park and London Fields. Although relatively flat it does contain some hillier areas in the north such as Stamford Hill and in the north east on the approaches to the Lea Valley such as Mount Pleasant Hill and Springfield Park. Hackney is one of the greenest inner London Boroughs, partly due to Hackney Marshes in the south east of the borough, and partly because it has numerous small and medium-sized parks. Cycling is allowed through most green spaces in Hackney, ensuring that they do not automatically create significant barriers to cycling.

Hackney has a vibrant cycling culture visible among residents, community groups and small businesses and has seen the highest rise in cycling of any London borough in the last decade. The cycling environment includes canals, parks, and river routes, some very busy major roads, and traffic calmed local streets. The London Cycling Campaign in Hackney (LCCiH) encourages council officers

to follow principles of integration (cycling with the traffic) and permeability (e.g. promoting cut-throughs for cyclists). Hackney Council has in previous years run a Home Bicycle Parking project with LCCiH, retro-fitting bike parking solutions into housing estates and other residential properties.

Cycling modal share

In the 2001 Census Hackney's modal share for commuter cycling was just under 7%. The London Travel Demand Survey calculates mode share figures for all trips (generally below the mode share for commuter cycling); however, the figures must be treated with some caution at a borough level due to the relatively small sample size for cyclists, even in Hackney. In the latest Travel in London survey (4) the modal share of all trips (by main mode) originating in Hackney between 2008/09 to 2010/11 was reported as 5%.

Themes from the Cycling Cultures project

Cycling subcultures

As in Bristol, cycling in Hackney has a distinctive subcultural character. It is linked in many ways to creative and media cultures, fashion (for example, fixed gear cycling) and social activities as well as being a central vehicle for the everyday commute and functional mobility.

It's also the sort of fashionista stuff, isn't it, and all the... single speed stripped down stuff (Gary, Hackney).

Normal for Hackney

Many respondents recognised that although cycling is more 'normal' in Hackney, it is less so outside of the borough. Many felt that cycling as an adult to some extent represents a challenge to the norm and can signify a

counter-cultural lifestyle. In describing this, people made reference to specific cultural characteristics associated with London as well as Hackney.

My friends find my lifestyle challenging but then they er... you know, they live in suburbia and married and mortgages so ... I wouldn't want to live a day of their lives so... most of my friends have done that, settled down, marriage, mortgage thing, sensible mid-range saloon family cars. Hell, hell basically. The hell I've spent my life trying to escape (laughs) erm... so the fact that I still go around on a bicycle they think is quite twee ... they don't live in London. (Paul, Hackney).

Storage issues

Of all our fieldsites, the issue of cycle storage emerged most strongly in Hackney. High density housing in the borough (mostly flats and converted terraces) coupled with a fear of bike theft meant that many people have to incorporate their bicycles inside living spaces.

We have lots of bikes in our house because there are four of us... so we have one in the hallway as you go in so if you get home first (sighs). It's kind of like the prize spot because you haven't got to take it up the steps and if you're a good person and you get home first because you are home early you would take it up anyway because the next step is then you have to carry your bike over the bike which is in the hallway which is difficult erm... and then we have a tiny not big enough landing area upstairs where the other four bikes live and if your bike is at the back we

end up with bikes coming out of people's bedrooms and half in and out of your know... the room with a tiny cupboard with the boiler in it there is always half a bike in there and basically it looks like it's the "Day of the Triffids", cycles are coming to get you from all angles... (Marianne, Hackney).

Cycling promotion

Many cyclists in Hackney said they encouraged friends and work colleagues to start cycling, helping choose a bike, mend it, or find their way around the city.

I am not a cycling evangelist but I do kind of actively kind of cajole my friends into cycling (Joanna, Hackney)

A number of our Hackney interviewees worked in schools and spoke about cycling cultures within these contexts (although the rate of children cycling to school remains low, as in other London boroughs). As with health workers in Bristol, school employees can potentially influence a range of other people: colleagues, children, and parents of children. People spoke about colleagues and friends accompanying them on commutes, about being lent bicycles and equipment, and advising on places to avoid while cycling.

Cycling environments

Green space is important in Hackney as in the other areas. The towpath through the former industrial zone along the Lea Valley was cited as a key leisure route and as somewhere where new cyclists could enjoy and practice cycling. The Regents Canal runs East-West through the borough, although this can be very busy with pedestrians at rush hour and some cyclists said they avoided it because of potential conflicts.

Hull

Hull is part of the East Riding of Yorkshire, located on the River Hull at its junction with the Humber estuary. It has a population of approximately 263,900. Hull suffered significant damage during WWII necessitating much rebuilding. It was known for its fishing industry, on which much economic life in the city was based. This was closed down in the 1970s and much local employment is now related to the chemical and health care sectors. The city still has a busy shipping port with regular ferries connecting Hull to Europe (also leading to motorised freight passing through the city). It has a station and a bus network; the M62 motorway stops short of the city turning into the A63.

Hull is an often overlooked high-cycling city. People do not necessarily associate it with cycling, yet Hull was known during the inter-war period as the UK's "Cycling City" with large numbers of bike shops. It still has high cycling levels comparable to those of York. This is influenced by its flat topography, low car ownership and the 'compact city' (with high population density and relatively short commutes). There are some attractive green spaces within the city as well as some off-road routes along the waterfront, the 'drains' running through the city, and disused rail lines.

Over the past 25 years Hull has gained a reputation for wide-ranging traffic calming schemes and urban realm improvement projects that have benefited pedestrians and cyclists. During the 1990s wide cycle lanes were installed on some main roads such as the Hessle Road, where this replaced motor traffic lanes. One third of Hull's residential area has been traffic-calmed or is an official 20mph zone, and the Council seeks to continue pursuing a policy of a mixture of on-

and off-road cycle routes. Cycle theft is declining but remains a key issue and there still appears to be a focus on educating potential victims.

Cycling modal share

The census of 2001 found that 12% of Hull's journeys to work were cycled. Annual cycle count figures at specific locations have been broadly encouraging over the past decade and it will be interesting to see what changes in levels of cycling to work have taken place at a city-wide level from the 2011 census data. Data is more limited in Hull than in the other areas, as it has not had a Cycling City programme (which necessitated additional data collection to monitor progress) and it lacks the more detailed and regular data collected in London via the annual Travel Demand Survey.

Themes from the Cycling Cultures project

Health and fitness

Cycling for health reasons emerged strongly, especially (but not only) in an older generation of cyclists. This was often related to emotional as well as physical and mental health benefits: for example, people mentioned holding on to memories associated with the fish docks and other lost parts of Hull history.

The freedom....enjoying the weather, the exercise, the health benefits.
(Molly, Hull)

I really, I really like the health benefits. I always worry about you know all the fumes and stuff but I try not think about it too do much I mean you know it keeps your legs in good shape. It keeps your lungs in good

shape you know, breathing wise.
(Esme, Hull).

Getting from A to B

There is a long history of 'functional' cycling in Hull which still shapes how it is regarded today and as a result, many still talk about their bikes as 'functional'. Cycling is not always seen as a choice even though in many other low-income UK areas, cycling levels are very low despite a lack of car access. The association of cycling with necessity explains to some extent why many people did not recognise a cycling culture in the city, because people associate culture with lifestyle choices. 'Getting from A to B' was not the whole story, but it was an important aspect of how many Hull people defined their cycling.

I'm quite happy with the [bicycle] I've got to be quite honest. It, it gets me from A to B (Sally, Hull).

It's more than just getting from A to B I use it for, I use it for that to do tasks and all, but I do actually enjoy getting out there (Jason, Hull).

Theft

Most people we spoke to had experienced some form of bicycle theft, and for some as many as six bikes were stolen. Responses varied. Many did not insure their bikes so felt little incentive to report the loss to the Police. Most simply bought a new bike and a better lock and changed their practices. Others simply started to care less about their bikes.

You're always wary you know and... I've been sort of locking up every time and take the lights off and things like

you know.... That, that gets to me but I mean it has to be done but you know, it does. I mean years ago, when I was younger like I was a kiddie you just never locked it outside the shop, you'd just go in but you can't do that now (Pete, Hull).

A lost cycling past

In Hull, although cycling rates remain high, people often felt that cycling had been lost. This contrasted with Hackney, where cycling rates are if anything lower but cycling seems much more prominent. In Hull, people could still often remember the massed ranks of cyclists some decades ago, and contrasted this to a sense that now people in Hull do not really cycle. People also recalled experiences of cycling as children with nostalgia and felt that children today lacked freedom to explore by bicycle.

I remember my dad, me father took my stabilisers off when I was about four years old erm.. And then I was just off like I was a natural cyclist you know. And then because this was in 1960s erm... people generally didn't go on driving trips. People didn't have a lot of money in those day, so bicycle especially in a poor working class city like Hull erm... nearly everybody had a bicycle and children and young teenagers would erm... instead of going off with their families in the countryside in a car, would cycle off. So I used to cycle off erm.. to places like Malton and Pickering which is quite a long way, maybe thirty miles away. And we'd think nothing of doing that. (Oliver, Hull)

Key Findings

The fifteen key findings have been split into three areas: experiences of cycling, meanings associated with cycling, and cycling policy and promotion. Each key point is accompanied by a brief explanation of findings and examples of data on which it is based. For more information on any of these findings or to find out about new or existing publications please contact PI Rachel Aldred.

Cycling Experiences

1. Compared with motorised modes, cycling creates distinctive experiences of places

Our research develops the idea that cycling offers a unique way of experiencing urban environments. One aspect of this is in terms of 'sonic register' (what you hear when you are travelling). Cyclists, like pedestrians, are particularly open to the sound of the city (Aldred 2010). In cars, people have been increasingly shut off from this, first by windows and doors and now also by air-conditioning and in-car entertainment, while public transport provides a more collective 'inside' environment.

The openness to sound experienced on a bicycle can be experienced as a blessing; for example, one interviewee said she loved being able to listen to birdsong while cycling to work on part of the Hull to Hornsea rail trail. However, it can be a curse: for example, people complained about constant noise from motor vehicles when on or near busy roads, noise from which users of motorised modes are themselves shielded. Other senses are heightened when cycling: people mentioned experiencing smells of cut grass, fish and chips, or diesel fumes, and the impact of feeling smooth or bumpy cycling surfaces. These are all connected: where there are pot-holes people must constantly watch the ground; where surfaces are smooth more attention can be paid to other senses. People talked about having to work harder (in terms of physical, mental and emotional effort) where cycling environments are less pleasant or more difficult to negotiate.

Cyclists are often expected to use their sense of hearing to the maximum possible, with those who do not do this described as 'iPod zombie cyclists'. Our response to this polarised debate was to explore choices made by the minority of interviewees who said they did listen to audio while cycling. We found that these cyclists made situated choices about when and how they use it, describing situations in which they felt it was 'safe' and in which they felt it was 'unsafe'. In other words they were not 'zombies' automatically attached to devices but people making and regularly reviewing decisions about whether to use these devices. Often users of mobile devices cited their need for 'relaxation' in the context of pressurised and noisy urban environments: interestingly, the first car radios were advertised to drivers on the same basis.

Key quotes:

You've got this little bit in the middle where it's just you and you've got your headphones on listening to music because the cycle tracks quite good so that you can put your stereo on and not have to think about cars coming up behind you (Neil, Bristol).

[I]t just seems to calm me and the time flies and you don't think about it so much. So again that, that could be erm classed as dangerous I suppose. But yeah it just relaxes me having, having me iPod on (Andrew, Hull)

2. Emotional benefits from cycling are important

We found that motivations for cycling were varied and included physical health benefits, cost and convenience, which have been cited in other research. Environmental motivations were rarely mentioned as key motivators, but were referred to: primarily in relation to local environments, including feelings of contributing to neighbourhoods being safe and pleasant (see also Aldred 2010).

Additionally, emotional benefits of cycling were described as important by many interviewees, for example in terms of 'me time' and 'winding down'. The physical activity provided by cycling can simultaneously produce emotional health benefits, although the extent and nature of this will depend upon the cycling environment.

Memory also came up as a key motivator: in particular, linked to nostalgic memories of cycling as a child. These memories were not generally related to cycling to school (which prompted a small amount of negative memories around bike theft and bullying) but instead related to 'messaging around' on bikes. The exact nature of the 'messaging around' varies depending upon the time and the place, but was remembered vividly by many. Interviewees could often remember the first time they cycled unaided, with Dad or Mum 'letting go' a rite of passage towards greater

independence. For those who cycled as a child, starting cycling again as an adult can provide a link to positive feelings and experiences associated with childhood. The implications are that children's mobility can contribute to mobility choices made in adulthood.

Key Quotes

[T]he [Bristol to Bath] cycle track, although it's going into the middle of Bristol city, it feels like it's a country lane. You've got like allotments either side, you've got trees growing over. So, it's quite pretty. So, it just, it clears your mind a little bit. It just gives you a little bit of time to think, especially when you're coming back to a house full of kids (Neil, Bristol)

Had a shopper bike that I stripped back. I painted it, sprayed it, sprayed it all erm.... blue I think it went. I don't know why coz it was purple and that was my favourite colour but I decided to go blue for some reason metallic it was and put it all back together and I think I.... probably still got photos of it at home in different stages of being stripped down and put back together (Molly, Hull)

3. Social riding creates 'mobile public spaces' different from individual riding

One aspect of 'everyday cycling' is riding in groups, which happens in varying degrees of organisation and formality. At one end, participants in Hackney spoke of increasingly encountering 'packs' of other cyclists at Advanced Stop Lines. Many felt this made them feel safer and part of a rising tide of cyclists, but some also felt nervous - how does one behave in a group of cyclists, while moving or while stopped? More organised groups exist, for example, one interviewee in Hull arranges an annual ride up the rail trail to Hornsea with family and friends. Specialist rides include tandem rides (in Hull and in Bristol), and rides requiring specialist clothing (from 'No Lycra' to mountain bike outings) and none (the Naked Bike Ride).

We studied two more traditional rides closely, one in Hull (Rachel and Katrina attended) and one in Hackney (Rachel attended). Examining the GPS tracks and the photos taken, we saw that group leisure rides using road space occupy an interesting position. They are using the road for what are seen to be dubious (leisure/socialisation) purposes, as well as using a marginalised transport mode. We saw them create 'mobile public spaces' which could be compared to, for example, a tour bus where people know each other, and move up and down the bus chatting. These mobile public spaces ebbed and flowed depending on the surrounding environment. Spaces perceived as safe and cycle-friendly (e.g. quiet lanes and streets, parks) generated different types of interaction between the group compared to faster and busier roads, where often both groups assumed a single file, defensive formation where chatting was impossible. These experience raise the

question of what purposes, as well as what modes, are prioritised on our streets.

Key Quotes

[N]ow we do these Tuesday afternoon rides, nothing official but it's just me and a few friends and we go on some route. Like last week we got on bikes on the cycle track and within half an hour we were up in Ashton Court looking down over Bristol, sitting there having a coffee up there [with the kids] and the social thing. We'd met up... It was completely different from the isolation I felt when it was just me and [son], trying to juggle around with the pushchair (Darren, Bristol)

On the quiet roads it mostly does feel like cyclists' territory and clearly people value the feeling of safety as well as the companionship (sometimes involving 'shared misery' as Alan puts it, in the Winter!). Where cars speed along these roads people mutter 'Eeejit!' to each other. However on a few stretches of A and fast B roads it's different; people largely move into single file and cycle quietly and near the kerb. This is car territory and it's unhappily accepted that the cars zoom past us at 50 mph. On these roads there seems to be much less tolerance of us; although when we all signal and move into a right turning position then it does feel relatively ok. (Fieldnotes, Rachel, group ride, East Yorkshire, 2010)

4. In terms of skills, knowledge, and 'stuff', a lot is expected of cyclists

Bicycles sold in the UK tend to fall into two categories: cheap mountain bicycles, and expensive touring or mountain bicycles. This reflects assumptions that developed in the post-war years that cyclists would either be poor (no motor vehicle) or affluent ('leisure cyclists'). Hull was the site where these assumptions were most dominant, and it was quite difficult to find a bicycle shop that sold other types of bicycle³. The cheap mountain bikes most common in the UK require cyclists to provide a lot of 'stuff'. Unlike continental city bikes, mountain bikes do not have built-in lights or locks, and so cyclists to be legal after dark (and keep their bicycles secure) must carry separate lights and locks. Cyclists are also expected to wear specialist clothing (reflective gear, helmets, etc.) An interesting thought experiment is to consider how driving would be affected, if drivers had to remember to bring their own lights and locks each time they made a journey, removing their lights again while the car was parked.

As well as the 'stuff' that cyclists have to juggle (clothes and accessories), they require knowledge that - in a low-cycling country - is not always easily available. One interviewee referred to this as 'learning to think like a cyclist': to assess routes, deciding if they would be, for example too far, too busy, too hilly, or too difficult to follow. A mixture of cultural and infrastructural factors is at work. Cycling can be inconvenient because routes are unpleasant or unsafe; it may also feel inconvenient because people think cycling will tire them out more than it actually does, or feel unable to cope with the 'stuff' they feel is required. Finally, cyclists are required to learn skills that may be unnecessary or taken for

granted when travelling by other modes. Drivers do not need to learn how to deal with punctures or brake problems; increasingly they do not need map reading skills because of in-car GPS. Cyclists however often feel they ought to be able to keep their bicycle on the road. While many find such a 'DIY cycling' ethos appealing, particularly among arts and community groups in emerging cycling cultures, others we spoke to simply wanted to get their bicycle fixed by a professional as would happen with a car.

Key Quotes

I'd change the brake cables and erm... I don't think I ever had to change the gear cable but erm... yeah, er... now I'm being a little bit romantic and rosy tinted spectacles because, I'm proud and, I suppose it feels empowering, to repair my own bike. But I think there were times when I was probably swearing a lot (laughs). Because the reality is kind of like, it can be frustrating. Erm... but it's not too bad, you know, like changing the brake blocks, it's not rocket science (Lisa, Bristol)

I think a really important thing to encourage people is not to emphasise having to do all your own repairs. I know that sounds a bit wussy. And I used to, when I was a mountain bike instructor I did it all myself, now I can't even remember how you do any of it. I just don't have time, you know. And I'm so happy to pay somebody at a place like this, 10, 15 quid to do it for me and just, you know, save me the stress. (Lisa, Hackney)

³ This has however changed since we carried out the fieldwork.

5. Storage issues shape and limit the use of bicycles

Much research has concentrated on experiences or meanings associated with the bicycle in movement. Less attention has been directed to what goes on 'behind the scenes' in order for cycling to happen. However, a pervasive theme in our research is concern about what could happen to the bicycle when it is *not* in use. Bicycles at rest are perceived as threatened - by theft or vandalism, most obviously, but also by the weather. People we interviewed eloquently expressed how they felt when they experienced loss or damage in this way, and their fears of such loss or damage. In a society where mobility is highly valued, waking up in the morning to find your bicycle missing can feel like a part of your self has been taken.

Accordingly, people spoke of using a variety of strategies - changing or adapting the bicycle itself, changing their own routines, adapting places and actively selecting new places - to counter the threat of theft or damage. This background work serves both to enable, and to limit, cycling practices. For example, some people chose cheap bicycles or deliberately left their bicycles looking dirty or unmaintained in order to deter theft: this has implications for their cycling experiences. Other people spoke about conflicts at home over bicycles in the way, or wanting to have two bicycles (e.g. one for short utility trips and one for longer leisure rides) but only having the space to keep one. In Hackney, where

many people live in flats, storage pressures were particularly acute; but for many people in all areas storing bicycles at home and at work was a big issue, subject to constant negotiation. Thinking about bicycle journeys as 'end-to-end' (more than even door-to-door – doors at home and at work can also be an issue!) highlights potentially important issues additional to those experienced while actually on the bike.

Key quotes:

We're only a small team of, we're only a team of five people doing, doing our work so erm there's an office in the back that, that used to be our regional manager's office but he's since left and the new regional manager based in another office so. I use that room just as my changing room really and I stash my bike in there....(Harry, Hull)

Oh yes it's fine yeah, yeah we've just moved in so there is not much in the kitchen so there is plenty of space for it there and less in the way although I think we are thinking about making possibly a bicycle shed or something in the front garden or something because I don't think it can live there for too much longer. (Elizabeth, Hackney).

Cycling Meanings

1. The meanings of cycling are different in different localities

We found that culture matters in terms of different localities, as indicated above in the discussion of fieldsites. Firstly, there is a distinction between the two 'established' and the two 'emerging' cycling cultures. In the two 'established' cycling cultures, cycling has a more 'everyday' character. This 'everyday' character had different connotations: in Cambridge, it was often defined as a rational choice between competing modes, while in Hull it was more often seen as something that people would do because they did *not* have other choices, often tied to personal narratives about upbringing in a city known for its high cycling rates. However, in both cycling was defined as not being about 'culture' in the sense of individual cycling identities or lifestyles.

But in the newer cultures of cycling, cycling cannot so easily be constructed as 'everyday' and has a more subcultural character. In both Bristol and Hackney cycling has become associated with different types of local arts and media organisations and networks, as well as with more mainstream types of community project also existing in Cambridge

and Hull (e.g. cycle sports projects). Free regular community maintenance workshops are prominent in Bristol and Hackney, suggesting a link between a DIY ethos and some of the cycling cultures there. We did not find community workshops in Hull, instead people we spoke to had often been taught to maintain their bicycle by a parent.

Key Quotes

There's a cycling community where people will go out for leisure but a lot of the people that you see they're on main roads and they're just wanting to get from one place to another (Esme, Hull).

Hackney is definitely erm... you know retro bikes you know a lot of girls riding the sit up and beg and a lot of fixed wheel bikes and a lot of single speed erm... you know old fashioned bikes or the new sort of track bikes with the aero wheels and that kind of thing and the people on them are very much the East London fashion (Rob, Hackney).

2. Key life course events affect what cycling means to people

When interviewing people we asked about their cycling histories and it became clear that people's ability and desire to cycle varies across the life course, as does the meaning of cycling. For older cyclists, cycling could be more challenging but was often highly valued because they felt it provided independence at a time of their lives when this was seen as particularly important. Some of the people we spoke to found cycling easier than walking; a few had turned to cycling after becoming no longer able to carry out more vigorous physical activity, such as running or playing football.

Cycling with children brings its own challenges: some interviewees spoke of periods when cycling did not feel convenient, while others spoke of how needing to find safer and shorter routes constrained their choices. However, sharing the pleasure of cycling was also appreciated. One interviewee currently using a cargo bicycle with a front carrier talked of how much he valued the chance to chat with his children while riding, and to see them as he rode. Another parent said she felt that cycling with her children was much more convenient than the alternative available to her, of using the bus.

Several older and disabled interviewees used adapted or electric bicycles, and some raised

questions about the inclusivity of cycling infrastructure. For example, a handcycle user may not be able to navigate gates used on cycle paths, and rough ground and steep inclines may pose particular problems. This is often compounded by the lack of indication given on maps that such barriers may be encountered. Barriers like cycle gates also affect some cargo bicycles, which are currently rare in the UK but becoming more common in some places, such as Cambridge.

Key Quotes

When I first had it [a tricycle], of course, I could walk. So, it was just a useful way of getting my shopping which was stable. I could load up a real lot of groceries and its stable, unlike a bicycle, but I would say now, liberating is the right word, yes, because without it I don't see how I would do my shopping (Jean, Cambridge).

I think I cycled up to the point, probably, where I got my first job, when I was about eighteen. I suppose that's the time when cycling is a bit uncool, your sort of late teens, and I think that's when I started to commute though, yeah, driving to work. (Neil, Bristol)

3. Cyclists are still stereotyped and stigmatised (including by other cyclists)

While many interviewees love cycling, 'being a cyclist' is still problematic. Cyclists face two apparently opposed stereotypes. Firstly, there are persistent perceptions of cyclists as incompetent: research in 2010 for the Department for Transport reported that 'other road users' viewed cyclists as not knowing, or not caring about, the rules of the road. Interviewees worried about not being a 'good enough' cyclist, with some expressing embarrassment at potential signs of incompetence such as being unable to fix punctures, not being skilled at signalling, or not wearing a helmet.

But the second stereotype people tried to avoid was being 'too much' of a cyclist, variously described as a 'proper cyclist', a 'cycling fanatic', a 'bike nut' or a 'sporty cyclist'. While on one level cyclists worried about being seen as incompetent, on another level becoming a 'competent cyclist' did not help, because being a cyclist itself is seen as a mark of stigma. Many interviewees responded to this by drawing boundaries (criticising

others as 'bad cyclists') or by worrying their own mistakes might be used against other cyclists.

Key Quotes

[I am] like a semi cyclist still because I am still new to this and because... I don't know why but in my head I am still... until I have been on a cycling holiday or been on holiday and cycled a lot or done like a bike ride like Cambridge to London or London to Brighton or whatever I think then in my head I would be a proper cyclist until I have tested myself in some way then I would be a proper cyclist but at the minute I am a semi one because it is for commuting and for fun. (Erika, Cambridge)

We have a lot of very bad cyclists who essentially ignore the rules of the road, travel without lights, that sort of thing. (Neil, Cambridge)

4. Cyclists are often judged by the way they dress

In the UK, much attention is focused on what cyclists wear: Lycra (or not), helmets (or not), hi-vis (or not). Many observers have drawn contrasts with cycling cultures in countries like The Netherlands and Denmark where people are more likely to cycle in 'everyday' clothes. We found differences across our fieldsites: we saw most Lycra and helmets in Bristol, and least in Cambridge. Perhaps not coincidentally Bristol has the lowest cycling rate across the fieldsites and Cambridge the highest. There is a tradition of worrying about cycle wear that goes back to the early days of cycling, where women cyclists were frowned upon partly because traditional female clothing did not seem to go well with the bicycle.

People in our various fieldsites were often concerned about what their choice of clothing (and accessories) might signal about them. Many sought a middle way in between 'everyday clothing' and cycle-specific clothing, putting together outfits to fit multiple demands. While images of 'sports cycling' can be off-putting, images of 'cycle chic' can were also sometimes experienced as problematic,

with some interviewees expressing concern about pressure to look stylish while riding. Helmets are not seen as stylish, yet there is strong pressure to wear helmets for 'safety reasons'. Worrying about what to wear on the bike can act as another barrier to cycling, sometimes linked to the fear that only sporty, super-fit and well-equipped people are entitled to or able to cycle.

Key Quotes

My wife, here, always wears a helmet. It's, it's, she feels naked on a bike without a helmet. In Holland, "No, don't need one". (Lee, Cambridge)

[I]t does matter how you look you know when you're on the road as well... I know you're treated differently depending on what you wear... If I'm on my shopper and I'm in this fancy skirt or whatever... I'm treated differently to when I'm on my road bike and I'm in my... erm.... you know these shoes and and in the kit. (Helen, Hull)

5. In some contexts, cycling is being redefined as aspirational

While as discussed above, cycling has traditionally been defined as associated with poverty or with a leisure lifestyle niche, this seems to be changing in some contexts. Particularly in emerging cycling cultures, cycling is being redefined as being aspirational - associated with middle class status or even with wealth. This is linked to broader social shifts related to production and consumption patterns. People are increasingly aware of the 'obesogenic environments' surrounding them. Many areas of life have had physical activity designed out of them; and sedentary behaviour is no longer seen as a privilege (the middle class manager with his car and his office) but as a disease of the poor. In particular, the car has moved from a status symbol in itself, to a mass consumer object. Linked to this, 'exercise' has become something people have to plan as a specific activity, and even something that people pay for (e.g. spinning classes).

Some of our interviewees specifically said they felt cycling was associated with affluence: this happened in Bristol, Cambridge, and Hackney. Stakeholders involved in Bristol Cycling City talked about their hope that new infrastructure would be used by trend-setting professionals and that

this would spread to other groups influenced by their actions. In Hackney, people pointed out that where many people live in flats with limited storage space, having somewhere safe to keep your bike can actually be a sign of affluence. However, the kind of cycling that better-off people do may also be more 'visible': both seen as more desirable (e.g. by advertisers and policy-makers), and more prominent due to the time of day and the routes used by this group (for example, busy morning commuter routes).

Key Quotes

But also, cyclists are, are, are usually middle-class. They've got money, you know. They're, they, if advertisers want to sponsor, advertise to people with money, cyclists usually, at the moment are middle-class. (Jean, Bristol: cycle campaigner)

I think probably in Hackney you get more of the middle class cycling, I think, whereas in other boroughs those people would naturally progress to a car. So I think there's more... People with young families, professionals will have bikes. (Thomas, Hackney)

Cycling, Promotion and Policy

1. Personal support plays a key role

In low-cycling contexts, personal support becomes particularly important. Many interviewees could talk about how they encouraged others, or how they themselves had been encouraged to cycle. A commonly cited way in which others helped was by accompanying new cyclists – often this meant showing someone around their commute to work on a Sunday when there would be less motor traffic. People mentioned this as a benefit of cycle training: cycle trainers might show trainees an alternative to an unpleasantly busy roundabout. Friends also helped in less directive ways, by inviting people to ride with them on a Sunday leisure ride, which could then lead to the invitee thinking about cycling for other journeys. As one interviewee put it, ‘Everybody needs a couple of saints’.

As well as advising on routes, friends and acquaintances helped in other ways. People passed on second hand bikes; they helped people fix bikes during lunch breaks; they lent and even bought clothing for friends; they passed on panniers and advised what kind of wet weather gear to buy. More broadly, at work peer pressure matters: this can be negative, leading people to feel defensive about cycling, but in other contexts peer pressure at work acted to reinforce cycling and create disapproval of *driving*.

Some workplaces have particularly strong potential to create influence chains: for example, in Hackney a number of the people we spoke had young children or worked in schools, and school contexts provide opportunities for cycling parents or teachers

to influence other parents, teachers, and children. In Bristol we spoke to a number of health service employees, many of whom felt that part of the NHS’s role as a public health promoter was to encourage cycling among staff. One project involved providing traditional and electric bikes to staff visiting patients in the community; this was cited as potentially then influencing patients’ attitudes to physical activity and to cycling more specifically.

Key Quotes

[S]he said to me like, “Oh I think I’ve got a puncture”. I said, “Do you want to bring it round” you know, this is on Sunday and...and she came round, had a really really good afternoon, three hours spent together just sat in the garden, cleaning, scrubbing... bit of you know cleaner on the bikes... scrubbing the.... you know loads of tooth brushes everywhere rah rah rah. Really excellent. Got her bike sorted. (Helen, Hull)

I encouraged [my friend] to start cycling to work, because she wasn’t really doing that, but, I mean I helped her to sort of, I said, “Oh, if you get some...”, she’s a teacher, “If you get some panniers...” and also, then I actually erm... bought her some waterproof trousers, and just generally did that. Another friend [...] I went out with her on the Sunday, to do her route to work. (Kerry, Bristol: cycle campaigner)

2. Advocacy, activism, and organisations matter

Another aspect of the research was studying cultures of cycling within local organisations. We found that advocacy, activism, and organisation matter. At a national level, cycling is still shaped by the de-prioritisation of cycling in postwar transport policy and by the opposition of cycle campaign groups to cycle-specific infrastructure. At a local level, organisational cultures also matter. In all our areas, cycling could be described as ‘partially institutionalised’. There was some acceptance that cycling is broadly a ‘good thing’ (not always the case in the UK) but with continuing institutional, financial and organisational barriers: for example, interviewees cited a lack of resources and/or institutional will to ensure developers adhered to planning conditions related to cycling.

Probably the clearest example of the difference local organisations make comes from Hull in the 1990s, where other factors were unfavourable (cycling had declined locally, and cycling nationally remained marginalised). In Hull, various factors came together to support cycling. Local voluntary and campaign groups were formed or reinvigorated, from groups promoting the World Health Organization’s Healthy Cities programme to a local Reclaim the Streets group. The Hull Cycle Campaign was formed with at its height 10-12 committee members and 30-40 activists. A local authority reorganisation abolished the old Humberside County Council and created a Unitary Authority in Hull. Many planning officers in the new Authority were sympathetic to cycling; the campaign pushed for a Cycling Officer and one was appointed. Money was spent on cycling, including reallocating carriageway space and improving off-road routes. Measures like 20mph zones also helped to make streets more cycle-friendly.

Hull cycle campaign no longer exists, Hull no longer has a dedicated cycling officer, and budget cuts have reduced money for cycling. But the legacy of the 1990s is still visible, as officers push for developers to contribute towards the local cycle network. Officers drew on their own experience in arguing more effort needed to be put into supporting cycling, including visible infrastructure.

Key Quotes

So if you can get the Highways guys that have to comment on planning applications and say, “Right. We’ve got a planning application to put a big new factory here. We know that there’s an off-road cycle track where it goes right into the, to the centre down there and we need a new link building as part of that if we can lever in some funding, put a planning condition on this development there and they provide X” and we do that, get it written in and two years later you’ve got yourself a fabulous link (Bill, Hull: former council officer)

Yes, a lot of the infrastructure in Hull wasn’t necessarily planned as such, it came about through events. Someone turned up and someone else said, hang on, we’ve got some money for that or can we get a cycle lane through here, can we put something at the traffic lights, there was an accident here, that’s an accident hotspot here, can some of the road safety money be put towards it, we’ll have a look at that. It just sort of evolved like that. Yes the development plan helps but it could just sit on someone’s bookshelf. (Tony, Hull: cycle campaigner)

3. 'Utility cycling' can limit our understanding of cycling practices and motivations

Understandably, where cycling has become defined as a children's or leisure pursuit, many advocates seek to promote 'utility cycling'. This is seen as cycling as 'just' a mode of transport, a rational choice to get to a specific destination. Utility cycling *par excellence* is commuter cycling, particularly as (a) data on commuting is relatively good and (b) the commute is a regular trip that shows high levels of local variation in terms of modal split within the same country or region. Many interviewees spoke about their cycling as being 'utility cycling', 'transportation cycling', 'functional', 'purposeful' or 'materialist'. Yet at the same time people could talk about trips undertaken purely for enjoyment, and 'utility' journeys lengthened to allow routes to take in favourite parks or quiet streets.

In a sense this is not surprising. Research on other modes of transport suggests that travel time can be valued in itself, and is not seen purely as a cost. Our research confirms more crossover between purpose and pleasure than is sometimes assumed. People would speak, for example, of riding with friends on a Sunday on local leisure routes, and this encouraging them to try riding to work.

There is also the question of what cycling is for. In terms of physical and mental health, trips made by older people could be particularly valuable, yet, like older people's bus trips, these journeys may not actually 'go anywhere' but be about socialising, enjoying

the outside world. Similarly, children's everyday leisure cycling is often overlooked, unlike the more purposeful riding to school (which is also of course important).

Prioritising 'utility cycling' runs the risk of prioritising trips made by 'AAAs' - affluent, able-bodied adults - and should perhaps be replaced with 'everyday cycling'. 'Everyday cycling' acknowledges that motivations and purposes often overlap; continuing to prioritise mundane trips it includes local cycling focused more around leisure and socialisation.

Key Quotes

Mary: [W]e use the track going all the way to Hedon and then we use the track going all the way into Sutton so we're very fortunate to be able to use the tracks. But the bike is erm... not only fitness but it's good for your mind because like.. we lost a daughter so to bike erm... is really good to erm... for your mind as well.

Jan: For your stress.

Mary: Yes. For stress. So erm.... the bike to me and me husband is everything.

(Hull, mother and adult daughter)

[M]y entire life is enhanced by the fact that I can cycle to work on the [Bristol to Bath] cycle path you know that is my outdoor time every day.
(Ruby, Bristol)

4. Cycling policy is shaped by broader ideas about social and public policies

Cycling policy should be seen within the context of changing policy paradigms more broadly. Within the UK, cycling disappeared from post-war public policy: the 'Keynesian welfare state' consensus did not feature cycling. Driving by contrast loomed large even when most of the population lacked car access. In the 'Buchanan Report' on *Traffic in Towns*, published in the early 60s, it was assumed that demand for cars would continue to grow. Cycling barely registers in *Traffic in Towns*, despite cycling levels still being relatively high when the report was published. While for post-war social democrats public transport could be seen as an important residual social service (collectively provided and subsidised) cycling did not fit within mainstream Right or Left-Wing conceptions of public policy.

Within UK postwar transport planning then, there was a role for public transport (even if viewed as a declining role), but not for cycling. Cycling was not seen as something in which the state should intervene; rather than being in the public sphere it was constructed as private and increasingly as a 'leisure' activity.

Cycling in the UK never became 'strategic', in the sense of being part of national state planning.

When cycling did become part of mainstream public policy, in the 1990s, the perceived role of the state had changed, from providing to commissioning, or from 'rowing' to 'steering' in the influential words of Davis Osborne and Tom Gaebler. Policy orthodoxy now stated that government should outsource provision and increasingly even planning of services (for example, via the Private Finance initiative). Although the 'strategic road network' remained largely controlled by the state, the new policy area of cycling was constructed in accordance with new ideas about policy governance. It was variously outsourced to charities (the National Cycle Network), Non-Departmental Public Bodies (Cycling England), and/or a patchwork of public, private, and voluntary sector bodies (Bikeability). Cycle planning remained localised with cycle networks negotiated locally rather than being seen as having broader national importance (for example, like the proposed high speed rail link from London to Birmingham).

5. Existing everyday cyclists in higher-cycling areas have a lot of ideas about improving cycling

Many interviewees (cyclists and stakeholders) could point to problems they regularly experienced while cycling, as well as to infrastructure, places or services they thought were particularly good. We asked interviewees what they thought could be done to encourage cycling (although often this was raised spontaneously). Responses seemed to change in the main study compared to the pilot. In 2008, Rachel was struck by the feeling among many pilot interviewees that cycling was an individual decision and little could be done to encourage other people to cycle. Most did not make links between their experiences as cyclists and particular policies or other changes that might encourage cycling.

In the main study (2010-11), however, people seemed more likely to respond positively to the question, or to spontaneously raise the issue in the interview. Infrastructural improvements were a common theme, with related complaints often relating to narrow cycle lanes where parking is allowed and which come into conflict with left turning motor traffic, or to shared use pavements that create conflict with pedestrians. Other suggestions related to bicycle storage, changing the legal responsibilities of drivers and cyclists, providing more repair and changing facilities, supporting community projects, improving financial incentives, cycle training, and driver education.

Many 2010-11 interviewees suggested that – at least in some contexts, such as alongside busy main roads – high quality segregated infrastructure (i.e. separate from pedestrians and motor vehicles) could help to increase perceptions of safety and encourage cycling. In Hackney the picture was more mixed; people were less likely than in other areas to

suggest such infrastructure, which links to the context there: neither the Council nor the cycle campaign favour segregated infrastructure. Some Hackney interviewees criticised cycle-specific facilities on the grounds that cyclists have a right to be on the road and taking them off the main carriageway weakens their ability to deal with motor traffic, as well as threatening their right to use the road.

The best thing is definitely is just separate cycle ways that, that are useful, that don't just go somewhere where there's no traffic anyway or don't really link any useful places, but that actually can be used to get from, I don't know, a residential suburb all the way to the, like the Bath cycle path. (Matt, Bristol)

I don't believe that most people are going to cycle regularly and as a matter of course unless they have some kind of facility that feels reasonably safe to them. So, whether that's a road which has got slow speeds and not much traffic, or whether it's a segregated lane or whether it's traffic free, you know, it doesn't have to always be the same thing, but unless it feels safe enough, you know, I don't think we're going to get most people cycling. (Sara, Bristol)

[E]verybody who's been to Holland or Belgium has seen the facilities there and that's the obvious standard to aim for isn't it? (Clive, Hull)

I have also cycled in the Netherlands as well and compared to the Netherlands they have got it so sorted

out there the cycles do very much have priority and there are cycle routes for everywhere it is just amazing and it's just a shame we don't have something similar over here because it makes a massive difference you feel so much safer. (Tara, Cambridge)

I think unless you've got a cycle lane which takes you from your doorstep to where you are going you are going to have to ride in traffic at some point and I think it encourages people to not pay attention and to not... then when they suddenly have to ride in traffic they are not aware of what's going on, you know for me a bicycle is a mode of transport and it belongs on the road. (Toby, Hackney)

[Cycle] training is the main thing that we promote and encourage to get children confident on the roads, sometimes people talk about cycle lanes being the erm... kind of this magical solution of put in a cycle lane and it's automatically safer but actually other studies have shown that if there is a cycle lane in then... which to be fair in London there is not an awful lot of space to put them in but if we put cycle lanes in then the cars actually drive closer to the line and end up driving closer to cyclists and if there isn't then cyclists, then cars give the cyclists more space. (Catherine, Hackney: local authority officer)

Policy Recommendations

Our project supports other research demonstrating benefits of cycling. Its qualitative approach generated descriptions of multiple sensory, emotional and social benefits, complementing already recognised physical health and environmental benefits. We found many examples of informal cycling advocacy and support networks at a micro and local level, alongside examples showing the importance of more organised support (and of the two complementing each other). Many people in local areas are doing a lot for cycling, from running projects, to lobbying their employers, to lending friends a bicycle and showing them a good route to work. Yet government spending on cycling in the UK remains a long way behind high-cycling countries: if cycling was better resourced, we might be able to leverage and grow local support networks more effectively to reach a ‘tipping point’ where cycling cultures can be generalised beyond specific localities.

We would stress that our focus on culture is not at the expense of improving cycling environments; both should complement each other. Copenhagen can for example be seen to have a cultural programme supporting cycling alongside its infrastructural programme; with cultural support for cycling a fundamental part of marketing the city to residents and non-residents.

Below we make fifteen specific policy recommendations relating to the key findings discussed above:

Based on findings about cycling experiences...

1. ‘Good places to cycle’ are needed; direct, pleasant routes that feel welcoming and safe throughout.
2. The emotional benefits of cycling should be more widely studied and publicised.
3. Group riding should be encouraged as a sociable, local and green leisure activity.
4. Policy should seek to make cycling easy, as has happened to driving over the last century.
5. Bicycle trips should be seen as end-to-end journeys; routes are very important but not the whole story.

Based on findings about the meanings of cycling...

1. Interventions need to take into account specific cycling cultures already existing in a particular area.
2. Where cycling is high, pay attention to those at risk of stopping (e.g. teenage girls, new parents).
3. Policy-making needs to challenge the stereotyping of cyclists, and avoid contributing to it.
4. When using images of cyclists, their effects should be carefully considered and monitored.
5. The aspirational associations of cycling in some contexts could be better understood and mobilised.

Based on findings about cycling, policy and promotion...

1. Informal peer networks of support are important and policy should seek to maintain or spread these.
2. Organisational cycling cultures can help to promote cycling and should be supported.
3. ‘Everyday cycling’ may be preferable to ‘utility cycling’, as a more inclusive concept.
4. Cycling needs to be seen as a key strategic priority, although specific solutions will be shaped locally.
5. Where cycling is high and/or rising, as in our case study areas, ‘everyday cyclists’ can be a crucial source of knowledge about what’s good and what’s bad in the local area.

Publications to date

Academic papers and book chapters - published or accepted for publication⁴

Aldred, R. (2010) 'On the outside': constructing cycling citizenship', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 11(1), pp. 35-52

Aldred, R. (forthcoming) 'Incompetent, or too competent? Negotiating everyday cycling identities in a motor dominated society', *Mobilities*.

Aldred, R. (forthcoming) 'Governing Transport from Welfare State to Hollow State: the case of cycling in the UK', *Journal of Transport Policy*.

Aldred, R. (forthcoming) 'The role of advocacy and activism in shaping cycling policy and politics', *Cycling and Sustainability* (Ashgate: due 2012, editor John Parkin).

Aldred, R. (forthcoming) 'The New Mobilities Paradigm and Sustainable Transport: Finding Synergies and Creating New Methods', *Routledge International Handbook of Social and Environmental Change* (due 2012, eds. Stewart Lockie, David Sonnenfeld and Dana Fisher).

Aldred, R. (forthcoming) 'The Commute', *Routledge Handbook of Mobilities* (due 2012, eds. Peter Adey, David Bissell, Kevin Hannam, Peter Merriman and Mimi Sheller).

Aldred, R. and Jungnickel, K. (2012) 'Constructing mobile places between 'leisure'

and 'transport': a case study of two group cycle rides', *Sociology*.

Online Publications

Jungnickel, K. and Aldred, R. (2010-) *Cycling Cultures*: www.cyclingcultures.org.uk/ Includes seven blogs: one per fieldwork site, one reporting on practitioner meetings, one project blog and one 'bike story' blog.

Reports

Aldred, R. and Kullman, K. (2011) *Transitions: becoming a cyclist and cycle trainer in London*. London: UEL

Golbuff, L. and Aldred, R. (2011) *Cycling Policy in the UK: a historical and thematic overview*. London: UEL

Martinez, E. (2011) *Is There a Market for Cargo Bikes in Hackney?* London: UEL.

Artwork

Jungnickel, K. (2010, 2011) A series of 'Bike Portraits' from Bristol, Cambridge, Hackney, and Hull

Zines

All Jungnickel, K. and Aldred, R.

Bristol Zine. Available at:
<http://www.cyclingcultures.org.uk/images/pdfs/Bristol-zine.pdf>

Cambridge Zine. Available at:
<http://www.cyclingcultures.org.uk/images/pdfs/Cambridge-zine.pdf>

Hackney Zine. Available at:
<http://www.cyclingcultures.org.uk/images/pdfs/Hackneyzine-double.pdf>

Hull Zine. Available at:
<http://www.cyclingcultures.org.uk/images/pdfs/Hullzine-double.pdf>

⁴ Because of the timeframe of academic publication, this list is partial and other publications are under review or in preparation - please contact the PI for details of other forthcoming publications or see website updates.

Magazine Articles

Aldred, R. (2011) Exactly what is Sustainable Transport? Mobility magazine 11: 14-17.

Aldred, R. (2011) Roads to Freedom, Red Pepper July 2011: available online at <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/roads-to-freedom/>

Aldred, R. (2011) By Studying Four UK Cities, the Cycling Cultures project hopes to identify key two-wheel trends, London Cyclist Oct/Nov 11, p.18

