# The disruptive traveller? A Foucauldian analysis of cycleways

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## Abstract

The relationship between the cyclist and the use of roadways and other spaces allocated for travel has a contested history. Pro-cycling advocates have argued from a number of positions for the rights of cyclists to use road space and changes in the location of responsibility for road safety. This paper examines how the widespread introduction of segregated cycle facilities in recent years, while having undoubted benefits can also be seen to raise significant problems for cycling in the context of broader travel behaviours. Bonham's (2006) exploration of the manner in which travel systems and patterns act as disciplinary regimes can be extended to further develop an understanding of the impact of segregated cycle facilities. Drawing on the insights of Michel Foucault, we have examined texts on cycleways in the United Kingdom and Australia, historical and contemporary, for the way in which cyclists are constituted and positioned. The findings are complex. Overall, recent texts produced within the health sciences begin to normalise cycling, while those produced within the field of transport position cyclists as disruptive or deviant travellers – albeit in different ways and with different outcomes depending on the broader context. In each case, the cycleway becomes a special space that enables and constrains cycling, while cycle practices are constituted as slow and disorderly, leisurely, often social and always requiring a 'quiet' (both in terms of traffic and noise) context. We conclude that the cycleway, by removing cyclists from road space, ultimately operates to maintain rather than challenge existing travel norms. We argue the consequences of this segregation may be profoundly at odds with the potential of cycling as a core component of sustainable mobility.



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## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the cyclist and the use of roadways and other spaces allocated for travel has a contested history. Pro-cycling advocates have argued from a number of positions for the rights of cyclists to use road space and for changes in location of responsibility for road safety. This paper examines how the introduction of segregated cycle facilities in recent years, while having undoubted benefits, also raises significant issues for cycling in the context of broader travel behaviours. In particular, we are interested in whether the separation of cyclists from other road users constitutes the cyclist as disruptive or 'abnormal', a traveller to be dealt with as a 'special case.' Further, we ask if displacing cyclists onto cycleways has the effect of excising them from the day-to-day travel routine and of facilitating 'normal travellers' (i.e. motorised transport users) in the unhindered conduct of their journeys. If this is the case, segregation of cyclists may operate, perversely and paradoxically, to maintain rather than to challenge existing travel norms and hierarchies.

This paper analyses texts on cycling for the way they place cyclists, especially in urban environments. We work from the position that what is written is not a more or less accurate reflection of reality but actively constitutes (shapes) that reality in ways that leave room for contestation (Larner and Walters 2004:3). We focus on texts because they are sites in which discourses (bodies of knowledge) emerge and we are interested in the economic, transport and health discourses through which cyclists are constituted and positioned in relation to others. These discourses objectivise bodies in specific ways, establish new categories of being (subjectivities), create new techniques of measurement, produce new norms and relate bodies to each other in different, often competing, ways. In this understanding, cyclists are not self-evident, fixed beings but the unstable outcome of on-going processes of differentiation and contestation over the (mobile) body.

We have analysed historical and contemporary texts produced through parliamentary, research, planning and lobbying processes. We have compared texts produced in the United Kingdom and Australia (but especially South Australia) because they are countries with particularly low levels of cycling. We acknowledge that a comparison between these countries and the Netherlands or Denmark would provide rich insights into different ways of thinking about the place of cyclists in urban space; however, such a project is beyond the scope of this paper. We have examined texts for the way in which they 'locate' cyclists in urban space and we are particularly concerned with discussions of cycleways – off-road infrastructure designed for bicycle passage forming a separate right of way.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first establishes the theoretical underpinnings of our analysis. Our discussion relies on a very different theorisation of the individual, of the subjects (or categorisations) of travel, and of the relationship between power and knowledge than is generally used in the transport literature. And our paper will only make sense if the key features of this theorisation are explained at the outset. The second part of the paper analyses texts produced in the pre- and post-WWII periods as competing discourses that target the cyclist as either a political or an economic subject. The final section examines contemporary texts for the ways in which cycleways are discussed, and the characteristics, qualities and actions attributed to the 'cyclist'. Of particular interest is the way the cycleway and the cycling body is constituted, and potentially normalised, in discourses on health and whether or not this perspective challenges transport norms. Put simply, we ask the question: do cycleways challenge or reinforce existing travel norms and hierarchies?

## BRINGING FOUCAULT INTO TRANSPORT

In contrast to the broader transport literature, we do not theorise the individual as a natural, pre-social being simply choosing one mode of travel over others. Drawing on Michel Foucault, we are interested in the techniques through which people in contemporary societies come to think of themselves as individuals and regulate themselves towards, alter or resist the subjectivities (or subject positions – e.g. as cyclists, pedestrians, motorists) available to them (Foucault 1982). We take the view that the production of knowledge about human beings – which has proliferated since the eighteenth century – and the operation of power which enables that knowledge is central to our capacity to think of ourselves first as individuals (Digeser 1992) and then as particular types of subjects (Foucault 1977, 1978). In this sense, those who produce and utilise transport knowledge participate both in shaping how people can think about their journeys and in structuring the field of action of individual travellers.

It is impossible to review the key elements of Foucault's work in this article, instead we offer a brief introduction accompanied by an example of

how Foucault's work can be utilised in transport. Readers unfamiliar with Foucault are directed to McHoul and Grace (1995) for a concise introduction and Bacchi (2009) on applying Foucault to policy analysis.

Foucault offers an understanding of power as productive, as producing particular types of being and knowledge (Bacchi 2009:37–8). He identifies different types of power (Hindess 1996:96–136) and, although governmental[1] and bio power are important to transport, our paper focuses on discipline as it foregrounds the role of 'spatialising' practices[2] in processes of objectification and subjectification (the formation of subjects). Disciplinary power, fundamental to the self-regulation that characterises modern societies (Foucault 1991:101), has enabled the production of knowledge about the capabilities and capacities of human beings that, in turn, facilitates innovations in the exercise of power (Foucault 1977:224). It is through the operation of power at a micro-scale, the sorting and physical separation of the human mass – constituting difference through the discursive mechanisms (records keeping, data collection) involved in separating, scrutinising and monitoring bodies – that knowledge of singular bodies has been produced (Foucault 1977:191–2).

From the moment we are born – separated from our mothers, gendered male or female, weighed, measured, named, allocated the special space of a cot and monitored at regular intervals – we are subjected to and made subjects through myriad practices involving the operation of power and the production of knowledge. The procedures of inscription which bring individuals into effect and objectivise bodies in specific ways – as healthy or ill, learned or illiterate, political or passive, law abiding or deviant, mobile or stationary – simultaneously enable the aggregation of those singular histories into knowledge of populations where norms, the limits to normal, and deviations from the norm are constituted (Foucault 1977, 1982). An important point here is that these are not *necessary* ways of knowing individuals. Rather, conditions at different moments enable objectification of bodies in new ways. With this knowledge, individuals are worked upon through systems of punishment and reward to regulate themselves according to the norm while those found wanting – disruptive, abnormal – might be removed altogether. Travel is but one domain in which bodies have been objectivised and subjectivised[3]; separated, scrutinised and worked upon and, in the case of cycleways, removed altogether.

Through the late nineteenth but especially the twentieth century it became thinkable, practicable and meaningful to study urban movement. Until recently, the meaning of that movement has been asserted and widely accepted as 'transport' – the journey from *a* to *b* specifically to accomplish some activity or task at point *b* (Bonham 2000). Over time, the journey, or trip, has come to appear as 'self-evident', as mechanisms for the study of journeys – origin–destination studies, household travel surveys, vehicle counts – excise particular practices from the mass of daily activities and bring them under scrutiny. Objectifying travel as 'transport' establishes the journey as a by-product of its end points – derived demand – and provides the imperative for trips to be accomplished as quickly, or as economically, as possible (Bonham and Ferretti 1999). 'Derived demand' functions as a 'statement' (Foucault 1976:102–17) within the field of transport, a statement that both disciplines those who would study travel, and discounts, if not excludes, the many other possibilities of our journeys.

Drawing on Foucault's (1980:119) understanding of power as productive, the objectification of travel as transport is productive in that it has enabled the development of a vast body of knowledge and brought new subjects into effect – the pedestrian, cyclist, motorist, passenger. These subjects have been facilitated through the operation of power at a micro-scale involving practices of differentiation and separation of users of public space, identifying those who are stationary and those who move (Bonham 2002; Frello 2008), and subsequently scrutinising, sorting, categorising and disciplining

[1] Governmental does not refer to the activities of the government but to the practices and programs of all those organisations that seek to guide the conduct of the population.

[2] Spatialising practices – spatial distribution of elements (e.g. bodies, activities) forms one of a number of instruments that enable differentiation and observation of individuals.

[3] Subjectivise: the practices (e.g. observation, differentiation, categorization, inscription) through which subject positions (e.g. travellers: cyclists, pedestrian, motorist) are formed and people are incited to become, or recognise themselves as, particular types of subjects (e.g. skills development, education programs, licence procedures, helmet legislation). Objectivise: to treat 'factually', the mechanisms by which particular practices, characteristics, behaviours are brought under observation and made objects of study.

those who move according to the conduct of their journey (Bonham 2006). A number of practices – particular ways of moving, particular types of observations, pauses, conversations – have been separated out, excluded as NOT-transport and marginalised in the space of the street. Other practices – keeping to course, attuning hearing, sight and reflexes to the operation of vehicles – have been worked upon in disciplining the mobile body (Bonham 2006; Paterson 2007).

In cities across the world, the contemporary division and regulation of the public space of the street (and road) has been guided by a transport rationalisation of urban travel (Bonham 2000). Streets have been divided lengthwise and travellers allocated space according to the speed and order with which they travel (Bonham 2000). The mobile body has been incited to move at speed to ensure the efficient operation of the city. However, in the early twentieth century, widespread concern over motor vehicle-related deaths and injuries underpinned debate over prioritising speed or safety. The debate was resolved (but never quite fixed) in favour of speed, with 'vulnerable' road users giving way to the fast (Bonham 2002). The slow and disorderly – pedestrians, horses and carts – were removed to the margins, checked by the fast and orderly, or excluded altogether. Overall efficiency, measured in time, could only be assured if each traveller agreed to be orderly – hence all those road safety techniques and programs that train bodies in 'correct movement' (Bonham 2006). The public space of the street, often identified in political discourse as a site available to all citizens, effectively becomes an economic space where the subject of transport discourse, conducting the economical journey, gains primacy. Subjugating oneself within the discourse on transport – becoming the efficient or economical traveller, which in the twentieth century has meant taking up the subject position of the motorist – is rewarded with priority in the use of public space.

These individual rewards invoke wider social rewards through the increase in the reproduction of capital through the facilitation of movement (Cox 2010). Indeed, an entire literature on globalisation has employed this metaphor of increased flows in speed, volume and depth to describe globalisation of capitalism from the end of the twentieth century (Boran and Cox 2007). Transport discourses are thus woven into discourses on the nature of public good and of socio-economically responsible behaviour, reinforcing the linkage between travel behaviours and 'responsible citizens'.

The knowledge produced about individual travellers is not only enabled by the exercise of power but also facilitates the further exercise of power. Power–knowledge relations operate at a micro-scale subjectivising singular bodies while, at a macro-scale, the subjectivities constituted within different disciplines (e.g. economics, demography) are deployed in the government of populations (Foucault 1981, 1982, 1991). Further, the aggregation of data about singular bodies not only allows the calculation of norms (and deviations from those norms) but in liberal societies, where citizens are constituted as free and incited to exercise freedom of choice (Huxley 2008), this knowledge is central to government as populations are guided rather than directed toward particular ends (Rose 1990; Gordon 1991; Rose and Miller 1992). In terms of transport, knowledge produced about individual travellers and singular journeys is combined into knowledge of urban populations and used to guide the choices of the population toward economical movement and the economical operation of the city. This process values speed and prioritises the reduction of travel time ahead of the impacts on health, environment and social exclusion that accompany increases in speed and travel energy consumption (Lohan and Wickham 1998; Whitelegg 1993, 1997).

## PLACING CYCLISTS

The division and regulation of street space according to a transport rationalisation of urban mobility has not gone unchallenged, and material outcomes have varied according to conditions in individual cities: the retention of the tramways in Melbourne or the establishment of shared traffic precincts in German cities are cases in point. But bike riders have been a constant provocation within traffic and transport discourses and the related division of urban space. Cyclists remain difficult to locate in terms of propulsion and vehicle design (Cox and Van de Walle 2007), subjectivity and place. Historically, decision makers, lobbyists and bike riders have vacillated between providing for cyclists on-road, removing them to off-road spaces or ignoring them altogether. Evident within these discussions is a tension that persists today between the cyclist as a political subject, a citizen with equal rights to use public space, and the cyclist as an economic subject – either as a producer who participates in the urban economy or as an economical traveller located within a hierarchy of speed and order. Three brief examples must suffice

to illustrate the uncertainty over where to locate cyclists and the tensions these discussions reveal.

Attempts through the inter-war years to remove cyclists from the road often met with resistance. The first experimental segregated track installed in the UK in 1934 beside the Western Avenue in North London led to active campaigning from the Cyclists' Touring Club (1935) as they argued cycle tracks were 'the thin end of a wedge ultimately to drive bicycles off the road' (Way 1966:165).[4] By contrast, Frank Urry, a member of the UK's Ministry of Transport Advisory Council in the 1930s, argued the impracticality of removing ever-growing numbers of cyclist-workers from the streets (Transport Advisory Council 1938). In the former case, the cyclist was located within a political discourse of citizenship rights while in the latter case the cyclist was identified as an integral part of the urban economy, thereby shifting attention from political rights to the most economical means of facilitating the worker. Similar discussions took place in South Australia where bike riding was linked to the worker (Honorary Committee 1936; State Traffic Committee 1938) and this particular economic construction seems to be at the heart of cyclists maintaining an on-road presence. In both the UK and South Australia, debates over cycle tracks were abandoned during WWII when austerity measures and the rationing of fuel for civilian motor vehicles meant personal (private) mobility was effectively given over to the bicycle, alongside public transport provision.

In contrast to the segregation measures of the pre-WWII period, cycling was largely ignored in post-WWII urban and transport planning. In South Australia, cycling was discounted within (Adelaide City Council 1957:8) or excluded from bureaucratic routines of data collection and reporting (e.g. Highways and Local Government Annual Reports) or studies of urban transport (e.g. Town Planning Committee 1963; De Leuw, Cather and Company 1968). Despite the shift of industrial and retail activity to suburban locations and anecdotal evidence that cycling was an on-going part of the journey to industrial workplaces, shops and schools, cyclists were simply ignored in post-war transport planning in Australia and the UK. Notable UK exceptions were the new town projects of Harlow and Stevenage (and subsequently in Milton Keynes), which included extensive cycle-only routes. In general though, engineering plans provided for motor vehicles – moving and parked – but not for cyclists (e.g. De Leuw, Cather and Company 1968). As cyclists were ignored in transport data collection and transport texts, they were also ignored in street space.

The aftermath of the 1960s freeway debates saw renewed interest in cycling that invoked a new round of discussions about the appropriate place of cyclists. The Director General of Transport in South Australia argued cyclists were to be encouraged '…to use low traffic volume residential streets and, where possible, exclusive tracks' (Department of Transport, South Australia, 1974:1). In the UK, urbanist Jean Perraton (1968:162) argued for the construction of cycleways.

> *On a modern road system the bicycle is an archaic anachronism, delaying and worrying car drivers and endangering its rider … The quality of urban living will be enhanced if [people] also have the opportunity to cycle on paths which are safer, quieter, with cleaner air and closer to grass and trees than urban motor roads.*

There are a number of important points to be drawn from this text. First, Perraton constructs mobility practices in terms of progress by juxtaposing the 'modern road system' and the 'archaic anachronistic' bicycle. This evolutionary view of mobility operates to naturalise and depoliticise the reconfiguration of public space Perraton is proposing, one that facilitates motorists and excludes cyclists. Second, Perraton identifies the bicycle rather than the cyclist as 'out-of-place', making this vehicle, rather than the motorist or motor vehicle, responsible for endangering the cyclist's life. Third, Perraton contests the place of bicycling in the transport order, constructing it in terms of lifestyle rather than access. If cyclists have no place in the transport order, they can be readily excluded from the road, a transformation completed in Perraton's use of the term *motor roads*. Finally, as the bicycle is characterised as 'delaying and worrying car drivers' a hierarchical relation is established between the cyclist's journey as a problem and the motorists' journey as the norm. In this instance, segregated cycle facilities – paths or cycleways – become places for the abnormal journey and cyclists are treated as a special case.

[4] In the UK, a trial of compulsory cycleway use was introduced on the cycleway running alongside the Oxford Eastern Bypass (Way 1969). The cycleway, though segregated from the main carriageway, was still available to local motor vehicle traffic and subject to highway regulations.

Segregation of cyclists onto cycleways echoes the exclusion of 'abnormal' bodies (e.g. the sick, the mad, the delinquent) discussed in Foucault's genealogical works (1977). Removing this disruptive traveller facilitates the routine flow of urban life and enables closer scrutiny of the 'abnormal' body. However, cycleways were never seriously implemented in the UK or Australia, possibly because on the one hand cycling could be positioned as a mode of transport without a future – the disruptive traveller would eventually disappear – or on the other hand as a lifestyle activity that did not have to be prioritised in terms of urban infrastructure. Comparison with Dutch and Danish texts of this time would provide important insights into different discursive constructions of cycling and the alternative governmental tactics they enable.

Over the past two decades, automobile-oriented transport systems have been re-problematised[5] in terms of environmental degradation, urban congestion, resource depletion associated with peak oil, and the health implications of aging populations and sedentary lifestyles (e.g. Freund and Martin 1993; Horton, Rosen and Cox 2007; DfT 2008). Environmental concerns gained traction through the 1990s bringing the mobile body under scrutiny, combining the economic subject who makes the journey as quickly as possible with an environmental subject who minimises resource use and waste *out of concern for the environment*. In addition, from the early 2000s the mobile body and practices of walking and bike riding have been increasingly scrutinised and worked upon within discourses on health. Seizing this moment, organisations and individuals sympathetic to cycling are shifting bike riding from problem to solution, and cycling practices are gradually being inserted into transport policy and planning. Alongside these developments, there are growing demands for closer scrutiny and accounting of cycling, including cost-benefit analyses of infrastructure, on and off-road cycle counts, and evaluations of cycling infrastructure, programs and promotions (e.g. SQWconsulting 2008). Through these mechanisms, discourses on cycling and the subjectivity of the cyclist operate as sites to resist marginalisation of bike riding within transport discourse. However, these discourses also subjugate cyclists in new ways, as we proceed to explore in the next section. They are not an escape from the operation of power or power–knowledge relations, but they operate to fill the category of cyclist with new content. It is within this context and through the intersection of discussions on transport, environment and health that the provision of specific infrastructure measures such as cycleways are brought back in as 'an opportunity to positively encourage cycling' (Arup and Partners Ltd. 2009:4).

## CYCLEWAYS IN TEXTS TODAY

Although bikes still make up a fairly small proportion of traffic (in frequency and space), their growing on-road presence challenges the practices and priority of motor vehicle mobility. Transport professionals, academics and cycle lobbyists in the UK and Australia continue to debate the placing of bike riders in urban space. Australian state transport departments are implementing various mixtures of on- and off- road infrastructure: New South Wales has focused on off-road facilities such as cycleways, Western Australia appears to have a more even mix between on- and off-road paths, South Australia concentrates on on-road infrastructure. The following section examines texts produced on cycling spaces for the ways in which they simultaneously constitute the cyclist, and practices and rationalisations of bike riding. We focus on discussions of cycleways – those routes that provide cyclists with travel possibilities outside the existing road network and highway systems (paths that run along river banks, through parklands and across the countryside) rather than bike lanes marked out on the street. However, these segregated routes – also referred to in some literature (particularly from the US context) as bike trails – are often linked to specific segments of the urban road network so the discussions frequently overlap.

In the UK, the primary motive force behind the creation of surfaced and marked cycleways has come from Sustrans. Originally formed as a lobby group in 1977, Sustrans was registered as a charity in 1983 and has continued to work in partnership with local authorities on numerous projects, including the National Cycle Network and a mixture of signed on-road routes and off-road cycleways, frequently utilising disused former railway routes.

Sustrans weaves together discourses on transport and health as the stress in all its original descriptions of cycle routes is related to health, safety and congestion:

> *[t]hese routes provide real, practical benefits to local communities countrywide, reducing traffic*

[5] Problematised: A term used in mathematics, sociology and other sciences, meaning 'defined in terms of its problems'.

> *fumes, easing congestion and providing a pleasant alternative to the stress and danger of motor traffic (Sustrans 1994).*

Echoing commentators from the 1960s (e.g. Perraton 1968), Sustrans consistently emphasises the sharing of off-road routes by all non-motorised users. It foregrounds the health benefits of cycling in its self-presentation and the lobbying process used to establish partnerships with statutory bodies for infrastructure and other projects (Sustrans 2009).

> *Sustrans provides creative, innovative and practical solutions to the transport challenges affecting us all. By working with communities, local authorities and many other organisations, we create change by putting people at the heart of activities, enabling many more people to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment (Sustrans 2010).*

Sustrans' emphasis on health resonates with the emerging health promotion and preventive medicine literature. Over the past decade, the health benefits of cycling and walking have been tested, and supported, through medical studies that relate these modes of travel to mortality and morbidity among given populations (Andersen et al. 2000; Chief Medical Officer 2004; Hamer and Chida 2008). Further, as norms have been established in relation to the amount of exercise necessary to maintaining a healthy body, practices such as walking and cycling have been included in health surveys to determine the level of physical exercise undertaken by given populations (Kavanagh et al. 2005).

The mobile body objectified within the health and medical literature directly challenges the transport rationalisation of mobility and the concept of 'derived-demand' (see also Kitamura, Mokhtarian and Laidet 1997). The journey is not simply a by-product of its origin and destination but is itself meaningful – it might be performed in conjunction with an origin and destination (or not) but its meaning exceeds the 'trip'. This health perspective opens new ways of thinking about mobility and facilitates the production of new norms in relation to urban movement. The procedures inherent in creating health and medical knowledge lend considerable authority to this alternative view of mobility which commands serious attention and governmental action. In Europe, discourses on health have been recognised and encouraged through the creation of the *Lifecycle Project* (http://www.lifecycle.cc/), while in Australia the *Healthy Spaces and Places* (http://www.healthyplaces.org.au/site/) initiative links mobility, place and health. The emergent discourse on health and the governmental programs spawned by it have the potential to facilitate a cultural shift in practices of travel as they operate to regularise and normalise cycling (and walking).

In this context, the cycleway might become the place for working toward the healthy body as its users are brought under scrutiny for securing health outcomes (Cohen et al. 2008; Merom et al. 2003; Evenson, Herring and Huston 2008) rather than as displaced and disruptive elements of transport. However, to date, as Sustrans, and others, specify the qualities of cycleways they simultaneously link a particular set of practices – slow, quiet, possibly meandering, appreciation of 'nature', peaceful, open to interruption and involving others – to the conduct of the healthy journey.[6] Consequently, the cycling body constituted within transport discourse – as slow and disruptive/disorderly – is largely reproduced in these discussions of health. Similarly, a range of practices – fast, direct, practical, continuous and solitary – are silently marked as inappropriate. But bike riders using cycleways – like mobile bodies everywhere – combine a range of practices at different times and under different circumstances.

Like health, safety has been a recurring theme in discussions on cycleways and the concept of 'quietness' links health and safety through reference to noise, speed and volume of traffic. In promotional materials for the range of cycleways and tourist routes constructed in the UK over the past two decades, many built in conjunction with Sustrans, constant and repeated reference is made to the 'traffic-free nature' of the routing. Immediately, the cycle journey is marked as *NOT*-traffic, and therefore not part of the normalised flows of vehicular movement on the highways.

A series of examples illustrate this process whereby 'traffic-free cycling' becomes the selling point of such schemes. Sustrans explains the status of 'The Jubilee River and Slough Linear Park: Traffic-free

[6] The combination of slowness, health and safety is explicitly integral to the promotion and identity of the RAVeL network in Wallonia (French-speaking Belgium), which makes a virtue of the interplay of these particular mobility practices (http://ravel.wallonie.be). Importantly, the promotion of these paths – as with others identified as sites of tourism and leisure practices seen as contributing to new forms of productivity in a post-industrial economy – introduces a visual discourse complementary to the discursive one under scrutiny here.

cycling opportunities between Slough, Maidenhead and Windsor' (UK) as part of a wider project to promote cycling:

> *[Sustrans] is behind many groundbreaking projects including the National Cycle Network, over twelve thousand miles of traffic-free, quiet lanes and on-road walking and cycling routes around the UK (Sustrans, Slough Borough Council and The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead 2008).*

Similar sentiments are expressed in promotional materials and leaflets for cycleways across the UK: 'The Water of Leith is a peaceful, traffic free route from Leith to Balerno' (Edinburgh Council nd); 'Ride through the peaceful South Tyne Valley on a traffic-free greenway to the spectacular Lambley Viaduct' (Hadrian's Wall Heritage Ltd 2010 Hadrian's-Wall-Country); and, advertising holiday accommodation:

> *Although many parts of the UK now have too much traffic for safe cycling, there are parts of the country where you can cycle in relative safety. Some railway tracks have been converted into dedicated cycle ways which is probably the ideal way for families with children to take to the road plus there are numerous national cycle routes and way-marked trails (Country Cottages Online 2010).*

These texts are at odds with attempts to promote daily cycling, as they locate bicycling 'outside of everyday life' and 'outside definitions of traffic.' Arguably, the assemblage of 'cycling as a holiday or leisure activity – safe cycling – absence of traffic' casts doubt on everyday utility riding. Further, in constructing bikes as NOT-traffic the needs of cyclists can readily be dismissed in traffic modelling and planning.

In Australia, cycle routes often comprise a mixture of off-road facilities (cycleways, veloways and paths) and on-road 'quiet' streets. In a caption accompanying a map of the proposed bike network for Sydney, producers of the NSW Action for Bikes strategy stated:

> *The result will be 420 km of major off-road cycleways and 214 km of major links on quiet streets. There will also be sealed road shoulders in semi-rural areas for experienced cyclists (Roads and Traffic Authority 1999:5).*

An update to that plan explains:

> *The Metro Sydney Bike Network is made up of off-road paths and on-road links using quiet streets, with facilities offering safe and attractive travel for less experienced cyclists (NSW Government 2010:10).*

Similarly, the Perth Bicycle Network, while including a wide variety of roads, also relies on quiet streets:

> *A local bicycle route adds value to the concept that 'every street is a bicycle street' by linking a series of quiet 'residential' streets which need little improvement in order to be attractive and safe for cycling, to provide continuity for somewhat longer trips (Bikewest 1995:5).*

As 'quiet spaces' are designated appropriate to cyclists, the cycling body is simultaneously constituted as one that is averse to or which does not function properly in places with noisy, busy, fast-moving traffic. The constant reference to 'quiet' places raises suspicions about the bike rider that uses 'busy' streets. Further, as 'residential' and 'local' streets are identified as appropriate sites for cycling, those who ride along shopping and commercial streets can be called into question. The current debates over the place of cyclists echo those of the inter-war period. Much of the discussion focuses on where and how *cyclists should* ride to ensure their safety, leaving little more than a disgruntled murmur, dismissed as irrational, around changing the conditions that place cyclists at risk.

Several additional issues are raised in relation to this problem of safety. First, a question arises about which cycling body is made safe from what. A recent Australian study found that women prefer to cycle on off-road paths or less heavily trafficked roads (Garrard, Rose and Lo 2008). However, the vast feminist literature on women's use of public space (e.g. Trench OC and Tiesdell 1992; Valentine 1992; Wekerle and Whitzman 1995) suggests that quiet streets and cycleways at night, or in especially 'out-of-the-way' places, may be equally or more 'risky' than riding on a main road. Indeed this is acknowledged in some cycle planning literature and in anecdotal evidence from women cyclists (Arvidson 2008).[7] The cycleway as 'haven' resonates with those uncomplicated constructions of the home as 'escape' or 'haven' and risks fixing gender, in terms of the spaces and practices of

[7] This finding is emerging from a study currently being undertaken by Jennifer Bonham and was raised in discussion at the Ethnographies of Cycling conference held at Lancaster University – 16 December 2009.

cycling, with off-road spaces being feminised and on-road cycling as masculine.

A second issue relates to the infantilisation of the bicycle rider, which takes place in two ways. First, the cyclist is constituted as a vulnerable or 'soft' road user. They are often characterised as endangering their own lives, taking unacceptable risks or refusing to take responsibility for their safety. Second, off-road facilities are frequently discussed as serving the needs of novices: '... attractive off-road facilities are of particular value because they are more likely to attract new cyclists by overcoming concerns about safety' (SQWconsulting 2008:4). This discursive positioning establishes cycle users as dependent and opens the way for those in positions of authority – 'responsible adults' or 'experts' – to take charge of bicycle journeys, removing cyclists from the road, providing special protections and particular treatments – with all the negative connotations associated with 'special treatment' in liberal societies (Bacchi 2004). Cyclists become those who are indulged. The subordinate status of the cyclist as a traveller is reasserted through the very means by which the intention is to promote and boost the image and activity of cycling.

As discussion focuses on a narrow framing of 'cyclist safety' – in terms of 'where *they* are safe', the view that cyclists 'delay and worry car drivers' (Perraton 1968:162), thereby disrupting the economic conduct of particular journeys, does not have to be said. To state in bike plans and strategies that *cyclists disrupt motorists* would be to invite debate about citizenship and rights to public space. In targeting cyclists through a discourse on safety, which, as argued above, is produced through power–knowledge relations, we do not engage with the explicitly political nature of the placing of cyclists in urban space. Further, and following from this, as attention is focused on practices, bodies and places of cycling, conditions on urban roads go unquestioned. They are simply not considered to be a 'problem'. Priority for fast, heavy, high-volume, polluting traffic continues to be taken for granted as the necessary outcome of contemporary urban life. Further, in designating cycleways as 'special' sites for cyclists, while failing to challenge on-road conditions, we arrive at the current situation where cycling on the road is readily and popularly constructed as inappropriate.

## CONCLUSION

This paper is underpinned by the view that street space continues to be divided and regulated according to a transport rationalisation of urban travel – a fundamentally economic understanding of movement which makes governing that movement both thinkable and practicable. This rationalisation of movement spawns a plethora of programs to work on the mobile body and guide the traveller in the economical conduct of his/her journey. Further, the transport rationalisation of movement prioritises and allocates space according to speed and order so that practices of walking and cycling become difficult to place on the 'modern street'. Cyclists' use of road space has been contested for almost a hundred years as responses to cycling have vacillated between removing them onto segregated paths, ignoring them altogether or, more recently, incorporating them into the street.

We have been particularly concerned with the effects of removing cyclists onto the segregated path of the cycleway, the rationalisation through which it occurs and the practices that constitute 'cycling' as an aberrant activity and the 'cycling subject' as a 'disruptive traveller'. The cycleway has been deployed in both transport and health rationalisations of cycling. Cycleways, as separate spaces, reinforce norms established through transport discourse. Further, health discourses have assisted in reproducing rather than challenging the way the cycling subject has been constituted within transport discourse – as slow, meandering, interrupted, requiring peace and quiet. In this respect, cycling is entrenched as a health rather than transport practice and, coalescing with modernist planning's spatialisation of activities, the cycleway becomes the appropriate place for cycling.[8] Paradoxically, the attempt to deal with inequalities that are inherent in the move to establish cycleways as special, protected-status spaces, results in reinforcing the cyclist and cycling as the 'problem' (Bacchi 2009). Focusing attention on the cycleway allows existing road conditions and travel practices to go unquestioned. Priority for fast, heavy, high volume, polluting traffic continues to be taken for granted, stifling debate on changing travel practices and operating against the establishment of new travel norms.

[8] Some of the 'active travel' literature challenges this spatialisation as streets once again become places to secure health – in line with the role of promenading in the nineteenth century. See for example Global Alliance for Ecomobility (www.ecomobility.org).

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