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**WOMEN ACTIVISTS' EXPERIENCE
OF LOCAL CYCLING POLITICS**

KATJA LEYENDECKER

PhD

2019

WOMEN ACTIVISTS' EXPERIENCE OF LOCAL CYCLING POLITICS

KATJA LEYENDECKER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the
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Faculty of Engineering and
Environment

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research thesis is to explore the experiences of women activists who advocated for cycleways in Newcastle, UK, and in Bremen, Germany, in the 2010s. Using an autoethnographic approach I bring my own campaigning experience to bear, combining my personal account with interviews and policy analysis to navigate and form a critique of the socio-technical landscape of transport politics.

Cycling is generally seen as a good thing for health, liveability and the environment, but cycling numbers have been largely stagnant over recent decades in the UK and in Germany. Cycling also suffers from an image problem, especially in low-cycling contexts such as the UK. For cycling to have a larger share as a mode of transport, cycleways, dedicated spaces for cycling, are needed. This is what the women activists demanded from their local decision makers.

The findings from this study suggest that women activists experienced systemic exclusion as the politicians ceded control to the technical experts and the vehicular-cycling campaigners' liberal demands supported institutional practices of designing for the car. In Newcastle, post-political circumstances were present in transport planning. It is this *institutional automobility* that is holding back the development of cycle- and people-friendly urban environments. Its technocracy can harm local democracy. I argue that *social automobility* (people's car use and dependency) is largely a consequence of *institutional automobility*. A cultural transformation is needed, expressly at the technical-political level to overcome institutionalisation in Bremen, and, in addition in Newcastle, post-political detachment. Cycle campaigning should continue to express radical demands in support of spatial redistribution and dedicated cycleways.

To understand how *institutional automobility* works and manifests itself is important if we want to democratise and humanise urban spaces. It is proposed that politicians who are more aware of the phenomenon would more readily work with cycleway campaigners to reform technical processes for the common good. Future research could involve the sociology of transport engineers and political party orientations in relation to institutional automobility.

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This work is written in thought of all cycleway campaigners, who have in recent years freshly politicised the cycling subject around the globe. I hope we will continue to do so for many years to come. Here are three quotations that provided me with motivation:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. ~ Margaret Mead

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. ~ African proverb

We are women, we have double standards to live up to. ~ Ally McBeal

DECLARATION

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on the 28th of November 2016.

I declare that the word count of this thesis is 97,665 words

Name: KATJA LEYENDECKER

Signature:

—

Date: 13 November 2019

1 INTRODUCTION

In the UK, it is increasingly heard from policy and campaigning circles that more women must be encouraged to cycle (Allatt 2018; British Cycling 2013). In the UK, less than a third of all cyclists are women (Garrard, Handy, and Dill 2012). In general, cycling for transport is rare in the UK with only 2% of all trips cycled (Spotswood et al. 2015). Furthermore, cyclists in low-cycling countries, like in the UK and anglophone Western countries, have an image problem (Leonard, Spotswood, and Tapp 2012; Cupples and Ridley 2008). Or as Greed puts it: “some young men on bicycles (dressed in lycra outfits, face covered with air-filter masks) are extremely arrogant and aggressive, just like some men in cars, and seldom are they burdened with shopping or children” (Greed 1994:41).

Yet, active travel, including urban-transport cycling, can improve the common good and individual wellbeing (de Nazelle et al. 2011; Litman 2014). Transport cycling reduces emissions, improves air quality, reduces noise levels, improves social and economic equity, independence, dignity and health to its users, is spatially efficient, affordable, provides inexpensive access to work, education and other venues of public life. However, despite the known and well-documented benefits, rates of cycling have remained low in anglophone Western countries (Pucher and Buehler 2008) and primarily a man’s rather than a woman’s travel mode (Garrard, Handy, and Dill 2012).

The wider backdrop to this study lies in any political inaction, national and local, that risks the unfolding of destructive consequences of climate change. Climate change is brought on by the ‘man-made’ emissions of greenhouse gases with transport contributing substantially: the European Commission (2016) has attributed a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions to transport and reports that transport is the main cause of air pollution in European cities. In addition to climate change, inequality is gradually on the rise again in many countries round the world, raising “economic, political and ethical challenges as it risks leaving a growing number of people behind in an ever-changing economy” (OECD 2011). Today, according to Harvey (2005), politics and democratic process are alarmingly detached from civic society, as the power of capital dictates political agendas. To make fuller sense of the politics of cycling, the investigation of *symbolic* spaces and interactions (Giddens 1984) are

imperative. Sociology's classical texts of modernity - Bauman's (1999) "liquid modernity", Castell's (2010) "information age" or Beck's (1986) "risk society" - all describe how uncertain and complex modern life has become for the individual in Western societies. In today's prevalent consumer-culture, simple and shortened narratives are presented, explaining to us the world, creating feelings of belonging and pride, but also feelings of shame and inadequacy (for example in the marketing and selling of products to consumers). Public spaces, symbolic and physical, have been aggressively manipulated to lull and lure us into consumptive passivity, according to Kellner and Lewis (2007). Where is the space and the agency to act? What can a person do? What role does the collective play in an individualised society?

The practice of cycling is unequivocally spatial, it has a *material* reality that happens in *material* space. The spatial character of cycling promptly renders the act of cycling political and contested, especially in cities that historically have been designed around the private car (and thus altering social reality). The literature on the subject of the right infrastructure, required for transport cycling, spans several decades (for example Banister 1990; Monheim and Monheim-Dandorfer 1990). In particular it is protected cycle space that is needed (Aldred 2015; Pooley et al. 2013; Pucher and Buehler 2012; Monsere et al. 2014) which enables cycling for a broad spectrum of the population, fully catering for all types of travel: a "mobility of care" taking into account all trips made beyond commuting (Sánchez de Madariaga 2013). Despite the availability of the technical knowledge however, cycling levels in the UK have remained low and "stubbornly unshifting" (Spotswood et al. 2015). UK has a 2% cycle mode share of all trips (DfT 2017, figure for England only). In comparison, the nearby Netherlands has 27%, Denmark 18% (Pucher and Buehler 2008) and Germany 11% (BMVI 2018). Women's cycling participation is 56%, 55% and 50% in the three countries respectively (Garrard, Handy, and Dill 2012).

Increasing cycling is often framed as a personal individual responsibility, as Spotswood et al (2015) point out. Cycling is construed by the decision makers as a private not a public matter, and hence depoliticised by framing it as an individual's choice (Aldred 2013b). Hillman, Adams, and Whitelegg (1990) describe parental decisions about school travel as an individual's choice, but one that is caught in a moral vice between driving and other modes: parents

individually use the car to keep their children safe. Since the advent of the car in society, space in our cities has increasingly been designed for cars, disadvantaging cycling through spatial and social marginalisation (Koglin 2014; Aldred 2013a; Horton 2007). Urban design is a concern, and the inclusion of the built environment is a vital and material consideration, as a number of academics have pointed out (Barton and Grant 2006; Shove, Pantzar, and Watson 2012; Sallis et al. 2006; Spotswood 2016). In particular, academic authors describe the bike-specific infrastructure as a major enabling factor for urban cycling and point out that behaviour and decisions are shaped by the environment (Taylor, Kingham, and Koorey 2009; Pucher and Buehler 2008; Pucher, Dill, and Handy 2010; Wardman, Tight, and Page 2007; Fraser and Lock 2011; Winters et al. 2011; Gatersleben and Appleton 2007; Winters et al. 2010; Aldred 2015; Monsere et al. 2014). To reach the large proportion of the population, behavioural change initiatives aimed at the individual are not sufficient, as they only reach the already motivated population, as outlined by Spotswood (2016) and also Dill and McNeil (2013). In the absence of changes to roads addressing systemic dangers, cycling may only temporarily increase for a specific event, for example when officially sanctioned on a ride-to-work day (Piatkowski et al. 2014). Forsyth and Krizek (2011) appeal to decision-makers to take urban cycling seriously by addressing the social dilemma on a structural level – in urban design. The environment shapes behaviours and norms. People cycle if the environment is (made) right: easy, comfortable, short and direct, convenient compared to other modes, as high cycling levels in the Netherlands attest. An elementary requirement enabling everyday cycling (for example parents with children) is the provision of protected space on main roads. It is transport authorities who are collectively entrusted to use urban spatial design for the common good, considering all levels of the socio-ecological model encompassing individual, social and environmental concerns (Sallis et al. 2006; Barton and Grant 2006).

Local transport authorities in the UK have been slow with the provision of cycleways evidenced by low cycle participation. Without systemic solutions in ready use and being consequently caught in the social dilemma between personal responsibility and public good, what can the individual do? One action that individuals can take is to enact their citizenship, make personal grievances

public and political. Individuals can come together with their concerns and form interest and pressure groups. This follows Blee's definition of group action:

[When people] join together to work for social change, [they] practise democracy differently, but no less than when they act individually to vote or to write to their legislators. (2012:4)

Activism is a group action that expresses dissatisfaction with current circumstances (Melucci 1996; Blee 2012). Activist groups "are venues in which people work collectively to understand their world, decide what is just and unjust, and express their values" says Blee (2012:31). I engaged in cycle activism in Newcastle between 2010 and 2017. As the group formation stage tends to happen swiftly and forcefully, the "cultural blueprint set out in early days of grassroots groups is difficult to reconstruct once the group becomes established" (Blee 2012:8). This means that only success stories are routinely researched, as those movements. Memories and experiences endure - the successful campaigns writing campaigning history. But a focus on "victories of activism" also hinders a fuller investigation when we need data that "reveal the behind-the-scenes and nitty-gritty activities that consume activist groups between their more visible actions" says Blee (2012:12) and she urges researchers to look at "internal talk" and "external talk" of campaigning organisations (2012:86) to get a fuller and richer picture of a campaign. This study attempts to do exactly that.

Experiencing activism myself, I knew group action and campaigning to be a thorny activity involving many ups and downs on political and personal levels. In order to tell the campaigners' story, this study explores the experiences of women activists who were involved in lobbying for cycleways between the years 2010 and 2017. To illuminate issues of local cycling politics, the research questions pursued in this study hence are both descriptive and corrective:

What do women activists experience when advocating for cycleways?

What can be learned from women cycle activists' experiences in order to improve the planning and implementation of cycleways?

In pursuance of answers to these questions, I met and spoke to fellow women activists to collate and analyse the efforts of our campaigning. To expand my own horizon, I cross-checked my experiences and findings elsewhere. I went to Germany to get a better understanding of the differences and similarities between our campaigning. Speaking to women activists and decision makers in Newcastle upon Tyne (UK) and in Bremen (Germany) and analysing the cities' transport policies broadened and deepened my understanding of cycle campaigning.

In the next chapter, I briefly introduce the background to this study, stating my personal interest and the academic position in relation to women and cycling. In Chapter 3, the literature review, I describe cycle campaigning in the UK and abroad to describe the research field in relation to my research questions. The chapter following the literature review outlines the methodology I used for my investigation: autoethnography. After this, there are five chapters on findings, beginning with analysing the transport policy texts for two cities, Newcastle and Bremen (Chapter 5), and outlining and describing the Newcastle Cycling Campaign which I chaired between 2010 and 2017 in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 analyses and discusses my online blog in order to deepen the account of my personal perspective on activism and local politics. Chapter 8 discusses interviews carried out with eight fellow women activists I visited in Germany and in the UK. A further four interviews, this time with decision makers in Newcastle and Bremen, are discussed in Chapter 9. In the final chapter I synthesise and discuss the findings from the different data sources, offering to the reader my conclusions together with an outlook into the future of local cycle politics.

2 BACKGROUND

Here I talk about my own relationship to the study, before providing an overview of the subject of women and cycling in academic research focussing on urban planning with a feminist viewpoint and a comparison of UK's low cycle participation to high cycling contexts elsewhere.

2.1 My own background

When getting involved in cycling politics, I was first moved by questions of urban space. What types of cycle infrastructure do people prefer to use? As an engineer my knowledge 'naturally' originates from a technical perception of the world. I began with reading books about cycling infrastructure design. As a result, I felt more and more surprised at the stagnation of the subject of cycling and space: the technical writings from the 1990s - for example by Banister (1990) and Tolley (1997) - were still relevant today. These authors stated that good cycle infrastructure was needed to increase the number of people cycling and gave technical guidance on how to do it right. This was frustrating: why was progress so slow on the cycling agenda? Why was there still so little decent cycle infrastructure where I lived, in Newcastle? Drawing on my own experience in Newcastle, most people I encounter understandably do not enjoy cycling mixed in with motor traffic as evidenced by Newcastle's low levels of cycling. It does not feel safe. It feels uncomfortable. Cycling does not measure up against driving or public transport. Expressed in 1990s and still expressed today, wishing to increase cycling levels necessitates building cycleways separated from motor traffic (Pucher and Buehler 2012; Pooley et al. 2013; Aldred 2015).

I have been in Newcastle since 1996. Progressively, I turned my interest towards asking why road designs had not substantially changed in the last couple of decades, despite our knowing the technical answers. What are the links and interactions between society, politics and the technical? These were 'unnatural' questions for an engineer. However, I could usefully draw on my activist experience which had begun in 2010: I knew that we had lobbied for changes to our roads to make them more cycle friendly, but we repeatedly had hit roadblocks when addressing our transport authority (Newcastle City Council). What was the exact nature of these roadblocks? In particular I

became interested in the story that could be told from an activist's point of view about the attempt to initiate changes in urban design. As activists we had experienced irregularities and irrationalities in the transport decision-making system. Cycling was about space, yes. But I also began to realise that cycleway activism was up against something much larger than some simple technical adjustments to the engineering and planning practices. Cycling was as spatial as it was political.

In summary, my investigation was motivated by experiencing a lack of progress on cycling infrastructure in Newcastle (UK). As an activist, I also wondered about Newcastle council's approach to citizen engagement. As a Newcastle resident I had experienced the lacking infrastructure first-hand – as a cyclist to begin with, before becoming active as a concerned citizen. In 2010 together with a fellow woman activist, I co-founded the Newcastle Cycling Campaign. Having thus become an activist for cycle infrastructure in Newcastle, I became increasingly aware of many difficulties pertaining to transport cycling and its politics. But the situation seemed to encompass many players and many fields - too complex to exhaustively describe in one breath or a couple of sentences. For these reasons, I concluded that cycle politics deserved a more comprehensive investigation and was grateful for the position at Northumbria University enabling me to research this phenomenon. The eyes that could provide that closer look at cycle politics were those of women activists advocating for cycleways.

2.2 Cycling and women

In a low-cycling scenario, such as the UK, the current cyclist is predominantly younger middle-class male (Steinbach et al. 2011). In the UK not even every third cyclist is a woman (and very few people, regardless of their sex, cycle on the whole). Sánchez de Madariaga (2013) offers a gendered view on transport by introducing the concept of "mobility of care". Currently, she suggests, something is missing when assessing transport needs. Instead she advocates for the inclusion of all types of travel in transport assessments: transport concepts must be broadened to reflect everyday life and should include a much fuller assessment and understanding of journeys. For example, she advises that

we ought to account for school travel, visiting friends and family and running errands, in addition to the traditionally investigated commuting journeys.

Women's transport realities are substantially different from men's due to the process of socialisation affecting social roles and norms that often equate women to relational and men to agentic actions (Wood and Eagly 2002).

"Because of their materially different position in society, women have objectively different interests from men", concludes Phillips (1994:200). Care-taking responsibilities, or "mobility of care" (Sánchez de Madariaga 2013), are especially noteworthy in this context. When cycling with children, that someone is responsible for someone else's safety and comfort. When shopping, carrying luggage comes into the equation. People make decisions by weighing up affordances: is it safe, does it feel safe? Is it easy to do? Is cycling even an option? Is it easier than driving, or other travel options?

Heesch, Sahlqvist, and Garrard (2012) report from a low-cycling context of Australia, that fewer women cycle than men. The authors posit a reason: women felt more constraint to cycle by social and spatial pressures. This contrasts with high-cycling contexts. In cities with high cycling more trips were cycled by women than men (Garrard, Handy, and Dill 2012), demonstrating the potential that creating safe and comfortable cycling conditions can offer. High-cycling contexts provide materially which results in women choosing bikes over other travel choices. When interviewing mothers in high-cycling Amsterdam, Eyer and Ferreira (2015) found a strong social norm to undertake journeys by cycling. With a supportive cycling infrastructure, the authors heard from the interviewed women, the trips and journeys for caretaking and reproductive work (i.e. Sánchez de Madariaga's "mobility of care") can be completed without much difficulty. Women in Amsterdam do not think about it much and feel simply supported by the urban design and social environment and hence 'automatically' cycle. When cycling is made easy it becomes an inseparable normal part of the way of life. Where cycling is a social normality in a city, it merely blends into the background, as Aldred and Jungnickel (2014) posit. The infrastructure that affords cycling, simply fades into the background, becomes utilised in a taken-for-granted way.

Greed says that “many European women planners would like to see the ‘city of everyday life’ which they define as the city of short distances [...]” (Greed 2006:744). Not surprisingly, the likelihood of cycling increases with decreasing distance (Gatersleben and Appleton 2007). The distance diminution and its effect on transport choices has been widely recorded (for example Emond and Handy 2012; McCormack et al. 2008; Timperio 2004; Wuerzer and Mason 2015; McCormack et al. 2008). This finding is of grave interest, as women make shorter journeys than men in the UK (UK Government 2018) and hence short journeys open up a potential for women cycling. As it stands however, there are constraints on transport choices for women in the UK. Even in a Danish context, Freudendal-Pedersen (2009) observes that transport options can too quickly become non-choices and ‘unfreedoms’ in a woman’s gendered life when starting a family. This is especially true for cycling, as safe road design provides the very basis for the extra responsibility for transporting children safely or carrying home the household shopping comfortably. Cycling with children may on the surface look like an individual’s, family’s or household’s choice, but deeply underlying this choice is the structural-political dimension of urban design (Hillman, Adams, and Whitelegg 1990). We know from Aldred (2015) that the simple act of imagining travel with children brings forth a more careful look at street environments and softens the respondents’ outlook and expectations (including that of the hardened UK cyclist) with separate infrastructure being overwhelmingly favoured. Kids are precious cargo indeed, often putting parents in a catch 22 situation (Hillman, Adams, and Whitelegg 1990). To break the deadlock, an inclusive approach to road safety requires engineers’ and planners’ decisions to be taken on a structural level on the behalf of collective society (Leyendecker 2019; Spotswood 2016; Koglin 2014). Abstract concepts, like for example safety and justice, carry material consequences - lived experiences and processes are made real through continued and repeated enactment (Charmaz 2008). If abstract concepts of inequality and unfairness are written into the code of streets, they are written into urban life and people will interact on that basis. There is a mutually-shaping interaction between the built environment and its users (Jensen 2013). The RTPI express the interlinkage of space and people thus: “Environments reinforce identity, but they can also alienate and discriminate” (2003:5). The

overarching concept for these interactions is conceptualised in the socio-ecological model (Sallis et al. 2006; Barton and Grant 2006). The thesis is informed by the socio-ecological model: the activists researched here asked for the urban environment to be adjusted in order for their social and personal experiences to be taken into account.

The workforce and the decision making in transport is predominantly male: in the transport sector men make 80% of all workers and 78% of managers (Eurofund 2018:7). Feminist urban planners have extensively written about the linkages between decision making and spatial injustices (Greed and Johnson 2014; McDowell 1999; Eichler 1995; Little, Peake, and Richardson 1988, to name a few). For many decades, these authors have tirelessly written about the difficulties they have encountered in addressing the masculinist culture of professional planning. These academic planners have highlighted the gendered outcomes of predominantly men-led planning processes and designs resulting in an urban form that neglects women's needs - women are not in the position to design for women. This notion, I propose, can be directly translated to cycling and designing for cycling too. If the designers were unable to include a diversity of experiences and realities, the resultant design may be narrow and exclusionary. As Greed expresses, "professional decision-making is not neutral as individuals inevitably bring their own personal life-experiences and 'world view' of what is 'normal' and 'average' to the policy-making process" (2006:738). Together with Roberts, she points out that "the reality of women's everyday experiences needs to be better understood by professionals involved in urban design" (Greed and Roberts 1998:177). This line of research combining women/gender and transport/planning peaked in the 1990s, with more recent efforts concentrating on gender mainstreaming (Damyanovic 2013; Greed 2006).

Lehner-Lierz (1997) cogently describes the gendered needs of women's travel and the structural struggles in city planning resulting in road layouts that remain unsupportive for certain uses in the UK and in Germany. Women, and by extension carers in general, are confronted with complex travel diaries of short and trip-chained journeys often with children in tow and goods to transport, Lehner-Lierz outlines. In addition to travel needs, it is a regular experience, the author argues, that children are ferried by car from "island to island", sealed off

from the public when travelling, and hence deprived of seeing the city as a connected map of society and human interactions (Lehner-Lierz 1997). These kind of restrictions on a child's independence and freedom can impair children's development into independent responsible individuals (Gärling and Valsiner 1985; Hillman 1993).

2.3 Feminism and social change

Gathering experiences of the 'everyday' has expressly been a feminist goal and effort since the 1970s (Smith 1987). Clearly in a modern, democratic and fair society, the lives of women are as important as the lives of men, but women's activities are often viewed through the male lens and described in male or masculine terms (androcentrism). The feminist orientation puts women's experiences at the centre, thereby allowing a move away from an androcentrist standpoint (Chase 2008). Chase (2008) suggested that women use their personal stories to draw attention to their very own view and to use these reports as primary data sources in academia, complete with their own identities and idiosyncrasies, meanings and actions. Seeing women as active subjects, rather than passive objects of study, has also made it possible for questions to be asked about power relations, including power imbalances in research methods. Women particularly, according to Kellner and Lewis (2007), are in a prime position to challenge androcentric organisation of society, often due to the direct experiences women have of the very situation.

Women, through their understanding of life and position in society, hold opportunities for social change, say Kellner and Lewis (2007). Yet, cooperation and relational thinking, both traits gendered as feminine in the current association (Eagly and Wood 1999; Wood and Eagly 2002), are simultaneously labelled "dysfunctional" and are hence marginalised in the masculinist scientific practice, reminds Hekman (2007:536). The overarching boundary in Western society is "a paternalistic social system in which masculine identities are differentiated from feminine ones" (Fontana and Frey 2008:135). A clear distinction is made about what is acceptable for women (and what is acceptable for men). Less rigid and less binary avenues should be explored to continue the pursuit of new knowledge and more equitable futures and living arrangements

for women and men, as social and familial relations are changing (Beck-Gernsheim 1998).

The historical omission of women's voices from urban design has been detrimental to women's full inclusion and participation in public life (Greed 1994; Eichler 1995). The gendering of social life (short journeys, complex diaries and daisy-chained journeys, mobility-of-care journeys) means, that women especially would benefit from space for cycling. Yet women are seldom involved in urban spatial decision making: engineering and planning remain professions dominated by masculine worldviews (Damyanovic 2013; Sánchez de Madariaga 2013). Current gender/sex relations are restrictive to women (Beck-Gernsheim 1998; Hekman 2007; Fontana and Frey 2008). Speaking from my own experience in cycle activism, progress on the cycling agenda has been slow in the UK. In a feminist tradition, I want to tell the story about the experiences of woman activists and the realities we faced when campaigning for cycleways and suggest future possibilities.

2.4 Cycle activism

Cycling has been researched by social and natural scientists. The social research tended to concentrate on the individual cyclist, particularly as a phenomenon in low-cycling contexts, with little research examining cycling in relation to socio-political change processes. The technical research carried out in the fields of geography, engineering and urban design has predominantly concentrated on extensive datasets and their analysis, resulting for instance in infrastructure preferences and route choices. As cycling levels have remained low in the UK (and other anglophone countries), theorising and conceptual work could assist in progressing the cycling subject.

Some researchers have been calling on the knowledge community to inject some urgency into tackling car dependence and a shift away from the car. Prenzel says "Whilst infrastructure has been extensively researched and reported on, efforts in the civic-society realm [*Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*] have been underrepresented" (2012:41, author's translation from German). Researchers have voiced the frustration with the slow progress of sustainable urban transport, transport transition and mode shift (for example Sallis et al. 2006).

But, the cycling and active-travel literature thins on ideas, concepts and models: how to create action and influence policy? How to bring about systemic change? How to inspire politics into action? Although transition theorists have now begun to look at sustainable travel, most notably Geels (2012), a clear transition path has not been charted for the advancement of cycling per se. Given the lack of applicable transition concepts and the frustration about the lack of progress, how the activist conceptualises physical and symbolic spaces in relation to space, politics and power structures should be useful to anyone seeking to make a difference; may that be progressive policy- and decision makers, transport practitioners, academics or activists.

The academic field understands that cities that want to develop a mass cycling 'culture' must attend to spatial issues in urban design, engineering and planning (Buehler 2012; Pooley et al. 2013; Aldred 2015). It is firmly established in empirical literature that cycleways protected from motor traffic are a basic requirement for population-wide cycling to occur:

No city in Europe or North America has achieved high level of cycling without an extensive network of well-integrated bike lanes and paths that provide separation from motor vehicle traffic. [...] Separate cycling facilities are a crucial first step towards increasing cycling and making it socially inclusive. (Pucher and Buehler 2012: 351)

It is clear from our research that most non-cyclists and recreational cyclists will only consider cycling regularly if they are segregated from [motor vehicle] traffic (Pooley et al. 2013:176)

More generally speaking, socio-ecological models (Barton and Grant 2006; Sallis et al. 2006) are a well-accepted basis to account for the influence of the built environment on individual behaviour – these models do not individualise travel behaviour. However, empirical socio-political research illuminating these processes and interactions (politics, society and change) is lacking.

Whilst urban design influences on cycling levels are well-established, the question of **why** we largely observe a static situation for transport - and low levels of cycling in particular - in UK cities, has not been extensively explored. Spotswood notes stagnated cycling levels:

Despite significant national and local efforts over the last decade to stimulate uptake of cycling in the UK, levels of cycling (particularly utility cycling) remain at around 2% of journeys [...] the UK has a stubbornly unshifting 2% rate of cycling for total trips made (DfT, 2005-11), compared to 27% and 18% of trips in the Netherlands and Denmark respectively. (Spotswood et al. 2015:22)

In the democratic process it is campaign and interest groups that press for change. Milakis (2015) reports that building a new cycle network got the Greek people of the island of Patras to consider cycling. Interestingly, the authorities built that network due to advocate pressure. This is not dissimilar to observations by Handy (2014) who recognises advocacy as essential to progressing the transport transition agenda. Equally does Lucas (2013) support advocacy, inasmuch as she suggests that researchers should employ active methods, like “action research”, to harness community’s strength of feeling and enable them to become activists themselves. Around the world, a small number of researchers has looked at cycle activism in particular, and developed concepts about the socio-technical and socio-political interconnections in transport cycling (Wachs 1998; Batterbury 2003; Horton 2007; Richards et al. 2010; Cupples and Ridley 2008; Skinner and Rosen 2007; Furness 2010; Jones et al. 2012; Vreugdenhil and Williams 2013; Aldred 2013b; Cox 2015a; Balkmar and Summerton 2017; Bopp et al. 2017; Stehlin and Tarr 2017).

Currently the literature on cycle activism only stems from a dozen researchers or so, but it presents a field of growing interest judging by the recent rise in academic articles. Balkmar and Summerton note the recent rise of cycle activism together with a lag in research:

very little research, if any, has described and analysed how contemporary bicycle activism is increasingly formed around urban conflicts, generating new forms of activism even in ‘bicycle friendly’ countries such as Sweden (2017:152).

Reporting the USA perspective, Bopp et al (2017) agree that cycle advocacy, despite its well-understood civic service, has not been well studied. There is a dearth of social-science research linking society and cycle activism, asking qualitative questions of why has change not occurred (rather than what infrastructures do we need). Talking about campaigning in general, Blee urges

in her ethnography of USA activist groups that in the current negative political climate “scholars have an ethical responsibility to highlight the value, richness, and contributions of grassroots activism” (2012:140).

It could be that the “‘chaotic reality’ of advocacy” (Richards et al. 2010:1) presents theoretical and methodological risks that only the very dedicated and involved researcher is prepared to take. Writing from a European perspective, della Porta adds a top-down dimension describing that “social movements have been far from prominent in the literature on democratization, which has mainly focused on either socio-economic preconditions or elite behaviour” (2013:126). Whereas Aldred (2010) has linked researching activists’ campaigning for cycleways to researching citizenship, thereby politicising the subject of cycle activism. She conceives cycle citizenship as a research field that needs developing because “currently there is little work on transport and citizenship (and even less on cycling and citizenship)” (2010:37). Aldred further suggests comparative studies between locations of different local politics:

The research could be strengthened by a comparative focus [...] where the demographic profile of cyclists is likely to be different leading to distinctively different politics of cycling. (Aldred 2010:83)

Previously, researchers have attempted the application of social movement theories (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Buechler 2011; Chesters and Welsh 2011) to cycle activism research. However, the direction of social movement theories, as yet, remains very theoretical making it difficult for practical application when it is also preferencing successful campaigns (Blee 2012) and tending to “notice only visible collective action” (Horton 2003). I engaged with the literature of social movement theory, then resolved to discount it for the purpose of this study, given the practical nature of my study, telling the story of everyday experience of women activists.

2.5 Cycling beyond the UK: policies and infrastructure

In my investigation I want to look beyond Newcastle and the UK. Pucher and Buehler comment on the “irresistible” cycling conditions (2008:495) in some Continental cities, praising cycleways, land-use planning and pro-cycling

policies (Pucher and Buehler 2007). The study starts with low-cycling Newcastle as the primary site of investigation. I have lived and worked in Newcastle since 1996 (when I was 23 years of age). However, for comparison I also take a glance at Bremen (Germany) to experience a different perspective: Bremen is a high-cycling city with 23.4% of all trips on the bike (Ahrens 2016), as compared with Newcastle, which has a 0.9% bike share of all trips (Tyne & Wear 2011¹).

Following the literature review (Chapter 3) and methodology (Chapter 4), I analyse and compare the transport policies for Bremen and Newcastle in Chapter 5 to develop a background understanding of the two cities. I summate my own activism experience in Newcastle in Chapters 6 and 7. For several months I lived in Bremen during my fieldwork, experiencing the city but also interviewing activists and decision makers. This allows me to report on the women activists in Chapter 8 and the decision makers in Chapter 9, before synthesising the findings in Chapter 10 and concluding in Chapter 11.

¹ Thanks is given to Newcastle City Council for providing the dataset, the calculations are the author's

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This study is interested in the experiences of women activists lobbying for cycleways (in Newcastle and Bremen). Cycle campaigners are at the forefront of challenging a persistent status quo in transport, but change is slow (Spotswood et al. 2015).

The literature review revealed that the “the 'System' of Automobility” (Urry 2004:25) is a prominent force in mobility and transport discourses, policies and practices. Some authors go as far as forcefully calling it the “hegemony of automobility” (Randell 2017:673) or the “automotive-industrial complex” (Furness 2010:48). Given automobility’s centrality, the next section describes the concept further.

Following the section on automobility is a section on critical transport planning, describing its link to democratic theories and planning theories. It also contains a critical discussion on transport planning in Newcastle.

A few researchers report on the phenomenon of cycle activism. There are four sections that look at cycle-activism research to critically review the ways in which academic researchers have conceptualised and explained the practice of cycle campaigning, its cultures, strategies and issues.

3.2 Automobility discourse

In automobile societies the car is part and parcel of our lived and felt reality (Sheller 2004). Academics point at automobility’s interwovenness with our everyday socio-cultural practices, for example Sheller’s “emotional sociology of automobility” (2004:223) or Randell’s “routine automobility” (Randell 2017:673).

The automobility system has feedback loops that expand itself so that “[s]ocial life came to be locked in to the mode of mobility that automobility both generates and presupposes [...] everyone is *coerced* into [automobility]” (Urry 2008:344). As such, automobility “serves as the crooked yardstick by which we measure both the viability of more sustainable human-scale cities”, poses Furness (2010:212). Furness also highlights the fragmentation of a collective

spirit (ibid). The driver is neither a citizen, nor carries responsibility. The driver is protected and remote: a cutting off from social street life happens due to “the driver’s location inside the opaque automobile iron cage“ (Randell 2017:667).

As described above, the academic discourse of automobility contains many worries about automobility’s dominant place in the socio-political transport system. Authors on the subject also make some emancipatory-progressive suggestions to “overturn of the car system” (Urry 2008:343). Furness puts this simply: “the automobile has no long-term future in the city” (2010:208). Sheller wants “to make the transition from today’s car cultures” (2004:224) and suggests:

Debates about the future of the car and road system will remain superficial – and policies ineffective – insofar as they ignore this ‘deep’ social, material and above all affective embodied context. (Sheller 2004:236)

Whereas Beckmann has detected changes taking place already, making a “postautomotive mobility paradigm” (2001:593) more likely. He argues that

[A] somewhat orthodox form of automobilisation has become reflexive in the course of a growing public recognition of the inherent threats of the car to culture and nature. (Beckmann 2001:593)

The pathways for the future of mobility under the paradigm of automobility remain a point of debate in academia, politics and public, especially as cars “generate intensely emotional politics” (Sheller 2004:221). Sheller writes:

Whether phallic or feminized, the car materializes personality and takes part in the ego-formation of the owner or driver as competent, powerful, able and sexually desirable. (Sheller 2004:225)

It is posed that the car and automobility intersect with gender. When media, popular culture and advertising appeals to “the ideals of exemplary masculinity that are associated with automobility [...] [t]hose discourses are, primarily, discourses of masculinity (Randell 2017:671).

Automobility also intersects with the politics of velomobility, as many sections below illustrate.

3.3 Critical transport planning and deliberation

3.3.1 Democratic theories and citizenship

What is the role of the citizens in the democratic process? According to Habermas' communicative model (1983), democracy can only exist if the public sphere allows a free flow of open dialogue. An element of dialogic tension is needed for democracy to function, says Mouffe (2000) who proposes that the democratic political space depends and thrives on “agonistic” dialogue and exchange. Dissent is of import to democracy, or as Blee puts it:

Activists are heroes of society, turning a critical lens on what is and imagining what can be. (Blee 2012:x)

People want to be involved in decision making. As part of this study women want to be involved in local planning about cycling infrastructure. In the words of della Porta:

Wherever and whenever decisions are made, the participation of the citizens is not only useful as a socialization to democratic values, but also a fundamental requirement for a just decisional process. (della Porta 2013:187)

These issues of active citizenship and inclusion are closely linked to wider concerns about democracy. Researching European democracies, della Porta (2013) notices the current fight for democratic spaces. Democracy depends on the effective interplay between institution and citizenry. That interplay happens in the “public sphere” which consists of state-mandated efficiency, on the one hand, and civil society on the other exerting a balancing and correcting effect on state power (della Porta 2013:4). She continues: “democracy develops with the permanent contestation of power” (2013:5), echoing Mouffe’s agonism (2000).

In this study, I want to take a closer look at my attempt at becoming actively involved in local democratic processes. Some form of exchange between public-personal and the political is necessary. In fact, Della Porta believes that

deliberation should take a prime role in democracy, as it fosters inclusion, it socialises and collectivises:

Communication [...] would also change the perception of one's own preferences, making participants less concerned with individual, material interests and more with collective goods. (della Porta 2013:7)

For communication to function effectively however, institutions should understand that activists are not “disaffected citizens” (ibid:188). Active citizenship can be frustrated. Della Porta further points out that some local democratic institutions deal with criticism defensively and thereby produce an “incoherent mix of exclusions and adaptations” (ibid).

Differences in opinions need to be first understood, then negotiated, before they can be concluded in some form or another. For della Porta the upkeep of democratic due process would mean “going beyond its liberal model, broadening reflection on participation and deliberation inside and outside institutions” (2013:2). In fact, democracy is not only a bureaucratic undertaking, such as the respect of law, democratic legitimacy also comes from the “trust of citizens” says della Porta (2013:4). Democracy has an emotive component.

But deliberation only for deliberation's sake is dangerous to democracy too. Della Porta describes it as a risk, that “[p]articipation in deliberative arenas must not, therefore, lead to any removal of accountability from public institutions” (2013:183). It is:

Technocratic models of democracy, which assume the existence of consensual objectives (such as economic development) to be reached by means of experts or bureaucracy are accused of snatching power from citizens (and alienating them). (della Porta 2013:189)

There are real difficulties with the ideas of dialogic democracy, may these be communicative (Habermas 1983), agonistic (Mouffe 2000) or deliberative (della Porta 2013). Blee for example, describes a circular and mutual production process between the social and the institutional:

As the accrual of social action, social institutions are provisional, temporary, and ever changing, reshaped by unfolding human

action. In turn, human action is bounded by the institutional framework in which action is taken, a framework itself created by earlier action. (Blee 2012:32)

Democracy works as an interaction between state and people. It requires common grounds in the form of “shared norms” (della Porta 2013:182). Politics (as much as campaigns) must be grounded by moral commonality because successful deliberation depends in “common objectives” (ibid). Any public debate must be sufficiently transparent and grounded as we “are supposed to be voting not for people but for ideas” says Phillips (1994:201), continuing that:

[W]e do not expect our representatives to turn round and tell us they’ve just had a brilliant idea but forgot to mention it when they asked for our votes. (Phillips 1994:202)

It is vital to more fully engage and include critical citizens. Or as della Porta puts it: “Critical citizens do not see reasons for loyalty, but often practise voice rather than exit [from the democratic system]” (2013:188). The debate may become shrill. On the other hand, people can also become disaffected when the debate is (deliberately) opaque, or when it is felt that the state is monolithic.

Talk can be cheap. And there also is the issue of silence. As Schmidt observes, a lack of public criticism “does not necessarily signal acceptance or agreement; it may merely hide disagreement and make it more difficult for government to gain a sense of the fault lines” (2002:137). As such, a collaborative system puts a demand on citizens. It requires active citizenship. Inch talks about the “hidden costs of participation” (2015:204). This effect should be sought to be better understood: “what political participation requires of citizens, the forms of democratic learning that they engage in and the broader significance of their political participation” (Inch 2015:422). To date, this investigation into successful participation has neither been sufficiently addressed in theory, nor in practice (ibid).

It appears that is not just about participation, as deliberative-communicative theories would have it. Rather, participation cannot be seen in isolation from the various contexts and structures it takes place in.

3.3.2 Planning theories

Planning theory is intricately linked to democratic theorisation: both fields ask critical questions about the participation in power systems. Planning, furthermore, is concerned with shaping and arranging structures, environments and places, and including transport systems. It is spatial and it is thereby political. A variety of planning theories tries to cover planning's full reach, or as Allmendinger explains that there is "no *one* planning theory" (2009:22, emphasis in original). Rather, planning theory is historically contingent and always consists of competing ideas, ranging from positivist to postmodern lenses. In fact, Allmendinger presents it as "a battle over the creation of knowledge and theory, a battle over the distribution and (mis)use of power and a battle over the translation of theory into practice" (2009:25).

Planning professionals are largely positivists, as Allmendinger points out, a "large proportion of planners actually believe that they are neutral and apolitical" (2009:28). However recent planning perspectives, ranging from post-rational to communicative, are "derived from a largely post-positivist perspective" (ibid:39). This mismatch opens room for tensions. In particular it poses questions about the role and limitation of the planner in participative forms of democracy. Equally the role of the politician is under scrutiny and the interaction between the planner and the politician.

Allmendinger suggests that planning in postmodern times can emancipate by adopting certain principles. This includes fostering citizen involvement to "encourage a radical and challenging attitude on behalf of citizens", to build "mechanisms to create a radical form of democracy [that] include a stronger link between the voter and representative" and to expose and challenge power by "making decision-makers and other actors more accountable and processes more transparent". (Allmendinger 2009:239). These principles resonate with deliberative aspects in democratic theory, outlined in 3.3.1.

Planning theory changes over time. For a couple of decades, planning theory was dominated by collaborative-deliberative planning models (Allmendinger 2017). The challenges of deliberative democracy have already been described above (see section 3.3.1). In planning theory, deliberative models have not been left unchallenged. As far back as 1998, Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger

considered that “collaborative planning theory fails to incorporate adequately the peculiar political and professional nuances that exist in planning practice [which are also] dominated by instrumental rationality” (1998:1975). The authors, then, detected a wider “acknowledgement that bottom-up democratic processes will only be truly effective when the political culture and institutional designs within which planning occurs are transformed” (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 1998:1987). There is a risk in participatory systems, that people are consulted to death and become disaffected. For more direct models of democracy and planning to be effective, the political has to take a grounded and active interest in the public, its needs, sentiments and situations. The political connects the public with the planning institution.

3.3.3 Planning and the post-political

Following a recent strand in political sciences, a new idea has entered into planning theory: Allmendinger plainly announces that planning “is now post-political” (2017:206) and defines it such:

The post-political condition is held to be one where contestation and conflict is supplanted by consensus-based politics in ways that foreclose all but narrow debate and contestation around a neoliberal growth agenda” (Allmendinger and Haughton 2012:91).

In a post-political system, arenas of democratic deliberation are under threat.

Exactly what are the processes for this foreclosure and public exclusion? According to Allmendinger, the “political and planning have been conflated and managed [where] planners now treat fundamental issues of difference (the political) as issues of politics (management)” (2017:193). This densely solid statement requires some unpicking. Firstly, planners, rather than public-political process, are in charge and have become managers and overseers of institutionalised knowledge and implementation. So far, this is not unlike Weberian institutionalisation (Weber 1951 [1922]). A technical hegemony (technocracy or governing by technical experts) is formed. Here, post-political theory goes further and enunciates the systemic breakdown and stifling of public discourse.

Secondly, politicians have receded from the public. Post-political theory poses that 'the political' is the arena where public-political debate takes place, so vital for democratic process to be carried out effectively. In contrast, 'politics' in the post-political sense is the administrative management in the official realm of politicians and government officers. When the political debating arena collapses into administrative politics, as postulated by post-politics, a vital space of democracy is lost. An outlet for active citizenship vanishes. This collapse threatens and subverts the democratic equilibrium between the political public and the power of politics. In a further twist, post-political planning theory suggests that "planning becomes a tool of politics and defends or polices this situation despite claiming to be open and democratic" (Allmendinger 2017:194). Power has been removed from the political arena whilst maintaining it is still functioning democratically – but this is now an illusion. As a result, the public choose to use other ways, in particular in single-actor, centralised governmental systems such as the UK:

[T]he public itself has very little voice in debate and deliberation in anything other than an adversarial manner. Because there is typically relatively little consultation with most affected interests or open discussion at the coordinative stage of the discourse, the only course of action left at the communicative stage of the public and/or interest groups are opposed to a policy is protest. (Schmidt 2002:242)

Displaced arenas or new arenas aside, how is that conflation of the political and politics achieved? One important mechanism is the shortening of debates and discourses to a point where the "political is smothered with the politics of the singular, e.g. 'the people', 'the community' or all-inclusive notions such as 'partnership', 'governance' and 'consensus'" (Allmendinger 2017:199). This singularisation removes debate from the political arena and it delegitimises discourses.

Another mechanism of public exclusion and foreclosure is depoliticization. As some issues are long-term and complex (for instance climate change or economic policies) political discourses must be found to convey these issues to the public. As such depoliticization becomes necessary "to save democracy from itself" (Allmendinger 2017:195). An unholy alliance is formed when modern politics filters "those issues and decisions that are suitable for deliberation and

those that, instead, are difficult and intractable and need to be approached in ways that are depoliticised” (Allmendinger 2017:197). This poses a philosophical dilemma to leadership in democratic processes. And it may be a format of functioning democracies, as Schmidt explains:

[The concept of 'public truth' or public common sense] also tends to idealize public participation by assuming that a communicative discourse characterized by a wide-ranging public deliberation will always lead to more progressive outcomes. There are in fact cases where issues have been better left to the coordinative realm than the communicative. (Schmidt 2002:238)

In any case, under such abbreviated and managed discourses, longer debates about complex issues and future scenarios can become harder. An effect of ‘the political collapsing into politics’ is public disenchantment. When the post-political strategies are the deferral of the conflict by the political (avoidance of debate), it is displacing the political and moving the conflict to other arenas which ambiguates accountability and shrouds the political (Allmendinger 2017:216). Further, the collapse of the political arena displaces real concerns from an affected community to “new, undefined and vague communities, such as the ‘public interest’ or ‘future generations’” (ibid) and “through an illusion of choice and discretion” (ibid:214). Real and material concerns become vague and theoretical. The public’s voice vanishes in generalisations and by shrinking and disappearing the public-political arena. Political accountability is hidden from view, resulting in public “disillusionment” (ibid:216). The public interest is generalised and deferred “to the point when the local interests realize this has happened” (ibid:215), eventually resulting in public disenchantment:

Those who wish to engage with more fundamental issues and question the 'consensus' do not fit and are left disenchanting and alienated from politics and political processes. (Allmendinger 2017:198)

With a disenchanting public the political arena is left unpopulated. The post-political circle closes as the political conflates with administrative politics. The post-political lens is critical and asks “pertinent questions of where such unifying narratives or signifiers come from, in whose interests they are operating and what associated tolls are used to ensure that politics is not troubled by the

political” (ibid:217). The analysis of institutional discourses and political narratives becomes important.

3.3.4 Transport planning

A subset of planning is transport planning. Transport planning has been theorised by a number of researchers (for example Greed 2011; Vigar et al. 2000). These theorisations typically use the deliberative-collaborative lens. Building on the participatory inclusive spirit are the consensus-building models of Innes and Booher (2004), and collaborative governance of Healey (2006).

Oosterhuis outlines the academic social field of sustainable transport planning:

Researchers must investigate the vicious circles that entangle natural environment, infrastructure, patterns of urbanization, habits and attitudes, meanings and perceptions, and bicycle policies and bicycle activism. (Oosterhuis 2014:20)

Next to walking and public transport, cycling is understood to be a central part of a transport system. Using the concept of velomobility (Koglin 2014), Cox notes:

We must carefully note the perilous and delicate relationship between velomobility and automobility. The global hegemony of automobility means that velo-mobility always operates in the shadow of automobility, shaped by the hegemonic dominance of car-systems. (Cox 2019:28-9)

Velomobility is a meaningless concept if it only serves to reproduce automobility without the car. (Cox 2019:192)

Schmidt remarks that policy production usually carries resonance with sentiments in “societal groups, in particular powerful groups” (2002:251). The strength of the automobility discourse is prevalent (refer to 3.2). Automobility finds its expression, for example, in a paradigmatic discourse known as ‘predict and provide’ (Vigar 2002). But transport planning academics have been arguing against the overindulgence of technical solutions (such as traffic models) and arguing for traffic demand management (over traffic smoothing), land-use planning, transport planner training, community involvement in decision-making amongst other things (see for example Vigar 2002). Transport planners hold the key for making the transition away from the centrality of automobility. However

the transition depends on a new kind of transport planning. New knowledges must be asserted, communicated and, ultimately, lived and implemented. Transition does not come without risks.

A link to neoliberal systems (i.e. economic hegemony or free-market fundamentalism) can be made. In Newcastle business interests have been found to hold a primary position, heeding past events where there had been “a vocal, narrowly-defined business interest and highly visible demands from a minority of ‘motorists’” (Vigar 2006:283). Davoudi and Healey reported back in 1994, that Newcastle City Council “adopted a pragmatic relationship with the business community, though primarily based on individual contacts” (1994:26) continuing that:

[T]he business voice was primarily that of the dominant business/agency grouping built up around government policy initiatives in the 1980s. It tended to exclude both a wide range of small firms, and some of the major companies. (Davoudi and Healey 1994:32)

Pemberton and Vigar remark in 1998 that stakeholders in the Newcastle region are preoccupied by economic interests (1998:8). Going into more detail, the authors conclude that business interests were “represented in transport policy debates principally through the regional and local Chambers of Commerce and an active local Freight Transport Association” (1998:14).

Further, Pemberton and Vigar express the view that it “requires reflexivity on the part of the members of the current policy community to continually pay attention to the voices in the wider polity” (1998:31). A constant application of reflexivity may prove difficult when a lack of leadership on economic development issues had been found to exist in the Newcastle region, reported by Seex and Marshall:

The OECD was extremely critical of leadership and institutional capacity at [...] local levels. It recommended urgent measures to boost strategic capacity, especially at the city-regional level. (Seex and Marshall 2007)

Seex and Marshall recommended that all Northeast councils within the city-region should “improve capacity and vision” (2007:25). According to this report,

transport was not managed at the right level, and did not receive the leadership it needed to be successfully delivering for people and economies (Seex and Marshall 2007). Moreover, the researchers argue “forcefully that city-regional mayors would help to overcome the existing ‘leadership gap’, and to deliver economic growth” (Seex and Marshall 2007:33).

Seex and Marshall also urge leading decision makers to act more strategic employing with “stronger long-term thinking” (ibid:35) on economic matters. They describe the current modus operandi as “parochial” (ibid:33) and ask decision making to make a deliverable plan and “combine long-term ambition with realistic short-term goals” (ibid:38).

The technical practice of transport planning has been defying sociological aspects inherent to collaborative theories, as Miciukiewicz and Vigar note:

Although there is a vast literature on social aspects of transport systems in social research [...] this research is often considered too complex and uncertain to be utilised by policy-makers. (Miciukiewicz and Vigar 2013:1946)

Vigar is now advocating for a more sociologically-oriented view which would allow for people's non-rationalities, to address the “difficulties of moving practitioners mindsets from a techno-rational mode of working that may struggle to recognize and incorporate politics, values, experience, emotion and affect into strategy” (Vigar 2017:43). An orientation away from a technical-positivist kind of transport planning is signalled. This orientation is not unlike Sheller’s directions towards “emotional sociology of automobility” (2004:223).

Unfortunately, Vigar’s approach inspired by affective-sociology remains silent on a possible conflation of the political with politics: a shrinking of the public-political debating spaces. How would it be possible to engage a disillusioned excluded public in a depoliticised arena void of the political? Instead, Vigar wholly keeps within the bounds of deliberative planning theory, when he says that the “principal challenge for transport professionals is to figure out how to engage such communities in the practice of policy development” (Vigar 2017:41). Post-political theory, explaining processes such as depoliticization and public disengagement, has not as yet fully entered transport planning theory.

Theorising transport planning processes and the practices of transport practitioners, some academics have also described and critiqued the practical planning problems in the Newcastle region in particular. Pemberton and Vigar noted back in 1998 that whilst ‘accessibility’ was well developed as a discourse in Newcastle, it was not overtly linked to issues of social exclusion, because implementation was about the “perceived problem of congestion and not one of environmental or social limits” (1998:9). The presence of a constricting discourse was noted. This could equally be linked to technocratic processes as it could be linked to the post-political simplification.

The council demarcated different interests in separate arenas, resulting in “camps” as Vigar reports in 2006 about a Tyne and Wear meeting that was:

dominated by conflict between the views of an ‘economy first’ camp [...] and a ‘sustainable development’ camp who wanted the strategy to focus on managing the demand for transport [...] which tilted attention toward familiar deeply entrenched debates about road schemes at the expense of generating understanding of and commitment to other solutions. (Vigar 2006:277)

As Davies cogently wrote in 1972, when analysing Newcastle council planning in Newcastle’s West end:

The exercise of power precludes discussion. It restricts [...] debate [...] and immunizes the official or councillor to the clarity of thought and logic or argument that characterizes policies that have to be justified in the face of scepticism, in the heat of controversy, and under the permanent threat of an effective consumer veto. (Davies 1972:227)

Politicians deal with social questions. Whilst the planners remain in charge of technological decision making. Davies described the dominance of technological progress (the technical) over independent moral authority (the political) leading to “social oppression” (1972:4). Technocracy means that technology acts independently from the political and can be used to justify council schemes (1972:231). Planners resolve moral problems thus:

On the one hand, [planners] cling to the legal fiction that they themselves do not ‘make decisions’, and that democracy functions so as to ensure that the ‘general will’ sanctions the chosen policy. On the other hand, by according technology an

independent authority of its own, they escape having to face up to the socio-economic consequences of their activities. (Davies 1972:230)

Nearly forty years from Davies' writing, he reminds us that planning had been corrupted: it is "simply that the exercise of power has taken the place of the exercise of reason" (1972:226). This has the effect that power has been cloaked convincing decision makers, politicians and officers alike, that technical competence (politics) equals authority (the political) (1972:227).

As Allmendinger explains about maintaining technical control: "[A communicative] approach involves a loss of power for planners by challenging their expert status and current dominant discourses" (2009:25). The technical maintains the dominant place in a technocratic system. A technocratic system was born where technical politics envelops the political and voids the public arena. Planning now has to contend with these realities.

These preceding passages from Vigar (2006) and Davies (1972) certainly contain elements of post-positivism and technocratic rule, if not also fitting into post-political theory. Foreclosure of debate and tightening of the political arena could be ascribed to effects described in post-political planning theory. However, these elements can also be related to Weberian technocratic rationalisation of institutions (Weber 1951 [1922]), a much older theory dating to the early 20th century. It describes the process of institutionalisation or, put otherwise, the establishing and consolidation of a hegemony over time.

The academic comments about Newcastle's polity, discussed above, contain much concern for the coherence of its democratic system. It is Webb who warns Newcastle about an impending "electoral vacuum, which others on the far right may be all too willing to fill" (2016:205). In any case, and more practically speaking, the transport planner has been described as operating in technical-technocratic isolation from the public and the political. The wider public, on the other hand, is portrayed as excluded from debate, separated out from business interests which have been found to hold a special elevated position in Newcastle, Tyne and Wear. While it has not overtly arrived in transport planning theory yet, in many ways the post-political condition has arrived in Newcastle's in practice.

3.4 Activism matters

3.4.1 The politics of campaigning

Writing in a USA context, Wachs reminds the reader how important campaigning groups are to democratic governance:

In a democracy there is simply no reason to adopt major changes in policy as a result of scholarly studies or technical findings. There is every reason, however, to adopt policies that respond to vocal and persistent interest groups that demonstrate they have staying power in the political arena. Whether or not cycling catches on in the United States will depend on the success or failure of grassroots movements. (Wachs 1998:7)

On a local level, cycle activists are “concerned citizens who can be learned from when envisioning and planning mobility transitions” proffer Balkmar and Summerton (2017:163). The researchers invite others to explore further how the activists construct cyclists as political subjects and how spatial claims are made: as, for example, Richards et al have done and report on a sympathetic council staff who points out that advocates “are asking the hard questions of the planning departments and the engineering departments – and that’s a good thing” (2010:6). The researchers also state that advocacy is essential in the bid to increase cycling. For instance, Batterbury recognises active citizenship as a vital agent for change because:

Planning is too important to be left to planners—especially those who do not ride bikes. The microgeography of the urban streetscape is best managed, and made more friendly and sustainable, by a coalition of citizens and professionals. (Batterbury 2003:166)

Arguably riding a bike should not be essential to becoming cogent of cycling’s needs and dilemmas. However, historically cycle activists are recruited from the cycling constituent (see section 3.5 below). Aldred points out that cyclists’ activism is “unusually prominent” (2010:41) in places like Cambridge, the city with the highest cycle share in the UK. She discovered, when researching cycling voices in Cambridge, that activists readily “suggest policies that might encourage other people to cycle, although with disagreements about what policies these might be” (Aldred 2010:42). This intimates that a clear campaigning message and direction are lacking amongst cycle campaigners.

Speaking as a researcher and a cycle campaigner, Horton warns of advocacy to lose focus as a cycling-is-done-to-us advocacy which only “gets cycling a few crumbs from transport’s table and achieves little beyond reproducing itself as marginal; it’s jaded, lacks vision and disempowers both ourselves and others” (Horton 2006b:unpaginated), however, he continues:

*The other style of cycling advocacy is more obviously vision-led.
(Horton 2006b:unpaginated)*

A vision provides a direction which helps a campaigning style that uses facts (notwithstanding mobilising emotions) - for instance, Richards et al say advocates “reported that they used research evidence in their advocacy activities, in particular, information about the design standards for cycling and walking facilities, economic benefits of active transport, and statistics” (2010:5) in order to lobby and progress their campaigning. Whereas Balkmar and Summerton also include cultural politics in campaigning, because an “inclusive concept underscores that the cultural and the political are not separate domains but rather tightly interlinked” (2017:154). However, combining culture and politics does not dissolve conflicts in relationship and cooperation, as recorded by Balkmar and Summerton interviewing a representative of the national cycle campaign who stated:

*Campaigning is a balancing act. You can’t seem to lack any backbone and be a politician’s slave, but politicians must somehow be able to trust that they can ask us and we won’t, like, stab them in the back if they aren’t on top of cycling issues.
(Balkmar and Summerton 2017:154)*

Notwithstanding policy and vision production, Richards et al report that cycle activists are also involved in “community mobilisation” (2010:6) and in “offering support and encouragement to existing cycling and walking advocate groups who may be struggling because of member stress and burn-out” (2010:7). The researchers observed that the common group arrangement consisted of a small core of activists with a wider mailing list (Richards et al. 2010:3). Given a typically small membership size, Richards et al (2010) describe that activism is vulnerable to burn out of the core group. The vulnerability is not surprising as the cycle activist operates under a “complex and double stigma associated with

being a cyclist” (Aldred 2013a:269), however, new activism particularly holds the potential to overcome the ambivalent identity and associated stigma (discussed further below).

Cycle advocacy, just like advocacy in general, is part of the democratic process. It can be a problem for cycle campaigners to negotiate the different styles of advocacy and determine what style is deemed most effective or appropriate to the situation. Campaigning from a socially marginalised position is not an easy proposition and may hamper or obscure the development of a clear campaigning vision.

3.4.2 Engaging with space and design

Cycling is spatial. Balkmar and Summerton draw the wider connections between mobility, politics and spatial resources: “Urban mobility is political in the sense that it refers to struggles over distribution of power and resources in public space” (2017:154). A cyclist claims space when cycling (whether that be on the road or on cycleways). Spatiality is also inherent to cycle campaigning if spatial claims are made by activists. If there were changes to the cycling environment, cycling could flourish, Cox points out the connection between infrastructure and cycling:

Only with the addition of other imperatives, does utilitarian riding begin to make sense in a generally hostile environment. If the environments of riding were to change, with the introduction of, for example, comprehensive infrastructures and other policy interventions, then utilitarian cycling becomes a more obvious possibility. (Cox 2015b:19-20)

Cambridge is the UK city with the highest cycling rate, making it an obvious location better understand the reasons for higher rates of cycling, in comparison to other UK cities. It is Cambridge where restrictions on motor traffic aid cycling, says Aldred, thus “creating a distinctive type of public space within which cycling is relatively normalised” (2010:39). Even Critical Mass, better known for its radical demonstration of cycling and its affirmations of cycling’s contributions, expresses a spatial assertion, as a Critical Mass flyer demonstrates:

[CM flyer:] Aren’t you sick and tired of having to fight for your life on city streets? Why are we treated like cars by the law, but like obnoxious and unwelcome obstructions by people in cars?

Where are we supposed to go? Aren't we doing ourselves and humanity a favor by commuting on bicycle? (Blickstein 2010:354)

Disregarding well-accepted socio-ecological models (Sallis et al. 2006; Barton and Grant 2006), Cupples and Ridley remain sceptical about the effects of urban design on behaviour, stating that “these infrastructural changes do not have direct causal powers” (2008:259). Further they note that infrastructure interventions could have opposing effects, stating that the “focus on infrastructure and calculated intervention might not therefore bring about the transformation in awareness necessary to make a substantial difference or it might generate resistance in the form of counterconducts” (Cupples and Ridley 2008:263). However, Vreugdenhil and Williams feel that “there are vital and productive powers associated not only with cycling but with the physical infrastructure of the bike lanes themselves, and that a sociotechnical focus helps dispel any human/nonhuman binary” (2013:289) as evoked by Cupples and Ridley. To embark on a transport transition, Vreugdenhil and Williams (2013) point out the urgent need to bring sociological concepts into the purely technical aspects of urban design (i.e. transport engineering, planning).

When interviewing advocates and council staff in New Zealand, Richards et al note the participants' interest of “the safety of cycle lanes, pedestrian perceptions of safety, economic benefits of active transport and accurate measurement of cycling and walking participation and injury” (2010:5). In the UK, campaigners and officials are also interested in spatial aspects and people have “desire for implementation of better facilities for cycling” (Jones et al. 2012:1420) with an implementation approach and infrastructural details outstanding in the UK. There are complications, as imagination and vision for bigger things may not come easy to people, explains Aldred:

There seemed to be a gap between people's ability to describe their local environment and talk about it as an 'environment', and their ability to do the same at a larger scale. (Aldred 2010:43)

The introduction of new infrastructure may also be made difficult when the quality of the design is compromised. A compromised design might only invite current cyclists and exclude others by the cycling skill they are able to muster, as an activist explains: “a compromise solution, a line at the edge of the road

does not necessarily constitute an appropriate cycle lane”, quoted in Vreugdenhil and Williams (2013:288). As stated in this letter to the press also quoted by Vreugdenhil and Williams, the new bike lane “is completely irresponsible and foolhardy in the extreme to encourage more unprotected and vulnerable cyclists to share a carriageway with vehicles . . . [a] white line painted on the road is not a means of protection” (ibid). Simply installing any cycle infrastructure is not sufficient, as it turned out the “white lines were implicated in conflicts over encroachment and marginalisation” (ibid). It is especially noteworthy that insufficient infrastructure in the case reported by Vreugdenhil and Williams was “contingent on the overall road widths” so that “bike lanes are typically broken up by entry and exit points” (2013:285) and offering little cycling continuity or comfort. This suggests that cycling infrastructure requires certain technical quality before it can inspire politically and socially.

Bopp et al point out that “significant research has indicated the importance of supportive physical infrastructure to support biking, especially among youth, women and older adults” and, they continue:

This highlights the importance of advocacy groups to help in creating and maintaining safe spaces for people to bike. (Bopp et al. 2017:5)

Space is contested by the presence of the automobile and its official and institutional practices in support of the car. Hence engaging with space is vital for cycle campaigning whose aim is to widen the base of the cycling constituent through urban design.

3.4.3 Automobility and activism

Automobility and car dependence are real. They hinder sustainable travel to emerge and prosper, explains Furness more fully:

The thorough normalization of automobility inhibits our capacity to ask [the difficult but necessary] questions because it dominates our day-to-day rhythms and serves as the crooked yardstick by which we measure both the viability of more sustainable human-scale cities. Or the prospects of more equitable forms of mobility. (Furness 2010:212)

Immersed in automobile dominance, people may show a strong adherence to cars, especially in relation to other modes. But this adherence may also be true for other transport modes. Horton notes that environmental activists are strongly anti-car (2006a:52). He wonders if this could be a distinctively British trait, because observations from “northwestern European countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands with relatively high rates of cycling, suggest a less direct link between modes of mobility and morality” (2006a:52). Further, Horton (2006b) notes a fault in the UK’s current transport politics: by equating cycling with driving it endorses vehicular cycling (i.e. cycling amongst motor traffic, see 3.5.1) which results in institutional promotion of cycling and leaving little room for politicising space. Driving and cycling are different activities with different interests, which can result in a ‘them and us’ divide and is often mentioned by activists (for example Vreugdenhil and Williams 2013). Skinner and Rosen however found “little evidence to support the polarisation between motorists and cyclists that is portrayed in both the pro-car discourse common in much media and political discussion, and in some parts of environmental movement” (2007:91).

Rather, there are spatial affinities, so that people feel strong links to their immediate locality where they live or work, as shown in Vreugdenhil and Williams quote of a local politician (alderman):

We realised people love their road, they have a personal relationship with their road. They know their road; it is part of the security that makes up their life. (politician, quoted in Vreugdenhil and Williams 2013:288)

The politician had gained this new understanding the hard way. Initial plans were protested against by locals, which led to the local authority’s reconsideration of their approach to communication. People simply live and act within a designed transport system, Jones et al say: “land-use planning has traditionally privileged car use and has resulted in its domination (and normalisation) in urban areas such that it reduces opportunities for walking and cycling and renders the conditions for their practice inhospitable” (2012:1421).

From transport groupings, turning to political groups of people, Richards et al report on the barriers that campaigners experienced, listing “a lack of funding, a

lack of will-power among either council staff or councillors, limited council staff capacity (time or training) and a culture of providing infrastructure for motor vehicles instead of people” (2010:1). Horton concurs that the car is dominant and says that “in city after city across the globe the bicycle is being driven off the roads, often consciously, as planners and policy-makers make way for increasing levels of car use” (Horton 2006a:52). Something that Koglin (2013) would agree with, researching transport planning and engineering practices. An acknowledgement of these unfreedoms in the transport system could be useful to understand people’s attitude and strength of feeling. For instance, as Jones et al express, “[it is] questionable whether the current paradigm promoting transport ‘choice’ is legitimate given the interaction between modes of travel and the power asymmetries that are played out on the public highway” (2012:4121). Vreugdenhil and Williams agree with the choice limitation as a mismatch of the technical and the social spheres:

[E]xcessive faith placed by the designers in the capacity of the technical processes and materials [... whilst] the role of the social was diminished. So, for example, the power and the possibilities of communication and consultation were underplayed. (Vreugdenhil and Williams 2013:288)

In an effort to understand the actions and activities of a transport authority, Richards et al. (2010) describe the way in which advocates reasoned about the opposing voices that a council had to manage and balance, in the light of a powerful pro-automobile lobby. However, Richards et al’s study also quotes an advocate who is sceptical of decision makers as they “don’t bother too much about evidence [and] make up their mind on some other basis” (2010:5). Another quote from an advocate in the same study, talking about council staff and elected councillors, states that decision makers “kind of think, well we don’t need to worry about cycling and walking [...] OK there’s some congestion, but that’s nothing that a few bigger roads won’t fix up” (2010:6). Richards and her colleagues write that the potential for automotive backlash is present, as can be expected from the interests that are vested in car dependence, for example car parking fees, removal of parking spaces, traffic calming (2010:7). This leads the researchers to conclude that it is an important advocates’ task to find new narrative frames to refute automobility’s vested interests. However, it is not just

about advocates, the overall power to democratise cycling is a political-institutional issue where governments, too, must find new narratives “given that the current model has failed to achieve levels of cycling witnessed in northern Europe” (Jones et al. 2012:1421).

As Jones et al state, the current model to increase cycling has failed, and the acknowledgment of that fact should lead to considering the needs of people who are not currently cycling, but who would cycle “on quality, designated cycle tracks separated both from road and from footway and along streets with lower speed limits” (2012:1421). Infrastructure changes behaviour and elicits people’s views, as Vreugdenhil and Williams report: the council’s painting on of cycle lanes did unsettle the “sociotechnical fabric” of the city (Vreugdenhil and Williams 2013:290). Returning to the importance of communicative approaches in socio-technical transitions, Jones et al write:

The challenge for policy makers at both national and local government levels is to start an open and honest dialogue with the public about the ‘transport crisis’ facing cities and the need to prioritise walking and cycling, rather than continuing in a piecemeal fashion under the remit of (supposed) transport choice. (Jones et al. 2012:1422)

With powerful forces maintaining the status quo, officers who design cities for cars and politicians who cannot imagine another future for transport, Jones et al (2012) further state that it is a challenge to communicate to the automobile adherent (described in section 3.7 below), the viability of walking and cycling. The authors continue suggesting specific project items, and explain that spatial shift is actually beneficial for driving:

Lower speed limits and the reallocation of road space to create safer walking and cycling routes are required if more people are going to be encouraged to walk and cycle more, and this can actually increase highway capacity for essential car journeys and commercial operations. (Jones et al., 2012:1422)

In that car world, cycle campaigners have their work cut out to crack into the life worlds of socio-technical automobility. Cycling is caught in a vice between the future models of urban space and the social, political and institutional car dependency. Campaigners will have to navigate these tensions and find new

ways of expressing future possibilities amidst the inflammation and alienation of the dominant system of automobility.

3.4.4 Individual consumer cyclist

Cycling can be construed as an opposite to driving, even more forcefully so in a car dependent society, as highlighted above. Due to its oppositional relationship with the car, cycling also sits at odds with consumer culture and capitalism more broadly which will be expanded on in this section.

Partly this can be explained by forces inherent in the “automotive-industrial complex” (Furness 2010:48) and as Wachs expands on the reality of capitalism in a car-dependent society:

Bicycle-friendly programs are at a disadvantage, in part, because they would save money and that means reducing spending for auto-oriented programs and that spending benefits so many in our society. (Wachs 1998:7)

Activists can stand in opposition to the car-capitalist system, consciously or otherwise. Cycle activists have conceptualised cycling as vital to urban life, according to Stehlin and Tarr this is exactly because of the opposition of cycling to driving, as “many activists see cars as the cause of urban contradictions rather than their symptom” (2017:1337). Cycle activists are practical in their views: according to Horton (2006a:51), environmentalists are pragmatic in their consumer choices and gravitate towards the middle ground, scorning bikes that are too cheap and too expensive.

Yet with the opposition to an exclusionary capitalist system come pitfalls for exploitation: Stehlin and Tarr (2017) put forward that corridor-style cycling projects fail to challenge the capitalist system and its inherent exclusion of social groups (race, gender and so on). Whereas Aldred points out that cycling advocacy can be exploited by carrying out societally useful work as unpaid volunteers in the Tory’s Big Society (2012:103) thereby aiding the status quo. Some aspects of cycling were indeed more “easily allied to neo-liberal governmentality, through its evocation of a duty to self-care” states Aldred (2010:46), This includes cyclists in her Cambridge study who argued that cyclists should receive higher social respect in exchange for their environmental behaviour (2010:44) thus evoking the sense of a communal market place. In the

current light however, Aldred sees the government discriminating against cycling by individualising its responsibility and notices that cycling “has for a long time been marginal to resource allocation in the public political sphere” (Aldred 2013b:194).

Horton argues that there need not be a contradiction, and says cycling “contributes to a green lifestyle at the individual level, and a green culture at the collective level” (Horton 2006a:47) presuming a collective identity exists, or could be built and mobilised into action (for the difficulties of a cyclist/cycling identity, see below, 3.6.4 and 3.7.4 in particular). Aldred is not opposed to the idea of collective identity either and proposes the “vision of ‘cycling citizenship’ [which] challenges the image of the individual as neoliberal consumer and the citizen as conceived primarily in national, formal political terms” (2010:35). She argues that consumption need not be atomising, it can be communal and transport consumption, particularly, can be political too (Aldred 2010).

Furness (2010) points out that we should address transport’s ecological issues head on. To him that entails that campaigners must not fall in the trap of “individualized solutions for a complex of cultural, political, and otherwise globally embedded problems” (Furness 2010:207). For example, Richards et al (2010) describe such an individualised solution: health-sector employees could act as advocates to convince individuals to cycle.

However, as explained in earlier chapters, without supportive infrastructure, i.e. a system-wide solution, there are limits to this individualised approach. Such an approach to cycling (individualised responsibility, improved cycling rights, cycle training etc) has proven to be an unsuccessful tactic to bring about change (Spotswood et al. 2015). In fact, Aldred reports that:

Activists particularly criticised what they saw as the use of SIN [safety in numbers] to impose individual responsibility, where the individual cyclist rather than the state must make cycling safer for others. (Aldred 2013b:199)

Cupples and Ridley make the point that:

The forms of authority embedded in strategies for sustainable transport and taken up by sustainability officers, advocacy groups and others which attempt to exhort non-cyclists to cycle

as a responsible, healthy and ethical activity correspond to this particular vision of urban citizenship and social risk. (2008:256)

Hence highlighting the current hostility for cycling in the absence of real and viable replacements for driving. The authors continue stating that cycle promotion shows “fundamentalist tendencies in which both totalising and binarising logics are at work” (Cupples and Ridley 2008:257). Talking people into cycling without addressing systemic issues is neither an inclusive nor an effective approach to cycling.

A further example of an individualised piecemeal approach is the way in which the media in low-cycling contexts tends to individualise the responsibility of cyclists in road crashes disproportionately. Aldred illuminates the example:

The different culture context is illustrated by an incident involving a young British cyclist. This was reported by the local press but the focus was on [...] criticising the youth [...] While the driver was 10 mph over the speed limit this was disregarded. (Aldred 2012:101)

Hence UK media employs a victim-blaming approach (Spotswood et al. 2015) feeding on the stigmatised and othered cyclist identity. In the absence of structural solutions, it is the prevailing narratives that keep making cyclists responsible for their own individual safety, as Aldred identified a discourse that focusses on individual safety: “helmets and high-visibility (hi-vis) clothing (both unusual in high-cycling countries) and more recently telling cyclists to improve their visibility by riding well out from the kerb” (2013b:194-5).

Parallels can be drawn with other discourses of exclusionary practices, Aldred quotes one activist noting:

“I’ve seen a lot of parallels between victim blaming of cyclists and victim blaming of women.” (quoting woman activist, Aldred 2013b:199)

Individualisation also occurs on other personal levels, where we have “normalize[d] the process of thinking like an individual driver, instead of social citizens with basic needs, requirements, and democratic rights” according to

Furness (2010:212). De-centring driving, cycling may actually work to foster solidarity, Aldred offers:

Interviewees presented cycling as a flexible practice that could ward off atomisation while respecting individual autonomy; in an individualistic society, this represents an attempt to accommodate individualism within a framework that simultaneously limits it. (Aldred 2010:49)

Living in a capitalist consumer society brings with it the individualisation of responsibility. With cycling happening on the margins of UK society centred on automobility, road danger and risk is transferred onto the cyclist to keep him- or herself safe. Hence, in a hegemonic car capitalist society, spatial demands that cycle campaigners make, may be viewed with suspicion by society. Ultimately, cycling in the UK is a critique of capitalism, car dependence and individual consumer society.

3.5 A brief history of cycle campaigning

3.5.1 Vehicular cycling and the CTC²

Researchers report that cycling organisations in Britain have a preference for riding on the road mixed with motor traffic. For example Horton reports on a “long-standing contentiousness, among British cyclists’ organisations, of off-road cycling routes” (2007:143). This phenomenon of the rejection of cycleways alongside roads is closely linked to a concept called ‘vehicular cycling’, which Aldred describes further:

‘Vehicular cycling’ promoted by key figures such as John F Franklin (in the United Kingdom) and John Forester (in the United States), proposes that cyclists gain respect and space on the road by behaving like a vehicle. (Aldred 2012:95)

According to Aldred (2012) vehicular cycling is enshrined in UK policy. To substantiate the claim, Aldred quotes from the ‘Cycling Infrastructure Design’ policy text: “There is seldom the opportunity to provide an off-carriageway route within the highway boundary that does not compromise pedestrian facilities or create potential hazards for cyclists, particularly at side roads” (2012:96).

² UK’s national cycle lobby

Opportunity, here, I interpret to mean space, and to a lesser extent finances. Hence the policy has no space (and monies) for cycling.

The phenomenon of vehicular cycling is closely allied to the issue of 'segregation' i.e. whether cycling should run on separated cycleways protected from motor traffic. In the UK, policy communities tended to be unconvinced of 'segregation', as Aldred outlines:

[There has been] scepticism towards 'segregation' (i.e. dedicated cycling infrastructure) among UK cycling policy communities. While a 1981 Cycling Consultation stated that 'in an ideal world' cyclists should have 'their own tracks', it cast segregation as (a) too expensive, (b) too difficult, and (c) a local responsibility. But policy-makers and advocates have often also seen segregation as undesirable in principle. (Aldred 2013b:194)

The result of the vehicular cycling policies in the UK is that dedicated cycleways are rare, sometimes cycle infrastructure consist of narrow lanes on shared footways, and should on-road painted-on lanes be present, they are patchy (Aldred 2012:96).

Part of the aforementioned policy community is the UK's foremost national cycle campaign the CTC (Cyclists' Touring Club, now Cycling UK), formed in 1878. With the rise of the environmental movement in the 1970s, the central role of the CTC came under threat as new campaigning alignments were probed. Drawing on historical documents, Cox (2015b) reports that to some campaigners the CTC's traditional role had gradually become superfluous to other campaigners whilst the CTC disavowed the new campaigns, thus opening up of a cleavage in campaigning. Whilst new environmental groups rose, the time-honoured cyclist remained unmoved, says Cox:

While these new groups were appropriate vehicles for the conduct of local campaigns, demonstrating and utilising the skills and interests of a diverse range of peoples, the perspective of many who defined themselves as cyclists remained rather aloof. (Cox 2015b:15)

The clash between the old and the new, in Cox's analysis, has to do with the differing interpretation of the utility of the bike: for the new groups the bike is a simple "means to an end" (2015b:17), to the old groups the bike is the end in

itself as central element. According to Cox, both campaigning visions draw on the environment, however the fault line opened up as CTC held a romantic escapist vision of nature and the environmental groups held a view of a plundered environment (Cox 2015b:19). Adding to the disparate vision about environment, Cox locates an associated tension: “unresolved disjuncture between the two positions is the place of pleasure” (ibid:20). Each of the two approaches has a value but can result in a “cognitive dissonance” amongst campaigners and campaign groups (ibid:21).

3.5.2 Historical tensions

Up until recently, the cleavages in infrastructure and vision in cycle campaigning had not been challenged, much less resolved in the UK. Rather they existed as uneasy parallels with the CTC position of vehicular cycling and escapist notions of cycling dominating in cycle campaigning. Over the decades, the cycling experience was changing in the UK. The car entered urban space and people’s imagination and the bicycle changed from a vehicle of speed in the early 1900s, “to one opposed to speed” (Horton 2006b:unpaginated) in the later 1900s. This new urbanism-inspired notion enabled new cycle advocacy groups to emerge as it offered a new political “critique of [...] contemporary capitalist societies” (Horton 2006b:unpaginated). Horton outlines the fault lines opening up in today’s car-oriented capitalist society and urban sprawl:

So if originally cycling extended people’s everyday geographies, today it constricts them; where the car encourages sprawl, the way in which environmental activists use the bicycle tends to produce the opposite effect, squeezing the different aspects of everyday life into a more compact geographical area. (Horton 2006a:48)

Now, the romantic notions of cycling were looking out of place in a city filled with car and a countryside criss-crossed with motorways. Of late, Aldred too observed changes in campaigning, noting a “broader rise of new cycling advocacy” (2013:200) of grassroots campaigns forming in the UK, particularly in London and Edinburgh. What does this contemporary cycling advocacy want? At present, the historical debates continue within advocacy, and “the meanings of cycling – and cyclists – is often hotly contested by [today’s] activists and others” (Aldred 2012:84). According to Horton (2007), although the bike was

marginalised by the car, the cyclist now makes a comeback, and with him or her comes the separation debate “as an unsettling haunting” (2007:147). Debates amongst cycle campaigners persist, Aldred detects “constant debates among cycling activists over whether ‘we are traffic’ (a Critical Mass slogan) or whether the bicycle is more akin to walking” (2010:40).

Campaigners have worried and are worrying still about adopting a safety rhetoric and they “caution about an overemphasis on injury and safety” (Richards et al. 2010:6). The concern of the cycle campaigners would be to make their much-cherished cycling look bad in front of others. But times are changing: Aldred reports on a new campaign that managed to “force a ‘frame shift’, around the re-politicisation of danger” (Aldred 2013b:199). The talk of safety and danger is a long-standing issue in cycle campaigning and closely relates to the tensions, elaborated above, identified by:

- Cox: cycle touring versus environmentalists’ conception of the environment and pleasure
- Aldred: marginalised identity of the current cyclist in a car dominated environment
- Horton: freedom and constriction, speed and slowness.

These core tensions are still current and not unique to the UK. Balkmar and Summerton recently reported about the conflicts within ‘Cycling Sweden’ (Sweden’s national cycling campaign) showing the circularity of argument:

[Cycling Sweden representative:] I want to send the message that it is simple and pleasurable to cycle. Yet this implies a balancing act because the angrier you get, the more you have to point out how bad things are. And then you trip yourself up, since what you really want to say is how wonderful and fun it is to cycle. (Balkmar and Summerton 2017:154)

Yet less conflicted narratives are getting developed too by campaigners. Alternative campaign groups in Sweden, Ghost Bikes Sweden (GB) and Bike Maffia (BM), use their displeasure to politicise urban cycling, expressing “dissatisfaction not only with how contemporary motorized urban spaces exclude or violate cyclists’ safety, but also reflect a critique of what is viewed as a depoliticized view on urban cycling” (Balkmar and Summerton 2017:161). It is

noted by researchers how cycling movements make use of new technologies and how they find new expressions for cycling as such becoming political: these new campaign groups are on the rise (Aldred 2013b; Balkmar and Summerton 2017). For example, Balkmar and Summerton discuss new campaign efforts in Sweden:

[These new] organizations articulate a more critical dimension of “cycling citizenship” compared to the more established organization’s (Cycling Sweden, CS) emphasis on the cycling experience in terms of simplicity and pleasure [... and] mainstream “corridor politics”. (Balkmar and Summerton 2017:161)

Like Cycling Sweden, the established CTC (now Cycling UK) have shown little ability to change old rhetoric. Change came from new challengers, from the local grassroots (whether that be in the UK or in Sweden).

3.5.3 Resolutions?

Understanding cycle campaigning history complete with historical tensions, Aldred has noticed that the cycling movement has started changing and is “beginning to produce new debates and changes to advocacy and activism” (2012:84). Attempting reconciliation inside cycle campaigning, Cox makes the suggestion to “connect this emphasis on pleasure [of cycling] with the stress in infrastructure provision and urban design in the environmental pro-cycling movement” (2015b:20) to start resolving the direction of cycle campaigning.

An example of finding resolution are the ‘new activists’ in London, reported by Aldred, who overcame tensions through organising a “short-term, clearly defined [...] campaign [that] allowed temporary involvement without identity threat” (2013b:199). And it was effective, according to Aldred, in that the initiative’s had a lasting effect on mobilising a new type of cycle campaigning that redefined the cyclist identity (2013b:200).

Cycle campaigning is changing. Whilst some orthodoxies still persist in cycle campaigning, a fresh cohort of campaigners is now finding alternative ways and means that challenge the older campaigning legacies of cyclist-centred messages. New messages on environment-pleasure and environment-identity are being constructed, articulated and used to politicise the issue of transport

cycling. Cycle campaigning is in a process of change away from the traditional campaigning that was centred on liberal demands for vehicular cycling rights.

3.6 Contemporary cycle campaigning

3.6.1 *Linking social and technical*

The infrastructure is now changing dramatically in some cities where cycle-specific routes have been built – the prominent examples are London, New York, Sevilla. When previously the engineers had ‘command and control’ charge of the city, we are currently in a “sociotechnical transition in cities”, say Vreugdenhil and Williams (2013:284). New technical approaches, such as the construction of cycleways, is changing the urban fabric, bringing new possibilities to the social.

The social must also find inclusion in cycling discourses: linking to cycling’s environment-pleasure dilemma (outlined above), cycle activists must confront their relationship to danger because the “denial of cycling’s danger tends too quickly to dismiss people’s genuinely held fear of cycling” (Horton 2007:137). This is especially the case if the “priority in efforts [is] to increase population participation in physical activity” (Richards et al. 2010:1).

The problems campaigners try to tackle run deep and do not only affect low-cycling contexts. Campaigners must recognise and “emphasize that even ‘bike friendly’ cities are troubled by various forms of ‘struggles’ among road users” (Balkmar and Summerton 2017:162) and focus on the futures and possibilities that cycling holds, “what it can be about – namely simplicity and pleasure” (ibid:163).

A previously purely technical, a technocratic, approach to cities is now challenged by cycle campaigners bringing sociality and social needs into the debate.

3.6.2 *Speaking for whom and how?*

Cycling is a marginal activity in the UK, stigmatised (Horton 2007), the practice of a “minority out-group” (Walker 2012), and hence, out of that social marginalisation, the issues of identity and constituency arise, to quote Aldred:

Like other social movement organisations, cycling organisations struggle with issues of identity. For whom do they speak? For the cyclist, and if so which cyclist? For potential cyclists – which could be almost the entire population. (Aldred 2012:102)

Historical tensions aside, there are contradictions that remain in campaigning for cycling. Jones et al have found that the “majority of the public will not entertain the idea of developing the cycling skills and ‘survivalist’ strategies to cope with riding amongst motorised traffic” (2012:1422). This is in contrast to cycling advocates who “increasingly insistent that today’s youngsters must be trained to ride on the road [in traffic]” (Horton 2007:144). The question remains as to who it is, that activists desire to cycle and under what conditions this is desirable or possible.

Questions remain. Who do campaign groups speak for? Who are the beneficiaries? In the past the CTC, for example, campaigned for the rights of cyclists and to increase their constituent. Just as Aldred says it is a “struggle to define their constituency, cycle campaigners of all stripes claim to speak for potential cyclists rather than only current cyclists” (2012:97). Campaign groups want more people to cycle but the strategies employed to date have failed to increase cycling in the UK (Spotswood et al. 2015).

There are currently two competing conceptions of cycling: cycling being fear/danger/struggle and cycling being fun/pleasure/freedom (hence Cox’s environment-pleasure dilemma). What links the two conceptions is firstly, taking into account - and taking seriously - lived realities and second and more generally, creating viable future visions for cycling in cities and urban life. The connection to cycle campaigning could be made by “male respondents who do not raise safety as an especially important issue for themselves [...] will say things like ‘I wouldn’t want my wife to cycle on that road’” (Skinner and Rosen 2007:89). This is echoed by Aldred (2015) who also found that adult cyclists, when asked to imagine cycling with children, showed a stronger preference for cycling separated from motor traffic. It is of value that cycle campaigners think beyond their own cycling preferences and imagine different lived realities. The cycle campaigner through widening his/her perspective to become inclusive to others’ views.

Excluding from debate large swathes of the population because they are not cycling is problematic in campaigning messages and tactics. It could lock cycling into a “masculine, well-educated middle-class” future, shaping agendas and demands only in relation to this constituent (Balkmar and Summerton 2017).

3.6.3 Macho cycling

Although cycling has done much for women’s emancipation more than a hundred years ago (Jungnickel 2015), cycling has historically been a masculine activity, executed by men: for a fuller historical record of cycling’s masculinity see “Women, gendered roles, domesticity and cycling in Britain, 1930-1980” by Cox (2015a). Notwithstanding the slowly dissolving historical tensions in cycle campaigning (described above), sex differences in UK’s utility cycling have not been inclusively problematised as yet: in the UK, less than a third of all cyclists are women (Garrard, Handy, and Dill 2012). The role of women in relation to cycling, as a socio-political question, has not been sufficiently illuminated. For Sweden too, Balkmar and Summerton note that the portrayal of cycling as a masculine activity is still in use.

A masculine view of cycling can strategically ally with hegemonic power, explain Balkmar and Summerton, reporting about the campaigning organisation Cycling Sweden. For political reasons of promoting cycling to decision makers, Cycling Sweden portrays cyclists through a majority lens i.e. male educated middle class hence side-lining cyclists who do not fit that profile and cyclists to be (Balkmar and Summerton 2017). This kind of portrayal not only aligns with hegemonic interests but is also exclusionary as it “renders invisible cyclists of ethnic minorities and all women [when] women in several European countries (such as Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany) ride bicycles (nearly) as much as do men, they tend not to be viewed as core agents of change” continue Balkmar and Summerton (2017:162).

This practice echoes back to the UK in the 1960s when women were blamed by male CTC cyclists for cycling’s general decline, as Cox quotes from the Gazette:

[Gazette letter, 1962] “We must face the fact that cycling does not appeal to women very much” [...] Women appear to have

become a scapegoat for broader changes. In reality, however, women's cycling was in far less of a decline than men's during this period." (Cox 2015a:194-5)

A deeper, sociological look at attitudes to women and cycling is thus warranted and in need of updating. In particular, as part of this project, it is useful to set women cycle activists in relation to cycle campaigning organisations, looking at the interactions that take place and what kind of attitudes exist.

3.6.4 Marginal identity

Given the marginality of cycling in the UK, identity is an important issue for activists, in particular because “[m]ovements based around [...] identities, have to convince potential members that that particular identity is especially important” (Aldred 2013b:198).

Indeed, most of the cyclists and cycle activists who Aldred interviewed in Cambridge “did feel part of an imagined community” (2010:43) but “people also felt ambivalent about being a ‘cyclist’” (2010:48). Balkmar and Summerton describe a woman activist who “has tried to engage with some other forms of cycling activism on several occasions, but has often felt that she lacks a sense of shared identity with these groups” (2007:159). Whereas Aldred (2010) imagines a diversity of cycling identities for the UK, and particularly wants to see politicised identities:

[W]e should explore how issues and identities are co-articulated and/or how they conflict. Identities are not purely a means to an (issue-based) end but neither are issue claims purely the expression of identities. (Aldred 2013b:200)

The relationship to politics, or even the definition of politics, can make campaigners wary, and fosters different campaigning styles and identities for example “hands-on activity that is different from discussing and talking, something she [a cycle activist] refers to as politics” as Balkmar and Summerton (2017:158) report.

To complicate matters, social identities can also “conflict with cycling identity” (Aldred 2012:103) creating internal struggles for the cyclist or cycle campaigner. Commenting on the outsider perspective of cycling practice, Horton (2006a) considers Castell’s three identity categories (legitimising, resistance and

project) to cycling. In Horton's estimation, the cyclist in the UK displays a 'resistance identity':

By cycling one experiences oneself as an outsider, intimidated and endangered by other road users and marginalised by a society reluctant to restrain the 'rights of the car'. Contrary to the apparent intent of much government policy, then, contemporary cyclists often actually feel as though they are being driven from the roads. (Horton 2006a:54)

Notwithstanding Horton's identification of cycling holding a resistance or contrarian identity in the UK or Aldred's variant identities, I will describe Jones et al's (2012) categories of different transport identities implicating cycle campaigning. In their research, these authors found three categories: cycling sanctifiers, pedestrian prioritisers and automobile adherents. These three identities are elaborated on in the following culminating in asking if a coherent identity is possible.

3.7 Cycling identity categories

3.7.1 Cycling sanctifiers

Using Jones et al's categorisation, the cycling sanctifier "holds that cyclists are entitled to use the road and the proposition that they should be removed and put on separate cycle tracks is strongly rejected" (2012:1415), in more detail:

[T]he cycling sanctifiers discourse reveals a viewpoint that is largely content with current cycling practice and appreciates the speed and convenience that cycling offers over walking (and even the car). Supporters of this discourse are likely to be confident sharing the highway with other, motorised, traffic and do not wish to see their right to use road eroded— it is perceived that this may arise if separate cycle infrastructure is provided. (Jones et al. 2012:1420)

This identity is strained, as Aldred points out that "[w]ithin a motor-dominated society such as the United Kingdom, a cyclist identity is existentially challenging" (Aldred 2012:102). Horton adds to that, expressing that the "practice of cycling contributes to an antagonistic collective political identity" (2006a:52). For Horton, cycling in itself is an act of political resistance. This conflicted identity begs further questions. If the identity of the current cyclist for

Horton is “existentially challenging” and the cyclist experiences “resentment, alienation and marginalisation” what avenues are there available to the cycle advocate? Horton describes the conflict in desiring others to cycle whilst enjoying being a member of a specialised activity:

Activists not only ride bikes; unlike the majority of cyclists they also actively campaign for more people to ride bikes, and thus seek to undermine the distinctiveness of their practice. (Horton 2006a:51)

Once more people start cycling, the practice of cycling would inevitably change, and would become less “distinctive”. The current practice of cycling is confrontational as it affronts automobility simply by a cyclist being physically present on the road, says Horton:

[T]hose cyclists who do not stick to the [road] margins, but either consciously or unconsciously attempt to ‘centre’ themselves, are experienced as threatening or unsettling, and are demonised [...] even the least ‘political’ of cyclists will sometimes break from the invisibility of the margins and therefore inadvertently challenge automobilities spatial monopoly. (Horton 2007:145-6)

There are tensions in the current cycling practice and the resultant identity. Horton identifies a negative feedback loop between the cycling practice and the identity, in that “[t]hose very tactics which have enabled cycling to survive as an urban practice can also therefore reinforce the cyclist’s already stigmatised identity” (Horton 2007:146).

A minority identity, such as cycling, is in need of defence, conclude both Cox and Aldred, respectively:

Cyclist identity [when it] is forming as a minority, needs to be defended against attacks, for the survival of the identity and the practice. (Cox 2015a:195)

Being part of a stigmatised group may simultaneously create a sense of group loyalty and encourage members to police the group’s boundaries, creating a perpetual even if suppressed insecurity about one’s own membership status. (Aldred 2010:43)

Under UK conditions, keeping a cycling identity requires an effort. Aldred reminds the reader that “[w]ithin highly motorised societies a cycling identity must be worked at” (2010:42), she notes that

Even in Cambridge cyclists can feel ambivalent about this identity [...] they feel under pressure to define themselves as a ‘good’ or ‘deserving’ cyclist [...] interviewees [cyclists] spoke critically of, for example, ‘fanatical cyclists ... extremely arrogant and very dangerous cyclists with the high speed bikes, Lycra, helmets, often listening to something’ [...] Where ‘bad cyclists’ exist, another option is to reject the struggle for ‘goodness’ and defiantly claim a deviant identity. (Aldred 2010:42)

It is not only cyclists policing the boundary of their own practice, Aldred explains that “[c]yclists are ‘routinely rendered as deviant’ and often as threatening to car-automobility” (Aldred, 2010:40). It was Cupples and Ridley (2008) who coined the term “cycling fundamentalism” to describe sanctimonious cyclists. Aldred responded to explain the phenomenon more fully:

Rather than using the stigmatising term ‘fundamentalism’ to characterise such views, we might see participants as reacting to stigma, marginalisation, and danger with group defensiveness and group pride. Despite their claim to deconstruct binaries, I believe that Cupples and Ridley contribute to a persistent binary discourse that constructs the ‘good cyclist’ against the ‘bad cyclist’. (Aldred 2010:40)

It is such things as the marginality of cycling in the UK that create the need for defending or defensiveness, the need to seek justification in society and transport systems, Aldred explains that “[t]he figure of ‘the commuter’ loomed large within attempts to create a defensible cycling-related identity” (Aldred 2013b:197). She adds the reasons for the commuter focus as it is “one of the most ‘legitimate’ uses of road space, being (a) purposeful rather than leisure-oriented and (b) enabling paid work” (ibid) invoking concepts of economics and capitalism.

Stehlin and Tarr bring social stratification into the discussion of marginalisation:

The effect is that people, such as white, male, bicycle advocates, who have rarely been marginalized by their racial, ethnic, or class subject positions come to understand themselves as underdogs by championing cycling [...] Through such a framing,

*marginalized practices have attained cultural and political cachet.
(Stehlin and Tarr 2017:1333)*

Understandably, there is the power differential between drivers and cyclists, opening up the “potential for an undesirable ‘them and us’ divide” (Vreugdenhil and Williams 2013:288). But Aldred (2010) also comments on a cyclist-cyclist divide, and describes the self-policing of cyclists, showing a self-reprimanding effect of UK’s cyclist identity, due to the ambivalent nature of cycling in the UK where the “‘good cyclist’ identity was not an easy one to claim, even if one wanted to do so” (Aldred 2010:43). In the UK, where cyclists are in the minority, cycling holds an uneasy cyclist identity. Self-awareness and self-policing were evidently something some UK cyclists resort to, as was the policing of the behaviour of other cyclists, as Skinner and Rosen describe:

*Other cyclists, it is claimed [by commuter cyclists interviewed ...] move around on the road unpredictably and without indicating [...] and because of this they give all cyclists a bad name.
(2007:92)*

Safe and responsible actions, and an ability to see the other road user’s point of view, are integral part to their identity as [commuter] cyclists, and this distinguishes them from many others they encounter on the road. (2007:93)

The insistence on discussing the ‘hell’ of ‘other’ cyclists (rather like the driver ‘under threat’) is an expression of a dominant worldview and the good, responsible self struggling against a bad society. (2007:95)

The unclear circumstances of cycling in a low-cycling context, led to illegitimate actions as Cupples and Ridley’s report for some of their research participants.

The New Zealand-based researchers report that

some participants in the focus groups acknowledged the contested nature of the rules and regulations which apply to cycling, noting that acts of deviance gave them feelings of exhilaration and that parts of cycling were enjoyable for this reason (Cupples and Ridley 2008:261).

Exhilaration and excitement is part of the cycling sanctifier’s lived reality.

However, there is a dilemma with that type of cycling too. Cyclists did worry

over the safety of other and dangerous roads, when thinking about family members cycling, report Richards et al quoting from a survey respondent that “a lot of the people [...] would like to be more active, they’d like their families to be more active, but it’s actually dangerous” (Richards et al. 2010:3).

Under current road conditions, the cyclist identity in the UK remains contested and dilemmatic. Cycling often is an ambivalent activity, most certainly to people who do not cycle for transport, and even cyclists when imagining their family cycling.

3.7.2 Pedestrian prioritisers

Continuing with the description and discussion of Jones et al’s categories, it is pedestrian prioritisers who hold the “strong view that cyclists should be provided with separated cycle tracks” (Jones et al. 2012:1417). This is not dependent on whether a specific pedestrian prioritiser cycles themselves but rather “related to the perception that cyclists would fare better in less stressful environments away from cars” (ibid). Jones et al outline the pedestrian prioritiser further as someone who “has a general dissatisfaction with the status quo and wishes to see more restrictions on motoring and changes in the cultural symbolism related to its practice” (Jones et al. 2012:1420).

Particularly in comparison to cycling sanctifiers, pedestrian prioritisers offer a different view on cycling, taking into account their lived experiences, as Horton explains that “[i]n the context of car-centred culture with low levels of cycling, then, fear of cycling might be seen as wholly appropriate” (Horton 2007:136).

Considerations of identity were involved, when Aldred investigated the new campaign group in London, the activists had concerns about the “words ‘cycling’ and ‘cyclists’ [as these] were seen as in themselves problematic and generating discrimination; initially the group were frightened of negative responses” (2013b:198). It is as if “[u]nder contemporary conditions the object of the bicycle and the practice of cycling seem simultaneously to be caught up in different worlds” (Horton 2006a:54). The contested nature of cycling may not exist within a high-cycling context of Dutch cities with cycle infrastructure where “cycling advocates are able to be less defensive than in the United Kingdom” (Aldred 2012:100). In the end the activists of Londoners on Bikes (LOB), Aldred reports, “[a]s well as constructing defensible activist identities, LOB needed to construct

a problem that was challenging yet manageable” (2013b:198). Eventually the activists found answers to identity and vision, as Aldred describes further:

Activists clearly distinguished their interest in bicycles as primarily political, rather than in bikes per se [...] through protecting their non-‘cyclist’ identity and legitimising the campaign as not purely for existing ‘committed cyclists’ [and] by linking it to broader social and environmental issues. (Aldred 2013b:198)

Horton, too, notes a broadening of the identity by cycle activists, so that “their elective identities are not defined exclusively, or even predominantly, by cycling [but as] ‘environmentalists’ who cycle as one part of their green practice [and] rather than change out of ‘normal clothing’ into ‘cycling gear’ to become ‘cyclists’” (Horton 2006a:47). Aldred also even witnessed the rejection of certain identities. She says the new activists “were not necessarily committed to acting upon a shared group identity [... thereby] helping to reframe long-standing assumptions about cycling policy and politics” (2013b:200), so that inclusivity is achieved by adopting “a politicised cycling identity [which] can be less off-putting in itself to ‘everyday cyclists’ than one that is more narrowly bicycle-focused” (ibid:198).

3.7.3 Automobile adherents

Continuing with the identity categories, Jones and colleagues list the automobile adherent the third and last. The automobile adherent’s identity “is underpinned by the belief that people have a choice of how to travel around and it is up to them to exercise this choice” (Jones et al. 2012:1417) and “cycling is perceived to lack the freedom offered by moving around the city by car” (ibid:1418). Jones et al lay out the automobile-adherent identity further:

The car is seen in a positive light. [...] There is no feeling of guilt or regret when choosing to use the car instead of other means of travel and using the car for short journeys is seen as justifiable. (Jones et al. 2012:1417)

The relationship of the automobile adherent to walking and cycling is one of infringement of territory and invaded driving, as Jones et al explain:

[Automobile adherents] may not be averse to walking and cycling per se, but they object to what they perceive as ‘anticar’

sentiments or policies and practices (eg speed restrictions) which they perceive might impinge on driving even though these could improve conditions for walking and cycling. Indeed, it was suggested that walkers and cyclists need to take personal responsibility for their own safety rather than slowing down motor traffic. (Jones et al. 2012:1419)

In their research study Richards et al quote a council officer expressing: “Cyclists want everything, pay nothing and choose not to obey the rules unless it suits them” (2010:4), which could be categorised as a comment from an automobile adherent. Horton ponders the deeper motivations of this identity and offers the explanation that “people will feel and fear the loss of a way of life as it has come to be lived, as automobilised” (2007:147) and that perhaps even the dislike and “fear of the cyclist is related to people’s anxieties that they, too, might end up taking to cycling, and becoming a ‘cyclist’” (ibid). Cupples and Ridley make a similar connection when they observe that the “potential of new ways of being (getting to work) might be dampened by the attempt to fix and determine what constitutes an environmentally responsible identity” (2008:263), and remind us that car dependency is a real thing:

[F]or many women who are responsible for organising household consumption and need to juggle paid work, domestic work and transporting children, the car has become essential and is ‘central to the logistics of maintaining everyday household relationships’ (Cupples and Ridley 2008:258)

However, the issue of car dependency also begs the question of fairness. For who do we design our city, our roads and public spaces? In a situation where not everyone can afford a car, and looking at the effect for the cyclist in a car-dominated society, Skinner and Rosen remind us that in the minority context “attitudes towards cycling can be hostile and even threatening” (2007:83).

3.7.4 Coherent campaigning identity?

In the preceding sections I outlined Jones et al three identity categories classifying attitudes to transport and society. Exploring the political stance of each identity, it can be described in Jones et al’s own words:

Pedestrian prioritisers were more inclined to desire change to the current transport system relative to cycling sanctifiers and automobile adherents who would appear, to a greater or lesser

degree, more satisfied with the status quo. Both of the last two discourses seek to maintain their right to perform their mobility under current circumstances and are not seeking changes to their own practice. (Jones et al. 2012:1420)

The three categories identified by Jones et al (2012) are instructive and instrumental as they allow us a differentiated look at campaigning identities for cycling: it is the pedestrian prioritisers who desire change whereas the other two groups are less progressive in their demands, rather desiring the status quo to prevail. However, cycling advocacy has to deal with what Aldred calls the “double stigma of cycling” (2013a:266) where both the cyclist identity is stigmatised and the cycling practice is stigmatised. Whereas Balkmar and Summerton remain committed to the cycling cause and suggest that new cycle activists “potentially provide the basis for shaping a collective cyclist identity and shared values formed around the embodied experience of everyday cycling” (2017:161), Aldred is sceptical of an approach valorising the cyclists and cycling, and explains:

Writing before the rise of new cycling advocacy, I argued (2012) that cyclists remain stigmatised in the UK, despite government promotion of cycling. As research shows activists responding to such pressures, struggling to create non-stigmatising, inclusive yet coherent cycling-related identities. There was a strong activist narrative around not identifying with dominant images of cyclists, or perhaps not even being a ‘cyclist’ at all. (Aldred 2013b:196-7)

There are conflicts in cycle campaigning pertaining to issues of identity and related political demands (Aldred 2013b). One answer has been put forward by Bopp et al, who suggest broadening the outlook and that “it may be worthwhile to consider non-traditional partners who may see additional value in bike-friendly communities. (2017:5).

How much does the practice of cycling determine the identity of an unpolitical cyclist as opposed to a politicised cycle activist remains a question for the sociology of cycle activism. Jones et al’s identity categories highlight identity possibilities for cycling, cyclists and cycle activists. Putting this together with the research on new forms of cycle campaigning, the cyclist-based identity of cycle campaigning in the traditional sense has become too limiting, so that a new

activist identity is emerging, defining itself through spatial claims-making and social fairness.

3.8 Summary

The discourse of automobility is all-pervasive. Transport planning theories contain a critical discourse on automobility however have been struggling to penetrate into planning practice. Wider theories, such as democratic and planning theories include the notion of the post-political. To date, transport planning discourse has not fully included the post-political and remains discursive-collaborative.

Owing to its specific nature, the research of cycle activism comprises only a small corpus of work. In that literature nevertheless a number of strands are apparent. Researchers have pointed out historical idiosyncrasies: tensions of vehicular cycling and the question of separation – tensions that persist today albeit in an arena that is increasingly contested. Cycling research also consistently has brought to the fore the issues of a cyclist identity and sought to imagine how it may fit with new campaigning styles. There are mentions of macho-cycling cultures that affect the inclusivity of political cycle activism. And, always present in the cycle campaigning literature, is the spectre of automobility (and to a lesser degree capitalism) haunting activism and hindering the emergence of more democratised forms of governance, emancipated politics and technical practices.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Making the personal political

As an engineer I initially struggled with gaining an understanding of ontology, epistemology and their surrounding debates. My professional background and training almost entirely consisted of a positivist perspective which I was unaware of - whereas my research questions sat squarely in the field of social sciences.

In contrast to the applied natural sciences of engineering, in social research the subject is also the object of investigation. There is a “double hermeneutic”, since in social science we investigate ourselves (Giddens 1984). We must question our every move in an effort to avoid falling in the trap of committing “epistemological violence” (Spivak 1988; Teo 2014). Particularly in the research presented here, I am deeply indebted to feminist methods, for instance Reinharz (1992), Eichler (1988), Roberts (1981) and Oakley (2000) and including critical voices such as Avishai, Gerber, and Randles (2013). Feminist philosophy and methodologies legitimised activist research with an interest in social and political change processes, addressing and influencing power relations. Feminist research, for example, suggests that women should not just be a passive object of inquiry, but that instead a woman as active researcher offers a new valuable viewpoint to society and the scientific community (Hekman 2007). To overcome dominance, “[a]ttacking the privilege of the natural sciences was tantamount to attacking the bastion of masculinity” (Hekman 2007:536).

There is a question of centrality of methods, their means and ends. Charmaz (2008), when examining different research approaches, says that constructivists’ lines of inquiry, first and foremost, have the studied subject in focus, and not the method. To address the “crisis in [research] practice” (Holman Jones 2008:234) some researchers have responded by creating their own research practices. Research should be active and involved to capture results which are put together through engagement, exchange and negotiation and sensitive to the research contexts (Fontana and Frey 2008).

Researchers should put some focus on the outcome of their projects, and not neglect that research can move audiences on many different levels, emotional to intellectual, so as to change their social thinking and political actions, suggests Holman Jones (2008). This is something that a purely positivist-quantitative approach to science could not achieve with ease, if at all. Careful crafting of the research question remains central. As Flyvbjerg and colleagues put it:

The research question should be carefully checked for its relevance to everyday life and power, and their respective politics: I would choose to work with problems that are considered problems, not only in the academy, but also in the rest of society. (Flyvbjerg, Landman, and Schram 2012:156)

Investigating individual cases can yield answers about the wider society and power at large and can lead to creation of knowledge for social change and the associated processes (Naples 2007). Or as Angrosino (2008) recaps for us, research should address marginalisation which also entails the careful examining of power systems and people in power.

4.2 Autoethnography: amongst academia and activism

4.2.1 *What is autoethnography?*

When a personally meaningful topic is chosen and investigation is contextualized appropriately in the sociocultural context of the researcher, autoethnography can powerfully engage readers in understanding not only the autoethnographer's world but also others in them. (Chang 2008:56-7)

According to Naples (2007), it is the researcher's self-awareness combined with the desire for social change that set aside feminist research from other approaches to research. This statement fits my situation: I had been deeply involved in campaigning in Newcastle for many years. My campaigning had prompted me to have questions about social and political change. As an "activist-academic" (Askins 2009) I am in the position of knowing through my engagement with the field and my actions in the public sphere, or as Lofland calls it: "intimate familiarity" (2002:151).

As Naples (2007) points out, the inclusion of activist activities in research means that the activist researcher establishes their credentials from having a deeper involvement, which can lead to better understanding and new knowledge angles on power structures and political processes. In fact, if staying passive and on the outside, the researcher is hindered to see a participant's view and also runs the risk of hindering the participants to act and understand the wider context or importance (Smith and Pangsapa 2007). In particular, again, it is feminist researchers (allied by other critical researchers for example post-colonial and poststructuralist), who place great responsibility on the researcher to critically examine and lay open her own role and position to avoid reproduction of dominant biases and oppressive paradigms (Naples 2007). As Charmaz (2008:206) reminds us, it is humans who are bound and bounded by their situations and circumstances: no research is ever carried out in a complete vacuum. What is observed can only be interpreted in dependence to the person's context, their history, experience and relationship.

Every researcher is forced to take a position (at various points in the research process) and must remain aware of having done so. We are reminded that the researcher is a part of the research by Hammersley (2002), who reflects on the circularity in all academic investigations. To alleviate the circularity of the researcher-research paradox - Giddens' "double hermeneutic" - self-awareness on part of the researcher is vital. Without any self-awareness expressed as reflexivity, the position of the researcher could become compromised and the whole research - research question, design and outcome – could become untenable. I understand the responsibility to be reflexive in my research. I am using "critically reflective [research] practice" (Thompson and Pascal 2012:319) – becoming aware of the research process itself combined with self-analysis. Just like Hickson, for me too "the journey of critical reflection [has] been an adventure" (2011:838).

It follows from the above that a relationship between research and writer exists and that this relationship must be made visible for the research to remain truthful and trustworthy. I am a chartered environmental engineer, a local political activist, a social researcher, a German, a woman, a cyclist. Naturally, the list could go on. We all inhabit a variety of social spheres and identities. We run in various social circles and interact with different professions. We belong to

different social groups. We, in fact, hold and employ a multitude of identities (see for example, Tajfel and Turner 1986). My view on the world has been shaped by my past experiences, situations and privileges. My research project is a product of all these ingredients, including my past and present perspectives, and hopes about the future.

Given my research questions and current involvement in campaigning, autoethnography was the method of choice for me. As Chang points out “autoethnography is a rigorous ethnographic, broadly qualitative research method that attempts to achieve in-depth cultural understanding of self and others” (2008:57). She continues by describing autoethnography as a method of inquiry that “has much to offer to social scientists, especially those concerned with raising cross-cultural understanding in a culturally diverse society” (ibid). Autoethnography creates a “window to understanding the relationships between self and other or between individual and community” (Holman Jones 2008:209). For Hammersley “the goal of ethnographic research is to discover and represent faithfully the true nature of social phenomenon” (2002:66). Smith advises academics to take up the “everyday world as problematic” (Smith 1987:0) and adds that the ethnographic effort is ultimately relational: “exploring actual social relations as these arise in the articulation of work processes and work organizations in one setting to those of others” (1987:175). Expanding on the notion of the relational character, Smith explains that ethnography “brings to light not only common bases of experience but also bases of experience that are not in common but are grounded in the same set of social relations” (1987:176).

Autoethnography is also a process:

Autoethnographic texts point out [...] the power of narrative to reveal and revise the world, even when we struggle for words. (Holman Jones 2008:211).

To achieve this, the autoethnographic researcher uses “tenets of autobiography and ethnography” and as such autoethnographic method is “both process and product” say Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011:1). Speaking about ethnography, Smith explains that it holds “a commitment to an investigation and explication of

how 'it' actually is, of how 'it' actually works, of actual practices and relations" (Smith 1987:160). We can see that the method is a process of discovery too.

There also remains the question of relevance. We must not lose sight of the reader, and "respond to the need to be explicit in moving your readers and audiences intellectually, emotionally, and towards concerted social, cultural, and political action" (Holman Jones 2008:235). For Holman Jones autoethnography is about achieving external impact and involvement, so that we as researchers using the autoethnographic method "must be willing not only to implicate our audiences but also to incite them to participate, to act, and to take risks" (2008:216).

Autoethnography is an open inquiry process. In effect, the journey is the goal: "Inquiry of the [ethnographic] kind builds in an open-ended character" (Smith 1987:177). Lofland, agrees: "In addition to [...] hypothesis-testing or theory-driven inquiries, there must be open-ended exploratory, inductive [inquiries]" (2002:151-2). In essence, research questions put under an ethnographic investigation undergo transformation through and throughout the process. Or as Smith puts it:

The ethnographic process of inquiry is one of exploring further into the social, political, and economic processes that organise and determine the actual bases of experience of those whose side we have taken. (Smith 1987:177).

It is also about the outcome. Hammersley warns that the ethnographers should be "concerned with ways of checking their conclusions" (Hammersley 2002:64) and reminds us about the inevitable multiplicity of possible interpretations; an interpretation is "only one of many possible valid accounts of the phenomena studied" (2002:76) so that ethnographic analyses must make "explicit the relevances on which their accounts are based" (ibid).

According to Chang, autoethnographers "use their personal experiences as primary data" (2008:49). However, as Chang also points out, "autoethnography is not about focussing on self alone, but about searching for an understanding of others (culture/society) through self" (2008:48-9), whilst Atkinson (2006) warns about self-transformation being employed as the main outcome of autoethnography. He continues to remind us that it is "others" who "remain

infinitely more interesting and sociologically significant than the majority of sociologists who document their own experiences rather than analysing social action and social organization” (2006:403).

Chang recaps the methodological concerns. Autoethnography can “become a research method with little social impact if several pitfalls are not carefully avoided” (Chang 2008:57). Continuing she lists the pitfalls: self-indulgence, focus on writing style and exclusive use of personal memory as data. I took this warning very seriously. In the research design section below, I briefly outline how I avoided falling hostage to two common pitfalls by designing safeguarding mechanisms into my research.

4.2.2 Safeguard against exclusive use of personal memory as data

The concern that is expressed is that the exclusive use of your own memory may not yield reliable data. Datasets that require contact with external sources add rigour to the research and allow comparison, validation, triangulation and cross-checking. In this project, I used three primary data sets: my video diary, my blog and interviews (described in more detail below). Whilst the first two are self-produced data, the blog was contemporaneous to the events I was studying and not produced retrospectively, reliant on my memory. For the construction of the video diary I did not solely rely on my own memory, but I used historical email exchanges with fellow activists and decision makers to prompt a recall. Furthermore, I included taped and transcribed semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews in my datasets. The interviews bring a distinctly extra-personal, external aspect to the research. The interview process and analysis are explained more fully below. In addition, I carried out a policy analysis comparing policy texts from Bremen and Newcastle, more detail below.

4.2.3 Safeguard against self-indulgence

The study is not about myself. My project is about social change processes. Whilst I am the author, the research ultimately is concerned with much wider environmental, societal and political questions about our society. “Through the local” I want to “access larger power relations” (Rose 1997:310). The PhD project is not about myself, inward-looking or self-pleasing. In fact, in Newcastle I was not alone, I was part of a community: a group of activists (Newcastle Cycling Campaign). We acted as a collective. Additionally, for this research I

interviewed other activists, in Newcastle and elsewhere, as well as politicians and practitioner to get a fuller picture of the phenomenon under investigation. I cannot deny however that I benefitted from positive side-effects of my PhD project. Indeed, I found it therapeutic to investigate the burning questions that had formed throughout my campaigning activity. Further, I intently disrupted my own thinking: I challenged my own perspectives by investigating Bremen, a city in another country, with another language and different urban design and practices. It forced me to reflect about my situation and position (see section 4.2.4 below on reflexivity).

I regard the safeguards against these two common autoethnographic pitfalls I have described here to be adequate and sufficient for this research project.

4.2.4 Me, myself and I

This research is concerned with women activists campaigning for cycleways in Newcastle in the years 2010 to 2017: I was one of these women. Paying keen attention to the researcher's active role in the process of knowledge production should result in a more inclusive way of doing research (Naples 2007). There is now a common understanding that research is socially constructed and reflexive methodologies "are becoming richly diverse" (Rose 1997). Making the case for "human learning" and "black swans" Flyvbjerg (2006) explains the need and importance for case-study research: "The highest levels in the learning process, that is, virtuosity and true expertise, are reached only via a person's own experiences as practitioner of the relevant skills" (ibid:223). This study is a case study in the Flyvbjergian sense. Newcastle is the case's location, centre of phenomenon and experience, whereas Bremen offers the inspiration and invitation to employ my reflexivity.

In my research project I built in safeguards to avoid self-indulgence and exclusive use and reliance on memory for data. Now I add reflexivity to that list. McCabe and Holmes point out that reflexivity is the standard response to the debate about the "quality of rigour in social science" (2009:1519) which is "moving towards emancipation through the practice of awareness" (2009:1520) and is "achieved through the process of stringent self-examination [and] exposure of dominating ideologies" (2009:1524). My research design allowed me to put myself into dialogue with other people, fostering new thinking and

emergence of new ideas. I also travelled to another city to see how it works for cycling, for cycle campaigners and decision makers. I also kept a field diary and wrote a blog to externalise my thinking and make it accessible at a later date for “stringent self-examination”.

However, Rose also warns the researcher that full “transparent reflectivity” cannot be achieved as the world is full of “messiness” (1997:314). Calling it a dilemma, Avishai, Gerber and Randles extend reflexivity to include feminist beliefs to challenge “unreflexive feminist critiques” (2013:394). Nothing is certain. It is important to stimulate self-awareness, and I believe my research design achieves that aim.

In the following I want to briefly outline my background. Spatio-culturally, I am a blend of my German middle-class upbringing (*Bildungsbürgertum*) and my UK socialisation starting in 1996 when I was 23 years old (with perhaps some minor influences from studying briefly in Rhode Island, US, in 1999/2000). Born in 1973, I moved to Newcastle in 1996. From a couple of periods in the US and Germany aside, Newcastle is the place where I chiefly spent my time living and working. I have experienced the city of Newcastle as a student, followed by being an engineering consultant in the private and public sector, an activist (and throughout: an everyday social being, friend, acquaintance, etc). As for transport, apart from a brief spell in 2005 when I owned a company car, I never experienced the need to have or drive a car in Newcastle. I have participated in Newcastle’s transport system on a daily basis as a cyclist, pedestrian and public transport user of Tyne & Wear’s Metro system.

When I engaged with ‘people in the field’, considering my own activist background, my involvement was not passive; it rather constituted an active participation in the research process. Increasingly becoming more equipped with an established tradition of critical academia to ask challenging questions, I sought to document a narrative of discovery and change through employing the method of autoethnography. I began my PhD research in Newcastle in early 2015. Before, I had been intricately involved as an activist in Newcastle, co-founding the local cycle campaign in 2010: Newcastle Cycling Campaign. Going outside my regular volunteer campaigning activities, it was in December 2016 and January 2017 that I met with two of my local activist colleagues for a series

of exchanges (conversation-style interviews). In addition to that, I also interviewed another woman activist (not from Newcastle), a politician and an officer from Newcastle council, and a UK sustainable transport expert.

As part of the research, I spent time away from Newcastle. For ten months I lived in Bremen, Germany (see table 4.1). Living in Bremen was a discovery and revelation. Bremen presented a new territory to me. I put my mental effort into experiencing and understanding the city and its ‘inner workings’. I sought interactions with its transport systems to understand the city’s transport use and culture. I sought inspiration and diversion from the tight-knit place that Newcastle presented to me. On my various visits, I would regularly cycle the city’s streets (covering many miles indeed) and recorded my observations and thoughts about the infrastructure, urban design and public spaces. As a participant observer (Foote Whyte 1994), it is the collection of impressions and interactions that reveals to the researchers a lot about underlying societal codes and cultures.

Table 4.1. List of visits to Bremen, Germany

Date	Length of visit	Reason
Jan 2016	½ month	Exploratory
Aug – Oct 2016	2 months	Exploratory
Feb – June 2017	4.5 months	Data collection
Sep – Nov 2017	3 months	Data collection

I learnt that we should always be careful in our use of the word culture and acknowledge its cognitively fleeting nature: “culture is emergent in human interaction rather than located deep inside individual brains or hearts, or loosely attached to external material objects or impersonal social structures” says (Tedlock 2008:155). Culture is rather like a “tool kit” that is exercised by its native users, adds Swidler (1986:273). Culture is loose, and changeable. It was in 2017, that I came to live in Bremen continuously for several months (see table 4.1 for details). Equipped with the expressions from the UK interviews and armed with my previous impressions about Bremen including being familiar with

Bremen's transport policy, I interviewed cycling activists (men and women, national and local), a transport politician and a council transport planner.

Feeling fascinated by culture and cultural variations, I was drawn to narrative research because it is "making visible and audible taken-for-granted practices, processes, and structural and cultural features of everyday social worlds" (Chase 2008:74). Through living in Bremen I gained a feel for the social fabric, the city's transport cultures and behaviours, in particular relation to cycling and cycling infrastructure. I experienced cultural distinctions in a country that I had left in 1996 to live in the UK. During that time, Newcastle and UK culture fundamentally had become normal and taken-for-granted to me, and I began to see Bremen and Germany through my 'UK eyes': how people behaved, their everyday rituals and interactions – all this was new and fascinating to me. Germany had both changed since 1996 and stayed familiar, and so had I.

4.3 Narrative inquiry

When reading about social inquiry I became aware that storytelling plays an important role in social sciences. As Riessmann points out, the "term 'narrative' carries many meanings [...] and is used [...] often synonymously with 'story'"(2008:3), owing to the human thirst for stories evidenced by "ubiquity of the narrative impulse"(2008:24). Coffey says that "individuals and groups construct identities through storytelling" (2018:8). Stories provide a sense of constancy and community. The qualitative researcher herself is a storyteller, feeding on narratives and plots.

Narrative analysis is a developing field with many approaches (Chase 2008). As Riessman puts it, "[t]here is no binding theory of narrative inquiry but instead great conceptual diversity" (Riessman 2002:229³). Narrative inquiry is concerned with preserving coherence of the experience, interview or engagement with text in documents. Riessman explains the position of narrative analysis to more traditional methods:

³ For the historical background of the origins and the development of narrative inquiry (life histories, sociology, anthropology, feminism, linguistic) see Chase (2008)

Traditional approaches to qualitative analysis often fracture these texts in the service of interpretation and generalization by taking bits and pieces, snippets of a response edited out of context. They eliminate the sequential and structural features that characterize narrative accounts. [...] mainstream methods [...] suppress narrative. (Riessman 2002:219).

Narrating comes naturally to people, because “[s]torytelling, to put the argument simply, is what we do with our research materials and what informants do with us” (Riessman 2002:218). Narrative is “retrospective meaning making [and] a way of understanding one’s own and others’ actions” (Chase 2008:64). It is for the very reason of producing meaning that “narratives must be preserved, not fractured” (Riessman 2002:220). Griggs and Howarth remind us that “discursive formation [...] involves the exercise of power, as well as certain forms of exclusion” (2012:173).

Researchers listen to narratives, get involved in narratives and also create narratives. The researcher herself tells a narrative. As Chase explains:

[Many qualitative] researchers [...] view themselves as narrators as they develop interpretations and find ways in which to present or publish their ideas. [...] As narrators, then, researchers develop meaning out of, and some sense of order in, the material they studied; they develop their own voice(s) as they construct others' voices and realities. (Chase 2008:66)

The analytical process, as Roe (1992) explains, is to distil a “metastory” out of the many narratives that are told in the text or interview. Extracting taken-for-granted cultural practices, as Chase (2008:74) puts it, is the approach of narrative researchers. I am taking a narrative approach to my data analysis to distil a metastory about women activists’ campaigning for cycleways.

4.4 Research design

People are drawn into social research from diverse backgrounds. [...] The upshot is a set of sharply different and conflicting answers to the questions of “why and to what end?” (Lofland 2002:146)

Rooted in the autobiography briefly outlined above, my autoethnography consisted of three distinct chronological phases. The three phases were firstly, my activism between 2010-2016, secondly my blog-writing and exploratory studies in Bremen, 2015-2017, and thirdly and lastly the interviewing phase in 2017 in Newcastle and Bremen.

The choice of Bremen as a location happened for a couple of reasons. One, I already had contacts in Bremen who could help on the ground. Another reason was my ability to speak German so that the interviews could be held in the first language or without an interpreter. A third reason was that Bremen is a city with substantial number of people cycling (23.4% of all trips (Ahrens 2016)) which would present a contrast to Newcastle (0.9% of all trips (Tyne & Wear 2011)).

The chronology directly translates into the three distinct datasets that I produced as part of my research:

1. A retrospective video-diary recorded in 2017, collating the activism phase (2010-2016)
2. The blog written between 2015-2017, reflecting on my personal campaigning experience
3. The interviews with women activists and decision makers held in 2017 to capture characteristic views and practices

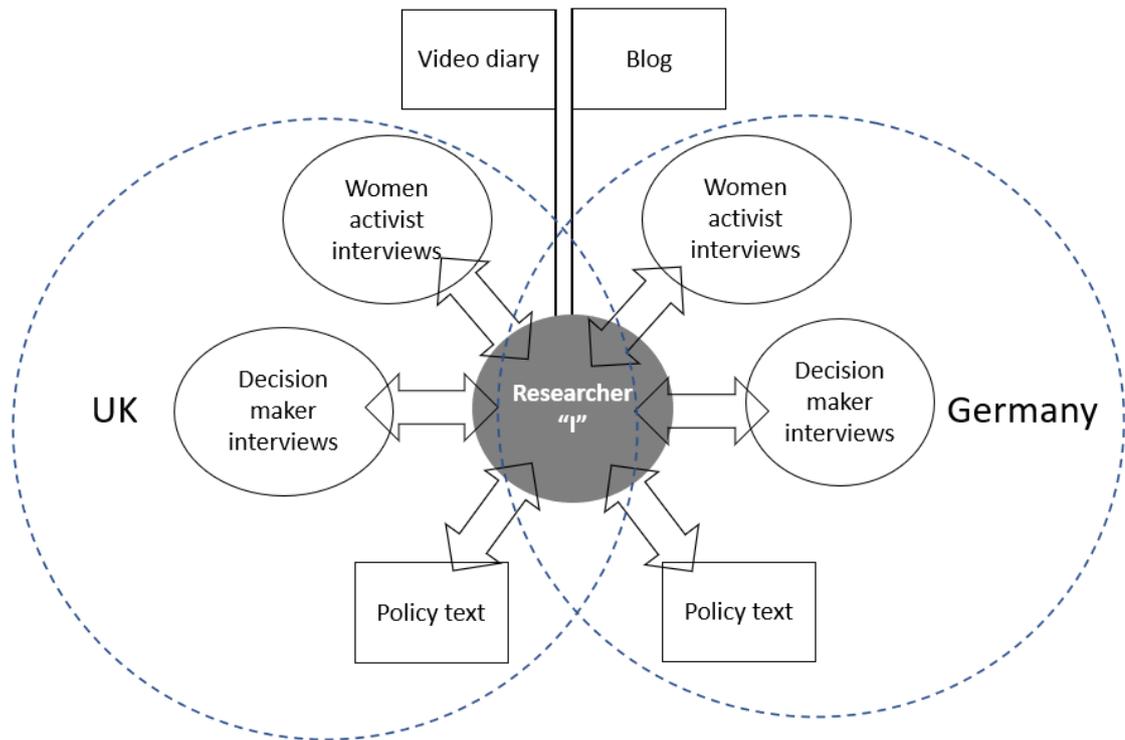
I also carried out a policy text analysis of the current transport policies in Newcastle and Bremen in order to contextualise the autoethnography. Figure 4.1 illustrates the timeline of my research in relation to the datasets.

Figure 4.1. Data production process

Data	Years							
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Activism	Activism							
Retrospective video diary								
Blog								
Interviews								
Policy analysis								

To graphically illustrate the autoethnography, figure 4.2 shows the data produced, collected and analysed in my research.

Figure 4.2. Data used in the autoethnography



The data sets are expanded on further below.

4.5 Data and analysis

4.5.1 Introduction

I used the autoethnographic approach to explicate seven years of my experience in campaigning for cycleways in Newcastle. As an activist-academic (Askins 2009) I passively observed and actively participated in social and political spaces. By using autoethnography I acknowledge that I am part of the research, shaping the fieldwork and being shaped by it. Angrosino (2008) describes the fine line to be trodden between the active and the passive elements, participating and observing, and heeding the tension leads to good inquiry and honest outcomes.

I supplemented my data (the primary data) with two policy texts to allow comparison to each other. The data sets, their production and analysis are described in the following sections.

4.5.2 Retrospective video diary

4.5.2.1 Data collection

[V]ideo studies echo concerns raised by researchers concerned with reflexivity and emancipatory impact employing diary-based methods. (Zundel, MacIntosh, and Mackay 2018:389)

The questions researchers ask, can only ever be asked within the researchers' own frames (Charmaz 2008). The context must be carefully investigated and described, as each question, collection and analysis originate from their own angle. Researchers must make themselves consciously aware to these frames, says Charmaz (2008). With that task in mind, I had to investigate my own context of campaigning in Newcastle. The judge-and-jury situation in my research, I understood, brought some methodological challenges. An "imaginative engagement with method" (Bates 2013:36) was needed.

As a first step, this project faced the challenge of ordering, analysing and summarising seven years of personal campaigning experience. For certain, there were organisational campaign documents (such as constitution, annual reports and meeting minutes) and other public documents of the campaign (press releases, articles on the campaign website, petition report), as well as external documents (policies, cabinet reports, consultation summaries), which could easily be obtained and analysed. In fact, as a local activist and chair of the cycle campaign I played an intricate part in the creation of many of the campaign documents in the first instance, and in case of the external documents, I had obtained (sometimes using a Freedom of Information request), consumed and analysed these for the campaign. I drew on all those documents when constructing the description of the case (see Chapter 6), but in particular I used the campaign's annual reports to assemble the event timeline of the campaign (see Appendix B for a list of events).

What all these documents would lack, however, would be one vital aspect: my emotional experience of campaigning was not present. The main challenge, as I

saw it, was to find a way to capture my own emotional journey. I knew that I, first of all, had to come to terms with the emotional journey of campaigning in Newcastle between 2010-2016. The reason for my initial hesitance over how to proceed, was that I wanted to make sure the history was presented honestly: not blinded, but rather informed, by emotions.

“Emotion is a biologically given sense, and our most important one” (Hochschild 1998:5). Yet emotions have been a bit of a bane to researchers. As Hochschild explains:

The sociology of emotion is a new, growing field within the larger discipline of sociology, and part of a wider interdisciplinary renaissance in interest in emotion. (Hochschild 1998:3)

In that regard it is worth noting “while the importance of emotion in contributing to [Organizational Studies] and its political projects is now increasingly recognized, little attention has been given to methodological issues” (Sturdy 2003:98). The researcher ought to become and remain aware of the interplay of emotion and rationality. Sturdy elaborates:

[T]he research process (that is knowing), such as the writing of this article, is necessarily emotional as well as rational, even if the former is typically silenced or, occasionally, celebrated or romanticized. (Sturdy 2003:99)

Emotions cannot be dismissed, as they form a pervasive part of being human. The inclusion of emotions remains a challenge for research, especially if conceptualised as opposing rationality.

Bates, discussing her experience with video diaries (2013:29), suggests that “video diaries can contribute to an embodied sociology by making the body visibly, audibly and viscerally present” (ibid). Moreover Zundel and colleagues found that their “[d]iarists reported that [a video diary] was convenient to record, and entries showed a frankness in the data that we did not expect to capture” (Zundel, MacIntosh, and Mackay 2018:399).

From experience I very well knew campaigning to be emotional: an exciting as well as an exhausting experience, a rollercoaster with many highs and many lows. It was important to me to express the full campaigning story including the

various different barriers to campaigning, whether structural or less tangible. As Bates argues: “The video camera can also distance the body on screen through the immediacy of the encounter” (Bates 2013:31) thus creating a space of (self-) reflection. Zundel and colleagues posit that:

[V]ideo diaries can add participants’ intense reflections [...] and as ‘unselective’ recording devices, they offer audio-visual glimpses into the wider work-world of the participants. (Zundel, MacIntosh, and Mackay 2018:387)

In my endeavour, I needed to do both: I wanted to stay close and gain distance. Knowing this goal and holding the promising video diary method in mind, I decided to go back in time and relive the campaigning experience, week by week. And so, on 1 January 2017, I started my retrospective video diary. I re-read campaigning emails from the week commencing 1 January 2010. Immediately following that familiarisation with the campaigning activities in that historical week, I recorded a three-minute long video clip summarising this week’s campaigning. The next day, 2 January 2017, I would move on to re-live another campaigning week. I continued recording throughout 2017, each day creating another video clip. Including campaigning activities up to December 2016, I was thus filming 364 three-minute clips making a total of 18 hours of retrospective video-diary footage, summarising 18,000 emails (average 50 emails a week). Refer to table 4.2 listing details of the process.

Using emails as memory prompts was possible for my research: I fortunately had not deleted any emails. Much campaigning business was done online. Even if we, Newcastle activists, had attended external events or met new people, we had a habit of emailing brief summaries to the committee to keep a record of the event and to keep the committee informed. In addition, much of the external interaction with the council was done by email (despite the campaign’s request for more regular face-to-face contact).

Having completed the video diary I can now say that capturing emotions was accomplished. I agree that “video diaries can produce close-up recordings of sometimes intense moments of joy or despair, confessions and worries, as well as conflicts and alliances” (Zundel, MacIntosh, and Mackay 2018:387). I spent a considerable time ranting and raving about various discriminations that the

campaign had experienced. Furthermore, having captured these feelings and emotions on camera, the video now froze the experience in time. I was then able to re-engage as an observer: I was able to develop a distance to the events through re-watching the clips. I re-visited the video diary several times. The process of reliving and reviving, then capturing and freezing memory and emotions, made it possible to spot trends and tendencies in my emotional landscape. With distance I could better understand my own emotions (as well as create a timetable of campaigning events between 2010 and 2016). Using a video process was useful, particularly considering the alternative of writing a diary. If I would have written down the information gained from the emails, much in-the-moment feeling/emotion would have been lost. Using spoken word, videos are faster and more immediate: the time between reading and expressing was less mediated by the conscious mind or intellectual thought.

Table 4.2. Timeline of creating the retrospective video diary

Real time		Campaign time		Video No. (i.e. 364 x 3 mins)
Sunday	01-Jan-17	Week 1	2010	Video 1
Monday	02-Jan-17	Week 1	2011	Video 2
Tuesday	03-Jan-17	Week 1	2012	Video 3
Wednesday	04-Jan-17	Week 1	2013	Video 4
Thursday	05-Jan-17	Week 1	2014	Video 5
Friday	06-Jan-17	Week 1	2015	Video 6
Saturday	07-Jan-17	Week 1	2016	Video 7
Sunday	08-Jan-17	Week 2	2010	Video 8
Monday	09-Jan-17	Week 2	2011	Video 9
Tuesday	10-Jan-17	Week 2	2012	Video 10
Wednesday	11-Jan-17	Week 2	2013	Video 11
Thursday	12-Jan-17	Week 2	2014	Video 12
Friday	13-Jan-17	Week 2	2015	Video 13
Saturday	14-Jan-17	Week 2	2016	Video 14
Sunday	15-Jan-17	Week 3	2010	Video 15
Monday	16-Jan-17	Week 3	2011	Video 16
Tuesday	17-Jan-17	Week 3	2012	Video 17
[...]		[...]		[...]
Friday	29-Dec-17	Week 51	2015	Video 363
Saturday	30-Dec-17	Week 51	2016	Video 364

4.5.2.2 Analysis

After recording all clips, I began to analyse the data. I re-listened to the fully assembled recording four times, creating emotional distance as well as data familiarisation and depth. During the analysis of the video diary data, I divided the recording into emotional and factual aspects. The information contained in the video diary, supplemented with organisational and personal documents, constructed the descriptive timeline: the campaigning history of events. Being attentive to the emotional aspects captured the emotionality of events.

Using qualitative thematic analysis, I was able to assemble a campaigning timeline as well as distil themes from the video diary.

As Toraldo and colleagues put it, “video-based methodologies offer unique potential for multimodal research applications” (Toraldo, Islam, and Mangia 2018:438), to avoid ontological uncertainties they propose that video research should be carried out in combination with other methods. The reader is left to consider two further primary data sets, introduced next.

4.5.3 Blog writing

4.5.3.1 Data collection

Blogs provide a vehicle for authors (and their commenters) to think through given topics in the space of a few hundred to a few thousand words. (Bruns and Burgess 2012:202)

When starting my PhD in 2015 I also started blogging. I continued writing blogposts for three years, ending in December 2017. I wrote the blog as an “activist-academic” (Askins 2009). This position allowed me to cast off the straightjacket of the academy. It was important to me that the blog would be on a public platform, as it meant I could test out my thinking. To that effect, the blog’s ‘leave a comment’ feature was activated, allowing and inviting interaction with others. A number of posts elicited feedback and debate. I should mention that Twitter also played a role in that regard. As a common social media platform that many activists and some academics use, Twitter often multiplied discussion and exchange of a blogpost. I was very active on Twitter in my PhD years (but left Twitter in 2018 to devote full attention to data analysis and writing up).

The blog was almost entirely written in English. However, as I connected more and more with Bremen, and Germany in general, the blog imagined/intended audience included German readers too. To that effect, a number of blogposts were written in German.

The intended audience covered a wide range. It reached from fellow academics, fellow cycle activists, over to political actors and council officials. I discussed matters of political intent and purpose. In that sense, the blog somewhat conformed with McKenna and Pole's findings, describing the typical political blogger as an "informer, watchdog, activist" (2007:100).

On the whole, writing the blog proved useful to me in many different ways. Bruns and Burgess found that "for the most part blogging is used to provide timely updates and commentary" (2012:202), suggesting that blogging has a certain immediacy about its practice. My original intention for the blog was to share information and data and to learn from others and about myself. I wanted to capture my ideas in order to study their development over time. In that sense the blog was a record keeper as well as a reflective and interactive personal, but public, diary.

The interaction with others through the blog was possible too. As an online blog, it was open to anyone online. As Bruns and Burgess outline:

[S]ome blogs, particularly those concerned with politics and journalism, are clearly 'public' in nature, others might function as personal media produced with a limited imagined audience in mind. (Bruns and Burgess 2012:207).

The publicness of my blog made me think twice before hitting the 'submit' button. For that reason, it improved my exactness in expressing my thoughts. My blogging was a public undertaking and it was scrutinisable. But the blog's blessing was also its curse. The publicness of the blog would mean that I curated a public image. Image management happened on both a conscious and an unconscious level. Blogging is an ambiguous endeavour: a ridge walk between private and public, knowledge and disclosure.

My blogging happened at a regular frequency. On average, I posted one article each week. A blogpost was averaging 600-700 words in length. Apart from late

2017, I blogged on a weekly basis. The words poured out of me and onto the worldwide web with ease. Table 4.3 lists some detail on the blog.

Throughout its production, the blog tackled a variety of subjects. One week I talked about the results of a data analysis I had carried out, the next week discussed a particular piece of literature, an activity I had participated in or summarised my thoughts on a presentation I had given at a conference. The posts could be theoretical in their orientation, talking about strategic and tactical matters of campaigning and politics, but I also wrote about my personal experiences and discoveries. Overall, the blog functioned as a thought processor, a space where I developed, shared and tested ideas, concepts and theories.

Table.4.3. Blog stats

Number of posts	179
First post	3 January 2015
Last post	30 December 2017
Average posting frequency	6 days
Word count	123,000
Average word count per post	680
Maximum word count	2,700
Written in Newcastle	115
Written in Germany	58
Written elsewhere	6
Blog web address	https://katsdekker.wordpress.com/

On a different level the blog also was a storehouse, a sort of public diary. The blog enabled me to first record, but then also to look back on my personal campaigning experience. It tells a story about the cycle campaigning politics I experienced and is useful for the autoethnographic account.

4.5.3.2 Analysis

I analysed the blog data using qualitative thematic coding. The blog text was my source data. By grouping the codes into clusters, themes started to emerge. In my analytical method I followed grounded theory, in particular described by Charmaz (2008:216-212).

The first step, starting in late 2017, was to re-read the articles several times. The re-reading helped me to distance myself to the text (which had been written with much incredulity, frustration and activist spirit). It was a bottom-up process where I started with the small pieces: the re-reading allowed me to break the text down into codes. For example, in the analysis process I began to see that the blog talked about the relationship I had to the political and administrative system in Newcastle, my attempt to take influence on the council, understand the politicians' actions, council officials' communications and how these overall practices and happenings influenced my perspective on the council. These are the codes.

In the second step I set about grouping the codes. "Coding gives a researcher analytic scaffolding on which to build" (Charmaz 2008:217). For instance, the above-mentioned codes lent themselves to be combined into three clusters: activist actions (see 7.2.1: banging on the council door), the effect on myself as an activist and citizen (see 7.2.2: civic subjects matter) and communicative methods and suggestions (see 7.2.3: effective ex/change).

In a last step the clusters gave rise to the theme. When assessing the clusters, I saw them coalesce in overarching properties. In the case of the aforementioned clusters, I had consistently been writing about systemic changes that I wanted to take place: the emerging theme was cultural transformation (see 7.2).

4.5.4 Interviews

4.5.4.1 Data collection

A fundamental principle of fieldwork is that the researcher's account of the studied scene should be built on the information provided by the most knowledgeable (and candid) members of that scene. (Van Maanen 2002:110)

The interviews were an important part of the autoethnography, as they allowed me conversational contact and dialogic exchange with other persons to stimulate my self-awareness and critical thinking. The interviews were part of the autoethnographic safeguards I employed against exclusive use of own data and putting a check on self-indulgence. The interview process also aided my reflexive thinking and development of ideas.

Noting van Maanen's comment above, all interviewees for this project were chosen for the very specific position they hold in respect of the research subject inquiring about women activists' barriers and solutions. I identified two women who campaigned for cycleways in Newcastle (my own location), and complemented the Newcastle contingent with one more UK woman and five women in Germany (of which three in Bremen). The decision makers to be interviewed were chosen for their political position (in Newcastle and Bremen). I was very fortunate that all the key people (senior transport councillors and senior transport planners) accepted my invitation. I was less fortunate with the additional interviews beyond the women activist and the decision makers. To gain a wider perspective, I had also invited senior national cycle campaigners for interview. Whilst the senior personnel of the German ADFC⁴ was enormously cooperative and obliging, I was less successful with the senior personnel at the CTC⁵ (now Cycling UK) who declined their interview to be taped (presumably feeling uneasy to be interviewed). For the uneven distribution that resulted, comparison was not possible on the national cycle campaigning level. Hence for lack of comparison, the data analysis does not contain a national cycle campaigning element. Additional interviews with practitioners and campaigners were held in the UK and Germany to further illuminate the phenomenon of cycle campaigning to me. I translated the interviews held in German. A list of all informants is given in Table 4.4. The list does not contain names. This is to remain compliant with the informed consent agreement (which was sought of all participants prior to the interview and approved by the Northumbria University ethics committee).

Combining the interviews of the different groups together with other datasets (video diary, blogpost and policy texts) and given the tightly defined subject of the project, no further recruitment was required.

Interviews are always personal and subjective (Fontana and Frey 2008), and as such cannot be seen in isolation from their context: context-setting is a pre-requisite to interviews. Motives, known and unknown to the interviewer, unaware biases, feelings and emotions are all part of the person, the researcher

⁴ Germany's national cycle lobby

⁵ UK's national cycle lobby

(Fontana and Frey 2008). The researcher doing the interview is just a human, and as such always caught in her own context, history and politics.

For my project, I had raised my own awareness through the construction and analysis of the video diary and the blog, as it had allowed me to distance myself through a retrospective reconsideration and re-evaluation of my campaigning experience. The interviews were yet another distancing mechanism constructed to hear others' experience and externally inform my autoethnography. A topic guide for the interviews is contained in Appendix A.

Table 4.4. List of interviewees

Interviewer: Katja Leyendecker	
UK / Newcastle	Germany / Bremen
Language: English	Language: German
Cycleways activism Women-activist interviews	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK1: Woman activist 40s (Newcastle) • UK2: Woman activist 30s (Newcastle) • 1x group interview with the above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D1: Woman activist 60s (Bremen) • D2: Woman activist 40s (Bremen) in English • D3: Woman activist 50s (Bremen)
Cycleways activism– wider geographical area Women-activists interviews	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK3: Woman activist 40s (UK, urban/rural) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D4: Woman activist 70s (Germany, urban) • D5: Woman activist 50s (Germany, urban)
Decision makers Decision-maker interviews	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local politician responsible for transport (Newcastle) • Council planning officer (Newcastle) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local politician responsible for transport (Bremen) • Local cycle campaign (Bremen)
Wider background	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle infrastructure experts (UK) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADFC senior officer (Germany) • ADFC board member (Germany) • Member of ADFC Bremen

According to Fontana and Frey (2008), the interviewer is active and political: an advocate for the just cause. Interviewing takes place between the researcher and the to-be-researched. This notion agrees with Angrosino (2008), who states that the researcher becomes a voice in the interview process, which can lead to conflict and offers opportunities for finding consensus and agreement, even unification and emancipation. In fact, Holman Jones (2008) sees it as a duty of research to activate audiences into participation. Speaking about the depth of

inquiry, emotional responses cannot be evaded in research interviews, and a structured interview may prevent the emotional dimension from surfacing (Fontana and Frey 2008).

I chose to work with women activists for their specific position in society and their distinctive knowledges, experiences and skills. Working together as women multiplied the chance to speak productively about the subject of power, as women often stay outside power structures, making it easier for them to critique these (Smith 1987). Or as Dinnerstein once blandly put it:

“It's easier for women than for men to see what's wrong with the world that men have run” (Dinnerstein cited in Broughton and Honey 1988:33).

In the interviews, as activists and women, we together had a challenging look at the space-production process to see the transport traps and paradoxes, barriers and opportunities. When interviewing activists Blee (2012) used a semi-structured format, which encourages the conversation partners to talk about their experiences as interviews are held in a conversational manner allowing the unfolding of narratives containing familiar and unexpected events. In that vein, I carried out a series of semi-structured interviews in 2017 to elicit views on transport governance in Newcastle and Bremen. In interviews the researcher can probe, at depth, into areas and into personal views and experiences and attitudes (Peräkylä 2008). The women activist interviews centred around personal experience of involvement in cycle campaigning and political arrangements, with a special focus on barriers experienced.

I was also interviewing people in charge of urban transport spaces: Interviews with decision makers were also carried out to triangulate the women activists' views. Connecting with the unheard voices (women activists in this case) involves the study of power (Angrosino 2008). The contested nature of urban space and campaigning for a spatial fairness made the campaigning political and predestined the research to be political. Interviewing decision makers was important to me so that I could better understand their concepts of responsibility and power. The face-to-face semi-structured interview process provides an opportunity, an outlet even, to participants to volunteer their thoughts (for example on political process and power structures).

To gather the above: in-depth face-to-face semi-structured interviews were held:

- Women activists were the focus for this research. I wanted to collate their personal gendered experiences with campaigning and political landscapes
- Participants were recruited in Newcastle through personal involvement in the subject of the research, and in Germany through personal contacts in existing campaigning networks, as a German speaker I was able to translate the German interviews
- Interviewing my fellow women campaigners was complemented by interviewing of decision makers responsible for urban transport spaces
- The interviews were not intended to provide a representative sample of the different groups of people, but rather formed an inherent part of the autoethnography (developing an understanding of women cycle campaigners approaches)

The UK interviews were completed before commencing the German interviews. The UK schedule consisted of three interviews with two fellow women activists in Newcastle (2 No. 1:1 interviews, 1 No. group interview). I then took the observations from Newcastle about its politics, design and activism to different external quarters in the UK. The Newcastle observations centred around the impenetrability of Newcastle politics and the contested lobbying aspect of the local campaign. I analysed these interviews before we met again in a combined meeting consisting of all three Newcastle women activists (me included) where I relayed information gained from the external UK interviews. The information centred on interactions between different parties (political, council and campaign) in other local contexts. This enabled us to construct concepts and questions that I could take with me to Bremen.

In late January 2017, I left the UK and I travelled to Bremen, Germany. Before the interview session I had already lived in Bremen for a few months over the preceding three years and acquainted myself with Germany (after many years living in the UK). These exploratory visits had helped me to inform my research direction. This time however I stayed for two extended periods, totalling seven months. I was armed with questions, ready to interact with Bremen, its people

and infrastructures. I interviewed relevant people in Bremen and in two other German cities (Braunschweig and Hamburg) including campaigners and officials (see table 4.4), attended public meetings on planning matters (ward and city-level meeting), spoke at two campaigners' meetings and chaired one meeting too, read newspapers and had many informal street encounters as well as conversations over cups of coffee with people I had met through my involvement in the local cycle campaigning scene. Without the exception of one person, all interactions in Germany were held in German. The impressions and discoveries returned with me to Newcastle where I finished the painstaking process of transcribing.

All interviews listed in table 4.4 were taped and fully transcribed and if held in German, relevant passages were translated for reference and quoting.

4.5.4.2 Analysis

I began with listening, and re-listening. I also translated into English the relevant parts of the German interviews. In both languages I cleared certain interjections from the transcribed interview text (such as kind of, you know, "erm" etc), not affecting meaning but improving readability. For the analysis I made a distinction between women activists' views (primary interviews) and views held by the decision makers. For the women-activist interviews I used narrative analysis (outlined above) coupled with qualitative thematic analysis. Thematic analysis provided a valuable cross check mechanism between the interviews: coding helped to bring out the linkages between the interviews. Narrative inquiry, on the other hand, describes the writing process.

Our position as outsiders, campaigners for better urban design, put us in a collective position with similar views. The thematic analysis would bring out the nuances.

However, the analysis of the decision-maker interviews posed different questions. Here was a group of people that was in many ways an adversary. There was a power differential in the ability to affect material changes in urban design. This situation needed to be accounted for in the interview approach and subsequent analysis. There was a fuller story to tell that would be lost following a thematic approach. That in mind, I used a different method of analysis from the thematic analysis utilised for the women activist interviews. For the decision

makers I employed a type of narrative approach to the analysis which Coffey (2018) calls dialogic. For Coffey, dialogic analysis is primarily concerned with preserving the coherence of a story told in an interview. When there is an open dialogic process at work it looks at the bigger picture that “serves to stretch our thinking beyond the specific and the practical” says Coffey (2018:91). In that vein, I aimed to summarise each decision-maker interview descriptively as well as giving an interpretative account of the interview. For example, I felt it was important to preserve the chronology of the interviews as it would highlight the overall narrative, the dialogic interaction.

Connecting up with a constructivist approach, Riessman warns that there is “no easy answer [to] transforming talk into written text, precisely because it is a representation involves selection and reduction” (Riessman 2002:249).

However, this was exactly my task and endeavour when analysing the decision-maker interviews. Using the dialogic approach preserved the context and coherence that I distilled from the interactions. Riessman says:

[I]ntersubjectivity and reflexivity come to the fore as there is a dialogue between researcher and researched, text and reader, knower and known [so that the] research report becomes ‘a story’ with readers the audience, shaping meaning by their interpretations” (Riessman 2008:137).

The narrative is emergent in the interview process. It is this holistic interview-narrative I tried to capture when analysing the interviews with the decision makers. I went through each interview text from start to finish, described what happened, what was said, retaining the context of the passage within the interview. Making use of my epistemological standpoint outlined above, the description is also an interpretation. Following this process, I produced a “thick description” of each decision-maker interview (Geertz 1973).

4.5.5 Policy texts (secondary data)

Similar to the decision maker interviews, policy texts also present a power differential to the researcher. As Cairney says, we “study public policy because we want to know why particular decisions were made” (2012:1). Public policy is the “sum total of government action, from signals of intent to the final outcomes”

(Cairney 2012:5). The task of policy analysis is “interpreting the pervasive uncertainty and complexity of many public policy issues” (Roe 1992:559).

It is quite an elusive task indeed, as narratives or discourses “transfer and produce [and] reinforce power, but they also subvert and conceal it, make it fragile and contribute to obstructing power” (Flyvbjerg, Landman, and Schram 2012:124). It becomes important to approach the policy text with some scepticism.

It is policy analysis that can fill the “large gray area between rationality and power, which is underinvestigated” (Flyvbjerg, Landman, and Schram 2012:143). Roe describes the task of the policy analyst:

[W]hen a policy analyst confronts an issue of high uncertainty characterized by multiple stories, many of which are conflicting, the analyst must search for the larger narrative, which not resolving the stories, embeds them into a perspective sufficiently broad to make sense of them together but not too broad as to render policy implications useless. (Roe 1992:563)

For this project, I obtained the two policy texts relevant to transport in Newcastle and Bremen and used a phronetic approach (Flyvbjerg 2001; Flyvbjerg, Landman, and Schram 2012) to locate and then analyse the narratives in each policy document. I was hence able to distil the policy text into salient narratives about urban space and cycling. By closely looking at the ‘said’ and thinking about the ‘unsaid’ in the policy text, I was able to construct a policy narrative for Newcastle and another for Bremen. For the analysis, I concentrated on two narrative lines in particular. I examined how cycleways are narrated in each policy text, and how car-parking is narrated in relation to space. Describing and distilling these narratives, I was able to construct a metanarrative. In addition, I give a personal account of cycling in each of the cities in order to situate and supplement the policy narrative.

In sum, I employed phronesis to ensure socially relevant questions were asked of the policy text and allowing a critical look at the texts. Combined with a narrative approach, I examined the narratives for cycleways and car parking, constructing the metanarrative about each city’s political management of urban

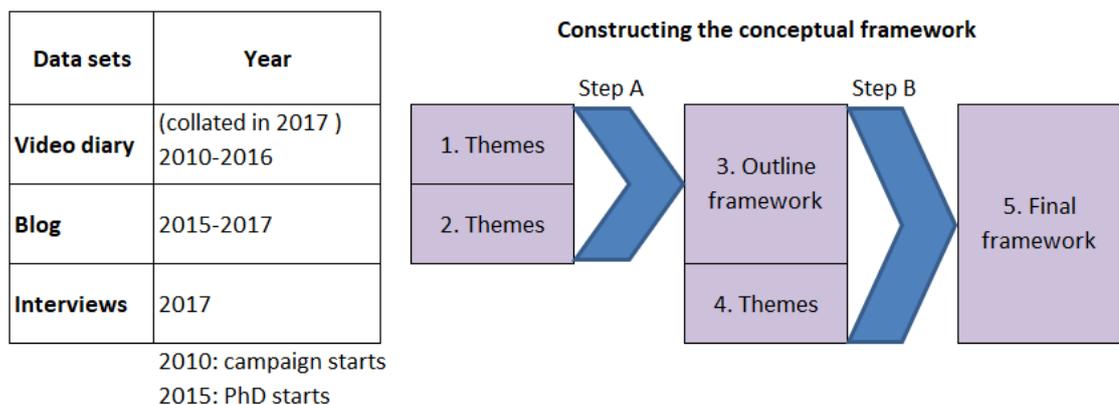
space. These policy metanarratives can then be related to the decision maker interviews and the women activists' framework.

4.6 Bringing data together

Finally we try to piece together the kaleidoscope of shapes and colors into a coherent story. (Fontana and Frey 2008:146)

The video diary, blog and women-activist interviews were all used in the construction of a conceptual framework, in search for answers to the research questions. Those data sets were joined together in a two-step process. Step A combined the themes derived from the analysis of the video diary and blog writing. This generated the outline framework of transport governance. At that point, the conceptual framework has solely been drawn up from my own personal data and reflected my personal view on transport governance. In the second step, Step B, I included the externally-informed dataset, i.e. the women activist interviews, to revise and finalise the framework. The merging process for the data sets to create the final framework is pictured in figure 4.3 below.

Figure 4.3. Synthesis process: constructing the conceptual framework



The findings from the interviews with the decision makers and the policy analysis were then compared to the framework constructed by women-activists in the final chapters, Chapter 10 and 11, whilst Chapters 5-9 first describe the results from the different datasets, working towards the construction of the conceptual framework.

Reflexivity plays a specific and vital role in social research and particularly in autoethnographic methods, as explained above. It was important to me to note and map change processes I underwent. Through reflection and mutual learning (from interviews and engagement with my own writing), I could notice subtle shifts and changes taking place in my thinking, and these will be described in the following chapters. The concluding chapter contains my overall reflection consisting of my own change in attitude as well as the changes that are required for the construction of cycleways to happen on a socio-political plane.

5 POLICY ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the transport policies from two cities, Bremen and Newcastle. Public policy is the “sum total of government action, from signals of intent to the final outcomes” (Cairney 2012:5). The task of policy analysis is “interpreting the pervasive uncertainty and complexity of many public policy issues” (Roe 1992:559). See section 4.5.5 which provides an overview of policy analysis. The two city sites relate to my research in the following way. Newcastle, where I live, is the primary site of my experience with local cycle politics, whereas Bremen served as a comparative element. The rationale behind choosing two sites is attended to in the section 4.4.

To assure the reader, I am keen to acknowledge, that any policy text should be read with great caution and reservation. The policy process takes political intents and economic arguments, ideas and ideologies - in an often tacit and unconscious process - to fashion and formalise a policy (Diane Stone 2012). Whilst the policy text, once written and adopted by the authority, is in itself only dry ink and does not imply implementation, it nonetheless would have been written with some considerable blood, sweat and tears in the policy process (Ingold and Monaghan 2016).

For the policy analysis, I examine the policies’ visions of space for cycling and for car parking. As outlined in more detail in the methodology chapter, I use narrative analysis, concentrating on the storylines the policies construct for the spatial distribution and redistribution of car parking and cycling. Space is important. The literature I consulted spoke of mass cycling only being possible with separated cycle space (Pucher and Buehler 2012; Pooley et al. 2013). When I experienced cycling infrastructure in Newcastle and Bremen, it became clear to me that the building of cycleways requires space to be reallocated to cycling. The women activists I interviewed spoke about the importance of urban space in relation to cycleways. On a practical level, space is a limited resource in cities which makes it contested and political.

Much of the space for cycling could originate from space that is currently used for on-street car parking. Car parking is a political issue and I have observed local politicians to find it challenging to develop a rhetoric for car-parking reduction - or motor-traffic reduction for that matter. The provision of car parking has long been known to hinder the transition to active modes by attracting ever more motor traffic and arrogating space from other modes, such as cycling. In that vein, according to Shoup (2011) free car parking does not exist, as the cost and damages have simply been externalised (for example, the air is polluted for free). The fiscal and spatial management of car parking is hence a vital component in any transport policy that seeks to decrease driving and increase other modes.

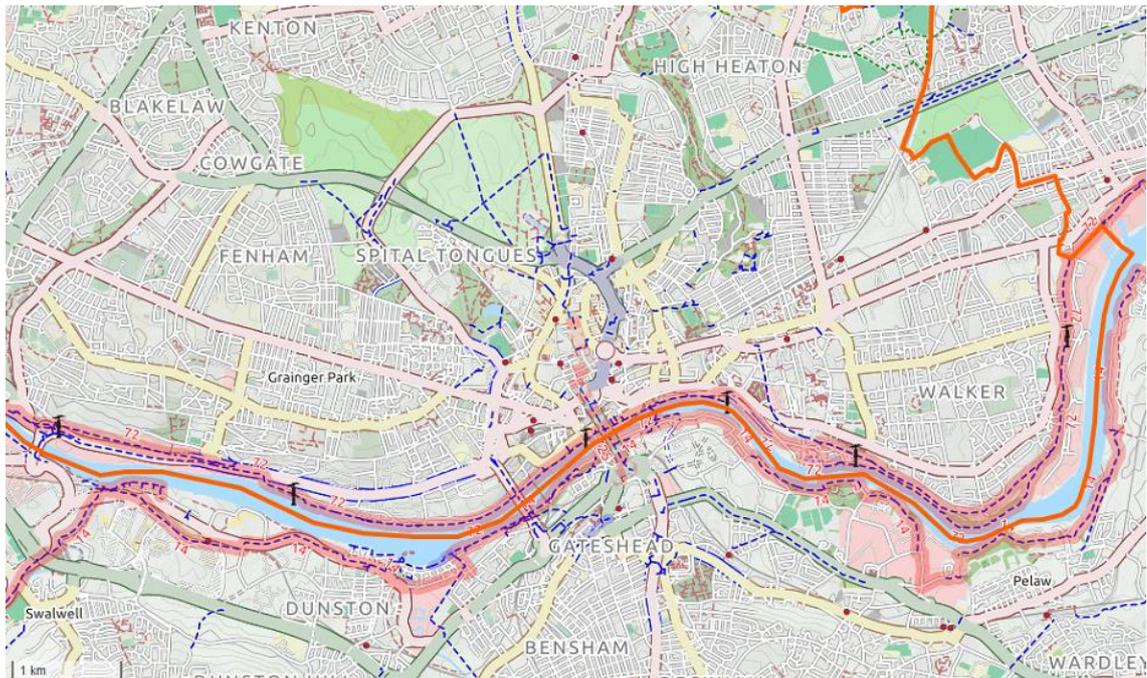
The purpose of the two policies analysed here is considerably different. Bremen's *Verkehrsentwicklungsplan* (VEP) (Bremen 2014) is exclusively concerned with traffic and transport, whilst Newcastle City Council does not consider traffic and transport in a separate policy. Instead, Newcastle's Local Plan (NCC and GMBC 2015), focuses on land-use allocation and new housing developments, but incorporates transport policy, stating that "[t]ransport and accessibility are fundamental to the delivery of the Plan's spatial strategy" (NCC and GMBC 2015:84). Despite their different emphases, the VEP and the Local Plan are the key written sources of Bremen's and Newcastle's transport policies respectively and are hence chosen here for analysis.

5.2 Newcastle

5.2.1 Newcastle background

Newcastle in the Northeast of England is home to 280,000 residents, who live in a moderately flat terrain overlooking the relatively steep North bank of the River Tyne (opposite Gateshead on the south side with 200,000 residents). The city also has an industrial history, especially in the mining and ship-building trades; it also functions as a regional hub providing cultural and educational services to Northeast England. A map of Newcastle is shown in figure 5.1 below. The red lines along the river Tyne denote the alignment of the National Cycle Network route 1. Separate cycle infrastructure is shown in blue.

Figure 5.1. Map of Newcastle, credit OpenStreetMap



The city of Newcastle in England, UK, has declared its ambitions to become a cycle city (NCC 2013) but has as yet struggled to construct cycling into its urban fabric, showing a correspondingly low 0.9% cycle mode share (Tyne & Wear 2011⁶). Newcastle is a car city: in my analysis of the 2011 household survey (Tyne & Wear 2011) I calculated that 55% of all trips⁷ are undertaken by car (Bremen 36%), whilst under 1% are made by bike (Bremen 23%).

Typical infrastructure is shown in the figures below. Figure 5.2 shows the most common situation in Newcastle: cycling is mixed with multi-lane motor traffic and necessitates navigating driving and parking vehicles. Whereas figure 5.3 depicts a painted cycle lane ending abruptly in a bus stop and parked cars.

⁶ Thanks is given to Newcastle City Council for providing the dataset, the calculations are the author's

⁷ The calculation takes into account all trips generated within Newcastle City Council boundary on mid-week days (Tuesday-Thursday) and comprises all trips recorded regardless of distance to exactly match the Bremen data analysis carried out by University of Dresden (Ahrens 2016).

Figure 5.2. Newcastle infrastructure: cycling in traffic, credit Richard Grassick (clipped from film)



Figure 5.3. Newcastle infrastructure: painted lane ending, credit Richard Grassick (clipped from film)



5.2.2 Newcastle transport policy

5.2.2.1 Policy background

Newcastle's key transport policy is incorporated in its Local Plan "Planning for the Future 2010-2030" (NCC and GMBC 2015), setting the spatial development

path for Newcastle (and Gateshead) land-use planning. It consists of 360 pages and six chapters. The plan was adopted in 2015 after a series of local protests (for example Moss 2012) effecting public inquiries and visitation by national inspectors. The policy's foreword signed by the council leader describes the city's struggle, between Newcastle's past history and future generations, growth and sustainability, community and business.

The foreword remains rather tentative on local transport matters and only speaks of local transport in indirect and non-spatial terms, calling it "access to facilities" (NCC and GMBC 2015:9). At its core, the foreword constructs the picture of an ongoing struggle: a struggle between the present housing situation and future of jobs and business. It creates considerable urgency: Newcastle starts "from a situation in which young families are already struggling to find a home they can afford in a community they want to live" reasoning that if "we fail to set out our own plans, the market will take over, and we will lose the opportunity to manage the consequences of growth for our communities, services and infrastructure" (NCC and GMBC 2015:10). The foreword acknowledges opposing forces between housing and space, but leaves two major tensions wholly unresolved. First the effects of continual spatial growth and expansion on communities and the environment is not addressed, notably climate change is not mentioned once. And second, the pressure between the planned growth in housing and its subsequent effects on the transport system is not clearly laid out in the foreword, making a subsequent resolution less likely. As such I found the "green thread that runs through this document" (NCC and GMBC 2015:9) promised in the foreword, quite absent from the policy text.

Newcastle's policy was a joint undertaking with the municipality on the opposite side of the River Tyne, Gateshead. This makes sense for land-use and transport planning as it combines a coherent conurbation, yet it would also be fair to presume that working jointly across two independent councils may complicate policy production (and implementation as it occurs). I argue here, that this municipal cooperation would matter less for the public consultation process that would be a routine part of any policy production process. However, it cannot be denied that Newcastle council did experience complications when consulting the public on the Local Plan (Moss 2012). The public protests and inquiries could be a sign for a disjuncture between the council and civic society.

Relating to the urban core only, Policy UC6 deals exclusively with cycling (NCC and GMBC 2015:136-138) and covers three pages of the document. Section UC6 states that cycling will be given “priority where appropriate” (2015:136) effectively demoting cycling from the start. Cycling makes further occasional appearances in other parts of the document but typically only in combination with other forms of sustainable transport i.e. walking and public transport.

5.2.2.2 Cycleways: commitment and rationale

Newcastle City Council clearly sets out its commitment to cycling in the Local Plan policy, linking it to notions of sustainability. As a “spatial vision” (NCC and GMBC 2015:21) the policy sets out to “[i]mprove sustainable access to, within and around the Urban Core by promoting fast and direct public transport links to the heart of the Urban Core, increasing walking and cycling and minimising through traffic” (NCC and GMBC 2015:39). Transport is framed as the provision of sustainable access. According to the policy, “[t]ransport and accessibility are fundamental to the delivery of the Plan’s spatial strategy” (NCC and GMBC 2015:84). Prior to the policy, Newcastle had implemented a citywide 20 mph (30 km/h) speed limit for residential areas, implemented in stages starting in 2010 (Proctor 2012) and completed the conversion in 2011. This had happened under the Liberal Democrat administration (2004-2011). Under Labour the council continued and completed the final phases of the speed-limit reduction to 20 mph (30 kmh).

Again, reinforcing sustainability and accessibility as the rationale for the spatial policy commitments, the council argues for cycling. Concerning spatial policy measures for sustainable transport, it is “important that new development is located in the most sustainable locations and accessible by a choice of travel modes, including walking, cycling and public transport” (NCC and GMBC 2015:84). The policy goes on to list reasons: “reduce the need for people to travel, minimise congestion, improve road safety and meet climate change reduction targets” (ibid) improving public health and quality of life. It is remarkable, that the policy makers decided to finish off the list of reasons with these words: “while still acknowledging the need to cater for the private car” (NCC and GMBC 2015:85), taking away much of the weight that the big picture reasons implanted.

Currently, the car is the prominent transport mode in the city. I get the impression that decision makers stand at a cross road asking: what really is the new place for the private car in this sustainable accessible transport vision? Contrasting the car's current dominance, the policy also outlines a transport hierarchy, listing it in order of mode preference: "Walking, Cycling, Public Transport (including taxis), Freight and Car Traffic" (NCC and GMBC 2015:88). Again, the policy text is not clear on how a transition away from the car is to be conducted.

In the policy, the council commits to working with others. A promise the Newcastle Cycling Campaign welcomed when carrying out a policy assessment in 2015. The council "will work with partners to create a strategic cycle network across the plan area that provides sustainable access to jobs and services ... formed from a mixture of on-road lanes (sometimes mixed with other modes), shared-use paths, off-road routes and recommended routes through traffic-free areas" (ibid). As a basis for working with others, the council wants to use the cycle network development process which it also links to cycle infrastructure. This was good news for the campaign, however, the preferential infrastructure choice remains uncertain. Worryingly to me, it specifically does not mention physically demarcated cycleways on main roads – something that is the "crucial first step" towards mass cycling (Pucher and Buehler 2012:351). For the city centre, the policy promisingly states that "there will be schemes which continue to enhance cycling infrastructure" (NCC and GMBC 2015:138) but with missing infrastructure preferences it rings hollow. Will the council engineers design physically demarcated cycleways or painted-on lanes for the Newcastle city centre? In addition, the council "will improve conditions for cyclists" (ibid) through the removal of through traffic from the city centre, promising "there will be greater priority and a more attractive environment for cyclists" (ibid). A map of the urban core is included in the policy, schematically outlining exit points for seven envisaged cycle routes emanating from the city centre. In addition to the radial route sketches, the map also shows a full route on north-south axis stretching into Gateshead.

The policy sets out a vision for cycling and cycling infrastructure. However, the details on the cycling elements are scant in the policy. Additionally, cycling is too often not differentiated from walking and public transport in the policy text:

Newcastle council has not as yet found a way to disentangle the sustainable modes and give them real eminence as promised in the policy's transport hierarchy. Essentially, the policy considers cycling in word but not in practice.

5.2.2.3 Car parking

The policy recognises car-parking management as a feature of “enhancement and delivery of an integrated transport network to support sustainable development and economic growth” (NCC and GMBC 2015:86), and suggests as mechanisms the “management of car parking locations, supply and pricing” (ibid). To me, these are strong statements: the council exerts control to influence transport mode choice. Interesting also, that an arc is drawn between sustainable and economic growth. The foreword left this tension unresolved, and so does the policy text. In more detail concerning car parking, Newcastle, together with its policy partner Gateshead, will “develop a joint car parking strategy to manage demand” (NCC and GMBC 2015:90), reduce commuter long-stay parking, promote short-stay parking for shoppers, introduce parking charges in shopping areas “where this can be achieved without threatening the vitality and viability of the centre” (ibid). The link to economic vitality is interesting and reflects, I argue, the influence of the business lobby in the urban core. Anxieties the council holds come clearly to the fore: car parking restraint fosters fear about economic losses. The car is nervously framed as essential to the running of the city. There are parallels to the comment “while still acknowledging the need to cater for the private car” (NCC and GMBC 2015:85) and discussed above. Both statements show deeply-rooted fears, I posit. With regard to the mandated car-parking strategy, through a Freedom of Information request I learnt that by December 2017 Newcastle had continued “discussions with Gateshead on a car parking strategy” (Newcastle City Council 2017). What to me looked like a promising and vital avenue in the policy transitioning away from the car, had to my disappointment not been progressed by the councils.

Gradually “surface car parks and on street car parking will be more restricted” (NCC and GMBC 2015:146). The use of the word “restricted” is of interest to me here, as it hints at the management of limited resources, something that policy makers in my experience are wary of. My appreciation however is short lived, as the policy quickly segues into commending the “great success in promoting use of car parks outside of peak times” (ibid) recognising the “Alive after 5”

(ibid) scheme that, since 2010, has permitted free car-parking in Newcastle city centre after 17:00 in collaboration between the council and city-centre businesses. This laissez faire approach to car parking jars with my notion of sustainable transport. The policy then announces that “further opportunities [of this kind] will be explored” (ibid).

Overall, the policy mentions the approach for car parking in the city centre in some detail, but lacks implementation detail, clarity and sincerity in its statements. It should be noted also that the policy text deals with city centre parking and leaves the approach to car parking more open in the areas outside the city centre (existing neighbourhoods and the areas designated for new housing development). However, if Newcastle wants to transition to cycling, the effect of on-street parking in strategic neighbourhood streets must be discussed and addressed.

5.2.3 Newcastle summary critique

In sum, the NewcastleGateshead policy sets out plans for car parking in Newcastle city centre, but does not clearly link car parking to spatial pressures in the urban design. The overall narrative in the policy contains contradictions to advancing sustainable travel; the most obvious one is the one that seeks to proliferate a free parking scheme, “Alive after 5” after successful lobbying of the council by city business groups (Shaw 2015). The importance, and the lobbying influence, of the retail industry on the policy can be inferred from policy statements as “short-stay parking for shoppers ... will be promoted” (NCC and GMBC 2015:90) and “without threatening the vitality and viability of the centre” (ibid). As for the car-parking elements in the policy, the city centre attracts the bulk of policy measures - the surrounding neighbourhoods and new housing areas receive less attention with regard to car parking. For cycling, the lack of real commitment is evident in the policy as the positive narrative is not backed up by sufficient detail that would translate into implementation. The policy is not sincere in that regard. There is a tension between the spatial development of cycling “while still acknowledging the need to cater for the private car” (NCC and GMBC 2015:85). Through this statement, the policy makers demonstrate their nervousness about embarking on a transport transition away from the car and bare the strength of their own belief in the private car. The policy nonetheless predicts that “there will be a considerable increase in cycling over

the next few years” (NCC and GMBC 2015:138). However, the spatial catering for cycling (so vital for de-stigmatising, democratising and diversifying cycling to open up cycling for all) is only weakly outlined and it lacks overall clarity in the policy text. The need for action is clearly stated in the policy (climate change, public health etc), however linking this firmly to spatial plans and actions has not been achieved. Beyond the engineering “mixture of on-road lanes (sometimes mixed with other modes), shared-use paths, off-road routes and recommended routes through traffic-free areas” (NCC and GMBC 2015:88), the reader of the policy is left wondering what kind of cycle network plans the council pursues and what kind of cycle infrastructure it proposes for the routes.

5.2.4 Newcastle: personal observations

My experience of cycling in Newcastle is hardly a positive one. The scarcely present cycle infrastructure consists of painted-on cycle lanes in places where it could be done without compromising driving speeds and volumes. This approach led to dangerous infrastructure: the paint, flimsy as it was to begin with, would simply disappear at conflict points such as narrowing road lanes. Newcastle’s cycling infrastructure, if it exists, is opportunistic and does not compromise car journeys. As a cyclist you cannot rely on cycle-specific infrastructure being present or infrastructure being consistent in its quality on a route. The typical cycling condition in Newcastle is cycling on the road, mixing with cars which makes cycling filled with stress and discomfort. The very few separated infrastructures were on leisure routes and often involved conflicts with pedestrians.

Whenever I had to consider a route to a new location, I would primarily make decisions based on comfort, with route directness being secondary. Chiefly, I was not prepared to mix with 50mph motor traffic. For instance, I would not cycle on Great North Road⁸ which created accessibility restrictions for me travelling to northern parts of Newcastle. Recently Newcastle City Council has begun to build cycling infrastructure at the location, although an improvement, the quality is varying. My requirements often led to lengthy and convoluted routes through back streets, considerably adding to journey times. Furthermore, with Newcastle’s 30 mph roll out in neighbourhoods, the feel of the streets did

⁸ Great North Road is a twin-lane distributor road with 50mph speed limit

not change, because the council had not closed rat-running routes for drivers. Hence motor volumes remained high on many neighbourhood streets ruling out further route choices for me. In essence, nothing was clear or predictable about cycling in Newcastle. It was spatially and socially relegated to languishing on the margins.

I observed Newcastle City Council's infrastructure plans to be random or in transition: The council's flagship cycling project, John Dobson Street, sadly was overshadowed by a road-widening scheme on Blue House roundabout. See Chapter 6 for more detail. It was this kind of randomness on road safety issues, subordination and lack of quality of Newcastle's cycling infrastructure that led me to take action, first as an individual concerned citizen, then collectively with fellow activists.

5.3 Bremen

5.3.1 Bremen background

The city of Bremen has 550,000 inhabitants and is situated in a flat North-German topography on the banks of the River Weser. Bremen has a colonial sea-faring history and retains a commercial and industrial heritage to this day, and also functions as a regional centre for culture and education. The German city of Bremen has a settled and deep connection to everyday cycling. To that effect, Bremen is a cycling city – as Bremen's policy states: "Cycling has a long tradition in Bremen. This is also evident in Bremen's comprehensive cycle infrastructure. Physically-separated cycle paths exist on most major roads sections and in many side streets" (Bremen 2014:67). A map of Bremen is shown in Figure 5.4 below. Separate cycle infrastructure is shown in blue.

With 23.4% of all trips completed by bike (Ahrens 2016), cycling makes for a prominent display in Bremen's cityscape. Cycling in Bremen is diverse and democratised: people of all ages and abilities make use of Bremen's pervasive cycle infrastructure. Infrastructure typical to Bremen is shown in the figures below. Figure 5.5 depicts a common situation in Bremen: cycling takes place on a separated space along roads, often continued over a side street (figure 5.6). Whereas figure 5.7 portrays more recent infrastructure: a painted cycle lane between parked cars and motor traffic.

Figure 5.4. Map of Bremen, credit OpenStreetMap

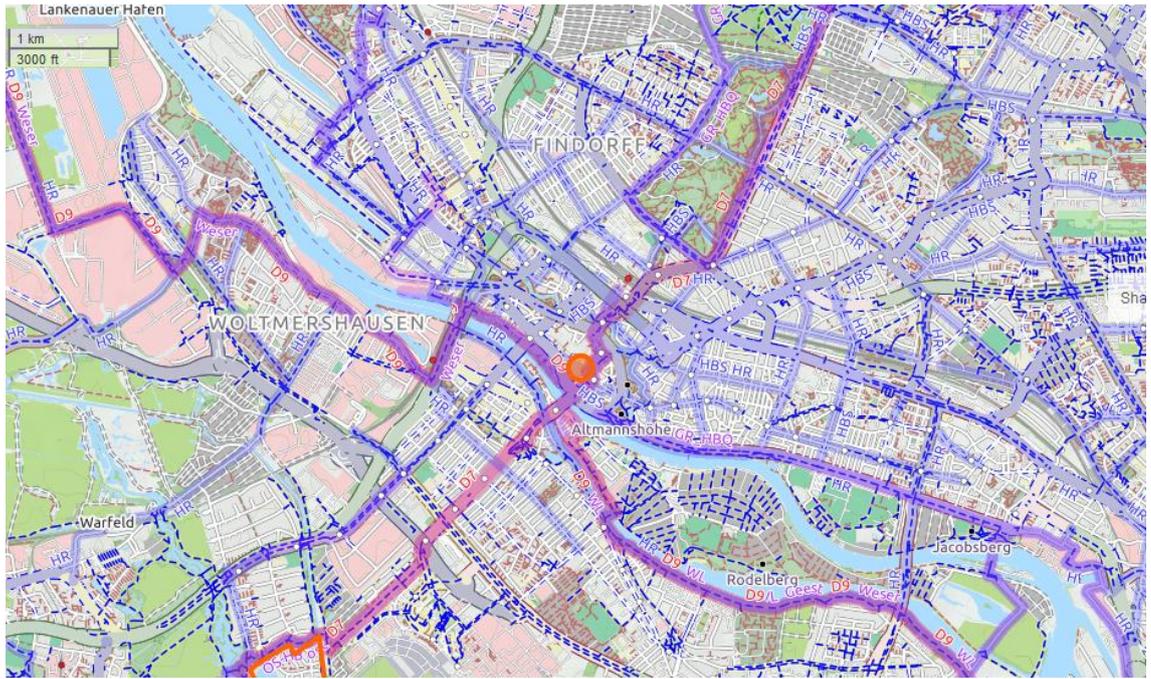


Figure 5.5. Bremen infrastructure: separated space for cycling, author's credit

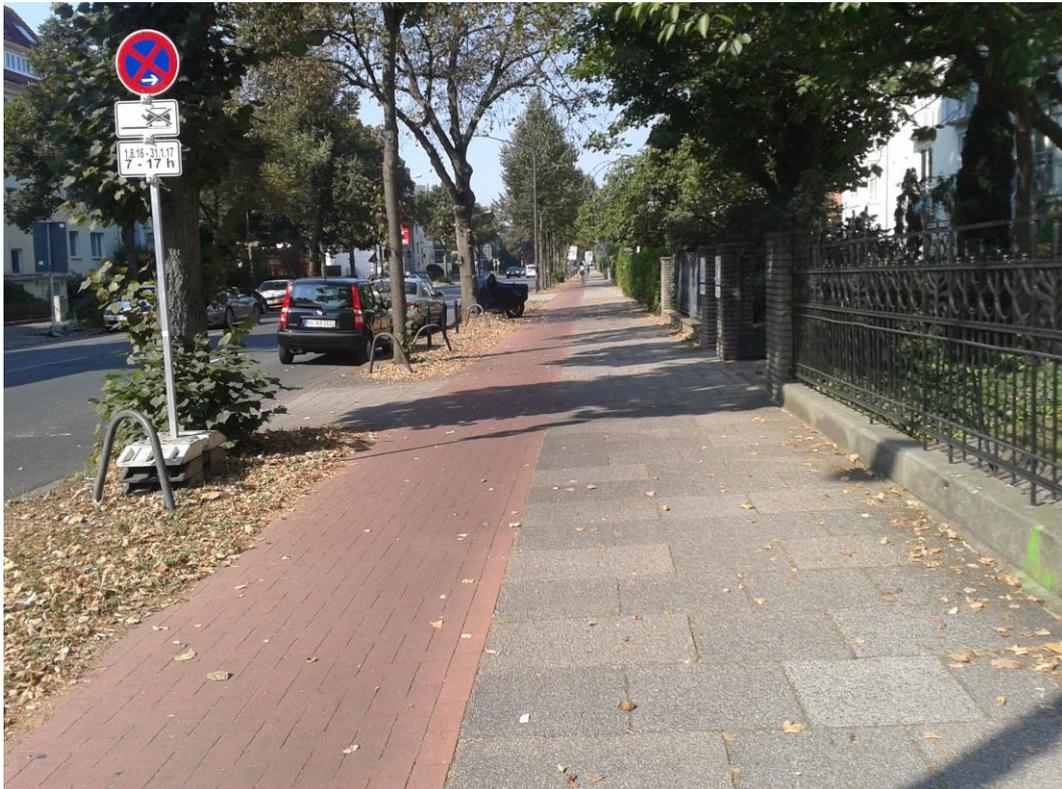


Figure 5.6. Bremen infrastructure: continued cycling over sidestreet, author's credit



Figure 5.7. Bremen infrastructure: recent painted cycle lane, author's credit



5.3.2 Bremen transport policy

5.3.2.1 Policy background

The city's pertinent policy is the Transport Development Plan 2025 (*Verkehrsentwicklungsplan*⁹) and referred to as VEP in the following text. It consists of 192 pages splitting into five chapters. Adopted in 2014, its planning horizon stretches to the year 2025. In the foreword, the city's senior transport politician (*Senator für Umwelt, Bau und Verkehr*) takes pains to thank the citizens of Bremen for their dialogic involvement in the making of the policy (*Bürgerdialog*) reflecting Bremen's longer history of specific dialogic citizen-state processes dating back to the 1970s.

The dialogic element of the policy production process won Bremen a European award (EC 2015). The process began with the setting up of a steering group (*Projektbeirat*) to agree a list of major concerns through dialogue and consensus. The process proceeded to involving the wider population through questionnaires, face-to-face meetings, organised public debates as well as an online map where residents commented on the infrastructure provision resulting in a detailed analysis of the comments. It must be noted, that the steering group consisting of one chair and 25 representatives was overwhelming (85%) represented by men (Bremen 2014:183) and that the double page introducing the *Projektbeirat* in the VEP only consists of comments from male steering group members (Bremen 2014:10-11).

In the policy two sections are devoted to cycling (11 pages) where cycling is framed in social and spatial terms. Cycling also features in the list of future plans, detailing fields for future development as well as distinct projects, for instance the planning of long-distance commuter routes. Mentions of cycling as a discrete mode of transport are made throughout the document.

5.3.2.2 Cycleways

Despite the already high cycle mode share in Bremen, the VEP's vision remains ambitious: "potential for cycling has by far not been exhausted in Bremen yet" (Bremen 2014:66). It goes on to provide details on the infrastructure: Bremen's cycle network consists of 390 km of main routes, which the policy describes as

⁹ The *Verkehrsentwicklungsplan* is available only in German, hence all quotes are my own translation

being “in line with quality requirements for everyday-cycling” (ibid). The Bremen policy takes a critical view when stating that “the network has optimisation potential” (Bremen 2014:67) with regard to “travelling speed”¹⁰ (ibid). After the discussion of adequate widths for kerb-protected cycleways (*Bordsteinradwege*) the VEP concludes that the “existing infrastructure is thus increasingly reaching its limits in many places and is not future-compatible” (Bremen 2014:68). The policy proceeds by lamenting Bremen’s so-called “culture of kerb-protected cycling”¹¹ (ibid) because, the policy argues, it runs counter to technical knowledge laid out in the design standards (StVO). This is a curious notion by the council. In my experience, a ‘cycling culture’ is usually celebrated by cycling cities and something that is looked up to by cities in transition away from the car. Bremen council is unsatisfied with people choosing to cycle on kerb-protected cycleways. The policy acknowledges studies that have shown this preference: the present cycling culture results in 96% of people choosing *Bordsteinradwege* over on-road cycling options even without the mandatory use of the cycleway (Bremen 2014:68, footnote 9). The stated reasons for this collective behaviour are comfort and safety according to feedback collected from “the citizens’ forums and regional committees” (Bremen 2014:68) held during the dialogic consultation process. The policy wants to comply with the technical standards but finds it in conflict with the everyday lived reality. In a confusion on the technical-social divide, the VEP then continues to describe on-road cycling solutions the city has implemented over recent years, and clearly links the “attractiveness of the cycle network [with] the quality of the infrastructure” (Bremen 2014:69). The confusion here relates to the prominence of separated cycleways in Bremen and their proven high use in relation to technical solutions: I argue that Bremen wants to technocratically engineer the social (and comply with technical standards), forgetting that the social may not follow a re-engineering of urban space. Indeed cycle share in Bremen has been slightly decreasing (Ahrens 2010; 2016). In addition, speaking as an engineer myself, technical standards usually permit a range of solutions and it is for the engineer to work through these distinctions, and choose the best solution.

¹⁰ Translated from *Reisegeschwindigkeit*

¹¹ Translated from “Kultur des Bordsteinradwegfahrens” [inverted commas in original]

As part of the VEP process, a stock-taking exercise (*Mängelanalyse*) was carried out to identify deficiencies in the network identifying missing links and deficits in the cycle network. The Bremen policy is careful about managing expectations: the “[network] improvement remains a longer-term and on-going task requiring effective strategies” (Bremen 2014:69). However, the policy also remains ambitious: “Cycle planning in Bremen ought to be carried out with increased resolve and innovation when compared with other cycle cities” (Bremen 2014:70). I read innovation here to mean implementation of on-road cycling as the policy again expressed its disappointment with the high use of cycleways: “cycling on the road has **as yet** not been accepted” (ibid, my emphasis). Cycleways are not valued by the council. It gives me the impression that the policy refers to cycleways when it talks about the “obsolete, non-state-of-the-art and thus only partly future-compatible cycle infrastructure” (Bremen 2014:142). This negative attitude towards cycleways is worrying, as it ignores people’s preferences and lived realities.

The chapter on cycling in the VEP culminates in a substantial list of measures ranging from the improvement of individual locations (streets and junctions) to prime cycle routes (*Premiumrouten*) to be planned and built in the short and mid-term horizons. The policy remains unclear about the type of infrastructure that will be used for the prime routes.

5.3.2.3 Car parking

In relation to the spatial measure of car parking, the VEP opens with managing the reader’s expectations: “analysis of stationary motor vehicle traffic can only be treated on a general level in the city-wide plan” (Bremen 2014:54), before continuing, that there are “enough parking spaces in Bremen city centre” (ibid), however a good Park & Ride offer is missing on main transport corridors (Bremen 2014:55). The small-grain architecture of buildings and streets, typical for Bremen’s urban fabric, “results in high parking pressures in these areas, so that in some cases emergency routes, sidewalks and intersections are parked up” (ibid) and “the already narrow roadside spaces in the affected areas for pedestrians and cyclists are further reduced, with significant restrictions on short-trip mobility and accessibility” (Bremen 2014:169). The policy acknowledges people’s need of a functional pavement and roadside spaces (*Nebenanlagen*). These social needs provide justification to the council for the

provision of “measures of car-parking management and space monitoring [...] in the action plan” (ibid).

The VEP explains that the localities where space scarcity is most pressing will be prioritised for improvement. To “make the public space barrier-free and accessible, especially in residential areas, the parking space will gradually be reduced in favour of short-trip mobilities” (ibid), combined with a city-centre parking strategy, implementation and enforcement of parking and stopping bans and the promotion of sustainable modes. A parking-permit system is already in use in a number of neighbourhood areas; and a car club is in operation in Bremen (Bremen 2014).

Given the importance of the management of car parking, the policy devotes only a couple of pages to car parking. It makes the distinction between the city centre and neighbourhood parking (as explicated above). Car parking is otherwise diffused into the policy text and a strategic approach is absent, despite the promising opening remarks in the car-parking section of the policy.

5.3.3 Bremen summary critique

In sum, Bremen’s transport policy, VEP, promises to implement spatial measures: this will be accomplished both through car-parking elements (most notably by reducing car parking) and improvements to the cycle network. In contrast to the clearly stated vision for car-parking reduction however, the policy’s pitch for cycling measures is less clear. The VEP refrains from dissolving the conflict between the wants and needs of the 96% of people (who use *Bordsteinradwege* for their perceived comfort and safety) and the interests of the council as the authority for technical decisions pertaining to transport. There is a disparity between people’s preference for cycleways and the council’s technical preference of on-road solution. The post-policy outlook for cycling hence is unresolved: will existing cycleways be improved and widened (the people’s choice) or may the council now execute their favoured technical solution for on-road cycling (technocratic choice)?

5.3.4 Bremen: personal observations

From personal observations of Bremen, the cycle infrastructure is a noticeable and prominent feature in the city’s urban design and much to be lauded. Rat-running in the remaining streets has been cut to a great extent (compared to

Newcastle for example) - whilst permeability for walking and cycling has usually been retained. This has created an adequate secondary cycle network. Nearly all main roads have been fitted with a separate space for cycling, usually elevated from the road on a kerb and running alongside pedestrian pavements, creating a substantial primary network. Many cycleways, however, leave a lot to be desired for path widths and surface quality. Over recent years Bremen council has removed some kerb-protected cycleways (for instance on Hamburger Straße, Humboldtstraße, Münchner Straße, Wachmannstraße), and replaced these with painted cycle lanes on the road or Cycle Streets (*Fahrradstraßen*). Bremen's Cycle Streets, as I experienced them, do not adequately cut motor-traffic levels and hence result in regular confrontation between cyclists and drivers. The impact of the recent changes on the city's transport system is not (yet) fully determinable. One such indicator useful to consult would be the cycle mode share. The latest representative statistics recorded a slight decline in cycling mode share between 2008 and 2013: from 24.8% (Ahrens 2010) to 23.4% (Ahrens 2016). This decline should be of keen interest to Bremen council considering the VEP goal "not only to keep the high share of cycling in Bremen's modal split, but also to increase it by a targeted, effective and perceptible improvement of cycling" (Bremen 2014:142).

5.4 Summary and comparison

The foreword in Newcastle's policy, written by the leader of Newcastle council, talks about the importance of planning for the city's future but the tension between house building and its effect on transport system is not recognised and hence remains unresolved. Whilst Newcastle's policy itself is functional (i.e. it allocates land for house building), it also leaves the contextual tensions of environmental and social changes, industrial past and high-tech future, unaddressed. This scene-setting detail marks a stark contrast to the opening remarks in Bremen's policy. Bremen's transport senator congratulates an active citizenry partaking in the dialogue (*Bürgerdialog*) to support the policy construction through a bottom-up process. Nevertheless, the lack of diversity in Bremen's VEP transport policy steering group, a central instrument to citizen participation and policy construction, evidences the presence of other forms of exclusion in Bremen.

As for the contents of the policies, both policy narratives show incongruities, showing rationalisation of rationality (Flyvbjerg 1998). Bremen's tension lies in the technocratic approach of the council to favour on-road cycling solutions despite citizens' overwhelming use of cycleways (even when their use is not mandatory). Whereas Newcastle's policy does not construct car parking or cycleways as spatial issues, thereby failing to acknowledge space as a contested urban resource that requires management and distribution. Through the lack of construing urban space as a limited resource that is political and contested, the Newcastle policy circumvents the need for transport-transition planning. Democratic processes were weak during the policy production phase. As such, political decision making and dialogic engagement with the citizenship resulted in protests (Moss 2012).

The "green thread that runs through this document" (NCC and GMBC 2015:9) indeed remained absent in the Newcastle policy as talk about sustainability remains theoretical. Compared to Bremen's policy process, Newcastle did not carry out a critical analysis (gap analysis) or list specific projects for implementation. The Newcastle policy lacks detail and thus its vision remains aloof. Despite making promises it does not pave a practical way to ground the vision.

There are tensions between the social, political and technical levels of each city. To summarise succinctly, Newcastle's norm is that of a car city and the tensions in Newcastle's policy are more fundamental in nature concerning a functional local democracy with leadership effecting vision and change, whereas Bremen's contradiction lies in the use of a technocratic practice amidst its status as a cycle city.

The next chapters turn to the primary data and describe my own experience (Chapter 6 and 7) and women activists' experience (Chapter 8) of cycle politics, proceeding to report about the decision makers' views in chapter 9 before synthesising and concluding (Chapters 10 and 11).

6 THE LOCAL CAMPAIGN

6.1 Introduction

This chapter retraces the history of the Newcastle Cycling Campaign concentrating on my personal role in the campaign. In this chapter I describe my input and thoughts about cycle campaigning in Newcastle in the years 2010 and 2016. To assemble this chapter, I used a video diary method to retrace my steps. In the video diary I focussed specifically on the political campaigning activities the Newcastle Cycling Campaign was involved in. The video diary was constructed retrospectively in 2017. The method is described in more detail in section 4.5. The following text summarises the campaigning events and organises them into themes that emerged from the video-diary.

6.2 Life before campaigning

There was a life before the Newcastle Cycling Campaign (the campaign hereafter). At some point, campaigning took over my life and entirely changed my worldview and outlook on the future.

I began as a civil and environmental engineer. I studied civil engineering at the Technical University of Braunschweig (Germany). As a 23-year old, I went on an Erasmus exchange to Newcastle for a year in 1996/7. I also participated in an academic exchange with the USA and, in 1999/2000, spent 15 months at the University of Rhode Island, where I completed my MSc degree in civil and environmental engineering. I returned to Newcastle in 2001 where I settled. I began to work as a consultant water engineer designing sewerage, drinking water and flood risk systems, working in the private and the public sector over the coming years.

Growing up in North Germany, cycling was my main means of transport, as would be usual for residents and more specifically for students. When abroad on exchanges to the UK and US, I did not cycle with such a regularity as I did in Germany. However, I began cycling more frequently in 2001, once I had settled in Newcastle. It began with an evening language class in Newcastle in 2002: the venue seemed a distance too far to walk and just the right distance to cycle to my mind. I bought a cheap used bike from the local cycle store and began to

cycle. Shortly after making that experience, I started cycling to work too. It was not until seven years later in 2009 (at 36-years of age), that I noticed a change: a shift had occurred in my attitude. Over the years, I now noticed, cycling had become increasingly more uncomfortable for me.

In 2009 I had reached a point where I questioned cycling's overall use and usefulness for my transport needs in and around Newcastle. Competing with motor traffic whilst being on a flimsy 2-wheel metal frame was now something that worried me.

6.3 Prelude to collective action - petition

Building up over several years, cycling had become progressively difficult and it felt uncomfortable to me. In my mind, it came to a head in 2009 where I began to think that cycling conditions in Newcastle needed improving. As a 'concerned citizen' I wished to contribute my experience and contacted the local council in 2009. My local council is Newcastle City Council (the council hereafter). The desire to contribute was helped by reading in the local newspaper that the council wanted more people to cycle. I consulted the council website for contacts and communication channels, but I could not locate an obvious contact point for cycling matters. As a consequence, I decided to write to the council's chief executive instead. In my first email to the chief executive, sent in summer 2009, I finally began communicating my experience to the council: cycling in Newcastle did not feel comfortable or safe and I was interested to hear their plans about improving cycling conditions. I wrote in April 2009

Cycling should be encouraged where possible as a clean and healthy mode of transport, I understand. Is there a plan to improve the city centre with regards to safe cycling, specially on the North-South axis? For my own safety I intend to keep cycling through Northumberland Street, at a snail's pace. Probably getting stopped by police once more.

This exchange continued over several months. It often took the council many weeks to reply. I was taken aback, as I did not feel that I asked obtuse or complicated questions. My emails were short and precise. In October 2009 I wrote:

Six months ago I contact the council regarding safe cycling in the city centre. You kindly forwarded my email to your cycling officer [name]. Unfortunately I have not had a reply from [name] as yet. Could you advise on the process please?

In relation to cycling and mode shift, I also inquired about the council's approach to climate change and sustainability. I had used the example of cycling: I was cycling, just as the council asks its citizens, but I found cycling on Newcastle's roads severely lacking in any safety or comfort.

Three months later, in January 2010, I wrote again

I only want to make sure that my first-hand experience is taken into some sort of account. Sorry to say this but in my opinion, this is a health and safety matter, and requires acknowledging if not even addressing to an extent. What can I do? I really do feel I could contribute towards the city centre cycling 'debate'. [The cycling officer's] silence certainly does not help. Would it be possible to be included on a distribution list or newsletter to get some insight into the cycling officer's work?

Nine months from making the first contact, I eventually was given a date for a meeting that I could attend to voice my concerns. The meeting was called "cycle forum". Eager to get answers to my questions, I attended the council's cycle forum for the first time in early 2010. Experiencing that meeting was a disappointment as it did not help me to find answers to my questions.

I had waited for so long my expectations were high. Yet when the day of the cycle forum had come, it did not address my hopes and expectations that had grown over the preceding months. Something had shifted in my perspective as a citizen though. At the end of that cycle forum meeting, I knew I had to take action. At the meeting I had witnessed that it was not just me who was ignored by the council: I had spoken to other attendees and sensed a similar dissatisfaction and even unrest. Upon leaving the meeting room I briefly spoke to the chairing councillor, the cycling champion. I recall saying: "We need to see progress on cycling matters. If you want public outrage, I can arrange that for you". I had no idea what I meant by that or what I wanted to do next. I only knew something needed to be done.

Following the forum meeting, I took the matter in my own hands. In order to initiate wider change processes and show politicians the existing momentum on cycling matters, I started an online petition. The anger that I felt about the council's inaction and inability to communicate led me to become a political citizen. I called the petition 'Safe Cycling in Newcastle city centre'. It collected just over 800 signatures in four weeks. Organising the petition connected me to many more people who equally felt that something ought to be done. I estimate that I had contact with more than one hundred individuals during the petition phase (by email, telephone and meeting in person). Scores of people got in touch to tell me about their woes with cycling and the council, warning me of negative experiences they have had with the council.

In addition to the petition, I compiled a report building the case for cycling in Newcastle. The report was important, because I wanted to create something lasting that the council could contemplate and use for the long-run. To that effect the report listed problems, proposed solutions and made recommendations based on all the things I had learnt during the petition phase, recounting people's misgivings and our eagerness for change.

With help from others I organised an official handover to the council. The petition was scheduled to be formally submitted on 2 June 2010 at the meeting of Full Council (the official monthly council meeting of councillors). On my suggestion, the councillor responsible for transport and cycling (a Liberal Democrat) had met with me the evening before to discuss details: I wanted to relay my findings to her and hear her response in advance of the formal meeting. The councillor, I felt, had not understood the gravity of the petition.

On the next day, I officially presented and formally handed over the petition. I was in good spirits. My video diary notes

*I remember the elation. The buzz of the petition phase continued. I was full of energy. I felt the weight on my shoulders, but I also felt that something could now be moving on with the council.
(video diary, 2010, week 23)*

According to the lead transport councillor, the matter had now been handed to the council officers. After the official handover, my suspicions remained: the council did not take the petition seriously. I was devastated because I felt

tremendous responsibility to the fellow petitioners - over 800 signatories including the many people I had personally met during through the petition. I wanted to see the matter formalised with the council, so I requested to receive a written letter from the relevant council director (civil servant), outlining the council's next steps. To my dismay, the letters I received did not address the problems raised by the petition i.e. designing and planning a better road system, training of engineers and improved channels of communication. I was shocked. I counselled others and ask myself: perhaps the lead transport councillor should be more engaged in the process?

I began meeting up with some of the signatories more regularly. I was drawn to one person in particular: her character, energy and knowledge were infectious. Over the coming months we discussed what could be done following the petition. We were now working together and monitored progress, which was slow. We resolved to form a campaign group. I now was a concerned and active citizen turned activist.

6.4 My involvement - some stats and figures

6.4.1 The campaign

The Newcastle Cycling Campaign was constituted by two women in 2010. I was one of these women. We had been brought together by the desire to improve cycling conditions and productively engage the local authority Newcastle City Council (the council hereafter) on urban design matters relating to cycling. After three months of preparation, we – the two founding members of the organisation – signed the campaign's constitution on the 27 September 2010.

The video diary notes:

We are officially launching the campaign! I had identified a problem, something I was unhappy about, and I wanted to do something about it. If we could formalise it well, we could link up with others and be stronger. (video diary, 2010, week 36)

I chaired the campaign between 2010 and 2017, the co-founder took the position of Secretary. The inaugural AGM was held in March 2011. For the first couple of years the campaign asked for a nominal membership fee (later

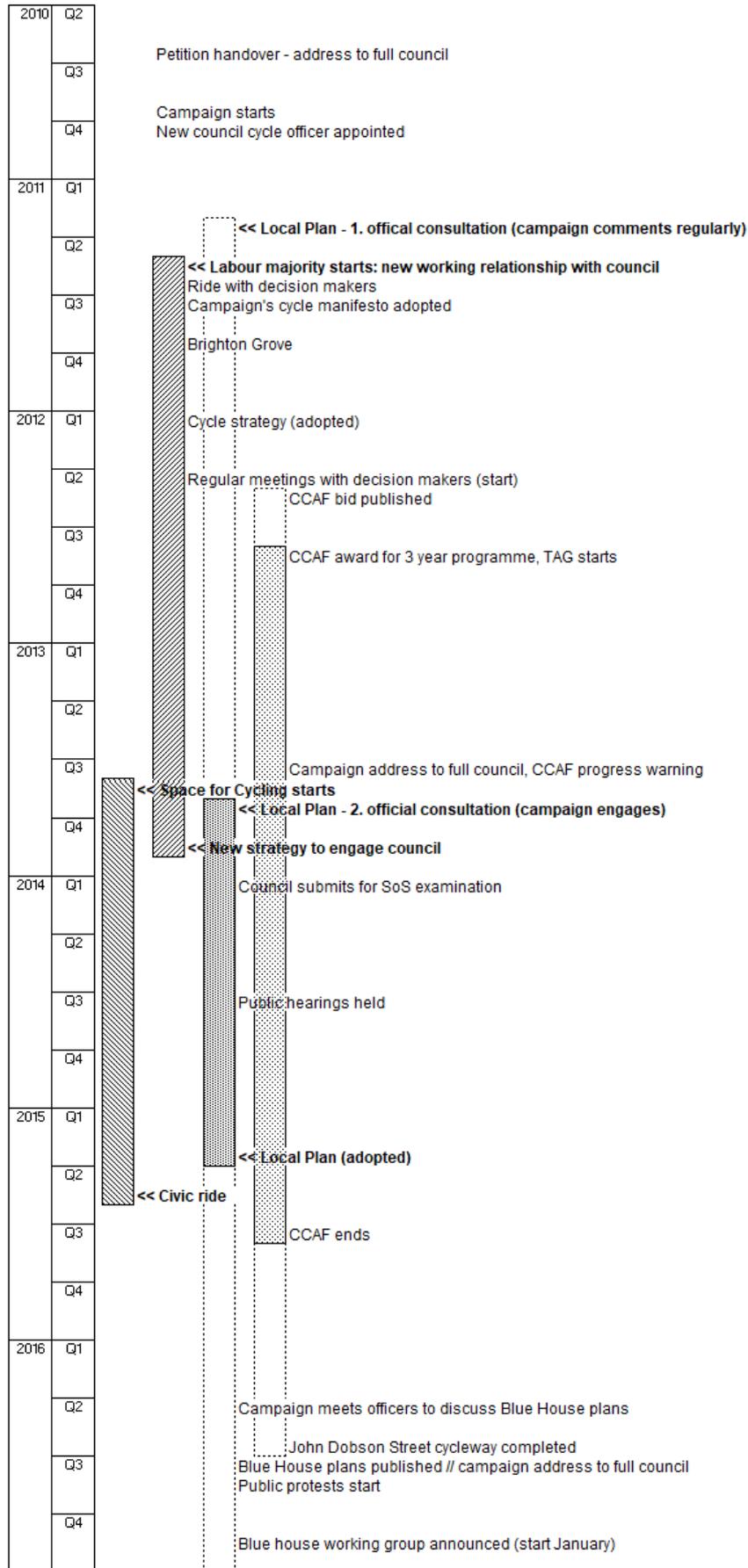
offering free membership) and consisted of about 100 members by the first AGM (rising to 1,600 members in 2017).

Before holding our first AGM we requested various data from the council (reports, numerical data sets), interacted with officers and politicians, promoting the campaign and its existence. We laid out how the campaign could fit into the democratic process and help the council on infrastructural matters. However, apart from little glimmers from individual officers, the overall attitude of the council was generally distant, even dismissive at times. For example, the first cycle forum meeting held shortly after the campaign's formation did not even acknowledge the formation of our campaign. This early exclusion made us frown, but it did not deter us. Over the following months, this kind of blind-siding would become a recognisable practice of the council.

A timeline is presented in figure 6.1 to provide a chronological overview. In addition, a list of campaigning activities is provided in the Appendix B giving more detail on specific events. The events are also progressively elaborated on in the text below.

From the very beginning the campaign's committee, with me in the chair, prided itself in the consistency of its message and personnel. Consistency was important to me. From our start in 2010 the campaign demanded changes to urban design to increase cycling participation: the building of cycleways on main roads (spatial redistribution from motor traffic) and cutting motor through-traffic in neighbourhoods (redistribution of volume and speed). It was the main claim of the campaign that changes to the infrastructure were necessary to enable everyday cycling for all ages and abilities. This infrastructural demand remained relevant throughout the investigation period 2010-2017 (and is still, at the time of writing).

Figure 6.1. Timeline of events



Personnel consistency was important to the campaign for building relationships with the council. The campaign created the position of infrastructure lead in 2013, in response to moneys coming into Newcastle to build cycle infrastructure (Cycle City Ambition Fund, see 6.7.2 below). This position, too, was held consistently by the same person. To that effect, the campaign personnel in our volunteer staffing was more permanent than the council's over the same period. Since 2010 all key council positions (in relation to transport cycling) had changed at least once. The relevant positions in relation to cycling and the number of council officials in position since 2010 is given in table 6.1:

Table 6.1. List of officials

Position	No. of persons	Comment
Councillors		
Council leader	2	Switch from Liberal Democrats to Labour in 2011 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr David Faulkner, Lib, 2010-2011 • Cllr Nick Forbes, Lab, 2011 – today (2018)
Transport cabinet member	3	Labour cabinet role portfolio 'Transport and Development' (changed 2017) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Wendy Taylor, Lib, 2004?-2011 • Cllr Henri Murison, Lab, 2011-2012 • Cllr Ged Bell, Lab, 2012-2017
Councillor cycle champion	3	Post removed in 2015 as part of Labour's consolidation of cabinet roles in 2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Stephen Psallidas, Lib, 2008?-2011 • Cllr Nigel Todd, Lab, 2011-2013 • Cllr Marion Talbot, Lab, 2013-2016
Officers		
Chief executive	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barry Rowland, 2009-2012 • Pat Ritchie, 2012-today
Planning director	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Slater, ? - 2013 • Tom Warburton, 2013-today
Transport planning (assistant) director	2	Council re-organisation in 2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvey Emms, ? - 2014 • Graham Grant, 2014-2017
Cycle officer	2	Post removed in 2014

The campaign committee met regularly, as mandated in its constitution. In the capacity of chair, I presided over 60 committee meetings. At these meetings we would discuss campaign tactics, organisational strategy and action planning, as standing agenda items. The Secretary recorded the minutes of every meeting.

These were analysed on an annual basis for trends and patterns to inform campaign strategizing and future planning.

Since 2013 our motto (as shown on the then newly updated website) has been “For a City with Space for Cycling. We lobby. We campaign. We publish. We inform”. We developed campaign policies for our own transparency (for example sustainable safety, protected space, Newcastle cycle forum and pavement cycling, helmets and helmet compulsion). We hoped to bring about change by using various means of communication: attending different types of meetings (regular and one-offs, formal and informal), writing press releases and submitting Freedom of Information requests (when the council had not been readily forthcoming with information).

Beyond the varied work of the committee members, the campaign, under my lead, would mobilise its membership to write to the council or gather for demonstrations as deemed appropriate and necessary by the committee. Figure 6.2 below depicts one such occasion with hundreds of participants filling Newcastle’s Grey Street.

Figure 6.2. Newcastle cycle demonstration, credit Shannon Robalino



A sequence of events, including its motives and outcomes, is listed in the Appendix B. Through our actions, behaviour and demeanour, we wanted to demonstrate to the council that the Newcastle Cycling Campaign was a force to

be reckoned with a professional, well organised, transparent and structured group, ready and eager to participate in the local democracy of Newcastle.

On a personal-professional level, by 2012, campaigning had started taking over increased proportions of my life. I was exhausted from my various commitments. I realised that my work-life balance needed assessing. By 2013, I tried to scale down to part-time working to be able to spend more on campaigning and handed in a formal request to that effect. Unfortunately, my employer rejected my application. Reasons given were affordability on their part. I scanned my office, and found that if I had children, working part time would not have been a problem as evidenced by my colleagues who were mothers routinely working part time. However, my situation was different: I wanted to give back to civic society by contributing to a campaign group, not become a mother. My employer's reasoning did not make sense to me. The overall strain finally started to show in 2014 after many months of stretching between 'work and life'.

The accumulating stress and added disagreements over technical matters with senior management at work, resulted in the decision to leave my employer. I was glad to start this research project at Northumbria University in February 2015 where I could organise my own time more flexibly and combine my social interest with academia.

6.4.2 *Press and media*

Between 2010 and 2017, I issued 51 press releases to the local media, the majority of which were picked up and published by the local newspaper (online and print). Over the years I appeared in numerous radio programmes and several television programmes. I would typically be contacted by the local BBC radio station as a member of the cycle campaign and asked to speak on air about cycle matters (live and pre-recorded). Providing a voice for cycling, I also collaborated with the local tv stations BBC, Sky Tyne and Wear (2012-2014) and Made in Tyne and Wear.

6.4.3 *Council engagement*

The council had one cyclist engagement group, the cycle forum. This forum was organised by the council and was an open meeting which had been held more or less regularly on a bi-monthly basis (6 meetings a year) since its conception

in the early 2000s. There had been a dry spell in 2008/9 when only a couple of meetings were held, and from 2014 onwards meetings were held quarterly and the forum renamed to cycle stakeholder forum. The cycle forum offered a communication channel with the council to the campaign. Council officers would attend and sometimes councillors or directors would be present too. I attended 17 of these cycle forum meetings between 2010 and 2014, before the campaign agreed to discontinue its expected attendance (in 2014). This step was taken because campaign committee had deemed the forum ineffective as an engagement tool between council and civic society. The website notes:

It is our disappointment with [our experienced ineffectiveness of the forum] that led us to the decision to cancel our regular forum attendance. In the meantime we will use other – more successful and less frustrated – communication routes to improve the lot for cycling in Newcastle. (campaign website, 18 August 2014)

The campaign had experienced the forum as a tick-box exercise for the council. Since 2012 however, we had been lobbying for the creation of more effective and relevant communication channels: embracing wider transport issues, not just cycling. The campaign and its partners were successful. When in 2015 the council held the inaugural meeting of the transport forum, I attended this meeting as well as on another two occasions¹². For more detail, see section 6.6.4 below.

The council also organised a number of one-off transport-related events for public attendance. These meetings included two cabinet meetings on transport policy open to the public, a consultation fair on public health and transport where civic groups were invited, and various council-organised information-gathering events – all of which I duly attended in my campaigner's capacity. In the time frame under investigation I participated in approximately ten one-off events.

Another activity was to submit Freedom of Information (Fol) requests to the council to gain insight into council plans. Between 2010-2016 I submitted 21 Fols on behalf of the campaign gaining useful information for the campaign.

¹² Further attendance was hindered by my research trips to Bremen, Germany. Fellow committee members presented the campaign in my absence.

During the period 2010-2016, Newcastle witnessed the conception of a number of cycling (and walking) schemes (listed in table 6.2). The campaign tried to be involved in these schemes.

Table 6.2. Council road schemes the campaign was involved in

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silver Lonnen (installing pinchpoints on a main road) • Brighton Grove (painted cycle lanes, removing illegal parking as well as legalising illegal parking) • Percy Street (on-going, several plans, unclear outcomes) • Elswick Road (bus priority, then CCAF) • Northumberland Street • Central Station (public realm work, some road restrictions) • Welbeck Road (Sustrans funds (withdrawn), CCAF, on-going) • Fenham Hall Drive (legalised pavement cycling) • Westend Strategic Cycle Route (CCAF, status unclear) • Great North Road (narrow cycle lane, lightly separated, walk-cycle mixing at bus stops) • Gosforth High Street (various consultations over the years, status unclear) • Acorn Road (CCAF, marginal public realm gains, cycle contraflow) • Brandling Park (CCAF, removed paid car parking, two-way cycleway but at expense of walking) • John Dobson Street (CCAF, cycleways of good quality, road-reallocation scheme) • Clayton Street (badly designed contraflow, removed) • Blue House (status unclear) • Haddricks Mill (status unclear) |
|--|

Many of the schemes were part of the Cycle City Ambition Fund (CCAF), a £6 million budget Newcastle council (with consultants Sustrans¹³) had won from the DfT (topped up in 2015 with another £10million from national government). The schemes' design details varied in quality, and many have not (as yet) been implemented. As part of the CCAF programme Newcastle City Council created a technical advisory group (TAG) which the campaign's infrastructure lead would attend on a fortnightly basis. Much patient education work about cycling infrastructure design was carried out by the campaign representative at the meetings. I attended two of the TAG meetings and was involved in the design discussions and debriefs held at the campaign's committee meetings. The list

¹³ UK's active travel charity

below clearly shows that Newcastle council was trying to provide for cycling (however the technical quality of the schemes is often lacking). There were also council schemes that had a rather more tenuous link to cycling than the CCAF schemes. But to the campaign, with a focus on urban design, all strategic transport schemes were of interest. We always risked spreading our resources too thinly, commenting on road schemes. I wrote many replies to Traffic Regulation Orders¹⁴, before the transport lead took over this function in 2014. It was not unusual to reply to 20 Traffic Regulation Orders in one year.

Any road-design scheme offered a potential: it could make things better or worse for cycling. Upon closer inspection these schemes usually were traditional highway schemes built on the predict-and-provide paradigm favouring car movements, junction capacity, journey-time saving or were carried out under a catch-all banner of road safety. The most notorious of schemes in the time frame of the investigation was a project that was part of Newcastle's Local Plan implementation: the Northern Access Corridor proposed road-widening to accommodate future housing developments. For more detail about the Local Plan see section 6.7.3 below (as well as section 5.2). One of the sub-projects was Blue House roundabout (mentioned below, and also in Chapter 9).

In summary, I was chairing a campaign group keen to see urban design implemented, inclusive of people's experience with cycling in Newcastle and according to council policy. The campaign was challenging the council on their practices in relation to space and its use.

6.5 Theme 1: a torn campaigning scene

6.5.1 Newcastle scene

The campaign was a new start-up, founded from scratch in 2010. Over the preceding decades, other local cycle campaigns had become defunct in Newcastle (notably Tynebikes).

The campaign's co-founder and I had carried out some investigation work prior to setting up of the campaign. After speaking to several individuals involved in previous campaigns, we had concluded that previous organisations were

¹⁴ A highway authorities in England can alter traffic in their area by issuing a Traffic Regulation Order

unviable for restoration. It meant that as a new organisation, we had free rein on administrative and campaigning decisions, setting aims and goals. Naturally however, the formation of a new campaign would have the potential to rub with older structures and long-standing campaigners. The co-founder and I tried to be inclusive when setting up the campaign, but that also needed to be done without compromising our high aims. For example, using old mailing lists we invited member of previous campaigns to join the new campaign, carefully explaining our purpose.

In Newcastle it was individual people who would position themselves against the new campaign, so much I knew. Whilst the Newcastle Cycling Campaign has stayed the course with its clear purpose (focus on urban design, building cycleways), a few disparate individuals would keep aligned with older ideas and sentiments, most notably the 'vehicular cycling' sentiment (see literature review, section 3.5). Vehicular cycling ideology clashes with campaigning for cycleways, as vehicular cycling states that roads already exist, and no spatial re-adjustments are needed. We witnessed that proponents of vehicular cycling agreed to modest demands such as advanced stop lines, educating drivers and other road users. The vehicular cyclists were certainly not in the majority in Newcastle campaigning scene, but when in attendance, I had experienced them as forthright and confident.

Much of the video diary is concerned with these ill-alignments between different people, their beliefs about cycling and concepts of change. Clashes with these views were emotional moments laden with deep frustration. But it was precisely these moments that documented the change that took place in the campaigning landscape and described how moments of change are perversely both a challenge and an opportunity, a beginning and an end. I was surprised when constructing and analysing the video diary, just how much of an opposition there had been in Newcastle to the new campaign. I had not realised this at the time. We simply had been too busy running a start-up campaign to take much notice.

The instances of these inside-campaigning struggles were demonstrably along the fault lines of 'old versus new'. For instance, one local individual (affiliated to

CTC¹⁵ and acting as their representative) concentrated on small gains (dropped kerbs, signage) but she was no ally to rely on when substantial road-space reallocation schemes were discussed. She opposed cycle-specific infrastructure. I tried to reason with the CTC representative. It was infuriating to me: this campaigning cleavage played into the hands of a council that appeared to prefer to retain the status quo. In a second example, another individual (ex-councillor and affiliated with the Labour party), used his influence and council contacts to chair working groups (hosted by the council as part of the cycle forum). The individual made decisions on the council's behalf and used his chair position as leverage with the council to further his personal stakes. His actions undermined and weakened the campaign's aim to demand cycleways. The council let him operate this way.

Wider debates about programming and infrastructure were suppressed in the process, as incremental change was favoured by the forum chair. As outlined in section 6.6, we adjusted our campaign tactics and techniques, to counter the marginalisation, for example using press releases and the media to publicise our alternative angle and stimulate debate. Today I suspect, that to a seasoned environmental activist this would be seen as tactical behaviours, but I was new to activism. However, I was learning the hard way. My own campaigning started to give me new insights. My mental state which had been technical and rational to this point, began to work in different ways. I began to ask sociological questions: how does an individual and society relate?

6.5.2 *National cycle groups*

An early emotional experience in my campaigning career was the clash with national campaign groups. To give an example, it was difficult to gain the support of national campaigns when I sought access to their local networks to gain signatures for the petition. There were exceptions, but in my experience, cooperation was a painful and long-winded process with these organisations. My frustration with the national organisations mostly centred around obscured visibility: it was impossible for me to see or understand what representatives were doing, why and how they were doing things. Eventually, in an attempt to understand Sustrans, UK's active travel charity, I participated in their

¹⁵ UK's national cycle lobby

organisation as a volunteer ranger. This resulted in my expulsion (in 2012) despite duly fulfilling my reporting task (the reason given for expulsion).

In 2010 I joined the national CTC (now Cycling UK), only to cancel my membership a few years later because of disappointment with the organisation. I did not feel represented by the CTC. The CTC was centred around the current cyclist. Notions of infrastructure and urban design were not espoused. In 2012, the CTC policy director wrote in an email to me:

promoting segregation risks weakening cycle campaigning, by giving politicians the excuse to decide we cyclists can't even agree amongst ourselves what we want. (personal communication 2012)

As someone who sees the urban design as a determinant of people's behaviour, I thought this did not make sense. I could not reconcile the CTC values to me as a person who is cycling, or the value to the local cycle campaign I was chairing. CTC were perennially uncertain about their purpose: a historical circumstance (Cox 2015a). Sustrans had been co-opted as consultants to national and local government and thereby lost the campaigning edge (Onthelevel 2009, and own local observation). Some of these confrontations diminished over time, as local internal opposition faded, and the national campaigns began to recognise cycleways as enablers of transport cycling on a population level. For example, the CTC (now Cycling UK) showed interest in cycleways when adopting the London Cycling Campaign's Space for Cycling initiative. Under that umbrella the Newcastle campaign ran various events such as campaign rides and asking Newcastle councillors' to pledge support (67% did, the highest support rate in England, outside London). However, this achievement did not result in an improved relationship with the CTC, which disappointed me immensely.

The two national cycling groups, CTC and Sustrans, had hidden their political campaigning strategies. From where I was sitting, they showed little interest in working with civic society on the ground, when we could all be sharing information, strategizing and planning. Over the coming years I tried to stay in touch with the national organisations and their local representatives, but oftentimes the rift in campaigning approaches and infrastructural preferences

was too deep and defining. I admittedly held a considerable whirlpool of emotional energy trying to resolve my disappointment in these organisations.

6.6 Theme 2: communicating to connect

6.6.1 *Tentative steps towards collaboration*

Over the years, the campaign sought to develop good working relationships with officials. Two of the three Newcastle Members of Parliament (MPs) were principally supportive from the very start of the campaign. Under my lead, the campaign's attitude was to seek relationships with decision makers and actively nurture these relationships. We provided written briefings to the Newcastle MPs listing the latest national and local cycle developments. We also stayed in touch by attending constituency meetings. However, the campaign's main lobbying focus was the council and with regards to lobbying the council, MPs only hold limited official power to effect local changes. The campaign needed councillors (and officers) willing to engage. This proved a hard task and is explained further in section 6.7.

The video diary recalls in much detail many of the cycle campaign's efforts to communicate with the council. For example, early campaigning efforts included my attempt to work with Newcastle's officials through a petition (for detail see section 6.3). My dissatisfaction with the official response led to the formation of the campaign. It was hard to believe, but soon after receiving the petition, the council changed the rules for submitting petitions, which would have invalidated the 'Safe Cycling in Newcastle' petition. It made me apprehensive. Nonetheless I wanted to understand the council, how it worked and the different cultures of the officials. Besides the petition, the campaign explored other communication channels with the council, such as the council-convened cycle forum (see detail in sections 6.3 and 6.4). It was telling from the start, that the council's cycle forum did not officially acknowledge the formation of the campaign.

Labour came to power in Newcastle in 2011, taking over from Liberal Democrats. There was a notable change in engagement with councillors, at least. After this change in political administration, periodic access to individual officials, directors and champion councillors, was much improved. But this ceased in 2012 when key councillors were re-posted or left their office

altogether. However, at this point, select campaign members were granted access to officers. For instance, I had a series of meetings with senior council officers over the following couple of years (2012-2013). Despite the closer contact, I still found it difficult to understand council operations. My video diary notes:

It is just so sad to see that we are running in circles, over and over again with the council, and they are chasing their own tail all the time. (video diary, 2012, week 41)

The campaign, like the petition, insisted that public communications needed improving. The lack of assistance by the authority to initiate a public debate on transport matters ultimately led to a re-assessment of campaigning strategy. We felt that a council-endorsed public debate would bring the cycle campaign to the attention of a wider audience - we viewed it as an essential part of a vibrant local democracy. I was convinced that with the council lacking direction and leadership (through policy production, adherence and implementation), any communication would be fraught. This was frustrating to me, as the campaign was poised for action in the public arena. The questions remained: what did officials need for initiating change?

The lack of communication from the council increasingly thwarted our search for answers. Eventually, under my lead, the campaign decided to follow a two-pronged tactic. We would work with willing councillors and officers, but we would also use the media to rally support, stimulate public reaction and put pressure on the decision makers. In essence it meant that we could remain a political campaign: we were able to gain a distance from council affairs, remain resolutely true to the campaign's aims and maintain independence from the council.

Another communication channel the campaign exploited, was official channels in council governance. Over the years, the campaign gave three presentations at the full council meeting, would also contribute to numerous written consultations and attend one-off meetings as they arose. But, channels of communications opened at random and were not permanent. Largely, again, deliberation in the public arena did not happen. This led to a failure to create a shared vision for Newcastle's transport future. The discussion of the clarity of

direction and political leadership (or absence thereof) were standing agenda items at campaign committee meetings. The diary notes:

Just trying to get hold of that report! It was a Kafkaesque experience! I was getting passed round inside the council: “no, someone else is dealing with it” – “no, it is commercially sensitive”. There was no feeling amongst officers that it was a good report that should be shared and talked about. They always kept things close to their chests. (video diary, 2013, week 26)

The campaign, taking a proactive stance, asked repeatedly for access to the council by requesting meetings with officials. However, one notable event went the other way round. The campaign was ordered to attend a meeting and justify its (media) tactics: we were accused of naming individual council officers on social media. I immediately knew that this accusation was false, as I was heavily involved in the social media messaging of the campaign. I was disappointed about the council’s accusatory stance. Nonetheless, I also strongly felt, that we could turn this meeting to our advantage. Councillors would be present too. The meeting could be used, I suggested, as an arena to positively promote the campaign to councillors. My notion proved correct, and the meeting backfired on the council directors. It was pleasing for me to see that the councillors indeed got to hear from the campaign first hand, and we managed to put our points across forcefully and clearly. To my worry however, it was the hostile tactics by the directors that had provided the opportunity, not amicable communication or healthy working relationships between the council and my campaign group.

With the uncertainty in council staffing (see section 6.4.3), officers would often come and go, in many regards it was the campaign that curated narratives for change: laying out alternatives to the car in adherence to council policy. This also meant that the campaign curated a memory of the council history. As the council officers would not do it, we saw it necessary to record and curate these histories. Telling our side of the story, we would pass it to interested or newly elected councillors. Initiating new councillors was important to the campaign, see section 6.7. Overall, I experienced the council lacking direction and as suffering from memory loss, amnesia and unaware of past histories, which

made the council difficult to understand, follow or befriend, in relation to the campaign's high aims demanding cycleways for Newcastle. My diary notes:

The council culture is myopic. It can't look forward and can't look backwards either. It's amazing how stuck the system is. (video diary, 2013, week 25)

Regular productive exchange would have improved the working relationship. We were faced with a council that found it difficult to work with civic society.

6.6.2 The council's cycle officer

At the same time as the campaign was formed in September 2010, the council had also advertised and then employed a new cycle officer. The post had been empty for three months following the departure of the previous cycle officer. To the campaign committee it seemed useful having a cycle officer as a point of contact. But as it turned out, much campaign energy was lost in the campaign's attempt to work with the officer. The video diary notes:

Council clearly did not want to do things. I know that now. (video diary, 2011, week 16)

To the disappointment of the campaign, the officer did little to understand our position, aims and strategies. The campaign offered many ways of getting involved: I tried to get the cycle officer interested in data acquisition, road surveys or policy analysis. I hope that these were neutral entry points that could lead to a successful working relationship. However, I was too optimistic, and I suspect, too technically inclined for the officer. This comment from the video diary shows my repeated frustration:

I am trying to work with [the cycle officer] again, but it's not going anywhere. It's tedious. (video diary, 2013, week 6)

In addition, much groundwork had already been carried out by the petition, also citing and listing previous reports and identifying initiatives. The subsequent campaign effort had further unearthed information: the analysis of the council organisation, its policies and transport data. These attempts paid little reward. The campaign continued to clash with the officer who seemed dispassionate about establishing exchange. This was frustrating, as the valuable groundwork

that the petition had laid were increasingly going to waste. The long-term effect, I had hoped the petition report could foster, was in jeopardy. Today, with the distance afforded by the video diary, I can summarise the common problems the campaign experienced into two categories: technical expertise and social expertise.

From the very beginning it proved difficult to work with a cycle officer who did not acknowledge the formation of the campaign at the council forum. She did not devote time to discussing the petition, its findings and implications with the campaign. On a social-interactional level, it seemed to me that Newcastle council did not have an established practice or working culture to engage community groups.

Talking to other Newcastle campaigners over the years would validate my worry. It was twice as hard for our campaign because we made demands for changes on a political level and we challenged council practice pertaining to transport. It also appeared that the cycle officer did not want to challenge practices inside the council, either on her own or together with external partners such as the campaign. By late 2012, I knew that establishing a productive communication channel with the cycle officer was increasingly unlikely.

To the campaign's dismay, the cycle officer routinely took executive decisions above her level of responsibility. These decisions did not reach the cycle forum for deliberation or were solely presented as *faits accomplis* to the forum. The forum chairs did seldomly challenge this. The officer also on occasion barred access to information. When the campaign had requested data, she would make little effort to understand the reason for the request, work with the campaign to obtain the data, or engage in discussions about the use of the data. We began to understand that the cycle officers saw the campaign as a nuisance. She wanted to minimise contact. The video diary expresses the frustration:

This is just about council window dressing. [The cycle officer] is just not letting anyone in. (video diary, 2014, week 10)

All this being said, I want to acknowledge a couple of things in favour of the cycle officer. As the quote from the diary correctly suggests, the rank of the

officer was low in the council hierarchy. Firstly, this meant that the technical expertise of planning and engineering matters was not present. Secondly, even if technical know-how and status would have been present, challenging the established practice of transport engineering and planning would have proved a hard task. These problems could only be solved on a more senior level. It needed leadership of a director, or it needed systemic challenging by a councillor. Both of which had not happened by 2011 to the extent that it resulted in change.

The campaign's major disappointment with the cycle officer was the officer's lack of understanding of community action and campaigning, how to engage with civic society. We could work in tandem, instead the cycle officer generally refused to recognise the campaign (as an organisation and its people) being part of a democratic process. However, in defence of the cycle officer, she was a part of a bureaucratic machinery with a distancing communication culture – she was socialised into the culture and bounded by it.

Acting on a recommendation from the petition report 2010, the then Liberal Democrat council had begun to tentatively draft a new cycle strategy in late 2010. However, to my dismay, the process the delegated council officers followed was not transparent. For instance, the cycle officer disregarded the procedural and technical comments I had made on behalf of the campaign. This was aggravated by it not being made clear how to comment and how comments would be taken into consideration. But something had been set in train: a cycle strategy was on its way, however rocky.

6.6.3 The cycle strategy and new Labour

The unproductive and frustrating state of the relations between council and campaign coincided with the 2011 local election taking place. The election result changed the political composition of the council. The Liberal Democrats lost their majority (they had held since 2004) to Labour. The campaign recognised this window of opportunity: new politicians presented a chance of beginning to work collaboratively. I was feeling hopeful. Could this mean a fresh start?

The task of producing a cycle strategy seemingly survived the administration change from Liberal Democrat to Labour in May 2011. A cycle champion was

appointed from the ranks of Labour councillors. Even the leader of the council took an interest, and many activities and meetings happened. Suddenly, communication was flowing much more freely between the campaign and the council. For example, the campaign organised a cycle ride through the city centre, city walks with politicians, informal meetings – and the councillors and some council directors willingly took part. I experienced a general eagerness by councillors to engage and understand the campaign’s experience and aims. It was a contrast to the political lethargy of the previous administration. Figure 6.3 depicts such a moment of hope that filled and fuelled the campaign in 2011: when the leader of the council engaged with campaign members, also with BBC media present (far right).

Figure 6.3. Newcastle’s hopeful new administration, credit Ted Thomas



Sadly, the dynamism of the Labour administration only lasted for a year, before continuity was broken once more: the cabinet member for transport left Newcastle, and the cycle champion resigned. Communication channels that had opened in 2011 began to close. By spring 2012 we were back to square one: the cycle forum was not effective and council reform through engaged councillors was once again only a distant prospect. Enthusiastic pedal-pushy politicians had left or were exhausted. The cycle strategy, although now

adopted (January 2012), had not brought about any change in officers' approach to transport planning or engineering or council communication systems. The seven radial cycleways, mandated in the strategy, were not progressed to the point of developing a plan. Not even a communication plan was developed despite the oft-feared opposition to cycle matters. For the construction of cycleways to be included in the council's bureaucratic processes and practices (let alone included on the city's roads), big and bold political steps were still needed to change.

The campaign made councillors aware of the shortfalls through inviting engagement with the campaign: requesting, attending and organising meetings and writing open letters to them. Action to challenge the old transport practices however was not visibly taken by councillors. In short, the window of opportunity to exchange and engage the council had been too short to bring lasting change by 2012.

6.6.4 *The transport forum*

Communication needed to improve, that much we could understand. And chance presented itself in 2015. In the estimation of the campaign, the establishment of a new communication channel, other than the cycle forum, had become necessary. Each cycle-forum attendance to the council meant that we were in agreement with council plans. This was ludicrous. The cycle forum was still not working effectively as a way to influence council policy and processes. So much so that the campaign took the step to stop attending the cycle forum in 2014. In our assessment, precious volunteer time was better exerted elsewhere. But here was a new opportunity.

Several months of my lobbying (on behalf of the campaign) finally led to the creation of a new communication channel. Together with the Public Transport User Group (a fellow local campaigning group) the campaign had asked the Labour cabinet to consider setting up a transport forum. We hoped the new forum could create an atmosphere for a broader and a deeper discussion – opening up the council to a deliberative dialectic dialogue. A wider discourse, linking cycling and transport, was long overdue. I even hoped that we could get on to discussing matters of fairness and justice at the new forum.

The campaign had suggested to the council that this forum's purpose, initially, should be to bring about sharing and bonding amongst council and civic society groups, as well as for the groups to get to know each other as people presenting their respective groups' demands. The new forum should consist of representatives of interest/community groups (rather than an open-door membership like the cycle forum) and should be chaired by a senior councillor to gain political traction and attention. It came as a surprise to the campaign when the Labour group agreed to set up a transport forum as suggested. Hopefully the new forum would now unlock the debate on sustainable transport and the future of travel in Newcastle.

The opening meeting of the transport forum was held in autumn 2015. This first meeting and subsequent meetings, though qualitatively better than the cycle forum, had not resulted in a bonding, sharing and learning atmosphere by 2017. To my dismay, the council rather used the transport forum as a dissemination channel, thereby diverting and suppressing the chance of cooperative working and deliberation to occur. The council allowed some limited input into agenda setting prior to meetings, but the agenda item 'definition of essential car use', that I suggested on behalf of the campaign, has not been debated by the forum as yet - despite its vital importance for a council focussed on improving car use (see next theme, section 6.7). The campaign project to improve communication and cooperation through the transport forum is on-going.

6.7 Theme 3: politics and democratic processes

6.7.1 Councillors and transport matters

My video diary was filled with recalling councillor communications. It was irksome. Going back through campaigning history was frustrating - it opened up painful memories that I had pushed aside since. But re-engaging with the history was important for this study. This meant I had to face my emotions about the council and work through these methodically. The construction of the video diary helped me with this unpleasant task. I also knew that it did not affect only me - a realisation that was helpful when engaging in the emotional effort.

Councillors, the democratically elected representatives, have frustrated Newcastle cycle campaigners (and ordinary residents) over the years. As

campaigners we often asked ourselves: What do councillors do? What do they want? How did councillors arrive at their conclusions and decisions? It felt personal too. Exactly what are a councillor's underlying worldviews, political beliefs and personal motivations? In the campaign committee we spent much time to understand and engage councillors.

Over the years I came to understand, that we were dealing with individuals holding discrete attitudes. Party membership was present and clear to see (Labour, Liberal Democrats) but the line of arguments on transport matters was not predictable by party affiliation. Transport, and cycling within that, was mostly a matter that would be referred to the technical department at the council. The video diary recalls:

The actual resolve to push [design changes] through on the political level wasn't there. (video diary, 2013, week 26)

Queries from civic society (residents or the campaign) were not critically viewed by the councillors or checked against city or party policies; they were simply deferred to the technical experts in the council. From what I could discern, councillors very rarely ever challenged the expert view.

Despite our trying, instigating a political debate about transport with councillors was nearly impossible. Sometimes a councillor showed initial interest. We had learnt that this was usually the case, when the councillor was freshly elected, keen and energetic. This interest would, almost without fail, quickly dwindle and disappear – or the councillor would leave the council. Speaking to many councillors over the years, I began to see that the subject of transport was too complex for them. The campaign hence tried to break down transport into bite-sized chunks by running certain initiatives: conferences, invites to campaign meetings. The campaign invited councillors to be speakers at rallies, city rides, technical training sessions in order to foster citizen engagement. We collected many stories of fellow citizens seeking a deeper conversation about transport, and transport cycling in particular. These citizens, so the campaign heard regularly, gave up, and developed an antipathy to the council. We passed these stories on to councillors for their scrutiny and comment, but these stories meant little to councillors judging by the lack of feedback we received. I often asked

myself, just where was the councillors' curiosity in conversing with the citizen and seeking redress on their behalf? What would grab the interest of a councillor? What could the campaign do to engage councillors in a productive dialogue?

Judging from the ready deferral to experts and disregard of transport policy, I learnt that a hierarchy of concerns appeared to be in place. I noticed an unwritten policy where certain citizens, usually business, retail or trade related concerns, would get heard preferentially (for example car parking places were installed because a shop owner requested it). In contrast, an ordinary citizen, a mere resident, who expressed concerns about cycling safety, cycling with children or drawing attention to a dangerous crossing were not heard. Even the campaign, though growing in membership and strength, was not heard. This baffled me. The campaign is a collective effort which bundled and voiced collective concerns.

Another logic was at play. Despite cycle-positive policies (Local Plan, cycle strategy), there were instances of councillors *opposing* walking and cycling improvements on grounds of protecting drivers. A typical reason expounded was that a scheme was untenable as it was perceived to make the parking or driving situation worse. I started to notice an overly generalised notion that councillors seemingly held: everyone drives and drivers needed protecting. This did not make sense to me in a city where 42% of households are without a motor vehicle (ONS 2014). A campaign member had done the calculation and presented them at a campaign meeting in 2012. The campaign had pointed this out to the council. For posterity, the campaign also made the finding public on the campaign website. There was some success. Only slowly, almost reluctantly, councillors began to use these statistics. It was particularly disappointing to me, as communication could have been so much more fruitful and productive if only a direct and open approach could be adopted by councillors.

Whenever we were made aware by others about their misgivings with the council's approach to transport, we were at hand informing the councillor(s) about alternatives, the dangers and imbalances of car-centric planning. For example, campaign committee members, I included, met with ward councillors

(Liberal Democrats) to discuss better working relationships. We resolved to share more information, but the councillors fell silent again afterwards. I began to have low expectations of councillors, whom I had also attempted to engage on a resident level for several years. I had lost confidence in my councillors and was now questioning due democratic process in general.

It was frustrating to work with councillors in many ways. Often, we would educate councillors about their own city's transport policies. First off, the situation was absurd. Secondly, the educational effort was rarely successful. For example, an important local spatial-economic planning document, the 1Plan, had been drawn up on a voluntary basis. It was tackling car-based issues for the city centre. But the 1Plan was not used by councillors. Councillors, in our experience, did not deeply engage with policy. One instance shocked me intensely. A senior councillor declared at a meeting "We don't do policy in Newcastle". This statement left me speechless at the meeting. However, the peculiar statement contained the very answer to why the campaign was left hanging when quoting policy. The politicians' answer to their own policy was to ignore it.

Instead, the councillors would refer people to the council engineer and planner. The practices in the engineering and planning departments were the dominant force. Occasionally technocratic reasons of tight project timescales or scarcity of monies were invoked as a reply to the campaign's concern about road safety, car-centric planning or dangerous car parking.

Councillors blindly accepted the technical discourse. To me this looked like a downward spiral: the councillors did not know (enough) about council policy and technical transport matters to challenge the engineers and planners. It was frustrating to witness this process. As a reaction to experiencing this regressive process, the campaign tried to educate councillors about shortcoming in transport departments. But the councillors only trusted the council experts.

Resulting from our experiences with councillors' lack of expertise and due process, it became a standing request by the campaign that councillors should be given training as a matter of routine and good practice of democratic process and transport matters. A couple of times (2012 and 2015) the council cooperated and provided training in cycle infrastructure design, administered by

external experts. However, I sadly noticed that these training sessions seemed to have little lasting effect on car-centric design and road safety considerations. Further, only officers not councillors attended the sessions which defeated the purpose in bridging the councillors-expert divide. In councillors' defence, many carry out their political duties in parallel to full-time employment, with minimal payment reward for councillor duties. This partly accounts for councillors' lack of interest. It also means, I would think, that democratic process is limited to attending the monthly full council meeting, in addition to referring transport matters to officers.

We tried active intervention by engaging councillors in various different ways. Taking councillors out for a bike ride or a walk-about to discuss urban design, would be useful as a one-off event, but again, on the whole did not result in long-term efforts opposing the automobile practices propounded by the engineering and planning departments. I give some local examples in "Call to action: towards a practice of inclusive road safety" (Leyendecker 2019). Transport was framed in a technocratic way rendering it inaccessible to the untrained layperson. The primacy of the transport departments was accepted by councillors.

Whenever councillors contacted us for advice, the campaign would keenly work with these councillors. That the campaign was actively contacted by a councillor happened on a handful of occasions (over seven years). The cyclist is stigmatised in the UK (Aldred 2013a; Horton 2007). The campaign however was not about cyclists, it was about transport cycling and urban space. The campaign was aware of this mismatch and understandably, councillors' motivation to get in touch could usually be traced back to personal experiences they had made as a cyclist. Either the councillor was already cycling (i.e. being a cyclist) or had witnessed a hostile event such as a cycle crash which made the councillors stop and think (i.e. vicariously becoming a cyclist). For these rare occasions when a councillor would take action and challenge the officers, they had either not been in their position sufficiently long to make a difference (lack of power) or would not have the patience or endurance that is needed to challenge technocratic automobility. To the disappointment of the campaign, councillors did not band together, for example, to form a partisan or cross-party alliance to unite in the challenge against council practice to openly demonstrate

their solidarity in sustainable transport to their colleagues. As campaigners we knew that solidarity provides strength to the individual. And over the years I heard the same story from many councillors lamenting the strength and impenetrability of the engineering and transport planning departments, yet councillors did not collectively challenge this shortcoming. For instance, a zebra crossing on a school street took over ten years to install. These occurrences did not result in a city-wide debate, it was not raised at full council or at a scrutiny level - councillors kept acting alone and saw these as their local matters.

We observed a policy blackhole in 2011, when Newcastle City Council implemented free car parking after 17:00 in the city centre (a city-centre retailer initiative called "Alive after 5" subsidised by the council, see also section 5.2.2). We knew from carrying out research that free parking attracts more traffic, something the city roads and neighbourhoods can ill afford (especially if the campaign's demand on cycleways were to be implemented). I had hoped this might be the last occasion such glaring discrepancy between policy and implementation would occur. But transport policy was disregarded again in 2016, when Newcastle City Council consulted on proposals to increase motoring capacity on roundabouts running through urban neighbourhoods. In disregard to its transport policy (mandating transitioning away from the car), councillors opted for the status quo: to widen roads for congestion relief at Blue House roundabout. I was shocked, that in 2016 Newcastle should still design for the car in such a blatant manner. A policy mandating a transport transition away from car use may just as well not have existed. When challenged, the campaign heard from councillors and officers: "it's what people want", "people would not like it otherwise", "people need to drive". When the campaign asked how the councillor arrived at their conclusions, silence was the answer.

This silence irked me, until I realised that following the status quo was the path of least resistance. Councillors did not know or did not sufficiently engage with city policies - policy had a low status in Newcastle politics. It appeared to me that councillors were not willing or able to challenge the technical transport culture at the council or what they perceived as current culture in society (everyone drives). In Newcastle we witnessed transport governance unconsciously maintaining the status quo of automobility and councillors uninterested to discuss the implementation of transport alternatives.

6.7.2 Cycle City Ambition Fund

Following the difficulties with the cycle officer, the council's technical departments and the two political administrations, it was not until 2013 that another opportunity for change presented itself: the Department for Transport (DfT) offered several million pounds to cities that could prove they were serious about implementing cycling infrastructure. The Cycle City Ambition Fund (CCAF) bid that Newcastle council produced with the assistance of Sustrans¹⁶ was a bid for urban renewal and change. I was hopeful, this was a lucky chance for cycling: a previous committee member of the campaign had started to work for Sustrans and managed to assert influence. Council engineers and planners had stated on (too) many occasions that to advance cycle infrastructure it needed money. Here the solution presented itself: a successful CCAF bid would provide that money. The Sustrans officer managed to convince decision makers that it was a logical step to apply for the DfT money and offered Sustrans help in the matter. The bid was subsequently produced by Sustrans for the council. I was impressed with the quality and ambition of the bid.

Newcastle's CCAF bid secured the DfT monies. The campaign was joyous and hoping for change to finally come to Newcastle. The campaign had already heard from sympathising insiders that the council was nervous about the success perhaps sensing the enormous effort that was needed to implement the promises of the bid. This was an early indication that, despite the money which was now available, resources, technical expertise and political conviction may not be in place in Newcastle. What could the campaign do to help the council spend the money productively? I greatly wanted this to be a mutual success for the council and the campaign. After three years of persistent campaigning, I felt tired and I finally wanted to see change happen.

Given the council's history, it should not have come as a surprise to me, that within a year the council's actions and plans were not in alignment with the CCAF programme. For instance, projects had not started that were supposed to have been completed by now. However, with the CCAF promise, I had my hopes up. The betrayal of trust, as I saw it, was strongly felt. This was very disappointing to the campaign indeed, as we had seen ourselves as a project

¹⁶ UK's active travel charity

partner to the council. We had hoped to manage the implementation programme together with the council. We stood ready to defend the cause of cycling and taking road space away from cars. We envisaged our work with council through sharing information in a transparent and open manner - a real partnership between the council and the campaign.

Committee members spent much of the volunteer time carefully commenting on technical items of design (through the TAG) and the progress of the programme (through the cycle forum and communications with individual officials). We tried to stay in contact with the council so we together could reconcile the programme and understand programming deviations whenever they occurred. Both founders of the campaign are professional programme managers and both of us had hoped to provide expertise. I felt, that we could be of use to the council. However, by mid-2014 we had to concede. It had become impossible for us to validate council action against the programme: the council had reworked the programme multiple times without keeping their partners informed. It was not clear which baseline the council worked from anymore. The campaign had become aware of projects that the council worked on, that did not appear on the programme or appeared in a different sequence. CCAF monies were spent elsewhere. A chance of a common effort between the project partners, binding different groups together in a common aim, I felt had been destroyed by the council letting go of the careful management of the programme.

On the back of a mis-managed CCAF programme, the campaign increasingly lost trust in the council to work in a reciprocating manner. I started having doubts that the council had the technical skills to manage a multi-million pound transformation programme. As a campaign committee, we also doubted the political sincerity to improve Newcastle's cycling infrastructure. As one officer said to me when I requested a programme update "what's the use, the programme will change anyways" as a justification for scrapping the entire works programme. To me, as a trained programme manager, this statement did not make any sense at all. I was furious at the inexperience that was demonstrated on such a grave matter: money for cycleways.

Just like policies, the CCAF programme eventually became irrelevant in council processes and the project board simply stopped reporting on progress. Visibility of the programme, and hence a chance of cooperative working, was lost completely by 2016.

At the time of writing (late 2018), the council still works through some CCAF programme schemes, recently starting implementation of a major West-end route. To me it seems that the CCAF programme has been absorbed by willing officers, and the TAG process of regular meetings with cycle campaigners is on-going, still meeting on a frequent basis. Some institutionalisation of the CCAF process has taken place. However, much still happens behind closed doors with civic groups getting little say on conceptual matters or the design process.

6.7.3 Local Plan and road widening: Blue House

Another year, 2015, had gone by with occasional cycle projects happening in Newcastle, some under the auspices of the CCAF 'programme'. By now it was typical that these projects would happen unexpectedly and lack in technical design quality i.e. not inspire new cyclists. By 2015 the council were also occupied with implementing schemes of their Local Plan 2010-2030 (20-year land-use policy including transport, see section 5.2). The policy document had attracted much local opposition during its consultation phases and inquiries; protests took place (Moss 2012). The council did not have a process in place to engage with civic society on that level, as I had also experienced on earlier occasions. The campaign had submitted critical responses to the council at the two public consultation stages in 2011 and 2012. As a campaign, we were keen to see details of cycle routes enshrined in the Local Plan. This wish was partially granted, when routes were hinted at in the Local Plan. Following a public inquiry, Newcastle's Local Plan was finally adopted in March 2015 after a series of public hearings and examination by the Secretary of State.

After adoption, the campaign attempted to keep in regular contact with the council to learn about the implementation programme and how we could assist in ensuring the council plans were of good quality for any cycling infrastructure components. The Local Plan was an ambivalent policy, promising much on many fronts. It meant that as the campaign committee we decided to only focus on the cycling elements of the policy which were reasonable. Counteracting an

anticipated lack of information from the council, the campaign also published a series of online articles alerting councillors to the sustainable transport challenge that lies ahead. The timetable for the Local Plan schemes were not made publicly available by the council, and hence easily evaded any scrutiny. To the campaign this looked in many ways like a repeat of the CCAF programme experience. Personally, I began to tire and detach from council affairs - my diary notes:

I kind of pull back and tried to look at the bigger picture and not getting bogged down. I mean, I always looked at the bigger picture – I do not quite understand what is going on here! But I pulled back from a day-to day quagmire of communicating with individuals at the council. I realised that the step change was not anywhere near. (video diary, 2015, week 50)

It was in autumn 2016 when the council unexpectedly published two schemes relating to the Local Plan (Blue House and Haddricks Mill). I was away in Bremen at the time but had a chance to look at the plans. I was devastated. The campaign committee was in shock. Emails started flying about between committee members. These plans outlined a dramatic road-widening scheme on a route through the Newcastle neighbourhoods lying north of the city centre, (called Northern Access Corridor in the Local Plan). Many mature trees were proposed to be felled as part of the plan to enlarge the Blue House roundabout, including substantial green space losses to the Town Moor (a public park). The Blue House would be swallowed up. I wrote to the transport councillor:

I hope we can learn from the total PR disaster that is Blue House scheme. It is very negative publicity for the council and a massive blow to civic trust. It's a huge worry. I don't know how we can now reclaim trust in the council after such a disproportionate design has been published for consultation. (personal email communications, 30 Jul 2016)

The motorway-style proportions of the plans shook the local citizenry. The tree loss, in particular, activated the environmental lobby and concerned locals. The campaign concluded that the council had not even tested scenarios compatible with transport policy (mode shift away from driving, reducing motor traffic); the plans were based on the outdated predict-and-provide approach focussing on private car commuter journeys. Widening this road before the construction of

the new housing areas, mandated by the Local Plan, would mean attracting new motor traffic not relating to the housing estates. I was shocked and alarmed by the proposals that came out. Again, I wrote to the transport councillor, relaying information and inquiring:

Do you know that overall traffic has fallen on the so-called "Northern Access Corridor"? Why not make it a green corridor and we can enact the Core Plan policies of mode shift and sustainable city and communities, addressing the threats of public health epidemic and Climate Change. (personal email communications, 10 Aug 2016)

It was unfortunate, I was away on fieldwork in Bremen and could devote little time to these unannounced disastrous plans. With regards to the council's Blue House plan, the committee pooled volunteer resources together to argue against the plans. The council's proposals ran against council's own transport policy and furthermore were technically counterproductive, the campaign asserted to the council. My diary shows my incredulity with the council:

What a bodge! The council was absolutely unaware of its implications that this Blue House roundabout scheme would have! To date, I am still so stunned, that no-one in the council had enough understanding to not do it like this. (video diary, 2016, week 34)

Again, and predictably, local protest resulted. Locals gathered on the Town Moor and vented their anger with the Labour-run council. Whilst the Liberal Democrats sought to capitalise on the local anger. I cannot believe that the Liberal Democrats did not know about this project. We raised early alarms with them in 2014/5, however the councillors did not engage.

As a result of the considerable demonstration of public sentiment, Newcastle council pulled back. The council now embarked on a new path. A path the campaign had not witnessed before: the council assembled a meeting which was to consist of representatives of local interest groups. The meeting was chaired by an independent expert advisor fluent in transport planning and engineering. Several meetings were held over the next year (2017) under the banner of exploring the options, called Blue House working group. The campaign attended the meetings. They were a mixture of council education for

society on transport engineering design and planning and, equally, society educating the council about residents' perspectives and interests. This, to me, is a rare occurrence of Newcastle City Council adjusting their style: group representatives invited only, a chair independent from council, a deliberation process employed (series of meetings). The Blue House working group reached a conclusion in early 2018, that was handed to the council for consideration. No announcement has been made by the council at the time of writing (December 2018).

6.8 Theme 4: talking about women and feminism

The video diary reliably returned to the subjects of gender - gendered voices and gender equality. It is a subject that is not overt, but rather rumbles on in the background as something that I wonder - and sometimes worry - about. In 2010 in my late 30s, if someone pushed me on the matter of women and equality, I would loosely have identified as a feminist, but I would not have felt that 'being a woman' was my defining characteristic. It was not an overt identity issue (despite the discrimination I felt I had experienced as a woman in engineering). This was similar to cycle campaigning. Much of the cycle campaigning came indirectly and viscerally. I would describe much of what we did and how we did it as automatic or intuitive.

There was a more pressing necessity and urgency, not the time for thinking about gender. Trained as a design engineer and project manager, I would know how to structure and organise: what needed doing, got done, reliably. But there were niggling thoughts too. Whenever I was surveying the scene (work or campaigning), I would be surrounded by men. The council, especially the planning and engineering officers: a male majority. Also, the senior politicians assigned to transport were predominantly men at the time of my activism with the Newcastle Cycling Campaign. Occasionally there was a woman present who would stand out from the crowd of men. I also observed the woman adopted-as-man. Often the case for women engineers, "one of the lads" - I knew it well from my own experience. Neither did fellow cycle campaigning groups, national and local ones, display sex parity on their organising teams or committees. But the Newcastle Cycling Campaign was distinctly different; we had assembled a sex-equal campaign committee – half women and half men.

The two founders were women remaining major forces for the campaign's direction and vision.

In other UK circles, too, it was common that the agenda setting for cycling was done by men, for example when planning a transport conference. Basic decisions had already been taken once women were invited to comment. The big things were already decided, resulting in women being co-opted (i.e. exploited as token women). Any conference programme in the transport field was typically filled to an overwhelming majority with men speakers, for instance, analysis in blogpost 19 April 2017¹⁷. Further, text books and standards would be compiled and decided by men, for example the German design standards RaSt (FGSV 2007). Retweets could be gendered too. In my observation, cycle-related twitter accounts would preferably retweet male twitter users, for example All-Party Parliamentary Cycle Group (APPCG).

The unequal-representation observations do not finish here. It is hard to describe how depersonalising it felt to be 'spoken for' or 'spoken about' at meetings or in group discussions. Yet this would be commonplace: men avowing interest in women-related matters, but disallowing time and space to women to speak on our own behalf. Decisions were taken quickly, preventing a wider discussion from occurring. Matters had already been decided, and typically related to the type and quality of cycling experience that a cyclist can expect: often asserting that cyclists are better off on the road. Or men would speak as experts about women cycling, with women banned to listening. In addition, meeting agendas were restrictive so that new ideas could not be awarded much room. I am not sure if these behaviours were deliberately exclusive. I suspect they were simply automatic i.e. dealing with a matter the usual way. It seemed that inclusivity and curiosity, interest in the other, were lacking. Where was our voice, the women's voice?

I wished things to be different. Why would men not let me speak, or, better still: listen to my views, ideas and findings first, then amplify them? I often heard these kinds of questions *after* campaigning meetings. Women felt silenced when there were vital contributions to be made by them. In Newcastle I

¹⁷ Link to post <https://katsdekker.wordpress.com/2017/04/19/numerical-discrimination-at-cycle-city/>

observed, women who desperately wanted to talk about the perils of the cycled school run. But this was difficult: airtime must be fought for with the council. Under current conditions, as I experienced, a fighting spirit must be learnt. Given the assertiveness that is needed, it came as no surprise to me, that this approach did not always feel natural to campaigners (women or men). The voices were not heard by councillors and council officers. At the time of writing, Tankerville Terrace in Newcastle, Jesmond, is still a treacherous road for people walking and cycling. The council, to date, has ignored the many safety concerns that have been raised over the years by school-run parents, walking and cycling on Tankerville Terrace.

When founding the campaign, I had to quickly acquire skills and learn how to lead a civic society group. This kind of leadership was a quite different skill to my dayjob. I was acquainted with leading a technical project or programme, designing and building a sewage treatment works or a flood bank. I now needed to think about the moral justification too. What was our group's demand? What makes these demands valid and urgent over other demands? What gives our demands the right and validity? The answers to the questions were not that obvious to me at the beginning. We had invaded a new territory. Again, using and drawing on personal experience had something to do with leadership and assertiveness, and I felt that this experience was gendered. It was exciting as well as terrifying. I was putting the system in question. On a practical level and as a woman, to resolve some of these concerns about confidence and legitimacy, I built in strategies to overcome the inherent tension between leadership and membership. I wanted to reduce tensions to improve efficiency and group coherence – to become more relational. To that effect, I was keen to employ meticulous transparency and openness so that campaign members were in no doubt what they were joining and reduce tensions.

Having organised the campaign's relatability, I experienced another tension: I wrestled with subjectivity and opinion. What makes the campaign's demands right, or better? In attempts to find answers to these moral questions, I wrote blogposts for other organisations, hence working with others to overcome tensions employing a dialogic process. I used words such as "testosterone-filled cycling conditions" and describing my experience, and the effects of socialisation and gender roles. Going through the process of making sense of

sex, gender and the politics around me was important. It allowed me to conceptualise our campaigning and define our campaigning style.

I also learnt to work with the media and local press. I had to feel my way, frequently thinking on the hoof and using my gut-feeling - as an engineer I had little formal training or experience in media matters. This was new uncharted territory. As it turned out it was exciting to get your voice heard. I felt that we as women often remained outside the established system of thinking. At the same time, it was exactly the exclusion from the established system that made it easier for us (as women) to see things more broadly: I had often experienced myself as an outsider (for example as a woman engineer) and had learnt ways to accommodate these tensions. But I also felt, the marginalisation made it more difficult for women's voices to be heard. As a woman I had experienced difficulties with acting in leadership roles in the current masculine-agentic system. I wanted things to be more relational.

Overall I have experienced women to be more relational than men. As chairwoman of the campaign, another intuitively-conceived strategy I employed in Newcastle was to rely on companionship and fostering of solidarity. We would be able to share, look after each other and debate about our experiences and meanings, the campaigning machinery and imagine future angles; something I deeply felt, the old/masculinist cycle campaigning scene was not delivering. In addition, I quickly had to learn that campaigning was a strenuous and arduous undertaking. Doing work as volunteers, unpaid, we did not have the time to meet and socialise as much as we would have liked or would have been optimal for our campaigning. On the whole though, our campaign had a strong central demand that channelled our frustrations and annoyances well: we did not hide them, we had developed a culture to put them out in the open for discussion. Furthermore, we had created an outlet for our woes and a force to be reckoned with at the council.

Solidarity, discussion and clarity were important to me and they were instilled in the campaign. If you want to change the world, it is coherence and unity that a strong group needs (Crisp 2015). Over the years, I wondered if these were feminine connotated traits. To me, in cycle campaigning women seemed to be more caring, communal and open to discuss matters and seek allies – when

men campaigners were fighting, seeking to be winners. All that organisational graft combined with the emotional sweat and tears, kept us glued together over the years resulting in functional campaigning and a coherent campaign committee.

6.9 Summary

With a fellow woman cyclist, I founded the Newcastle Cycling Campaign in 2010. Between 2010 and 2016 I chaired the campaign and was intimately involved in setting up its strategies. The campaign had the construction of cycleways at its heart which distinguished it from 'cyclist campaigners'. The campaign was political and sought to work with the council. The relationship to the council was fraught and resulted in many clashes with the campaign. Officers were often blocking campaign efforts. Councillors did not challenge the car-centric planning practices.

The analysis of the video diary collates my personal experience of campaigning in Newcastle, presented in this chapter. Combined with the results from the blog analysis (in the following Chapter 7), both personal explorations feed into the construction of an outline framework. Further, the interviews with women activists help construct the final framework, presented in Chapter 8.

7 ACTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

7.1 Introduction

I must admit, I am blogging about my thoughts and experiences on a weekly basis. It is one of the many things that keeps a spirit level on sanity. It has shown to be really therapeutic, mediating against the vagaries of the PhD journey. Blogging? I recommend it. 2015/12/03

The chapter in front of us is based on the analysis of my online blog. Data sources and analysis methods are described in more detail in the Chapter 4, outlining the methodology for this study. I wrote the blog between 2015-2017. On a timeline, it follows the period covered by the video diary i.e. the campaign history from 2010 to 2016 (which I describe in Chapter 6). The examination of blog data further develops a picture of the activist perspective, describing my own experience of campaigning for cycleways in Newcastle. In particular, this chapter expresses my conceptual thinking as an activist *before* I conducted the interviews with women activists (Chapter 8), and local decision makers (Chapter 9) in the UK, and in Germany.

The themes that emerge from the blog posts are listed in the sections below. The analysis phase permitted me to re-engage with my own thinking and motivations, some of which I had written more than three years ago. Seen together with the video diary (from Chapter 6), the analysis in this chapter culminates in the construction of an outline conceptual framework that illustrates my experience of advocating for cycleways. The framework will then be appraised against the conversations with women activists in the next chapter.

7.2 Theme 1: cultural transformation

7.2.1 *Banging on the council door*

Locally, in Newcastle, the campaign (I chaired) had identified the council as the opponent and recipient of cycle campaigning. As I described in my blog, it was hard to engage with the council: often decisions had already been taken. For example, I wrote:

Institutional decisions range from decreed (prescribed) or collaborated (co-scripted) in nature. The movie script has either already been written, or we are still in the process of co-writing the script of the everyday play of “What’s fair for folks in our future city?” 2016/08/07

Here, I am alluding to the institutional tendency to exclude people from decision making. That way, the council remained in the driving seat (so to speak). Campaigners were often gullible I felt. My experience of Newcastle was, that it had proved to be a difficult endeavour to communicate with the council in meaningful ways. I had several years of experience of what on the blog I described as: “trying to get answers to very simple questions, and trying to get a lever onto council to organise a step change in their organisational and technical culture to enable Newcastle to move into a better future” (2016/08/22). I had observed decision makers’ talk in Newcastle, but much less action, planning or implementation. I marvelled about the reasons for that inertia and concluded that it could be due to organisational structure and culture; I wrote:

[Speaking to a fellow woman activist] we chatted about how the authority’s absence of care is so astonishing. It’s clear to me the council in its current form can only talk ‘walking and cycling, active travel and getting out of your car’ but its structure and thinking renders it incapable to turn human scale and physically deliver on the promise on their highways. 2015/01/31

Council structure and scale were a problem, I expressed on the blog. Further, my observation was that the attitudes Newcastle City Council held of the public were often condescending. An attitude which I felt was not just short-sighted, but also missed tackling the long-term unsustainability of automobility. I expressed:

Currently authorities may reckon it is too much effort to communicate wider ideas, including explaining the pros and cons. [Newcastle City Council] do not take into account the time it takes to uphold the current system of automobility (the car-oriented transport system). It takes tremendous effort to defend and maintain its grossly indefensible position. 2016/07/15

Thus, by using a time-efficiency frame, I turned the tables: the upkeep of the current system is not sustainable. Campaigners were right to question the

institutionalisation of automobility. Especially as I observed that the practices of council officers kept progress under lock and key of automobility. For example, I wrote in the blog:

Once [council's transport practices are] embedded at the political and the administrative level, it has become a dominant socio-technical system, like automobility has. It becomes ever so much harder to change. 2016/04/15

Here I am expressing my frustration with institutionalisation of automobility as a practice: as automobility is enacted at the political-technical automatically, it has become invisible and dominant. Because it is invisible it is difficult for campaigners to shine the light on the technical practice of automobility.

I mused, where would the challenge to institutionalised automobility (of council transport departments) originate if not from campaigns and from the political? However, meaningful policy debate and dialogic exploration of political issues, I had observed, was almost entirely absent in Newcastle's council chamber. This absence was in contrast to the intentions expressed in council policies. The transport policies, I had assessed as a campaigner, had progressive elements in them, although often ambivalent in their expression (see section 5.2 for details on the policy assessment of Newcastle's Local Plan). Inspired by these progressive elements and seeing possibilities, I proposed on the blog that policy could be an engagement mechanism to foster debate amongst polity and civic society. Policies should not be wasted, to that effect I wrote:

[Newcastle council's transport policies are progressive and] when change is coming, it must be managed well, and civic time must be used productively and well. It's such a precious resource and authorities should be proud of it and therefore manage it wisely and with foresight. 2016/07/28

It was my view that councils should be welcoming campaigners with open arms. In my blog, I repeatedly expressed that productive interrelations between politics and civic society were key to progress and transition (and to keeping local democracy alive). The connector piece between politics and campaigners was policy, in my view. There should be a "joyous celebratory victory march of

policy” (2016/07/28). But this political relationship was absent, nascent at best, as I expressed in my blog:

Decision makers should help to legitimise policy-supporting (change-directive) viewpoints, seek out their policy partners and work with them. It means that, together, we can move policy and strategy into implementation. 2016/07/28

However, what happened instead of working together, I wrote:

Personally, I have often seen decision-making bodies to shun working with their obvious policy partners, often because the (transport) policies had not been broken down into bite-sized chunks. 2016/07/28

I sensed an awkwardness by politicians to express political viewpoints on transport. That, combined with an unwritten council policy of dampening wider public debate as I saw it, led to the council shooting own goals. Here I described a specific example of such a lack of productive debate:

*Leaving big questions [concerning policy and future plans] unanswered adds to the feeling of helplessness, anger and mistrust that has understandably been building amongst the public over the Blue House (Northern Access Corridor) plans. A rift is opening, and it can only be bridged by council **grounding the debate**. This can be achieved by council, the authority, clearly and honestly putting forward their intentions and motives, for everyone to understand. Does council recognise the crossroads and that their organisational culture has to change, to engage community groups in a meaningful civic debate? 2016/08/22*

A value system was missing, hindering vision formation and the ultimate “grounding” of debate. Council working effectively and empathetically with civic society, groups and concerned citizens was something I had not experienced in Newcastle in my active years as a campaigner. I noted that the mechanism of council using policy as an engagement mechanism to debate long-term issues (of value and vision) was vital to local democracy.

7.2.2 Civic subjects matter

Through my engagement with councillors I had noticed that councillors felt uncertain about transport matters. I dialogue was not possible because

councillors would defer to the technical department (which had institutionalised automobility). I experienced that councillors lacked the ability to reason about transport matters, which meant that it was difficult to understand the council:

We can more readily identify with ideas once we see the reasons behind them. 2016/07/15

Drawing on my negative experience with the council, I knew that to engage effectively, you had to respect your partners. It depends on knowing and understanding a partner and growing with the partner. Yet I felt ignored. To that effect I wrote:

For decision makers to understand how people feel about a city, how people contextualise and interact with their policy, political and administrative environments is vital for the planning of expeditious urban change and making engagement and communication inclusive and equitable. 2016/07/15

We all, civic groups and citizens, formed a part of Newcastle's polity - I felt that deeply. Yet we were not treated as if we mattered and my blog brings out many instances to that effect. I introduced the idea that there was responsibility on the council to understand the Newcastle citizenry and understand psycho-social concepts. Why do people get involved? What gets people involved in civic matters?

One thing was clear to me, once we would understand each other, city council and citizens, we could act with increasing humility towards each other. I wrote on the blog:

The important thing seems to be awareness of being human and that we err. These intense human errors [cognitive biases] warrant a much deeper and humanly discussion to resolve differences in angle, position, scale, standpoint and suitability. 2015/07/11

Understanding human nature (psycho-social aspects) was necessary for developing respect and understanding. In reality I saw council acting aloof and distant, residing far away and high up in a kind of ivory tower of technocracy and automobility practices. Moreover, the council's communicational style often

stifled the formation of civic interaction, even resulting in civic disengagement, I penned:

An authority may hide their iron fist in a fluffy glove of (pseudo) engagement and consultation (as so often the case), people will ultimately feel the bogus and reduce their trust in that authority. 2016/07/15

Trust was at stake, I posited. Losing trust, means losing support. The council would have to start taking campaigners seriously and understand the services campaigners can offer to a city. And it came back to policy, in my estimation. The oversight and responsibility of the council stretched, I argued, to concretely outline visions and plans. This would give citizens the chance to develop a connection and identification with Newcastle's future. I suggested that trust could be developed that way. I explained:

There is a wider vision and idea that people have to understand and internalise first to understand the overall context, the benefits and see the necessity of change and strategies for change. I strongly believe people like to be and feel part of something. We are constantly seeking to belong, finding identity and locating meaning. 2016/07/15

With a special focus on transport, I noted the absence of this debate in Newcastle:

I'd like us to talk shop about 'shifting the modes', get really down to the awkward nittygritties of the transport transition and – perhaps above all – take a longer view through a wider lens. 2015/04/03

In my view, taking a longer and wider lens, would aid the development of vision. We as civic society, deserved, I posited, a clear and concrete future outlook, honesty and transparency. In my blog, I identified specific subject areas and suggested an active travel frame:

If decision-making levels of society could more freely, openly and sincerely talk about concepts of environment as dis/enabling, safety as ex/inclusive, climate change and limits to growth as reasons, we'd be a heck of a lot further along. This could enable civic society and social change. 2016/08/22

Here, I was alluding to the usefulness of a concept embracing the built environment for socio-spatial decision making, making road safety inclusive and working with the limits of growth. All three areas (car-free environments, inclusive road safety and limits to growth) remained taboo subjects to decision makers and hence indirectly to citizenry too.

In Newcastle as I experienced, policies did not matter to decision makers, communication channels were ineffective, the dimensions of time and space were framed for the upkeep of technocratic automobility (and all its related contradictions and costs to society). My concept of civic society was, however, that we were partners and deserved better treatment. Council would have to learn to engage with the public by using vision and learning to challenge taboos (in partnership with campaigners).

7.2.3 Effective ex/change

The lack of vision made it harder for the council to engage civic society. I wrote about the lack of vision and its effect:

This [lack of systemic action by the council] makes it messy. In fact, it deeply disables decision makers and also undermines their authority and trust-worthiness too. 2016/07/28

For me, council's lack of vision was an act of self-harm, weakening councillors' leadership position and relationship to the city's residents. The council had to provide some certainties (through policies for instance), rather than tentatively feel their way forward. The councillors would have to confront officers, I wrote in the blog:

For sustainable transport to succeed, a two-way process must be in place. It needs an open and honest exchange between politicians and (engineering and planning) officers as to what's wanted and needed – constraints and enablers. 2015/05/02

That meant that obvious contradictions needed to be confronted, for example road safety. To me it seemed that there was an internal struggle the council had to address: updating practices to open up a sustainable future for transport. Whereas outside the council chambers and offices, I knew from my own experience, civic society was waiting, some poised for action. I wrote:

When you engage people in talks about the qualities a good city should hold, I observe a great deal of consensus in the answers I am given. We need an integrated transport system with a much better transport mix of options. For mode shift away from the car we need space for cycling – largely speaking it is the missing ingredient. 2016/05/26

In my estimation it was about space, and space needed airing and bringing out for debate. Talking about the management of space as a societal resource, would lead to positive collective actions by civic society and decision makers. Once council would have addressed their current contradictions and taboos (car-free spaces, road safety and limits to growth, see section 7.2.3 above), it would lead to partnerships and formation of trust.

For that to happen and for the council to relate to the citizenry, I suggested that a new conduct code would have to be written that espoused civic society as a value (also section 7.2.3). Coming back to a value frame, council needed to ask the right questions and be confident about knowing what is right. I proposed concentrating on invoking pro-social tendencies as a first step on this journey of transformation:

Bringing to the fore an altruistic, less self-centred view, depends on building trust in ideas, ideals and their identities and meanings. 2016/07/15

On the blog, I proposed that when plans and projects were proposed, “spatial closeness” (i.e. I live there, this is my street or neighbourhood) mattered substantially for making sense of public opinion, as people are proud and territorial. These local desires when expressed are often labelled NIMBY by council as the expressed desires run counter to council’s plans and are hence a nuisance to the council. For example, I wrote:

Spatial closeness [in a city or neighbourhood] can result in feelings of identity, pride and belonging. It becomes more personal. This can be used to good effect, or bad effect.

In my estimation, the expression of local desires was a sensitive subject, and cautious consideration was necessary to manage this inclusively. Being

sensitive about people's territory was as important as being careful with people's expressions of wishes and desires.

I also had experienced that personal time was precious too. For me this was simply a matter of courtesy and a sign of trust that council valued the contribution that civic society groups can make, so I wrote these pleading words:

I'd like to mention trust and the scarce resource of civic time. Volunteers are often at the vanguard of change. It is volunteer campaigners and unpaid advocates who make the time to state alternative views and paint visions of a different and better future. I have seen these status-quo challengers in action – it's beautiful. Some are radical, some more moderate. There are people out there, not afraid to state a case for common good and ask for change. 2016/07/28

Council, I posited on the blog, needed to learn to work with volunteers. In order to achieve that, communication needed to decelerate. Essentially conversation should be taken off the automatic tracks of automobility practices. My experience with the ineffective cycle forum in Newcastle (see particular sections 6.3 and 6.4) helped me form this view. I wrote:

[T]o have a sensible debate – we should aim to slow debates down, create longer conversations and spaces where this is possible, to create positive atmospheres of sharing and collaborative exchange for problem solving and learning. Institutions and their own discourses, practices and approaches have a role to play to make that a reality. 2016/08/16

I ultimately saw the development of civil communication as the responsibility of the council. The powerful had to let go of some of their power and authority. I felt certain that this would unlock civic society and local democracy, and decelerate and defuse an institutional kind of automobility.

7.3 Theme 2: telling the story

7.3.1 Watch your words

The blog talks about the importance of language. I felt that it was a matter of courtesy, to choose your communication style with care. I was interested in language and understanding “the codes and sensitivities – because, really, I

want to tell [my] story with integrity” ([2015/02/21](#)). I felt that words carry and convey concepts and connotations and as such can grow your own understanding of a situation.

Likewise, I discovered that your use of words has effects on others too. Having a common code to draw from can strengthen a group. Hence, for example, I was dismayed when Sustrans¹⁸ used a divergent vocabulary in their report on cycling in UK cities (commissioned by the respective local authorities). Here I explain the nature of my disappointment in more detail:

In the UK, we do not even have a common way to describe cycling infrastructure. To move on, we must talk language, I think. This [Sustrans project] was an opportunity to harmonise [infrastructure terminology] and inform and educate transport authorities. It would make talking in the future easier, simpler and more cooperative. [2015/10/22](#)

It became increasingly clear to me, that as much as language can unite, it can divide. Just like space can invite and repel, so can language. I was fascinated by language change over time. Language is a living organism, as is society and traditions. With an excessive sense of inevitability, I expressed:

Today, a couple of newspaper articles from 1953 got me thinking again. Society and its language, ‘manners’, identities, practices are endlessly on the move. No standstill, no rest. [2015/12/25](#)

Take the word cyclist. When I compared the words “cyclists” and “Radfahrende” (German for cyclist) I knew that the English word is much more strongly loaded than the German equivalent. There was a negative connotation in the English word. As a consequence I had become more careful with using the word cyclist. I described a typical situation here:

As a matter of regularity I have tried to put it to the local press that [newcycling.org](#) [i.e. Newcastle Cycling Campaign] are a community group speaking for the future of cycling in our city Newcastle, outlining better urban design (ie not cyclists, rather urbanists), but we still get the ‘cyclists say’ written in the headline. There are press pressures. [2016/08/16](#)

¹⁸ UK’s active travel charity

Controversy and sensation sell, and whipping it up on cyclists was a thing for the media:

As a BBC radio reporter once said to me, if we want a lively show? With the word cyclist, the call-ins are certain to become hotwires. 'Cyclists' are a point of interest, it seems. 2016/08/16

That matters of language, individual words, linguistic effects and meanings interested and fascinated me endlessly, may stem from being bilingual. German is my first language (moving to the UK in 1996, when 23 years old, I am 45 at the time of writing this text). However, I experienced language as a fascinating and complex medium that creates discrimination as well as solidarity.

Sometimes we were also left empty of words. Whole streetscapes were left unquestioned. I was fascinated by the permanency that the human mind affords to cities, their roads and streets. I experienced that it all started with very tiny details, but ending with discriminatory streetscapes:

The sign that extolls to the passer-by "parking could cost a child's life" (and just how is that sign solving that problem?), or the road marking 'attention school kids' half-covered by parked cars (so what's really important here?), [...] or simply the space affordance, continuity and comfort given to driving, subordinating walking or cycling 2015/06/12.

In the blog I wanted to talk about the effect of our speechless detachment from urban spaces, because "we still get messages from [urban spaces] – whether we like it or not" (2015/05/22). And so I rebranded city spaces and streets as "billboards" (for example 2015/03/27) and busy roads as "walls" (2015/05/22). I wrote:

Space, and its absence, tells us things; and these things and messages will affect our onwards (inter)actions. 2015/05/22

But, I added, that sadly:

UK streetscapes are not [...] selling the cycling alternative" (2015/03/27) [because the] product that's sold, subliminally, is driving. With these [road] signs and symbols the car wins, hands down. (2015/06/12)

For me the concept of “selling” became an aspect of viewing streetscapes from a new angle and rethinking my perception of space. I compared roads to supermarkets aisles where “layouts are designed to lead and appeal to the human mind and make you do things” (2015/06/12). Further in that vein, I suggested that we could borrow techniques from marketing studies:

Eye levels, short and long gazes. What is it that the consumer wants and what is it that the buyer sees? How [are streetscapes] selling walking or cycling (the product) to the general public? Look at it from the marketing point of view. What's the ambience? 2015/06/12

Or, I proposed, we could conceptualise roads as workplaces:

As a Chartered Engineer it strikes me hard: the leniency we take to assessing risks when it comes to our roads. If our roads were classified as a 'workplace' however all sorts of health and safety rules would kick in. Using the principles of health and safety – and good project management more generally – would include effective crash investigations when things go wrong. This can help future learning and could aid prevention. 2016/09/16

We should shift word concepts to construct new visions, I ventured on the blog. We could utilise the importance of disruption in forming new meanings, vistas and views. Some form of disruption is necessary to upset the established old and bring about something new. Trying out new things to experience your city differently would help in that regard. On the blog I wrote:

A friend registered me to go on an Edible City Centre walk this week. And even to me (someone whose eyes are relatively open to the urban environment, its constrictions and possibilities) was amazed at the spaces and places we visited. Our caged perception gives us a closed and fixed perspective. Until our thinking is freed and then our imaginations, creativity and visions are opened, unbridled and almost profound. 2015/05/22

Continuing along the lines of disruptions, different views and angles, I also imagined the child's perspective:

It seems to me, that UK road safety is as insanely exclusive to walking and cycling now, as it was then in 1992 [referring to Hillman et al's One False Move]. We need to learn to see the

road through our kids' eyes and design them through their eyes.
2015/05/15

Seeing through an other's eyes, walking in someone else's shoes needs empathy. A moment of empathy for the older, less fit and strong had presented itself, when cycling covering from illness (after contracting chicken pox). When cycling, I felt the street stress even more deeply than usual, I wrote:

With my tired head and legs, it was so much harder than usual to hold my space, assert myself and ride confidently. The failure of a system that relies on conflict between cyclists' battle tactics and drivers' interpretation of these as aggression was only too plain to see. Imagine you are someone who is cycling with kids and there are additional responsibilities. How must the older generation feel? Or parents when faced with the decision to let their kids cycle? How fit mobility aids into this equation? The road system we have built in our cities is not inclusive, kind or benign – it's exclusive and cruelly unsympathetic to the needs of the majority. 2015/05/29

I had experienced in Newcastle, that the design of our streets was not user friendly or intuitive for cycling. Indeed streets were a product, that was difficult to sell in the current condition. The current marketing approach to cycling however leaves the heart of the problem untouched, I expressed:

Initiatives that are solely based on "cycling is so much fun" (not linked to building a cycle network which has been mapped carefully etc) totally, tragically and sadly miss the point and can even do damage. 2016/04/09

I felt that the net must be cast wider because for marketing to be effective it "must address people's concerns [or it] creates a disconnect and ultimately people stop listening" (2016/04/09). I condemned the current approach and wrote: "That is not marketing – that is plain self-defeating auto-destruction" (2016/04/09).

I expressed that democratising cycling was as much about trying out different word concepts and meanings, as it was about learning and trying out new talking skills. For example, drawing on my media experience, I suggested taking a deep breath before answering a seemingly simple question:

Sometimes the long answer is the better answer. Insist on it. It's a skill to learn, I believe, to give long answers. It's the long answers that change the context, re-evaluate the original subject and ultimately challenge the current paradigm. 2016/07/23

In my blog I expressed the opinion that language and word use can be a powerful agent for change. We, academics and activists, should be careful with the language we use and how we frame our subject. Cycle campaigners should not be afraid of disrupting current frames and imagining new beginning.

7.3.2 Addressing automobility

I felt that there are inevitabilities which require urgent action. There were big matters to address, as I reiterated here:

With the bigger picture of oil running thin and worldwide overpopulation, change is coming whether we like it or not. We could take action. For future change to happen, providing a new or radical standpoint enables and empowers people to think new thoughts, and understand the issues. It also moves debates onwards and shifts public opinion. 2016/07/28

Spatial automobility was a taboo subject that awaited airing. I expressed my view in the blog: "We will not be able to rethink cities and thread cycleways through our road networks if we do not tackle the big issue: cars and the space they claim" (2016/02/05). I urged, that campaigning must address automobility as, to my mind, it obscured progress. I noted on my blog:

***Automobility** also is a culturally grown system which has pervaded the whole of society on almost all of its levels. Hence the constant problem with viewpoints: a lot that is done and said is done and said through the goggles of automobility. It should be our [activists'] focus to remove those goggles and shine some light onto society's retina. 2016/10/16/*

Going beyond the social manifestation of automobility (i.e. car use and car dependency), I looked at other forms of automobility. I noticed that the technical practice of road management and design came up frequently in the blog. I wrote frequently about the deep roots of automobility practice, designing for the car, and how it hindered the implementation of sustainable transport. In the blog I suggested remedies when I wrote:

If you could start to think about comfort and convenience for cycled journeys we would afford a similar rigour to the one we currently give to driving, through technical practices like ‘smooth flow’ modelling and junction capacity assessments. We would design for optimum speeds and minimum waiting times, reduce number of stops and we would smoothen the speed envelope. [...] Designing for an overall journey experience by using parameters and data and take a much fuller account of the cycling experience along the route is a long way off still.
2016/03/24

Using my experience as an engineer I could relate to established practices: how following a scripted pathway becomes second nature. I could understand that when a practice became embedded, like automobility has, it relied on tacit knowledge. The automation of the practice would decouple it from values. I wrote about the necessary reformation of urban road design using new starting points:

*The current city engineering and planning will have to adapt and apportion space according to the desired **future mode share**. A road diet is necessary, and long overdue in the UK. A new look at planning and engineering the transport networks is a must.*
2015/07/03

My experience had convinced me that a reformation of the planning and urban design practices was necessary. It is not just engineering and planning, I suggested, it affects society too. This thought had come to me particularly when reading Knoflach's work, I wrote:

[Knoflach] tackles our myths and fallacies head-on, through stating the scientific evidence and talking about the emotional system backlash. [...] Are you feeling uncomfortable when reading Knoflach's [anti-car] comments? It could well be the feeling of taboos acting on you. 2016/02/05

I often felt surrounded and choked by automobility. Once I started looking, it was manifest all around me. Due to automobility manifesting as a society-wide phenomenon, I explored society's interaction with it too. I found Malene Freudendal-Pedersen's concept of structural stories helpful in that regard (Freudendal-Pedersen 2007). I explain the concept in the blog:

Traditions provide behavioural rules, short cuts. These are simplifications that make social interaction possible. Modernity and modern society have lost many traditions; and as a replacement we have created structural stories. These are stepping in to regulate and direct modern life, keep peace and harmony (and as it turns out, sometimes at a cost or price too). One such structural story is that “a car is freedom”, and many more stories are stemming from that. 2016/05/20

I began to embrace that being human meant being imperfect. Being human means to err, as all human reasoning was subject to biases and heuristic shortcuts. There was a blessing in that too, I thought. It could mean a new starting point for more honest approaches to change. On the blog I expressed:

These intense human errors warrant a much deeper and humanly discussion to resolve differences in angle, position, scale, standpoint and suitability. One would be to establish a more interactive and sympathetic process with the public – listening to why people do and say things. 2015/07/11

I had often heard that people feared change. I believed, that even in the fear of change lay possibility. We needed to acknowledge fear and unravel it. In the blog I suggested that history could provide perspective and be a building block for change, and wrote:

[W]e live in a changing world. It seems that it is good to look back – it can bring out and perhaps even conquer our humanly fear of change. And then we can look forward (in)to the future – yes, in more sense than one – enjoy it and dream up good things about it. 2015/12/25

Automobility I conceived as a societal and an institutional phenomenon. The blog acknowledged the current situation, which often looked hopeless to cycle activists. However, I tried to go beyond that and use the current situation as a starting point to convert it into positivity and opportunity. I was convinced that from current practices and viewpoints, change could result. During the writing of the blog I learnt about sociological theories and social psychology. I began to understand that the challenges were ingrained and immense, but not insurmountable.

7.3.3 Broadening views

To broaden others' views and effect change we needed to start with ourselves. We needed to broaden our own views. In the blog I often described my own situation and angle, including biographical reflections. I wrote:

Cycling is so normal where I grew up [in North Germany] that I did not give it a second thought. In hindsight, yes it probably provided independence from parents to get from A to B on my own terms, and yes, cycling is practical and quite a nice and energetic thing to do which makes you generally feel good about yourself. But hindsight is easy. At the time, cycling was so normalised through the available infrastructure, that I did not have to give any further thought to it. 2016/07/23

In my blog I observed that the UK cyclist was filled with concerns about safety and comfort, and laden with social stigma and transgressing norms. Once I had tapped into this constituent, the landscape was humming with stories about urban cycling experiences – offering broader views that non-cyclists could understand. For example, I briefly sketched these stories in a letter to the cycling minister:

The husband who does not want his wife to cycle for fear of her immediate health and wellbeing. The woman who is anxious every time her boy-friend is out on the bike. The cycling parents who forbid their kids to cycle out of worry about the busy road at the end of their street. And I understand their decisions borne out of immediate and personal worry. 2016/05/26

A broader view meant thinking beyond the current cyclist. After all, notwithstanding my own regular experience of Newcastle roads, the harassment and danger a cyclist experienced was concrete and material. My account of cycling in Newcastle was “despite of” not “because”:

I cycle [in Newcastle], but to be clear: my cycling happens rather despite not because of its attractiveness to get from A to B, or the comfort I am afforded. I have been shouted at, driven at, objects have been thrown at me. 2016/05/26

Despite their marginalisation as cyclists, campaigners needed to be honest and inclusive if they wanted to stand a chance broadening someone else's view. Taking an all-round look, the non-cyclist was under my microscope too because

campaigners dealt with public opinion and how to change it on a regular basis. I wrote: “Perhaps we ought to get under the human skin, to see what everyone sees, hears and feels” (2015/06/12).

I felt that it was paramount to shift paradigmatic power positions in politics and in the media through taking wider angles. I experienced the media as a constant source of irritation as it consisted of incomplete, rushed and shortened views. For example, after listening to a radio show I was shocked about the everyday normality of automobility permeating our views and allowing ready relegation of cyclists:

Listening to BBC Radio 5 Live gave me a strong jolt and another painful reminder just how automatic, deep, engrained and normal this anti-cyclistism and transport-mode discrimination is.
2015/10/31

To bridge this gap, I attempted to weave a broader tapestry of the common cyclist and the non-cycling commoner in my blog. To take a broader view, I thought that we as cycle campaigners had to emancipate ourselves.

A blueprint to conceptualise a fuller society was needed – a broader look that would also be of use to the transport decision makers. For example, I sought to reconfigure policy makers’ view by considering the statistical problem of small cohorts. Despite all the focus on getting women cycling, men in Newcastle didn’t cycle either, I wrote:

In a conurbation like NewcastleGateshead [where 1% of trips are cycled], over and above the 61,250 women, there are also 58,750 men who are not yet convinced the conditions are right for cycling. The interested-but-concerned [Geller/Diller typology] come from both genders when the totals are considered.
2015/09/18

Through my campaigning I had observed that transport planners focussed obsessively on the rush-hour commute (which in statistical terms is a male domain). This meant that non-commuters were left stranded, as I described in the blog:

Disregarding over 80% of all trips [i.e. the non-commuter trips] does not seem a sensible way forward [for transport engineering and planning]. Yet, the transport systems and practices, still, are

obsessed with the commute, even after various pushes for change have been made by the research community over many years. 2016/07/08

Looking at the numbers in a different way, provided a broader view on the matter. In summary, my perception was that for sustainable travel to gain a foothold, the governance apparatus must broaden its view and construct a more inclusive concept of transport. For campaigners this would entail challenging the technocratic paradigms of transport practices. But to me it also meant that campaigners must emancipate their own views towards a broader more inclusive view on cycling matters.

7.4 Theme 3: fractured campaigning landscape

7.4.1 Internal campaigning politics

I felt torn on the cycle campaigning community. On the one hand I describe cycle campaigning as “a positive outlet, and a good community and I have met the most excellent people through activism too” (2016/07/23). On the other hand, I also experienced a much darker side to our campaigning over the years. Cycle campaigning had its own tribulations.

Looking at the inside of cycle campaigning, I thought of our activism as a multi-layered activity. On the blog, I expressed that numerous activities were open to an activist to select. But, I asserted, some activities had a higher priority than others. In activism, bringing collective grievances to power holders’ attention was a vital activity. I wrote:

Individuals [...] can form or join interest groups highlighting inadequacies, raising profiles, putting and bumping things up on public and political agendas. Showing off public support. Lobbying, informing and activating decision-makers is certainly one thing that campaigners must do. 2016/04/15

Lobbying was vital. Speaking truth to power took coordination. I knew from my own experience that people did not simply wake up one morning as an activist. It took a person to progress up “stages of activation” before finding their place in the local campaigning scene (if not exiting before). The stages started with

becoming aware of a problem, taking personal action before joining up with others to address an injustice.

In my blog I would specifically make the distinction between two activist types: community organisers who grow and nurture the campaign from within, and political activists who work outwardly on the aspects of political change. In the blog I expressed:

We can find ourselves on various activation stages towards becoming city-for-all campaigners. And in the lumpy campaigning landscape there are always different roles each one of us can play in the campaigning orchestra too – the great potential for coordinated collaboration between political activists and community organisers was palpable at [the Women and Cycling conference in 2016]. 2016/07/23

The local situation in Newcastle was unstable I felt. I put this down to previous Tyneside campaigns losing focus and becoming sole community organisers without taking political aim. Whereas the Newcastle Cycling Campaign (I chaired) prioritised political results. To that effect I wrote:

*On Tyneside, we have seen whole campaigns and swathes of campaigners come and go. A campaign is of course a concerted effort by a number of individuals. It only functions well (has influence and impact) if the campaign message is clear, easy and simple and its running is well-organised and resolute. This includes the many times we had to say **No** as some things did not fit our focus (example: getting involved in road safety initiatives). On other occasions, folks come to us with a great (but perhaps not essential) campaigning idea, we would reply: “Great! Why don’t **you** do it, with our help?” 2015/12/10*

There was a balance to be struck because activism needs community organisers too: looking after volunteers, coordinating action (in agreement with the political wing of the campaign). I strongly felt that growing and stabilising a cycle campaign would hinge on “harnessing and corralling cycling’s diversity [...] In a way you have to keep your eyes on the horizon, to see the sunrise” (2015/01/17). Not just through my involvement in Tyneside and Newcastle, I had observed that cycle campaigning kept running in circles all over the UK. The UK scene was uncoordinated and without vision. This was most noticeably

the case in comparison to the US. The US cycle campaigning scene was addressing political issues, I wrote:

I am inspired by what the US advocacy does. It gets on with it (Bike League for example) – searching out data and turning it into narratives, and finding partners and finding uncompromised ways of working together. I try to compare this to the UK and I cannot yet see the coherence or clarity that our US cousins so confidently and proudly exude. We should seek to enlighten our debate – shining lights upwards, sideways and outwards.
2015/10/03

We should look for campaigning partners. I strongly felt that the endeavour was not just about cycling. For me it was paramount to work within civic society on the whole (i.e. finding allies and campaigning partners to grow the campaign effort). For instance, one such cooperation could be to ally with transport professionals. Together we could campaign for best-practice design standards, I wrote:

Isn't it time we got together and got talking on infrastructure categorisation, professionals and advocates alike? Maybe the Dutch may have done a thing on that. Or, staying in the UK, and in the absence of a useful DfT standard, the London Cycle Design Standards may help. Naturally, CEoGB know a thing or two on cycling infrastructure. 2015/10/22

This previous statement made it clear. The disparate activity that took place on the national level was palpable to me; it hurt campaigning. There was a number of groups, but cooperation was making for slim pickings. On the blog I lamented that focus, language and purpose were often not aligned. I wrote in a blogpost:

Recognising that a single message is necessary for wider unity and a collective cooperative effort is what we are currently lacking in England. There are great examples of pockets of local activism, and a nationally combining and combined effort is now much overdue. The “cycling community” has not managed to burst out of their own bubble and still often sits in an echo chamber “talking to themselves”. Narratives, stories and pictures are as yet missing. Cooperation and coordination to create coherence is needed. 2016/02/26

Cycle campaigners were talking to themselves not taking into account wider societal processes (thereby echoing politicians, section 7.3.3). This isolationist

existence often made cycle campaigning counterproductive and self-defeating, even before leaving the starting blocks.

On a regular basis I expressed my annoyance about cycle campaigning's lack of focus. For example, there was a perennial misconception of campaigning types (inside communal, external agentic), I wrote:

*I have noticed amongst campaigners that we often get confused with who we are addressing with our campaigning. Strong campaigns stay strong when they have a **strong message of common good** which is squarely **aimed at the people who can practically do something about it.** 2016/04/15*

Again, we needed political campaigners addressing political subjects. With so much in cycle campaigning that needed reforming, in my blog I attempted to formulate a way forward. I had some experience with Newcastle and I asked myself, what would a focussed campaigning message look like? Our message of solidarity, I proposed, cannot come from the realms of cycling (or worse still, cyclists) but it must go wider. I drafted such a statement on my blog:

Please join us in the campaign for better cities with cycleways and good walking conditions (which necessitates DfT ministers to ensure a regular budget is set aside and design standards are drawn up). (*) better = cleaner healthier economically-vibrant socially-inclusive active-transport modern (etc) 2016/04/09*

I thankfully noted, that by 2016 there had been a conspicuous shift in cycle campaigning in the UK, especially compared to the early 2010s when I began my campaigning. National campaigning by the *Cycling Embassy of Great Britain* and the *London Cycling Campaign* had increasingly been successful in bringing the relevance of urban design to the fore. I wrote:

Cycle campaigning and especially with its more recent (and long overdue and very welcome) focus on the environment and urban design, positions itself clearly against automobility together with its inherent professional and political practices. 2016/10/16/

Cycle-specific infrastructure, protected cycleways, started to be on the cycle campaign agenda, and the message was taken up by the political system too.

In a debate about urban design and its purpose I saw the spatial battle gain broad support. On the blog, I expressed:

If your campaign aim is one of common good, as building cycleways is, you are on the right track. [...] The message [...] will win over people, silently supportive or newly informed.
2016/04/15

Any opportunity for cycle campaigning to leave the “bike bubble” (2017/01/08) behind was worth taking. Campaigning had begun to change to prioritise urban design, opening up political debates about budgets and cycling’s worth to society.

7.4.2 Other campaigners are hell

Upon entering the cycle campaigning world in 2010, I quickly noticed some particularities. It often felt as if I had stepped onto hollowed grounds. I wrote:

Pitching a tent in a tribal landscape takes painstaking emotional effort, fluctuating between patience and persistence. 2016/03/03

In Newcastle I could not help but observe cyclists’ dedication and determination. Yet this, I felt, did not compare well to the patchwork of campaigning methods and styles. I strongly felt that a clear campaigning concept was missing. I expressed on the blog:

[T]he cycling community (people who cycle) [...] is dedicated to what they would call ‘their’ cycling cause. But that alone doesn’t make us campaigners, and so, not surprisingly, many aren’t.
2015/01/17

Slowly, I noticed that the focus for other cyclists was often on their identity, and cyclists’ rights. Being a cycle activist, I regularly was in the presence of cyclists. These cyclists would eagerly tell me how to cycle correctly or commented on my bike. Things that did not interest me. I had ideas too, but the capacity of others to listen was low. I wrote:

I was surrounded by many “old men with grey beards” who lectured and explained age-old things to me. I listened patiently to their same failed rhetoric, same myths and spoke against them. I was left wondering if I were heard at all, and how often the Beards have put down these views before. 2016/03/03

Over time I began to realise that the UK cyclist is culturally shaped by stigma and exclusion, creating a need to congregate and vent (rather than formulate solutions). And I understood that their cycling was not my cycling. In my blog I wrote:

Oftentimes, [the cyclists'] cycling cause is closer to home than the call for mass-cycling conditions and cycling infrastructure as the means to make that happen. Their cause is cycling for fitness, or leisure, or getting psyched up by cycling in the mad British traffic. Their activity and type of cycling makes and shapes them on a very personal level. 2015/01/17

From the UK cycling experience a narrow and belligerent identity resulted. This raw cyclist identity, I felt, did not translate well into public messaging or political campaigning. I began to understand that the “grey beards” wanted to recruit people into their beloved cycling by talking up cycling. By contrast, I wanted to upgrade the urban design, and wrote:

Waxing lyrical about the loveliness of cycling just does not seem to be right for me anymore. It's depending on the overall context and audience of course. But being the ever-present campaigner for a fairer healthier city, we must distinguish clearly between the what and the how. Extolling the virtues of cycling is often missing the point, especially when pitched against the harsh cycling realities of our hostile roads. We need to link up the potentials of cycling to the road realities. As advocates we have to get real. 2016/07/23

Whilst I agreed that we would mobilise our personal, emotional and visceral experiences, these would have to embrace experiences matching the wider society (that was not cycling under the current conditions). Most of us aren't road cyclists (favouring on-road cycling), I knew that. We would have to be honest about cycling and “get real” i.e. take into account wider realities. Acknowledging that cycling was hard work on UK roads, I wrote:

Relying on these special survival skills and techniques will only get you that far recruiting pedal participants. Advocacy should put itself into their shoes more often. Listen. And learn. Paint the reality of others. Then campaign for their needs to be fulfilled. 2015/05/29

Like a record playing in one groove, its eerie sound goes on and on, so much so that after a while you don't even hear it anymore, you block it out. Let's face it. Cycling in the UK currently isn't fun (convenient, safe, comfortable...). 2016/04/09

To that effect, I grew increasingly critical about the “grey-bearded” UK cyclist extolling that “cycling is fun” and “getting more people cycling”.

Being a cyclist and being a cycle campaigner now were two entirely different things to me. I wondered in a blogpost about the sourcing of cycle campaigners from cyclists' ranks:

I am not sure we can quite so easily source the campaigners from the current cycling community without training, education and awareness about campaigning. 2015/01/17

Increasingly, I had a sense of futility about UK cycle campaigning. Older campaigning, I felt, had become counterproductive to the cause of cycling. It glorified cycling to the exclusion of realities. Yet there was a dilemma: how could cycle campaigning not be about cycling in one way or another? Also, I knew that many campaigners had entered campaigning through being a cyclist - including myself. Tired about the confusion, I wrote:

*I often feel that our debate gets lost by **talking cross-purposes**: essentially we are talking about the same thing, but looking at it from different angles or dimensions. 2015/10/03*

If we would not talk about how we wanted to get more people cycling, cycle campaigning talked cross-purposes. Cycle activism, I felt, needed all the solidarity it could get. I often argued and despaired with other campaigns. I wrote about the national charity Sustrans:

It's about different groups working together. Sustrans sadly, once again, decided against doing so. 2015/10/22

Our campaigning goal was about cycling, but the old solution was steeped in a cyclist identity demanding their rights (changes in the law), when the new campaigners, I noticed, took a wider view and demanded changes to the urban realm.

Though cycling's face is slowly changing – yes there are good pockets of really good people doing really good stuff – UK advocacy is still often in a rut of sameness and irrelevance (see [sustrans](#), etc). 2016/04/09

I felt, that the source of new cycle campaigners presented itself as a dilemma. The old and the new were at odds. We needed to find cyclists whose minds were not preoccupied with their own identity, proselyting everyone else to be like them. Cycle campaigners, as I saw it, did not campaign from the position of the cyclist but from a position of urban space.

7.4.3 The ideal cycle campaigner

In a sense, every UK cyclist was a rebel – not many cycled in the UK, and if you did, it looked like making a statement. Cycling was against the norm (of automobility). Cycling in itself sent a message, I wrote:

In the UK, when we are cycling, whether we like it or know it, we are sticking up for cycling. It's a tremendous show of outsider-ship and social norm rebellion, reformation of realities, as well as learnt skillsets and hard-earnt knowledge. And that can feel exhilarating. 2015/05/29

The transgression and skill, I understood, could make you feel good. Yet this, I had experienced, was also a lonesome existence. In the UK, I knew the cyclist experience to be an exclusive one, not welcoming to outsiders. My sincere wish was to become more collective in our view and “to move the debate on” (2015/10/03). What I wanted to talk about, and leave behind us, was our own internal navel-gazing debate. I strongly advocated that we, as cycle campaigners, needed to speak out about road conditions more inclusively:

I believe that we do need ever more campaigners and spokes-personnel, if only to reach a breaking point where it becomes totally acceptable to say “Cycling? Under current conditions I am scared (for my children) and I want functional cycling infrastructure”. 2015/01/17

I suggested that we connect with public sentiments by activating common frames. I wrote:

We must learn to tell stories about our struggles and create identities beyond the one of “being a cyclist” (the perennial).

What we do must ring true with the wider public. Scripting more coherent storylines can help that. 2016/10/16

If possible, I argued that the ideal cycle campaigner would be fully revved up on the “activation scale” (2016/07/23), ready for campaigning action. The campaigning ahead was hard enough, I knew from experience. It was crucial to my mind that an individual recognised where they stood in the campaigning landscape. In my branch of campaigning, campaigning for political and technical changes, knowing how to deal with conflict situation was a key skill. And campaigning work meant to speak with conviction and vigour, I wrote:

As advocates we no doubt are aware of this systemic bias against cyclists. That’s what we face. We are outside the social norm but in general terms what we do (cycling) is supported by policy and the country’s future needs (space, health, economy, environment...). And we need to keep calling this out, when it happens. 2015/10/31.

Over the years I had been interviewed by local and national media, given oral evidence at the Transport Select Committee, spoken at Newcastle City Council. From that experience, I understood that it was a tough ask for campaigners to challenge the biases and taboos we faced, whilst remaining inclusive and open. Part of the tactics, I thought, was to come armed with options, because if “you want to see change in a certain field (say transport), it is important to state alternative views to avoid self-silencing” (2016/07/28). One necessity for gaining political influence, was that campaigners clarify their demands, sort and rank them. On my blog, I advised:

Prioritising [...] could move on and concentrate the internal and raging debate amongst cycle campaigners, so that practitioners and politicians can make good investment decisions. 2015/03/07

Cycle campaigners needed to decide what they wanted, and then express this clearly and with conviction (not unlike the demands I would make of politicians, section 7.3.3). We needed concepts. Re-fashioning old concepts for new purposes was a possibility. On the blog I proposed:

[W]e could create [...] a ‘Maslow’s hierarchy of provision needs for higher cycle share’. That would be an excellent step forward

in the irksome debate about cycling and its place in transport (planning and engineering). 2015/03/07

Building a more coherent movement was a necessity if we wanted to increase chances of success. I also felt, that we should learn how to deal with social contempt. I wrote:

One of the hard things in campaigning is getting the momentum going and keeping the momentum. But the hardest thing yet in low-cycling countries is dealing with the marginalisation status. And to persistently deal with it whenever it's thrown at you over and over again. The social norm is not on our side to start with. 2016/04/15

Campaigning in Newcastle often felt like an isolating activity to me. Despite the local solidarity in our campaign, the opportunities to link up with local campaigners had not always been successful in Newcastle (where activism is stretched thinly at any rate). And the linking up with other campaigners on a national cycle platform had been sporadic in my experience. There was scope to develop cycle campaigners, I thought, and make use of mutual learning and exchange. I wrote on the blog:

We should [...] exchange and share our experiences more. Making sense of and valuing this early [campaign] work is so important – it would construct a more resilient campaigning platform stocked with motivated campaigners. 2016/10/16

Our marginalised status was a real thing, we should be aware of, I wrote:

Campaigns should be keenly aware of their inherent status of marginalisation and social no-norm. I have seen many campaign groups whose response was to hide and turn inwards. [The constant threat of] marginalisation needs to be acknowledged and addressed. 2016/04/15

For instance, if we could only understand marginalisation as a natural reaction to the intrusion that cyclists/cycling could present. I wrote: “In whatever you do, don’t get marginalised – it’s the tactics of normalcy to want [to remain] the norm” (2016/07/28). And the normalcy is automobility.

I noticed that one permanent danger was the goal-softening that took place when campaigners were under constant pressure from normative and political power. I expressed on my blog:

[A]dvocacy [...] is also a place where it can get pretty hairy. It's the juncture between short-term incremental initiatives versus long-term goal campaigning. 2015/12/10

Campaigning activism is not for everyone. Some personalities do not support working through adversity or dealing positively/constructively with confrontation (to find solutions). 2015/12/10

Having an understanding and concept of these normative “pressures to conform” would help campaigners and I was grateful every time I met a great campaigner, cycling or else, who shared my understanding. With the sparsity of such events in the UK, these moments were especially informative and heartening. Looking towards the US campaigning again, I wrote:

With people like John Burke, CEO of Trek, we can make a difference. He challenges his colleagues to get into urban design, connecting with campaigners and political lobbying. Urban design, because if changed, holds tremendous opportunities for selling cycles. Who could argue against John's logic? If the cycle manufacturers (cycle industry on the whole too) put their money where their mouths are, we could do leaps and bounds in informing and educating decision makers. 2016/03/03

Overall, after many years of campaigning, my assessment was that cycle campaigning would benefit from three things in particular:

Confidence, diversity and resilience. If we get those three things into UK (and German perhaps too?) cycle campaigning, we are onto a winner. 2016/03/03

By confidence I meant confidence in our message and our path, by diversity I meant the move away from the cyclist identity and embracing a more inclusive view “getting real”, and we needed resilience in looking after ourselves as campaigners and to learn, share and grow together. Talking from experience, cycle campaigners could do with being smarter in their communication and

messages, and in their understanding of social processes: how normative pressures act on them.

7.5 Theme 4: a woman engineer and feminism

7.5.1 Wakeup call for the engineer

To talk comfortably about gender/women in relation to transport cycling, I felt I had to look at data as a first step. I recognised this quantifying approach as a 'hangover' from engineering practice and described it as "just a bit of fun number crunching" ([2016/12/25](#)). Initially, the engineer in me had essential doubt about qualitative methods and theory. At the beginning, I was drawn to data that were figures and numbers. I expressed in the blog:

[Early in 2015 I had] discovered, and delved into, the massive online data warehouses. To get to know the Census 2011 better I thought it might be good idea to have a general look at basic commuter 'behaviour' – the mode share pie. [2015/02/28](#)

It is important, I believe, that we start talking about the transport transition. We will have to ask questions like 'what is the current mode split', and 'where do we want to go'. But more vitally and to the point, how will we do that. And there might be gender-specific answers to this. [2015/02/28](#)

In 2015, I looked at sex differences in transport. Quantitative data analysis was what I knew best and that was what I kept doing for the time being. In a series of blogposts, I summarised results of the data foray into the Census 2011 data. For instance, I discovered:

Whilst not cycling much in Newcastle (where 24% of commuter cyclists are women, close to the national average) they [women] do take the bus and walk more than men. Again, through looking at that dataset alone, we cannot distinguish whether this is through choice (health, environment etc), or lack of choice (no car, one car household), or indeed how the decision (conscious or not) was reached in the first instance. [2015/02/28](#)

Working women in Newcastle travel quite a bit more sustainably than their gender counterparts. [2015/02/28](#)

Interestingly the gender mode share pies [for Cambridge] do not look that different to each other. There might be an important

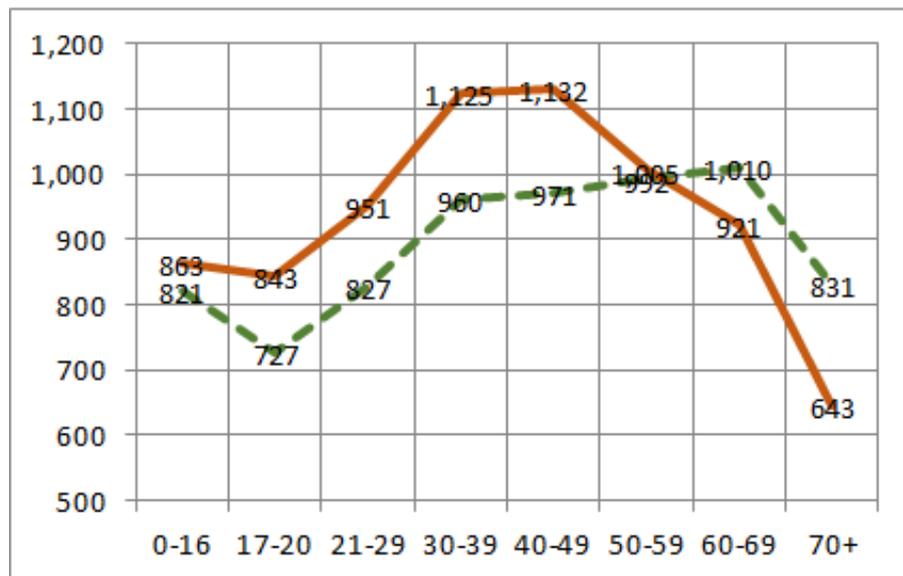
*'spirit level' message in that for politicians and practitioners.
2015/02/28*

Women commute by public transport and walking more than men; and certainly **not much cycling** could be seen amongst women (yet not to forget cycling's generally small participation rate aka low mode share) – but how there is, it seems, a clear relationship between a higher ratio of women cycling and higher levels of cycling. 2015/04/10

Above are excerpts from analysing census data including differences in travel behaviour by sex. The other dataset I consulted was the National Travel Survey (NTS) data. I summarised results on my blog, for instance:

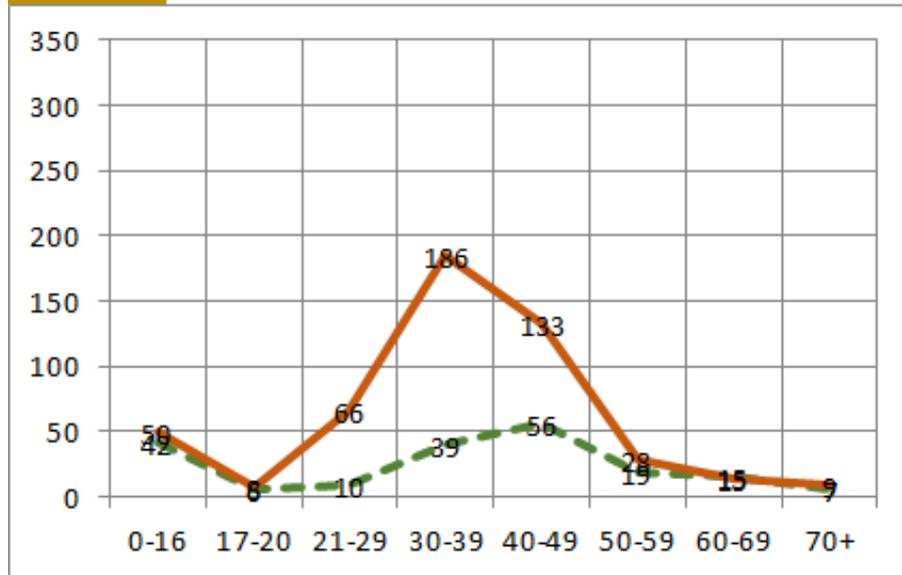
The gendered travel arrangements that emerged from the NTS are quite interesting in their own right. Oh, the gendered lives we lead! So here's the definite "trip advisor" with women in continuous orange and men in dashed green. The 'average woman' younger than 55 years (or so) makes more trips than the 'average man'. After that age the pendulum swings towards men. (Surely, it must be all these shopping trips!) 2015/04/10

All trip purposes combined



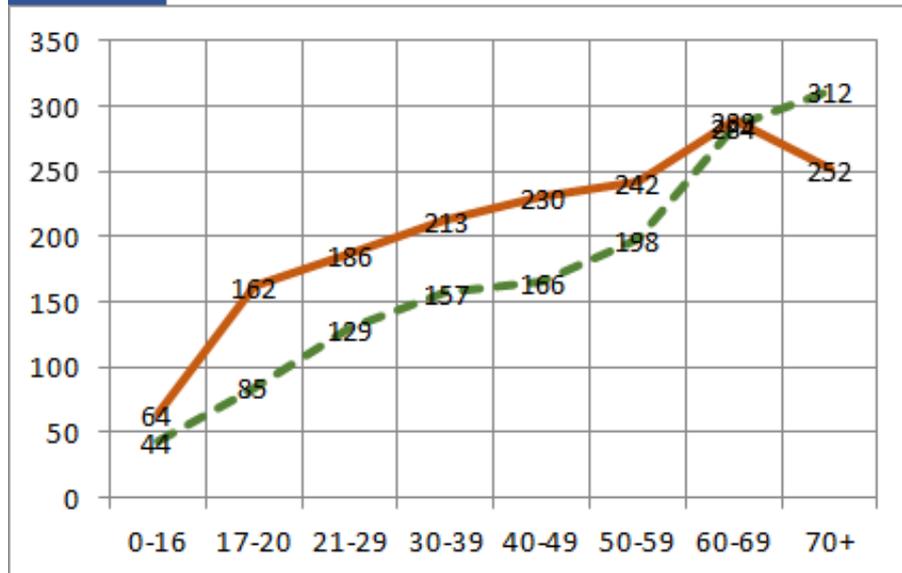
The trips for the school run peak in the female 30s – it's women between 20-50 years of age who do the school run quite a bit more than men. 2015/04/10

Escort education



In other news. More men on average get the shopping in, once they are 65 years old or thereabouts. [2015/04/10](#)

Shopping



After the “number crunching”, a marked shift in my thinking took place. I began to understand and appreciate data with a constructivist epistemology. I began to ask myself, what is the origin of our knowledge? How is knowledge obtained? We had to be careful, I proclaimed, as figures and numbers had a subjective side too. Inherently I knew from engineering that data interpretation has

subjective elements. The interpretation of the results was not clear-cut and can open up options, I gave the example on the blog:

You can ‘turn the tables on the data’. If the analysis of the input data says that cycle infrastructure is needed, another decision can be taken: to reduce speed, volume and/or vehicle mix so that no specific infrastructure were needed for cycling. 2015/05/02

Slowly I began to warm up to a more variegated perspective on knowledge creation and data analysis. Understanding the psycho-social aspects became increasingly important to me. For instance, I realised that the definition of women was often done from a male-dominated viewpoint. Drawing on feminist theory, I wrote:

In my reading I stumbled across this sentence, which really made me smile “Objectivity, feminists revealed, is male subjectivity ... it is difficult for feminists to convince their male colleagues of this fact because of the pervasiveness of the masculinist values.” (Hekman, 2007:537). 2016/08/04

This chimed with my engineering experience where I was a woman in a male-dominated field. Hekman’s words were a revelation and effected a shift in my thinking about data in general, and qualitative data in particular. I was eager to apply the alternative perspective to gender/women and transport cycling. And I found ready candidates. For example, transport planning has a focus on the commute, yet 80% of journeys are non-work journeys (2016/09/29). I expressed on the blog:

Just looking at commuting data misses to consider a large number of trips, especially those made by women. Women, as is clear, are not a minority group. Yet women and their needs, even as a major group in society (women make more trips than men), are often disregarded. Looking at the commuting data alone discriminates against women in general, women’s activities and discounts women’s place in society. 2016/07/08

I learnt, first hand, that the women’s perspective was quite often occluded in the travel data. Various aspects of travel data - collection, analysis, methods of analysis, type of data – were biased towards male activity for example the rush-

hour commute. As I described in this blogpost, it mattered tremendously what data we include:

*In order to make designs environmentally effective and create gender-inclusive networks, we need to incorporate all ways of travel in our assessments [not just focus in the commute].
2016/07/08*

The other aspects of the data process were under question too. I became very aware that data have limitations. I wrote:

As a health warning to academics most specifically, it is also paramount to clearly state limitations of the data sets we use. If we use census data, we must be aware of its possibilities as well as its restrictions, and feel obliged to explain these. But, really, to degender transport we will have to go beyond the easy wins of data availability. 2016/07/08

Over the course of the blog, I journeyed from quantitative data analysis (a positivist engineering approach), to doubting the clarity and truth data can provide. Data were political. I had started writing the blog as an applied-science engineer and emerged as a social scientist in the process.

7.5.2 Journey through others to find myself

On the blog it was important to me to find ways to present and explain myself. I wanted to enable others to see me as a person with an array of interests and concerns (not just a one-dimensional cycleway campaigner). I introduced myself:

Hi, me: Chartered environmental engineer, cycle campaigner, PhD researcher. 2015/05/02.

However, I felt that describing myself as a woman engineer was not easy - I had history and my baggage required checking in. For instance, my work history felt unconventional to me: "Once upon a time a CEng woman engineer... and doesn't end the usual way" (2015/01/31). The statement related to experiencing problems at my workplace, whilst also becoming an activist. My thinking had started to change and had become more radical in my outlook on life. Cycle campaigning had provided a new look on the world, which had begun to affect my life more generally. Writing my blog helped me keep a balance, to sort,

loosen up and let go. I described such an impulsive moment when I spoke to the audience at a women's meeting (Urbanistas Newcastle). I wrote:

Well, I didn't prepare for it, it was rather my grasp-the-spirit-do-something self who spoke, as usual. I pitched for women's voices to be heard and become louder to overcome the stale rusty droning all-too-often deafening background noise of an old city elite, holding up the out-dated status-quo banner. Phew. There. Heads nodding, smiles and laughter – I think I did okay. Start by starting. 2015/01/31

I deeply felt that it was vital to get together with other women and talk about our ails and ills. It felt good. Transport governance in Newcastle, as I had experienced it, was so insane and infuriating, often attested on the blog. The exchange with others helped me to keep a level spirit, letting off steam.

In my experience it was women who questioned and challenged power much more than men did. It was women, not men, who led me to examine power, justice and governance. And other women gave me strength. I experienced that by getting together and talking about our experiences, we could find commonalities and identify possible future scenarios. Learning from others, being inspired by women's enthusiasm and hunger for change and clarity of vision, was catching and invigorating, I expressed in a blogpost:

After [attending that women-led] gathering, I am now more than certain that change will come from women. From women spelling out their frustration, hopes and needs. Spelling out our vision – for the city and its public space and use. Imagining the environment to be in tune with women's values and aspirations. And turning that into (street) action [...] 2015/01/31

To me, the path to a better future was through harnessing and amplifying women's imagination and strength. I repeatedly expressed in blogposts:

We have to listen to what women say and understand their (transport, employment and personal life) needs much better. 2015/03/07

And ways to make women[']s voices [...] heard must be found. 2015/03/13

During the writing of the blog I read a tremendous amount of academic, grey and popular literature, often suggested by others, and often through the blog or twitter. In the blog I would sometimes describe these moments of discovery after doing some academic reading,

*[I]t strikes me quite hard that cycling is an inherently female means of transport **if we let it.** 2015/03/07*

Then I came in contact with the 'classics'. These authors would guide my understanding of the relations between urban design and women/gender. I wrote:

*Understanding our relationship(s) to and with our urban environment is key, I believe, in making the transport transition relevant, and bringing it alive to everyone. Psycho-analytically unpicking our roads and taking our reactions apart is vital to success in this matter. So, [Jan] **Gehl** and [Jane] **Jacobs** – here we come. 2015/03/13*

*I am also reading up about UK planning, from the 1990s onwards, and have stumbled across **Clara Greed** in particular. 2015/03/21*

***Jan Garrard ... Jennifer Dill and Susan Handy.** These three women are on my 'classic cycle academic watchlist'. 2015/03/13*

Engaging with literature also meant learning about the different infrastructure preferences for men and women. I referenced specific studies on my blog, for example:

And we are reminded of previous studies by Winters and Teschke (2010), Jackson and Ruehr (1998), Garrard et al (2008), Krizek et al (2005), explaining that women and easy-going cycling folks (not the high-octane fuelled cycle enthusiasts) prefer separated facilities and avoid high traffic volumes and speeds. 2015/03/21

Women preferred to cycle away from motor traffic. Similar to reading, through the data analysis I carried out (Census 2011, National Travel Survey and Newcastle's household travel survey), I discovered yet more numeral

differences for sex/gender and transport. This allowed me to link to social processes, on the blog I stated:

These 'budget' differences on commuting and business miles vastly account for the overall difference in women's and men's total mileage. Seems that men are the bread winners still... under the current economic accounting system at least.
2015/04/18

It appears that men between 35 and 60 years of age, or so, are travelling their hearts out [by mileage], comparatively to women. The main trip purpose contributors are commuting and businesses trips. 2015/04/18

However, I felt, the datasets were unable to answer my questions of why we were stuck on transport matters and how we could unstick it. The datasets left questions open, as I write with much tongue in cheek:

There are some more hypotheses and observations that can be drawn out of the [National Travel Survey] data set, no doubt! And I would love to know why women, on average, visit their mates at home more than men would, as the NTS tells us. Could homes (still?) be the private realm that has escaped the otherwise pervasive malestreamed design of public places? Who are these women visiting? Other women? People of what age? Is it their parents? Or maybe I am just being a little bit too snooty now.

Furthermore, since data show differences in travel behaviour and preferences, I now believed that women's experience should be made more central to decision-making. Relating to this, I wrote in the blog: "Debates about social and environmental justice are important kick-starters of the [transport future] debate. And women, due to their much busier complex travel diaries, should be at the very heart of it" (2015/05/02). During my involvement as a cycle activist, it was often heart-wrenching to hear the stories of other women. For instance, here were two mothers who pioneered cycling with kids in Newcastle - under very demanding road conditions - and they experienced public disapproval and institutional inaction.

It's not for the first time, and I have a feeling it will neither be for the last, that I heard a mother describe the following to me: "I cycle along with my 10-year old on Percy Street (relatively busy city centre road), when a driver shouts at me to 'get off the road

and start caring for my child' – I will of course keep cycling, but that says more about my rebellious nature and sense of independence, than any biking bliss and enjoyment we ought to experience". 2015/05/15

Yet here is the reality again, demonstrated by this short video made by a mother of two in Newcastle, filming the trip home from school with her 7-year old. The anguish, required skill and necessary attention levels are clear to see. All this makes the short trip look and feel quite adventurous, rather uncomfortable in places and certainly not convenient. She has interjected some commentary in her video at a much lesser frequency of me wincing about our insane roads and the inappropriately pressurised position pedal parents are put in. 2015/05/15

These stories of strength and strife made me hungry for change to happen. To initiate change and create new narratives, telling stories of others was important to me as an activist. I recall the story of a mum:

I have spoken to the mum, who does the right thing and cycles her children to school. She does what the authorities want her to: she cycles. Her cycling however comes at a price. Comfortable is not what her journey could be easily described as. When cycling she suffers ridicule, abuse, anger and scorn. She gets the blame from drivers, who have been held up for a few seconds. She should get off the road and start caring for the safety of her kids, is what she hears. It's a heart-breaking story to hear that the person who is doing good, also takes the hit. She ought to be rewarded. But the system fails her. This mum's story is not a single case, I have heard it dozens of times. Too many times. It is also worth noting that under the oppressive conditions described here, we cannot blame people for not cycling. What's needed for people to cycle is space for cycling. Then she could cycle in peace with her children. 2016/05/26

It was about the urban design, it was not appropriate, I felt anger because solutions existed and there would be rewards for society. I wrote the "potential for levelling the transport playing field is immense and should be vastly rewarding and empowering for women too" (2015/03/07). Women could become active citizens, rewarded and empowered by supportive infrastructure.

In summary, I learnt much from books, by reading papers and substantiating claims and experiences by analysing data. In addition to data, and much more revelatory to me, I personally grew most through talking to others, by listening to

others' stories and experiences. Walking in others' shoes opened up new world of ideas and concerns, for example the strive of cycling with children. In addition, I experienced the strength and determination of fellow women as infectious adding to my energy and conviction.

7.5.3 What is feminism anyway?

Being involved in cycle campaigning as a woman meant that I learnt new concepts and terminology. For example, the preparation work for a symposium sharpened my mind and stretched my narrow (engineer's) horizon:

Recently a spotlight has been put on women and cycling in the UK. But what we really mean, I think, is understanding society's gendered lifestyles, its needs and pressures. All fairly simple stuff, you may now rightly say. But it's the stuff I have been grappling with over the last few weeks. The symposium provides a good opportunity [for me] to wrap this up and move onwards.
2015/09/11

When I began to read feminism more broadly, I was astounded by the sex differentials in our society. I felt I had to nail my (green, white and purple) colours to my blog's proverbial mast and draw attention to these differences. I became more eager to talk about feminist issues. An opportunity knocked when I was invited by an engineering institution to write a think piece on women in engineering. The opening words of the article were:

Sexism is everywhere. Julia Gillard's speech still starkly springs to my mind (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2011) and Grayson Perry's recent BBC documentary "All Man" discussing masculinity is a good example too. Or the collection of women-at-work issues summed up in the article by Barnett and Rivers (2016). It's not hard to grasp that something is askew.
2016/06/09

Once alerted to sex differentials (the different treatment of women and men for no apparent reason) I suddenly noticed the gendered world all around me. I looked at the words I used more critically. Feminist, to me, seemed a loaded word (just like cyclist). I felt that I had to use it with great care not to antagonise my readership. I wrote about the meaning of feminism on the blog:

So, feminism? Well, whatever you want to call it. Any cause that's improving diversity, equality and fairness in engineering,

and the wider population, is worth pursuing. We are making better decisions, the more diverse the inputs and the debates are. Including women voices in city planning, or disability voices in transport equality debates are the signs of a mature inclusive society. Workplaces should be no different. 2016/06/09

The time I had spent on talking and listening yielded results. Learning more about women, gender and society showed way-finding transformative effects. My confidence grew. Presenting at the women-in-cycling conferences was useful for me. I had the opportunity to speak to other women, and I had to spend some time to think through my own position. These events sharpened my mind. One by one, each event caused moments of change on my path to understand women and gender in relation to transport cycling. I wrote: “The women forums in York, Edinburgh and Hereford respectively were also turning points in defragging my direction and position” (2016/10/05). It was a lesson to be cherished – I evolved, through the blog, events and meeting people.

When I got deeper into feminist research though, I found it to be a layered and complex field. I noticed that there were many debated and contested elements in feminist literature – very few relating to transport. What I did appreciate however was that feminist theory was political and change oriented (not value free and objective). On the blog I described this tension:

Feminist research is full of different sub groupings. Its diversity is almost too staggering to behold. There are permanent and constant debates about the angles. Which position to invade or attack. And what standpoint to take. Ultimately though feminism accepts that it has a political mission of societal betterment and justice too. And that is in contrast to many other academic professions. 2016/10/16

It was in 2016, that I started to address the women question in my cycle-campaigning research in earnest. I had been searching the literature, and I finally found angles that applied to transport cycling in relation to women. Here, for instance, I talked about the many different strands that began to join up:

Women have much to gain from a more diverse transport system, ie including cycleways. Women also generally have a more cooperative way of working, and can perhaps better break some stalemates we currently find ourselves in. We must grow a voice for a better future, and women are at the heart of this.

There also has been much talk about cycling and cycle campaigning being a masculine pursuit. In order to more fully represent society, women's voices will be necessary. Newcycling, Newcastle's cycling campaign, is founded and led by women. I want to find out how this compares to activism in Bremen, Germany. 2016/10/19

It had taken a lot of reading and talking, but by 2016 I had eventually become comfortable with the 'women angle'. It was also important for me to be aware of our diversity. I saw it as a strength not a weakness. Our identities, women's and men's, intersect. On the blog I wrote:

And talking about different. We are all different. I am a woman engineer. I am a cyclist. I am a vegetarian (mostly). I am German (mostly). I am all these things, and more; I am sure we all are, many different things. Diversity starts with ourselves and recognising our own differences, to recognise and accept others' differences – and celebrate it, together. It's important as limiting others, reduces how they can behave and express themselves. It limits their productivity, creativity, ability to innovate, relate and teamwork. 2016/06/09

I proposed that we could use these identity intersections as a starting point for debate. It could ultimately lead to the initiation of cultural changes to the institutions and physical changes to the transport system. On the whole, my blog underwent a transformation from feminist-by-name-only, to becoming a critical feminist-by-theory also. I tried to find ways to apply feminist principles to cycle campaigning. At the time I was not able to articulate it as such in the blog, but I ended by seeing an intersectional approach (Crenshaw 1989), valuing diversity, as the way forward.

7.6 Putting it together – outline framework

Together with the themes from the previous chapter, the themes explicated above can now be assembled into an outline framework summarising my own personal experience of campaigning for cycleways in Newcastle. Whilst the following Chapter 8 collates the experience of fellow women cycle campaigners, in Newcastle and elsewhere, and culminates in the assembly of the final framework.

7.6.1 The spheres

Merging the themes deriving from the video diary (Chapter 6) and the blog analysis (Chapter 7), results in the identification of four spheres, with some themes connecting and bridging these spheres. Each sphere relates to a group of people implicated in local cycle politics. The spheres are shown in the framework figure 7.1 in the top row. The themes are situated underneath in relation to the spheres.

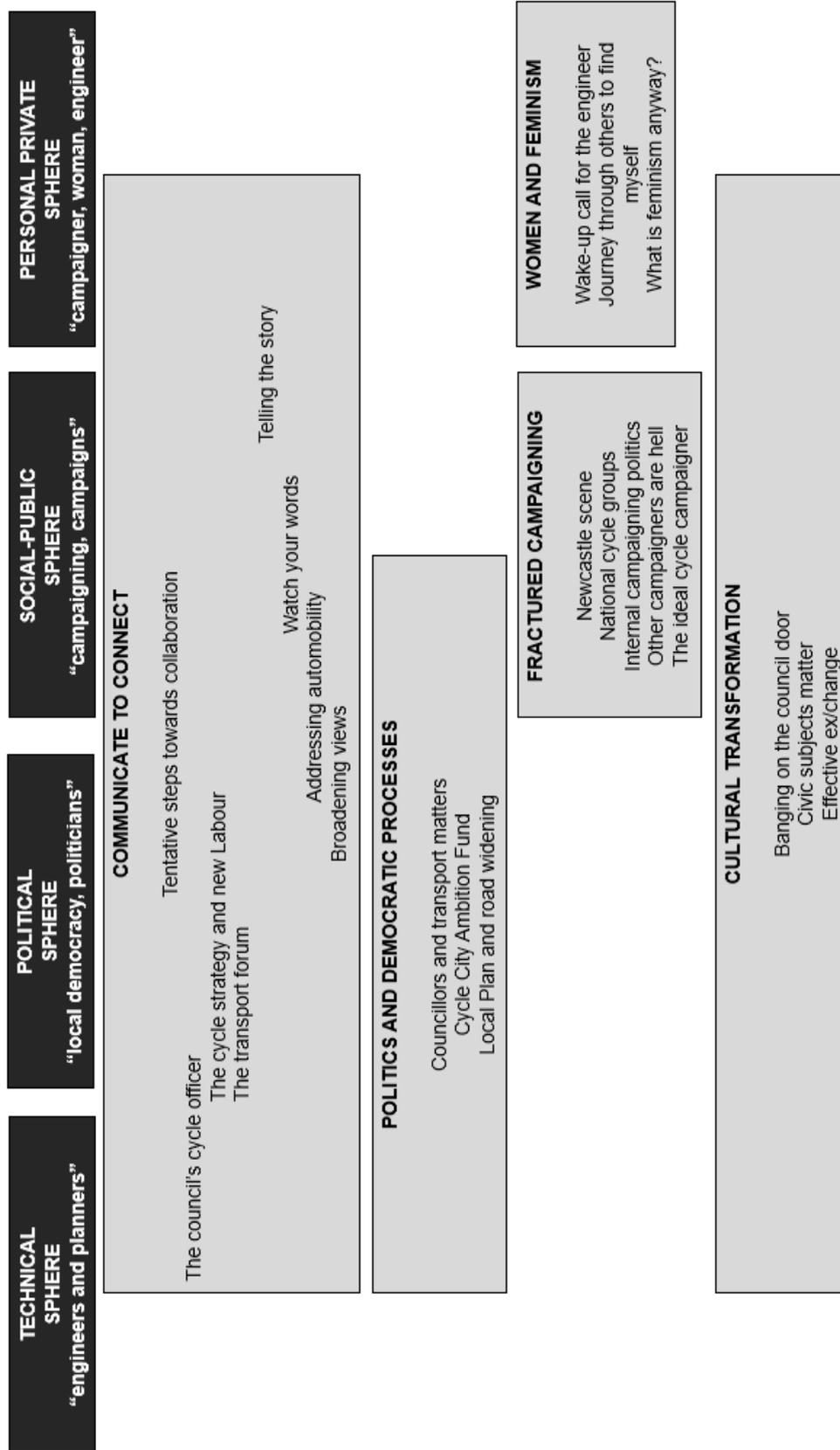
The first sphere is the engineers and planners: the technical officers at the council. The second, adjacent sphere consists of the politicians, enacting local democracy in the social-political world. Campaigners represent the third sphere, inhabiting the socio-public world. The fourth sphere is the private-personal, where I reside with my multiple identities (woman, campaigner, engineer, cyclist). The adjacent spheres connect and interact. Whilst the two outer spheres (technical and personal-private) could connect, it is usually via a representative body i.e. the politicians or the campaign groups.

7.6.2 The themes

The four themes identified in Chapter 6 (video diary) consist of single-sphere and bridging themes.

There are three bridging themes, cutting across spheres (*communicate to connect*, *politics and democratic process* and *cultural transformation*). I combined two themes to form the first bridging theme: *Communicate to connect* and 'telling the story', retaining the former as the theme title in the framework. *Communicate to connect* reaches across from the technical sphere through the political (politicians) and social-public (civic society) spheres to the personal-private. This theme talks about experiences I had made early on in campaigning: campaigners reached out to the officials to state their demands. It is concerned with my personal experience and my attempt to make cycle campaigning political and theorise about ways to achieve this. Whereas the second bridging theme *politics and democratic process* charts the later campaigning experience when local cycle campaigners better understood the processes and could comment on the shortfalls in the democratic system, connecting the technical, political and public spheres.

Figure 7.1. Framework derived from blog and video diary analyses



The third bridging theme is *cultural transformation* which talks about the council's responsibility, as I perceived it. It also makes suggestions for change. This theme therefore stretches from the personal-private sphere, via the socio-public into the political sphere.

There are a couple of single sphere themes. The theme *fractured campaigning* can be combined with this chapter's a 'torn campaigning scene'. I retained the former theme name for the title in the framework. The theme solely resides in social-public sphere when talking about the internal struggles and troubles in the campaigning scene. The fourth theme from Chapter 6, 'talking about women and feminism', can be combined with Chapter 7's 'women engineer and feminism', now called *women and feminism*. It solely resides in the private-personal sphere as it is talking about my personal experiences as a woman cycle campaigner (having a professional engineering background).

7.6.3 Discussion

Throughout the themes runs a common thread: institutional automobility. It stands opposed to cycleways, the women activists' demand. The campaigning for a new spatial order, i.e. campaigning for cycleways, brought the new cycle campaigners into the realms of institutional automobility. However, the embedded and engrained nature of institutional automobility meant that it remained largely invisible to the politicians and council officers too, resulting in blind defence of automobility in general. Designing for the car and free traffic flow was what technical council staff carried out as a matter of fact.

The technical and the personal were not connected. This is what I experienced when I began to probe the Newcastle landscape in 2009, drawing on my personal experiences of cycling, before formally lobbying for cycleways. The political sphere shields and defends the technical.

The next chapter collates the experience of woman activists lobbying for cycleways. In that chapter I will review the outline framework against the women activists' accounts to assemble the final framework.

8 INTERVIEWING WOMEN ACTIVISTS

8.1 Introduction

The themes that emerged from the interviews with the eight women activists are described in more detail in the following sections of this chapter, before I turn to summarise and discuss them.

I explicated four themes from the interviews using narrative analysis coupled with thematic text analysis, as explained in the methodology chapter. This was done in isolation from the analysis of the two previous chapters that analyse data about my own cycle campaigning experience: the video diary and the blog analysis. The three data streams come together in the framework, at the end of this chapter.

8.2 Method and participants

The interviews were conducted in the UK and Germany in 2017. It was important to me to capture the interviewees' stories, issues and experiences of cycle campaigning, therefore the interviews were held as semi-structured conversations, where I let the women activists lead the dialogue with limited interference on my part.

I spoke to three women activists in the UK (two in Newcastle), and held another five interviews in Germany, of which three were conducted with women activists in Bremen. The methodology chapter (Chapter 4) gives more detail on the interviewees and the interview process.

8.3 Campaigning, communication and exclusion

8.3.1 *Logical and practical*

Logic, sense and reason played a substantial part in the women activists' approach to campaigning "because who wouldn't want better conditions who would not want our roads and streetscapes to be better" (UK3) when exploring cycle campaigning issues.

Critique of perceived irrationality was a functional part of the women activists' campaigning repertoire. For instance, this interviewee pointed out the lack of

progress under the current agenda of transport politics, where “you ride on the road if you can find space for it, and so far, it's not bringing any numbers, so that's not working!” (D2) when addressing campaigning tactics in her interview. She intimated that if it is “not working” to get more people cycling, things needed to be critically assessed and adjusted accordingly. To the women activists, addressing spatial marginalisation was particularly important and it felt rational to them to address spatial issues. It was apparent to interviewees that “you need a safe space for cycling and you know all the research showing this is what people want” (D2). The women activists insisted that certain things were rather obvious and palpable to people like them who were experiencing the city on their bikes on everyday trips, chores and running errands. For example, this interviewee described that “because of the bumpy surface, you have to expend cognitive energy on riding your bike, rather than being able to check the situation around you - nothing new, is it!” (D5), using a sense of impatience and reason to argue for change as implied in the exclamation “nothing new, is it!”. However, the women activists currently used infrastructures that did not always work well for them.

Things needed to make sense and be practical for the interviewees. As one woman activist said when talking about her London experience: “the roads were just so awful that it annoyed me that it was so impractical” (UK2). The UK infrastructure was so impractical it was dangerous and the “full spectrum of aggression would be waged on you – every single day” (D1) the interviewee said, when exploring issues of UK road design. The women activists felt that the urban design was often counterproductive to their needs, not practical - even pushing them away from cycling, or cycling on the pavement. These comments about practicality of infrastructure were made by interviewees both in the UK and Germany, despite Germany's more prevalent cycle infrastructure and higher cycle mode share.

In addition to infrastructures, social and technical spaces relating to cycling also did not always function well for the women activists, as this interviewee from the UK pointed out, describing the supposedly simple act of purchasing a bike:

We had to [separately] buy mud guards we had to buy rack, buy lights - you had to buy everything and then none of the things fitted very well because they weren't designed for it [...] [then]

you had to take your lights off [your bike] because somebody would nick them and the whole business of getting on your bike and sort out all that - I hated all of that. (UK2)

The logic and practicality of cycling with children or carrying items on the bike was another matter that often did not work for the interviewees. For example, this UK interviewee summarised her thoughts thus:

[When cycling with a child in the seat] isn't very easy stopping and starting and you have this balance thing with that weight that's moving around behind you. [Experiencing London roads] I just I thought that it seemed obvious from the minute you were on the bike that nobody wanted you to cycle. (UK2)

With their own logic often betrayed by the urban design (and in the UK also in social/technical sites), the women activists insisted on the rationality of their ideas, perspectives and experiences. That meant that getting involved in activism was something sensible and reasonable for them, as explained by these interviewees:

I guess I have always been an activist. (UK3)

Activism is something normal and positive. (D1)

Does [getting involved in activism] need a reason? It just seems like logical. (D2)

Understanding council actions as logical was seen by the interviewees as an exception rather than a routine. Often, as this interviewee outlined when exploring issues of council governance, clear direction was lacking, resulting in policies that “are so broad and so fluffy as well, you could put quite a lot of stuff in it and it wouldn't still be very clear, what they are trying to do” (UK1). In some cases, councillors were seen to “panic because they don't see the bigger picture” (D2).

An interviewee, for instance, was specifically critical of the political leadership team (the cabinet), that she wished to be more rational and coherent because: “you want to see some kind of action but also coherence between what they are doing across the city, signed by cabinet, supported by cabinet, they don't seem

to be really delivering” (UK1). The perceived absence of rationality from council politics and policy, was a UK phenomenon rather than a German one.

There was something normal and logical about campaigning for the interviewees. The women rationalised what they witnessed and observed around them applying their own codes of practical logic. The women activists insisted on a rationale that accounted for their cycling reality. They wanted the things around them to make practical sense and they demanded that (their) logic to be heard and accounted for by the transport authority.

8.3.2 Spatial ambition and vision

The cycle campaigning the women activists imagined originated from logic and necessity. As one activist said, when recalling her campaigning history:

I am campaigning for cycling because cycling's something that's good for my child and our family. (UK3)

But the realisation of a cycling agenda was challenging. For instance, when exploring campaigning issues, one interviewee described the sheer scale of the campaigning task as, “what we are asking for is a real revolution” (D2). But the vision for revolutionary demands was often described as absent in the interviewees’ local campaigning contexts. This meant, as many interviewees described, that many cycle activists were just happy with whatever space was left once cars and car parking had been satisfied, rather than “cycling gets its space, first of all, only then driving is considered” (D1) when I inquired about road designs in the interview. For example, this interviewee could, at first, not believe the ambition that her local campaign group showed: “I suppose I didn’t know how high [the cycling campaign's vision and spatial] standards were!” (UK2).

Having vision and imagining spatial changes is not easy, as an interviewee explained: she “hadn’t seen any quality [infrastructural] things and swallowed the CTC¹⁹ line around if you campaign for cycleways you get bad ones and you are forced to use those and we might risk losing the road” (UK3). The lack of spatial ambition was also at odds with the interviewees’ revolutionary demands

¹⁹ UK’s national cycle lobby

of reallocating space away from cars to construct cycleways. The women activists were keen to acknowledge spatial limitations in cities, as a mechanism to discuss redistribution. Making spatial demands also put the interviewees at odds with the council, because space is a limited and hence contested resource and “if you [as a council] want cycling, at some point something has to give” (D2). In the face of such external opposition, sticking to the revolutionary campaigning goal (cycleways, road space reallocation) was a task in itself.

The women activists operated under the vision of spatial redistribution (from cars to bikes) resulting in ambitious campaigning demands.

8.3.3 Excluded realities

All women activists would eagerly talk about their lives, including how it differed from men’s and male cyclists’. For example, this interviewee pointed out that “women have a totally different lived reality which - really - has very little to do with fast courier cycling, to give an example” (D5). Life changes brought new realities to the fore, as this interviewee explained, when I asked about her personal background:

Before I had my son I was a confident cyclist <laughs> whatever that is, and I had never experienced cycling I suppose in the Netherlands or in Denmark or in anywhere that had infrastructure that made cycling any better [...] having a child absolutely seismic change in all things and absolute priority is keeping my child safe. (UK3)

Women wanted their lived reality to be heard and taken seriously. They argued on grounds of “their realities”. One interviewee explained it like this:

That isn’t [just] my perception, that is my reality! (UK3)

Interviewees did not want their perceptions and views (and hence material realities) to be excluded and had attempted to understand exclusion. This interviewee, for example, explained that exclusion was an experience that could be difficult to grasp and handle:

[To be ignored and underrepresented at meetings] was hard to deal with for me. Especially because I had not seen through it all [the power mechanisms at play]. (D5)

This activist explained that she felt “heavily defined by being a woman”, adding that “being a woman compounds all the issues” (UK3). Another interviewee, when exploring issues of feminism, put it this way “sadly, women still have a different reality to men’s” (D1). When I inquired about the “sadly” she replied that “women still do the childcare [...] and hence have a different outlook and different needs” (D1). The interviewees felt constrained by their womanhood in some way, and it had to do with being a woman in a men’s world. Another area of agreement amongst the women activists was the notion of a gendered spatial landscape around them constraining their actions. One interviewee recalled the conversation with a friend going unnoticed:

[A friend] has [expressed] that feeling, like, I am fitted in afterwards, I don't know, how do I fit in here and I certainly wouldn't be cycling, not in a critical way, in a kind of unjust way, because she is... it overlooked a lot of people. (UK2)

The interviewees were aware that forms of exclusion took place in their lives, and wanted to quantify the effect of exclusion. Women are not a minority group. Many suggested that the (covert and overt) exclusion of women could mean the exclusion of the majority. This could even be a deliberate process, some began to wonder. This interviewee, when exploring issues of democratic governance in her interview, asserted that “pushing out [is] a tactic, it often means pushing out the public majority” (D5). For example, a traditional council transport plan or road design was:

Missing off a whole load of people, people like me who didn't work or commute, and I had children and so had slightly different needs in lots of respect. (UK2)

Many women activists described the routine exclusion of women at the political level, that they had noticed in their campaigning. Certain subjects were reserved for men, it was suggested by some. For example, this interviewee described how she had experienced politicians considering transport politics a male domain and that “women issues [are limited to] social issues and that is where women get political posts whereas the core issues such as development and transport are done by men” (D3) when asked about people interactions in

her interview. The transport consultant that I interviewed (D2), also pointed out that transport consultancy work is a male domain.

These exclusionary practices may be done tacitly or unconsciously, but they are no less limiting to women's participation and hence reducing the political influence of women. All interviewees condemned exclusionary council practices (whether they be done innocently or purposively) and decision makers' ignorance of women's needs in urban design.

8.3.4 Lobbying people

Political lobbying work (working with politicians) was ideally construed as a relational and cooperative activity by the interviewees. As activists the interviewees felt they had to do lobbying work engaging with the decision-making process, and particular politicians. Interviewees agreed that lobbying and campaigning meant that you needed to find allies.

As an activist you needed to be poised for debate at all times. But there always was a risk that campaign effort could go wrong, as outlined by this interviewee (who has been a councillor in the past) when I asked her about political interactions: "there is the possibility that a political relationship can get mean and demeaning, and exclusionary" (D5). As this interviewee explained, a local campaign group had been set up to work with the council, but the council was unable to respond and utilise the campaign fairly and effectively:

We [our campaign] have definitively grown through learning and actually bringing more people into the campaign but the council hasn't really kind of moved on or built on this initial kind of support for cycling they have. (UK1)

Highlighting how delicate and uncertain campaigning could be, the interviewee added timing to the dimensions of a successful lobbying effort: "And then I think it's all down to meetings, encounters, opportunities you know kind of meeting the right person at the right time" (UK1).

Sensibility was needed for lobbying and a good background understanding of the persons in power. The women activists talked about understanding politicians to find out "what makes him tick" (UK2), when planning their lobbying.

Knowing decision makers' morals and motifs were a lobbying currency, as exemplified by this interviewee's comments:

To understand you know what he [senior councillor, Labour Party] values what he wants to champion as a politician whether these are Labour values to do with obviously his political party or they are more personal kind of views based on his kind of experience on life, background. (UK1)

Another interviewee described the importance of "long-term relationship building and everyone having some sort of mutual respect and a vision" (UK3). The interviewees envisaged that we, campaigners and decision makers, had to come together with respect and "listen to each other as people" (D2). Knowing each other as respected adversaries could be part of the relationship-building, because it is then that "they become personal opponents and that relationship does not turn mean that easily", expressed one woman activist (D5), when exploring communication strategies. However, this direct and confronting approach may not be for everybody, because "I like people being nice but there is a time not to be nice there is a time to be more critical but I hope that we're all working towards being critical friends" said UK3, when I asked her about people relationships and lobbying. Talking about political campaigning versus community organising, she also pointed out the importance of generating narratives and personal stories, because people could then relate and because mobilising "those sorts of non-campaigners cycle campaigners in a political way is much more powerful in many ways than potentially working with a very focussed people who do want to sit down with council and councillors and tell how to plan a network".

There was also a murkier side to the lobbying aspect of campaigning. When exploring issues pertaining to people, the interviewee explained that "because it is people - you never get to the bottom of it" (UK2). People can be unpredictable and complicated. And politicians tended to oversimplify people, a view offered by this interviewee: "People are more nuanced than politicians give them credit for" (D5). Yet people were also resilient, was the experience expressed by this interviewee: "people aren't stupid - they know what the situation is, and they adapt to it" (D2).

Lobbying work was seen as essential to the women's activism. It was construed as something that depended on people and relationships. The interviewees wished that the lobbying work could be done more cooperatively, as currently the mutuality was not always repaid by the decision makers.

8.3.5 Gendered styles

In my interviewees with women activists I let the women speak and tell their story, rather than pressing for certain issues to be discussed. One issue that was mentioned frequently was that of sex and gender. To mark it as a starting point for her, one interviewee briefly summarised the German student activism of the 1970s she had experienced. This activism confined and relegated women activists to "making coffee and children" (D1). Out of that dismissal, she continued, the women's movement was born, and feminist activism emerged from the universities. But, then as now, she did not understand herself as a feminist, "rather as a woman, who is against the conditions that confront her" (ibid).

Most women activists expressed that their campaigning experience appeared to be heavily defined by their being a woman. The question about how sex/gender affects campaigning interaction and communication arose in most interviews. Not surprisingly, being women activists, all interviewees believed that women had valuable points to make that ought to be heard (see also above section 8.3.3). One interviewee ventured that women could more easily than men allow themselves to be "pragmatic" (i.e. more fundamental, less status-driven, less car-centred, less egocentric) in their approach to transport politics, as women had less to lose socially (D5). Men, she inferred, were more prone to be caught up in power and involved in power games. Another interviewee, too, when pondering about sex/gender differences asked herself if women were less selfish than men (and could hence act less selfishly):

Do women have less ego, sometimes I wonder, sometimes. I'm not sure. Or is it expressed in different ways? I don't know. (D2)

Some women activists asked: what *exactly* are we dealing with here? What *exactly* is sexism or feminism? What is men's relation to women? On the whole, there was a common understanding amongst the interviewees that there were

noticeable differences between the sexes and how they communicated and handled situations. Agreeing with the notion of male egos and bravado behaviour, which was made by most interviewees, this interviewee had experienced men being more aggressive in their interactive approach. For instance, when volunteering for roles/tasks "men are more gung-ho, they believe they have the skills etcetera, whereas women don't [volunteer in the first place]" said a Bremen activist, when exploring issues of gender equality in group situations. In contrast to ego-driven behaviour (which they had associated with men), for the interviewees themselves it was not so much about being proved right in conversations, but rather about fostering a successful conversation, as this interviewee outlined:

Sometimes they [men] are not that far apart but they're just so darn determined that their opinion is going to be heard [...] one of the most valuable things to do is just to say: 'this person is right!' Or: 'As this person said [...]' always give credit, share, where-ever it came from. (D2)

Another interviewee, who also was a councillor at the time of the interview, described the disappointment she felt in her own party and how it treated women speakers:

Even in my own [Green] party which claims to be supporting women, it happens that women get interrupted when speaking, when men don't [...] And it's in these initial distribution wars in meetings²⁰ that women are pushed aside, when women do not participate at the beginning of the meeting. (D3)

She described that she would speak up "if someone makes wide-sweeping claims "as a woman you should not do X or such, then I would challenge that on the very spot" (D3) when recalling interactions with political colleagues. Often conversation required an act of confidence for the interviewees. Speaking out required civil courage.

It was also common for the women activists to be misunderstood by men, as described in the following exchange between her and a male campaigning colleague:

²⁰ Translated from *Verteilungskämpfe*

This is a man thing! Because he [conversation partner] is not a real macho guy, at the same time he was trying to explain stuff to me, how's, like: I said 'I understand! I have a different opinion!' And [...] he seems to really think that I didn't understand what it was about! (D2)

A number of interviewees spoke about emancipation, campaigning pushing their boundaries and that exerting civil courage comprised a rollercoaster experience. It is through continued constant experience that you can grow and learn about yourself and your limits, "you constantly have to check, what can I achieve, what's possible, sometimes that also means to stand still and leave things alone" (D5). Campaigning required to take a position somewhere in between self-care and boldness because "you learn from experience the things that strengthen you and the things that don't" suggested D5, when thinking through relational campaigning issues in her interview. Women activists felt standing on a ridge between self-inspection and self-realisation. One step at a time, a conversational challenge could at least be made on a case-by-case basis. As assertively expressed by this interviewee:

If I get interrupted I simply speak in a louder voice, or I ask to be heard till the end; these are the kind of things that many women would not do [...] I want to contribute my ideas, and to do so I have to be prepared to defend my opposing view. (D3)

The women activists expressed difficulties in challenging a certain conversation culture that surrounded them in their campaigning. They often experienced the communication culture around them as egocentric, when they favoured a relational approach. The conversation style that the women activists had experienced tended to leave the original questions unresolved, whereas their focus was on resolving issues. Participating in conversations might require acts of courage on part of the women activists, who had to claim and fight for their space/time in conversations to be heard. The interviewees described the reactions by their male conversation partners as aggressive/defensive and often missing the point.

8.3.6 Overcoming exclusion

The interviewees wondered what concretely could be done about the exclusion of their needs. When I inquired about her entry into cycle activism, this

interviewee replied that she became first activated through following social media, then by meeting people in person and through finding that “sense of togetherness across whatever other boundaries there are, and I suppose I found that a bit in the cycle campaigning community” (UK3). When exploring management issues of cycle campaigning, another interviewee talked about experiencing isolation and lacking a sense of “organisation, planning and, you know, sticking to what you had said you would do” (UK1). She then found “somebody you could rely on” (ibid) which eventually led to the formation of the cycle campaign in Newcastle. Another interviewee had recently witnessed organisational change in her longstanding campaigning group in Germany, and she welcomed this newfound clarity, “the fact that it is clear now is, that is the good thing, that you can take out there [to the wider public]” (D2). Clarity in organisation gave a sense of common purpose and solidarity to these campaigners.

Demands were made by the women activists for a wider inclusion of their realities, exemplified by the interviewee who expressed the "need to honour and understand people's experiences and their reality" (UK3) when talking the conduct between people in her interview. One interviewee simply put it like this: we have to understand that “there are different normals” (D2) drawing on her personal experience of living abroad. Using the plural, she expressed that, in her estimation, “normal” was not one dimension, it was many: it was diverse. Another interviewee also commented on the need for diversity:

Diversity of interests is part of a democratic system, these interests must be fought for, and it needs spokespeople [...] we are currently losing the understanding of diversity, the notion of different groups, the struggle between these groups as part of democracy and people who get active for different interests. (D5)

Diversity was something the women valued highly. To the activists, diversity involved boosting the number of women, but subsequently also meant the inclusion of other groups, such as children, elderly and other restricted mobilities. This was underlined, for instance, by the interviewee who expressed that "it's important to have a campaign with different people because different people bring different perspectives" (UK2) when exploring council relations. The

claim underpinning the quote is that diversity results in a more nuanced perspective, which was a view jointly held by the women activists.

More political diversity could be helpful too, some women activists intimated. This interviewee, for instance, described her experience with different councillors, she had noticed "that the women [councillors] largely are different to councillors you come across, they all seem to see in a different way, get [understand] different things, particularly because they had children they look after elderly parents" (UK2). But diversity also needed something to rally around. As one of the woman activists explained, she would "rather have it transparent: [because] then you can argue against". The women activists saw "creating the vision and then moving it forward" (D2) as the necessary step fostering solidarity amongst activists and decision makers (see section 8.3.4, particularly). Diversity needed something to unite around or it would be fragmenting, as experienced by many of the woman activists.

Some interviewees suggested that through experiencing other places, people could diversify their views, and learn. Experiencing a foreign place could prompt reviews and questions, and according to this interviewee:

[...] extensive period lived in the different culture and I think that brings also ways of observing, more through the eyes, at least the willingness to question things, because [in new surroundings] you get jarred all the time by little things. (D2)

Experiencing other places diversified and emancipated your own views. Spending time in another place holds the possibility of a growing and learning experience; for example, one German interviewee described having a "rude awakening"²¹ (D1) when first cycling in an English city. She explained the significance of her experience abroad: "had I just stayed in Bremen, I wouldn't have become a cycle activist [...] it totally changed my view" (ibid). She went on by recalling an exchange project she had organised between a German and an English city:

[During the exchange project] suddenly the English adolescents began to perceive their environments differently; when in Bremen

²¹ Translated from *böses Erwachen*

they felt more accepted by their environment [when cycling] and more ostracised by the English road environment [... whilst the German adolescents when cycling in Darlington] felt non-existent, not seen or accepted; of course, there are parallels to how women have been treated in previous decades. (D1)

Experiences of places elsewhere can also be life-changing, as this interviewee pointed out when drawing on her personal experience as a foreigner living abroad: “what you didn't realise when you weren't there - there is no going back, and [now] you don't really fit anywhere” (D2)²². After having seen Dutch cycle infrastructure first-hand, this interviewee reflected on changing effect this kind of experience could have:

We stayed with our [Dutch] friends and they had a cycle path outside their front door and I thought wow I just did remember thinking wow! That's amazing we could have that! [...] you start really noticing the world is not designed around people with young children, old people, you know, it's not really designed and you come up against that you know, and I think to a large extent people who don't experience that, they don't notice it. (UK2)

Even new infrastructure in your own city, could also prompt change in thinking. The new experience would create new thoughts and ideas, highlighted some interviewees. For example, this interviewee said:

I cycle down John Dobson Street [on the new kerb-separated cycleways] [and my daughter] was so cute yesterday, she said: hmm Mummy, this is the only one like this, isn't it, in Newcastle? The only one. Why is it <laughs> the only one? Why is there not more? [This one is great] because I can cycle down here and there's no cars. (UK2)

For the interviewed women activists, their current everyday reality of travelling around the city was fraught with distress and impracticalities. In fact, they felt excluded in many ways: the urban design, and also the processes and cultural practices of politics and decision-making that had created the exclusionary urban environments. The interviewees speculated about what could be done to overcome that unfortunate situation. Not surprisingly, they demanded inclusion

²² This comment chimed tremendously with me, having lived in Newcastle nearly half of my life and coming back into contact with Germany as part of the PhD.

in male domains such as transport decision making, diversifying of the transport-politics culture exposing it to experiential learning and more open attitudes.

8.4 Vehicular cycling

8.4.1 Homogenising and individualising

The women activists I interviewed recurrently mentioned a certain type of cyclist. One interviewee called this type the “lycra people [...] some are women, and majority men” (UK1). This group, more specifically, often consisted of “men [who] were running things, happy to be riding with the traffic, don't want to be slowed down” explained D2 when exploring relations with other cycle campaigners. Typically, expressed some interviewees, these male lycra cyclists were keen to uphold a certain homogenous perspective on cycling in their campaigning. For example, in this interviewee's experience, a specific group of cyclists would claim that cyclists “all want the same for cycling, that the people who want to cycle are all the same” D5 recalled when exploring campaigning issues. Solely seeing, even insisting on, the cyclist's perspective was common amongst this particular group of cyclists, many interviewees claimed.

One interviewee outlined the homogenising thinking of this group, explaining that in her campaigning circle (before forming the Newcastle Cycling Campaign) “there already was a lot of acceptance of things like roads couldn't be changed or wasn't even an issue” (UK1). As such, the “lycra people”, current cyclists and usually men, had narrowed down the landscape of possible solutions by discounting urban design from the campaigning repertoire. This had the effect that when UK1 got first involved in cycle campaigning, she reacted in a trusting and unquestioning way, she initially absorbed the message that “more people could cycle if they could just give it a go, give it a try [...] I wasn't quite thinking what other elements are important to get people into cycling” (UK1). Focussing on the cyclist (and making others into cyclists too), meant that urban design was not a campaigning option. The exclusion of urban design left the focus on individualised solutions. This interviewee recounted the typical position taken by fellow cycle campaigners: “If people don't want to cycle like we [cyclists] want to cycle [...] then they must be educated and taught, so that they act differently” (D5) when exploring issues of cycle campaigning. The interviewees however

expressed their disagreement with the individualised solution of training and education. For example, this interviewee put forward:

Many of us are excluded and labelled weak [by the cyclist rhetoric], and that apparent weakness is unworthy and 'less than' [...] they are not only denigrating women, but rather everyone who they label as weak, worthless or meek [...] their concept of human nature allows saying to others that the others are deficient. (D5)

One interviewer gave that group of lycra-clad campaigners a collective name, calling this phenomenon “vehicular cyclists”. This terminology was more readily used amongst some interviewees than others, but all could describe the phenomenon as “a theory that cycling is safer on the road and that people must be trained in cycling with motor traffic” (D1) when exploring cycle campaigning history. Many recalled the conversations with the vehicular type of cyclist to be tough and challenging. The vehicular-cycling activist did rarely compromise or “agree to disagree” (D5), to the extent that “the VC [vehicular cyclist] movement is [...] almost fascistic” in their demeanour (ibid). There was a totalising, machismo and non-conformist attitude in the vehicular-cycling personality, which “extends to the type of cycling they do: contingent on confrontations with cars [...] insisting on rights [...] rebelling against state authority” expressed D1, when exploring issues in campaigning.

In fact, the cyclist perspective and associated identity (by the group of fast male vehicular cyclists) had exasperated this interviewee early on:

I was also quite irritated [when I started cycling ...] I didn't like the idea of becoming a cyclist and it put me off [...] I never really liked that I was aware, even before I cycled, that there was a thing, you were a cyclist, or you were not a cyclist which is kind of funny now I think about it. (UK2)

An interviewee outlined that vehicular cyclists themselves experienced exclusion which was originating from the exclusivity of their cycling practice, so that “vehicular cyclists suffer from not being fully accepted in society [...] from the start, not taken seriously, [it does not appear to the vehicular-cyclist campaigner] that there could be good reasons, and that others are capable to know their own needs and that they are smart too” said D5, when recalling

experiences with vehicular-cycling campaigners. This reaction to protect a social identity can be understood in the context of cycling's "stigmatised identity" in the UK (Horton 2007; Aldred 2013a). For the German context however, it is interesting to note, that this effect was reported to be present there too, despite the higher levels of cycling and the normalising effect that should result.

8.4.2 Political influence

It only took a few vehicular cyclists – a small minority in wider society – to wipe other interests and voices from the social and political plane; one interviewee talked about her unpleasant experience with vehicular cyclists and called it "shocking, how a minority can so forcefully dominate the debate for 20 years and thereby destroy a politics promoting cycling for all" (D1). According to a couple of interviewees, the vehicular cyclist lobby had been successful in the past. To these interviewees, the success of the vehicular-cyclist lobby was demonstrated by a city senator proclaiming that "cyclists are safer on the road" (D1, D3), reciting a vehicular-cycling mantra without hesitation. The 'cycling is safer on the roads' statement was asserting precisely what the vehicular cyclists sought, cycling on the road and not on cycleways - and the politician had adopted the statement and was using it. The endurance of the statement, also drew this reaction by another interviewee:

The number of times I have to hear 'someone is objectively safer on the road' despite the fact what I subjectively feel, it's like I could scream! (D2)

The persistence of this belief is "dreadful, [...] we activists now have our work cut out" expressed D1, when talking in the context of city governance.

Vehicular cycling (i.e. to cycle preferably mixed with motor traffic) is a documented phenomenon in the UK (Horton 2007; Aldred 2012). Here, it is of interest to note, that this phenomenon was experienced by all UK and all German interviewees alike; all women activists had come into contact with a vehicular-cyclist type of campaigner at some point. It was pervasive in the cycle campaigning scene. In 2017 when the interviews were held, this woman activist commented on the "cyclists are safer on the road" mantra of the vehicular cyclists:

I can't see anywhere that there is a central place that is putting that message out. It just seems to have spread [...] it's just like I said I can't figure out where it comes from - it's just sort of there now! (D2)

Vehicular cycling was the common campaign message in previous years in the UK (see also section 3.5), and as the interviews uncovered, it was present in Germany too. However, the German interviewees reported on recent changes in cycle campaigning at the national level. The national ADFC²³ adopted a clear pro-cycleways policy and 'cycling for all' agenda in 2016/7. But change is slow, and some local branches of the ADFC have continued to be 'manned' by vehicular cyclists. Changing an organisation's direction is not straightforward, when for many years the local ADFC branch "has always promoted this position [of vehicular cycling], and now to say that they were not totally right doing so, that's hard to admit" (D2). With local voices continuing to promote vehicular cycling meant that "for now we are cycling with HGVs and buses, which is awful" said D4, when exploring a local road scheme in her interview. All that was left for now was a deep divide between the old and the new campaigners. Tempers could flare on both sides, as this interviewee expressed her frustration: "largely speaking, VC types really aren't my type [...] their idea is idiotic." (D5) when exploring her relationship to vehicular cyclists.

8.4.3 New conversing with old

Most interviewees had experienced resistance when speaking to other cyclists. For example, this interviewee described being ignored when speaking to fellow, but vehicular, cyclists: "I felt frustrated, or I think I was probably getting a little bit bored of being the one trying to generate some discussions and some debates [amongst current cyclists] and being quite isolated" expressed one Newcastle interviewee (UK1), when I inquired about her cycle campaigning experience. Despite these feelings of isolation, the women activists expressed a strong desire for their views to be heard, often grounding their arguments in urban design. For example, this interviewee demanded: "I should be listened to as well [because] if I feel unsafe you're not going to get me out there" (D2).

²³ Germany's national cycle lobby

Given the resistance women activists had experienced in their campaigning, communication was a hot topic for them. For instance, when trying to communicate, a fellow campaigner had become reserved and defensive in a conversation, stalling progress in the exchange. One interviewee vividly described her experience thus:

I asked questions and sometimes I get a defence, and like I'm not looking for defence I am I'm just trying to understand, it's like explaining I'm not understanding something, explain so that I can understand, not, don't defend don't tell me why it's good, explain it to me [laughs] but yeah. (D2)

Frequently the verbal interactions did not make good common sense to the interviewees. Especially conversing with seasoned campaigners (often men), the women had experienced old and new ideas colliding in conversations. The simultaneous presence of old and new frequently resulted in defensiveness and tensions between the debaters. Inside their own campaigning circles many interviewees had experienced this tension between seasoned and newcomer campaigners. This interviewee recalled:

VC [vehicular cycling proponents] find it hard to admit that this is a totally new viewpoint for them, a viewpoint they have never been confronted with. (D5)

Disrupting the prevailing communication patterns (in cycle campaigning) also came at the price of feeling excluded, as some interviewees highlighted. Beyond cycle campaigning, outspoken women in society were routinely penalised for speaking out, "yes, you get told off, again and again" recalled D5, when exploring gender communication issues. Whereas, another interviewee recounted an instance, when the outspoken women activist had left a councillor feeling "a bit frightened of engaging with us" (UK2). Being shut down, ignored or avoided altogether has happened to all the interviewees. This was deemed hindering productive debates. The question of how to converse successfully, led the interviewees to ponder how the situation could be overcome. This woman activist suggests trying to decouple respect from support:

Well, these guys [seasoned cycle campaigners] have been working on this for a long time and so we should support them – well yeah, I can listen to them, and I can respect them, but I don't

have to support them! [...] my [campaigning] colleague, who said, you know they've been doing this for a long time, you have to listen to them. And now I'm going: that doesn't mean I agree, that still doesn't do it for me. (D2)

Some interviewees also hoped for better ways of managing disagreements. For example, this interviewee hoped it was more common "agreeing to disagree with vehicular cyclists, we are political opponents [with different viewpoints] - and that is perfectly ok" (D5) when we talked about communication conduct. But the process of agreeing-to-disagree was not always easy and certainly not commonplace, as some interviewees pointed out. For example, this interviewee found it necessary to explain to her conversation partner that "I understand [your argument], I just have a different opinion" (D2) when asked about internal campaigning disagreements.

The women activists struggled in their communications with seasoned campaigners. They routinely felt put down and ignored. The interviewees came up against defensive ways of communication, which the interviewees deemed unproductive. It was the communication culture between cycle campaigners that had to change, insisted the women activists.

8.5 Decision-making processes

8.5.1 Protect cars and business

When I asked my interviewees about their campaigning, there was a common sense amongst the interviewees that councillors supported automobility (over other transport modes) and primarily sought to protect car drivers and cars. It was a feeling that was unequivocally expressed in the interviews, many interviewees returning to this theme throughout the interview. Here I give two examples from German interviewees of these types of comments:

[Politics] categorically avoids anything that could hurt some drivers. (D4)

It is taboo [for councillors] to say that the car is not needed. (D5)

Speaking about her experience of UK local politics, this interviewee suggested that politicians cannot afford to take too many risks and that "politicians do what

interests them and what is in their interest – something totally uncharted like cycling is a risky area to choose in the UK and runs counter to car drivers” (D1). The interviews showed strong pro-automobility politics in the UK and in Germany.

The politicians’ focus on cars and subsequent neglect of cycling resulted in politicians resorting to “victim blaming” (Spotswood et al. 2015). For example, many interviewees reported that rather than politicians probing for structural reasons for cyclists’ behaviour (such as lack of crossing points or usefulness of infrastructure), the onus was solely put on the cyclist to stay safe. An interviewee said there are “certain subjects no-one wants to touch with a bargepole so [the council] simply conclude that it’s the cyclist’s fault, end of” (D4), or as another interviewee put it in more general terms:

We get to hear that in reply [from politics] to many of our existential questions: you have not been successful? It’s your own individual fault then! (D5)

Interviewees in both cities expressed that they felt economic lobbies had much to answer for with regard to automobility. Indeed, it was reported by the women activists that councils’ development and planning briefs also brought councillors into contact with powerful economic forces such as property developers and investors and their subsequent interest in generating profit. One woman activist recalled with sadness a case in which investors demanded that on a new development site, “tree felling was needed to maximise car parking spaces” (D4). The interviewees felt that there was an imbalance between economics interested in short-term profits and longer term environmental gains. In the circumstance of economic interests trumping environmental ones, another activist suggested that the councillors were “probably aware that it’s not that good [a solution] and if you are a councillor do you know how to change it?” (UK2). When I asked her about governance issues at the council, she wondered what hidden forces were at play. These comments raise questions about the power, remit and effectiveness of politics to balance citizenry and economic interests in a fair way.

Another example that some interviewees mentioned in relation to finance was councils’ reliance on income streams. Reflecting on the wider economic context

for cycling in relation to council budgets and balance sheets, the approach employed by council officers in Newcastle was to monetise programmes for business rates, which also created pressure to act quickly, as this interviewee had witnessed:

[Currently the decision-makers at the council] are all about jobs and businesses and this kind of indirect link between income from business rates [...] just crazy because it's really not a lot of money but because they are getting so squeezed I think that mad rush for developments and housing on the greenbelt is just purely motivated by that income. (UK1)

One interviewee reported having experienced the “power web”²⁴ (D3) when I inquired about government authority in relation to business interests. She described politics, executive council and other vested interests interlinking in her city. Listening to the interviews, it appears that councillors had ceded control to economic interests and cycling did not fit into this economic model of running the city.

8.5.2 Ineffectual politics

Many interviewees were wary of the effectiveness of decision makers. The women activists highlighted their expectation that the wider remit of politics was to manage resources for the public good and future generations. One interviewee, for example, pointed out that a “ward committee ought to have the public interest at heart” (D3) and, when exploring democratic processes, expressed her doubts about politics routinely acting in the public interest in reality. As described in the section 8.5.1 above, politicians put economic interests at the centre of their decision making, rather than using public interests as their starting point.

In addition to politicians’ pursuance of economic matters, urban space was a political subject, as one interviewee expressed: if you were to remove road space to create cycleways “you are taking something away from other people and the politicians don’t like taking stuff away from people” (UK2). The women activists understood that the removal of road space for cycling was politically contested; it subsequently needed an effective political system managing the

²⁴ Translated from *Filz*

public good for the long term. However, in an absence of effective transport politics (managing urban space in the public interest) this was difficult to achieve for politicians, the interviewees pointed out. Political ineffectiveness in spatial transport matters left voids in the political system – voids that new socio-political organisations began to fill, explained an interviewee:

The [proposal] really came from the people of the [citizen party] initiative. This new group wants to be active in grassroots organising, connecting and supporting people and such - they are also a political party. (D4)

One interviewee, however, recalled effective ways for a political party to get people involved in political discourse. She mentioned the use of “expert citizens”²⁵ who politicians “consulted with in our ward” (D3) when we explored local governance in her interview.

One interviewee recalled a time when the council was effective and had created a “responsibility map”²⁶ (D5). Although she did not necessarily agree with the details on the map, it was the map’s transparency and tangibility she had valued highly then, as “something concrete, something unambiguous that allows you to take a clear position towards it” (D5), it was effective. Comparing UK to Germany in our interview, one woman activist commented that the “understanding of deliberative, grassroots democracy²⁷ is different in the two countries, so much so that UK councils don’t take it seriously” (D1). However, these positive comments aside, the general experiences the interviewees had had with transport politics was overwhelmingly ineffectual and uninviting. The three examples of democratic effectiveness described above are from Germany. The interviews did not capture any examples of effective democratic process in Newcastle from the Newcastle activists. The third UK activist, however, described being part of a ‘round table’, getting decision makers and professionals together and seeking to improve the effectiveness of local democracy on transport matters, describing this instance as “an opportunity for me, I hope to act as a broker” (UK3). She also said, more groundswell and

²⁵ Translated from *sachkundige Bürger*

²⁶ Translated from *Vorbehaltsnetz*

²⁷ Translated from *Basisdemokratie*

bottom-up pressure needed to be built up first before the round table would be effective. Indeed, for the women activists it was important to make the current system workable and effective.

Many interviewees explained whilst councillors should be in charge, they had the feeling that councillors had lost the overall control by focussing on economic management, for example:

I don't think there is either a critical mass of councillors within the cabinet who really look at different aspects and not just focus on the budget and [...] that became a political default position.
(UK1)

Most of the interviewees were keen to mention their frustration with the ineffective management of transport programmes and the lack of communication surrounding these programmes. When exploring issues of council management, one interviewee described how she was annoyed when her campaign group was told by officers “that all money gets spent at the end of the financial year and therefore monitoring the budget or reporting on the budget every quarter was meaningless” (UK1). This way of monitoring a budget did not make sense to her, in fact it rather seemed to be the antithesis to the idea of monitoring altogether. Yet councillors overseeing the budget, she reported, did not intervene to effect improvements.

Notwithstanding the focus on economic management, one interviewee explained that she felt political parties were getting less effective overall and had lost connections with the wider population more generally, being out of touch with citizenry. She expressed that “parties do less [...] for example the German] Greens are quite established now, and they are less and less connected to grassroot initiatives and the voter base” (D4) when I asked her about local politics.

Having come into contact with ineffective politicians on a local road scheme, an interviewee pointed out how politics led to the exclusion and disregard of many citizens: “Now I know about how disruptive local councillors can be [...] I know it does not necessarily seem to always have a very good outcome for all the people within the city” (UK2) when recalling a councillor experience.

Interviewees recognised that the power to change road layouts lay with the

council and they would therefore comment extensively on effective council management, something that was essential in the interviewees' estimation.

Assessing what the interviewees said, the connection between citizen and councillor seemed more fragile in the UK, compared to Germany. One UK interviewee simply recalled her attempt to improve a road crossing by contacting a local councillor, and described an ensuing pillar-to-post situation:

[I asked] can we have a zebra crossing? You start to see why it takes a decade to get one because [...] I am not sure there is a process and that people [at the council] probably just fob you off a lot well I can't decide that, and I can't decide that, and they can't decide that - who decides it? (UK2)

The political lack of organisation and direction, lack of effectiveness, was identified as affecting campaigning too. This UK interviewee, for example, explained about the effects that a council road-building scheme had on campaigning resources:

All that Blue House stuff makes it really, really hard when you are having to react to something like that [...] what we really wanted to get [and] see done this year, so that looking at the routes and the networks, we put it [towards the council] at every opportunity and we are not able to do anything particularly proactive about it we are reacting all the time to the stuff. (UK2)

On another council scheme, the same interviewee had witnessed an argumentative ward councillor, unable to manage public opinion in an inclusive manner. She explained that the local ward councillor was "going on and arguing with everybody and that's a councillor trying to argue with residents, that the residents are wrong [it makes me angry] that it was all allowed to happen" (UK2). She expressed her disbelief at the situation being allowed to develop and when it unfolded that no decisive action was taken by the council to manage this situation. She described the alienating effect this had between residents and the council.

One of the problems, interviewees pointed out, was the way policies were not used effectively by a council. Policies seemed to lack in status (and hence policy implementation was slow or absent). For example, an important policy document could become extraneous, where the council's cycling policy "feels

like it's quite a bit of a standalone document that sits almost on its own in a sea of other policies and documents" (UK1).

The women activists rarely expressed sympathy for political agents. They clearly ascribed civic responsibility to politicians. However, this interviewee, did ponder that it was "not just about the money, it's also about what the decision makers spend their time on" (UK1) alluding to a possible lack of focus and effectiveness due to time pressures. Mostly though, the interviewees' sympathies for the council were ambivalent, because of the political incompetence campaigners felt they had witnessed on many occasions. As this interviewee explained, when an opportunity knocked in the form of a road-change project, it was the council's inability to work effectively with supporters and campaigners, which had the effect of creating an emotionally draining experience for everyone involved:

It doesn't help that you get the backlash anyway, but you don't carry anyone with you, if you deliberately go out of your way to make it, like, not a particularly cheerful experience [for people, ... council] just lay back and martyred themselves fought everybody willynilly, but didn't go: well we know those people are behind us let's talk to them see if you can you know none of that. (UK2)

In relation to integrating cycling into transport schemes, all respondents had their stories of disappointment to tell. An interviewee, for example, had recently experienced a highway scheme that had made her go "on the warpath with the painted-on cycle lanes" (D4) which in her estimation were inadequate for everyday utility cycling. The highway scheme was eventually built including the painted-on cycle lanes which quickly proved substandard, so that the only available option now was to "open the footpath to cycling, so that women and children had a chance to cycle along that route" (D4). Many interviewees criticised the politicians' ineffectuality in relation to road-scheme consultations and implementation, lack of consistency with policy and insensitivity about real-life experiences.

The women activists described how they had come into contact with ineffective and ineffectual politicians on many occasions in their campaigning. Road schemes were a particularly sore point where political effectiveness and sensitivity was quite absent according to the interviewees. The lack of efficiency

the interviewees experienced often caused tensions between the campaigners and the politicians.

8.5.3 Leadership wanted!

Weak or absent leadership had been witnessed by many of the women activists at their locality. For instance, when exploring experiences with councillors, one interviewee expressed that “it’s this being all things to all people that I don’t like [about local politicians]” (UK2) describing an absence of direction of the politicians she had experienced. The lack of political leadership was remarked on by all interviewees in one way or another. This lack led to other interests taking the lead and filling the ‘leadership void’, for example, as described this interviewee:

So [council’s] motivation is not we think a people-friendly city centre it’s a good thing for the city, is a good thing for businesses, that motivation comes from somebody else who might actually bring jobs to the city. It is completely indirect, it’s kind of, it’s not of their [council’s] own making. (UK1)

This interviewee, when exploring issues of democracy, expressed that in her estimation “representative democracy is all about political leadership, that parties lead from the front and do not run behind at the back” (D5). The call for political leadership was echoed by other interviewees. For instance, this woman activist said that Newcastle council lacks “that one person at the top of all those things, addressing it, I mean, who would that be [...] how high do you go?” (UK2).

In Newcastle, for many years the campaign group had lobbied the council to develop long-term plans for a cycle network, but to the complete surprise and shock of the campaigners the council had recently published a road-widening scheme for consultation. The Newcastle interviewee described the lack of council leadership in relation to the road scheme: council was “just fighting, individuals doing firefighting, but [...] you didn’t have anybody there or a number of people there going: ‘how can we deal with this problem?’” (UK2). In this case, the council had created their own problems, because not one politician was asking “how do we tackle this problem?” (UK2).

All women activists clearly expressed that societal change depends on people. In fact, one interviewee took this point further and pointed out that “progress speeds up if the right people are in place” (D4) when exploring political relations. Another interviewee agreed and said that “an individual in an organisation can make a lot [of difference], if at the right seniority and they have the right experience - they can change things” (UK2), when exploring council governance issues in the interview. She explained further recalling a site visit with officials:

When we went to Waltham Forest, well, they all sit under one person, the whole lot sits under one person. (UK2)

In the interview, she also wondered about the situation in Newcastle when the newly elected Labour party, in 2011, was energetic at first:

I bet [the new council leader] thought that, why not, let's do it, and then they tried to do it - and then it's hard [... when] the first obstacle is their own institution who does not want to do it. (UK2)

The women activists acknowledged that leadership was not easy as it involved challenging the status quo (for example taking on council transport departments). An interviewee when exploring issues of leadership, suggested that power is diffuse and “nobody is in full authority anymore, because they are all... that's only one point of view” (D2) evoking the idea of a power pluralism in transport politics (and local democracy more broadly).

The interviewees called for steady rational leadership, if not one effective leader. However, the interviewees also noted the risk involved in putting all eggs in one basket. As much as powerful individuals could make change happen, powerful individuals could also hinder progress, the interviewees noted. For example, as this interviewee pointed out, whilst “it's definitely about the people, [... but] certain individuals can block things sometimes” (D2) when reflecting on political relationships. Another interviewee further explained that interactions and practices at the council would unhelpfully congeal into a culture where “you have these different personalities who have been in there for a long time and some of them [...] have little empires and [...] nobody dares [to

challenge]" (UK2). People were people, we are fallible and err, expressed many interviewees.

Lack of political leadership was observed by all interviewees. Absent leadership resulted in road plans that would fray relationships between politicians and citizens/campaigners on the ground, interviewees reported. Transport matters were lacking political input and political leadership. The interviewees were in agreement about the importance of political leadership for the successful initiation of change processes.

8.5.4 A wall of officials

Interviewees raised concerns about working with a big bureaucracy, as expressed by this interviewee:

It might be because [the council] is a large organisation but it feels like having one part of it on board does not mean everybody else is on board as well. (UK1)

Their council was not accessible, some interviewees reported. For instance, Newcastle council had various departments: transport planning and highways engineering, but also car parking and traffic lights. The council presented a confusing picture to the activist standing on the outside of the council walls. For campaigners it was often difficult to fully understand who was doing what at the council, who to contact – even after years of involvement this could still be the case.

Many interviewees expressed difficulty in understanding the functions of the council. For those reasons, the council could feel rather faceless and overwhelming – a “wall of officers and councillors” (UK2). On their pursuit to understand the council, activists came across stuffy ideas and plans, as described by this interviewee:

You got to work with this institution [...] that has these plans in drawers that has been there since the 1965 and you know you don't necessarily understand. (UK2)

When eventually locating a council official responsible for the matter in question, action was rarely assured. For example, one interviewee described that she had come across risk aversion when dealing with transport authorities:

“Everybody wants to cover their butts, that [...] is my perception in Germany, nobody takes the risk [to do things differently]” (D2).

The women activists had experienced a lack of transparency in their transport authority. Communication with the council often seemed faceless and many interviewees expressed their annoyance with the impenetrable transport departments.

8.5.5 Exclusionary expert knowledge

Relating particularly to transport decision-making, the common description given by the interviewees clearly put technical officers in charge, as politicians had ceded control, as demonstrated in this comment:

I also get a feeling that politicians are there to almost rubberstamp proposals. They are not [...] I am not sure to what extent they steer things or giving it direction. (UK1)

Instead, it was technical officers (planners and engineers) who controlled the information and the narrative. This is, for instance, expressed in this interviewee’s quote:

Local councillors seem to me just relatively powerless, from time to time it feels like officers will throw them a bit of something you know <laughs> don’t say we never do anything for you <laughs> like that, but [...] it’s the kind of thing they do anyway, it’s, somewhere it fits in a programme it doesn’t seem to be very much. (UK2)

The same interviewee also made the link to technical systems and how technocratic considerations dominated the transport process. She called it “that expert knowledge thing”. The interviewee continued to describe that council officers “can shut you out with terminology and very easily say the modelling does this, and the this does this, and you don’t know the right questions” (UK2).

Politicians also came face to face with the supremacy of the technical “expert knowledge thing”: the technocratic system of transport design. This interviewee who was also a councillor at the time said, we “politicians are constantly told [the highway engineering department] are the experts, don’t criticise, they know what they are doing” (D3). Campaigners were also rebuffed by the council giving the reason of special knowledge, as many women activists reported.

Here, an interviewee described the focus on technological solutions and how cycling did not fit into technological modernity: “I suspect planners are kind of techie, they want all this tech stuff, electric cars and all that, and then cycling is [only] seen as a nice thing” (UK2). Some women activists pondered that they had experienced transport technology as a male domain. This interviewee, for instance, mentioned that in her experience there was a gender side to transport consultancy: “traditionally it's been men - I have been there [as a consultant], and it's difficult to get in there” (D2) describing a closed system. A couple of interviewees also drew attention to a lack of diversity inside the council pointing out that “the highway engineers are mostly men” (D1) and that at officer level particularly “they only hang out with people like them” (UK2) when exploring council governance issues.

One interviewee, expressing worries about the openness of technical systems with regard to data collection. She explained that she was “sceptical about data gathering and analysis, as it's not an open process” (D4) when exploring interactions with the council in our interview, alluding to accountability issues in closed systems in her interview.

Officers had been seen to use certain approaches to invalidate contributions invoking their expert status, as explained above, but also used other instruments. For instance, after I had described to the interviewee that “I would have liked to contribute to the project but then I am told [by officers] there is no time, or the plans are already complete and cannot be changed, that opportunity has passed”, she simply answered by agreeing that “yes, these are all typical tactics and the typical defences that are employed by officers to keep any contributions out” (D5). She said that she had experienced similar tactics of exclusion.

Another tactic employed by officers, some women activists mentioned, was the tactical use of fear, particularly in relation to road safety. Schemes were managed by holding the individual responsible whilst structural issues were left unaddressed. However, in addition to the officer commonly using fear and individualised responsibility to manage road safety, this interviewee added that the officer was also fearful themselves. Officers were afraid of the professional, public and political reply to a design proposal and that it is “a fear-based way of

presenting [road safety], and they are afraid of what they're going to hear" (D2). Essentially the officers were fearful of using a different approach and discussing design matters in public sphere, as their design reputation and expert knowledge was at stake.

The account of this interviewee questioned the internal working environment at the council; she had experienced a council officer who "threw his toys out of the pram because he had been told 'no' [by a senior ...] I don't know, I get the impression [that] internal relations are not great as well, team working (UK2).

Interviewees described their city council transport department as technocratic and disconnected from the issues that activists were flagging up to them. Technical officers sought exclusion by isolating themselves from public engagement using a variety of strategies. The women activists often felt excluded by the technocratic knowledge and the expert systems exercised by the council officers.

8.6 Discussion

Speaking with the eight women activists was a humbling experience. These women had dedicated a substantial part of their spare time, of their life, to lobby for cycleways to effect better cycling conditions. I was grateful for their involvement in my research, and felt elated, nervous and excited before the interviewing: I wanted to do my best to inclusively tell our common story. I felt the pressure of responsibility towards others.

From my own experience I knew how demanding campaigning can be on the daily time schedule and as a mental effort also. The commitment to campaigning, i.e. improving social conditions through political lobbying and providing peer support to fellow campaigners, was strong in every one of the women I interviewed. With their high aim to realise cycleways for their cities, they confronted the status quo: institutional automobility was their opponent. They also came in conflict with older styles of cycle campaigning, the vehicular-cycling approach. The frustrations I together with my fellow campaigners had experienced in Newcastle (Chapter 6), was now echoed by fellow campaigners elsewhere. We had experienced the same frustrations about local politics being unreceptive and the vehicular-cycling campaigner standing in opposition to our

aims. Now I realised that this frustration ran as a thread through our campaigning. We were frustrated by the status quo: institutional automobility.

Interviewing the women activists was also a very inciteful experience, not only on the matter of shared frustrations and common experiences. Through the process I had learnt new things. For instance, one interviewee's professional background was community development (in the environmental sector) and her overall stance to campaigning was a communal affable one (being frustrated by vehicular cyclists and officials). Others' background was programme management or urban architecture, teaching, or child development. Our backgrounds readily translated into our campaigning. We used our skills, professional and personal, to understand and advance the cause of cycling. Speaking to the fellow women helped me to see how my background (foreigner, woman engineer) influenced by style of campaigning. As an engineer, I wanted things to be technically sound, they needed to be logical and make good technical sense. Council's approach to road safety was frustrating because it did not make logical sense, which compelled me to write a paper on the subject (Leyendecker 2019). However, over my concentration on the 'technically correct' way, I may have overlooked social details. I may not have been 'socially correct': I was combative with the council, where I demanded answers, political and technical expertise. Arguably this is the stance that Newcastle needed at the time, when officials only had the roughest of ideas of what everyday cycling is and what it meant for the city and how it could transform society. A shock was needed, I still think that true now, to rattle the council cage.

I also learnt about taking personal experiences seriously. The women's insistence on their personal experiences being heard, left a major impression on me. I had not so much struggled with the legitimacy of our claims, but I had doubts about the communication of my personal experiences as, again, my focus was on the technical, true to my professional background. The women activists taught me that personal experience counts and can be made to count. It also fosters solidarity. Individual experience can count beyond the individual: a campaign group can be formed and amplify these personal voices collectively. People come together in solidarity and purpose. In a way, this is what we did in Newcastle when we founded the Newcastle Cycling Campaign, however it took me some time to fully accept the legitimacy of that approach and find a balance

between the technical and the personal. In parallel, I also came to this new understanding by engaging with feminist literature. Making the personal political is a motto coming out of the second wave women's movement. Academic feminism talks about the importance of accounting for personal experiences (Hekman 2007). In my case, I accounted for my own cycling experience in Newcastle and wrote to the council. I made my voice heard. Together with a fellow Newcastle woman we collectivised our personal experience into a campaign group: voicing our concerns to the council. Through the practical interview process and my theoretical reading, I can now understand and agree with Hekman:

Objectivity, feminists revealed, is male subjectivity. (Hekman 2007:536)

Through the research process, the confidence about the worth of my own experience grew, especially as our story charted exclusion and expulsion to which the women activists provided some shelter and certainly solidarity.

The thread on leadership in the interviews was an interesting one for me to discover too. In my campaigning, I felt uncomfortable about the leadership issue. Did we need a leader? To me that was a risky ask, as leaders could be for good or for bad. Clearly, women activists asked for a good leader – someone who entertained the idea of spatial reapportioning. How could we be certain to get a good leader? What was leadership as opposed to a leader? How does it link to democratic process? These were issues I had not considered in my campaigning. I will turn to this thread in the final chapters.

8.7 The final framework

The women activists constructed their arguments using their own logic and their practical everyday experiences as the starting point. They talked about their involvement inside cycle campaigning and with local politics. They identified the vehicular-cycling campaigners, technocratic officers and ineffectual politicians as three main barriers to building cycleways. The interviewees wished for more transparency and more cooperative modes of exchange. They desired their experiences to be accounted for much more than was the case currently. They also wished for more mutual learning and cooperation to take place.

From the three data streams (video diary, blog and women activist interviews), a final framework can now be assembled by merging the women activists' views with my own experience, i.e. the outline framework (figure 7.1). The framework is shown in figure 8.1 (excluding vehicular cycling) and figure 8.2 (vehicular cycling only), below. Solely for practical reasons of space and legibility has the framework been split in two figures. As in the outline framework (figure 7.1), the four spheres are listed at the top, representing four different groups of people.

Some women-activist themes were overlapping with the themes from the outline framework. As shown in figure 8.1, for their similarity I matched the theme 'decision making process' to the previous theme *politics and democratic processes*. Whilst the original theme gave practical examples, the new sub-themes can add more detail and nuance. Especially the sub-theme *exclusionary expert knowledge* augments the richness of the theme, talking about the relationship between officers, politicians and campaigners that the women activists recalled. The women had highlighted that the process was inaccessible (*ineffectual politics* and *a wall of officials*) and skewed towards *protecting cars and business*. For the democratic process to be successful the women *wanted leadership*.

A new theme in this chapter 'campaigning, communication and exclusion' extends the theme *communicate to connect* into the personal sphere. The women activists talked about their own experiences: they stressed the importance of *spatial ambition and vision* and that it entailed *lobbying people* putting across arguments in a *logical and practical* way. But their *realities had been excluded*. The interviewees also spoke about ways to improve the situation: the sub-theme *overcoming exclusion* hence contains practical information in answer to the research questions. It contains aspects of community/solidarity, valuing diversity and different experiences to foster productive debates. A previous theme, *women and feminism*, was not directly touched on in the women interviews. It however appeared as a sub-theme, called *gendered styles*. The women activists were much defined by being women and the forms of exclusion they had experienced in their campaigning

Figure 8.1. Combined framework – part 1/2 (excluding vehicular cycling)

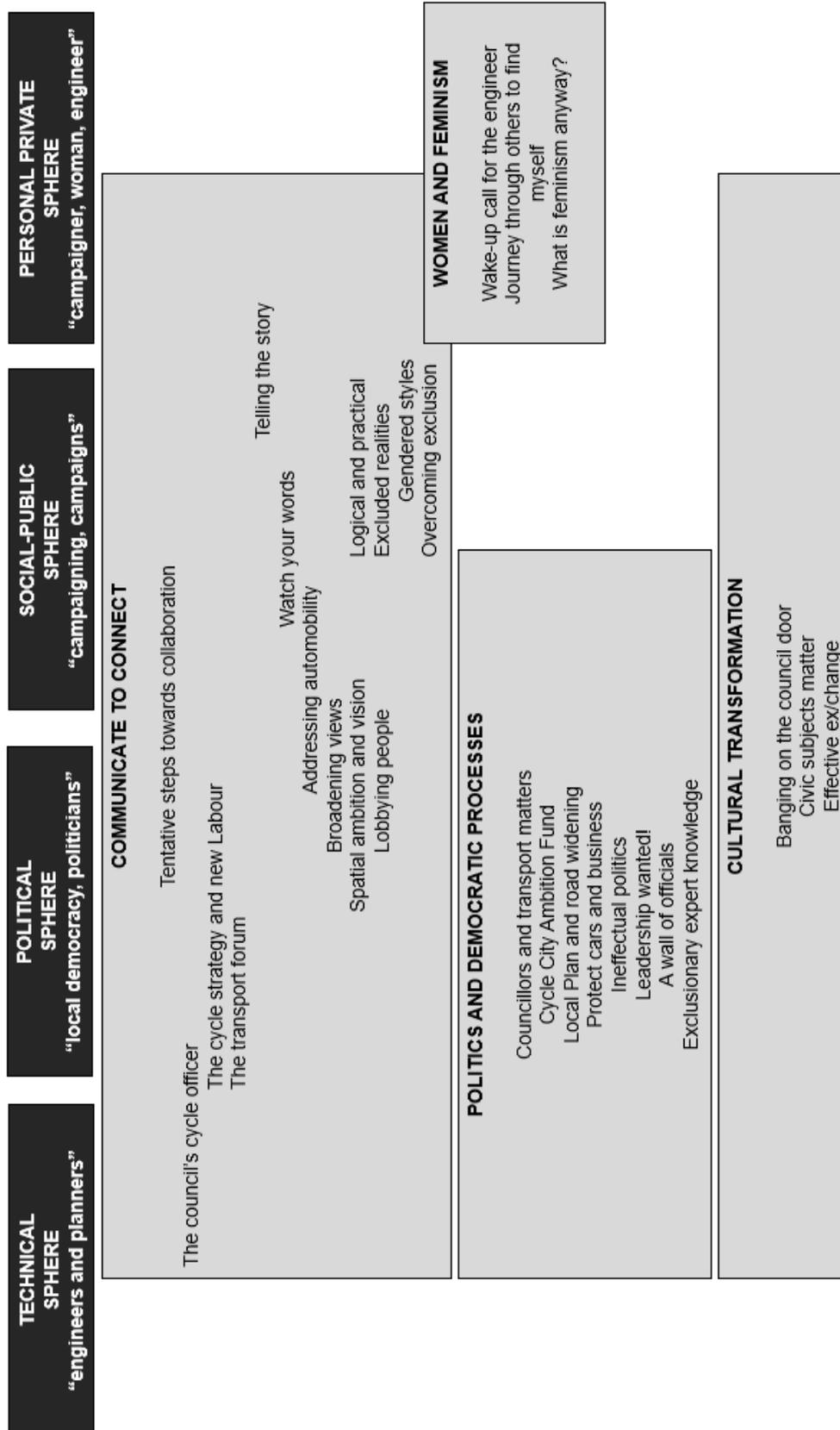
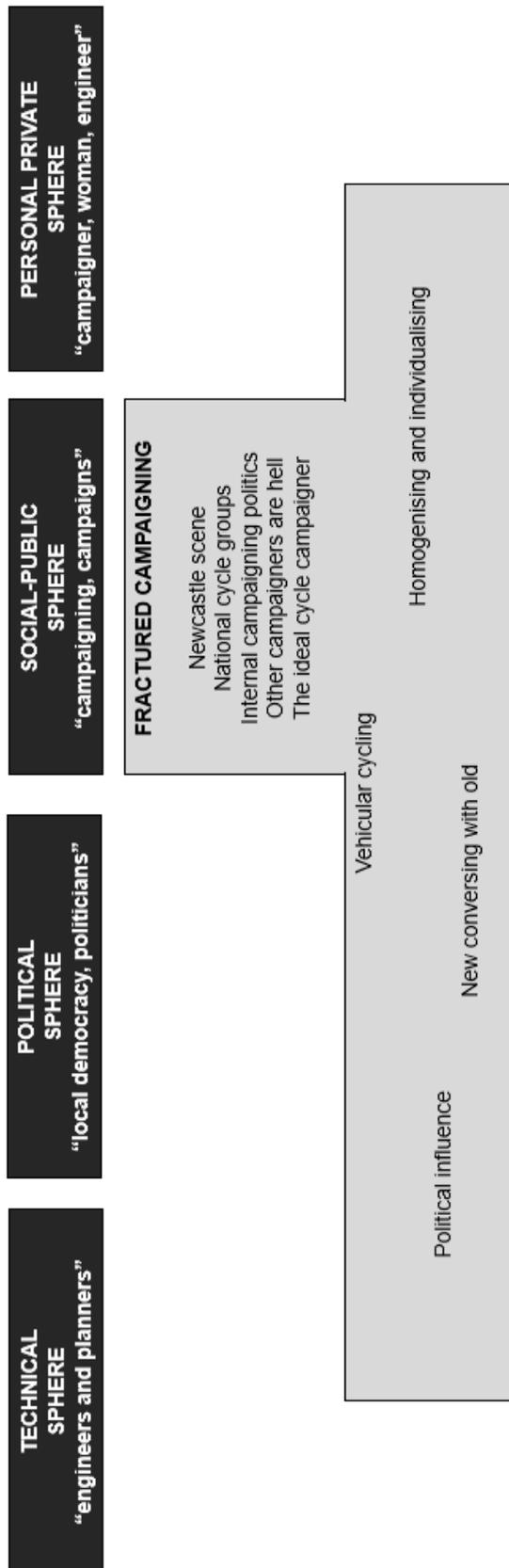


Figure 8.2. Combined framework – part 2/2 (vehicular cycling element only)



for cycleways (and everyday life in more general). Differences in communication styles were mentioned in particular. My interviewees were aware of feminism and women's rights, some more than others. Overall though, it was not so much feminism but rather the exclusionary experience of being a woman that was described in the interviews (and hence led to the placing as a sub-theme outside the original *women and feminism* theme). However undoubtedly, they overlap, as indicated in the framework.

One theme in the outline framework *cultural transformation* was not touch upon by the women activists. Just like *women and feminism*, this theme remained a personal way post on my private journey rather than the fellow women's.

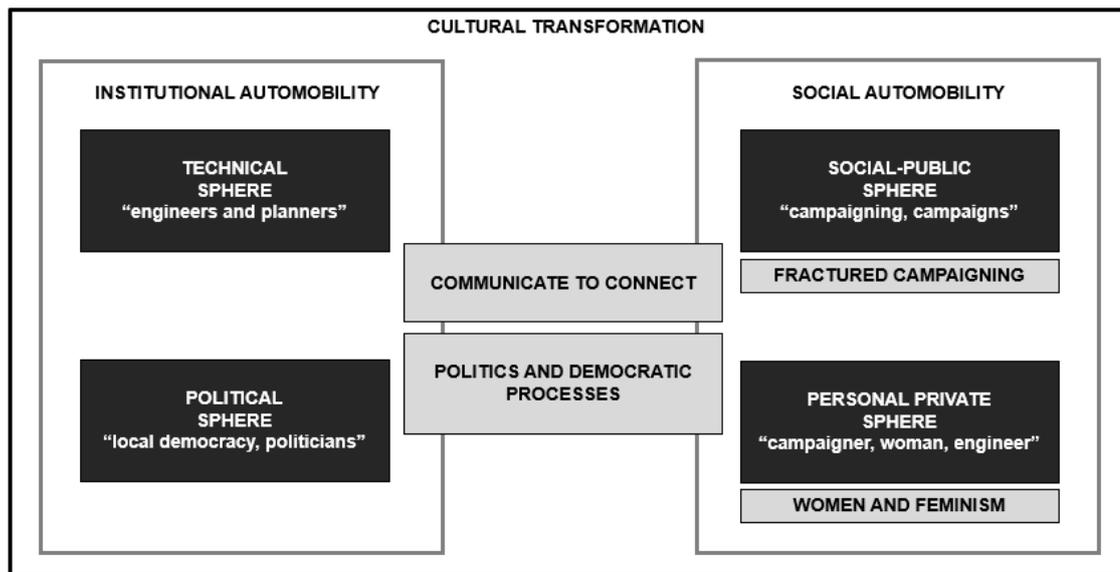
The final framework continues in figure 8.2. The figure covers the 'vehicular cycling' theme in original theme *fractured campaigning*, relating to the incongruent campaigning landscape. Vehicular cycling had some prominence in the women activists' accounts and was a major frustration for them - as it was in my own campaigning experience. However, the themes in the outline framework concerned campaigning experience only and had slotted neatly under the social-public sphere, whereas the woman activists expanded my understanding of the cycle campaigning landscape into the personal-private and the political spheres – making the personal truly political. The women activists expressed their dissatisfaction with the vehicular cycling approach and talked about the forced homogeneity of vehicular cycling. This ran counter to the value the women activists placed on diversity and debate (see 'campaigning, exclusion and communication' theme, merged into *communicate to connect*).

Whilst automobility dominates the space in cities, metaphorically it remains invisible in the framework. Just like in the outline framework, the practice of designing for the car (called *institutional automobility* in the text) is diffused into the background: it is ever present. In its essence automobility spans all aspects and spheres. It is implied and underlying.

The practice is spatially maintained by the technocratic officers (technical sphere), and tacitly supported by the councillors (political sphere) and vehicular-cycling campaigners (social-public sphere) by blocking discussions on the subject of cycleways. Automobility also has a social aspect: it is socially maintained. I call this social automobility, hence partitioning and detailing Urry's

(2004) two components in his “socio-technical system of automobility”. What was needed to achieve change was *cultural transformation*. I have arranged a final framework in figure 8.3. It allows for the bridging and overarching aspects to be represented by showing the relationship of the spheres to each other.

Figure 8.3. Final framework



The next chapter examines decision makers in Newcastle and Bremen (senior politicians and transport planners) to elucidate their understanding of cycling, cycle activism and local politics more generally. The views of the decision makers, as well as the policy analysis (Chapter 5), will then be compared to the framework in the final chapters.

9 INTERVIEWING DECISION MAKERS

9.1 Introduction

Narrative accounts of the decision-maker interviews are presented in this chapter before I turn to compare and discuss them. I interviewed four key decision makers for transport in order to uncover answers relating to the research questions: I wanted to understand how the decision makers described their approaches to transport cycling and building cycleways and what kind of engagements they had with cycleways activists.

The interviews took place in Newcastle and in Bremen and comprised of the senior transport politician and a senior transport planner for each of the two cities. In my fieldwork in 2017, I first held the interviews with the Newcastle decision makers, before travelling to Bremen. The interviews are described and analysed in chronological order in this chapter.

9.2 Method and participants

I used narrative analysis to preserve the interviews in their entirety: the narrative analysis allowed me to retain each interview as a whole, but also to interpret and condense it into a “thick description” (Geertz 1973). My overall approach to these interviews is detailed further in section 4.5.4.

In the following, I start with the Newcastle politicians and transport planner, then doing the same for the comparison-city Bremen. I then compare the politicians’ interviews to each other, before comparing the planners’ interviews. After that I finish the chapter with a short summary.

9.3 Newcastle

9.3.1 Newcastle’s politician

The interview with Newcastle’s senior transport politician covered substantial ground and provided an insight into the politician’s concepts of city politics, local democracy and the role of transport cycling. I started off by acknowledging his portfolio “Investment and Delivery”. I noted that it has no direct mention of transport in the title and asked how he had managed in his role as senior

transport politician to cover the wide-ranging remit of his portfolio. The politician's answer was that "investment and development with highways infrastructure are inextricably linked; they are one of each other" and that it "all moulds together" considering different modes of transport and accessibility. At that point, he had not yet fully convinced me of the simplicity of his substantial portfolio and I followed up by inquiring about potential conflicts between investment, delivery and transport. In my experience of local politics, transport was fraught with unacknowledged and unresolved tensions (see Chapter 5 also, for policy analysis). It felt as though the politician was smoothing over these tensions. He replied that "the conflict comes because the aspirations of the populus of the city and the users of the region, who may happen to come to the city, wanting different things". There are tensions. They do not lie in his portfolio, but rather in the different needs and desires of residents of the city and visitors from the region. I was glad, that tensions found a mention.

Throughout the interview he would return to the theme of different transport user groups, for example there was the selfish motorist or selfish cyclist. The politician commented regarding selfish motorists:

And I have come across people like that say that's it and when I mention the fact that it's gonna be an improvement for all we have to make sure the roads are safe we have to make sure it's reliable for public transport I actually had people turn around to me and say I don't care. I am not bothered about them I am bothered about me in my car and I want to get there. And these people actually do not even see other drivers. That's just them. And if talked in the first tense all the time to us. It's what I want.

The politician commented regarding the selfish cyclist:

I get views from cyclists [...] some cyclists will turn round and say "not them, we want rid of them and it should be for cyclists". It's for all.

The different transport user groups presented a problem to him as a politician, as they want different things. In his view, people leaned towards being static, not wanting change. He detailed his view on human nature thus:

It's human nature that people will be resistant to change, status quo prevails as the easiest route and individuals are a bit like

electricity at times: they take the easiest route and if status quo is an option then it would just go.

The acknowledgement of human nature feels appropriate to me. However, our views differ on the consequences. He said, as a politician he had “to reflect the views of all, and not just a few, or a minority”. This seemed rather simplistic to me: cyclists are a minority that should be enabled through the construction of cycleways. He further stated that elections are the “people’s chance” to get him out of office, and that he tries to “reflect the views of the people”. Again, this felt simplistic. He spoke about representative democracy only in relation to elections. But he also expressed tensions that he faced:

[As a politician] I try to deliver the best that I possibly can. But sometimes you will not suit all the people all the time but what you got to try and do is try to suit the majority of people.

The concept of his decision-making was hard to grasp for me. What kind of majoritarian decision making did he speak of? As Stone puts it: “The will of the majority can be adverse to community interests” (2002:367). In my view, whilst cyclists are a *current* minority, with the right assistance could be a *future* majority. But did he take the possibility of ‘future cycling majority’ into account? I had the impression that he was not talking about the future. In any case, the interview went into a different direction and I let the politician continue his thread of argument uninterrupted.

It was not always easy for the politician to exactly make out what people wanted. (This murkiness became particularly apparent in the council’s misconceptions in two council projects, more below). He talked about his strategy of “not taking it on as a conflict and a fight” but rather to “try to use [our interactions] as an opportunity to educate” people, for example, on public health choices and lifestyles. Whilst the minority/majority statement was clear: the politician made choices for the majority, he would also intervene by educating people.

It was less clear how the politician would determine what the majority view was in the first instance (which he would then influence by education). The interview turned to talking about council consultations when I specifically asked him about

how he would find out what the majority wanted. (For the sake of a smooth interview this meant leaving unquestioned the assumption that the majority should rule.) He began with an acknowledgement:

I think not just our city council but a number of councils have actually learnt how to put [our messages] across a bit better.

This was quite intriguing to me. He had stated earlier on that he ruled by knowing what the majority wants and educating people, and that he would find out what the majority wanted in elections. This baffled me: here was an instance, consultation, where the council was still learning and improving its processes, yet consultation was also a vital mechanism to understand the views of the people.

However, before talking in more detail about the politician's concept of consultation we briefly turned to exploring the structure of the council. I asked in relation to consultations: "How do you fit in expertise and maybe professional conduct?". I was interested to understand the relationship between politicians and officers. He confirmed to me that cabinet would have a final say on matters: "major policy decisions come through cabinet and that's a public meeting", and that he also relies on teamwork with expert officers. He said that he, as:

[the] political lead, may not be an expert in that field, so you need to have the people who have the experience, the breadth of experience, but also the academic understanding behind a particular area.

He praised his "great team" at the council. He stressed the importance of a focus on delivery of projects "because you don't just want them [projects] to stay ideas, you want to see them on the ground". (This implementation focus was pleasing to hear for me. Yet also rather aspirational: speaking from my experience with the council, policy implementation, in particular, was lacking in Newcastle, particularly in relation to planning and building cycleways.) Teamworking could be extended to contractors and consultants, he said:

Where we haven't got the expertise, we can actually bring it in. So, networking is so important as well.

Of his own volition, he then mentioned a recent council project, the Blue House roundabout scheme, in relation to team effort and consultation as a “good example” of teamworking. Blue House roundabout was a majorly contentious project (see also Chapter 5 and 6). It hence surprised me at first when the politician brought up the project. However, it also showed to me, that the council was working on improving its consultation processes, as the councillor stated earlier.

Historically, our views differed with regard to the Blue House council scheme. As an activist I obviously had come in contact with the politician before. We had history. The Blue House project, stemming from the Local Plan (Newcastle’s land-use policy, see section 5.2), consisted of improving the capacity of inner-urban junction for motor traffic, widening the approaches to the roundabout, felling a number of mature trees and reducing the green space of the Town Moor. In the estimation of the Newcastle Cycling Campaign (which I chaired at the time), the council had put forward a scheme based on the outdated practice of predict and provide. Not surprisingly to us cycle activists, and mirroring the enormity of the scheme, vocal protests erupted when the plans were made public by the council. After experiencing the strength of the feeling in the local community against the scheme, the council reacted by holding a series of meetings with community leaders over a year in 2017, led by an independent facilitator (with technical knowledge in transport planning and engineering). The group subsequently made recommendations to the council. The community has not heard back from the council at the time of writing (late 2018).

The politician recalled the Blue House scheme’s technical basis and public reaction:

The city council prepared a plan about what would be required if... if the trend would be continued which was increased car use, increased public transport, increase upon all forms of transport and it was something that people didn’t want to see.

For the politician, the scheme was technically-sound: something that “would be required”. He did not mention alternative practices to the predict-and-provide approach the council had chosen to adopt for the project. Yet the cycle campaign had pointed out the fallacies of the practice to the council for several

years. The politician, however, did not critique the council system, its experts or consultants, for using an outmoded practice. We hence differed substantially in our assessment of the fitness of the technical case for the Blue House scheme.

That people did not like the scheme was something that “everybody was glad about [because] what it means is ... is that if ... if we have a safe junction there then you are going to need people to change their mode of transport”. The politicians construed the situation as a social-personal problem of individual behaviour change. He also saw an opportunity to educate people in the importance to change their travel behaviour. For him the meetings of the working group were about getting across to the participants that it was them, the people, who had to change and that he, as the politician needed a promise of change before he would make changes to the scheme. The council would consider a new design if people of that working group promised to change their travel behaviour. In my conceptualisation of the problem, this approach is the wrong way around: urban design begets behaviour. But the politician made no mention of the normalising effect of infrastructure to generate behavioural change (the message the cycle campaign had been keen to send to Newcastle decision makers).

Beyond the politician’s focus on individual behaviour change, I wanted to find out more about his wider concept of the citywide management of transport. The Blue House location was situated in neighbourhoods, I posited, and asked: “But there is also transport going through there that is generated from further afield. How do you square that?”. The politician then talked about growth in his reply. He mentioned predictions of the future, city businesses and council interactions with neighbouring authorities. What he did not mention however was the spatial management within Newcastle boundaries. I understood, that this line of inquiry did not yield any tangible answers to my original question, so I directed the interview on to another council scheme, hoping to also cover citywide transport issues in a local community context. The project, Acorn Road, pertains a local shopping street where relatively moderate improvements had been proposed by the council (making Acorn Road a one-way street with cycle contraflow, with the number of car parking spaces principally retained, see also the transport planner interview (section 9.3.2 below), for critical comments about Acorn Road).

The politician described the council scheme: “it was a major shift [and because] people are resistant to change there was an immediate defence put up about status quo should prevail”. That a moderate scheme was described as a “major shift” was intriguing. However, it makes sense in the contentious context that surrounded the scheme through many ill-fated decisions the council took. The “major shift” was not a comment about the infrastructure, it was a comment on council consultation and community engagement.

From the view of the politician it was the people resisting the Acorn Road proposal. He did not quantify or segment the resistance. The politician however described the quality of the public reaction of some residents:

The consultation process that went on resulted in members of staff either being verbally or indeed what I would class as physically assaulted by people spitting at them.

He continued, that it was then “you realise that something is wrong” and “we realised that things could not continue the way that they did at the start of Acorn Road”. As a result, the council changed their approach as they “did learn quite a few lessons especially from the start of Acorn Road”. He concluded by saying “some of the business people down there have shook me hand and said, I am glad that you stuck with it because the place is better now”.

I asked him about the consultation process and what it was that council, and he personally, took away from the experience and what lessons had been learnt. He began by describing his responsibility: “I am an elected member and I am here to set policy and make sure that policy is adhered to”. This statement demonstrated policy-based leadership to me, and pleased me. However, I also knew from experience that Newcastle had an uncommitted relationship with policy (see Chapter 6). I remember thinking in the interview “this sounds good in theory, but does not hold up in practice”.

The councillor continued by delineating his own responsibility from responsibilities of officers’: “I am not here to deal with the day-to-day process of either consultation or whether or not installation or servicing of the highways; that is an officers’ job”. However, the severity of Acorn Road had meant that his “email address was, should we say, aggressively publicised” which was “not the

best use of my time”. The result of the email inundation was that council took a “very stringent look at the way people are coming up with ideas through the process and making sure that the officers are acting upon that”. I had tried to contribute to the Acorn Road comment website that the council had set up at the time of the consultation. My approach was to make people aware of policy commitments that the council has in relation to sustainable transport. I wanted to ground the debate in policy, give it something substantial to discuss. However, I did not receive any backup from the council, the website was unmoderated and comments had turned high-pitched and hate-filled. A local opposition-party councillor was very active on the website. In the end I gave up: if the council could not even confirm its own reasons for the scheme and side with supportive citizens, then there was little hope for grounding the shrill debate.

Returning to reporting from the interview: I wanted to understand more about his concept of the individual (versus groups) and asked how he saw individuals and groups coming together in civic society, forming associations, making views heard and holding power to account. The politician started his reply with “I think there’s an even more fundamental step behind the issue that you brought up there and I think it is the subject of your PhD, because I believe in total accessibility”, and continued

I believe in accessibility for all, irrespective of where they come from. Or who they are. So I [as a politician] try to make myself accessible to all of them people you have outlined.

This reply puzzled me. I had broadly introduced my PhD project as an investigation into “politics, activism and democracy” and the answer given seemed evasively pluralistic to me. At this stage, we were also unfortunately nearing the end of the allotted time. His secretary had already been in the room to announce the arrival of the next appointment. But the politician continued talking to me. He said:

One thing I do believe in - I see that for your project like you are doing for your PhD - is that, when people take on public office, people are turning round and saying: should an individual be involved with sections or sectionalisations or groups? - again that

word accessible comes in... and I am a great believer in equal opportunities.

He talked quite extensively about some of his first-hand experience in the trade unions and told me that “when you have people [...] in different sections then you can actually sometimes end up with sections spending more time fighting against section, rather than fighting the objective of the organisation.” The interview then swiftly came to an end with the politician declaring that “positive discrimination totally different from positive action” adding “that do you?” clearly signalling the end of the interview time granted to me. I thanked him for giving his time.

I left the interview, feeling grateful that the senior politician and I had a conversation about local politics despite our opposing positions (I had chaired the cycle campaign since 2010 lobbying the council). It was only later, when listening to the interview, that I realised there were contradictions in the politician’s views I could not resolve. I could have asked further questions. I have interspersed the interview description with my critical commentary.

9.3.2 Newcastle’s transport planner

I began the interview with Newcastle’s leading transport planning officer by inquiring about a specific council scheme, Blue House, which had also been a topic in the interview with the senior transport politician. In particular, I asked how the scheme working group, that had been set up by the council after the protests, reconciled demands originating from different levels i.e. local neighbourhood, city-level and regional levels. The senior officer started by acknowledging some “shortcomings” of that group as it only represented the local neighbourhood level – it was conducted in a “Blue House microcosm”: leaving the through traffic from further afield voiceless. He continued, that council would also engage “major businesses in and around the area” to compensate the shortfall in area coverage. In summary he said:

We do stuff [wider area coverage] through businesses mostly and we try and engage with various people in various ways about changing their travel behaviour.

Like the politician, the officer also put emphasis on individual behaviour change. He, too, was concerned and frustrated about how difficult it was to change people's behaviour. For the Blue House scheme, the officer believed that this meant bargaining with the local residents. He recalled the council's messaging: "While we [council] do it [building the scheme] why don't you change the way you travel". Returning to the working group he reflected on the spatial diversity of that group only consisting of local interests: "We haven't managed to necessarily get that representation on the group" but the council had been, for example "trying to get in touch with people who work, you know car commuters to come along to the group as well" (over and above the residents associations and active travel organisations). I got the feeling that the planning officers was concerned because car drivers were under-represented in the group. Overall, the planning officer, so far, matched the politician's recollection of Blue House.

I let the officer talk. He spoke about the council's original scheme in relation to the working group thus:

One of the things that is definitely coming through... through the working group is the idea that if people don't want to see that type of scheme - and it's good that they don't - then their decisions and choices on a daily basis are the things that can make sure that doesn't happen.

Interestingly his interjection "and it's good that they don't" indicated that the original council scheme was not necessarily an altogether good scheme in his estimation. Thereby contrasting the politician who had not made such an evaluating remark and relied more on the predict-and-provide practice as the accepted standard.

The officer "would quite like to see the working group actually continue" and not disbanded after the group would give their recommendation (the purpose that convened the group)²⁸. The planner could see use in the group and wanted to widen its focus for "various different debates that have come into play". A continued presence of the group could help the council in "managing [...]"

²⁸ At the time of writing (late 2018), the group had completed their review (early 2018), but further communications about council's final decision or indeed the group's continued existence had not been received

various different viewpoints”. He added that the “perfect solution [was] a mixture of infrastructure and people’s behaviour, meaning that, you know, climate change wasn’t happening – you know what I mean”. He took climate change seriously and portrayed it as a threat. I remember thinking at the time of the interview, that the politician had not mentioned climate change in his interview.

The officer continued by almost apologetically saying that change was “not necessarily happening overnight [...] we need to take steps in that direction through our infrastructure [but] our strategy is pretty clear coming from [the senior transport politician] and [other] politicians”. (A bit later in the interview he expressed similar sentiment: “Holland did not change overnight to being a cycling nation”.) The frustration was noticeable in his voice. I thought at the time that he wanted change to happen quicker, but had hit internal and external buffers. But also, that the Newcastle Cycling Campaign’s demands had not been met, and the planner was somewhat apologetic. After all, I had chaired the campaign group since 2010 and often found myself in opposition to council’s plans.

I wanted to find out more about the strategy that was “pretty clear coming from the politicians” and asked for clarification. He described the strategy in three words as “‘to not through’ [...] if people want to get to places [...] it] should not come at the cost of through traffic and that’s as true of residential areas as it is in the city centre”. By mentioning the city centre the interview had turned away from Blue House. The officer then excused to talk about the 1970s motor age of “road building schemes [...] and Buchanan”, that as a consequence had left cities and society with today’s car dependency. He then touched on road classification and network development - two points the local cycle campaign had lobbied the council for, over the years. It was pleasing for me to hear he took an interest and was aware of these campaigning points. The officers said what he had “talked about with [the senior politician] is roads and streets [...] we will designate a road network and that’ll be where vehicles drive, and the other stuff will be streets [where] vehicles won’t take priority”. The ‘to not through’ approach he said was “an interesting one chiming with a lot of the businesses”. On the whole, I began to have the feeling that the officer was bridge building with me: acknowledging campaigning issues as well as laying out his position.

The officer's mention of the 'to not through' approach had led us into a new part of the interview. We now talked about businesses. The view that the officer presented on city businesses was a rather unsegmented and homogenous one, conflating big and small businesses:

Obviously a lot of businesses are nervous about any kind of change, as are people really, but they often sit on a knife edge in terms of their retail and their cash flow and everything, so any changes can be people can be nervous about them and one of the things that has chimed with them is this idea of: we are not stopping people accessing you we are just potentially changing the means by which they do.

It was frustrating to me to see retailers being given so much attention. Retailers, I had known through my campaigning and researching, are inherently car oriented: excessively demanding car access and car parking. It was sad to see that this played out in Newcastle too. As a campaigner I had wondered about the influence and sway businesses held on the council (see also *Alive after 5* in section 5.2). The business-council talks were held in private, and there was little visible interaction between the council and business representatives - from what the campaign could see.

The interview returned to the business topic later. However, at this point, I gave a precis of the interview so far and asked if he could reflect on the connections between convincing people to change their behaviour and the "pragmatic and bold view" that he had briefly mentioned at the beginning of the interview. My reason for probing was that I hoped to find out about the strength of the political vision and how that affected officers. The officer began with explaining that "those bold solutions are taking place in the background and it's stuff that we are not necessarily talking to the public about, rightly or wrongly", acknowledging that not all council plans were always made public. I felt justified in the view that many business talks were held in private.

The officer continued by describing a meeting between planning officers of different cities where views on "smart cities" had been exchanged. At that meeting city officials "did quite a lot of lobbying [of national government] behind the scenes about what we might do". Suffice it to summarise at this point, that the council officer appeared comfortable to lobby government (for better

regulatory framework) and was also comfortable to converse with businesses about council strategies.

Following that, the officer then reflected on the relationship between council officers, politicians and society:

some of this is about making sure both the politicians and the public understand what you are doing but, generally, it will also take somebody with vision and conviction to lead these things through.

He saw himself in an information-dispensing role (to politicians and public). What grabbed my interest in the interview was that he mentioned “vision and conviction” as an ingredient, or possibly a pre-requisite, to “lead these things through”. When I inquired about who that somebody was at the moment, he replied “well, it’s not really for me to say”. Not letting go yet, I probed further: “Would you see that as a responsibility of a politician?” and he replied tentatively and somewhat evasively: “I think it’s something a number of politicians are working on at the moment”. The officer then added “you know, [the senior transport politician] has faced a lot of flak for things he has done, a lot of flak [...] he stood up to it all, and I think for officers, we try to support him”. He continued to make sure I understood that officers had also faced “fair amount” of flak, and added:

A lot of what we do is perhaps behind the scenes and that is right, we are professional officers employed to do a job we should not necessarily be the figureheads on any of this stuff. It should be people who are democratically elected to do it.

I recall thinking at the time, that I half agreed with his statement. Yes officers are “working behind the scenes” and “figureheads” are the politicians, but it also was transport officers operating in the shadows had done much damage to the city’s transport system over the decades. Continuing along the lines of vision and conviction, the officer proceeded by pondering the opportunities of the forthcoming “all-out elections” and a regional mayor. As for the mayoral position, he said “you know, having that person would be really good, because everybody would know what it is that we are working to, because somebody has been elected with a mandate to do something”. This officer was yearning

for clear political leadership, I remember thinking: he was frustrated with the lack of current leadership.

I continued with making a link to the politician's interview and his interest in "accessibility" and the constellation of the decision-making apparatus, carrying out the majority view and educating the public. I was interested in finding out about the officer's concept and experience of this political puzzle, i.e. knowing what the people want and carrying out policies and projects (both can be controversial). In this context the officer brought up Acorn Road, a council project where there was "massive opposition"²⁹ to what otherwise was "generally pretty limited changes to a district shopping street [...] not a groundbreaking design" and that a "year and half after the scheme is done everyone thinks it's great [so that] the issue there is that we probably didn't go far enough". The officer explained the process of decision making:

Ultimately, he [senior transport politician] is the decision maker and he has to make difficult decisions. And so that means, that sometimes, it is, you know, him making the decision often in the face of significant opposition but he is doing it for the right reason.

The officer continued to describe the situation after the Acorn Road scheme was completed: "There are loads of people – loads of people – who are happy with what we are doing particularly if they understand it, and the more people we are able to talk to and explain the rationale to the more people will generally think: well, having heard your rationale I think it is rational". This was pleasing for me to hear that the officer made the link between people, council and rationale. It portrayed the council as a participant in civic society with responsibilities (i.e. to provide a rationale). The council as an active player in civic debate, was what the campaign had identified as missing. The council often remained aloof and detached (also see sections 6.6 and 6.7). He also stated that "what people think the public view is, is wrong, but also the people who make the loudest noises aren't necessarily reflective of the population at large" acknowledging the difficulty of knowing who the majority was and what

²⁹ The officer gave no further quantification or qualification of the opposition. In my estimation the opposition to the scheme was small but vocal. In addition, the politician had also mentioned that the opposition had been aggressive.

the majority wanted, for example in relation to Acorn Road scheme. Next, he talked about the thankless task of an officer, and politicians, as the public could misconstrue the council and would rather express negative views towards the council than positive ones. The officer felt that:

One of the biggest things that we have done in the last two years, and it's taken a long time to build up the relationships to do this, that we have much better engagement with the business community now, much better, and that is really important.

The council had engaged with the business community and fostered a better understanding and partnering climate. This was progress, I thought, but also demonstrates the influence the business groups have on the council. The officer returned to the business topic rather than talking more about the relationship between the council and the general public. "Retailers", the officer repeated his words he used earlier, "often they are working on knife edges". He, again, vividly painted the picture of hardship for Newcastle retailers. It is worth noting that throughout the interview he did not speak of hardship of residents and communities. He continued by expressing that "these people at senior level of business have the ear of other people and can alter the way that they feel about things" because "people have networks". Council officials were involved in those networks through which materialised "not necessarily fully fledged or fully-over-the-top support but certainly an understanding of what it is that we are seeking to achieve". I was distraught, that the council would engage with businesses and excluded civic-society groups. This was a clear lack. At this point I acknowledged the importance of networks to influence outcomes, then asked the officer to think about how a consensus could be advanced in the active travel scene (rather than business networks), inviting the officer to talk about civic society and residents. The officer replied that "to some degree we are trying to create a coalition of the willing [...] again a lot of it comes down to personal relationships" and proceeded to describe the prevailing tensions for him as an officer:

In my role [as council officer] I have got to try maintain really good relationship with business people, with residents when I come into contact with them, with lobbyists with various specific viewpoints and with everybody in between.

So, there was a connection to civic society (residents, lobbyists). However, the planner swiftly turned to pluralism: “and with everybody in between”. To me this means that the council have not as yet segmented society, besides businesses. Because a social segmentation (for example transport users) had not taken place, the council struggled to fathom the seeming multitude of voices and to take them into account.

The officer was personable: he thought that “the really important thing is to listen to people trying to understand where they are coming from, [these groups] all fit into that same kind of melting pot”. As an officer he knew about “bad relationship that people have had and how that’s played out then in a public forum” so that he “would not underestimate the impact of personal relationships and we just need to maintain these relationships”. To improve on relationships, he had recently geared his team up for better community engagement and welcomed officers with non-technical skills. He explained: “What is really important there that they [community liaison officers] then become better in the language of what we [as transport professionals] are trying to do and influence our own language back at us”. He described the mutual learning process and diversifying of the transport planning team:

Plot out people involved in the development and implementation of transport teams [...] you get people who are often in a cluster [...] often in a similar area and what you need is to take yourself out and people who are completely different often then.

This, I think, could signal the beginning of a segmentation exercise: for the council to simplify the multitude voices so that reactions can be understood and gauged. He ended by critically expressing “we are a local authority and it’s... it wouldn’t be surprising to understand that most local authorities are quite risk averse, and that creates, or can create, an attitude of conservatism with a small c”. A comment I can relate to deeply, for example in relation to council’s approach to road safety. The interview ended with the officer’s contemplative words on spatial and social change in the city of Newcastle:

Turning that around takes times. And a lot of stuff people don’t see [...] and that’s what we are trying to do.

Overall the interview was a surprisingly open exchange between a planning officer and an activist-academic. The lack of political leadership was palpable despite the officer's overall positive comments about politicians. There was much that the officers said that I could relate to, however the focus on businesses was disappointing to me as a campaigner and academic. Despite that, I could also make out the possible emergence of the council working with the public (residents, lobbyists).

9.4 Bremen

9.4.1 Bremen's politician

The interview with Bremen's senior transport politician started with the clarification of his title (*Senator für Bau, Umwelt und Verkehr*) and the clarification of Bremen's political structure. Bremen has a three-tiered governance structure consisting of regional, city and ward levels. The senior politician held responsibility on regional and city levels, however his political work consisted of "90% city level work [*kommunale Aufgaben*]". He described the interactions between city and ward levels, where "quite often there can be areas of disagreement [*Streitigkeiten*] and then we have a debate about where the responsibility lies". These arrangements "are always a challenge to find the right balance between the elected representatives and the citizens".

The politician spoke freely, and did not interrupt his flow, so that he continued by outlining Bremen's cycling situation, reiterating details and figures from the VEP (Bremen's transport policy, discussed in section 5.3). He described his tasks were to "get bikes from the cycleways on to the roads" giving reasons of "objective safety", cycling speed, spatial and financial limitations. This framing of safety and behaviour sounded familiar to me, having analysed the VEP (see Chapter 5). Later on, the interview returned to the subject of preferential on-road cycling, when I inquire about his statements. The politician wanted to educate drivers to respect "cyclists and cycle lanes" and wanted to educate the public that cycling was safer on the road. Part of that plan is to designate more roads as Cycle Streets (*Fahrradstraßen*, where cyclists have priority over drivers, are permitted to cycle two-abreast and 30 kmh speed limit applies). He proceeded to speak about Primary Routes (*Premiumrouten*), a primary network of cycle routes that Bremen planned to create. To demonstrate my interest to

the politicians, I briefly interjected that I had familiarised myself with the VEP as part of my research, which led the politician to talk about the origins of the VEP and his involvement and leadership in the process.

I was interested to hear the backstory as told from the perspective of the politician responsible for the VEP. In his analysis, when he took office as senior transport councillor in 2011 (he was wholly new to the city at the time), Bremen “was dominated by petty transport issues that had reached a fever pitch”. As the lead politician responsible for the VEP, his first step was to set up a steering group consisting of interest groups, who had often been at “their throats”³⁰. He however wanted to create an atmosphere of collaboration. In advance, He made clear to the interest-group representatives, that he “understood that they are lobbyists, and that is ok in the VEP process”. But his main goal was to ensure a sound process for the VEP and urged the steering group members to work together so that “all voices are heard in a productive discussion and does not end in ideological disagreements”.

The environmental groups, he recalled, were very active in the early phases compared to the Chamber of Commerce³¹ and the automobile association (*ADAC*); both did not participate much in the beginning. He told me why, in his opinion, this had been the case. The reason for that initial disinterest of these traditional groups representing business and driving, had been that these organisations had expected the status quo to prevail, the politician ventured. Despite the uneven start and the divergence of groups’ interests, goals were eventually agreed amongst all the groups’ representatives, making “all this an exciting phase, very creative too”. I could clearly make out that the politician was proud of this achievement. He was “immensely happy and relieved” and reckoned that “even if no further agreements would have been reached, we nonetheless would have had a catalogue of demands to show for”. I remember feeling impressed, as I compared the cooperative effort, leadership and achievement with the situation in Newcastle that I had experienced.

For the second engagement phase of the VEP, the council went out to the public. It consisted of collating citizens’ comments using an online mapping

³⁰ Translated from *Streithanseln*

³¹ Translated from *Handelskammer*

system, the politician reported, still talking uninterruptedly. The thousands of “relatively qualified comments [...] weeding out the ones that read like online newspaper trolls” were clustered and included in the VEP. I felt that the politician had a good understanding of people’s online behaviours, especially as I compared it in my mind to Newcastle City Council’s pained online engagement for the Acorn Road project (see above).

The politician’s description of the VEP process was of interest to me and contained useful viewpoints for my background research on the functioning of local politics in Bremen. Without my interference, the politician then proceeded to talk about his involvement in bringing about a solution on a longstanding transport hot spot: citizens had requested a pedestrian crossing over an inner-urban highway that isolated two communities. He described how he had familiarised himself with the problem in advance, then invited “people with disability aids and pram-pushing mums” to a walk-about of the conflict area, organised the press to be present, and arranged for officers to carry out calculations confirming his initial instinct (time saving of drivers versus pedestrians). The Chamber of Commerce had been the main objector in the past, and upon presenting the details were urged by the politician to see sense. In my mind, I was impressed to see such an actively involved politician, grasping and shaping a local situation. The politician said to the Chamber of Commerce that “we will build this crossing and if I should hear from you that the SUV driver’s time is more important than the old lady walking across, then I will fight you all the way [*fertig machen*]”. He concluded “we took an old ideology [of time savings] and presented figures, we made it about everyone’s participation in public space, you cannot argue with that aim”. The politician recalled that he had given a speech at the beginning of the VEP process invoking a communal feeling where he had “reminded everyone that we all play many different roles in transport each day and it’s not just about us but also about our families”. He enjoyed the installation of the new crossing, said “it was a moving experience” and added: “I am delighted about each time a red light stops me in my car at that location, because I know it means a pedestrian can now make use of the green light”. I could not help but feel captivated by the politician’s commitment and involvement to express his values and interests. This was quite apart from what I had observed in Newcastle: the Newcastle politician was comparatively

reserved and was careful to express preferences in relation to groups and residents.

Returning to the VEP process, the Bremen politician outlined the bottom-up process that was used to assemble the goals. In his estimation, it has been a consensus-building process, that had kept everyone involved and satisfied. He described another old disagreement: traffic flow at a tunnel bottle neck. He had resolved this issue by employing another strategic move: he used a traffic trial to take the heat off the debate, collected and analysed data to quantify³² the problem. All this tactical planning he “enjoyed very much, it needed some clever thinking³³ to get sorted!”.

He also then mentioned that the VEP won a European prize for how publicly engaging the process had been, that was employed by the council. It was “justified [...] we really managed to change the debating culture in our city” hinting at a long-term effect that could, for example, he had noticed, even the Chamber of Commerce now being much more open to deliberations on public realm.

It was at that point that I felt the politician’s description of the VEP process was sufficiently outlined. I gleaned that he was proud of the process and that he had been involved in some detail, giving me an understanding of his approach to issues and tensions in relation to lobby groups and the general public. To me, this was stunning as it was in quite some contrast to my experience with politicians’ handling of political affairs in Newcastle. But, time also was pressing, and I wanted to hear the politician’s view on women, cycling and infrastructure.

To change onto the new subject, I asked the politician if we could talk about women and cycleways, and whilst he agreed, it took a couple of attempts to change onto the new question. Once on the new subject, he started with bemoaning the lack of diversity in the VEP engagement, despite council’s various attempts to overcome this, by for example varying timing or location of events. After laying out this common engagement problem, the politician switched to talking about activism. He continued that he “was not aware of any

³² Translated from *versachlichen*

³³ Translated from *Hirnschmalz*

women cycle activists” in the city. To me this was a remarkable statement, as I was aware of a handful of women activists advocating for cycleways challenging the on-road cycling focus of the council. I let the politician continue uninterrupted. He speculated about the lack of women activists: if this lack was the case because “the topics of transport politics are somehow male dominated”. His musing certainly chimed with my Newcastle experience not just relating to engineering and transport, but also where local politics showed exclusionary tendencies. It was helpful to hear the Bremen politician’s conceptualisation. I recall, what I was thinking at the time: how can we, activists and politicians together, make the transport debate more accessible to women and other under-represented groups?

He expressed that despite council attempts to get more women involved in the VEP process, in the end the council were not entirely sure where to situate women conceptually or in the engagement process. The politicians explained that there were many other groups (such a migrants) that needed attention too recalling council colleagues’ argumentation. This was disappointing to me, as it showed some similarities to the pluralistic ideas that the Newcastle politician had expressed about the populace. I remember thinking in the interview, there are parallels, women are conflated with other social groups (and hence overlooked). But I decided that this was a complex issue that would require time to lay out my framing, and we had not yet talked about cycle infrastructure preferences.

Whilst I was thinking the politicians continued. Coming back to one of the strategic success story earlier, he thought that the new crossing or the VEP focus on short trips should aid women’s everyday activities. He briefly talked about the importance of walking. The council, his team, had been successful in collaborating with the local newspaper to put walking on the agenda a couple of years back. He said “yes, my team are cunning like that” and described his own NGO background, valuing strategising, clear messaging and team working to “analyse and solve critical conflict constellations in order to reach a mutually beneficial consensus”. For him, “conceptualising is much of the fun, as is to steer towards good outcomes”. Here was another contrast to the Newcastle politician who did not construe strategizing and planning ahead with such positive vigour and delight as his Bremen counterpart. As for the Bremen

politician team work was important too for the Newcastle politician. But steering and planning was something the Newcastle politician was less comfortable with, I got the distinct impression from the interview (see above). Hence I took this opportunity to congratulate the Bremen politician on the award-winning approach to citizen participation and his leadership on transport issues. I explained to him that there was a lack of that kind of leadership in Newcastle in my experience. In his reply he mentioned, again, the relatively complicated decision-making process in Bremen, depending on working relationships and effective debating. He had much appreciation for the officials who “after a day at the work desk, then go on and spend many a night in ward meetings”. These meetings sometimes “derail and the atmosphere becomes negative, we call those ‘BBQ parties’³⁴ because we get grilled and burnt alive”. The next day “we might have a tactical meeting to discuss what happened, learn from it and adjust our approach”. I, again, was given the impression that the politician enjoyed working with others – he was actively shaping processes and debating ways forward.

At this point I directed the interview back to cycleways and road safety; something he had brought up at the beginning of the interview. I asked him about the origins of his earlier claim that “cyclists are safer on the road”. I explained to him that I had not come across any evidence supporting that claim, in spite of the many years of my interest in that subject. He started by discussing road safety of the school run and the negative safety effect parked cars had on children walking and cycling to school. The crash statistics evidence that, he claimed. However, when I asked for more details, he could not directly point to the source of the statistics, instead he directed me to contact council officers. Again, he brought up cycle speed which, he said, had been improved on schemes the council had implemented. The politician gave the example of a certain crossing where the council re-located cycling onto the road so “you now save three minutes” (*Herdentorsteinweg*, near the central station). He told me that he “was aggressively accused by drivers” who did not want cyclists on the road and “had sworn to hold him personally responsible if a cyclist would be injured”. As can be imagined from the high-stakes context, he

³⁴ Translated from *Grill Parties*

was rather pleased to report that “in the 1.5 years following installation no-one has been injured, knocking on wood”. He, however, was “aware that cyclists, men and women, have different needs”. I was pleased to hear him make that connection. But there was a problem: he said that the highway department (ASV) “does not like the dual provision because of the legal uncertainties it creates”. “But”, he continued “I am pragmatic, it works and that’s the important thing for me”.

Again, I inquired about the safety statement he made earlier “cyclists are safer on the road” as I wanted to find out the origins of the claim in the council, and at that point in the interview the politician referred me to speak to council officers (see section 9.4.2). The politician then recounted the ruling by the court (*Bundesverwaltungsgericht*) in the 1990s that mandated a minimum standard for cycleways for mandatory use (which the ADFC³⁵ at the time celebrated as a victory as their interpretation of the ruling allowed the removal of mandatory cycleways and enabled on-road cycling). I felt that this thread of inquiry was exhausted. I made a mental note to contact the council.

At the beginning of the interview, the politician spoke about the Primary Routes. For me this was a way in to discuss infrastructure types and quality criteria. I was intrigued by the on-road focus and what that would mean for the quality of the Primary Routes. Hence I returned the interview onto Primary Routes (*Premiumrouten*) and asked about progress that had been made since the adoption of the VEP. After briefly outlining the structure of the routes (radial and circular, “a spider’s web”) the politician described that there were “disagreements on the ward level, as they want to retain car parking spaces and that causes conflict, which we are trying to resolve”. This was interesting to me, as I had investigated car parking reduction as a spatial policy element to allocate new space to cycling (see Chapter 5). For him, the Primary Routes are strategic and city-wide and hence firstly a city matter, not a ward matter. Much further discussion is needed, thereby returning to the beginning of the interview and the topic of political structure and debating culture. His next appointment was now due, and the interview came to an end. I thanked him for the time he

³⁵ Germany’s national cycle lobby

had given me. I had failed to discuss infrastructure quality with the politician, however I felt this subject could also be pursued with the council officer.

9.4.2 Bremen's transport planner

This interview was conducted as a direct result of the interview with the senior politician. The politician had referred me to speak to council officers, who could tell me more about cycling safety and Bremen's policy favouring on-road cycling solutions to kerb-protected cycleways (*Radwege*). Consequently, I had contacted the planning department, as advised. A subsequent meeting with the transport planner was organised, swiftly and easily.

I began this interview with the point in question: by asking the senior transport planner if he had heard the politician stating "cyclists are safer on the roads"? The officer's unequivocal reaction to the statement was "that statement, of course, is rubbish³⁶"; and he followed it up with "you cannot categorically state that, it needs differentiation". He explained further:

If we would have the policy that cycle traffic belongs on the road, that is fine, but consequently you then have to also design for that. The road in its current form may not be safe for cycling, so you have to work on making it safe.

The transport planner and I were in agreement on that point: on-road cycling is acceptable under certain conditions. We briefly went through the 1990s court decision for minimum standards of cycleways, thereby corroborating the politician's account (see above). According to the transport planner, the court decision effected the 1997 revision of the traffic regulations (*StVO*) and revocation of mandatory use. (The planner returned to that later in the interview.)

The interview continued and I inquired about the claim that crash statistics show that cycling is safer on the road; and the answer from the council officer again was that "we have to differentiate here" and gave examples how a more nuanced look could be achieved. He listed normalising for traffic volume, size and scope of study, generalisability amongst the main items that would need checking. This was music to my ears; here was someone who looked at the

³⁶ Translate from *Quatsch*

subject holistically and less ideologically charged. When I asked about school-run safety, the officer was not aware of the dataset that the politician had referenced. The officer replied: "It's possible that we have datasets to that effect, but I have not seen them". Whilst he believed that visibility could be improved to make cyclists were more visible to drivers on the road, he also cautioned: "many cyclists are scared to cycle on the road, because drivers can be very aggressive". It was pleasing to hear, that the planner took a more socio-spatial position linking human behaviour to urban design. He expressed that he was unsure about how effective driver education and enforcement could ever be; it may have temporary effects, but it is not a general solution. Education had its limits to improving road safety.

I let the planner speak freely. He continued and mentioned a street in Bremen where a Cycle Street conversion had recently taken place (*Parkallee*) and that the council "would now try to make it clearer to the users by changing the street design". He was keen to stress that "cycling on the road also means being stuck in traffic", something he would not favour, as it does not incentivise cycling. The officers described transport planning:

Transport planning has a windscreen perspective, and that is not for malicious reasons but rather something that one has drunk like mother's milk, it's a passive perspective.

He continued by talking about human nature in more general terms:

All this is only human, and can easily be explained psychologically. It rather shows that this is not ill will, it simply is the reality we live in. Once you understand this, it becomes a planner's job, because you cannot - and ought not - simply upend people's reality.

I was impressed with the planner's perspective taking into account a sociological angle to explain human behaviour. He did not seek to change behaviour directly but contemplated urban design options to provide clarity and ease to the user. Of the four decision makers I interviewed, the Bremen planner stood out in taking a clear socio-spatial approach. The planner essentially insisted on designing with people's nature and realities in mind.

Continuing along a socio-spatial perspective, I asked him about the observation stated in the VEP transport policy: despite the removal of mandatory use of cycleways, an overwhelming amount of people still prefer to use them. Attesting he was aware of this, he stated “the use rate of cycleways is well above 90%, some studies even show the preference of cycleways to be 100%”. I made a mental note, that this stood in opposition to the politician’s statement that people preferred to use the road (see above). Linking to technical responsibility and decision-making, I quizzed the officer about the politician’s statement that the highway department (ASV) disliked dual-use infrastructures. He replied that he was not aware of that. Rather his own observation was that “the ASV, at least in the past, liked building cycleways but nowadays accepts more and more on-road and dual use solutions”. Instead he proceeded to talk about the legal basis for road design (StVO). I let the planner talk and develop his argument on the legal-technical standard.

The planner was sceptical of the StVO regulations and its application which, in his description, gave preferential treatment to on-road solutions (over protected cycleways). He saw “a danger in that, because on the one hand the cycle lanes did something for legitimising cyclists on the road, on the other hand the space, previously occupied by the cycleways, could be lost forever”. I began to understand, that space to my interviewee concerned both technical territory and social belonging. This notion was fascinating to me. He continued: “there could be a switch in political direction, and perhaps then cycle lanes would not get repainted”. For him, it was important to allocated permanent space to cycling:

Really, in a democracy you need a few structures you can trust if you wanted to secure transport cycling for decades to come. And cycle traffic and cycle infrastructures present a reliable instrument to ensure that.

He then spoke about the importance of reliability that cycle networks and infrastructures must offer to the user, so that “users are never left alone”. Reliability was, he felt, the “lived reality” on Bremen’s cycle infrastructure.

The planner was in a state of flow, recounting cycling’s benefits. For example, he wanted me to know that cycling is space-efficient and “we should incentivise people by building good infrastructure that prioritised cycling over driving”. The

planner saw cycling in relation to driving, and ranked cycling above driving so as to realise and unlock the benefits of cycling. This was not easy; according to the planner we must adapt technical processes. There was the “obsession in highway departments to reduce congestion”, he said “rather than understanding congestion as a self-regulating flow mechanism”. He focussed on the long term because “whilst all of us would rather prefer to eat chocolate, porridge is the healthier option in the long run”. He stated that “I think modern live is fast and hectic, everyone wants things at this very instant” and he would like to see “a change in thinking, that things can be different and more relaxed, and cycling can deliver on that”. It was striking, I noted to myself: the planning officer spoke about the future in psycho-social terms: his yardstick was the human person and human nature.

Letting the officer speak uninterruptedly, he then began to describe his own background. He grew up in a capital city in South Germany, and went to university in Germany’s midwest before arriving in Bremen as a transport planner several years ago. His first impression upon arrival in Bremen was one of a cycle city where “everyone 8-80 sits on a bike”, where you have to be careful when walking and you have to learn to respect cycleways. He, as an officer, would call Bremen a cycle city, even if some politicians do not like to hear that. “Cycling in Bremen, you are part of a community, part of that culture, and that is a positive thing”, he said and continued “the strength of the culture creates respect and legitimises cycling in Bremen [...] sometimes walking suffers because of that”. I got the clear impression that the planner was a real advocate for active transport. The planner recalled the successful creation of a Cycle Street “one that works, pedestrians now have their own wide pavements, and there are plenty of cyclists on the road”. There was another side to this, however, he said: “Bremen’s drivers also demand rights [...] and some say that cyclists tyrannise drivers”. Drivers could be vocal about that perceived imbalance and become aggressive. The planner, essentially, had constructed a triangle: cycling, walking and driving. These three interests often collide. I recall silently agreeing with his concept.

On his own accord he then moved on to talk about the roundabout *Am Stern* (literally ‘At the Star’), a complex six-way roundabout with a tramline through the middle which he described as an “extreme example”. He mentioned that *Am*

Stern is not designed in line with the leading academic expert on roundabouts, the “roundabout guru”. This particular national expert had “the windscreen perspective and he is not exactly a fan of cyclists”. According to the officers, the expert would recommend, on safety grounds, that cyclists should mix with motor traffic (when *Am Stern* cycling has a separate annular cycle lane). Whereas the officers argued that *Am Stern* in its current form was optimal for traffic with regards to efficiency: the mix of traffic modes provides the highest through-put the junction can achieve. He stated that “without thinking in space-efficiency terms, European cities would be jammed”. He wished that his transport-planning profession would have a better standing in society. He justified his statement by giving a practical example: “if I want bread I go to the bakery, or meat at the butcher’s [...] it would be good if the planning profession could be better understood”. I interpreted that as follows: the officer expressed the need to belong and be part of transport planning, however he also had identification issues, because transport planning was not always understood by others. He also described problems between planning and politics: “politics tries to be open towards planning, but politics is also influenced by interest and lobby groups”. This statement reminded me of the Newcastle planner who had described the politicians as “figureheads” (hence giving the officers more of an executing function).

Up to this point, the officer had spoken more or less uninterrupted, apart from a few minor interjections on my part to express my interest. But now I took the opportunity to steer the interview towards Bremen’s campaigning landscape. I ask him about the ADFC (Germany’s national cycle campaign) and that it seemed it was them who historically had claimed that “cyclists are safer on the roads”. He said this was notion was correct in his estimation. I asked him if he had any knowledge or recollection of that history. He recalled an “excursion to Nijmegen in the Netherlands together with ADFC representatives to meet the Dutch campaigners”. When the subject came up “the Dutch were clearly rejecting cycling on the road, it certainly wasn’t a role model for them as it simply seemed the wrong approach in the Dutch context”. The meeting was a clash of “totally different approaches and perspectives [...] it would be idiotic³⁷

³⁷ Translated from *völliger Quatsch*

to suggest the Dutch cycleways don't work". He continued by outlining his experience of Dutch cycleway design and exhorting the Dutch approach "where the infrastructure puts onus on the driver to interact, not the cyclist [...] it's a different philosophy". I noticed the common thread: he returned to the socio-spatial approach once more. In Bremen, he said, council still had to fight for every car parking space to be removed and parking on pavements was a substantial problem: taking space away from driving and car parking was a struggle in Bremen. The political reality described by the transport planner, required leadership to match the ambition of the VEP transport policy to tackle the spatial issue of car parking. The planner's words gave me the impression that little had been done by the council to re-frame the car-parking issue since the adoption of the VEP.

On the officer's own accord, he proceeded by talking about Troisdorf where a cycle-lane experiment had been conducted, with mixed results. Which led him to return to the *StVO*. He recalled speaking someone on the *StVO* committee, who would say that the *StVO* was "only about ensuring safety, not about improving cycling". But the planner argued, despite *StVO*'s preference for cycle lanes (over cycleways) that the *StVO* does not stipulate the removal of cycleways. Speaking of the National Cycle Strategy (*nationaler Radverkehrsplan*), he said that "as yet there has not been a transport minister who mandated real improvements for cycling". Cycling was dealt with by delegating it, even relegating it, to lower levels of governance, the way he sees it. He then listed Germany's cycling cities "Bremen, Münster, Freiburg, Erlangen, München [...] and Hannover also" and described these cities as "beacons (Leuchttürme)" that should be celebrated more. The officer was clearly frustrated with cycling being supported in word but not in deed (for example ministerial budgets or effective less-ambiguous technical standards).

The interview flowed, and we were now holding a conversation. There was much we had in common, I felt. I asked the officer about the politician's seeming difficulty to call Bremen a cycle city. The officer suggested that there were political tensions, stemming from the coalition arrangement in Bremen's government. "If you say [cycle city] too loudly, it could also backfire on a politician", he reckoned. However, he found it "saddening that there was no clear declaration [for Bremen as a cycle city] because it would be positive, it

would send a positive signal, but the other coalition party would have to come round to it". He added, again alluding to the function of political leadership for officers:

If we are not clear inside our administration, we cannot send a signal to the outside.

I asked him about his own role in this latent disagreement, to which he replied: "Well, there is the politician, but I am a mere civil servant, so I can speak more freely permitting I don't veer off my technical competences". This was an interesting statement: the officer described technical competences as a safe haven. Technical knowledge, to him, provided certainty and clarity.

Keeping our natural flow in conversation, I invited to tell me some more about the ADFC visit to the Netherlands. He stated that

Well, it was a disrespectful discussion. If that discussion could only have been conducted more sensitively. In a way both sides have something to contribute. But without heeding the historical, political and cultural background, you cannot sufficiently honour the topic.

This comment chimed with me. I felt as if I had been there at the fateful meeting, as I could imagine the dynamic between the specialised-interest proponents of vehicular cycling and the holistic Dutch approach to cycling. In his estimation, the "ADFC lobbies to make the bike nationally respectable and they would know that the allocated budgets are tight, not much available for cycling infrastructure". I recall that I could relate that statement directly to the situation in the UK, where liberal demands (rights, respect) are made by the CTC leaving the spatial aspects untouched. The officer then, again, exhorted cycling and its benefits, especially cycling's space efficiency and the negative effect of car parking. He once more commented passionately about car parking reduction: "this is crazy, it's taboo but someone has to say it out loud". He had not "heard any politician who had really tackled this issue".

We talked a bit more about car parking, specific Bremen sites, human nature and possible solutions before the formal part of the interview ended. The informal part started with asking if he had any questions or needed clarification

on anything that we had discussed. Yes, he had questions. It impressed me tremendously to hear that the officer showed interest in my perspective. I was grateful and obliged his request. Subsequently, we talked for another hour about women's transport needs, generalisable claims about gender differences, politics and ADFC. At the end he thanked me for explaining various aspects to him. Overall, he said, he had found the exchange very valuable and useful for his own understanding.

9.5 Summary

9.5.1 *The politicians*

Newcastle's senior transport politician took an individual focus depending on behaviour change (rather than perceiving the infrastructure as an influencer or enabler). He pleaded with people to do their bit. His conception of society was, that we are all the same although some may need a helping hand. He came across feeling at ease with handling consultants, business groups and council experts. In contrast to his commercial focus however, he was less comfortable with other organisations such as civic society groups or interest groups – in the interview he showed a lack of interest in these groups and a lack of ways of getting these groups involved and heard. Furthermore, the Newcastle politician did not challenge predict-and-provide practice of council engineers.

The part most confusing to me concerned the decision-making basis for the Newcastle politician. He believed in majority rule. However, this approach opposes cycling, which currently is a minority mode in transport. Stemming from this conception, his concept of transition (away from the status quo) was also less clear. In his view on human nature, people were often stuck in their ways favouring the status quo, but he would carry out the will of the people. It was not clear from the interview how exactly he knew what people wanted, when the council was still perfecting how to carry out consultations. For him, the election result is the direct feedback from the electorate. His responsibility was to make policy and oversee policy implementation. He did not conceptualise how to resolve tensions that may arise as a result of divergent interests in civic society.

Bremen's senior transport politician (the transport senator) demonstrated his understanding of civic engagement as well as civic society groups. He worked

with them tactically to achieve outcomes. In his political capacity, he had challenged and opposed business groups (*Handelskammer*) on car parking and journey time. The politicians used and mobilised policy processes to bring about change and resolve deadlocks. He believed that cyclists are safer on the road, as the technical officers at the council had informed him. He did not know any women cycle activists in the city.

Comparing the two politicians, Bremen's senior politician was actively involved in shaping discourse and policy implementation. His Newcastle equivalent lacked the sense of active leadership from the front; he instead relied on system maintenance and established practices (business interests, predict-and-provide planning, elections).

9.5.2 The planners

Newcastle's senior transport planning officer showed signs of frustration with a lack of political leadership (vision and conviction). He had listened to the local cycle campaign (for example network development and road classification). He worked relatively closely with business groups and had worked hard to establish good relationships with these. The officer had a recognition of the presence of informal (lobbying) networks and information flows the council entertained. Personal relationships play a role in networking according to the planner. He also wanted to be closer to interest groups; he showed a nascent and growing understanding of the value of civic-society engagement in decision making. The officer, seeking change, initiated modifications to the council structure to enable his transport team to transfer knowledge and broaden current practices.

Bremen's senior transport planner, a council officer, demonstrated a sociological understanding of human nature and fallibility. He did not fault people for their behaviour, he considered space as an influencer of behaviour. He wanted to see more differentiation in technical decision making and political debate. The officer wanted space for cycling and wanted it to be protected from political vagaries. He expressed some critical views on the technical professions of transport planning and highway engineering.

In comparison of the two transport planners, the Newcastle planner wanted to engage civic society to advance progressive plans and build momentum for

change; he showed frustration with the business-as-usual approach of the political system. His Bremen counterpart was keen to acknowledge an ecological model of a city, thereby comfortably marrying human nature and spatial design. His frustrations and fear lay with losing urban space to driving and he sought ways of protecting space for cycling and walking.

9.6 Next step

These interviews raise questions about processes of local democracy, technical practices and political leadership styles. Bremen's democratic processes allow politicians to lead from the front, whereas Newcastle showed a more defensive attitude, leading from the back. The technical practice of automobility was strong in both cities, however. Even in Bremen the planner was worried about losing cycle space to driving and the taboo of car parking, when in Newcastle his equivalent had not found a balance between spatial changes and human behaviour and what that could mean for an understandable and transparent form of governance.

10 DISCUSSION

10.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the different data streams generated throughout this autoethnographic study in relation to the literature review. Thereby Chapter 10 addresses the first, the descriptive, part of the research question:

What do women activists experience when advocating for cycleways?

Chapter 11, conclusions, deals with the corrective part of the research question, offering to the reader a view on where to go from here, addressing the second part of the research question.

In search of answers, I used my own campaigning insights I had gained in Newcastle, and the knowledge I acquired when interviewing relevant personnel in the UK and in Germany: women activists and decision makers. I also analysed policy texts. I constructed a conceptual framework (see section 8.7) to describe the phenomenon: illuminate the landscape that women activists negotiated in their volunteer effort campaigning for cycleways. The women campaigners experienced internal (campaigning, vehicular cycling, *social automobility*), external (*institutional automobility*) and spatio-cultural exclusions (communication, deliberation, arenas). The activists had opened an arena of their own, which built on their own rules thus escaping dilemmatic *social automobility*. All the while *institutional automobility* remained largely monolithic and distant. The political had receded from the public arena.

10.2 A new message: space for cycling

Many of the women activists I interviewed were not entirely happy with their current campaigns and campaigning efforts, nationally and locally. Other campaigns were too timid or not addressing the core of the problem. The new activists felt dismissed, their realities and rationalities were discounted. When attending campaign meetings their views were not heard. One interviewee had even told me that her views were openly laughed at in a campaigners' meeting. For personal preservation, the women activists asserted, it was vital to have

like-minded people around you (perhaps even preferably other women rather than men), as a sense of belonging gave strength for their campaigning.

As the literature review showed, a new kind of cycle campaigning had recently begun to emerge in the UK (Aldred 2013b) and elsewhere (Balkmar and Summerton 2017). Personally, I add my fascination with the US campaigning scene (expressed in my blog), where new campaigns around cycle infrastructure had appeared too. This new kind of campaigning articulates concerns about the urban environment and proposes dedicated cycle infrastructures to democratise cycling. In this study too, women activists in the UK and Germany had spatialised their demands by demanding cycleways.

In Newcastle we started a campaign from scratch. The woman activists I interviewed for this study from elsewhere did not have that luxury of relative organisational independence: they often were part of traditional cycle groups to begin with. However, there were shifts in the landscape: the UK activists became part of a new campaigning groups (for example Cycling Embassy of Great Britain), and the German activists were part of new groups (for instance Volksentscheid Fahrrad Berlin). Women cycle activists played an active role in these new formations. With these new arenas, new ideas were opened up for discussion that the older cycle activism had tabooed. Space became a mentionable issue.

As the women activists explained in the interviews, vehicular-cycling campaigners did not address spatial issues, instead for those campaigners it was about gaining respect, sharing road space and cyclists' rights. With those campaigners in charge of lobbying, technical practices of automobility (transport engineering and planning) were not challenged. In the UK, the existent national cycle campaigning was grossly silent on spatial goals to pursue.

Furthermore, there were organisational issues: campaigning networks were not coordinated effectively separating national from local campaigning. Due to the lack of national campaigning guidance the newly formed Newcastle Cycling Campaign had to learn as we went along. As I experienced it, the CTC³⁸ (now Cycling UK) or its subsidiary Cycle Nation were unable to assist local

³⁸ UK's national cycle lobby

campaigns. For instance, the annual campaigners' meeting I attended in 2010 in Edinburgh left me disappointed regarding forward planning and collective action. When visiting Newcastle in 2011, the CTC was interested in touting the council for business and did not invite the campaign group. We had local solidarity in Newcastle, but there were issues that required resolving on a national level (campaign coordination, interactions with the Department for Transport). Some links were forming between individuals of city campaign groups, in particular through a CTC adopted LCC³⁹ campaign Space for Cycling. But solidarity largely stayed local and inside Newcastle.

The CTC was sceptical about this focus on space and "segregation", in particular. This was expressed in an email from the CTC policy director: "promoting segregation risks weakening cycle campaigning, by giving politicians the excuse to decide we cyclists can't even agree amongst ourselves what we want" (personal communication 2012). To the new campaigners, however, the older campaigning scene was too cyclist-focussed, too powerless and too unpolitical. The new campaigning kept its course on dedicated cycleways, convinced that campaigning from a point of personal rationality offered sufficient legitimisation of their concerns.

Using Jones et al's (2012) transport identities (see 3.7), the women activists I spoke to as part of this research would be categorised as pedestrian sympathisers, whilst the traditional cycle campaigners are cycling sanctifiers - or even cycling fundamentalists in the words of Cupples and Ridley (2008) although *cyclist* fundamentalism would be even truer to the case. In Newcastle the new campaigners, researched here, were battling vehicular cyclists in a much milder form compared to women activists' accounts (UK and Germany). Rather the new campaigners in Newcastle found themselves contesting in a depoliticised field: fellow campaigners, often older men, warned new campaigners about being too political in their campaigning. Old campaigners favoured incremental change and were concerned that the newer more radical forms would upset the council officials if too controversial in their demands and forceful in their lobbying.

³⁹ London Cycling Campaign, UK's largest and biggest city cycling campaign

To my great surprise, the cycle campaigning situation was similar in Bremen and other German cities. I had expected the cyclist identity to be less prominent in Germany: as cycling is so much more normalised there, the identity is less threatened, less stigmatised and in lesser need of defence. But, in Germany, too, the vehicular-cyclist type was present in the local campaigning scenes, presenting a strong cyclist identity and campaigning on a personal-needs basis: they needed to cycle fast and did not mind cycling amongst vehicles: cycleways were seen as obstacles.

There was much fragmentation on the ground in 2010 when we formed the Newcastle Cycling Campaign. The new campaign was constantly vigilant to keep the focus on urban design, not to spread the campaigning effort too thinly and stay effective in advocating for cycleways. In many ways this came at the cost of internal efforts i.e. community building, as committee was busy with external, political goals. In addition, individuals attempted to soften our campaign's focus (i.e. cycleways for Newcastle), and used up valuable resources, especially in the earlier years of the campaign. Cycle campaigning was in flux throughout the UK. In 2010, vehicular cycling was still a prominent philosophy in cycle campaigning, but by 2012 LCC had begun to challenge the dogma and organised the Love London Go Dutch conference. A couple of years after, the Germany's national cycle lobby (ADFC) began to stir too. Under the leadership of its new chief executive, the urban environment and planning came onto the agenda.

Space is hard fought for in cities like New York and London (Sadik-Khan and Solomonow 2016; Walker 2015). That even extends to a cycle city, like Bremen. As the Bremen planner told me: he was interested in separating space off for cycling not just for reasons of safety and comfort that cycleways provide, rather he wanted to see cycle space protected from political vagrancies (of future administrations unsympathetic to cycling).

Space was in need of constant defence. Addressing spatial issues i.e. lobbying their councils for cycleways, made the new campaigners' demands public and political. This was a new type of campaigning. It conceptualised space as a negotiable issue.

10.3 Deliberative leadership

Chairing the Newcastle Cycling Campaign, I experienced leadership as a contentious issue in campaigning. Leadership could be used for good and for bad, it could be benign or malevolent, use to a constructive or destructive-fragmentary effect. Leadership presented a minefield. There was a normative aspect in leadership I specifically felt uncomfortable about. Ultimately that meant, that I chaired the Newcastle campaign (2010-2017) with much unease. I wanted to be inclusive, yet we had boundaries with goals and standards to maintain and negotiate. As a result of that angst born out of inner conflict, I frequently spoke about my unease about leadership at committee meetings, making my campaigning colleagues aware of my reservations. I needed to hear that my committee colleagues still wanted me to chair our campaign group, confirming my position as chair (a position I kept for seven years after all).

In Newcastle I tried to share power as much as I could, yet our volunteer group also needed clear leadership giving direction (but implying control and power differentials). I found this a rather tricky issue to navigate. It required a case-by-case resolution. This effort was tiring and it was taxing my cognitive energy. We Newcastle activists were protective of our vision and aims: lobbying the council for cycleways. Older campaigns CTC and Sustrans, I had observed, were less clear about their goals, rather their energy went into the bureaucratic maintenance of their institution and the liberal campaigning for rights and respects for cyclists.

To avoid splintering, in Newcastle we tried to resolve inner conflicts in the campaigning landscape by openly debating these issues in committee and at campaign meetings to the best of our ability. This helped focussing attention on outward action and steered away from getting bogged down in inner struggles or navel gazing, as the CTC has been reported to be prone to (see Cox 2015a). In Newcastle, we tried to encourage shared learning and that meant encouraging open debate whilst keeping an eye on our bottom line (cycleways). Certain aspects were non-negotiable: the council as the adversary and the focus on rendering urban space. This led to committee members who disagreed with those aspects to either 'come around' or to eventually resign from the committee. From these instances, we learnt that there was a balance between

keeping the campaign vision and group coherence - valuing the devil's advocate only to a point.

Of course, it could also be argued that the campaign committee was exclusive – it was exclusively keeping a focus on the campaigning goal, which led to the exclusion of members. The campaigning goal of political lobbying for cycleways was non-negotiable and took first priority. To avoid conflicts we were upfront: we had widely publicised our goal and made it transparent. People knew what the local campaign demanded and they decide for themselves if they agreed or disagreed.

I approached my chairing of the Newcastle campaign through honest and agonistic communication (Mouffe 2000): deliberation that would confront, anticipate and even seek out conflict. This approach put us at odds with the old campaigners. Traditional cycle campaigners, as I had observed, wanted to befriend others at all costs and convert them to their creed and become cyclists.

In Newcastle, we worked on creating a campaigning community. We offered an outlet for cyclists' frustrations as well as persistently pointing to road designs as root causes (for marginalisation and stigmatisation). This was not an easy task due to the stigma that a cyclist carries in UK society (Horton 2007; Aldred 2013a). Thus, the Newcastle campaign embarked on re-educating cyclists by making them aware of structural solutions to the discrimination they experienced. Thus, the campaign became a home to people who understood cycling as a consequence of urban space and as something that is worth the allocation of road space (rather than focussing on driver education and respect initiatives).

Communication was certainly an issue for the women activists: the difference in communication styles and attitudes between old (mostly men) and new campaigners (including women). The Bremen planner also mentioned that the conversation code was lacking when recalling a German campaigners' meeting with their Dutch counterparts in Nijmegen. An aggressive tone made productive communication and exchange difficult.

Equipped with clear goals, new campaigners (in Newcastle and beyond) were also keen to find new allies, creating networks and nurturing alliances, sharing

intelligence and stories (good and bad). We wanted to learn together, gather intelligence to avoid mistakes in the future. This meant doing communal work traditionally associated with the relational-feminine role. The women campaigners sought to be inclusive and acted collectively, whilst protecting their bottom line: urban space.

As I showed, the activism I investigated struggled internally, with their own identification - forms of campaigning, group leadership, cohesion and direction. The answers to these struggles were complex, and often required activists to tiringly navigate issues on a case-by-case basis. Activists working together in these new campaigns with clear spatio-political goals helped foster a new kind of group cohesion and solidarity; one based on radical space reallocation and urban planning for cycling.

10.4 Populating the debate: bringing in the social

In Newcastle the campaign had tried to widen the political and public debate by talking about space in relation to people's needs by interacting with politicians and the local media. It was clear to the campaigners, that the general public was complex and better conceptualisations were needed to explain linkages between people's actions and the spatial provision. Investigating transport decision-making, Acker, Wee, and Witlox (2010) remind us that the human thought process is not always linear or immediately logical to an observer. In their comprehensive disentangling of the various cognitive processes in transport decisions, it quickly becomes apparent that unreasoned behaviour can result when people make decisions about transport. The human mind is a complex (research) matter (see 4.1). As the framework (see 8.7) highlights, in order to emancipate the transport landscape, it was important to unpick *social automobility* in order to understand its relation to *institutional automobility*.

But *social automobility* and its effects and roots were insufficiently conceptualised by Newcastle City Council. The Newcastle politician's approach required "people to change their mode of transport - and being willing to do that". His approach harped back to the preference of individualised solutions i.e. promotional efforts that had failed before (Spotswood et al. 2015). Newcastle's urban environment was a problematic product to sell in its current state. Social

aspects were not conceptualised by Newcastle's decision makers but rather seen as bothersome and complex.

Speaking to women activists who campaign for cycleways resulted in a conceptual framework showing their struggles and strategies: showing their sociology of cycle campaigning. The framework shows the women activists' struggles with the technical, political and social spheres. Their strategies comprised communication: sharing amongst each other to foster solidarity and requesting better communication channels and atmospheres (times and places). The primary expressions of needs of the women activists related to the construction and maintenance of cyclable urban environments (currently absent in technical-political spheres). The secondary resultant needs related to measures of inclusion: so that the needs could be sufficiently heard and actioned.

The women activists I interviewed in the UK and Germany began their campaigning by drawing on their personal experiences: these experiences of discomfort and exclusion led them to want to talk about urban design (and from activist spaces). Another effect was that the women activists extrapolated their spatial campaigning to the wider public: people like them, who want to cycle more and believe cycling deserves better treatment in urban design. As such the women activists found new, spatial resolutions to the hitherto problem of "getting more people cycling". Just as Aldred noted in London campaigners, these women too had begun "to produce new debates and changes to advocacy and activism" (2012:84). The social began to spill out into the political.

In the literature review, it is Vreugdenhil and Williams (2013) who suggested to include the social in the technical and bring sociology into transport decision making. However, in Newcastle decision makers were uncertain about the people and human nature: what was it that people wanted? What if a perceived majority did not want change? The Newcastle politician I interviewed expressed a view on human nature that was rather negative and conservative: "It's human nature that people will be resistant to change, status quo prevails as the easiest route and individuals are a bit like electricity at times: they take the easiest route and if status quo is an option then it would just go".

I was intrigued: where would that leave progressive non-reactionary people, people making radical demands, like campaigners lobbying for cycleways? The Bremen planner, although expressing a similar view on the complexity of human nature, put a positive-progressive interpretation to it: “All this [observed behaviour] is only human, and can easily be explained psychologically. It rather shows that this is not ill will, it simply is the reality we live in. Once you understand this, it becomes a planner’s job, because you cannot - and ought not - simply upend people’s reality”.

The Newcastle politician used the complexity of human nature as a reason to remain still, whereas the Bremen planner used it to insert a moral value and reason to change the urban environment – a “planner’s job”.

The Newcastle campaigners had their work cut out: the politician recognising the complexity of society yet unable to lead with clear goals and moral values. He had essentially abandoned the political field.

10.5 Weak politicians

The women activists I interviewed had the common understanding that cycleways were an issue that politicians must address. This political understanding is reflected in research (for example Richards et al. 2010; Aldred 2013b; Batterbury 2003). As it stood, the consequences were material for the new campaigners: cycleways were not planned or built by the council, or even dismantled (where cycleways were present to begin with, such as Bremen).

Parochial issues and party partisanship dominated everyday politics in Newcastle. Much energy was consumed by petty party politics. Energy that otherwise could be used to a deliberative democratic effect. It was tiring for activists, as the politicians’ preoccupations with short-term matters and personal squabbles did not address material transport problems.

In Newcastle we dealt with senior politicians rumoured too scared to talk to campaigners, as a fellow activist and council insiders reported. Campaigners in Newcastle also suggested that the situation was generally awkward: politicians who came into power in 2011 and keen to make changes, soon discovered that it was their own officers’ *institutional automobility* holding up progress. The Newcastle campaigners, now in 2017, were asking: what did the politicians

want and need? They wondered about the transport politician's value system. As the framework (8.7) shows, in Newcastle the political (political sphere) had collapsed into politics (technical sphere) and had formed a monolithic block of *institutional automobility*, voiding the public-political arena.

Contrastingly, the Bremen politician saw the citizenship as something he engaged with in the arena of values and policies (and also being supported by Bremen's political system favouring deliberation). There the transport politician was a campaigner himself, often leading and steering projects, ordering the collation of evidence, not afraid to go public and explain reasons for his actions. The Bremen politician displayed a sense of pride of his own lobbying-campaigning background. He was not afraid to combine his moral conviction with his politics. The political was still present, actively leading on policy production and shaping policy content in Bremen.

The Newcastle politician I interviewed mentioned elections as the point of citizen expression: the point in time where the citizens could tell him to remain or leave in office. For him the election (not party manifestos, policy production processes, or deliberation) was the communication method between political and public spheres. When in reality, the Newcastle campaign had to chase politicians for their policy and commitments before the elections, because otherwise there was little way of knowing what grounding and logic was used, what course of action a politician or his or her party was backing. Transport was a dark matter, deemed too complex by the politicians and best left to the technical experts. In Newcastle there was little clear before elections, and lack of clarity continued afterwards. Elections were a shopfront with little content.

Newcastle's senior politician had a problematic understanding of local democracy. Firstly he vowed to do what the majority of people wanted; in fact they would elect him to do just that. Majority rule in itself is problematic as minority interests are pushed aside. Secondly, he also stated that people did not always know what they wanted. I would add to that confused standpoint, that there were no discernible representative mechanisms in Newcastle to determine the views of the citizens.

Furthermore, the Newcastle politician did not see (or denied) a direct connection between the urban design (as planned and engineered by his

council) and people's choices in reaction to the designed space. Given this situation, it is not surprising then, that his senior transport planner showed some frustration with the lack of political clarity and steer (yearning for a regional mayor providing "vision and conviction").

Yet Newcastle's planner was keen for spatial change to occur. Through the unfortunate lack of political direction and clear narrative, he was unable to translate sustainable transport ideas into reality without stoking public outrage and backlash that was hard to control. The council had experienced a number of protests between 2010-2017, some in favour of automobility, some against – always with an ambivalent background as council's plans, too, were often unclear. And so it was not surprising that politicians were void of coherent replies. In addition, Newcastle's transport policy was unclear and contradictory, mirroring the politician's wavering and hesitation to work with civic society groups. The concept of *social automobility* was missing: why were people angry? Why do some people drive? The Newcastle politician had not sought to understand society as a whole in relation to transport and its politics. The political recoiling from the social, opened a void that was filled with the occasional outburst of public protest.

Newcastle's politics was riven with petty party fighting, and a clear party designation was missing. Newcastle campaigners had high hopes when Labour took over in 2011. However, we were quickly shocked to see that traditional Labour values of fairness and social justice in health and education (all effortlessly relatable to cycling for transport) were brushed aside by the cabinet politicians. Newcastle Labour acted in new ways, akin to New Labour economic ways (even neoliberal ways), rather than traditional 'old Labour' values of the social.

Contrastingly, in Bremen the senior transport politician understood the workings of civic society, was not afraid of steering projects and actively creating public support, by collating an evidence base for council actions and careful timing of projects. I observed Bremen to sport an active citizenship and active politicians. Local democratic process of exchange and deliberation, even party affiliation and demands (conservative property owners, progressive environmentalists), are easier to identify. Traditional political party affiliations still exist. During my

time spent in Bremen, I attended various cabinet meetings as well as public meetings, and saw that dialogue and deliberation was much more present, valid and clear there, than in Newcastle.

Something Newcastle's transport planner had mentioned to me in his interview was that a mayor, in his estimation, would provide "vision and conviction". The mayoral idea has recently been picked up again in Newcastle as part of the formation of a North of the Tyne region. Some researchers have expressed worries about the abolition of regional institutions (Robinson, Shaw, and Regan 2017). I remain sceptical about regional level decision making for transport. Whilst cross-over effects from council to council need coordinating, local travel continues to consist of short trips that are made locally within Newcastle's boundaries, the majority done unsustainably by car. The call for a mayor sounds like a yearning for stability expressed in a reactionary answer of 'strong man politics'. Without due democratic process and mechanisms, this kind of leadership becomes a gamble.

Overall, no clear plan emerged charting Newcastle's transport future, mandating the construction of a cycle network. Programme management was experienced as substandard by us campaigners in Newcastle (two of us were programme managers in our professional life). Even when there was a brief period of substantial cycle infrastructure budget (awarded by the Department for Transport in 2013), Newcastle politicians quickly lost control over the process, and officers returned to their usual operation: transport matters were only handled by the technocrats, for their eyes only. To the day of writing it was unclear how (and even if) the millions of pounds have been spent in Newcastle on the CCAF programme. The campaign thought that financial management and evaluation could be used for deliberative democratic effect: it would give a concrete discussion point. However, councillors lost control over the budget and soon the programme board stopped publishing progress reports. The responsible councillors fell silent.

It was the fragmentation at the political level that was felt strongly in Newcastle by the campaigners. The politicians were unable to hold a steady debate about urban space and automobility, despite the campaign's standing offers of assistance. Very quickly, and almost without fail, politicians fell back into

stereotypes, stigmatising cycling/cyclists, and concluding that people needed cars. Coarse wholesale transport arguments (“for all road users”, in the name of “road safety”) swallowed nuances and novelties such as cycling. The strength of automobility was such, that even councillors who did not drive were convinced that their electorate exclusively drove cars, concluding that the city needed to provide for private car (despite 42% households without vehicle access). Transport was untouchable, it was tightly wrapped in the technocracy of *institutional automobility*.

In Bremen it is a reliance on technocratic measures, whereas in Newcastle on top of the technocratic reliance sits a deliberative deficit. Bremen campaigners stand a chance to change the technocratic hegemony, using more actively the deliberative channels in Bremen’s democracy. Bremen only has to overcome an information deficit, whereas Newcastle has a more considerable, a democratic, deficit to overcome. In Newcastle politics had swathed the political. Newcastle’s public arena was emptied out, depoliticised and decontextualised.

10.6 Whose interests?

In Newcastle campaigners had noticed external influences on the council such as chasing national monies, an exclusive economic discourse around jobs and the business community. These influences are documented in research, and are historical (see 3.3.4, for example Pemberton and Vigar 1998; Davoudi and Healey 1994). It was frustrating. The Newcastle cycle campaigners were aware of these interests only through discursive assessments; they had never found themselves in the same room with business groups. For instance, the council’s transport forum had not sought that connection. Disturbingly, the business groups were invisible to us campaigners.

We, cycle campaigners, had noticed that other environmental groups were few and far between in Newcastle. The Newcastle politicians and planner had partitioned groups into “camps” (Vigar 2006). The politician and planner were preoccupied working with the business community, leaving environmental groups on the outside. I had the feeling that council kept the groups apart deliberately, possibly heeding past events where there had been “a vocal, narrowly-defined business interest and highly visible demands from a minority

of ‘motorists’” (Vigar 2006:283). Conflict was such avoided by the politicians. But it also meant that the population was not engaged on the whole, leaving out large sections of the population (individuals, groups). The uneven engagement had the effect that business interests were given prominence.

Although noting an improvement in the number of women politicians, especially in Newcastle, Robinson, Shaw, and Regan point out the lack of diversity in North East’s institutions which consist of the “‘the usual suspects’, ‘the perpetually selected’ and often the ‘male, pale and stale’ who are evidently not representative of the region’s population” (2017:5). A lack of diversity had been noted by the women activists beyond Newcastle too, desiring more women in decision making positions and more women colleagues in campaigning. The lack of diversity according to the women, held back the progressive alternatives to be aired, discussed and implemented. The women had hence sought to form their own supportive organisation or joined organisations that had aims and principles matching their own i.e. getting cycleways on the agenda. Personally, for a political Newcastle I was wondering if we had a crisis of confidence, a lack of vision and conviction, in our councillors rather than a problem reducible to sex/gender representation. However, this should not deter from the irrevocable fact that the Newcastle Cycling Campaign was founded by two women, creating a vehicle for putting forward their lived and socially-rendered realities and visions to the council. In essence, the local campaign turned much of the status-quo narratives on their head.

As it stood, business and economic interests were winning out in Newcastle. The privileging of the economic was facilitated by the traditional practices of the council engineer and planner, who accounted for journey time savings and congestion relief, increased junction capacity and improved free flow of motor traffic, to “strike a balance for all road users” as Newcastle politicians liked to say and thus, again, evading decision making. Listed in that order, Newcastle’s policy aims to “[m]inimise congestion, improve road safety and meet climate change targets” (NCC and GMBC 2015) could be read as an order of importance to the council, given the prominence of business interests and technocratic rule in Newcastle.

In Bremen, however, I came in contact with a politician who openly challenged the Chamber of Commerce (when he amassed data to overcome the journey-time savings approach by counting pedestrians too). However, car parking was still a taboo (businesses demanding car parking for their customers), as the Bremen planner reported. Just like Newcastle, certain groups and topics were not heard in Bremen. Recently, however, a new civic-society coalition formed to politicise the issue of Bremen's car parking⁴⁰. The coalition is made up of four prominent environmental/transport groups⁴¹.

Arguably cycling is normal in Bremen, however the women activists I interviewed in Germany did point out the institutional strength of *institutional automobility*. It was fascinating to note the pervasiveness of the automobility discourse in a cycling city such as Bremen. Low cycling levels and stigmatisation are one thing (Aldred 2013b; Horton 2007), evidently *institutional automobility* transcends these forms of marginalisation.

The Bremen planner was particularly interested in social aspects in transport planning. He had expressed a sociological view of his profession and society on the whole. Transport planning needed to take into account human nature and psychology, he said. He was critical of his profession and saw room for improvement. This agrees with Pemberton and Vigar's view that it "requires reflexivity on the part of the members of the current policy community to continually pay attention to the voices in the wider polity" (1998:31).

The Newcastle campaigners were disillusioned and noticed that there was a vacuum, a void of rationality, a lack of public arena. *Institutional automobility* was monolithic and untouchable. I would not go as far as saying that *institutional automobility* creates potential for a swing to the right (as Webb (2016) does), however the lack of rationality and disillusionment with the council effectiveness could have tendencies to that effect. Newcastle's post-political void is currently filled by economic and business interests. The centring of economic interests seemingly happened behind closed doors in Newcastle: the politics dealt with them in opaque ways and left the civic society on the outside.

⁴⁰ Translated from *Parkraumbewirtschaftung*

⁴¹ The coalition is called *Bündnis für die Verkehrswende* (Coalition for transport transition) and consists of the Bremen branches of the four national groups ADFC, BUND, Fuß eV and VCD

10.7 Summary

The findings of this study are supportive of the literature presented in Chapter 3. The thread of automobility was strong in the data. The women, as activists, felt they were democratic citizens, but often had no physically or communicational place to go. The public arena had been tightened around a discourse of automobility. In Bremen it was *institutional automobility* that was holding up progress. In addition, in Newcastle political affairs had receded into the politics of management. A new style of cycle campaigning focussing on the spatial emerged. Its proponents, the women activists, came into contact with the deflected automobility of vehicular cyclists: cyclist-identity campaigners.

The study evidences the entrance of the post-political into transport planning. Transport planning theory has been enriched.

11 CONCLUSION - AN ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN POST-POLITICAL TIMES

11.1 Introduction

Chapter 11 addresses the second, the corrective, part of the research question:

To improve the planning and implementation of cycleways, what can be learnt from the women activists' experiences?

This study identified four spheres: the technical, the political, the social/public and the personal sphere. All four spheres (technical, political, social, personal) would work together in a successful (democratic) system.

Institutional automobility was the technical and political norm. The technical and political spheres operated detached from the other spheres. In Bremen, transport planning and engineering were institutionalised. Whereas in Newcastle, the political had receded into politics, put in post-political terms.

All the while, *social automobility* at the social-personal sphere manifested itself as car dependence and 'forced driving'. In the last decades, cities have been built for cars. To the activists at least, it meant, *social automobility* was an effect of *institutional automobility*. A cultural transformation is needed on various levels to reform and undo automobilities.

As the women activists had pointed out, if we wanted cycleways, we were up against something big and powerful – “what we are asking for is a real revolution” (D2) because politics “categorically avoids anything that could hurt some drivers” (D4). The women came up against monolithic automobility and in their campaigning experienced its short breath. Discourse was shortened. Newcastle in particular lacked public outlets so that citizens could politicise their personal experiences, needs and demands. Alternative future imaginations were unavailable and repressed, especially in the conflated discourses of automobility. In post-political conditions, alternatives proved difficult to put on the political agenda. This disaffected citizens.

The activists' views aligned with theoretical conceptions of participatory or deliberative democracy. The women activists were clear in that democracy

means talking, negotiation, bargaining, weighing, testing boundaries and ultimately agreeing compromises based on the understanding of the other's differences. It means including critical voices, listening and debating.

Both in Newcastle and in Bremen, the politicians did not sufficiently question *institutional automobility*. In both cities there were transport planners waiting in the wings to enact transport transitions (removing car parking, building cycleways). These planners were waiting for political resolve and steer. Concerning cycleways, the Bremen politician had ceded control to the technical staff who favoured on-road solutions. And Newcastle's leading politician did not invite or accept group influence (yet worked with business groups). As a guiding vision was missing: any debate could only commence in a fragmented way. The decision-making apparatus in Newcastle placed little value on policies and the policy production process. When it can be used to stimulate public debate.

All interviewed women reported on vehicular cyclists, unwittingly or not, aiding *institutional automobility*.

Post-political planning theory helps to explain and introduce ways of understanding and learning from the phenomenon of a spatialised cycle campaigning. The transport system had turned post-political in Newcastle and prevented debate, also characterised by a mistrusting and disenchanting citizenry. Bremen presented a different story: a deliberative democracy met with Weberian institutionalisation: transport had become heavily bureaucratic and formulaic.

The lack of Newcastle's public debate and the absence of a public arena in Newcastle affected me gravely. Observing such confused state of a democracy was a devastating experience – and experience which is likely to stay with me as a personal memory of Newcastle. I was disappointed with Newcastle, its politicians and its by-and-large unreflective civil servants. The neglect of this issue activated me and radicalised my personal-political involvement. It also makes me reflect on the many Novocastrians who told me they had given up participating in democratic processes over the years. The council system was too impenetrable and monolithic, too unsympathetic towards citizens' expressed needs. It had conflated politics and the political: *institutional automobility* was part and parcel of this expression. Citizens had indeed become disaffected.

This study looks at the conjunction of active citizenship and political participation. Active citizenship is vital to democracy, see for example Blee (2012) or della Porta (2013). Cycling citizenship, as called for by Aldred (2010), sits uncomfortably with 'driving citizenship' which takes place "inside the opaque automobile iron cage" (Randell 2017:667). Furthermore, collaborative forms of democracy require active citizenship. Inch calls this the "hidden costs of participation" (2015:204). The following section takes a closer beat-by-beat look at active citizenship and how this fared in Newcastle's post-political times. Given the circumstances, can the planning and implementation of cycleways be improved, and if so how?

11.2 My political activation

When I began to be involved as a concerned citizen in Newcastle in 2009, my conception of local democracy was one of a rational system: politicians, transparently making policies reflecting collective needs and weighing individual freedoms. I believed that policy and public debate was its tool. In reflection, I was politically tremendously naïve. I was socialised in the German political system having left the country in 1996 (when I was 23 years old). My rational conception was shattered by my campaigning experiences between 2010 and 2017. Over the years, my trust and belief in local governance as a fair and democratic system diminished. Over time, my understanding of local democracy as a place of collective exchange, deliberation and negotiation was crushed. What could I do? I became a campaigner. Furthermore and fortunately, I was given the opportunity to theorise the experience in this study. I hope to tell a collective story of active and communicative citizenship.

My emergence as a political citizen took time. It was not a straight forward process. First, I had begun to dislike the cycling experience in Newcastle. Through voicing my concerns to the authority, I became active as a citizen. The inadequate urban design had politicised me. Council's deflections started here. Later I co-founded the Newcastle Cycling Campaign to address these issues in a collective and concerted way. This process was punctuated by as much excitement (in the earlier days) as it was punctuated by an overwhelming amount of disappointment (in latter years).

Campaigning in a post-political system meant dealing with the collapse of political arena (where political-public meet). The campaign came into contact with the conflated and depoliticised discourse of *institutional automobility*, leaving *social automobility* unmentionable. There always was the risk of disengagement. Campaigners came and went, burning out in the light of impenetrable politics of *institutional automobility*.

I wish I had known from the beginning about the emotional risks of campaigning in a local democracy with no culture of deliberation and a repressed public debate. Effective citizen arenas did not exist in Newcastle. There was very little local history of campaigning to build on. Fellow environmental campaign groups were weak. Newcastle's environmental campaigning scene was too small to provide sufficient support and impetus. At the time of writing, Newcastle's active citizenship is growing and becoming more active, but it is fragile. Through this study, I wish to have contributed a baseline story that Newcastle can build on.

The Newcastle Cycling Campaign, I chaired, had to learn from scratch and learn by doing. Volunteer campaigning is not a profession that is learnt. As activists, we learn things as we go along. We are motivated by interests and needs, not skill or knowledge. With this study I hope to contribute to writing a campaigning history for Newcastle, that makes new campaigners aware of the post-political trapdoors of deflation and conflation.

Despite the foreclosed political-public arena however, the Newcastle campaign remained engaged and active. To our luck, we consisted of a sufficiently large pool of people to allow for temporary resting periods from campaigning. This could be the strength of campaigning and collective action in the age of post-politics. A campaign counteracts, or at least buffers, the post-political effect of disenchantment numerically: there is a breadth of membership holding against institutional inertia. A long breath is needed to inflate the political and insert it back into the public arena. I wish to contribute through this study that active citizens can understand themselves as a critical and crucial part of a democracy.

In democracy, conflict points must be addressed and cannot simply be brushed aside - or resentments result, in line with agonism (Mouffe 2000) and even proponents of deliberation and communicative theories (della Porta 2013;

Habermas 1983). The politicians were unable to bring about a convincing discourse and shunned a wider public debate. It was a devastating experience to see politicians struggling to find a coherent narrative. As a citizen what was I supposed to do, or think? Were the politicians incompetent or incapable? Was the democratic system at fault? With the political so far receded into politics, the campaign in Newcastle could not instigate a debate. I hope that Newcastle politicians can critically rethink democracy and democratic debate, imbue it with value and effective discourses, and work productively with civic groups.

In Bremen I learnt, that it need not be that way.

When doing my fieldwork in Bremen, it was heartening to see democratic process, deliberation and exchange much more alive and interactive. Post-political inflation was not present to the degree that it had already advanced in Newcastle. Bremen's civic society was livelier and more connected in comparison to Newcastle. From that visit to Bremen, I also know it is possible for politicians to lead from the front in relation to transport matters: transparently, with policy and strategic thinking. The conceptualisations that the Bremen politician put forward chimed with me. When I spoke to him, I could understand the reasoning behind his actions. Where the Newcastle politician had been confusing, his Bremen counterpart was able to explain his position, view and course of action. Although I disagreed with him on the on-road cycling stance of the council, I understood his actions: he understood the council officers as experts. He asked me to speak to the experts if I wanted to know more - which I did. In Bremen I observed an accessible politician, who seemed to be energetic and open, a strategic thinker working with civic society (albeit favouring on-road solutions).

In Bremen, the political and politics were two distinguishable entities. Bremen's transport had not succumbed to post-political stresses and strains of power conflation, loss of arenas and debate. I experienced productive council meetings in Bremen where dialogue happened, rather than remote and ritualistic rubberstamping as had been my experience from Newcastle. There was political deliberation on a local level, something Germany is rather known for than the centralised UK (Schmidt 2002).

In my study I have experienced two democratic cultures, two conceptualisations of citizenship. It can be learnt, that deliberation depends on a functioning political system that values interaction and can carry conflict to conclusion. When in Bremen, collaborative/communicative planning theories are useful to understand the transport sociology. Newcastle can only be understood through the post-political lens. Active citizenship under post-political conditions is a protracted and painstaking exercise.

11.3 Limitations of the study

For this qualitative research, I do not claim the account to be representative or reproducible. Rather I claim this study to be illustrative of a very specific case: the socio-political ecology of local cycle campaigning in Newcastle, which at the time of investigation (2010-2017) was making new demands, of a spatial nature.

Ethnography is concerned with practical matters. Ethnographic and autoethnographic research necessarily erects boundaries to define and specify the phenomenon under investigation. I was fascinated by the lack of progress in increasing cycling despite the civic effort of cycle campaigning. In addition, I was a cycle campaigner in Newcastle starting in 2010 and had experienced tensions in the social, political and public realm. We advocated for cycleways. In the end I decided to research the phenomenon 'lack of progress on the cycling agenda' by looking at my own experience in relation to fellow women cycleway campaigners, decision makers and policy texts. The product is the illumination of a very specific case told through the eyes of one person. There are other stories that can be told about the case.

I sought to safeguard against autoethnographic indulgence, see Chapter 4. Part of that safeguarding was to speak to a number of people to better understand their experiences and positions. It cannot be claimed that the list of informants was exhaustive. The decision makers held senior positions and were in the leading positions with regard to transport matters. Their views would influence local political and technical direction. However, how much the decision makers were able to tell a full account or indeed could influence their environments, was not possible to know. Especially the Newcastle politician seemed careful. And that would not be entirely surprising, as we had previously met as opponents:

the politician and the campaigner. The women activists were chosen on the basis of existing personal relationships and connections. At the time of this study, the new cycleway campaigners had begun to challenge the older cyclist activism. I spoke to eight women activists as a consequence. I felt more connected to women activists (than men activists): I acted on a personal preference. The number of interviews, eight women activists, was a number of feasibility and practicality. If there would have been more time, I could have spoken to more women activists and obtain further insights. Also, I could have interviewed more decision makers. Yet, research studies are bounded by reality, juggling time, cost and quality.

I do not claim that my understanding of Bremen was as developed as my understanding of Newcastle. In this study, Bremen functioned as a comparative to Newcastle, giving a boost to my reflexivity and providing a safeguard to 'autoethnographic indulgence'. In total I lived in Bremen for a year or so during the research. Despite these efforts, the Newcastle polity remains the main focus (where I have lived since 1996).

I had hoped to carry out the research much more in collaboration with my Newcastle fellow campaigners. However, early on in the data generation, it became apparent, that the time requirements for such a formal collaborative endeavour was unsustainable for the volunteer campaigners as well as prohibitive for the timely progression of the thesis, already interrupted by fieldtrips to Germany. Nonetheless, informally and ethnographically I was in close contact with my fellow women campaigners in Newcastle, who undoubtedly influenced my thinking throughout the research process.

The research presented here concentrates on cycleways in cities. The study does not claim it can be transferred to rural areas where a different transport mix may be necessary or desirable.

11.4 Where next for politics, campaigning and future research?

Activists' experiences in Newcastle can be explained by post-political theory. Newcastle has a democratic deficit. The public-political arena is emptied. Newcastle should embark on a public debate on democracy, its values and mechanisms, combined with histories of local campaigning and civic courage.

Understanding the post-political condition, its effects and dangers, could help Newcastle's decision-makers (politicians and civil servants) to reorient their energies away from system maintenance to the regeneration of democracy.

As for an attempt at restoration between the political and the social, different adaptations of local democratic process could be tried out in Newcastle linking citizenship to the political more closely, akin to the Bremen system. As a first step, I would propose Newcastle council make use of segmentation studies in order to comprehend the social/citizenship in relation to transport and to conceptualise *social automobility*.

As Robinson, Shaw, and Regan suggest in their 2017 report about the English Northeast, there are "a number of participatory and deliberative techniques to try to ensure wider involvement in decision-making beyond the 'usual suspects' [such as ...] citizens' juries or assemblies, and in relation to board appointments, the use of random or lottery selection" (2017:13) to overcome the stale and pale, if no longer exclusively male, elite (Robinson, Shaw, and Regan 2017). However, as post-political conflation has taken place in Newcastle, politicians would have to learn about the functions and mechanisms of deliberative democracy first, before citizen assemblies could be successful. Cultural attitudinal change is needed in relation to democratic systems. I would like to see more critical research into Newcastle's governance system. This would be best addressed by transdisciplinary studies in political sociology and social psychology, in order to explicate historical, current and future paths. Methodologically, this could be carried out as collaborative research with politicians so that a mutual learning process takes place.

Newcastle's politicians should aim to become political and strengthen democratic processes. Campaigners reported a ping-pong effect when demanding cycleways. The ball landing in no-man's land: neither city (cabinet) responsible, nor ward matter. For instance, Newcastle politics could take a look at the governance system to clarify and strengthen the relationship and responsibilities between city and ward matters. If not direct democracy, then deliberative democracy is a governance form that Newcastle could aspire to pursue.

In this study, I did not interview transport engineers. There is a body of general research on engineers, for example Beder (1998), Carter and Kirkup (1989) and Faulkner (2007) theorising about engineering's emancipation and masculinity. In my estimation, transport engineering currently remains understudied. Given the centrality of transport engineering to the maintenance of *institutional automobility*, the sociology of transport engineers would be a study worthwhile. It could also illuminate the interactions between engineers and planners, or politicians. Such research could yield more exact ways on how to reform these technical practices and move out of *institutional automobility*.

Cycle campaigners are not a homogenous group. These different groups have different demands. Furthermore, these different demands are difficult to reconcile. Some of the local opposition to road schemes is due to these different viewpoints. Politicians should take a closer look and segment these demands, rather than plead pluralism (for example saying "they cannot make up their own minds") and retreat. I see the future of cycle campaigning in demanding radical spatial change because these changes benefit society systemically and for the whole.

For new cycle campaigners, I propose, it to be useful to be aware of the different types of cycle campaigning. The old activism is cyclist-centred and liberal in its orientation: it promotes better right and more respect for cyclists. It hinges on the construction of a cyclist identity. The new activism, carried out by the women activists interviewed here, is space-centred: it sees spatial changes at the heart of change. The spatialisation of demands led to making the campaigns political, which the old campaigns' focus - on liberal matters - had failed to do. The politicisation of cycling (through spatial demands) has led to some physical changes on the ground in select cities in the UK, USA and Sevilla in Spain. It led to changes in the ADFC's national level. In Newcastle separated cycleways are built.

In Bremen it was worrying to hear that the politician was not aware of any cycleway campaigners, women or otherwise. Campaigners in Bremen must be more vocal and seek ways to articulate their demands more clearly. The recently formed bremenize.com seems a good start to that effect, publicising critical views on car parking and cycling politics. For example, the local ADFC

branch could liaise more closely with grassroots groups in order to align with, promote and further the national pro-cycleway position of the ADFC: recently the national ADFC published a position on cycleway-type infrastructure (ADFC 2018). I extend that recommendation to other local ADFC branches (city and regional⁴²).

Throughout the study I had problems placing women and gender in relation to transport matters. The women activists helped me to understand the value of personal experiences (as did feminist/critical theories that allowed me to write this autoethnographic account). Overall, we know that on average women's journeys are different, but the gap is closing. We know from research that women favour separated facilities (slightly more than men) (Aldred et al. 2016). The transport sector is male-led (Eurofund 2018:7). However, I rather propose to work on a subject-matter basis: we should value all types of journeys. This could entail improving journeys of care such as school routes or neighbourhood connections. Care journeys are more often undertaken by women. The focus away from alleviating congestion for commuting would help various under-represented groups. Identification of social groups would be paramount: 'who benefits?' would be the relevant question to ask. It is something politicians interested in inclusion, diversification and resilience could concentrate on. All this means putting the social (back) into the technical: transport to value liveable places and not just traffic.

It must be stated most plainly, *institutional automobility* harms local democracy and citizenship. It provides a highly rationalised and overly technical position on transport that leaves little room to account for people's realities and rationalities and pick apart *social automobility* and car dependence. If politicians were interested in their local democracy to be functional and effective, they would be well advised to challenge *institutional automobility*. Politicians should work together with interest groups and find inclusive narratives in support of such venture. Ultimately, the technical practices, transport engineering and planning, need to change, to be de-rationalised, to account for the full sociology of journeys taking place in our cities. These practices partial, value-laden and

⁴² Translated from *Kreisverband* and *Landesverband*

subjective and depend on democratic processes. Transport engineering and planning must be understood as practices that are highly political.

Activism and campaigning are essential to keeping the political system on its toes, awake and critically reflective. It was my conviction too, that in Newcastle, it was our duty as cycle activists to hold power to account. We wanted our ideas to be heard and debated – activists were enlivening the local democracy by contributing ideas about alternative futures. Much time and effort went into campaigning and highlighting the pitfalls of *social automobility*. Much of the Newcastle administration's time went into defending *institutional automobility*. A circularity between the campaign and the administration (politics) was apparent. How to break this unfortunate circle? Some call for simply more opportunities of deliberation and participation. Whilst that is sensible for Bremen, given the post-political circumstances in Newcastle however, this would have little lasting effect. Newcastle needs more democracy. Collaborative methods would descend into pseudo consultations, as the local campaign had experienced. In Newcastle, a politicisation process would have to take place first to restore connectivity and trust between the citizenship and the political.

Through autoethnographic reflection I was able to pin down parallels between my activist world and the world of research. Real life stories make for a theoretical contribution. Individual stories can indeed challenge monolithic hegemonies. The personal, indeed, turned out to be political.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Topic guide for interview

Activists

Personal history

Why campaigning? Your campaigning role

How to campaign, to appeal to power or gain influence

Achievements, successes of your campaigning

Challenges, challengers of your campaigning

Future outlooks/vision

Anything you would like to add?

Decision-makers

Opening question: What's your role in your organisation in relation to cycling and transport infrastructure?

How do you engage and work with the public (concept of civic society)

In practice, how do you use democracy and democratic processes?
(concept of democracy)

How useful is transport policy? Do you have a practical example of where or how you have used policy? (concept of policy / implementation / transition)

Closing question: Is there anything you would like to add or discuss?

Appendix B. List of council-oriented campaign events

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
2010/11				
Silver Lonnen road safety scheme	Council infrastructure	Campaign comments	Installation of pinchpoints (pedestrian crossings) deemed unsafe for cycling on this route	Complete
Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) including One Core (city centre) plans	Council policy	Reply to first consultation	Space use reconfiguration: car parking strategy, consolidation of bus services	Demands were not included in final document and have not been taken up wholesale by council
Councillor travel survey	Campaign action	Created an online survey	Engaging councillors in transport-related activity	Half of Newcastle's 78 councillors completed survey. Survey report produced and shared with councillors
Bike ride with the council leader (called 4C: City Chief Cycle Challenge)	Campaign action	Organiser	To introduce the campaign to newly elected councillors	The cycle manifesto was rapidly adopted

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
Council cycle forum and working groups	Council process	Regular attendance (2010-2014)	Clear focus on urban design/spatial planning. Functionality/effectiveness of the forum	Campaign left the forum in 2014
Cycle manifesto (statement of intent, policy)	Campaign action	Creator, lobbied council for adoption	Clear promise needed from politicians, agenda setting	Adopted in 2011
Cycle strategy (policy)	Campaign action	Lobbying for production (and adoption)	Focus on the creation of cycle routes (over soft measure, such as training people to cycle)	Adopted in 2012
Strategic Cycle Routes (SCR)	Campaign action	Lobby council to adopt into policy (for example LTP3)	Councillors to commit to planning and building good-quality cycleways	SCRs nominally included in cycle strategy 2012, and programmed in Cycle City Ambition Fund (CCAF) bid in 2014
2011/12				
Central Station plans, new traffic circulation	Council scheme	Providing feedback at	Include cycling permeability	Some campaign demands were included, i.e. closure of southern

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
and public realm improvements		various consultation stages		end of Grainger Street, cycle infrastructure provision remains substandard
Designated North-South cycle route through Newcastle, National Cycle Network 725 (NCN725)	Council scheme	Feedback (unsolicited)	Infrastructure changes to meet set quality criteria in street design	John Dobson Street built. Plans on other sections have been discussed (not built). Barras Bridge plans exclude cycling
Percy Street, Barras/Haymarket	Campaign action / council scheme	Info / data requests	Want an open dialogue and fair / inclusive consultation	Obscure process, unclear future plans
Traffic regulation order (TRO) process	Council process	Campaign accepted as informal consultee	Inclusion on consultee list to gain an understanding of council formal design processes	TRO process was reformed in 2016
Brighton Grove illegal car parking (on a popular cycle route)	Campaign initiated	Instigated debate	Install good quality cycleways to show commitment to cycling and urban design	Only cycle lane installed (rather than separated / protected cycleway, including legalisation of previously illegal car parking on East side)
Cycle infrastructure design training for	Campaign action	Lobbied council	Train officials in latest innovative design techniques	Training not a regular Continuing Professional

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
council officials				Development (CPD) feature of council officers
Working group on Strategic Cycle Routes (network)	Council process/scheme	Contributing to discussions lobbied for design criteria	Include design criteria to automate the process as much as possible and lessen campaign burden on time and resources	Design criteria do not officially exist. Council has claimed to use London Cycle Design Standards (LCDS), but evidence of that is slim.
Road user debate	Campaign action	Lobbied council	to discuss council's exclusive approach to road safety and essential driving	Council created transport forum (2015)
Automated stations (loop counters) counting cyclists	Campaign action	Requested data from council of the counting stations	Created map to inspire council to action, and show coverage	Mapped, and council somewhat inspired to use data and expand data collection
2012/13				
Elswick Road plans	Council scheme, bus priority	Feedback on council plans, mobilise select members	Comments on plans, mobilised select members (users of the route) to comment on cycle bypass removal	Council ignored comments at the time; then, in 2014/15, announced plans to substantially re-design the entire corridor (as part of CCAF

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
				programme)
Bike ride with senior decision makers along NCN725	Campaign action	Organiser	To allow first-hand experience and foster dialogue	Uncertain/intangible (part of an on-going effort to establish dialogue about Newcastle transport future)
Development of the Strategic Cycle Routes (SCRs)	Campaign action	Lobbied council	Incorporate into policy	Slow council uptake, eventually included in 2014 (CCAF programme)
Core Strategy, Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), council budget proposal	Council process	Responded to consultations	Asked for a longer view to be taken. Tackling climate change issues need longer time horizon	Not included in final plans/policies. (Wider impact: uncertain/intangible. Effective communication base has not been established with council)
Walker Route plans	Council scheme	Provided informal advice, Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and cycle forum	Protected cycleways on main roads, clear design and user-friendly pathfinding	Plans were shelved in 2015, programme unclear

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
Welbeck Road plans	Council scheme	Attended Scrutiny Regulatory Appeals Sub Committee (RASC) meeting, mobilised members action (write-in) to show support	Welcomed plans, provided support to council	Ward councillors opposed the scheme, senior councillors and officials shelved the plans, programme unclear
NCN725	Council scheme	Audited current quality of route	To show that designs I subpar and encourage council action	Picked up by CCAF programme in 2014. On-going discussions/deliberations
20mph streets in city centre	Campaign action	Requested data from council	Mapped to show poor coverage in city centre	Minor action by council (removal of wrongly placed signs), no overall strategic approach to extend 20mph zone in city centre
Northumberland Street assessment	Council scheme	Contributed to study, met with consultant,	Allow cycling outside shopping hours and assess impact, show contradiction in	Cycling remains banned. A reasonable alternative route (albeit bypassing the shopping

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
		cycling banned (despite mixing heavy delivery vehicles with pedestrian use)	current approach and highlight the lack of alternative North-South route through Newcastle centre	area) has been created, see John Dobson Street (2016)
Haddricks Mill plans	Campaign action	Produced joint report with Living Streets in anticipation of council plans	Attempt to inform/alert councillors about the difficulties of walking and cycling at that junction	Council's proposal (as part of NAC) met with public protests in 2016
Heaton Road cyclist's death	Campaign action	Lobbied council to create register of road pinchpoints (danger to cyclists), and to set up a design strategy	To minimise danger (and honour the occurred death)	Not started (despite promises made at cycle forum)
Fenham Hall Drive	Council scheme	Provided	Ensure good cycling and	Built to council's original design

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
plans		feedback via forum and TRO process	walking quality design	(unclear routing/placing of cyclists, including cycle lanes on busy and fast road), impact of car parking not addressed
Westmorland Road plans	Council scheme	Provided feedback via forum and TRO process	Ensure good quality design	Part of CCAF programme. Construction to start imminent, scheme of good design quality
2013/14				
Cycle contraflows in city centre (incl Clayton Street)	Campaign action	Requested data from council	Created visuals, to lobby council for low-cost designs (counteracting council-proclaimed money shortage)	Council installed contraflow on Clayton Street without seeking campaign comment (2015). Dangerous layout, contraflow removed within months
CCAF budget attained (SCR included), start of route planning/designing	Council process/scheme	Advising, assisting, commenting, providing informal training	Ensuring all options are considered, lobbying for good design solutions	CCAF programme has not been monitored, and whilst schemes happen this is random (disowning civic society influence and input)
TAG group starts	Council process	Provides	To professionalise and	Education effort, on-going

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
meeting (as part of CCAF)		informal design training for council engineers/planners	streamline the cycle infrastructure design process (and reduce necessary involvement of the campaign in everyday urban design matters)	
Conference with the Dutch Embassy (Love Newcastle - Go Dutch)	Campaign action	Main organiser, budget from council	Enable knowledge transfer and inspire council action, platform for politicians	Intangible. Senior politicians made statements, but their onward action remains unclear. Links between council officials and practitioners did not form.
Transport plans in Gosforth, individual schemes listed below	Council scheme	Responded to various consultations over several months	Ensure good quality design for cycling and walking	Some minor results, but overall campaign comments have largely been ignored by council over the years
<i>Gosforth High Street</i>		<i>Mobilised membership to comment, letter writing</i>	<i>Discuss movement plan for Gosforth, different streams of traffic, traffic reduction</i>	<i>Protests resulted in response to council's unclear narrative and goals (red route). No implementation took place on High Street section</i>
<i>Salter's/Church Road</i>		<i>Provided</i>	<i>Challenging council's</i>	<i>Built. Car movements prioritised.</i>

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
<i>junction with High Street</i>		<i>technical feedback on design including challenging council's design philosophy of junction capacity</i>	<i>exclusive approach to road safety and highway design practices</i>	<i>Walking and cycling comfort and safety relegated</i>
<i>Great North Road: Regent Centre northwards to Broadway roundabout</i>		<i>Provided detailed comments</i>	<i>Informing council of the potential for a national flagship project: re-modelling of roadspace necessary, protected cycle space vital on main road, bus-stop bypass design</i>	<i>Built, but to questionable/inconsistent design quality, major mistakes made (cycle continuity/safety compromised, car movements prioritised)</i>
Strategic Cycle Routes (SCR)	Campaign action	Bike rides along the routes (cycle safaris)	To chart the current quality of infrastructure, get familiar with routes, and imagine designs	On-going, completed in 2015
Brandling Park, Jesmond	Council CCAF	Commenting on plans,	Important strategic cycle corridor, as first CCAF	Built in 2016, oversized cycling infrastructure, council

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
		attending TAG meetings	scheme at TAG this would be a test case for dialogic involvement between campaign and council	removed paid car parking, compromising walking route, when traffic management would have sufficed,
2014/15				
Road classification, movement plans	Campaign action	Lobbying council to abandon piecemeal planning, providing ideas for a citywide approach	It's spatial: Newcastle needs citywide plans for an integrated transport approach	Not taken up by council (despite potential to simplify design process in the long run)
Acorn Road, Jesmond	Council scheme	Lobbying, contributing to dialogue and narrative development, various consultation replies	In supporting council to implement the scheme, but supporting the council was difficult to achieve as plans kept changing	Built but to sub-standard design quality: car parking not sufficiently assessed, cycle contraflow design questionable for stress-free cycling
Space for Cycling:	Campaign action	Organiser	Installing cycling and urban	67% councillor support (highest

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
protest rides and councillor sign-up			design firmly on the council agenda	in England, outside London)
Safaris of Strategic Cycle Routes (continued from previous year)	Campaign action	Bike rides along the routes (cycle safaris)	To chart the current quality of infrastructure, get familiar with routes, and imagine designs	Complete
2015/16				
Transport transition (next steps, how to)	Campaign action	Agenda setting	Providing a holistic narrative to officials (for their use)	Council did not embrace the narrative
Letters to Nick Forbes and Pat Ritchie	Campaign action	Authors	Involving the senior decision-makers, inspiring by providing statistics and solutions	Failed to establish a dialogue
33 TROs	Council process	Replies	Educating council officials on cycle-friendly urban design	TRO process was simplified
TRO consultation process	Campaign action	providing feedback on TRO process, challenging council's processes	Process is too onerous, ineffective	Process changed (in part due to national regulatory changes)

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
Haddricks Mill (in anticipation of Northern Access Corridor)	Campaign action	Published thoughts and ideas	Hoped to influence council design and consultation processes	Plans published in 2016 were not amenable to sustainable travel (public protest resulted)
Senior politicians' statements	Campaign action	Keeping record	Reminder of words / promises, and show the lack of action	Lack of engagement with the campaign. Invisibility of senior decision makers.
Advocacy and academia debate day	Campaign action	Co-organiser	Bringing different (national) groups together for dialogue.	Positive feedback received.
2016/17				
John Dobson Street, installation of protected two-way cycleway (500 metres length)	Council scheme	Providing informal comments, and replying to formal consultations	Important for its prominent position in the city centre. Concerns raised about linkages into a wider network and traffic light settings	Scheme built, overall positive outcome. Good quality, but no linkages made to routes, or wider network plans
Northern Access Corridor, part of council's Local Plan	Council scheme (Local Plan)	Campaign had raised earlier warnings on the Local Plan, and met with council	For sustainable transport schemes, council must abandon predict-and-provide approach	See below listing

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
		planners to discuss the design approach		
<i>Cowgate roundabout, junction capacity scheme</i>		<i>Commenting on council plans through TAG</i>	<i>Informing council about best practice design for cycling on roundabouts</i>	<i>Built 2016</i>
<i>Blue House roundabout, junction capacity scheme</i>		<i>Commenting on council plans through TAG, when scheme was published for consultation further comments, press releases</i>	<i>Council to reassess its junction capacity approach with regards to transport transition and mode shift: cycling, walking and public transport</i>	<i>Council to decide, process and timing unclear. Spontaneous public protests resulted (not instigated by the campaign). Council convened meetings to assuage public reaction and obtain feedback and design inputs</i>
<i>Haddricks Mill, junction capacity scheme</i>		<i>As above</i>	<i>As above</i>	<i>Council to decide, process and timing unclear</i>
Strategic Cycle Routes PLUS ring routes	Campaign action	Agenda setting	Creating a cycle-network narrative for the council	No visible progress at the council, some indications that

Activity	Type of activity / initiator	Campaign involvement	Campaign's demand / reason for involvement	2017: status / progress made
(network idea)				the TAG could discuss SCRs as a standing agenda item
Training sessions for council engineering/planners	Campaign action	Lobbied council for professional training	Confidence in council officials to design cycle schemes is low. Planners and engineers not sufficiently collaborating	One-off complete, training sessions held. (Formalised continued learning has not been established)
END OF TABLE				

GLOSSARY

ADFC	Allgemeiner Deutscher Fahrrad Club, Germany's national cycle lobby, founded in 1979, operating in three tiers: national, regional and local groups
CCAF	Cycle City Ambition Fund, a Department for Transport programme that enabled select cities to bid for monies for cycle infrastructure improvement in 2013
CTC	Cyclists' Touring Club, the UK's national cycle lobby, the organisation rebranded in 2016 with a name change to Cycling UK, founded in 1878
Local Plan	Newcastle City Council's land-use policy adopted in 2015 in collaboration with Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council, covering transport management and planning
Sustrans	UK's active travel charity, lobbying for walking and cycling, operational since 1977, linking into national governance through the (recreational) National Cycle Network
TAG	Technical Advisory Group, Newcastle City Council coordinated group of volunteers and council officers to facilitate a technical exchange on CCAF matters, started 2013
VEP	Verkehrsentwicklungsplan. Bremen's transport policy, adopted in 2014

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