Policy styles in planning for active urban mobility: Tracing knowledges between Bogota and Seville

AAG Annual Conference, 21 April 2015
Emma Street and Philip Black
Real Estate and Planning, University of Reading

Outline

- Policy ‘problems’ and the global search for ‘solutions’
- From Bogota to Seville - the creation and transfer of an alternative model for active urban mobility
- Conclusion: Proactive policy styles and the search for solutions – towards alternative policy styles in urban mobility planning?

Global-scale policy ‘problem’

“Population aging and urbanization are the culmination of successful human development during the last century. They also are major challenges for this century.”

- World Health Organisation, Age Friendly Cities report

Global search for ‘solutions’...

The WHO defines active ageing as:

‘the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. It allows people to realize their potential for physical, social, and mental well-being throughout the life course and to participate in society, while providing them with adequate protection, security and care when they need’.

- Cycling as a relatively low-cost, low-impact and social form of physical activity that can promote well-being
- Policy makers begun to recognise this but there is still a lot to do…need for new / alternative solutions?

Discourse of ‘policy crisis’ in the UK

- % aged 60+ predicted to rise from 23% (today) to 29% in 2034 & 31% in 2058
- 85% of older people with depression receive no help from the the NHS
- 11% of 65+ population find it difficult to access a corner shop; 12% to their doctor’s surgery; and 25% struggle to get to their local hospital

The government said plans to improve public health would help relieve some of the pressure.
Our research...

- EPSRC-funded 3-year research project study to understand cycling among the older population and how this affects independence, health and wellbeing
- Mixed-methods research and engagement with 50-59 (approaching older age) and 60+ (older adults) populations in Reading, Oxford, Bristol and Cardiff
- Aim is to advise policy makers and practitioners how our environment and technologies can be designed to help people to continue to cycle in older age or to reconnect with cycling (life-course approach)
- Searching for ‘good practice’ beyond the UK, including more inclusive approaches to urban mobility planning
- https://vimeo.com/106933009

Policy 'problems' and 'opportunities'

1 LOW LEVEL OF CYCLING AMONG OLDER PEOPLE IN THE UK
The share of journeys made by bicycle is low for all age groups, but particularly low in older age.

2 DIFFERENT STORY ELSEWHERE
Cycling is an important mode of transport in older age in other parts of Northern Europe.

Cycling has the power to tackle social issues such as loneliness, isolation and may also have the potential to improve both cognitive function and eudaimonic wellbeing - the sense of happiness acquired through fulfillment, autonomy and purpose in life.

In need of (global) solutions...

Achieving the Mayor’s Vision for Cycling in London (March 2013) will, amongst other things, require London practitioners to apply tried-and-tested techniques from around the world to the London context, and to innovate as necessary. To this end, TfL commissioned a study of selected cities, to understand better what makes for success in relation to cycle infrastructure, safety and culture. The study was tasked to focus on design approaches in cities with high levels of cycling and/or recent significant growth in cycling numbers.

- Public policy challenges in need of bold solutions including alternative and innovative policy ‘styles’ and models
- Policy-makers seeking ‘good practice’ elsewhere, including outside of the global north and the usual suspects, e.g. Copenhagen
- How do these models emerge and travel and do they offer a more progressive and pro-active set of solutions for urban governments?

‘Problems’ in need of solutions...global policy transfer

- Policy transfer is a process by which: ‘knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political setting ... is used in development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political setting’ (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000: 5)
- Geography of policy transfer “Casting a light on the strategies through which various actors change the geographies of governance across space, including non-state actors” (Prince, 2012: 189)
- “We need ... above all, a move away from an excessive preoccupation with Western countries. Only then can the extent of diffusion/transfer, and the dynamics underpinning it, be more fully explored” (Marsh and Sharman, 2009: 270)
Creating an alternative mobility model (Gilbert, 2006)

- Bogota, Colombia’s capital city of 7.8 million inhabitants
- Following a series of crises during the 1990s, improvements to governance led to the United Nations designating it Latin American “ciudad ejemplo” in 2002
- System of elected mayors in place with balance of power towards mayoral autonomy reformed in 1993
- Infrastructure planning used to bolster civic pride and address a series of social challenges via ideologically bold public investment schemes including a new public bus system ‘Transmilenio’, public libraries and extensive cycle network and public cycle hire scheme
- Delivery of these major projects relatively unaffected by changes in personnel with subsequent mayors embracing the ‘principal projects of their predecessors’

Creating an alternative mobility model

“...we were a city that lacked the ‘bike culture’ that many talk about. But when we built a bicycle network that people could use, that connected them to the places they had to go to, we went from having 28,000 people using a bike as a way of getting around, to over 350,000. So today, for every four cars in Bogota, we have one riding a bike.”

Gil Penalosa, speaking in 2012

Creating an alternative mobility model

- Proactive, technocratic ‘problem-solving’ style of policy-making guided by a clearly-articulated ‘bright idea’ and requiring political skills and rapid, possibly experimental, modes of delivery (Bovens et al, 2001; Lampis, 2013)
- In Bogota, this involved making unpopular and / or risky political decisions to challenge “powerful interest groups for the greater good of the city” (Gilbert, 2006: 415)
- Policy making by application of ‘bright ideas’; here political skills matter to engender “bicycle consciousness” across diverse socio-economic groups (Cervero et al, 2009)
- “A bikeway is a symbol that shows that a citizen on a $30 bicycle is equally important as a citizen on a $30,000 car” (Former Mayor of Bogota 1998-2001, Enrique Penalosa)

Creating an alternative mobility model

- Key individuals involved in development of Bogota model travel the world discussing its ‘success’, cities without a strong ‘cycle culture’ but with political vision were looking…
- E.g. Seville, regional capital of Autonomous Community of Andalusia in southern Spain, municipal popn of 1.5million
- Leaders of grassroots cycling campaign now occupied positions of political influence and could prioritise cycling
- Supported by a process of community budgeting and use of technical experts versed in the tradition of ‘Dutch-style’ infrastructure design, created an opportunity to engender a new ‘people-centred’ form of urban planning and design
- The ‘power’ of this approach is espoused by a global network of designers, consultants and policy actors
The ‘Velo-City’ international conference was held in Seville in 2011 to launch the city as a progressive and newly ‘cycle-friendly city’ on the global policy stage.

It was Chaired by Gil Penalosa now Director of the ‘8 to 80 Cities’ Toronto-based NGO and consultancy “provid[ing] cities with candid and straightforward recommendations that support our mission to...support projects that reflect social equality in the public realm” (8-80cities).

The 8 to 80 Cities ‘rule’

• In 2005 leaders of the municipal government made 23m Euro investment in 80km segregated 2-way cycle network (completed 2006!) increased to 120km in 2011
• Cycle-hire scheme ‘Sevici’ installed in 2007, heavily-used in urban-core
• Cycle journeys increased from 5000/day (2006) to 72,000/day (2010); a ‘modal share shift’ from 1% - 6% (Malpica, 2013)
• Seville is now ranked 4th most bicycle friendly city in world (The Copenhagen Index)
• BUT political regime has recently changed, leading to concerns about future upkeep / maintenance

Transporting an alternative mobility model

• Policy styles that take a proactive and ‘idea-based’ approach can engender bold and rapid change in urban mobilities with the potential to address wider goals such as social inclusion
• ‘Solutions’ based on particular policy constructions ‘travel’ via global agents who facilitate and sometimes ‘sell’ models
• The two cases underline the importance of strong urban leadership in getting ‘results’; this can of course be (democratically) dangerous, and be destabilised as political regimes change (the case, to an extent, in both cities)
• Geographical literatures pointing towards the pitfalls of policy transfer therefore provide a useful counterpoint and critique
• More optimistically, the cases offer a politically progressive vision of urban inclusivity as an alternative to the ‘usual suspects’ (where political structures and fiscal systems align)

Towards alternative global policy mobilities?

What we have “learned”?

• Make a network, not isolated cycleways (Of course!).
• Make your network fast: people will feel it is useful!
• Make your cycleways visible and easy to recognize
• Make your cycleways safe: protect the cycleways against traffic.
• Two-ways better than one one-way (at he beginning)
  • if there are parking lanes, put your cycleways between parked cars and pedestrians. Make easy the access to cars.
• Bike-sharing systems are a complement of the cycling network. But not conversely.
• It helps to have a unified management of the bike program.
• Consensus with urban cycling associations is very important!!