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Governing Transport from Welfare State to Hollow State: the case of cycling in the UK

Abstract

This paper analyses UK cycling policy in relation to the shift towards a hollowed-out neoliberal state. In the UK, cycling became embedded in public policy only after policy-making had been variously outsourced to private, quasi-private, and voluntary organisations. The paper argues that this broader context has contributed to the ongoing failure to treat cycling as a strategically important mode meriting substantial national transport funding. Secondly, the paper makes links between a growing policy focus on 'active' and 'responsible' citizenship, and the dispersal of cycling policy away from transport into other areas including public health and the environment. It is argued that while there are benefits to this construct, it has again helped to maintain cycling as perceived as peripheral to the main business of 'transport'. Cycling policy has been doubly devolved: away from the state, and away from transport. The implications of this for policy and advocacy are discussed and future directions for both are finally outlined.

Keywords: *cycling; environment; health; individualisation; privatisation; welfare*

1. Introduction

This paper analyses UK cycling policy in the context of broader shifts in policy governance: away from the state, and towards the responsible individual. While these trends are much discussed in social policy literature they have received less attention within transport policy. However, it is argued here that they complement sector-specific factors (such as the dominance of motor interests) in explaining the failures of cycling policy to substantially increase cycling. The paper begins by discussing the shifts in policy governance, with some examples of how they have affected transport policy. It then discusses two distinct periods within UK cycling policy. The first, 1945-1990, saw cycling marginalised in policy debate with the terms of the postwar UK welfare settlement implicitly excluding cycling. (A slight return in the 1980s saw cycling cast as a risky and marginal pursuit, but not one requiring governmental action or protection.)

The second major section of the paper deals with cycling policy from the 1990s onwards, in particular the growth of cycling promotion, the growing involvement of advocates, and the construction of cycling as a 'win-win solution' to public health, environmental and economic problems. However, it is argued that this discourse, combined with the outsourcing of cycling policy and implementation, contributed to the continuing marginality of cycling. Cycling may have been viewed as good and green, but it never became seen as a 'strategic' priority for the national state. This section examines how the incorporation of advocates – partly enabled by the portrayal of cycling as a positive lifestyle choice – became increasingly contested. Finally the paper makes some suggestions as to what might happen to cycling and cycling policy in the context of budget cuts and further governmental disengagement.

2. The Hollow State and the Responsible Individual

Advanced capitalist countries such as the UK have experienced a shift away from the Keynesian welfare state consensus towards more neo-liberal forms of governance. This has meant a move away from policies designed, implemented, and managed by the nation-state, towards the

involvement of quasi-state organisations, or state bodies at sub- or supra-national levels (Clarke and Newman 1997, Powell and Hewitt 1998, Milward and Provan 2000). The election of New Labour in 1997 brought change and continuity in UK policy. After 1999 spending rose, but was frequently directed towards public-private partnerships rather than the 'traditional state'.

Rather than the private sector (or individuals or charities) simply replacing the state, the 'state' and the 'private' were brought together in new ways (Powell and Hewitt 1998). Britain's complex railway system is an example. Privatised in 1995 by the Conservatives, track ownership was re-nationalised by Labour, but the system remains a patchwork of operators, rolling stock companies, and maintenance consortia. Hence, the 'hollow state'; involving networks which are not purely public, purely private, or purely voluntary, but which mix personnel and characteristics of two or three of these sectors. Another example, the Coalition Government's 'responsibility deal' on healthy lifestyles, involves big business in planning government policy while seeking local business involvement in implementing campaigns (Public Health Commission 2011).

The shift away from the state has affected different areas of transport in different ways. The 'strategic roads network' remained state-run: experiments with toll roads and Private Finance Initiative road schemes have been relatively peripheral to the strategic direction of policy and the design of individual schemes, which remained set by the state. This marks a contrast with PFI health contracts, where the private sector is involved from the beginning in defining the types of infrastructure and services to be provided (Author 2008). If privatisation has been intended to move services out of the politicised 'public sphere' it is not always successful: despite the formally private nature of much of the railway system, the state remains clearly implicated in its operation.

Mirroring the growing role for private business and third sector organisations, policy has increasingly focused on the responsibilities of private citizens as service users, with policy rhetoric highlighting a move away from the 'passive' citizen. Policy-makers seek to encourage citizens to become self-regulating (Miller and Rose 1990). In the New Labour years, this 'responsibilisation' was referred to as 'active citizenship' implying that the citizen would control not just his or her own behaviour, but also contribute to broader community governance (Brannan et al 2006). This approach has been continued with current Prime Minister Cameron's attempts to promote a 'big society' where private citizens run formerly public services on a voluntary basis.

'Responsibilisation' has made its way into transport policy, particularly this century. After a brief flirtation with transport radicalism, New Labour sought to avoid what 'modernisers' saw as top-down, state-led mistakes of the past (Shaw and Docherty, 2008). They sought to allow individuals, seen as consumers, maximum 'choice' while encouraging them to use these choices responsibly. The 'choice' agenda continued into the Coalition years with the concept of the state 'nudging', rather than regulating or prohibiting behaviour. The *Cutting Carbon, Creating Growth* White Paper uses the language of choice throughout: '[i]t is short-distance, local trips where the biggest opportunities for people to make more sustainable transport choices exist, and these opportunities exist now' (DfT 2011: 12). It encourages 'active citizenship' through, for example, praising rural communities that provide voluntary bus services.

While the rise of the 'hollow state' and the 'responsible individual' has been extensively studied within social policy, this is less the case within transport policy. This paper argues that these concepts are helpful in analysing the re-configuration of cycling policy in the UK. The form UK

cycling policy has taken is shaped by *when* it became a concern of the state: in the 1990s, when the 'hollow state' paradigm was well established and the 'responsible individual' paradigm emerging. The paper suggests that these dominant policy approaches have led to cycling being (a) located outside the national state and (b) attached to discourses around healthy and environmental lifestyle choices. This in turn has shaped the policy solutions developed.

3. Cycling before Cycling Policy

This section provides a discussion of cycling and policy before the 1990s, when, it is argued, a major change took place. As Paul Rosen comments (2002: 158) 'In the United Kingdom there had been barely any policy related to cycling [...] until the 1980s'. Below I link this invisibility of cycling to the construction of the UK's specific post-war Keynesian policy consensus. As Rosen indicates cycling made a slight return in the 1980s in policy discourse; however, this framing was predominantly negative, focusing on the responsibility of the cyclist to protect herself on the roads, with the national state constructed as lacking resources and ability to do much.

3.1 Cycling as Invisible

During the Keynesian state's heyday between 1945 and 1975, cycling was hardly visible within official UK policy discourse. One reason was the growing power of motoring and road construction interests, affecting transport policy throughout Europe (Netherlands Directorate General for Passenger Transport 1999). Another is more nationally specificⁱ: the perception of cycle transport as not requiring dedicated infrastructure or resources. This meant cycling did not 'fit' within a policy paradigm prioritising large-scale state-led investment. There was no clear place for it as a state policy object, assisting its removal into the 'private' sphere of leisure constructed as outside the domain of the state. As a form of transport, cycling appeared anachronistic in an era favouring large organisational forms in the context of carbon dependent welfare capitalism (Cahill 2010).

By contrast, forms of motorised travel, both public and private, were seen as matters of public concern: prominent policy objects with major economic costs and benefits, requiring state investment or subsidy in infrastructure and operation. Yet while there was planned (contested) disinvestment in public transport, cycling declined without explicit planning for this; no Beeching Reportⁱⁱ was needed because there was no national state-provided infrastructure or services to remove or reduce. In 1963, the year of the Beeching report, another influential report was published: *Traffic in Towns*, the 'Buchanan report'. Focusing on roads, it did not discuss the needs of cyclists, who made few appearances in text and images. One such image, the illustration of 'A Central London Block' (Buchanan 1963: 178), shows four to five lanes of general motor traffic, one dedicated bus lane, and no cycling infrastructure; one cyclist is pictured on the pavement.

As indicated by the reports, the planning mainstream assumed people would increasingly choose to own and use private cars.ⁱⁱⁱ Policy focused on how the state should invest to facilitate this (and mitigate disbenefits), while providing public transport as a social service for those who could not travel by car (Vigar 2002). The most important roads were 'strategic', motorways and trunk roads controlled by the Highways Agency, while local authorities controlled other roads. As cities were redeveloped, pedestrian shopping precincts were built surrounded by major roads; leaving no place for cyclists, often legally barred from pedestrian zones and in practice barred from heavily motorized zones. Attempts to maximise motor vehicle flow led to the building of bypasses, gyratories and multi-lane roundabouts in the 1960s and 1970s. Most postwar 'New Towns' did not provide well for cycling, particularly the more car-oriented second wave (Jones 2008)^{iv}.

Much has been written about how the motor industry lobby has shaped transport policy (e.g. Paterson 2007). In explaining the invisibility of cycling, one factor might be the postwar decline of the British bicycle industry, and the lack of state support comparable to that for the car industry. Grous (2011: 8) comments that while 3.7 million bicycles were sold in 2010, '[a]lmost all of these were imported, with the UK bicycle manufacturing industry having declined drastically since its heyday over two decades ago.' The UK car industry also experienced substantial competitive challenges in the post-war era, yet was seen as a sector of key national importance and supported by successive governments of different political complexions. Despite its problems, levels of UK car production have been maintained since the 1960s, at 1.5-2 million units annually. By comparison in 2009, only 20,000 bicycles purchased in the UK were domestically produced (Bike Europe 2011) with total UK production that year standing at 29,000 bicycles.

3.2 The Cyclist as Child

One key exception to the invisibility of cycling and cyclists was in terms of child safety. This located cycling within a depoliticised 'safety' discourse since criticised for lack of attention to the causes of road danger and for blaming parents (and children) for child road casualties (Davis 1993). The Central Office of Information's short road safety film 'Sewing Machine' (1973) begins with a mother saying 'I'll just be a minute' – but that's too long, the lugubrious voice-over tells us. The child runs out of the house and into the road to see her friend and does not see the car that kills her: according to the film, this is the fault of her mother.

A range of non-state organisations targeted child cyclists, with charities and cycle advocates involved alongside cycle manufacturers (especially Raleigh). This was accompanied by discourses positioning children as vulnerable on the roads as never before. A 1955 leaflet advertising the Raleigh School of Cycling bemoaned the fact that 'the traffic ... has changed most of all' since parents were young. Acknowledging that many targeted parents no longer cycled it called upon them to instead allow their children to enjoy 'simple and enduring pleasures which television and the cinema will never supersede' (Raleigh 1955). Today's children were constructed as future adult drivers with cycling teaching 'roadsmanship'.

Just as in the leaflets and the texts, adult or utility cycling disappeared on the streets: cycling had gone into precipitous decline after 1951 and within two decades was marginal as transport.

Table 1 here

Table 2 here

3.3 Cycling as Environmental

While cycling was virtually invisible within UK policy-making, the 60s and 70s here as elsewhere saw campaigners raising it within an environmental transport frame (Author 2012). Themes raised then continue to resonate in transport debates: not least because 'environmental transport' advocacy formed part of a rising dissatisfaction with the welfare state consensus. Although this consensus could in theory have incorporated cycling provision (and did to some extent elsewhere), in practice it had become linked to planning for the car as a symbol of the new consumer society. This new activism was linked to a 'New Left' critique of bureaucratic, energy intensive capitalism,

constructing cycling as challenging the hegemony of the state and big business in the form of car or oil firms (Wollen 2001, Furness 2005).

However, cycling only became politicised once it had ceased to be 'everyday', increasingly 'out of place' in the motorised city (Golbuff and Aldred 2011). By the 1970s, cycling in many countries had experienced decades of decline. In 1973, UK cycling had collapsed to its lowest-ever level at 3.7 billion passenger km (1% modal share) down from 23 billion in 1952 which represented 11% modal share (Department for Transport, 2011: see Table 1 above). Its marginalisation allowed cycling to become associated not with mundane mass transport but with subversive play and utopian futures. In some countries (such as Denmark and The Netherlands, which already had a tradition of bicycle provision), popular protests in this period are seen as having pushed politicians to at least partly reverse car-centric policies and declining rates of cycling (De Jong and Rouwette, 2010; Jamison, et al., 1990; McClintock, 2002).

Several well-known British environmental and transportation organisations formed during the 1970s, including Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, London Cycling Campaign, Sustrans (then Cyclebag) and Campaign for Better Transport (then Transport 2000). This advocacy did have a brief impact of policy discourse. A 1977 study for the Department of Transport reported that 43% of trips to work in flat, compact cities could potentially be by cycle (as against the actual level of around 3%: Waldman 1977). In the same year the then Labour Government's Transport White Paper offered local authorities a budget for 'innovatory cycling projects'. It stated that '[c]ompletely segregated cycle routes would be impractical or far too expensive in most cities, but local authorities should consider ways of helping cyclists when preparing traffic management schemes' (DoT 1977: 28). Despite briefly encouraging rhetoric, cities were not to be remade for cycling but to be improved piecemeal where possible.

3.4 The Invisible Cyclist

In the UK, the brief flurry of policy interest in promoting cycling subsided in the 1980s, with the motor-car seen as a symbol of New Right individualism (Rajan 2006). On a local scale there were some limited moves to address cycling, such as the creation of a small cycle policy unit within the left-wing Greater London Council before its abolition (Author 2011). On a national level, a form of cycling policy discourse emerged that was deeply problematic and has continued to shape perceptions of cycling three decades later.

Firstly, the then Conservative government's 1981 Cycling Consultation Paper reinforced the construction of cycling as a local issue stating (1981:2) 'local authorities decide their own priorities for expenditure'. There would be no major state-led investment; instead funding for 'Innovatory Projects' would be provided on a competitive and case-by-case basis with business involvement encouraged. Very slowly, piecemeal and incremental changes were made, such as the use of Advanced Stop Lines. This was the heyday of the 'hollow state', in which only areas seen as major state priorities were safe from being outsourced or cut. The Strategic Road Network was one of these: it continued to be managed and directed through the national state, with local authorities having limited say over the development of such roads. By contrast, cycling was never constructed as being 'strategic', rather, local authorities could decide whether they wished to promote it.

Secondly, although rates of road injury and death had fallen since the 1960s, cycling policy discourse highlighted danger, risk and vulnerability. Its response was to focus upon the individual

responsibility of cyclists to protect themselves by wearing what was then called 'conspicuous clothing' and using lights. Framing cyclists as defective motorists, the Consultation Paper stressed the risks they run: 'Where cyclists are involved in crashes their machines offer them almost no protection' (DoT 1981:1). Increasingly it was suggested that cyclists simply could not be seen by drivers. A 1984 publicity campaign warned cyclists 'BY 5 O'CLOCK IT WILL BE HARD TO SEE THIS POSTER LET ALONE YOU' and telling drivers 'NOW THE NIGHTS ARE DRAWING IN IT'S EVEN HARDER TO SEE CYCLISTS' (Wall 1984). The campaign included less specific warnings such as 'CYCLISTS: DON'T LET YOUR NEXT RIGHT TURN TAKE YOU TO THE HOSPITAL'.

So while cyclists did become visible in policy terms, this constructed them as *invisible* and *unprotected*, and thus inherently endangered on the roads. Given the tone of this rhetoric, which acknowledged that cycling had some benefits, it is perhaps surprising so little was done to protect this vulnerable species. However, it is perhaps less surprising if we consider the broader policy context in which the 'hollow' nation state was reluctant to start new programmes of public works, except in areas perceived as core state business. Unfortunately these priority areas included road building, further marginalising cyclists whose interests were not generally considered when building bypasses or upgrading trunk roads (which by definition were not 'local' roads). After a brief rise in kilometres cycled in the early 1980s (although the modal share of cycling did not rise), cycling declined again in the 1980s and bottomed out at a level far behind many other Northern European countries.

4. The Era of Cycling Policy

This section discusses the incorporation of cycling within mainstream UK policy discourse. It is argued that this was shaped by a mixture of the continued 'hollow state' model and a new focus on 'responsible' and 'active' citizenship. The focus of government action thus shifted from warning of the dangers of cycling to promoting its benefits. However, the underlying model continued to be cycling as an individual choice. Now perhaps this was seen as predominantly a 'healthy' rather than a 'risky' choice, but with the key actor still the individual, now reconceptualised as healthy, environmentally concerned, etc. Accordingly, the national state continued to take a back seat, with even 'national' cycling infrastructure delivered by a charity through variously negotiated local arrangements. This created barriers to prioritising and providing high quality connected cycle routes, noted with frustration by all sides in UK cycling's fraught debates over provision.

4.1 The Answer to All our Prayers?

The 1990s saw a dramatic discursive shift as cycling became more positively visible in policy discourse. With growing environmental awareness alongside continuing congestion, academics, policy-makers and politicians questioned the logic of building more roads to meet forecast demand (Goodwin et al 1991). Linked to this, promoting cycling became framed as a concern of the state. This started in the last years of the Conservative Major administration, with the setting up of a National Cycling Strategy (1996); this contrasts with the 1981 consultation paper which focused on 'protection' rather than 'promotion'. The focus on cycling continued: in 1997, the newly elected Labour government held a landmark Parliamentary debate on cycling.^v

Into the new century there was a growing stress on cycling as a 'win-win' solution to multiple policy problems. It moved outside the domain of 'transport', to become a public health and environmental issue (Author 2011). Moving away from an exclusive focus on risk and safety, public health organisations and doctors' groups published material supporting 'active travel', including

the relatively early example *Cycling: Towards Health and Safety* by the British Medical Association (1992). By the twenty-first century local authorities were mandated to produce cycling strategy documents, which tended to start off describing these multiple benefits of cycling and exhorting individuals to choose cycling. Cycling funding was increasingly sourced from non-transport budgets for schemes such as GP exercise referrals.

This diversification of cycling discourse developed within a context of 'pragmatic multimodalism', which Shaw and Docherty (2008) argue provided some support for walking, cycling, and public transport without changing the underlying biases of UK transport policy (towards the car). Pragmatic multimodalism translated the three pillars of sustainable development (economy, society, environment) into differentiated support for different transport modes. Car and air transport remained identified with economic gain: hence, Labour's support for Heathrow's third runway and road building post 2001. Public transport was linked to social inclusion; with access to public transport seen as addressing disadvantage (Lucas 2003), while walking and cycling became specifically associated with environmental and health goals.

This approach mobilised new constituencies but with an underlying vulnerability: unlike motorised transport, cycling was still not defined as 'real' transport (Author forthcoming). This can be seen in the plethora of policy documents and web pages devoted to cycling. While many local authority sites give prosaic, value-free details about buses, highway maintenance and car parking, cycling pages feature exhortations. For example, Manchester's cycling pages begin: 'More Manchester people are choosing to cycle. It is a great way to get around - being healthy, environmentally friendly, and affordable. More cycle journeys also means reduced traffic congestion and cleaner air. It is one of the most sustainable modes of travel...'^{vi} While there are exceptions (e.g. Cambridge) this approach is fairly representative. Modes more integrated into the 'transport' frame are merely *described*, highlighting infrastructure and services (of varying qualities). For cycling, the individual is *urged* to act, for reasons of health, sustainability, cost, and congestion. In a country where many people know no regular cyclists, a discourse of individual responsibility has led to a fissure between perceptions of 'cyclists' and perceptions of 'cycling'. While surveys suggest (some) positive associations of *cycling* (e.g. DfT 2009), research continues to indicate that *cyclists* themselves are seen in negative terms, stigmatised as incompetent, risk-seeking zealots (DfT 2010, Author 2012). For the majority then cycling is a 'good thing' as saving polar bears is a 'good thing': something abstract and far away that hardly touches everyday life, with those individuals who do decide to engage in it seen as rather odd at best. The example of polar bears is not irrelevant: an often cited problem of environmental discourse is its failure to connect with everyday lived experience (Slocum 2004), and exhortations to cycle may suffer similar fates.

4.2 The Outsourced Cycling State

While local and national state organisations sought to persuade individuals to cycle, New Labour was wary of introducing potentially unpopular regulations. The 'hollow state' orthodoxy tells government to 'steer' rather than 'row' (Osborne and Gaebler 1992); while additional factors blocked substantial, direct state action supporting cycling. Ministers feared being characterised as anti-car, seen as also being against individual choices made by 'responsible' citizens. Transport Minister Andrew Adonis told *London Cyclist* magazine (2010:29) that rising levels of car ownership were not a problem: "We want to give people more choices about how to make trips, not fewer ... A large-scale transition to low-carbon transport will not be achieved by deprivation". Road charging was seen as political dynamite, despite being market-based and so apparently more in

touch with a politics aiming to influence rather than mandate choices. It took a then Independent mayor (Livingstone) to introduce the London Congestion Charge.

In line with the 'steering state' approach, responsibility for cycling policy implementation was variously outsourced, displaced sideways to quangos and voluntary organisations, and downwards to local authorities. Within local authorities reports, research, plans and feasibility studies were increasingly outsourced to consultants. The Bristol Cycling City programme relied heavily on Steer Davies Gleave (SDG), one of the major transport consultancies. Such consultancy organisations generally cover all transport modes, including road and public transport schemes: SDG are also project managing Bristol's Bus Rapid Transit scheme and working on the planned South Bristol Link Road. This is part of a broader shift of expertise from local authorities towards contractor organisations: Higgins and Allmendinger (1999: 40) reported that by 1999 'significant proportions of planning work are now undertaken outside the local planning authority' with traffic and transport then the third most common topic on which planners sought outside advice.

Alongside this broader outsourcing of transport planning, specific cycling networks were created around the state, using outsourced or contracted, sometimes low-cost or volunteer labour. Cycling England was set up in 2005 as an independent body with a volunteer board comprising representatives of British Cycling, cyclists' organisation CTC and Sustrans, alongside specialists in health, education and sustainable transport. Most of its funding was allocated to local projects such as the Cycling Demonstration Towns.^{vii} These showed that concentrated investment could increase cycling levels at a local level, while cycling nationally stagnated (Sloman et al 2009). £18 million was invested in Cycling Demonstration Towns, with four of the six towns or cities investing at least £10 per head of population per year, a substantially higher level of investment than the UK average of £1. This is comparable with spending in high-cycling European cities, although such cities already possess more extensive and higher quality infrastructure and services.

While cycling continued to be defined as primarily a 'local' transport issue, Sustrans was charged with delivery of the UK's National Cycle Network (NCN). This was however itself 'localised' as different sections had to be locally negotiated with planning authorities, local landowners (public and private sector), local heritage groups and so on. 'There are over 400 active partners involved in the NCN project, including local authorities, countryside and utility bodies, landowners, central government, amenity groups and community groups.' (Cope et al 2003: 6). Sustrans' Gill Harrison (2010) identified the role of funding constraints in limiting provision: 'We would love to see an NCN of the same standard as the routes in Holland and Germany but that would require government commitment and investment.' Much maintenance of the NCN is voluntary and localised: Sustrans runs a network of volunteer rangers "looking after" a particular stretch.

The official consensus in the UK continues to be that cycling provision should not require separate infrastructure, as expressed in the 'hierarchy of solutions' (IHT 1996; DfT 2008). This has militated against clear and enforceable standards on issues such as comfort, speed, and directness (if such infrastructure is not desirable, why create standards?) Much cycle-specific infrastructure **has** been built in urban areas since the 1990s, but has been criticised by campaigners for appearing as an add-on to a car-system, rather than a coherent cycling system. The perceived failure of such infrastructural solutions has reinforced a focus on individual 'behaviour' through market research, individual travel planning, financial incentives and targeted promotional campaigns. Cycle training, once seen as a child safety measure, is now seen as a way of promoting sustainable transport.

By contrast to the outsourcing of cycling, the national, state-run Highways Agency continues to direct the 'strategic network' with motorised traffic central to this. Cycling is virtually invisible on the HA website. For example, during 2002/3 the HA had identified 'points on the trunk road and motorway network where there was a potential difficulty for people wishing to cross the road... The Agency has made progress investigating and implementing improvements where appropriate, at 15% of identified sites. It should be noted that the delivery of identified solutions at the NMU [non-motorised user] sites is subject to the availability of funding.' (Highways Agency undated).

So walking and cycling are not core funded priorities for the national transport state: but more than this, walking and cycling are seen as being interrupted by the 'strategic network', rather than being part of it (for example, through dedicated routes paralleling trunk roads). This is important: in many policy areas the 'strategic' trumps the 'local', from new airports or high speed rail lines to incinerators and power stations. Given conflicts between cycle provision and car parking in many areas, the failure to define cycling as 'strategic' helps to perpetuate poor infrastructural solutions that, for example, allow parking in cycle lanes. The current *Cycle Safe* campaign organised by *The Times* newspaper recognised the importance of the 'strategic', arguing that a small fixed proportion of the HA budget should be directed towards cycling. This was met with confusion by Roads Minister, Mike Penning. Penning seemed to view the 'strategic infrastructure' provided by the HA (which includes many trunk roads legally permitting cycling) as incompatible with cycling provision. Earlier in the year he had told Parliament that 'I hope there are no cyclists [on Highways Agency infrastructure]' (Hansard 2012).

4.3 Advocacy and the state

I have argued above that cycling policy-making in the last twenty years has been (a) located outside the core of the national state and (b) linked to discourses of health and environment, with associated portrayals of cycling as an individual choice to be encouraged. Further, the case is made that this construction has helped to perpetuate poor infrastructure and continued under-investment. A third important trend has been the inclusion of local and national campaign groups within policy processes, as with Cycling England. At a local level, Cycling Demonstration Towns and Cycling Cities have involved cycle campaign groups in planning for cycling.

The two main traditional advocacy organisations are Sustrans and the CTC (formerly the Cyclists' Touring Club). Sustrans' aim is to promote sustainable transport more broadly, but it has a strong focus on cycling. Its structure differs from that of the more membership-based advocacy organisations: Sustrans has 'supporters' rather than 'members' and is governed by a Board of Trustees. In income terms, Sustrans is now primarily a service provider, while CTC is involved in service provision but to a lesser extent. Historically, CTC has been a members' club oriented to cycle touring, indicated in its former name. Around a third of its income now comes from grants for charitable projects, with the other two-thirds from members' subscriptions and trading income (Author 2012a). The third key national actor is Cyclenation, previously the Cycle Campaign Network. It is a federation of local cycle campaign groups and its nationally funded activities are limited. Member groups vary in size: from large organisations such as London Cycling Campaign and Cambridge Cycling Campaign, to smaller, less formal groups.

While all three groups were involved in cycling policy, the extent of this involvement differed in different locations and between different organisations. Transport for London set up a 'Cycling

Centre of Excellence' in 2000; over the next ten years cycling levels in London approximately doubled (albeit from a very low baseline). The London Cycling Campaign (LCC) became involved at TfL and borough levels with the development of cycling policy, for example, CRISP^{viii} processes created as part of the London Cycle Network route planning process. These plans sought to harness local expertise and translate it into a language acceptable to policy-makers, drawing upon abstract and calculable logics expressed through drawing and modelling.

In addition to increasingly promoted health and environmental benefits, cycling began to be constructed as playing a variety of social roles. Through their Community Fund, LCC and TfL co-funded small local cycling projects, particularly with an 'inclusion' angle. Many partnerships with varying levels of formality were set up between user-run organisations, lobby groups, and local public and private sector organisations. Examples cited in current research include police forces donating unclaimed bicycles to local charities and local councils allowing cycling clubs to use storage containers within parks. Frequently a partnership approach was accompanied by the aim of mobilising citizens as not 'only' cyclists but also as, for example, good community members, healthy citizens, carbon-conscious consumers, etc. (c.f. Author 2010).

4.4 The end of the cycling state?

Despite all this local effort, cycling levels stagnated and the ambitious targets for cycling in the 1996 National Cycling Strategy (to double cycling by 2002 and again by 2012) were missed. Critics have argued that the UK's cycling renaissance was doomed to fail, because motor dominance continued. John Whitelegg claims (2007: 4) that pro-cycling projects were "forced to work within a conventional transport and traffic ideology that is stuck in a car-centred 1960s world view." Infrastructure aimed at encouraging cycling was only permitted if it would not adversely impact 'other modes' (i.e., the car). While modal shift was encouraged as a headline goal, this was not translated into clear commitment to increase cycle trips and reduce car trips, and reducing motor vehicle capacity remained seen in most cases as politically untouchable.

Complementing that analysis, this paper draws attention to the role of the 'hollow state' and the 'responsible citizen', which simultaneously unlocked new resources and helped to stop cycling being defined as part of the core transport network. The 'active citizen' (in the form of civil society groups) was mobilised to deliver a substantial programme of events and projects in conjunction with local authorities and other organisations. However, in 2010 much of this started unravelling. The abolition of Cycling England confirmed the new government's reluctance even to nationally sponsor local cycling projects. Budget cuts led to redundancies among transport officers, with those promoting 'smarter travel' frequently at risk. Has the cycling state come to an end? Even in London, where Conservative Mayor Boris Johnson has made frequent statements in support of cycling, the Cycling Centre of Excellence was abolished.

One sign of the times was a conference in October 2010, billed as a 'Sustainable Transport' event. Although planned before the election of the new government, it was clear that for the organisers, the debate was about electric vehicles. Co-funded by electric and vehicle firms, it acted as a showcase for technical solutions to environmental problems. Modal shift – and even smaller changes such as 'eco-driving' – hardly featured, while sessions dealt with electricity demand and battery design. The audience, many local transport planners, were at best bemused, at worst angry. Despite the Chair's promise to include an ad hoc session on modal shift and a potential presenter being identified, the conference organisers would not allow this as existing session

organisers had paid for their slots. One planner intervened describing the conference as a waste of time, at which point a third of the room applauded loudly.

This event demonstrated contradictions within 'big society' discourse. Already existing quasi-state networks around cycling show how the state can leverage volunteer commitment and energy, from unpaid experts on the Cycling England Board to networks of local volunteers helping local authority officers and consultants to plan local cycling infrastructure and implement local behaviour change initiatives. The reduction of support for these networks risks leading to the alienation of professionals and campaigners. While the 'hollow state'/'active citizen' model failed to substantially increase cycling levels in the UK, the activation of citizens may nonetheless have created the potential for new forms of activism, once the state tried to disengage from this model.

One key part of the 'new activism' is the rise of activist cycle blogging. Some of these bloggers, disillusioned with what they saw as the failure of traditional cycle campaigning, created a new national campaign group, the Cycling Embassy of Great Britain (CEGB). In 2011 and 2012 bloggers organised protest rides, sometimes with or supported by existing advocacy groups. London has initially been at the centre of this movement. When Danny Williams (of *Cyclists in the City*^{ix}) criticised plans to reinstate additional motor traffic lanes, remove cycle facilities, and raise the speed limit on Blackfriars Bridge, he supported his case with reference to TfL screenline statistics showing a rising proportion of bicycles entering Central London. On one level these statistics demonstrated the continued localisation of cycling: while London cycling levels remain low, increases in cycling are highly concentrated. However, with some of this increase among City professionals, the localisation is itself becoming 'strategic'. The graph below gives an example of this shift indicating the prominence and visibility of cycling within certain key contexts.

Table 3 here

To conclude, this article has discussed cycling policy within a framework highlighting the shift away from Keynesian forms of state governance, towards public-private forms seeking to motivate the 'responsible citizen'. This has failed to redress the decline in UK cycling that began in the post-war period and was concluded by 1971. The separation of 'strategic' and 'local' transport has continued, with the 'strategic network' defined with respect to national transport connections, hence excluding cycling, defined as local transport and/or 'leisure'. The paper has further highlighted the contradictory role of national policy discourses casting cycling as a healthy and sustainable 'lifestyle choice'. While on one hand this has mobilised new constituencies, it has contributed to the ongoing failure to see cycling as part of the core transport network. However, in the context of state disengagement, these abandoned cycling constituencies are now seeking other ways of making their voices heard.

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ⁱ By comparison to many but not all other Northern European countries.

ⁱⁱ 'The Reshaping of British Railways', published 1963, recommending the closure of many branch lines and services.

ⁱⁱⁱ To his credit Buchanan saw this as hugely problematic, whereas Beeching rather naively assumed that drivers would be multimodal, driving to main line stations to continue their journeys by rail.

^{iv} Stevenage is the exception here. While Milton Keynes did include a cycle and pedestrian network this was added subsequent to the original, car-dominated design of the New Town, and design was compromised.

^v Although cycling policy became a devolved matter, the main differences that have developed relate to London rather than to different countries of the UK.

^{vi} http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200102/walking_and_cycling/732/cycling_in_manchester

^{vii} In 2009-10 it received its highest annual allocation, £60m.

^{viii} Cycle Route Implementation and Stakeholder Plan

^{ix} <http://cyclelondoncity.blogspot.com/>