
Walking and Cycling Interactions on Shared-Use Paths

This project is a three year PhD study. It is funded internally through a CTS studentship. The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between cyclists and pedestrians on shared-use paths and in turn inform policies and design guidelines associated with these paths. Shared-use paths 'are designed to accommodate the movement between pedestrians and cyclists' (DfT, 2012) they can be segregated or non-segregated. The case study path chosen for this research is the Bristol to Bath Railway Path, UK.

Context

'What if we were to open up all sites, places, and materiality's to the mobilities that are always already coursing through them?' (Sheller and Urry, 2006:209).

The promotion of cycling and walking is prominent in local and national transport policy as a solution to problems such as obesity, traffic congestion and climate change. Thus the implementation and design of walking and cycling facilities in the UK is crucial. There are many complex processes (physical, mental, social and emotional) that take place during walking and cycling journeys; thus when individuals merge and share space there is potential for this to affect journey experiences. By understanding and acknowledging these complex processes and by opening up sites to the mobilities coursing through them, as Sheller and Urry state above; walking and cycling spaces can be better designed and planned for.

This PhD research takes a mobilities approach because the traditional ideas of transport policy and planning often focus on why movement occurs and on the departure and arrival points rather than on what takes place during the mobile journey itself. The areas of interest to mobilities researchers are described as movement spaces or spaces of mobility, such as a shared-use path (Horton et al. 2007). There is a focus on the rhythms, flows,

inter-connections and encounters associated with those spaces. However, the most recent UK shared path design guidelines do not appear to acknowledge the mobile experience as the multi-dimensional process that it is. This thesis proposes that by examining walking and cycling interactions on shared-use paths through the mobilities lens; and by bringing this perspective to the principles which underpin the current shared-use path design guidelines; this can improve the shared-use path environment.



Research Questions

This research aims to contribute to the mobilities literature and inform shared-use path design guidelines and policies by asking the following research questions:

- What are the different kinds of interactions that occur on shared-use paths?
 - How and why do they occur and impact on the journey experience?
- What are the differences between the mobile sensory experiences of walking and cycling?
- How and why do interactions with other path-users impact on these mobile sensory experiences?

- Do path users have positive/negative attributions towards sharing space?
- Do the following factors have an impact on interactions and journey experiences?
 - Path rules, path type, path-user type
- Do the principles of current shared path design guidelines reflect the journey experiences uncovered in this research?
 - What, if any, changes should be made?
- Are video recordings a useful aid to in-depth interviews for accessing the subtle processes and experiences of mobile journeys?

Methodology

This research involved two phases, both of which are now complete. Phase I of data collection included a quantitative on-site intercept survey with cyclists and pedestrians as they travelled along the Bristol to Bath shared-use path. The survey questions concentrated only on the Bristol to Bath path; surveying participants within this space allowed them to focus their answers and thus improve the accuracy of their responses. Respondents were required to answer questions about their; use of the path, interactions with other path users, journey experience and preferences for path improvements. Questions were related to their journey on the path on the day of the survey.

The findings from the intercept survey helped to inform the next phase of data collection. In order to gain a more in-depth insight into individual and personal experiences on the path, Phase II of data collection was implemented. In Phase II path users were asked to video record their journey along the case study path, this was then used as a discussion tool in a follow up in-depth interview. The more subtle mobile experiences such as the rhythms and flows of movement, which are central to this PhD, are often difficult to capture with the more traditional static methods such as interviews (Buscher and Urry, 2009). Thus a research method that was 'on the move' (Buscher and Urry, 2009) was developed by combining the videoing mobile method with the more traditional interview method.

Findings

At this stage of the study, the overall findings of this research are currently being analysed and developed.

References

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