



**SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT OF LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS:
STRENGTHS AND BOUNDARIES OF SHARED DECISION MAKING**



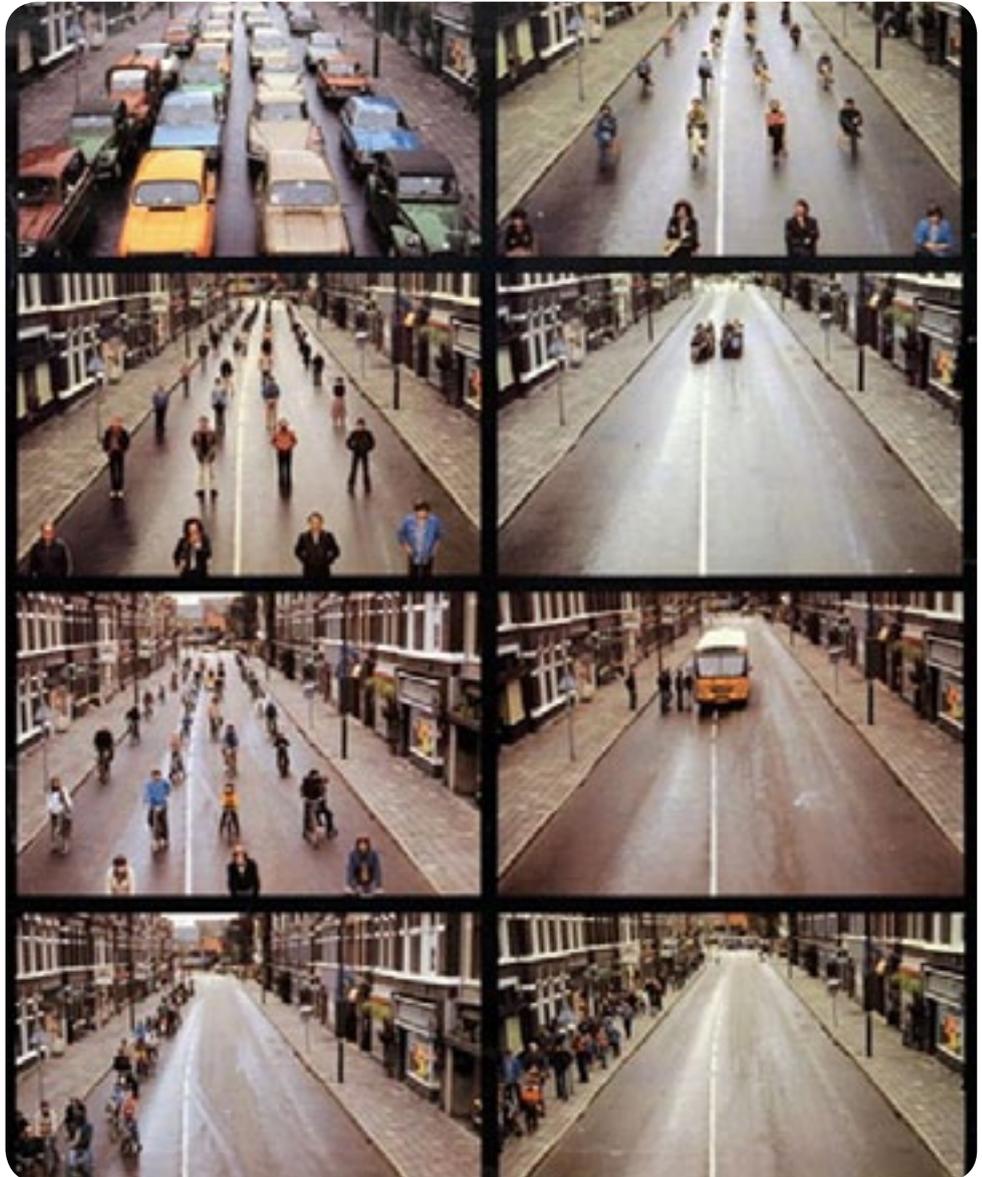
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CHAPTER 5. SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT OF LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS:

Cycling infrastructure is increasingly becoming a grassroots demand. This demand tends to become more vocal when there is weaker political support. Environmentalists, neighbourhood councils and cyclist associations can represent a competent and strong counterpart to planning departments in charge of urban mobility. It is critical to tap into these highly motivated groups early in the planning cycle to stimulate the generation of ideas, understand mutual needs, and increase the ownership of the final decision. Whether at the level of consultation or at deeper degrees of involvement, the responsible local authority must ensure all players know that once the participation process is over, the final word stays with the authority. Lessons from Budapest and Dublin are highlighted.

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"Public participation is a key aspect in any decision-making process. In addition to making sense in itself, it is essential to ensure the feasibility of any measure."

Idoia Garmendia, Deputy Mayor of Vitoria-Gasteiz

STRENGTHS AND BOUNDARIES OF SHARED DECISION MAKING

5.1 The Power of a Critical Mass

The role that a critical mass of citizens can play, both in creating a demand for cycling initiatives, and in reaching solutions that are widely applicable, is indispensable. Examples in this section highlight the power that voluntary organized activity can have in turning over a car dominated city.

The Dutch, who currently enjoy a very advanced cycling culture, have not always been bicycle friendly. In the 1960's and 1970's, Dutch politicians were pleased to see more and wider roads in their cities and even wider highways around them. They spent considerable money to provide more space for car traffic and considered cycling old-fashioned. However when serious side effects and casualties of motorised traffic rose in Amsterdam, the citizens felt unsafe and unprotected on the roads. As they realised the power of their community they started to organise protests against car dominance and air pollution. A Cyclists' Union was set up and empowered to start a proactive cooperation with politicians and authorities. While the cooperation was not without friction, it enabled many political changes. Figure 5.1 illustrates the attitudes around that time.

Something similar happened in Budapest some years later. A small group of cycling activists from three NGO's organised the first "Critical Mass Budapest" on the international car-free day in September 2004. At that time, the modal share of cycling in Budapest was below 1% and the activists argued for improved cycling infrastructure and facilities. Without a massive budget but with creative stencils, stickers and hundreds of volunteers, the organisers attracted 4,000 people for a rally on the most significant streets of Budapest. Since then, that rally has been organised twice a year and evolved from an underground protest to a bike holiday reaching 50,000 attendees in 2008. The movement gained great visibility in the national newspapers and TV stations. In the special case of Budapest the challenge was not only to convince the municipal and national officers and politicians on all sides, but to promote cycling for citizens without the existence of a quality cycling-friendly infrastructure. Between 2004 and 2012, Budapest's cycling share grew from below 1% to 4-5%.

Organised voluntary activity also challenged the car dominated culture in Ireland in the late 1970's. At that time, Voluntary Service International (VSI) published Give Way to Bikes - A Report on Cycling in Dublin (1979) followed by protests in the early 1980's against inner urban road schemes. That report paved the way for the formation of the Cyclists' Action Group in Dublin, Cycle Folk, and, further down the line, the creation of the Dublin Cycling Campaign in 1993. See Figure 5.2. In the years that followed, cycling campaign groups or associations emerged in other Irish cities such as Galway and Cork followed by smaller groups in Waterford, Dundalk, Maynooth, Skerries, Sligo, Limerick, Westport (Co. Mayo), Malahide and Naas. An umbrella body, Cyclist.ie (www.cyclist.ie), was formed in 2009 to lobby at a national level and an 'all island' level. This organisation is advancing the work that has been carried out by the larger city associations and is helping local groups to become established. Cyclist.ie, now the Irish member of the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) enables national authorities to deal with one single umbrella body representing transportation cyclists' interests rather than several separate organisations, which can be an effective strategy. See Figure 5.3.



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5.2 Generating ideas, solutions and plans

In addition to instigating change or challenging existing culture, NGO's and local stakeholders encompass a wealth of knowledge and can assist in generating ideas, solutions, and plans.

At a policy formation level, local cycling associations can be an extensive source of ideas and initiatives. Many of the demands of grassroots organisations in Ireland have been or are being adopted as public policy with the publication of the National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) (Department of Transport 2009). See Figure 5.4. These demands include the urgent need to reduce urban speeds, to improve driver behaviour in the vicinity of cyclists (e.g. with calls for a minimum passing distance and a much enhanced training curriculum for Approved Driving Instructors) and, more generally to move away from the "windscreen view" of the roads and road safety held by many transport policy makers and practitioners. Credit in this case is also due to enlightened officials working at a senior level in the Transport ministry as well as the politicians themselves. The campaigners' challenge now is to confront the approach to road design and traffic management in which the main thrust is still perceived to be the efficient movement of motor vehicles above everything else and to ensure the implementation of progressive policies such as the NCPF.

In many countries expert knowledge on good cycling promotion is still being formed. Decision-makers can benefit from the ideas and knowledge that cyclist advocates have accumulated both locally and from other cities. NGO's can build online databases about cycling and mobility, including links, articles, books, videos, funds, questionnaires, and more, which can save the administration time and energy.



Ireland's First National Cycle Policy Framework



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Local stakeholders also have broad everyday local experiences. Residents and local shop owners know best where the local danger points are. Asking them to contribute to mapping the conflict points of the neighbourhood, conducting surveys, and organising public discussions can be beneficial. Their involvement also helps improve social inclusion in policy formation, which is good for people and politicians.

In Budapest, a public forum was set up first by NGO's in order to discuss the public opinion and to announce a bicycle working group. The bicycle working group pulled together members from numerous local NGO's, experienced and motivated planners, traffic engineers, psychologists, and communication experts to prepare a proposal for a national cycling policy adjusted to the 2007-2013 EC financial period. 'Five ministries and a dozen NGO's were involved in the first meetings and nothing could have been worse than a conflict between NGO's when presenting their ideas to the new government. Some trade-offs had to be made between utility, recreational and pro cycling demands but a good draft of cycling policy has been accepted', said Adam Bodor, who became the first national cycling coordinator commissioned by the prime minister between 2006-2010.

Based on best practices, the Cycling Hungary Programme 2007-2013 took shape in order to increase bike commuting, develop bike tourism, decrease bike accidents and develop pro cycling facilities. The learning process for the authorities and NGO's, such as the Hungarian Cyclists' Club (HCC), lasted for about two years and was supported by many international projects funded by the European Commission (e.g. CARMA - Cycling Awareness Raising and Marketing, Active Access, LifeCycle, Volunteers Of Cycling Academy). While neither standard nor required by law, transportation officers created a Road Design Guideline integrating cycling as an equal participant, which is believed by local stakeholders to be one of their most important achievements. Adherence to the guideline is required when applying for co-funding from the European Commission and extra points (5% of total) are awarded if a cycling NGO supports the proposed plan. This has facilitated the accessibility of development plans and transparency in general. While there was disagreement on some topics, such as turning right at red lights, the depth of the NGO's involvement in the brainstorming stage was unprecedented, and ideas were presented by both the opinion leaders of cycling subcultures and young planners.

In Europe, cycling associations, or their umbrella bodies such as the ECF, can also shape policy and raise awareness of cycling through structured engagement with the many institutions operating at the European or global level such as the OECD, UN, WHO.

Cycling on the Inner Ring Road, Budapest (one direction)



5.3 Broadening community awareness

Besides the engineering and legal issues of cycling schemes, local stakeholders and NGO's can play the key role when it comes to marketing and communication, which is an essential component of a successful programme.

For example, the HCC is the most significant Hungarian organisation related to cycling campaigns. The 'Bike to Work!' cycling challenge was first announced by the Ministry of Transportation in 2006 as a pilot project. Following its first year as a pilot, it has been coordinated by the HCC involving approximately 10,000 cyclists into the campaign twice a year. The campaign was co-funded by the LifeCycles project which provides a great tutorial on their website on how cycling campaigns should be implemented. By now, 'Bike to Work' has become the best known cycling brand in Hungary.

While businesses and the media can be strong allies, they do not always react positively to cycling initiatives. One topic that can receive significant public attention is the debate over the reduction of speed limits in city centres in order to create calmer streets for socialising and shopping and make the city less threatening to cyclists and pedestrians. Such an initiative was advanced in 2009 in Dublin with strong leadership by an elected politician from the city, Councillor Andrew Montague. However €21 M was spent on car advertising in Ireland in 2010 (Nielsen Advertising Intelligence Services, 2011). The media's pro-car (and even misinformed) reaction led some City Councillors to sway in their positions, and a proposal to scrap or shrink the 30 km/h zone under trial was created. In response, the local cycling association, Dublin Cycling Campaign, led a well-researched and organised campaign to retain the 30 km/h zone by bringing together a diverse array of civil society groups. The myths were busted, the benefits were explained, and the elected members were persuaded to retain the calmer and safer 30 km/h zone, with only a minor subsequent change to the zone eventually adopted. The cycling association thus helped the City Council to advance policies which would otherwise have been discarded or diluted. Equivalent campaigns are on-going in many countries with the UK's "20's Plenty for Us" campaign providing a good example of advocacy groups being a strong counterpart at local government level. And, in Graz, Austria, shop-keepers initially fought speed-reduction measures, but were later won over with strong evidence that shoppers also come by foot, bus, tram and bike.



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NGO's can help reach tens of thousands of people by newsletters, online and social media; they can be the city's ears and mouth in some ways, ideal partners for cycling campaigns. There are also certain international trainings, conferences, funds and projects in which NGO's can participate as partners, organisers or even legal representatives of the city. NGO's and local stakeholders can also facilitate festivals and fun events which are an effective way to connect with a wider audience who may not normally be traditional cycling advocates. In Ireland, example cycling festivals include the Cork Cycling Festival (Figure 5.6) and the Kerry Bicycle Festival (Figure 5.7).

The cyclists user group in London (LCC) organised a big cycle ride following the 1981 regional elections. A demand was made at County Hall to the new leader of the regional council to adopt three cycling measures - he agreed to them immediately and there followed five years of innovative pro-cycling policies in London.

More recently, in 2006 before the national elections in Hungary, cycling NGO's organised a bike rally named 'Tour de Votes' between the national parties' election centres in order to raise awareness of active transportation. Approximately a thousand voters delivered the Cyclists' Petition expressing the need for a long term cycling policy to provide a continuous network, a review and update of the National Highway Code, accurate data on non-motorised traffic modes, radical traffic calming in residential areas and in downtowns, bike parking facilities and the integration of cycling into the existing public transport system. The Cycling Coordination Office started shortly after the elections and involved all authorities from the Parliament to the Traffic Safety Committee.



5.4 Forming effective relationships between NGO's and governmental authorities

Transparency, clarity and consistency are all aspects of effective partnerships between local stakeholders and governmental authorities.

Transparency is critical in establishing good relations and trust. In order to talk about facts, there must be accurate data on cycling and about road accidents. It was a huge barrier for organisers in Budapest that the availability of the plans and early-phase concepts depended on the relationship between the planners, authorities and the municipality officers. Ideas should be discussed and documents should be shared with the public as soon as possible. The more errors in the plans and the later their correction, the less they are accepted and the more it costs for everyone.

Also, all participants must understand clearly the nature of their participation and the agreed junctures of the process at which it takes place. For example, it needs to be clear that in the development of a project, activists can provide input at (1) the early or conceptual stage of a project; (2) the preliminary design stage; and (3) the detailed design stage, but not repeatedly over subsequent points. The danger is that there is so much consultation on the minutia of schemes that progress is slowed substantially. The cyclists perspective is one of perhaps many inputs cities get. The elected authority has the responsibility to balance differing demands and interests in the best interests of all (or as many as possible) and needs to take charge to advance schemes.

There is also the difficulty of dealing with several spokespersons or representatives from a group, arising from the fact that much advocacy work is done on a voluntary basis and it is difficult for volunteers in other full time jobs to attend day-time meetings with authorities. Each representative needs to be aware of what the other one has argued. While this is really a challenge for the advocacy organisation, it does require more understanding from the authority. In practical terms, this might mean ensuring that meeting agendas and supporting documents are circulated well in advance to enable often over-stretched volunteers to provide considered input on various policies, plans and projects. Many user-groups establish a working group or committee to liaise with the city to avoid these problems. This was the case in London from 1981 to 1986.

Consistency of opinions is also key. Once an agreement is made then those concerned must stick to it. There are typical conflicts such as whether traffic calming, bike lanes or separated bike paths are the best investments for a certain neighbourhood. The main point must be that cyclists shall be accommodated on the streets somehow in a safe and attractive way.

While the work of stakeholder engagement ought to be largely complete once agreed policies are in place, experience suggests that the cycling associations need to remain involved so as to monitor what (if any) progress is taking place and provide input even at advanced stages of projects so as to help ensure that cyclists' needs are met. In this context a site visit to a new cycle or traffic scheme can be very helpful and ideas can come once people can see the site and its issues. At a very practical collaborative level, interaction between cycling associations and government bodies can inform and enhance initiatives to promote cycling such as National Bike Week events in Ireland (see www.bikeweek.ie for the Irish events) and the creation of campaigns to tackle bike theft. Another example is the "Avoid the Thief" video produced collaboratively by the municipality, the local police and the local cycling association in Dublin.



5.5 Conclusion

In summary, engagement between stakeholders and the municipality is a continual process spanning the many stages of the development and implementation of concepts and initiatives. It is critical to tap into these highly motivated groups early in the planning cycle in order to stimulate the generation of ideas, nurture the mutual understanding of needs, and increase the ownership of the final decision. Collaboratively and collectively, this cooperation can advance the creation of a strong cycling culture in European cities.

In some cities the initiative for pro-cycling has come from cyclists, but it has also come from politicians and officials too. What is useful is that there is a dialogue with users while recognising that the city also needs to reach out to people not currently using cycles. In the end, good cooperation with user-groups can lead to better policies that will have a greater chance of success and a better value for the investments.

"Get the media interested in what you are doing for cycling in the city and let them tell the story - this worked really well in Odense."

Mr. Steen Møller
Mayor for Culture and Urban Planning, Odense



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