



Socio-Cycle: Cycling Symposium

3rd-4th February, 2023

University College Cork, Ireland

Call for contributions

Overview

In current policy and planning discourse, there is great interest in reimagining and redesigning cities as more cycling-friendly spaces. In Ireland, the Government has recently announced significant investment in sustainable travel infrastructure, with a major focus on reallocating street space to cycling facilities, such as separated paths. Cities in Ireland currently show low cycling levels in comparison to other European countries, such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany, and many cities in France. The most commonly-cited barrier to cycling in Ireland is low levels of perceived road safety and therefore improved cycling infrastructure appears key to promoting bike use. However, research indicates that investments in the built environment are not enough to increase cycling rates. Research highlights, for example, the significance of contextual/life events in influencing travel behaviour (Chatterjee et al, 2013); the importance of local cultural identity for how cycling is perceived – as ‘cool’, ‘exotic’ or ‘mundane’ (Aldred and Jungnickel, 2014); and the symbolic capital of the bicycle as an expression of lifestyle and status, which influences cycling’s popularity positively and negatively (Hoor, 2020). Social and cultural factors therefore also play a significant role in determining the strength of a city’s cycling culture but remain complex, poorly understood, and inadequately researched in policy-making contexts (Willis et al, 2015; Sottile et al, 2021).

Furthermore, the OECD recently highlighted the urgent need to prioritise policies that move Irish transport systems away from car dependency (*Redesigning Ireland’s Transport for Net Zero*, October, 2022). It recommends redefining the goal of the transport system as ‘sustainable accessibility’ – a concept that values proximity, densification, slowness, and local living over urban sprawl, high mobility, distance, and speed. This demands a radical shift from the current car-centric mindset. It also requires the Government and local authorities to design and promote policies that make large-scale behavioural change imaginable, attractive, and possible. How can a social scientific perspective on cycling practices support us in addressing these complex societal challenges?

Submission Themes

With these challenges in mind, we seek submissions from cycling researchers and practitioners who are interested in the social and cultural significance of urban cycling and in advancing pro-cycling policy. We welcome contributions addressing the following themes and questions:

- How can we better understand the social and cultural factors that influence cycling culture in a small city like Cork?
- In what ways can Irish cities learn from good practice examples from similar small or regional cities in Europe and internationally that demonstrate how cycling can be promoted in convincing and creative ways?
- Irish cities can be described as starter cycling cities (i.e. with a cycling modal share below 10%). How can social, cultural, and political resistance to cycling in cities like Cork be challenged and how can pro-cycling policy and cycling uptake be advanced?
- How are cycling practices shaped by social differences including age, gender, ethnicity, class/social location, and (dis)ability?
- What is known about children and young people's mobility or cycling experiences in the city? How are young cyclists (and their parents/guardians) represented in media and policy narratives? How do we connect children's cycling to policy agendas such as the playful city? How does thinking about cycling as 'play' challenge mobility-enhancing paradigms?
- How is cycling safety understood? Whose responsibility is cycling safety? Whose responsibility is it to police cycling safety? In what circumstances do cyclists feel safe? Which cyclists feel safe(r)?
- Thinking about the concept of mobility justice, how do systems of discrimination, such as racism, sexism, classism, ageism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression shape cycling practices, impact on perceptions of (un)safety, and limit cycling potential?
- How does the concept of *sustainable accessibility* encourage us to think differently about the intersection between cycling practices, policies, and infrastructures and proximity to essential goods, services, and places?
- How does the concept of *proximity* encourage us to reimagine sustainable travel and pro-cycling policies? For example, how do cycling policies complement urban planning ideas that promote proximity, such as the 15-minute city? How is the idea of proximity important in the context of a small city?
- What is the significance of cycling advocacy groups for challenging car dependency? How is pro-cycling activism represented in media and local politics? How can pro-cycling activism become more impactful? Why and how do people engage in cycling advocacy?
- How do new cycling practices such as the use of bike share schemes, cargo bikes, and e-bikes, shape and reshape thinking about mobility, environmental sustainability, accessibility, justice and inclusivity? For example, what are the implications for cycling with children, people with disabilities, older people, etc.

Submissions may be guided by the themes outlined above, but are not limited to them. We are interested in diverse responses from broad disciplinary, trans- or inter-disciplinary backgrounds. We welcome submissions that are empirically- or methodologically-focused, theoretical, and/or creative/artistic in style.

Symposium formats and session submissions

We intend this to be an open and inclusive event. We welcome submissions from academics, including early career researchers and Masters-level students, and individuals and/or groups beyond academia who are involved in policy-making, advocacy and activism, and the promotion of cycling through professional and/or community-based activities.

Presentations may be in the more traditional academic format of:

- 15-minute conference paper with 5 minutes for audience Q&A. Conference paper presentations will be grouped into 90-minute parallel sessions.
- Poster presentation. A1 format poster. A dedicated session for poster presentations during the event will invite conference participants to view posters and ask questions.

Those less familiar with academic conferences may wish to participate in the 'Lightning Talks', which are short 6-minute presentations on particular topics. If you have a burning issue that is relevant to the themes of the conference, then you may consider discussing your idea in this format. 'Lightning Talks' will be grouped into sessions during which you may explain your issue to the group and consider how that issue might be further explored or addressed.

We welcome submissions from anyone whose interests are relevant to cycling promotion, including individual members of the public, professionals/practitioners, civil society organisations, community groups, youth groups, activist and advocacy groups, etc.

Submissions

- 15 minute conference papers: Please send the title of the paper and an abstract of 250 words maximum to e.hogan@ucc.ie by Friday, December 2nd 2022.
- Poster presentation: Please send the title of the poster and an abstract/poster description of 200 words maximum to e.hogan@ucc.ie by Friday, December 9th 2022.
- Lightning talk: Explain your idea in 150 words and submit to e.hogan@ucc.ie by Friday 9th December. You are welcome to contact Dr Eileen Hogan in advance of the deadline to discuss your idea and your submission.

Attendance Costs

Fees will be payable through the conference registration site which will open in early January.

Costs are as follows:

- Regular fee: €50
- Students/low wage/unwaged: €20

Fees include catering (coffee/tea breaks and lunches)



We are delighted to welcome [Dr Meredith Glaser](#), from the [Urban Cycling Institute](#) at the University of Amsterdam, to give the Keynote Address at this event and we are grateful for her advice and support in this research.



'[Socio-Cycle](#)' is a research project devised by Dr Eileen Hogan and Becci Jeffers in the School of Applied Social Studies and ISS21, University College Cork, in collaboration with [Cork Environmental Forum](#) and the [Cork Cycling Campaign](#). The project is funded by the Irish Research Council.

