

# What Can Bicycle Parking Teach the Wider Parking Industry?

Dr Peter Wood

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Increased demand for cycling means that cycle parking is becoming a fast-growing part of the parking sector. Furthermore, the lessons to be learned by studying how cycle parking infrastructures promote different forms of travel experience and consumer behaviour have radical implications for the wider parking industry.

One of the principal motivations for this study was a research gap identified by Researching the Research, a project commissioned by the BPA in 2015. The Bursary was able to fund Dr Peter Wood's research, to carry out a qualitative study of cycle parking.



## Research Aims and Method

The study investigated how alterations to the 'periphery' of a system can significantly transform how that wider system operates. Established as a short Postdoctoral project, it re-utilised a dataset detailing the contemporary growth of cycling in London, to conduct a more focused examination of the implications for the parking industry.

The analysis firstly examined the implications for how the parking industry and policymakers might more effectively engage with the growing popularity of cycling. Secondly, through using a case study that often contrasts with the more established issues facing automobile parking, the research provides provocative thought-leadership on how the wider parking industry could respond to changing trends in land-use, infrastructure investment, and digital technology.

The fieldwork built up a 'thick' qualitative dataset on how cyclists practically parked their bikes, using interviews, travel diaries, focus groups, and by accompanying riders on their journeys. The facilities studied ranged from informal use of lamp posts and the common

public rack, to premium underground parking linked to changing rooms and online communities. This data went into an analysis of how the types, spatial distribution, and capacity of available cycle parking infrastructures can affect the forms of trip generated. It included examination of how different peripheral skills or accessories can allow parking facilities to be used very differently, and how facilities themselves can influence how people learn travel skills and share information or build cycle cultures.

## The John Heasman Bursary

The BPA continues to promote and encourage further research through the John Heasman Bursary. The Bursary was set up by the Association in 2006 in recognition of the contribution that John Heasman (former BPA President and Director General) made to the parking sector, with the express aim to promote research and encourage professionalism in the parking sector. With greater information, best practices can be identified to improve parking services and parking management and it is hoped that this will lead to further investment in parking research.

# Key Policy Suggestions

## Higher-security cycle parking would support more diverse forms of cycling

Much cycle parking is relatively insecure, which discourages the uptake of cycling, particularly by travellers on lower-income travellers or who would otherwise use more expensive bikes. Parking insecurity discourages the use of bicycles and tricycles adapted for use by mobility-impaired riders, or to carry cargo or passengers. It also inhibits the up-take of lighter and faster cycles, which would otherwise save time and effort on existing journeys, or more efficiently compete with urban rail, bus and car use and so encourage longer journeys. Furthermore, whilst providing secure residential and workplace cycle parking is a clear means of increasing parking capacity, by supporting households and workplaces to contain multiple cyclists it would also promote skills sharing.

*'My neighbour started seeing me parking, and started asking 'how do you rent a locker? How much is it?' And is it cheap?'*

**Jessica – resident on a Social Housing estate**

## Providing cycle parking in low-cycling areas will support novice cyclists to get started

Many who subsequently commute initially learn expertise and confidence through carrying out shorter journeys on lower-quality bikes, and may retain that bike for shorter trips or when using lower-security parking. In contrast, because commuter-cycling is highly frequent and regular journey type, it may seem efficient to focus investment on areas of high-employment, areas in which the residential population has an existing high propensity to cycle, and the corridors between them. However, without a baseline level and density of cycle parking infrastructure these spatial trends will likely becoming self-fulfilling. A behavioural analogy to cutting branch or feeder rail, bus and road links, insufficient parking infrastructure in low-cycling areas may inhibit novices from making short non-leisure journeys – such as errands - that incubate further or more frequent travel.

*'I've become completely paranoid, so I have a more difficult lock... which makes it safer but it drives me nuts because I actually ride less and take smaller journeys because it takes me so long to go over to the nearest secure parking, take it off and unlock.'*

**Emily, lives in a town centre flat**

## Cycle parking redefines the function of a transport interchange

Parking infrastructures can be thought of as locations where different elements of journeys and equipment are unbundled, re-organised and re-bundled into new practical configurations. The simplest are locations where people informally leave their vehicle when they change mode of transport. More complicated cycle hubs have showers, lockers and the like, which facilitate the use of more specialised accessories and behaviours, such as particular clothing, harder exercise, and showering after travel. However, other infrastructures provide pre-journey support for travel, (often at workplaces) such as online instant messaging and social media that assists exchanges of information, or face-to-face skills-sharing events. Parking operators may increasingly see opportunities to provide these as services at key parking hubs. Furthermore, against investment in (urban) public transport, taxi-apps and autonomous vehicles, parking operators may increasingly need to incorporate these services as part of an integrated strategy to ensure the competitiveness of parking at a destination.

*'Given the cost and difficulty of constructing new unbroken-networks of underground urban road and rail infrastructures, how would a similar scale of investment in underground and overground bike parkingpoint infrastructures compare?'*

*Dr Peter Wood is an independent researcher and a Visiting Research Fellow in Geography at The Open University. The work-in-progress findings of this study were presented at Parkex 2017. Detailed findings will be published in academic journal articles during 2018.*