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14 Community bicycle workshops and "invisible cyclists" in Brussels

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Introduction: rights and justice

The appreciation and full recognition of the "right to mobility" of urban residents to transport is an important aspect of social justice (Cresswell, 2010). Some residents are unable to access mainstream transport systems for reasons of cost and geographical proximity. In many cases access to other urban services and opportunities depend on mobility. Several attributes of urban residents – their residential location as well as their social status and income – affect their basic rights to access convenient and affordable transportation, in the same way that social, economic, spatial, and environmental injustices play out in many other aspects of urban life (Lefebvre, 1968). For example, housing costs and low incomes can diminish access to public transport for inner city residents that would appear to be surrounded by it.

Non-active travel, particularly private vehicle use, is prevalent among those with more discretionary income (Tuong, 2014). "Sustainable mobility" policies in contemporary cities try to provide moral or material incentives to reduce vehicle congestion and pollution by using active transport modes in preference to private vehicles (Affolderbach and Schulz, 2015; Banister, 2008). Sustainable mobility planning also provides better infrastructure for pedestrians, bikes, and public transport, as a form of supply-side urban investment. But it overlooks the politics of persistent injustices in the urban transportation system. Not everybody can take the bus, train, or tram to work, or cycle or walk. What if there is still no accessible public transport? No money for fares? Street dangers to women and children, or racially motivated violence on the streets and at train stations? Simply "supplying" public transport and cycle routes through public and private investment does not address all of these problems effectively.

To go further, we need to consider more radical mobility policies that acknowledge the lived experiences of transport users, who could help to determine the barriers to improved mobility they face in disadvantaged communities or sectors of society, and then "co-produce" workable solutions with transport and infrastructure experts. Demand-side factors like reducing personal risks and enhancing transport capabilities and expertise among commuters and travellers are vital for encouraging urban residents to consider more sustainable modes of transportation. Increasing bike

transport. Increasing bike ownership across race, class, and gender is an important contribution to "material equity" (see Introduction, this volume). Supply-side investments, by contrast, facilitate mobility but cannot actually force residents to use them. In Europe's top "cycling cities" in the Netherlands and Denmark, for example, demand for cycling as a quotidian transport mode is high, and it exists in a dialectical relationship with a cyclist-friendly built environment constructed to facilitate it (Gössling, 2013). While these countries are not universal templates given their specificities, planners elsewhere ignore at their peril the elements of demand-side bike culture, and the knowledge of routes, infrastructure, and urban place and space that individuals have (Batterbury, 2003). In other words, sustainable mobility cannot be left to the official "experts" alone. Community participation in bike planning, then, is part of bicycle justice.

Our aim in this chapter is to expose a hitherto understudied aspect of bicycle justice, namely efforts to establish and run "community bike workshops" or "*ateliers vélo collectif*" using one European city, Brussels, as an example. These are autonomous and self-help initiatives that are largely "invisible" to mainstream engineers and planners because they are bottom-up, rarely sanctioned by governments, occasionally edgy and anarchic, traverse gender and racial identity, and they are part of an ever-shifting not-for-profit transport sector.

Brussels illustrates demand-side sustainable transport very well, because a number of initiatives fight against pervasive automobility, reclaiming "rights" to mobility and public space. We asked how its many workshops operate, what contribution do they make to bike culture and to rights to the city – and for whom? Interviews were conducted in community bike workshops and among transport organisations in 2014–2015. We posed questions about their mission, participation, premises, and links to mainstream organisations (Batterbury, 2015; Vandermeersch, 2015). We did not survey their clientele in any depth. Vandermeersch is a mechanic and workshop organiser as well as a researcher; Batterbury researched for ten weeks, as an outsider to Brussels but as part of the first academic exploration of the operation and socioeconomic contributions of community bike workshops worldwide (Bike Workshops Research, 2015).

Community bicycle workshops

Bicycles make a contribution to tackling, or partially reversing, the growth of automobility, the ubiquitous and unpleasant tendency of those with sufficient assets to favour cars over other transport modes for reasons of prestige, convenience, and habitual inactivity (Urry, 2004). Bicycles are quite capable of tackling many transport injustices, as they fill in gaps in networks and provide transport for almost anybody, including disadvantaged social groups. They do this quietly, without pollution, and at low cost (Horton, 2006). They remain marginal in terms of their traffic volumes, but they are illustrative of community efforts to roll out sometimes radical mobility actions and policies, as we will show.

"Community bike workshops" offer alternatives to bike shops, and are less commercial in their aims. They have been around for over 30 years in western nations, and their numbers are on the rise, sometimes as part of community ventures that have a strong social outreach mission or an activist basis (Carlsson, 2007; von Schönfeld, 2015). They are "do it yourself" responses to mobility problems that aim to increase community cohesion. They are small "urban commons" where people come to repair their bikes, source second-hand and scavenged parts, and learn maintenance skills. As Donald Strauss (2015) says, 'Wrenching co-ops are self-sustaining, socially, economically, and environmentally just institutions open to all who want to learn, volunteer, and participate' (p. 108). Almost all are not-for-profits, they usually rely on volunteers to assist the clientele although a few have paid staff, and they are based in cheap or free premises. The clientele make voluntary or fixed-rate financial contributions to use the workshop, or in some cases they donate their own labour instead. Some are decidedly anti-capitalist or anti-car; but all try to contribute to sustainable transport through the transmission of bike repair skills, regardless of their political leanings. In France, this is termed *vélonomie*, or the creation of a self-sufficient or autonomous bicycle citizen capable of riding safely and keeping their own bike maintained. Parts and bikes are salvaged; cheap and low carbon transportation is constantly created regardless of the participants' social status or identity.

Europe and the Americas have many such workshops in towns and cities. Some are networked. In France, they are linked in a federated "movement" of sorts called Heureux Cyclage (www.heureux-cyclage.org). There is an international email list for bike workshops called The Think Tank, and its network organises the annual Bike!Bike! conference in North America and Mexico (https://en.bikebike.org). Whether or not their organisers participate in wider networks, most workshops concentrate on serving just one city neighbourhood, although people coming from further afield are not refused help. Research on the culture of cycling generally, of which they form a part, is an emerging field (Aldred and Jungnickel, 2014; Carlsson, 2007; Bicicultures, 2015; Horton et al., 2007; Strauss, 2015), but discussions of bike workshops are still very sparse. For example, key researchers John Pucher and Ralph Buehler (2008, 2012), who strongly support mainstream adoption of cycling in cities and better planning, do not discuss them.

Workshops in Brussels

Brussels, Belgium, is a multilingual and multicultural "small world city" (Corijn and van der Ven, 2013). There are about 1.2 million people in what is known as the Brussels-Capital Region, which is made up of 19 communes, or local government entities. Its governance structure is complex, because of historical differences between Flemish- and French-speaking communities since the formation of Belgium in 1830. On first appearance it seems a rich city, with prestigious buildings and cultural institutions, and most of the political and administrative functions of the European Union are based there. Nonetheless, it has a high

unemployment rate (20.4 per cent in 2013, www.statistics.irisnet.be). About half of the highly skilled workforce commutes from outside the Capital Region, and the city itself has a persistent underclass of long-term unemployed. The "Brussels Paradox" describes this coexistence of economic success and social polarisation (Oosterlynck, 2012). There is a considerable level of disadvantage within parts of the city, and a racial and linguistic diversity. Aside from skilled and often temporary expat workers, the city has substantial populations of Italians, Spanish, Turkish, Moroccans, and Congolese, some being descendants of guest workers in manufacturing who came to Belgium in earlier decades. The city is also a refuge for many asylum seekers and immigrants without legal status.

Bike use in the city transcends class, race, and social status. The numbers of cyclists are slowly rising, aided by a city bike share scheme that has seen moderate success (the *Villo*). Cycling mode share is embarrassingly low, compared to Flemish cities outside Brussels and against Belgium's Dutch neighbour, at only 2.5–4 per cent of all trips (Bruges, Belgium is 25 per cent; Antwerp, Belgium is 16–23 per cent; Ghent, Belgium is 14–20 per cent; Amsterdam, Netherlands is 22–40 per cent, see www.cityclock.org/urban-cycling-mode-share). There are important structural reasons for this. Unlike some of its neighbours, the city is hilly, and for decades it had strong support for automobility, particularly post World War II. Even today, a quirk in fiscal policy means it is easier for employers to give free use of a company car to employees than a higher salary. In Brussels, recent government statistics show 36.7 per cent of cars registered in the city are company owned, mostly diesel powered, and these encourage employees to drive for personal and work related trips (Beckx and Michiels, 2014). Driving 2–5km in the city is quite common, even though the public transport system of trams, buses, trains, and métro (subway) is quite extensive. Driving behaviour is generally thought to be poor – for example, advanced cycle boxes at stop lights often have a car in them and parking restrictions are widely ignored. There are, however, many one-way streets in the centre where only bikes are allowed to travel against traffic, seemingly without major incidents so far!

In Brussels, community bike workshops have grown rapidly over the last five years, and they are well attended by *Bruxellois*. A strong desire to remain "DIY" and independent exists in several workshops (Vandermeersch, 2015; Carlsson, 2007), while others are in the non-profit social enterprise economy, hiring paid workers, and working in partnership with government. Some are supported by larger cultural or cycling organisations. Aside from their transportation objective, workshops are meeting-places for cross-cultural interaction, new ventures, and building the "social economy". Brussels' cycle spaces are 'significant sites of social encounters' (Jensen, 2013, p. 225). The spatial distribution of workshops is shown in Figure 14.1, against a welfare indicator for the 19 communes.

Eight of 14 workshops shown are in communes with above average government welfare payments to citizens, indicating a level of economic disadvantage. Most are in the inner city or fringes, with a small number in outer suburban locations, particularly close to a university campus (the two Ateliers Voot and Vélo Pital).

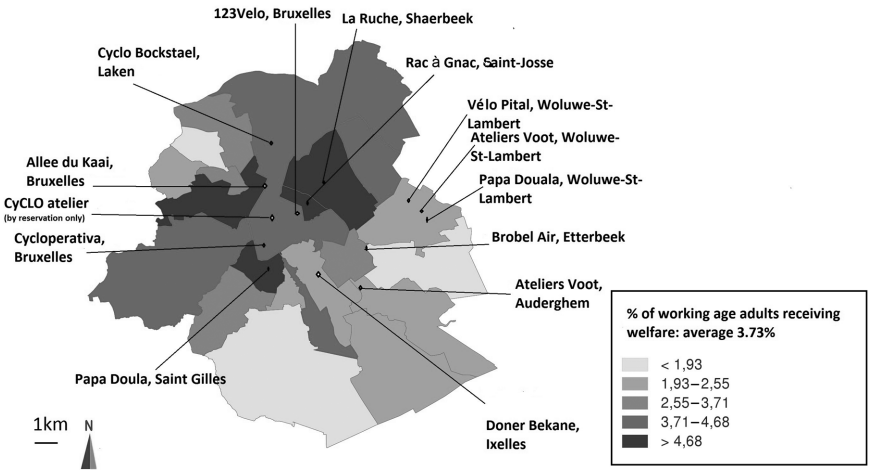

Figure 14.1 Location of community bike workshops in Brussels, against percentage of working age adults receiving state welfare payments

Note: Data from Observatoire de la santé et du sociale Bruxelles Capitale and IBSA, SPF Economie – Statistics Belgium.

Source: Simon Batterbury.

Three domains of the Brussels workshops illustrate their strengths and weaknesses: people, premises, and networking beyond the workshop. Workshops appear to be fertile ground for bicycle justice, but they currently struggle with limited capacity, staffing, or premises.

The people

The bike workshop is not a well-known feature of city life. Some members of the public we talked with actually confused them with bike shops, and their locations are often away from prominent retail strips. Many are relatively new, dating from the late 2000s, with Atelier Kaai opening in 2004. For those that use them, they learned of a workshop through word of mouth, social media, limited workshop advertising, and through Brussels' cycling subcultures.

Each workshop functions slightly differently. Workshops are staffed by people who are – largely – cycling enthusiasts and community development practitioners. They, and the workshop clientele and their bikes, are all "participants" in the unique social field of the workshop, which combines camaraderie with practical actions and pedagogy. As one organiser says, "it's a tiny village in the middle of the city" (*c'est un tout petit village au milieu d'une ville*) (Vandermeersch, 2015, p. 31). Because most workshop volunteers also hold jobs or are students, hours of operation can be limited. Evening and weekend opening hours are most common.

The volunteers and workshop organisers play slightly different roles, as in any volunteer organisation. The workshop organisers (*les responsables d'ateliers*) need basic management skills to connect the workshop to utilities, manage keys, pay bills, order a few new spare parts at bulk prices, check that rosters are full with volunteers (without which the workshop cannot open), and complete annual accounts. Organisers innovate on the job, and rarely have much help in doing so or any training in non-profit management in the Belgian context, or in the legal requirements of running a workshop. Only one workshop had an organiser trained in non-profit administration, courtesy of a foundation training grant. The volunteer teams, meanwhile, are important for directing citizen and community engagement, and the division of essential tasks like stripping down bikes and sorting to create a stock of parts – a key workshop activity. There are difficulties in marrying a desire to tinker around with bikes while also maintaining some forward planning and strategising to keep the workshop functioning. Even in the world of volunteer-run community enterprises, a modicum of efficiently is required. Brussels also has some paid mechanics, for example in the Rue Voot workshops, who operate in more established organisational structures and with slightly larger budgets (Vandermeersch, 2015).

Workshops are variations on a theme; each functions slightly differently. Only four workshops have written rules to which volunteers must adhere when on the premises, concerning the handling of tools and relationships with clientele. These internal policies are more common in American workshops (Batterbury, 2015). All agreed, without much enthusiasm, that accounts have to be drawn up and receipts kept. For example, as one organiser commented

> yeah I keep my receipts, I am useless at accounting, I've just got an envelope for them . . . I really need an accountant and I would pay them to sort it all out. (*Beh je garde mes tickets, je suis nulle en compta, j'ai juste une enveloppe à tickets . . . je cherche absolument un comptable, j'ai envie de le payer pour qu'il me mette en ordre*.)
>
> (Vandermeersch, 2015, p. 38)

Among the 44 mechanics known to be volunteering in 13 workshops in mid-2015, only one was a paid bike shop mechanic beyond his workshop participation, and five in total had full training in bike repair. Some learned their mechanical skills in *Points Vélos* (repair stations in the major train stations, most run by the Belgian NGO CyCLO). The majority of organisers do not have formal qualifications, although technical colleges in Brussels offer relevant courses where they can learn basic skills. Some volunteers work across more than one workshop, viewing their contributions and friendships to exceed a single shop. Even when they are worn thin, interviewees expressed a passion for being a part of the workshop project; "I love working here: I'm in love with this workshop", one said (*j'adore faire ça ici, cet atelier, je suis amoureux de cet atelier*) (Vandermeersch, 2015, p. 36).

Those mechanics who regard the bike as an education tool operate rather like teachers. They are patient with the customers, showing them how to do

mechanical tasks, but they also expect punctuality and confidence from other volunteers. As workshops become more popular, it is not always possible to attract skilled volunteers – levels of mechanical abilities differ, and professionalism varies; advice to customers on how to stick with a tricky repair (like removing a rusted bottom bracket) or to complete a repair task can be haphazard. After all, this is the community sector and so it is dependent on the skills and knowledge of those moved to participate.

Some participants are activists who identify as profoundly anti-car, but it is difficult to generalise. We noted that some volunteers are certainly urban radicals; Brussels has a long tradition of countercultural protest and alternative politics. All volunteers see bike use as essential for the city and for tackling its appalling traffic congestion and pollution, and they support it strongly in their volunteering and other actions. But for some, it is also a "war" or a source of resistance identity. Workshops are an element in this struggle, against cars or against the conformity of the state. Because of this image, and despite the diversity of reasons why workshop users visit them, members of the public may consider some workshops unwelcoming to non-radicals.

Workshops replicate the skewed gender relations found among bike riders. Most volunteers and visitors are men. Very few women in Belgium are trained bike mechanics and Brussels is no exception. The general view is that it is a man's job, although women are of course found in bike shops and cycle teams in positions of responsibility as managers, in charge of logistics or particular non-mechanical tasks. Brussels workshops, despite their sometimes militant politics, are hardly more egalitarian; there were three women mechanics among 44 surveyed. Vandermeersch is one of them, and all three felt welcomed in their workshops. It is likely that her mechanical skills have legitimated her presence among a male-dominated fraternity. Among the workshop clients, women are again in the minority. This simply reflects the reality on the streets, in professional cycling, and among daily cyclists, at least in Brussels. There are some statistics in French-speaking Belgium outside Brussels, where there are around 25 workshops. Some 32 per cent of workshop visitors were women in a recent survey (www.lheureuxcyclage.be/les-ateliers). The situation may be less skewed in Flemish-speaking Belgium, where so many people cycle for everyday transport.

In general, the clientele are diverse in their origins. The racial composition of the clientele has never been surveyed and it would be hard to do so but, we suspect, reflects neighbourhood demographics. One North African said:

> I was not paid to say this, but I promise you, this is the only place where I talk with whites and Flemish. Yeah, I see them at the supermarket, but we do not talk. Here we are together, we work together. It's funny, but the team are the only whites that I really know. (*On ne m'a pas payé pour dire ça, mais je vous promets, c'est le seul endroit où je parle avec des blancs et des flamands. Bah, je les croise au supermarché, mais on ne se parle pas. Là, on est ensemble, on travaille ensemble. Elle est marrante cette équipe, mais c'est les seuls blancs que je connais vraiment.*)
>
> (Vandermeersch, 2015, p. 32)

The struggle for operating space (premises)

As community-based non-profits, bike workshops are not equipped to pay for market-rate commercial real estate. A few workshops, such as Working Bikes in Chicago and the Bicycle Kitchen/Bicicocina in Los Angeles, own their premises, but this is rare. Across Europe, workshops find space in squatted or borrowed premises, in buildings awaiting planning permits for redevelopment, or in premises offered or subsidised by local or regional government. If there are genuine commercial rents to meet, this means earning enough revenue to cover these costs, and the only place to do this is through bike sales or charging for services. This can conflict with the mission of serving the local population in a particular neighbourhood, if that population is very low income.

Our interviews reported major difficulties in securing premises on anything other than precarious terms in Brussels. Several, like Cycloperativa in the Annessens neighbourhood (with a high population of recent immigrant residents, particularly from North Africa), have an attachment to that place and its people and want to remain in the local area (the *quartier*). In 2015, Cycloperativa lost their rented premises, and moved to a storefront a few blocks away that is awaiting planning permission for redevelopment. Finding this space required using the organisers' social capital and networks in the neighbourhood. The stock of tools, bikes, and work benches and stands were moved with cargo bikes by several volunteers in one day, and the shop, which was in rough but serviceable condition, was made functional and connected to power and utilities within two weeks.

Such relocations are common and while requiring effort, they are seen as part of the life of a workshop that serves a community while keeping costs very low. One mechanic said that:

> to begin, and to maintain continuity, you must have a workshop, a place to work, in the neighbourhood. Without that it just isn't possible. (*Pour commencer, la continuité, faut qu'on continue à avoir un local, un endroit pour le faire, dans le quartier. Euh, sans ça, c'est juste pas possible.*)
>
> (Vandermeersch, 2015, p. 40)

Technically, workshops can operate as mobile entities, using cargo bikes and setting up almost anywhere, but some stands and tools are too big or heavy, and spare parts and junk bikes need to be stored. Some do operate in this way occasionally, but still have a home base. One of the most spacious workshops in Brussels is 123Vélo, which is situated on the ground floor of a squatted former government building with an intentional community above it that supports and uses the workshop.

It began as the effort of one individual but has grown significantly over the last five years. Its customers come from many countries, with different racial backgrounds, and speak many languages. Vélo Pital, by contrast, is on the medical campus of the Université Catholique de Louvain in the eastern suburbs and has a more stable ground-floor space and a less diverse clientele.

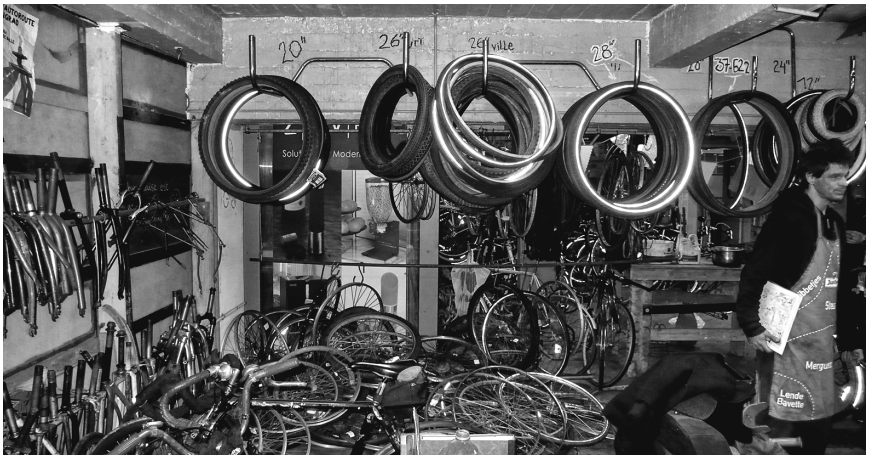

Figure 14.2 123Vélo workshop and its founder

Source: Simon Batterbury.

A respondent whose workshop had been forced to move two times listed the negative repercussions of working in temporary spaces: the chaos of moving, the loss of some local supporters and visitors from the immediate locality and even some volunteers. The volunteer mechanics we interviewed made it clear that to contribute to community development and social cohesion, "you must stay there, in the neighbourhood, or you lose support". (*Il faut rester à la, à la mesure du quartier, aussi non on le perd*) (Vandermeersch, 2015, p. 40). None of the workshops sought better premises just to expand; the quest was for stability, not profile or position. Managers were most concerned about optimising their operations and placing them on a more sustainable footing over time. That said, a few wanted to expand their reach, and Papa Doula workshop has done so by setting up a second shop in a suburban location, Woluwe. The Rue Voot workshop, which employs salaried mechanics and has the support of local universities, making it more "professionalised", has evolved into a paying non-profit with usage fees. It occupies two commercial spaces, one of which is subsidised by VUB (a university) because of the high numbers of students that use it. Above all, workshops want to remain accessible to the general public and in a building that makes this possible. Workshops operate very differently from bike shops in this regard; they can get by with back street and out-of-the-way locations, and unattractive premises, as long as there is sufficient room to stage repair sessions and store a stock of bikes and parts.

Each workshop has its own feel, though there are common spatial elements across them. Aside from stacks of junk bikes (mostly solid commuter bikes) and some restored machines for sale, there are working spaces and collections of stripped down parts in tins, drawers, and diverse receptacles. Tools are accessible

and usually available to visitors rather than jealously managed. The more established workshops have sofas, a fridge, and a place to make hot drinks. Electricity is necessary for evening activities. Running water and some heating is desirable, but a full set of utilities is not required for the limited opening hours that some workshops maintain. Several are wired for sound and internet. The workshops certainly nurture a bike culture; we have attended sessions with few or no clientele, where instead volunteers interact, tidy the workshop, and discuss other projects over a drink; and others so full that people spill out onto the street.

Networks and linkages

One might expect that bike organisations would work together as a broader coalition, since they are institutions within a shared culture with similar aims to get more people mechanically competent and on bikes, reducing automobility. But within the workshop movement, views differ on this point, and commitment to networking is variable. There are two elements to consider: the extent to which workshops themselves work together, and their links to other types of organisations.

Progressive bike networking (*réseaulution*) was talked about in all the workshops. As stated above, networks of workshops do exist in other countries and internationally. *Bruxellois* organisers are particularly familiar with the French network Heureux Cyclage. Networking was seen as positive, although the autonomous nature of each collective can create clashes in approach and values between workshops. For example, researcher Del Real identified problems between the two major workshops in Strasbourg, France, where one was more "conventional" than the other, and in Paris the two workshops she interviewed had split over whether to remain distanced from government support (Del Real, 2015). In Brussels, some workshop organisers expressed a need to strategise together, while others desired only informal contact (for example, rebalancing stocks of recovered bikes and parts across multiple workshops, an activity common in US workshops). Ideas for cooperation across workshops in Brussels include co-ownership of a small truck to transport used bikes; bulk discount buying of bike parts like cables and inner tubes; a joint website and media presence; and above all, redressing the lack of formal training for many of the volunteers. This would contribute to "opening" the workshop movement more widely.

Workshop organisers are already active in broader pro-cycling initiatives. These include the monthly Critical Mass (*Masse Critique* or *Vélorution*) rides, a large *Vélorution Universelle Bruxelles 2015* event that included a critical mass ride of 1,000 people and a conference, a car-free day in central Brussels, the *Clean Air BXL* anti-air pollution campaign, and *Cyclehack BXL* which is part of a global movement to enable citizen and grassroots design solutions for problems facing urban cyclists (http://CyclehackBXL.be). All of these adhere to a broadly Lefebvrian ethos of support for social justice and citizens' rights and define air

pollution, traffic collisions involving cyclists, and a lack of cycling knowledge among the general public as infringing on these rights. Bike workshops are seen as practical spaces for addressing these problems.

The number of cyclist advocacy groups in the city is impressive, but incongruous since the modal share for bikes remains very low. Cyclists are all but "invisible" in the transport statistics, yet they are well represented and supported. Workshops in Brussels have an ambivalent relationship with mainstream "sustainable" planning and mobility organisations. The main bike organisations working in the city are membership organisations, Fietsersbond (the Flemish national bike organisation) and GRACQ (*Groupe de Recherche et d'Action des Cyclistes Quotidiens*), the francophone equivalent which operates in Brussels and Wallonia. Many workshop managers and volunteers are members of one of these two, which fight for infrastructure improvements and safety, something workshops are not equipped to do. CyCLO, which began by running community workshops decades ago, has "mainstreamed" its activity successfully. These organisations are interested in cultural change favouring active travel by bike, but their modes of operation are very different. In addition, there have been instances of tension with bike shops that have been around much longer and whose owners have felt their customer base is being eroded by teaching people to fix their own bikes. When Rue Voot was first established, bike shops organised a short protest strike, but this did not persist.

Beyond their own potential network, bike workshops partner with outside community-minded individuals and organisations. Nurturing key local contacts strengthens the capacity of each workshop to temper disagreements stemming from sociocultural and age differences among participants and users. In terms of wider links, Cycloperativa best illustrates the importance of developing and maintaining good links to the neighbourhood and its own social organisations. While the mechanics enjoy their participation in the workshop, it has a particular aim to act "for and with" (*pour et avec*) local people. There are a number of directions in which these partnerships could expand; for example, cognate nonprofits like Tournevie86 (which loans out tools) and Repair Café87 (workshops to fix household items) are poorly connected with bike workshops today, despite their obvious synergies.

Conclusion

We have highlighted the considerable differences between community bike workshops in just one city, where cyclists are less visible than motorists and public transport users. Workshops are individualistic, local, gendered spaces, and most are only sporadically part of a wider bike justice "movement", though they may be active in other bike initiatives and events. They capture and enhance citizens' intention to cycle, regardless of whether good infrastructure and state support exists. Despite their edginess and sometimes transitory nature, they increase demand for cycling, and they maintain it.

Bicycle justice includes the actions of community bicycle workshops. They are part of a global movement, particularly strong in Europe, which includes radical citizen-led and more mainstream sustainable transportation solutions. Most of the participants we interviewed emphasised that they were grassroots in their orientation. There is a definite transition, best represented in Brussels by CyCLO and its numerous pro-cycling efforts, towards professionalisation and mainstreaming their actions. This is commonly the next step that workshops follow across Europe, and tends to diminish some of their conviviality, anti-establishment sentiment, and it increases workshop fees. To date, though, only a few workshops have transitioned to having secure workshop space and paid staff, similar to trends elsewhere (Strauss, 2015).

It is unlikely that all workshops will professionalise, or even that the distribution of city workshops shown in Figure 14.1 will remain the same in a few years, as actors and premises come and go. The workshops are not just about bicycles, anyway; they also promote community strengthening and act as social hubs for individuals who are drawn together by a desire to improve the urban commons. The participation and socialisation of local North African youth in workshops like Cycloperativa is a sign that some workshops are as much about offering a space for socialisation and activities as they are about promoting bicycling itself.

The Brussels case offers parallels with North American cities. It is a city with a small but growing number of cyclists and with a very dense population of immigrant communities in the inner city, some of whom cycle and use workshops. Its automobility problems are severe, and generated by previous rounds of car-dominated transport investment and current tax laws that favour company cars. "Sustainable mobility" planning is now tackling the problem, but we have argued that generating a "bike culture" (to create *demand* for cycling) is just as vital as fixing dangerous intersections, laying new bike paths, and installing parking. There are urban processes that may be seen through a bike workshop lens: how, in such an environment that is hostile to most forms of bicycle justice, do alternative and grassroots initiatives like these pursue a social and a mobility agenda? In Brussels, workshops have succeeded in supporting *vélonomie*, and at the same time creating new spaces of socialisation and cultural exchange in the city. The "invisibility" of these movements and their participants to mainstream policymakers and the general public is unjustified. Meanwhile, and despite this, they are slowly contributing to a new social production of space, and to vibrant two-wheel communities. *Vive l'atelier*!

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