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Critical Tensions in Planning for Cycling’ Cycling and Society Research Group Annual Symposium 2023

Call for contributions In car-dominant contexts, planning for cycling is politically contentious – particularly when it involves redistributing rights to space. Proposals for cycleways that reallocate road space, for example, can be criticised as out of touch with what are considered to be the genuine needs of locals for a variety of activities where cycling simply cannot substitute the car. Through challenging the centrality of driving, cycling is argued to create ‘traffic chaos’, which makes the harms of driving even worse. In addition, cycleways that involve reallocation can be constructed as ableist interventions that further reduce the accessibility of public spaces and destinations for disabled people. While proposals for cycle infrastructure may be rejected primarily from the perspective of their impacts on the accessibility of driving, planning for cycling can also be criticised for not being ambitious enough: failing to provide enough directness to major destinations to substitute car journeys, inadequately insulating people cycling from the dangers of ‘traffic’, and neglecting the appropriate spaces and parking required to enable inclusive and diverse cycling (e.g., slow cycling, social cycling, tricycling, cargo cycling). Furthermore, the processes through which cycle planning is undertaken are equally contentious. On the one hand, actions may be taken to fast-track trial cycling infrastructures that often involve the redistribution of public space from ‘roads’ to ‘cycleways’. These actions may involve a lack of prolonged public engagement and considerable executive decision-making from state and local authorities. Some groups affected by these actions may feel disempowered and ignored, while others may ardently support such resolute (but temporary) approaches, judging them a necessary evil to tackle entrenched car dependence. On the other hand, in public and academic discourse on cycle (and climate-related infrastructure) planning, the imperative of socially-inclusive planning processes can be emphasised. Namely, in order to plan socially just mobility infrastructures, the major groups potentially affected by these plans should be robustly involved in any planning and governance process. This approach

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