

Towards User-Centric and Culturally Resonant Cycling in 15-Minute Cities

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Isabelle Stengers

Another Science is Possible

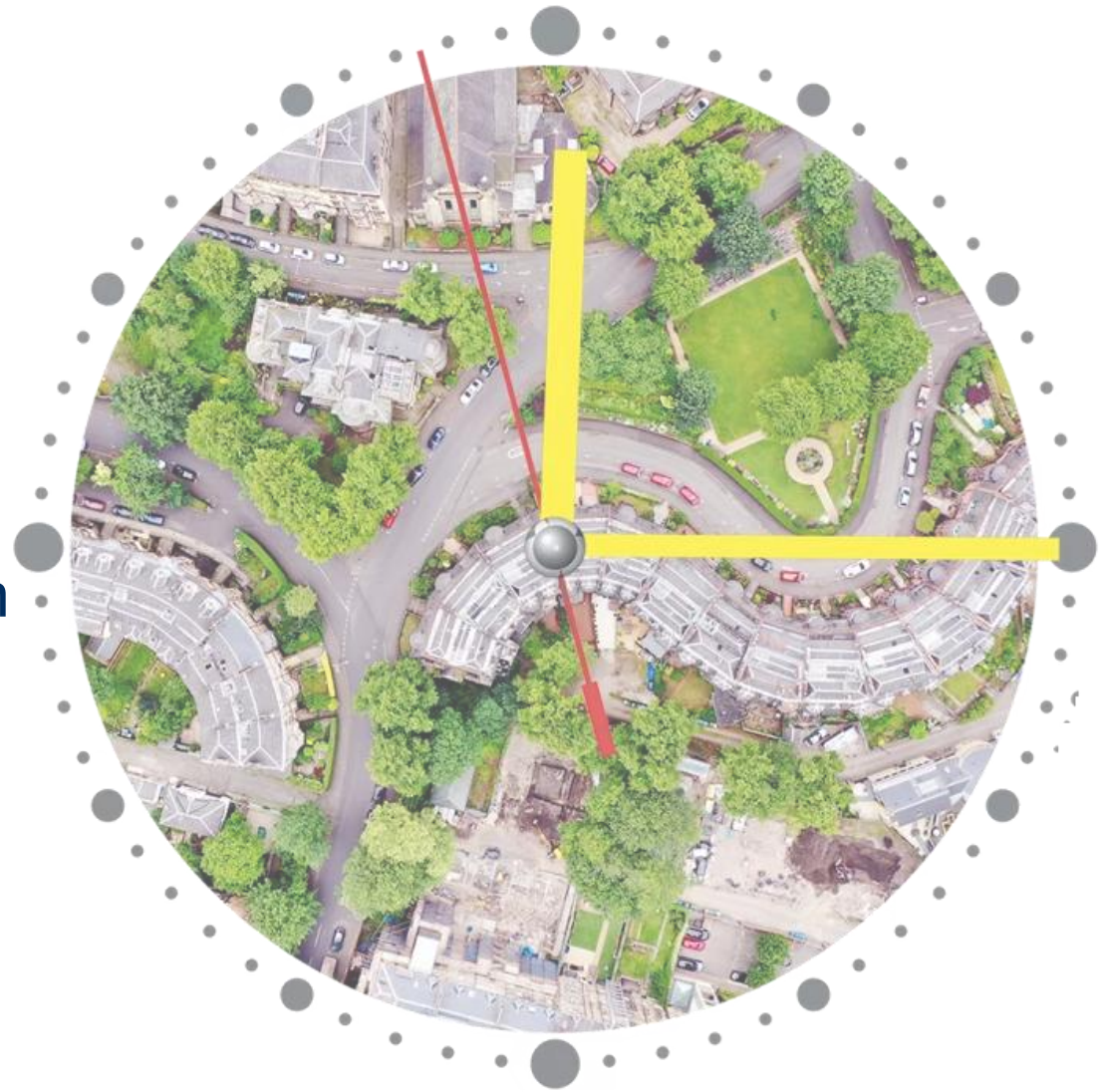
A Manifesto for Slow Science



Today's argument

In places dominated by cars and vans, realisation of 15-minute cities in which cycling is common requires us to:

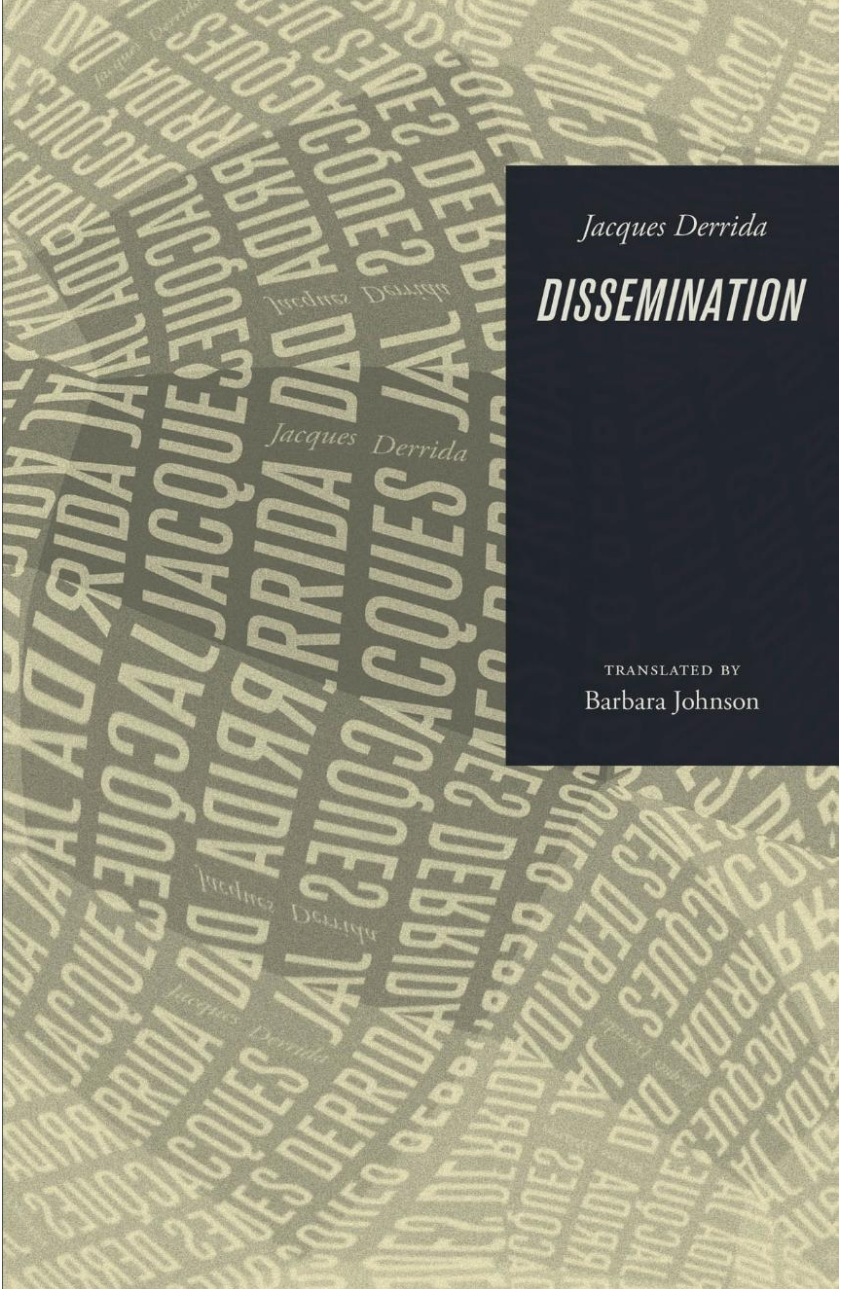
1. Know cycling, and transportation more widely, differently from the functionalism in transport studies and planning
2. Move beyond techno-rationalism when realising practical initiatives to encourage cycling



Towards happy proximity



living with dignity, working while reducing travel, obtaining supplies via short supply chains, preserving physical and mental health in the vicinity, accessing education and culture, and flourishing in harmony and resilience with nature



Jacques Derrida

DISSEMINATION

TRANSLATED BY
Barbara Johnson

Fallacy of misplaced concreteness

Substitution of an abstract category for the events and processes that constitute the reality we are interested in

Thought requires abstraction, but abstraction has limitations and comes at a price. Misplaced concreteness is one of the costs

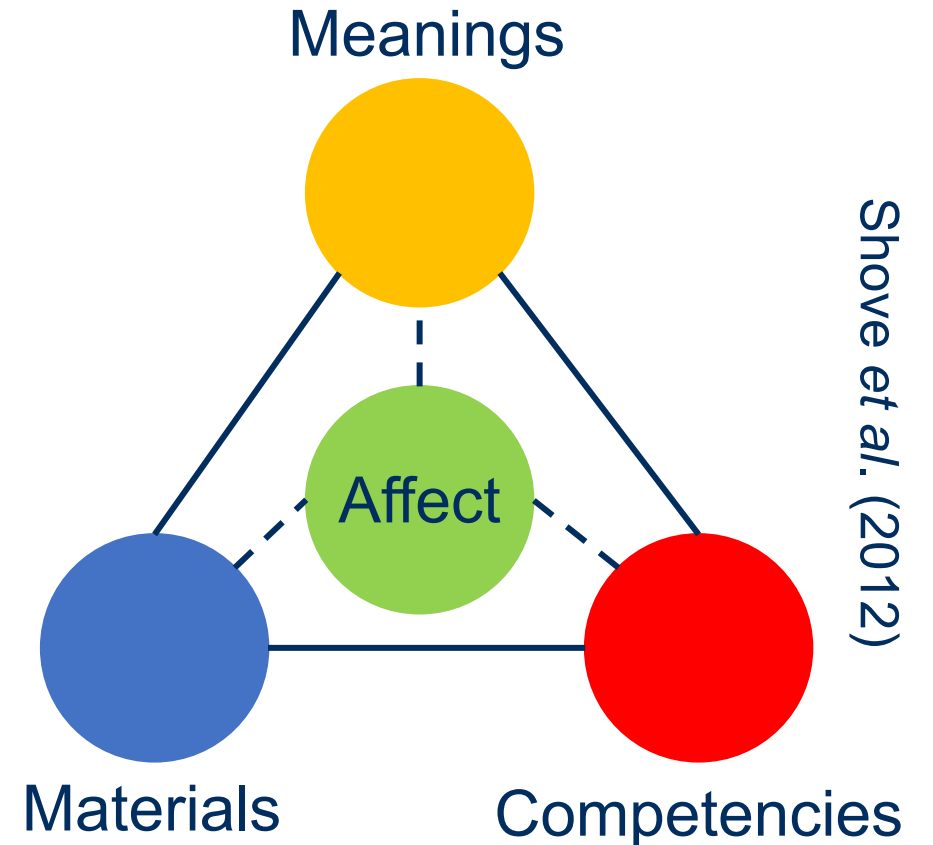


Alfred North Whitehead

Social practice

“ *routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge* ”

Reckwitz (2002: 249)



Understanding difference

Discrepancy

- Grounded in commensurability, equivalence, stability
- Represented & communicated through language (incl. numbers)

Alterity

- Grounded in unbridgeable singularity & uniqueness
- Experienced but non-communicable; at best approximated using language

Epistemic justice

Attunement of knowledge production processes to the experiences, concerns and knowledges of (user) communities, groups and individuals

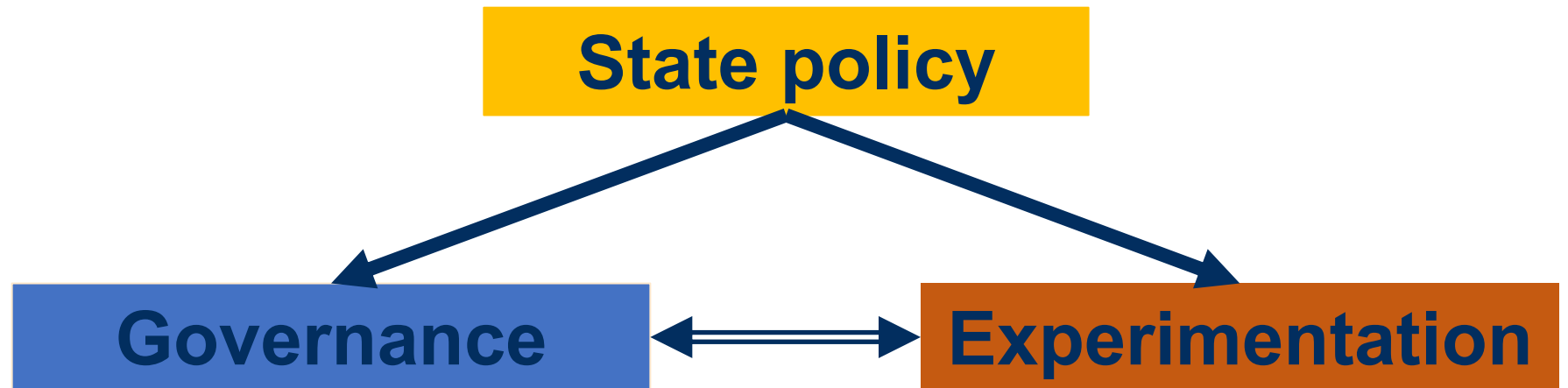
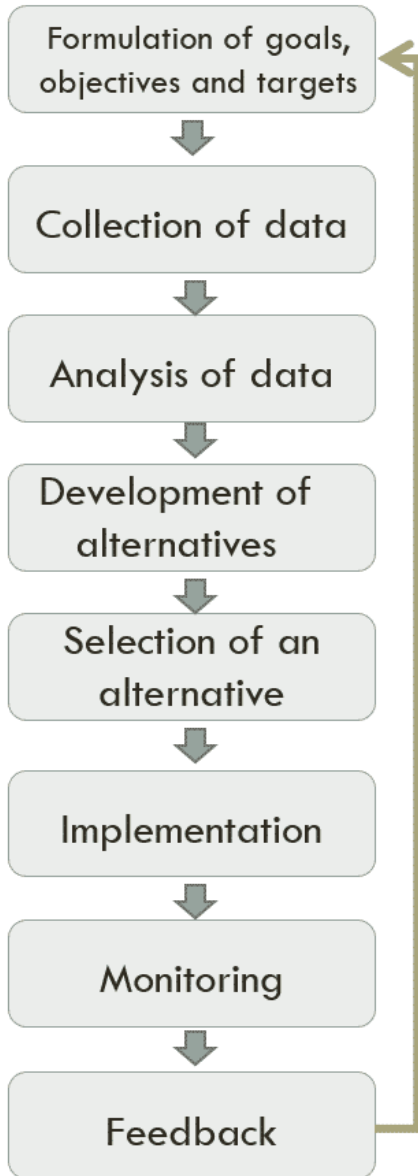
Inclusion of relevant communities, groups & individuals

- Testimonial injustice: certain knowers excluded from knowledge production
- Testimonial smothering: certain knowers leaving out important aspects

Appropriate epistemic resources

- Hermeneutic injustice: concepts, models, methods not adequately responding to practices & experiences of knowers
- Wilful hermeneutic ignorance: persistence with unsuited concepts, models methods

Realising initiatives differently



Experimentation as *“enduring feature of environmental governance and as a form of “inquiry” [that forms] a problem through and around which actors can be enrolled and solutions found”* (Bulkeley 2023)



Specifying Practices Enabled by Cycling In Fifteen-minute Cities

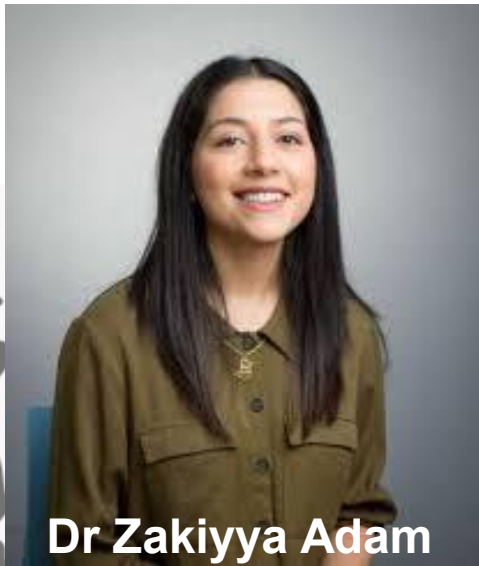


Experimental approach

Transition experiments: test & evaluate, in epistemically just ways, co-constructed interventions into specific kinds of cycling in each city

Meta-lab: coordinate shared learning across experiments in each city & develop wider lessons for other small- and medium-sized cities





Dr Zakiyya Adam

E-cargo bike delivery
in suburban locations

Bristol

E-cargo bikes for trips
within organisations

Poznan

Maastricht

Commuting by different
bikes, 10-30 km

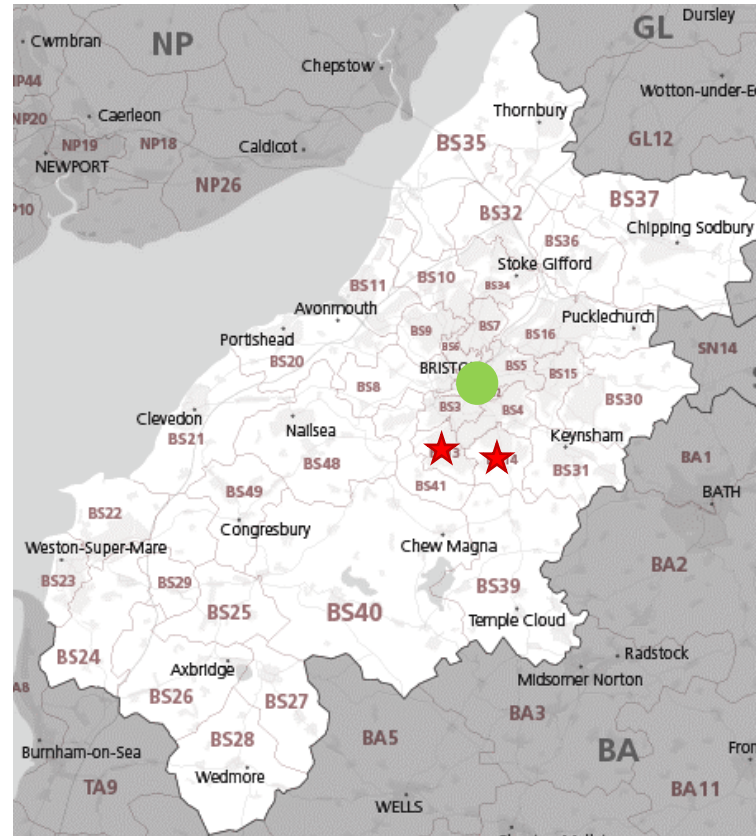
Bellinzona

Graz

Primary school &
extra-curricular travel

Primary school travel
(under development)

Transition experiment in Bristol



Credit: Dr Zakiya Adam

Expand last-mile deliveries to inner-suburbs through decentralisation of freight consolidation & loading using micro hubs

- E-van
- Semi-permanent storage (container)

Evaluation:

- Before/after interviews
- Tracking data

● City Centre
★ BS13 and BS14

Concerns among (former) Zedify riders

Before interviews (09/24)

Poor access to facilities (toilet, lunch, shelter/warmth) & assistance

Area's safety:

- 'rough' area (deprivation)
 - cycling friendliness

Lack of social interaction & loneliness

Waiting for e-van

Concerns among (former) Zedify riders

Before interviews (09/24)

Poor access to facilities (toilet, lunch, shelter/warmth) & assistance

After interviews (02/25)

Access to toilets as biggest concern, followed by few places to buy lunch

“ *I’m a bike courier so shelter and warmth isn’t something you really sign up for. Yeah, I think in general just because you don’t have the opportunity to return, then your day is like you’re forced out in the open for a lot longer. But there should always be somewhere you can find shelter if you need it. There’s a lot of times where I just hid in the back of the trike if I needed to.* (Rider #3)

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After interviews (02/25)

Access to toilet as biggest concern, followed by few places to buy lunch

Area's safety a concern, but especially the major roads connecting centre and suburbs

Mentally preparing for long day out, loneliness an issue for only some

Generally not an issue



“ *I barely knew where I was most of the time because I was having to stare at the road. Because if I hit a pothole wrong or veer too close to the kerb where the road went down like that, the trike would just go with wherever the road was. (Rider #3)*

” *I can't think of any examples of people on the road being aggressive or annoyed. ... I think people are more intrigued to see this kind of weird wobbly box bike bumping around on the road than annoyed. (Rider #2)*

“ *It definitely is more efficient, but it does feel like all the reward ... maybe not all the reward cos I guess the community and the environment gets reward, but a lot of the reward goes to the company and not to the rider. So, we’re working harder in worse conditions and potentially finishing earlier so they can deliver more boxes and get more money.* (Rider #4)

”

Some reflections

Transition experiments still in full swing, also in Bristol

Longitudinal (before/after) interviews are combined with tracking data analysis:

- Helps to offer thicker understandings of difference as discrepancy and at least some grasp of alterity ⇒ enhances cultural resonance
- Brings ambiguities in effects of interventions to the fore
- Enhance user-centredness and epistemic justice

Next steps:

- Translate results into recommendations for other small & medium-sized cities
- Facilitate institutionalisation of just experimentation with cycling as heterogeneous practice into place-specific governance arrangements

Take-away messages

We have to make the ideas underlying the 15MC vision work, given the interconnected environmental, health and social crises the planet faces. This is facilitated by:

- a) Knowing urban transport differently – revise modes of abstraction to articulate ambiguities (pharmakon), avoid misplaced concretenesses, enrich our grasp of difference, and enhance epistemic justice
- b) Realise interventions differently – experiment with experimentation to justly realise low-carbon, climate resilient, clean, healthy, equitable and user-centric mobility, including cycling as a heterogeneous practice



Thank you

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**Driving Urban
Transitions**

EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP



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