
WITS

<UN SDGs>

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<Walking in Their Shoes: Sustainable Transport Policymaking, Embodiment and the Policy Adoption Gap>

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This research investigates whether the experience of walking, cycling, or taking public transit by transport policymakers leads to policy that better supports these modes. Dominant transport systems in much of the world are carbon intensive and broadly socially and environmentally unsustainable. There is no absence of policy recommendations from transport and mobilities researchers that endorse and prescribe means to support a just and sustainable transition in mobility. Yet, this transition currently falls well short of the speed and magnitude necessary to achieve the transport systems desired before the planetary boundaries are dangerously exceeded. Some have called this the “policy adoption gap”. This persistent gap warrants additional complementary forms of intervention. Current approaches rely largely upon discursive persuasion, such as through research reporting. WITS instead takes an embodied experiential approach, asking: how do the particular mobility practices of transport policy makers influence their policy formulation?

Theories such as standpoint feminism and embodied cognition suggest that embodied experience shapes understanding in ways that sometimes go beyond the knowledge gained and perspectives formed through purely discursive interactions, learning, and persuasion. No one has applied these theories to the challenge of transport policy formulation, and yet this may constitute an additional, possibly powerful approach to realising transport systems that support the achievement of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals 3, 10.2, 11.2 and 13.

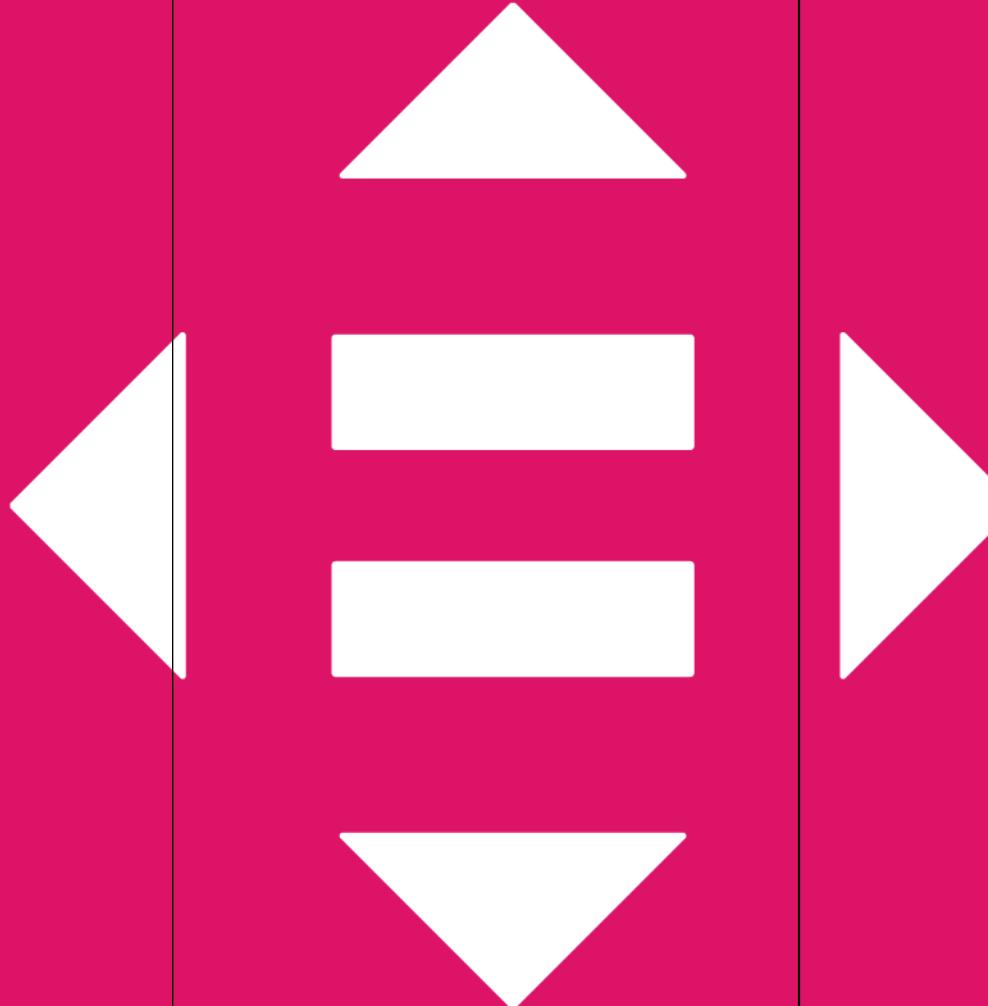
WITS will analyse the relationships between data from a survey of policymakers, their demographics, and the current and historical modes they use, and a database of their respective transport policy documents indexed by the strength of their support for active transport and public transit. Subsequent interviews will nuance the analysis.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



10

REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE C AND COMMUNIT



13 CLIMATE ACTION



Meet the Project

If you had to explain your project to someone outside your field, how would you describe it in three sentences?

My project, "Walking In Their Shoes," investigates whether transportation policy makers who walk, cycle or use public transit may be more likely to craft and/or adopt policies that better support these modes. The study does this by comparing existing walking, cycling and public transit policy with policymakers' own means of mobility surveyed through 'mobility biographies'. Realisation of a connection may lead to more just and sustainable transport systems.

What fascinates you most about the topic of your research project?

Most of the research and scholarship on embodied, experiential knowing has been either apolitical and aimed at building theory, or liberatory and thus 'practical'. The liberatory work has aimed to raise the consciousness of the oppressed (as in feminism's standpoint theory). My study is similarly practical, but pursues a different, complementary tactic of liberation by potentially raising the consciousness of decision makers, not unlike the approach taken by the ancient Daoists (Taoists) of China.

The study draws its inspiration not only from several academic disciplines, such as psychology, feminism, and environmental anthropology, but also more diffuse sources, such as the Jamaican proverb "who feels it knows it," Victoria (BC, Canada) city councillor Sharmarke Dubow's motion challenging his elected peers to take the bus for a week, and my earlier doctoral research which found that using multiple modes of transport may enhance intermodal empathy.

I am excited about applying these ideas to mobilities/transport in a practical way and I hope it offers a new pathway to just and sustainable societal change in other areas as well.

How does your research contribute specifically to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals?

If policymakers use more diverse modes of transport, and this leads to greater understanding of pedestrians', cyclists', and public transit users' needs, then their emerging policy may deliver more incentives (such as new infrastructure) and fewer disincentives to walk, cycle, and/or use transit. Through these changes, a more diverse cross section of the population will experience improved mobility, and the transport system will become less environmentally damaging (SDG Goal 11.2). These changes in mobility, which affect most aspects of people's lives, may lead to reduced inequality (SDG Goal 10.2), improved population health and wellbeing (SDG 3), and reduced carbon impacts associated with climate change (SDG Goal 13).

<!DOCTYPE html> <html lang="cs"> <head> <meta charset="UTF-8"> <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1.0"> <title>Obrázek s textem</title> </head> <body> <p style="font-family: 'Trebuchet MS', sans-serif; font-size: 10px; color: gray; margin-top: 10px; font-style: italic;"> N.B. Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. </p> </body> </html>