

Bicycles in motion: New scopes on cities, cycling and mobility justice

Bicycles have been studied as one of the paradigmatic examples of the social construction of technology, thoroughly developed from the 1980s onwards by STS scholars as well as historians of technology. Cycling history has also gained traction in mobility history in the last decade and a half, which had been previously dominated by mono-modal approaches on railways and automobility. It was also influenced by the new mobilities studies, which brought concepts such as “mobility justice” and “motility” (mobility as capital) (Sheller, 2018; Kaufmann, 2002). Recent studies deepen the crossings between history of technology, mobility history and urban history, mainly moving the scale of analysis from the object to the socio-technical system, including actors as different as users, activists, planners, engineers, legislators, mediators, and the city.

The *Cycling Cities* editorial project has made consistent efforts in this direction, having started within Europe and then broadening its scope to African, American and Asian cities. It has proposed five key factors that are guiding research agendas to explain cycling persistence, decline, and agency in the city (Oldenziel, Emanuel, de la Bruhèze, Veraart, 2016). These factors are urban planning, traffic policy design and data policies, alternative mobility options, social movement's agency, and cycling cultural status and values.

This panel proposes discussing these five factor aspects of the history of the socio-technical system of urban cycling, especially regarding the following key topics and concepts:

1. *Bicycles as “Migrants’ technologies”*. Bicycles have been and are still today the means of transport of undocumented migrants in urban and rural economies of the Global North (Bastos et al., 2021).
2. *Bicycles as “Technologies of the poor”*. Mobility of the poor in the Global South and North, technological use, hybridization, maintenance, and repair, related with the “environmentalism of the poor” (Martinez-Alier, 2002; Edgerton, 2008).
3. Bicycles as “Technologies of protest”, that is, technologies that are socially constructed as part of the repertoire of collective action in the struggles against specific technological objects and systems, in particular, car-centered mobility (Valentines-Alvarez, 2022; Sousa et al., 2025).
4. *Bicycles as “Situated-in-motion knowledge” standpoints*. Cyclists have experienced and regarded the city through different standpoints (also structured by gender, race, or class), which had been key to planning the city in more eco-social justice ways. The cities today have been shaped by this artefact and the activist knowledge, practices and networks it has produced (Haraway, 1988).

If you are interested, please send a proposal to luisacoelhosousa@fct.unl.pt and Jaume.Valentines.Alvarez@uab.cat by 14 April 2025, including a 150-word abstract as well as your name, title, affiliation, and e-mail address.