EJTIR

Issue 17(1), 2017
pp. 25-45
ISSN: 1567-7141
tlo.tbm.tudelft.nl/ejtir

Do Northwestern and Southeastern Europe Share a Common "Cycling Mindset"? Comparative Analysis of Beliefs toward Cycling in the Netherlands and the Balkans

Dorina Pojani[1]
School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

Dukagjin Bakija[2]
Cultural Heritage without Borders, Prishtina, Kosovo.

Entela Shkreli[3]
GO2, Shkodra, Albania.

Jonathan Corcoran[4]
School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

Iderlina Mateo-Babiano[5]
School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

Employing the theory of planned behavior for guidance, this study explores the similarities and differences in beliefs about the decisions to commute by bicycle to work in three small, cycling-oriented cities: Gouda (The Netherlands), Shkodra (Albania), and Peja (Kosovo). The setting in the Balkan Peninsula, a less developed region of Europe which has been more rarely the subject of scientific inquiry, has the potential to offer applicability to (smaller) developing cities. The study identifies the following themes or beliefs related to cycling: (1) health and exercise (2) environment (3) safety (4) enjoyment (5) convenience and practicality (6) financial savings (7) pride and tradition (8) status and image and (9) female independence. The findings suggest that, in developing cities changes to the physical environment alone – although crucial - are likely to be insufficient if travel modes are to shift toward active transport. To this end attitudes and perceptions need to be tackled as well. In promoting cycling, policy makers need to strike a fine balance between the concept of the bicycle as an economical mode and as a "trendy" one. The most promising way forward appears to be a combination of public infrastructure investments, cycling tracks in particular, and social marketing strategies to alter travel behavior.

Keywords: *cycling; work commute; behavioral studies; cultural aspects; policy transfer; the Netherlands; Albania; Kosovo.*

[1] A: St Lucia, Chamberlain (35), 4th fl, Brisbane Qld 4072, Australia T: +61-7-33656455 E: d.pojani@uq.edu.au
[2] A: Rr. Idriz Gjilani, Hyrja 4, nr.9, 10000 Prishtina, Kosovo T: +381-38-754866 E: dukagjin.bakija@chwb.org
[3] A: Rr. Marin Barleti, P 167, Shkodra, Albania T: +355-692853159 E: contact@go2albania.org
[4] A: St Lucia, Chamberlain (35), 4th fl, Brisbane Qld 4072, Australia T: +61-7-33656455 E: jj.corcoran@uq.edu.au
[5] A: St Lucia, Chamberlain (35), 4th fl, Brisbane Qld 4072, Australia T: +61-7-33656455 E: i.mateobabiano@uq.edu.au

1. Introduction

Emerging from socialist rule in the early 1990s, many Southeastern European cities experienced rapid increases in private automobile ownership and use mirrored by a dwindling rate of cycling. A quarter century on, these cities continue to struggle to revive utilitarian cycling (i.e., as a commute mode). In search of effective active transport strategies, there has been a particular emphasis on drawing on best practice from elsewhere. In particular, Dutch cities are seen as a prime example of high rates of bicycle use in Europe that underpins the targeted recruitment of Dutch cycling experts into a variety of cycling projects in Southeastern Europe (Pojani and Stead 2014). However scholarship continues to point to the need of a comprehensive comparison of the physical and social cycling context in order to assess the likely success of transferring Northwestern European policies and measures, such as segregated cycle lanes and priority for cyclists at intersections (Marsden and Stead 2011). In other words, studies that examine the variety of cycling infrastructure and amenities in conjunction with a consideration of cycling culture and attitudes are missing from the current literature.

To redress this need, the authors examine the similarities and differences in individual and social beliefs concerning the decision to commute by bicycle in three small, cycling-oriented cities: Gouda (The Netherlands), Shkodra (Albania), and Peja (Kosovo). Smaller cities rather than larger metropolitan areas have been selected for this study because in Albania and Kosovo a cycling tradition exists only in these settings, which are much less congested with cars. The Netherlands was selected given that it arguably constitutes the world flagship example in terms of urban cycling (Pojani and Stead 2014). Common across much of the Netherlands, cycling infrastructure in Gouda is wide-ranging and covers the entire city, comprising an extensive network of segregated lanes as well as traffic calming measures in shared streets. Albania and Kosovo are post-socialist countries (a century ago they formed a single country) each of which had a strong cycling tradition during socialism. This has since waned in their largest cities due to major congestion issues; however it remains in some smaller cities, which have lower rates of car ownership and use (Pojani 2011). While lacking segregated cycling lanes, Shkodra has one of the highest levels of cycling in the Balkan region. Peja continues to strive to improve its urban amenities for sustainable transport modes (MobAlb 2015; MobKos 2015). Since the three settings are comparable in terms of size and modal share of cycling, the authors contend that it is possible to discern the role that beliefs play in the decision to cycle to work, and draw on these to compare such beliefs between Northwestern and Southeastern contexts. The study provides a new evidence base with the potential to contribute to the development of cycling policy and infrastructure development in Southeastern Europe.

The key question addressed by this study is to establish the extent to which Northwestern and Southeastern Europe share a common "cycling mindset" which can be strengthened through investment in cycling infrastructure backed with cycling promotion efforts. An *environmental possibilism*[6] stance is adopted that contends that while a supportive physical environment (e.g., the presence of cycling lanes) is crucial in achieving high cycling rates (see Lanzendorf and Busch-Geertsema 2014), the decision to cycle is based on individual will, and thus is highly dependent on intrinsic motivation. The physical environment is passive while people are the active agents at liberty to choose between a range of different travel modes. To this end, the authors argue that, at most, the built environment can condition, but not control, human actions (e.g., traffic calming can train drivers to give priority to non-motorized modes).

[6] *Environmental possibilism* is a doctrine in geography, anthropology, and other disciplines, which postulates that the pattern of human activities is the result of the initiative of individuals operating within the natural, cultural, and built environment framework. This doctrine contrasts with *environmental determinism*, which emphasizes the influence of natural and built habitats in shaping human actions and lifestyle choices and assigns a passive role to individuals.

Drawing on 46 in-depth interviews, the authors first develop a theoretical framework that captures the role of motivation or intention in predicting behavior. The present study replicates earlier work by Heinen and Handy (2012) but with a few important differences. Heinen and Handy's (2012) study focused on university cities in developed countries. By contrast, the present study is set in non-university cities and, therefore, its results are arguably more generalizable to a larger set of contexts. Also, the present study is set in a less developed region of Europe (which has been more rarely the subject of scientific inquiry) and thus has the potential to offer greater applicability to cities in less developed regions. At the same time, the inclusion of a Dutch city in both this study and Heinen and Handy's study permits for an important point of comparison.

In contrast to most prior studies, which have dealt with cycling infrastructure and other supportive built environment features, the present study focuses on the role of personal attitudes and social pressures in the decision to commute by bicycle. This alternate focus offers the potential to unveil new insights into the cycling psychology and culture in addition to the more traditional focus on the built environment.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: The next section presents the theoretical framework and summarizes the extent of existing knowledge on the psychology of human motivations and on the use of cycling as a commute mode. The third section describes the case study contexts and outlines the research methodology, which is followed by a discussion of the findings before offering some tentative conclusions and policy recommendations.

2. Theoretical framework

The authors' understanding of the role of motivation or intention in predicting behavior derives from the theory of planned behavior (Fig. 1), a well-tested theoretical model developed by Ajzen (1991). While this theory is more often used in quantitative studies, it has proven to be well suited for qualitative studies as well (see Heinen and Handy 2012). While quantitative and qualitative research studies employ different variables, they can be guided by the same conceptual framework and can be equally capable of investigating the same hypothesis. According to the theory of planned behavior, the likelihood of a particular behavior being performed in specific contexts (e.g., commuting to work by bicycle) is highly dependent on an individual's intention to perform the behavior. In turn, the intention to perform the behavior can be accurately predicted by three independent concepts: (a) beliefs about the likely consequences of the behavior (*behavioral beliefs*), (b) beliefs about the expectations of others (*normative beliefs*), and (c) beliefs about the presence of factors that may further or hinder the performance of the behavior (*control beliefs*).

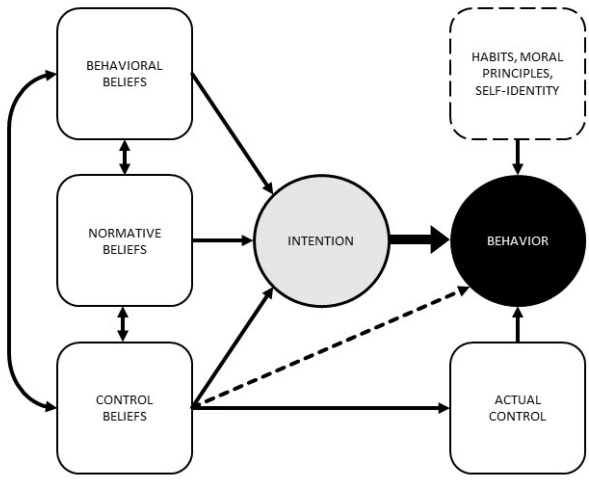

Figure 1. Theoretical framework (based on Ajzen 1991)

Clearly, the theory of planned behavior views human social behavior as reasoned – although people's beliefs might be unfounded or biased. However, habits, moral principles, and self-identity are also likely to be a motivation for humans to perform certain behaviors (Aarts et al. 1998; Hunecke et al. 2001). Habits, in particular, may play an important role during routinized, semi-automatic actions, such as the travel mode choice for the daily commute (Aarts et al. 1998; de Bruijn et al. 2009). Also, individuals with a certain self-image or identity, e.g. those who see themselves as "environmentalists," "athletic," or "urbanites," might be more likely to use public transport or non-motorized transport for their commute (Hunecke et al. 2001; Scheiner and Holz-Rau 2007; Lois et al. 2015). The influence of factors such as habits, moral principles, and self-identity on travel modes is still being debated in the academic community.

As a general rule, the stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the more likely is its performance. But the behavior is only performed if, in addition to having the right motivation or intention, an individual has actual control over the behavior. Actual control depends on an individual's ability to decide at will whether to perform or not the behavior and on his/her opportunity and resources - such as, money, skills, cooperation of others, etc. (Ajzen 1991). As long as the configuration of beliefs, actual control, and other factors remains stable over time, there is no reason for the behavior to change (i.e. past behavior will be the best predictor of future behavior). The introduction of new information (e.g. awareness of traffic calming measures along the route to work, a cycling event, or an awareness-raising campaign) can disrupt or break past patterns and lead people to change their usual behavior (e.g. switch commute mode from car to bicycle) (Bamberg et al. 2003; Rose and Marfurt 2007; Gatersleben and Appleton 2007; Lanzendorf and Busch-Geertsema 2014).

In addition to the psychologically-based theory of planned behavior, alternative approaches and theoretical conceptualizations exist. Some researchers have employed social models of behavior to describe utility cycling, such as Social Practice Theory or Energy Cultures (Spotswood et al. 2015; Stephenson et al. 2015). These models distinguish between the concept of "culture" which suggests a given transport behavior context and the concept of "practice" which highlights human agency and response to community norms. Employing "culture" as a frame, a study set in the U.K. describes cycling in Hull and Cambridge as embedded within these cities' working class base and academic tradition respectively (Aldred and Jungnickel 2014). Similarly, a study set in Germany derives six typological clusters of cities, including one called "cycling cities" in which inhabitants show a strong and consistent propensity towards cycling, both in terms of behavior and perceptions. Cycling cities are found to be smaller and less dense than average (Klinger et al. 2013; see also Handy et al. 2012). A study considering 28 European cities identifies eight mobility culture clusters, among which are "green cyclists" and "practical cyclists" who mainly differ in their degree of environmental concern. These clusters encompass the Netherlands, Belgium, West Germany, Denmark, and Finland (Haustein and Sick-Nielsen 2016).

The concept of culture has influenced the present study as well.

3. Literature review

Most previous research on cycling commutes has focused on control beliefs and actual control. A number of studies have examined the roles of individual constraints (e.g., gender, age, and income), natural environment constraints (e.g., topography and weather), and built environment constraints (e.g., urban form, urban size, and bicycling infrastructure and facilities) on cycling rates and route choices. Rarely have cycling studies focused on behavioral and normative beliefs.

The following is a summary of the knowledge on cycling as a commute mode. This literature review is structured in accordance with the theoretical framework outlined previously. In presenting the findings on behavioral and normative beliefs, the authors draw on the article by

Willis et al. (2015), which examined 24 quantitative studies, in addition to studies by Bonham and Koth (2010), Tapp and Nancarrow (2014), Goetzke and Rave (2011), and Bernhoft and Carstensen (2008). In presenting findings on control beliefs, the authors draw on the comprehensive review article by Heinen et al. (2010), as well as a comparative study by Chattaway et al. (2014).

The review articles included here provide a rather comprehensive picture of the current knowledge on cycling. Any gaps have been filled though the inclusion of individual studies. The present literature review refers to the foregoing authors and is subject to the caveat that nearly all included studies involve highly developed countries. The role of habits is not discussed because it is theoretically less clear, as mentioned.

3.1 Behavioral beliefs

The main findings on behavioral beliefs are the following: (1) Bicycle use is positively affected by perceptions of the health benefits from exercise, the enjoyment of cycling as a sensual experience, the monetary savings, the convenience and rapidity, the environmental benefits, the necessity to reduce one's environmental footprint, the flexibility of departure time, the avoidance of traffic congestion, and the dislike for driving. The higher the perceived benefits, the longer the distances that commuters are willing to cycle. (2) Bicycle use is negatively affected by perceptions of impracticality, lack of time, and physical discomfort or pain. (3) People who have never experienced cycling or who do not do it often tend to have more negative perceptions and attitudes related to this transport mode.

3.2 Normative beliefs

The main findings on normative beliefs are the following: (1) The work environment is very important in the decision to commute by bicycle. Factors such as having to wear formal clothing at work or not wanting to arrive at work while perspired or with an untidy appearance can preclude cycling. The influence of colleagues and the work culture are influential too. Having coworkers who actively commute or working in a youthful, casual environment leads more people to cycle to work. (2) Perceptions of other cyclists have an effect cycling odds. Cycling is more likely if other cyclists are seen as "normal" or "business" people rather than sporty types, who wear specialized clothing, own expensive equipment, and possibly "behave badly on the roads." The inability to imagine oneself as a cyclist and the idea that cycling is something that other people (or children) do are barriers to cycling. This phenomenon is also referred to as "social spillover effect." In some cases, the perceptions of other cyclists have a social class dimension: cycling might be stereotyped as an activity for poorer or lower-class people. (3) The opinion of one's community on cycling can encourage or discourage this behavior. People who believe that their family members, neighbors, and friends accept or support or actively encourage cycling are more likely to cycle or intend to cycle. Similarly, people whose social environment sets the example by cycling are more likely to follow suit. On the other hand, believing that "cars are the coolest way to get around" is negatively associated with cycling. (4) The social environment might only be influential when commute distances are small. Over longer distances, behavioral and control beliefs might be more important in the decision to cycle to work. (5) Media representations of cycling can have a positive or negative effect on cycling rates. Where media have an "anti-cycling agenda" and presents cyclists and motorist as foes, viewers might be less inclined to cycle. Portrayals of professional cyclists, politicians, actors, and other celebrities are influential in creating a positive image of cycling.

3.3 Control beliefs (and actual control)

The main findings on control beliefs (and actual control) are the following: (1) The built environment and the perception of it have an influence on bicycle use. Short distances, functional mix, and access to bicycle parking lead to increases in cycle mode share. The effect of objective high densities, dense cycling networks, traffic lights, and presence of showers in the workplace on cycling rates and objective safety levels remains unclear. But knowing cycling routes and

perceiving that one's route is of high quality and away from traffic, noise and air pollution positively influence the decision to cycle. (2) The natural environment and the individual experience of it have a large influence on bicycle use. Hilliness, rainy weather, low temperatures, and darkness result in lower cycling rates, while the perception of a beautiful scenery along one's route leads to more cycling. (3) Socio-economic factors, household characteristics, lifestyles, and life stages appear related to cycling rates but the findings are mixed and the direction of causality is unclear. Large differences exist between countries. Car ownership (generally associated with higher incomes) has a negative effect on cycling rates. (4) Other factors, including gender and travel cost, time, effort (especially for people with household duties such as shopping and child care), and safety have important effects on cycling rates, especially when considered in relation to competing travel modes. The perception that one lacks transport options (other than a car) negatively affects the decision to cycle. Men cycle more than women in most countries. Finally, a low level of confidence in one's ability to cycle (low self-efficacy) - more often observed in older people - is also a deterrent to cycling.

4. Methodology

Three cases form the focus for this study, namely: Gouda (The Netherlands), Shkodra (Albania), and Peja (Kosovo). All three are historic, smaller-sized, densely populated cities located within a reasonable distance to the respective national capitals, and are connected to the capitals via road and rail (Fig. 2). All three cities have high cycling rates, especially Gouda and Shkodra (Fig. 3). In Gouda, cycling is better supported through an extensive network of cycle lanes, as well as traffic calming measures (Fig. 4). In Peja and Shkodra, employment is mostly local whereas Gouda is more of a commuter town. Some basic data on each city is provided in Table 1.[7]

Figure 2. Location of the three case study cities

This study is based on 46 in-depth semi-structured interviews. To understand human psychology, including personal beliefs, stories, meanings, and interpretations, individual qualitative interviews are preferable over quantitative surveys involving "dry" statistical analysis or focus groups in which there is an amount of self-consciousness and peer pressure (Liamputtong 2013). While opinions vary on how many interviews are sufficient in qualitative

[7] A note on transport during the socialist era. In Shkodra, private car ownership was not permitted. In Peja, which was part of the former Yugoslavia, private car ownership was allowed but it was low as incomes were not large to sustain it. Conventional wisdom would suggest that socialist regimes would more promote collective modes such as public transport. However, as both cities are small, buses were minimally used and most travel was on foot and bicycle. However, data from the socialist era is unavailable. It was either not collected or it was lost during the turbulent post-socialist transition years. Now the respective Cities and non-profits are making an effort to collect data.

studies, a survey of leading experts confirmed that a minimum of 15 interviews per city is adequate (Baker and Edwards 2012).

In the present study, the conditions for participation in interviews were: adult age (18 or above), employment outside the home (i.e., involving a, however short, commute), and residence in the case study city. The fact that participants were employed meant that the elderly (i.e., retirees) were excluded. Participation was not restricted to people who commuted by bicycle; individuals who commuted in other ways were encouraged to participate as well. No incentives were provided for participation. The methods of participant recruitment are presented in Table 2.

Figure 3. Cycling in the pedestrianized centers of three case study cities

In total, 16 interviews were conducted in Gouda, 15 in Peja, and 15 in Shkodra. The interviews took place between summer 2013 and winter 2014 and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes each. Some interviews were conducted in person and some by telephone or Skype. Overall, the study participants in all three cities tended to be more educated than the population at large. In Shkodra and Peja the participation of younger people was broader while in Gouda older people and parents of small or teenage children tended to volunteer more often. The gender mix was balanced but participants tended to be car owners (although car ownership in not universal in any of the three cities). In Gouda, many participants worked in another city, reflecting a longer average commutes than in the other two cities. (Commuting to another city for work is common in the Netherlands, as the national communication network is of high quality.)

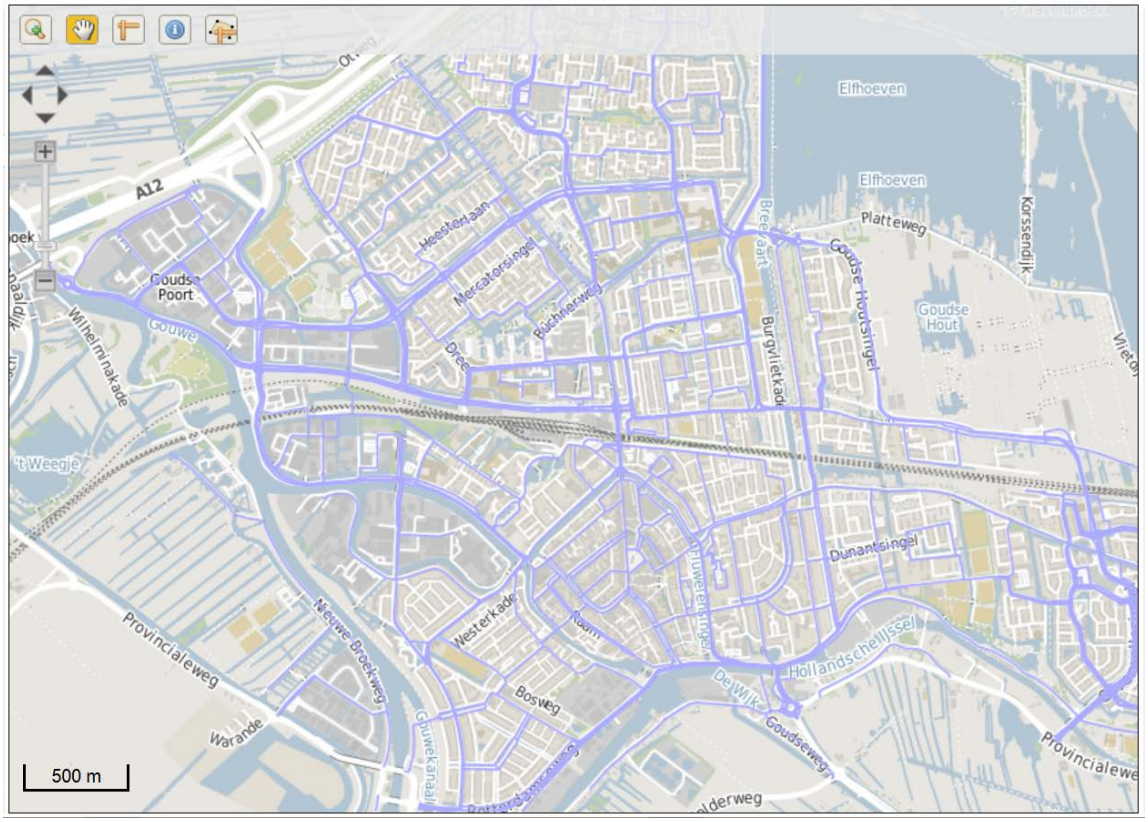

Figure 4. Map of main cycling paths in Gouda (in purple). Narrower streets (in white) are cycle-friendly but shared with other modes. Map courtesy of the City of Gouda. An interactive map of cycling routes in Gouda is also provided by: http://www.routeyou.com/nl-nl/location/bike/47477936/fietsen-in-gouda-overzicht-van-alle-fietsroutes

Table 1. Basic data about the case study cities

City	Gouda	Shkodra	Peja
Country	Netherlands	Albania	Kosovo
Population	71,000	77,000	60,000
Area	18 km²	16.5 km²	15 km²
Altitude	0 m	13 m	505-520 m
Topography	Flat	Flat	Mostly flat
Climate	Moderate maritime, with significant rainfall	Subtropical with hot summers	Continental, with significant rainfall
Commute modal split	34% cycling 19% walking 40% car 6% public transport 1% other	25% cycling 41% walking 19% car 12% public transport 3% other	6% cycling 60% walking 30% car 3% public transport 0% other
Car / bicycle ownership	78 / 88%	49 / 75%	78 / 41%
Distance to capital	Amsterdam – 70 km	Tirana – 95 km	Prishtina – 80 km
Average commute distance	13 km	4.9 km	3.9 km
Economic base	Leisure, retail, healthcare, urban tourism	Retail, food and textile industry, water tourism	Agriculture, crafts, retail, mountain tourism

Sources: Data on mobility in Peja and Shkodra were provided by MobKos and MobAlb respectively. All other data are courtesy of the respective municipal governments.

As for the cycling populations of each city, no prior data is available; however, the participants of this study are likely to mirror the profile of the local cycling populations as cyclists generally were keener to be interviewed. All the respondents had lived for at least a few years in their current home; therefore their responses related to travel reflected long-established patterns and were not the result of temporary arrangements. Interviews were carried out over a long period of time, meaning that the influence of current weather conditions on the responses was balanced out.

Table 2. Participant recruitment methods

City	Method
Gouda	• Printed notices in city center cafés, the central plaza, ten Gouda primary schools; and the central train station building. • Internet notices on social network sites and the website of an urbanism research group within Delft University of Technology. • Email invites to individuals in the researchers' personal and work network. • Notices to a local non-profit cycling organization (Fietserbond) and the City of Gouda. • Item in a Gouda primary school newsletter distributed to parents.
Shkodra	• Internet notices on social network sites. • An announcement on a local radio station (Radio Travel). • Email notices to the Albanian Architects Association with a request to redistribute. • Email invites to individuals in the researchers' personal and work network. • Notices to a local non-profit cycling organization (GO2) and the City of Shkodra.
Peja	• Printed notices in key locations in the urban area. • Internet notices on social network sites. • Email invites to individuals in the researchers' personal and work network. • Notices to two local non-profit organizations, MobKos and Cultural Heritage without Borders, as well as the City of Peja.

All the interview questions were open-ended. The questionnaire compiled by Heinen and Handy (2012) was used as a starting point but was modified and adapted so that it would work in both a Northwestern and Southeastern European context. The interviews were in five parts. The first part collected demographic and socio-economic data about the participant. The second part contained questions on attitudes and behaviors related to the work commute. The third part focused on beliefs related to a (potential) cycling commute. The fourth part dealt with the interviewee's social surroundings. And the fifth part presented the participant with several hypothetical commute scenarios involving individuals and families in various life stages and situations and asked him/her to elaborate on these hypothetical commute choices and options.

The interviews in Gouda were conducted in English (a language nearly universally spoken in the Netherlands) while the interviews in Peja and Shkodra were conducted in Albanian (the official language in these two cities). To avoid or minimize social desirability bias (i.e., the tendency of interview respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favorably by the interviewer), participants were assured that there were no right or wrong answers and that the researcher would not pass judgment based on their commute mode.

The interviews were voice recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. The analysis was based on "conventional content analysis," a widely used qualitative research technique, in which coding categories are derived directly from the text data rather than preconceived theories. This type of analysis was selected because existing theory on cycling-related beliefs in the South is limited, as noted. Data coding was manual and followed a standard iterative process employed in the analysis of qualitative data, based on recurring keywords or synonyms thereof. The results of this type of analysis are particularly useful for model building (Hsieh and Shannon 2005).

5. Findings

The themes identified by Heinen and Handy (2012) that included beliefs about (1) *health and exercise* (2) *environment* (3) *safety* and (4) *enjoyment*, all emerged through our case studies. However, several additional themes emerged – mostly related to the contextual differences between the Southeastern Europe and Northwestern Europe or California (the setting of Heinen and Handy's study). These new themes include beliefs about (5) *convenience and practicality* (6) *financial savings* (7) *pride and tradition* (8) *status and image* and (9) *female independence*.

Given the qualitative nature of the research, statistical analyses of the data are not provided. The authors believe that the nuances of the individual responses provide the main attraction and value of this study. The findings are succinctly summarized in Table 3. Throughout the discussion, the term "cyclist" applies to individuals who (at least occasionally) cycle to work, while the term "non-cyclist" refers to individuals who do not currently cycle to work.

Table 3. Summary of findings

Theme	Main findings
Health and Exercise	• Health is a nearly universal concern. • Bicycle commutes help people incorporate some physical exercise in their sedentary or busy lifestyles. • For athletic people cycling is an inseparable part of an active lifestyle. • Cyclists are viewed as more athletic and energetic types than others. • In the Netherlands cycling is seen as an activity for everyone while in the Balkans it is seen as primarily for the young and fit. • Car drivers are seen as "lazy." • Cycling is seen as good for one's mental health and well-being, in addition to physical health. • A virtuous circle forms through cycling: the more one cycles, the fitter one becomes; the fitter one is, the longer the distances one is willing to cycle.
Environment	• Bicycles are viewed as an environmentally-friendly mode. • Commute decision do not depend primarily on environmental considerations. • Only few, very committed "environmentalists," choose to commute by bicycle on principle. • A polluted urban environment produces a vicious circle: the more polluted a city is, the fewer people want to cycle and breathe foul air; potential cyclists turn to driving for their commute, thus polluting the air further.
Safety	• Safety is not a major barrier in small cities with have narrow roads and relatively low motorized traffic volumes. • Parents are absolutely unwilling to take risks with their children. • Where drivers are also cyclists at one time or another, they are more concerned about the safety of cyclists. • The more experienced a cyclist is, the less concerned he/she is about safety. • Women tend to be more nervous about riding alongside other traffic than men.
Enjoyment	• Cycling is an enjoyable and pleasurable activity, most often associated with positive thoughts such as "relaxation" and "freedom." • Cycling is viewed in much more positive light than public transport. • Enjoyment is a more important consideration than health in commute decisions. • The more attached to cycling one is, the more likely he/she is to project these feelings onto others. • Some cyclists are averse to cars while for others, enjoyment of cycling does not preclude deriving pleasure from driving.

Theme	Main findings
Convenience and Practicality	• Convenience, practicality, and speed are major reasons for commuting and shopping by bicycle. • For those who already cycle, cycling is almost second nature. • In the Balkans, unruly car traffic is a deterrent to commuting by bicycle for non-cyclists. • Cycling is seen as more reliable, and as offering more autonomy than cars/public transport as travel can be timed it depending on preference and fitness level. • Most people in the case study settings own simple city bicycles and wear regular clothing while cycling (as opposed to sporty outfits). • In the case of parents with young children, cars are seen as desirable or necessary. • Adverse weather conditions affect the perception of cycling as practical. (But in the Netherlands people are accustomed to much colder and rainy weather. In the Balkans heat and humidity in the summer are also problematic.)
Financial Savings	• In the Balkans, the cost of various transport options is a major concern. • With growing incomes, there is a risk that cycling levels will diminish. • In the Netherlands, due to higher incomes, cost is a secondary consideration in the choice to commute by bicycle.
Pride and Tradition	• People take considerable pride in the fact that they live in a "bicycle city." • Cycling is often a family tradition. • Cyclists tend to project a "cycling mindset" onto others around them. • In the Netherlands, local pride borders on a moral obligation to cycle. • The influence of the workplace or neighborhood environment is weak. • Local cycling cultures and consequent pride are shaped and sustained by public policies that encourage the use of bicycles while discouraging the use of cars.
Status and Image	• In the Balkans, the concept of cars as a status symbol and a luxury item, and the concept of the bicycle as a cheap vehicle for the poor, hurt the image of the bicycle. • In the Balkans, the example of Northwestern European cycling cities is playing an important role in raising the status of bicycles. • For upwardly-mobile respondents in the Balkans, commuting by bicycle is a temporary solution, and their hope is to upgrade to a car. • If car ownership is unrestricted, it is difficult to restrict car use. • In the Netherlands, cars are generally seen as a necessary household appliance and there is no particular status associated with car ownership. • In the Netherlands, being environmentally-conscious is fashionable among people belonging in the educated middle class. • In all three places, cyclists are very frustrated by, and critical of, the car-orientation of their social circle. • In all three places, public transport has a negative image, especially buses.
Female Independence	• In the Netherlands there are no noticeable gender biases in relation to cycling. • In the Balkans, travel-related gender barriers and stereotypes persist. • In the Balkans, bicycle ownership affords women some mobility independence but some women feel self-conscious if they commute by bicycle. • Dutch children are trained to cycle on their own early on and are less dependent on the mothers for car transport.

5.1 Health and exercise

A concern with health is nearly universal among the respondents. This finding is identical to Heinen and Handy's (2012). The interviews reveal that many people commute by bicycle in order to incorporate some physical exercise in their otherwise sedentary or busy lifestyles. Older respondents prefer cycling to other forms of casual exercise (such as jogging or stair-climbing) as they feel it is less strenuous and has a lower impact on their joints. Others are generally athletic and see cycling as an inseparable part of their active lifestyle. Respondents in this group often

ridicule others who choose to drive to work or other destinations and then sign up for costly memberships in gyms where exercise takes place indoors in stale air.

Often one's decision to cycle to work is lauded as "a smart step toward better health" even by non-cyclists. Even if they cannot, or do not want to, commute by bicycle on a daily basis, many respondents cycle to work once or twice per week or only during the warmer and dryer season, or engage in some amount of recreational cycling on the weekends. To achieve better health, some non-cyclists who live far from their job would be willing to commute by bicycle if they did not work full-time (otherwise their workday would become excessively long). A commonly held view is that cyclists are more athletic and energetic types than others, and that non-cyclists, especially car drivers, are "lazy." Sometimes, drivers themselves have internalized this view, admitting that their car-dependence is fundamentally driven by "laziness" rather than necessity.

Many others are aware that, due to the short distance between their home and work, the cardio exercise that they perform while cycling is minimal. However, they feel that "a bit of exercise is better than nothing." Cycling is also seen as good for one's mental health, as it relieves the tension of driving, "clears their head," energizes riders, or appeases other daily stressors.

Gouda cyclists appear to be much more vigorous compared to Shkodra and Peja cyclists. Respondents from Gouda would be willing to cycle to work for up to 15 or even 20 km, while for respondents from Shkodra and Peja 10 km is the maximum cyclable distance. Also, the Dutch cycle at much faster speeds. This might owe to the high-quality intercity cycling infrastructure in the Netherlands, which allows individuals to easily commute by bicycle from one city to another. This feature is not present in the other two countries. This finding suggests that a virtuous circle forms through cycling: the more one cycles, the fitter one becomes; the fitter one is, the longer the distances one is willing to cycle.

Gouda and Shkodra respondents are more likely to believe that cycling is an activity than the elderly can and must perform just as well as the young. In Peja, by contrast, the view is that senior citizens are "weak" and in need of commuting by car. This attitude might be due to lower levels of physical fitness among the non-young in Peja. But it might also result from cultural stereotypes which frame the elderly as frail and dependent in the Balkans and as self-sufficient in Northwestern Europe.

5.2 Environment

Cyclists and non-cyclist alike are convinced that bicycles are an environmentally-friendly mode. This finding is also similar to Heinen and Handy's (2012), except that no major differences are noticeable between the three cities in the present study. When they refer to "the environment," respondents most often think of air pollution. A few are aware of other types of environmental benefits (e.g., less noise and visual pollution). However, only few, very committed "environmentalists," choose to commute by bicycle in order to be true to their principles and "practice what they preach." For most people, the low environmental impact of cycling is more of a "lucky side-effect" of their decision, which depends primarily on other factors.

All respondents are also aware that car use is detrimental to the environment. Some drivers' responses are underpinned by elements of shame or rationalization. For example, respondents defend their choice to drive by saying that their car is "green." Other individuals, who make more balanced travel choices combining cars and public transport and bicycles, are free of "environmental guilt." Some even refer to those who never drive as "environmental fundamentalists." But a polluted urban environment produces a vicious circle: the more polluted a city is, the fewer people want to cycle and breathe foul air. Potential cyclists among the respondents turn to driving for their commute, thus polluting the air further. (Some people in this group still cycle for recreation.)

5.3 Safety

Overall, safety does not emerge as a major barrier, likely because the three cities under study are small, have narrow roads, and relatively low motorized traffic volumes. But many respondents in Shkodra and Peja are somewhat concerned about safety while cycling, especially if they have to transport others on a bicycle. In particular, parents are absolutely unwilling to take risks with their children. Interestingly, in Shkodra where drivers tend to be unruly, a few respondents see cycling as safer than driving because bicyclists are more likely to ride in alleys, backstreets, and other low traffic places and are therefore less likely to become involved in accidents.

In Gouda, respondents are unconcerned about traffic safety while commuting by bicycle. Also, they are more likely to say that they are comfortable riding alongside car traffic – although many appreciate the presence of segregated lanes in the Netherlands. Similarly, Dutch respondents in Heinen and Handy's (2012) sample found cycling to be as safe as driving. This confidence likely owes to the fact that drivers in the Netherlands abide by the traffic rules much more closely than in the Balkans, and are more aware that the road space must be shared with cyclists.

Some respondents are also concerned about the safety of others (e.g. pedestrians and cyclists) while driving. They fear that if they are not careful, they might hit someone one day. This type of concern surfaced most often in Gouda where most drivers are also cyclists at one time or another. Often respondents project their fears onto others; e.g., those who are more concerned about traffic safety are also more likely to imagine that non-cyclists in general are nervous about riding a bicycle. This is especially true in Shkodra and Peja, which lack segregated cycling tracks.

The more experienced a cyclist is, the less concerned he or she is about safety. Women tend to be more nervous about riding alongside other traffic than men. Some non-cyclist women in Shkodra and Peja say that they would only commute by bicycle if tracks were installed and cycling was made absolutely safe.

5.4 Enjoyment

As in Heinen and Handy's (2012) study, nearly all respondents, including non-cyclists, find cycling to be an enjoyable activity. For many this is a major reason for choosing a bicycle over other commute modes. Cycling is most often associated with positive thoughts such as "relaxation," "good view," "adrenaline," "clean air," "freedom," and "nature," – even for non-cyclists. A sense of freedom while cycling is described as a mental state but also as the ability to mix and match many more potential routes – which is seen as an advantage over driving that restricts motorists on the same vehicular roads on a daily basis. The ability to run into acquaintances, and stop and socialize at will while on a bicycle is part of the attraction of cycling especially in Shkodra and Peja where people are generally more sociable. The more attached to cycling respondents are, the more likely they are to project these feelings onto others. For example, cyclists are more likely to believe that other people in various life stages and with circumstances different from theirs would also elect to cycle to work. Several cyclists feel that non-cyclists are "missing out" on a major pleasure and a potential for adventure. Some speak of a sort of mental and physical "addiction" to cycling. Generally, enjoyment overrides health considerations when choosing cycling as a commute mode. This is demonstrated by the fact that several respondents who live far from work are now considering purchasing electric bicycles for their commute (which do not require much physical effort to operate).

While public transport ridership is often seen as a "necessary evil" to be endured, bicycles are seen by most cyclists as a mode chosen deliberately and out of pleasure. At best, public transport is considered as a tool to "get from point A to B" and does not carry the positive associations of a bicycle. Several respondents report that, although their employer would reimburse their travel expenses if they commuted by car or public transport, they choose to cycle to work because it is a much more satisfying activity.

Some cyclists are rather averse to cars. They say that they find driving through heavy traffic to be stressful or become easily impatient and frustrated when stuck in traffic jams. But for a number of others, enjoyment of cycling does not preclude deriving pleasure from driving. This shows that travel-related decision making is not a black-and-white issue.

5.5 Convenience and practicality

Convenience, practicality, and speed are major reasons for commuting by bicycle for those respondents who work and live within the same city. Habitual cyclists typically "don't think about it, just jump on a bike and go." For many Gouda respondents, in particular, cycling is almost second nature; they view the bicycle as an extension of their body. They only stop cycling if a disability precludes it. Even people who find cars to be more comfortable as a vehicle see bicycles as a faster intra-city travel mode, as it allows riders to maneuver easily and take shortcuts.

One cyclist in Gouda says that most of his work colleagues are forced to drive to work because they live too far but "are jealous of him for being able to cycle to work." At the same time, in Shkodra and Peja car traffic is a deterrent to commuting a bicycle for non-cyclists. They tend to find cars more practical and safe, as mentioned. In Gouda, traffic calming devices are applied throughout the inner city; therefore, this issue is not present.

Being able to arrive at work on time is particularly important in Shkodra and Peja where schedules are more rigid and penalties for tardiness often apply. In Gouda, this is less problematic because many Dutch employers have adopted progressive workplace policies such as flexible schedules, telecommuting, and the like. However, many respondents in all three cities see bicycle travel as more reliable as they can time it depending on preference and fitness level – as opposed to buses or trains which are subject to delays outside one's control. The autonomy afforded by bicycles is very important to most cyclists.

The view of cycling as a practical mode is reflected in the fact that most respondents own and/or prefer simple, regular city bicycles for their work commute, especially in Shkodra. In the other two cities, there is a market for more specialized bicycles, including racing bicycles in the flat Gouda region and mountain bikes in the mountainous Peja region, but these are most often used for recreation during the weekend rather than for commuting. In Gouda, it is not uncommon for the respondents' households to own up two bicycles per person, while in Shkodra and Peja, due to lower incomes (but also lower cycling rates) respondents often have to negotiate with other family members over the use of one or two bicycles in total.

Bicycles are also seen as practical when shopping trips are combined with one's work commute. For example, a man in Gouda relates an entertaining story of how he once purchased a flat-screen TV in a nearby town, loaded it on a bicycle, and left followed by the incredulous gaze of the store clerks. A shopkeeper in Peja recounts how he often loads up to 20 kg of merchandize on his bicycle.

In Gouda, bicycle use is seen as so convenient that public transport trips are often combined with cycling trips at either end of the commute. A typical trip for out-of-town commuters looks like this: one cycles to the train station, parks the bicycle there, takes the train to the next city, picks up another bicycle that has been parked there overnight, and cycles to work. Variations include: using a folding bicycle to take on the train, or taking a tram or bus at one end of the train trip.

Rarely do respondents wear special clothing for cycling (i.e. Spandex or Lycra outfits). Most cycle in their regular work clothes, which also confirms their view of cycling as a practical activity. A few women find cycling slightly restrictive in terms of clothing as they feel that they have to wear trousers rather than skirts while on a bicycle. However, they consider this a minor inconvenience compared to the benefits that they derive from cycling. Many others, especially in Gouda, are entirely unselfconscious about their looks while riding a bicycle. For example, a young woman tells a story of how once she even went to a wedding on a bicycle, wearing a gown.

The concept of a bicycle as a practical vehicle ceases to apply when childcare is factored in the discussion. Most respondents see cars as desirable or, at the very least, as necessary for parents. In Gouda, and up to a point in Shkodra, cyclist parents can manage child transport by carrying toddlers on a child seat, by using cargo bicycles, or by having older children bicycle alongside the adults. But in the case of distances longer than a few kilometers or in rainy or cold weather a car is seen as a requisite. For example, a man in Gouda, who lives only 1 km away from his workplace, drives to work because he has to drop off his one year old child to daycare on the way and is concerned that cold weather will harm the baby. Conversely, many empty nesters, who used cars much more during their childrearing years, have now reverted back to cycling for their commute or various errands.

Respondents in the two Balkan cities have a different conception of distance as it relates to commute mode choice. They are more likely to walk to work up to the point where walking becomes impractical due to distance. Then they choose cycling (or another mode depending on preference and/or availability). When the commute distance becomes too large for cycling, they switch to cars or public transport. In Gouda, on the other hand, commuters nearly always opt for cycling (even for very short trips) – up to the point where cycling becomes impractical due to a large distance. As mentioned, the maximum distance that respondents from Shkodra and Peja are willing to cycle to work is smaller than for respondents from Gouda.

Adverse weather conditions affect the perception of cycling as practical. Sensitivity to weather patterns is present in all three cities but the meaning of "bad weather" – bad enough to deter one from cycling to work – is rather different in the north and the south. In Shkodra, where winter temperatures are mild, rain is sufficient to make cyclists switch to other commute modes.

In Peja and Gouda, respondents are more concerned about cycling during snow which makes the roads slippery in the winter. Cycling under the rain over short distances is not seen as problematic, especially in Gouda where precipitation is a nearly daily occurrence and people accept it as part of life. Typical ways to cope with the weather elements include: keeping a raincoat in one's bag at all times; owning rain pants and rain boots; and keeping a set of dry clothes and shoes one's workplace.

Shkodra's and Peja's summers are rather warm; bright sun and humidity are other deterrents to cycling but not for all respondents. Some respondents note that cycling allows them to be mobile in hot weather, as trips are quicker and cycling in the heat creates a pleasant, cooling breeze (especially on an electric bicycle that requires no physical effort).

5.6 Financial savings

In Peja and Shkodra, where incomes are much lower than in Gouda, there is a noticeable concern with the cost of various transport options. When a car is mentioned as a (potential) commute mode, respondents tend to immediately think of its related expenses: gas, parking fees, repairs, and fines. The low cost of cycling (other than for the purchase of the vehicle itself) is a major attraction here. Cycling is seen as ideal for part-time workers who supposedly have lower overall earnings.[8]

In Gouda too, respondents tend to believe that part-time workers are more likely to commute by bicycle than full-time workers. But here the choice is dictated by a desire to be physically active; e.g. if the distance to work is large, respondents often reason that: "this is too much daily cycling but if it's only for two days a week, then it's good exercise." Given Gouda's higher incomes, cost is a clearly a secondary issue – in the face of stereotypes that cast the Dutch as parsimonious.

[8] While the cost of living is lower in the Balkans than in the Netherlands, cars and bicycles are imported goods and cost the same as they would elsewhere in Europe (there is no domestic production of transport vehicles in Albania nor Kosovo). Therefore, absolute income levels are more important than relative ones in this case.

5.7 Pride and tradition

In all three cases, respondents take considerable pride in the fact that they live in a "bicycle city" – in the case of Gouda, in a "bicycle country." For many, cycling brings to mind pleasant childhood memories. It is often the case that cycling is a family tradition: people whose parents are cyclists are more likely to choose to commute by bicycle as well. Also, several respondents who are cyclists point to the importance of teaching the value of cycling to children (their own, but also to children in general). In Gouda, cycling is also seen as a way for teenagers to become independent of the parents well before they are eligible to obtain a driver's license. Cyclists tend to project a "cycling mindset" onto others around them. They would like their friends, partners, and family members to cycle too. In Gouda, local pride borders on moral obligation - perhaps reinforced by the Dutch Calvinist tradition of hard work and self-reliance. In all three cities, the influence of the social environment specific to one's workplace or neighborhood appears to be weak (or impossible to disentangle from the general cycling context).

Notwithstanding the importance of tradition, responses suggest that, especially in Gouda, the local cycling culture and consequent pride have been shaped and sustained by public policies that encourage the use of bicycles while discouraging the use of cars. Policies which directly affect the commute choices of the respondents (as reported by the same) include: segregated cycling tracks, car parking limits and provision of secure bicycle parking at their workplace, provision of showers and extra bicycles for short work-related trips at the workplace, and reimbursements for the use of active transport. Conversely, if car parking is freely available near one's home and/or work, the likelihood of owning a car and/or driving to work increases. For example, a woman in Gouda says that neither she nor her partner commute by car; they have organized their lives so that they can fulfill most of their travel needs by bicycle. But they purchased a car during a vacation trip abroad and later decided to keep it as parking is free on the public streets near their home.

5.8 Status and image

The concept of cars as a status symbol in the two Balkan cities hurts the image of the bicycle. This is a salient issue in this context. In Gouda cars are generally seen as a necessary household appliance, much as a microwave oven or a TV set. By contrast, in Peja and especially Shkodra (where private car ownership was prohibited during socialism) cars are more often seen as a luxury item which only the wealthier strata can afford. Here, several respondents, including cyclists, fear that others might view them as "cheap" or "poor" for commuting by bicycle rather than by car, especially if the bicycle used is not new and shiny. Also, there is a concern that the young have started to abandon cycling, as they believe that driving is "trendier" while bicycles "old-fashioned." For many cyclists, it is important to point out that they "cycle by choice," that is, they do own a car but are "choosing" not to drive it.

Some older respondents too feel that they need to be seen riding or driving a car as this mode is a "better match" for their social position than a bicycle. This is true even when they are fully aware that car driving is detrimental in many ways, or when on a personal level they enjoy cycling. This dissonance is present especially in individuals with high-level jobs, who need to wear formal clothing at work. These types of social pressures not to cycle were somewhat present in Heinen and Handy's (2012) study as well, especially in the American setting.

Personal stories related by the respondents reveal that, in the Balkans, up to three decades ago it was the bicycle that constituted a status symbol, as not everyone could afford it. In Gouda, the opposite was true: respondents recount that in the 1950s and 1960s, with the country emerging from the war and recovering economically, cars had a higher status and were a preferred travel mode.

For some upwardly-mobile respondents in Shkodra and Peja, commuting by bicycle is a temporary solution. They hope to upgrade to a car whenever possible, e.g., as soon as they obtain a driver's license or when they have saved enough. While some respondents have purchased cars

only for occasional use on weekends and during holidays, many others (in all three cities) believe that "once you buy a car, you have to use it to commute otherwise there is no point in having it." This quote points to the fact that it is difficult to restrict car use if car ownership is unrestricted.

Unlike the two Balkan cities, in the Netherlands being environmentally-conscious is fashionable among people belonging in the educated middle class. Even drivers make an effort to highlight their concern for the environment, for example, by purchasing fancy electric cars. These types of decisions mostly serve as a statement.

On the positive side, in all three cities cyclists are seen as more youthful, athletic, and energetic types than the population at large, as mentioned. The bicycle has a generally positive image in people's minds, even among non-cyclists. A place visually dominated by cyclists is thought of as more "civilized." In Peja and Shkodra, the example of Northwestern European cycling cities such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen has played an important role in raising the status of bicycles. In all three cities non-cyclists are seen as more passive, but also as more status-conscious, than the rest of the population. A number of respondents are very frustrated by, and critical of, the car-orientation of their social circle, where people "get in the car just to go buy a loaf of bread."

Unfortunately in all three cities public transport has a negative image too, especially buses, which are perceived as an unreliable mode of last resort. In Shkodra and Peja buses are considered to be nearly as polluting as private cars. In Gouda, where high quality rail services are available, trains have a better image than buses but still not as good an image as bicycles. Train commutes provoke anxiety in some people as a schedule must be followed (as opposed to bicycle commutes which are entirely flexible). Others prefer train to car commutes (especially if a seat is guaranteed) because they can read, sleep, and admire the landscape during the trip and therefore are less engaged and stressed than during driving.

5.9 Female independence

In Gouda there are no noticeable gender biases in the responses. By contrast, in the two Balkan cities, the interviews reveal significant gender differences in the work commute. In Peja and especially in Shkodra, driving is more often seen as a male activity. If a car is available in the household, the male members of the family use it whereas female relatives resort to public transport, walking, or cycling. Commonly, women in Shkodra believe that "a man needs the car, while wives are subservient to their husbands, so they must find other ways to commute."[9]

A commonplace scenario in Shkodra and Peja is for the husband to drop off the wife at her workplace and the children at their school while driving himself to work. Because households in Shkodra and Peja rarely own more than a car, female respondents are more likely to see a bicycle as a personal possession, a vehicle which is theirs at all times – as opposed to a car which is shared with other household members. In this sense, a bicycle gives women a sense of independence and self-sufficiency - provided that they feel comfortable and safe riding it. They have control over the timing of their trips, whereas if they have to rely on being driven to work by others they are worried about punctuality.

In Shkodra - where cycling is more common than in Peja - female cyclists are more likely to feel admired by passersby. In Peja, some women, especially older ones, feel self-conscious if they commute by bicycle. The assumption here is that "it is safer for married women to travel by car so that way they are not exposed to the eyes of other men." But if a woman is divorced, that is, she "has no husband to tell her what to do," then "she is free to choose whichever travel mode she likes," including cycling.

However, there is some evidence that Peja might be moving in Shkodra's direction. A few respondents in Peja note that they admire Shkodra's street scene where people of all ages and

[9] This pattern of the husband being the predominant car user in the household might be also be typical for more developed contexts (see Best and Lanzendorf 2005).

genders cycle freely, and women "are not timid." In both Shkodra and Peja, women are seen as more "fragile," more likely to "run late for work," needier of the comfort of a car while travelling, and less likely to physically withstand long cycling commutes. Clearly gender barriers and stereotypes persist in these two settings.

Finally, in the case of Shkodra and Peja, childcare and household responsibilities are nearly always regarded as a primary responsibility of women. In terms of cycling, this restricts women as child transport or bulk shopping is not always easy or possible on a bicycle. In Gouda, on the other hand, both sexes tend to have a sense of equity in terms childcare or housecare expectations and use of available transport vehicles in the household. Also, many Dutch children are trained to cycle on their own early on (e.g., they cycle alongside the parents on their own bicycle), and are therefore less dependent on the parents' vehicle for transport. Cargo bicycles, consisting of a box, platform, or basket attached to a bicycle, which allow an adult to carry one or more children, are widely available in the Netherlands - but not in Albania nor Kosovo.

6. Conclusion

This study found that, in both a Northwestern and a Southeastern European context (represented by three case studies in the Netherlands, Kosovo, and Albania) beliefs related to cycling are very important in the decision to commute by bicycle. Beliefs were found to play a relatively more important role in the Southeast, where cycling infrastructure is weaker, whereas in the Northwest actual control of the environment (i.e., the presence of state-of-the-art cycling infrastructure) supersedes the role of beliefs but certainly does not eliminate it entirely. The main findings of the study are summarized below and compared to the existing theoretical body, set forth earlier. These conclusions are structured according to the adopted framework, which considered behavioral, normative, and control beliefs.

In terms of behavioral beliefs, this study mostly confirms the findings of prior studies. In both the Northwest and the Southeast cycling is positively affected by perceptions of the health and fitness benefits, the enjoyment, the convenience and practicality, the environmental benefits, the autonomy, the avoidance of traffic congestion, and the dislike for driving. Bicycle use is negatively affected by perceptions of impracticality (especially related to childcare and household duties) and lack of time. Safety-related beliefs are prevalent in the Southeast more than the Northwest. In the case of the Southeast, monetary savings through cycling constitute a much more important motivation than in the wealthier Northwestern region. There is a real risk that the local cycling culture will weaken as Balkan countries become wealthier. It is a well-known adage that transport problems are perverse: they tend to worsen as societies become wealthier while other sectors such as education and health care improve. This is a novel point, which has been ignored in prior studies – likely due to their setting in developed countries.

Normative beliefs are rather different in the two contexts. A sense of pride in the local cycling tradition of their city exists in all case study three cities, and cyclists are most often seen as "normal" rather than unique people performing an unusual behavior. In Shkodra and especially in Gouda cycling is an entirely mainstream activity. However, in the two Balkan cities social barriers such as the high status associated with car ownership and the perceived incompatibility between cycling and female gender and old age tarnish to some extent the image of cycling. Factors related to external appearance, such as having to wear formal clothing at work or not wanting to arrive at work while perspired or with an untidy appearance, are a stronger deterrent to cycling in the Southeast than in the Northwest. Narratives and images of high-level politicians or other important figures from the Northwest commuting to work on bicycles help create a positive image of cycling in the Southeast. These points have not been made in earlier studies – again, due to their setting in developed countries.

Although this study did not focus specifically on control beliefs (or actual control), given the semi-structured nature of the interviews several points emerged. The findings confirm prior studies in that the built environment and the perception of it have an influence on the decision to commute by bicycle. In particular, short distances and the presence of segregated cycling tracks lead to increases in cycle mode share. Perceiving that one's route is of high quality, visually appealing, lined with trees and other greenery, and away from traffic, noise, and especially air pollution positively influences the decision to cycle. Rain and low temperatures negatively affect cycling rates especially in the Southeast where people are more accustomed to warm and sunny weather. Car ownership (generally associated with higher incomes) has a negative effect on cycling rates but this effect is stronger in the Southeast. The presence of small children in the household leads to more driving and less cycling in both contexts. Men clearly cycle more than women in the Southeast, whereas in the Northwest there is more gender equality in this respect.

These findings have importance for policy because they suggest that, in less developed cities changes to the physical environment alone – although crucial - might be insufficient if travel modes are to shift toward active transport. To this end attitudes and perceptions need to be tackled as well. In view of this finding, the study strikes a cautionary note on the potential for transferability of the results across the Northwestern and Southeastern regions. In promoting cycling, policy makers need to strike a fine balance between the concept of the bicycle as an economical mode and as a "trendy" one. But changing long-held psychological beliefs might prove more challenging than providing cycling infrastructure and facilities. Also, this type of "soft" intervention has not traditionally fallen within the realm of transportation planning. The most promising way forward appears to be a combination of public infrastructure investments, cycling tracks in particular, and social marketing strategies to alter travel behavior.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to (a) Delft University of Technology and the University of Queensland for funding portions of this research (b) all the volunteers in Albania, Kosovo, and the Netherlands, who participated in this study (c) Eva Heinen and Susan Handy for sharing the questionnaire of their study and (d) the research assistants in Albania and Kosovo who helped with the interviews and transcriptions.

References

Aarts, H., Verplanken, B., and van Knippenberg, A. (1998). Predicting behavior from actions in the past: Repeated decision making or a matter of habit? *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 28(15):1355-1374.

Ajzen, I. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 50(2):179-211.

Aldred, R. and Jungnickel, K. (2014). Why culture matters for transport policy: The case of cycling in the UK. *Journal of Transport Geography* 34:78-87.

Baker, S. and Edwards, R. (2012). How many qualitative interviews is enough? Expert voices and early career reflections on sampling and cases in qualitative research. Report, ESRC National Centre for Research Methods, University of Southampton.

Bamberg, S., Ajzen, I., and Schmidt, P. (2003). Choice of travel mode in the theory of planned behavior: The roles of past behavior, habit, and reasoned action. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 25(3):175-187.

Bernhoft, IM and Carstensen, G. (2008). Preferences and behaviour of pedestrians and cyclists by age and gender. *Transportation Research F* 11:83-95.

Best, H. and Lanzendorf, M. (2005). Division of labour and gender differences in metropolitan car use: An empirical study in Cologne, Germany. *Journal of Transport Geography* 13:109-121.

Bonham, J. and Koth, B. (2010). Universities and the cycling culture. *Transportation Research D* 15(2):94-102.

Chataway, E., Kaplan, S., Nielsen, T., and Prato, C. (2014). Safety perceptions and reported behavior related to cycling in mixed traffic: A comparison between Brisbane and Copenhagen." *Transportation Research Part F* 23:32-43.

de Bruijn, GJ, Kremers, S., Singh, A., van den Putte, B., and van Mechelen, W. (2009). Adult "active transportation: Adding habit strength to the theory of planned behavior." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 36(3):189-194.

Goetzke, F. and Rave, T. (2011). Bicycle use in Germany: Explaining differences between municipalities with social network effects. *Urban Studies* 48(2):427-437.

Handy, S., Heinen, E., and Krizek, K. (2012). Cycling in small cities. In J. Pucher and R. Buehler (eds.) *City Cycling*, pp. 257-286. Cambridge, Ma: MIT Press.

Haustein, S. and Sick-Nielsen, T. (2016). European mobility cultures: A survey-based cluster analysis across 28 European countries. *Journal of Transport Geography* 54:173-180.

Heinen, E. and Handy, S. (2012). Similarities in attitudes and norms and the effect on bicycle commuting: Evidence from the bicycle cities Davis and Delft. *International Journal of Sustainable Transportation* 6(5):257-281.

Heinen, E., van Wee, B., and Maat, K. (2010). Commuting by bicycle: An overview of literature." *Transport Reviews* 30(1):59-96.

Hsieh, HF. and Shannon, S. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research* 15(9):1277-1288.

Hunecke, M., Blöbaum, A., Matthies, E., and Höger, R. (2001). Responsibility and environment: Ecological norm orientation and external factors in the domain of travel mode choice behavior." *Environment and Behavior* 33(6):830-852.

Klinger, T., Kenworthy, J., and Lanzendorf, M. (2013). Dimensions of urban mobility cultures: A comparison of German cities." *Journal of Transport Geography* 31:18-29.

Lanzendorf, M. and Busch-Geertsema, A. (2014). The cycling boom in large German cities: Empirical evidence for successful cycling campaigns. *Transport Policy* 36:26-33.

Liamputtong, P. (2013). *Qualitative Research Methods.* Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Lois, D., Moriano, JA, and Rondinella, G. (2015). Cycle commuting intention: A model based on theory of planned behaviour and social identity. *Transportation Research Part F* 32:101-113.

Marsden, G. and Stead, D. (2011). Policy transfer and learning in the field of transportation: A review of concepts and evidence. *Transport Policy* 18(3):492-500.

MobAlb. (2015). Urban mobility in Albania. Available at: www.mobalb.al Last accessed on 20 December 2014.

MobKos. (2015). Urban mobility in Kosovo. Available at: www.mobkos.eu Last accessed on 27 April 2015.

Pojani, D. and Stead, D. (2014). Going Dutch? The export of sustainable land-use and transport planning concepts from the Netherlands." *Urban Studies* doi: 10.1177/0042098014562326.

Pojani, D. (2011). Hammer and cycle: Cycling post-communism. *CyclingMobilities* 4:18-21.

Rose, G. and Marfurt, H. (2007). Travel behaviour change impacts of a major ride to work day event. *Transportation Research A* 41:351-364.

Scheiner, J. and Holz-Rau, C. (2007). Travel mode choice: Affected by objective or subjective determinants? *Transportation* 34:487-511.

Spotswood, F., Chatterton, T., Tapp, T., and Williams, D. (2015). Analysing cycling as a social practice: An empirical grounding for behaviour change. *Transportation Research Part F* 29:22-33.

Stephenson, J., Hopkins, D., and Doering, A. (2015). Conceptualizing transport transitions: Energy cultures as an organizing framework. *Energy and Environment* 4:354-364.

Tapp, A., and Nancarrow, C. (2014). Cycling in Great Britain: Beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Report, Bristol City Council and the University of the West of England.

Willis, DP, Manaugh, K., and El-Geneidy, A. (2015). Cycling under influence: Summarizing the influence of perceptions, attitudes, habits, and social environments on cycling for transportation. *International Journal of Sustainable Transportation* 9(8):565-579.