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The double-bind of competitive funding: Exploring the consequences of state-funded bidding processes in a locally managed cycling infrastructure project

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In an era of sustained budget cuts, England's local authorities are increasingly forced to 'apply' for infrastructure funding via competitive bidding processes. However, we currently know little about how this method of funding impacts implementation. Accordingly, we consider the consequences of competitive funding by exploring the constraints associated with implementing infrastructure under the state-funded Cycling Demonstration Towns programme. This was achieved via a case study in Chester, a city that was unable to deliver the ambitions of their bid. This study was informed by figurational sociology in order to focus on relational processes. Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with personnel involved in the planning and implementation of the project. The key findings were: (1) participants considered the bidding process to be akin to a 'beauty contest' where authorities were consciously making fantasy-laden promises in order to 'impress' the awards panel; (2) those involved in the bid did not consult key delivery parties, many of whom held car-centric predispositions, until funding was secured, and this led to complications in the delivery process; (3) during project implementation as the chains of interdependency of those involved widened, several unintended outcomes emerged which contributed to the two 'flagship' infrastructure proposals being halted; (4) this led to an intervention package that was heavily weighted towards promotional, or 'soft', interventions. Theoretical insight from this study suggests that competitive funding is likely to encourage authorities to present bids that are largely detached from the realities of implementing infrastructure, thus leading to difficulties once funding has been awarded.

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1. Introduction

Since the 1950s, cycling infrastructure has been positioned on the periphery of 'main transport business' in England (Aldred, 2012), where politicians have tended to prioritise motor traffic, regardless of the environmental, social, and economic costs (Pucher and Buehler, 2008a). This is likely to have contributed to cycling accounting for around just 2% of all trips (Department for Transport [DfT], 2018), compared to countries such as Denmark (18%) and the Netherlands (26%) where cycling infrastructure has been more extensively developed (Pucher and Buehler, 2008a). According to Pucher and Buehler (2008b: 11) "local governments in the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark have been planning, constructing, and funding bicycling facilities for many decades, at least since the 1970s but much earlier in some cities". In these instances, active travel [AT] policies and programmes are largely carried out at the local, or municipal, level; whilst the involvement of the state is mostly focused on standardising infrastructure design, safety training, and general promotion of AT (Pucher and Buehler, 2008b). This is said to be due to the assertion that municipalities are better placed "for making the specific plans that reflect the particular conditions and needs of the local context" (Pucher and Buehler, 2008b: 509). However, in England, AT is a more recent policy concern, with the first National Cycling Strategy (NCS) published in 1996. A series of, largely advisory, AT strategy documents have followed the NCS over the past two decades (see Bloyce and White, 2018), however, as this has remained a national 'issue', AT proponents have had to continually compete for policy space alongside other mass-scale transport concerns, such as aviation and highways (Hull, 2008). Nonetheless, a small number of state-funded projects, aimed at improving the standard and visibility of cycling infrastructure, have been introduced (Aldred, 2015; Bloyce and White, 2018). In keeping with the government's decentralisation agenda (Matthews, 2016), most of these AT projects are locally implemented and funded via a bidding process in which local authorities (LAs) compete for funding. Given the overall reduction in the total funding available at the local level in England, this model has become increasingly common, particularly for LA projects that are beyond the legislative requirements of core services (Loader, 2002).

According to John and Ward (2005), the government's aim for competitive funding has been to encourage greater value for money, as bidding parties are encouraged to consider their plans on a cost-benefit basis. However, critics of this approach suggest that it only helps national governments shift problems of "economic decline and social disadvantage to the local level, while retaining control over the broad direction of expenditure" (Taylor, Turok and Hastings, 2001: 46). Furthermore, some argue that bidding processes themselves can be unnecessarily costly and time-consuming for public bodies (Loader, 2002). Michel and Taylor (2012: 485) highlight how the "volatility and unpredictability" of competitive funding can limit an LA's ability to create long-term visions for infrastructure programmes, such as those relating to cycling, as progress becomes dependent on the allocation of funding. At the same time, there is little evidence to suggest that competitive bidding leads to better outcomes (John, Ward, and Dowding, 2004), especially with regard to costs (Flyvbjerg, 2009). Conversely, economists have utilised models, such as auction theory, to predict that the perceived requirement to put across the best business case to funders might lead to underestimates of completion timescales and overall costs (Flyvbjerg, 2009; Milne, Roy and Angeles, 2012). To the best of our knowledge, however, there has yet to be an empirically grounded study that has explicitly focused on the consequences of competitive bidding processes for AT projects, both in England and beyond.

This paper focusses on the implementation of Cycling England's Cycling Demonstration Towns (CDTs), the most recent example of major cycling infrastructure funding that can be explored retrospectively in England. This funding was disseminated via two separate rounds of bidding

processes, whereby 18 different LAs were awarded funding. Reports on cycle count data from these areas suggested that there was an average increase in cycling of around 26% by the conclusion of the respective projects[4] (Sloman, Cavill, Cope, Muller and Kennedy, 2009; Cope, Kennedy, Crawford, Cavill, Parkin, and Sloman, 2017a). However, there was much heterogeneity across the 'towns' (Goodman, Panter, Sharp and Ogilvie, 2013), with cycle count increases ranging from +6% to +62% (Cope, et al., 2017a). This might suggest that, whilst cycling in all of these areas was still "modest in relation to that observed in much of continental Europe" (Cope et al., 2017a: 6), some LAs were more 'successful' in implementing their proposals than others. In order to learn more about the difficulties of implementation, we focus on the CDT project in Chester, a city in the North West of England that generated over £4 million of funding[5]. When analysing data from Chester (including cycle counts, manual counts, and national physical activity surveys), Cope et al. (2017b: 5) found "mixed evidence of growth in levels of cycling over time from a moderate initial baseline". Furthermore, the Chester CDT project was unsuccessful in implementing some of their infrastructure proposals, with several plans being heavily amended, and their two largest infrastructure projects abandoned. This ultimately meant that just under £400,000 of funding was not claimed from Cycling England. This empirical case study therefore focuses on the constraints associated with the process of developing competitively funded infrastructure projects in a place where implementation was problematic. Studying this type of case has the potential to shed light on how local policy dynamics can give rise to unintended outcomes. Very few researchers have followed the policy process of transport infrastructure and Marsden and Reardon (2017) note an absence of local policy makers' perspectives within studies. Furthermore, there has yet to be a thorough examination of the experiences of local bidding parties throughout the implementation of competitively funded infrastructure proposals, with the majority of research focusing on policy making rather than what "happens on the ground" (Pollitt, 2016: 22). Indeed, Whitford (2007: 62) suggests that "most studies have paid less attention to the design and execution of mechanisms by focusing instead on why and when services are contracted out". Flyvbjerg, Glenting and Rønnest (2004: 47) therefore argue that more research is required on the role of bidders and "constructors" throughout the bidding and implementation stages.

Finally, previous research has explored factors that may affect the uptake of AT programmes. This field of research presents the opportunity to draw comparisons between countries with high levels of cycling (see Pucher and Buehler, 2008a), and those which have yet to generate significant increases in their cycling percentages, such as England and Australia (Hull, 2008; Cole, Burke, Leslie, Donald and Owen, 2010; Pooley at al., 2013; Aldred, Waston, Lovelace and Woodcock, 2015). The findings of these studies demonstrate that AT programmes in 'successful' countries have been most effective when they have been developed in a multifaceted manner, whereby safe and accessible cycling routes are supported by a range of information-sharing initiatives and measures which seek to restrict car use[6]. Indeed, it is often the case that infrastructure alone is not enough to encourage a greater number of people to take-up regular AT. For example, qualitative research in Lancaster – an English town that was also awarded CDT funding – suggests that, despite infrastructure improvements, residents had a range of complexities and contingencies to their travel habits, which meant that cycling was rarely considered as a suitable travel mode (Pooley et al., 2011). In countries where AT is a 'fringe' activity, policy makers have often stopped short of initiatives that are designed to reduce, or restrict, car use (Hull, 2008; Pooley et al., 2013). This has been attributed to politicians having little appetite to challenge their residents' strong attachments to motor vehicles, with some assuming that the introduction of such policies may

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[4] These figures were relative to a baseline count from the beginning of each project. Automatic cycle count data only informs about the number of bicycles to pass a certain mark. The distance of journeys and number of cyclists in a city must be ascertained through other means.

[5] Chester has a population of almost 120,000 (Cope, Kennedy, Crawford, Cavill, Parkin, and Sloman, 2017a) and is the major city of Cheshire County, which holds a population of around 1 million.

[6] Restrictive measures are those that make driving expensive and inconvenient, often through "a host of taxes and restrictions on car ownership, use, and parking" (Pucher and Buehler, 2008a: 495).

affect their public approval (Aldred et al., 2015)[7]. It could therefore be argued that there are a number of internal, and external, constraints that might impact LAs as they attempt to implement AT plans. As such, the overarching aim of this paper was to explore how competitive bidding, and its associated complexities, would develop under this context of political balances. By drawing on concepts of figurational sociology, this study was designed to shed more light on the micro politics of CDT bidding and implementation by tracing the influence of interdependencies across the figurations of people associated with Cycle Chester. In doing so, it elucidates the relationship between bidding and implementation stages of government-funded projects more generally and focuses on explaining unintended outcomes associated with the realities of implementing such projects. Figurational sociology was valuable in this regard as it guided our attention towards the dynamic processes of implementation and, in particular, the influences of wider human networks. The next section provides a brief overview of the national CDT project, before then providing more details on the project in the city of Chester.

1.1 Cycling Demonstration Towns

In March 2005, DfT established Cycling England, an independent body with the aim of increasing the number of "short urban trips by bike" (Cycling England, 2010: 3). In October 2005, Cycling England, supported financially by the DfT and the Department of Health, announced that they were to provide £7 million matched-funding to individual towns (the CDTs). The aim of the CDT programme was to "explore the relationship between investment in cycling, as part of a whole-town strategy, and the number of cyclists and frequency of cycling trips" (Chatterjee, Sherwin, Jain, Christensen and Marsh, 2012: 2). CDT funding was allocated via a bidding process for towns "with a population of approximately 100,000" (Sloman et al., 2009: 3). Of the 31 different LAs that applied, funding was made available to six towns[8]. This funding meant that the CDTs would have approximately £10 of matched-funding per head of the population for each year of the project. Such funding for cycling promotion was unprecedented in England, the typical English LA spend at the beginning of the programme being close to £1 per head (Sloman et al., 2009). Although the CDT funding was around 10 times that of the typical spend, it was still less than half the funding that was being spent in urban areas of the Netherlands, a nation long regarded as the 'leaders' in promoting AT (Pucher and Buehler, 2008a). With this new funding, the initiatives delivered in each CDT involved a mixture of 'soft' measures (e.g. cycle training and signage) and infrastructure measures (e.g. cycle lanes) that were tailored to each area to promote cycling as an alternative to other modes of transport (Goodman, et al., 2013).

The CDT project was extended into a second round of funding in 2008. This was popular, in that "half the highway authorities in England submitted bids" (Cycling England, 2010: 3), which was approximately 60 authorities, of which 12 were chosen by the awarding committee to receive a share of over £43 million, proportionate to the population of each area (Cycling England, 2010). One of those chosen was Chester, which, like the other 11 areas, was awarded three years of matched-funding (Cycling England, 2010)[9]. By the conclusion of these CDT projects, the average annual spend on cycling had been £14 per head (Cope et al., 2017a).

1.2 Cycle Chester

The first time that the public were able to view confirmed proposals for the Cycle Chester project was via a 'Masterplan' document, named Cycle Chester (Cycle Chester, 2009). This set out an ambition to double the number of cycle journeys in Chester by 2011, via improvements in infrastructure, training, and 'softer' interventions such as parking and signage (Steer Davies

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[7] Of course, these are the exact predispositions that restrictive measures are designed to change.

[8] Chester Council did not apply for funding under this first phase of the CDT programme.

[9] At the time of bidding for funding, Chester was governed by both Chester City District Council and Cheshire County Council. However, these bodies were replaced by Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) towards the middle of the project's timeline. This organisational change was due to the 2009 local government restructures, which led to a number of new unitary authorities across England (Local Government England, 2010).

Gleave, 2010). The proposed infrastructure projects included two 'flagship' projects which were separate bridges designed to help increase access for those wishing to cross the river that runs south of the city centre. One was to replace an already standing footbridge, and another would have been entirely new. In addition, there was a proposed 3km extension to an off-road cycling path, making use of a disused railway line, and a large permanent linking ramp which would connect this same off-road path with a retail park, university, and a canal route (the positioning of each of these projects can be viewed on the map provided in Appendix B). The delivery group was eventually able to generate £4.4 million. Of this total figure, £2.4 million was awarded by Cycling England as a result of becoming a CDT, and the Council then had to match this funding. This was supported by £1.25 million that had already been promised by the sustainable transport charity SUSTRANS. The rest of the matched-funding came directly from the Council's budgets.

By the end of the project, the total amount of funding claimed from the DfT was £2,055,634 (Cycling England, 2010), with just under £400,000 of the funding allocation not spent. In comparison with other second round CDTs, this meant that Chester had the lowest annual spend per head (£11) (Cope et al., 2017a). In terms of outcomes, the Council reported a number of, largely, soft measures such as signage (680 new signs to indicate suggested cycling routes), cycle parking (including 48 secure lockers), and marketing/training events (Cope et al., 2017b). As for infrastructure changes, the Council designated additional areas of marked cycle lanes, including 53km of off-road cycle lanes and paths (DfT, 2012). However, only two of the four proposed large-scale infrastructure projects, the extension of the disused railway line and the associated linking ramp, were completed within the allocated three years. The two flagship projects never came to fruition. These outcomes are discussed in further detail below. Before we do, however, we provide a brief overview of the theoretical approach of this study.

2.   Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned by the theoretical framework of figurational sociology. According to Velija and Malcolm (2019: 1) "significant bodies" of figurational work have developed in relation to policy, including policy implementation within the areas of sport (e.g. Bloyce and Lovett, 2012; Stuij and Stokvis, 2015) and health (e.g. Dopson and Waddington, 1996). These analyses have helped to develop a more reality congruent picture of "why policies implemented in organizational and community settings tend to have unplanned and unanticipated outcomes" (Thurston, 2019: 26). This suggests that figurational sociology has the potential to contribute to a more adequate understanding of implementation processes within transport groups.

Figurational sociology was developed by Norbert Elias. He used the concept figuration to refer to "a structure of mutually oriented and dependent people" (Elias, 1994: 482). This could be any group, organisation, or policy network. The central dimension of a figuration is that power is not a property possessed solely by particular individuals, but rather, there is always a balance of power within all human relationships (Goudsblom, 1977). Elias suggested, therefore, that human relationships are characterised by a balance of power and it is these balances that lead to interdependent bonds. However, such balances are never constant; rather, "fluctuating power balance is a characteristic of the flow of every figuration" (Elias, 1978: 31). Interdependencies create uneven and shifting power balances that give rise to some individuals holding greater control over the interweaving actions of a given figuration at different times. Despite this, Elias argued that there will always be outcomes that no one party or individual has intended, as power is never absolute. The more complex the figuration, the more difficult it will be for one individual to achieve their intended aims (Elias, 1978). This is because individuals are forced to engage in power balances with a greater range of people, who all have their own motives, such that the intentions of any one individual become increasingly opaque. This leads to an increased likelihood of outcomes that were not foreseen or intended. One's ability to steer a figuration is, therefore, not "simply a question of either 'control' or 'no control'. It is a question of degrees of influence, in turn

related to power balances, and also a question pertaining to the ratio of intended relative to unintended consequences" (Dunning and Hughes, 2013: 47).

Elias's work on unplanned processes can be useful in understanding the development of competitively funded transport infrastructure. Flyvbjerg (2008: 4) explains that, despite claims of improved forecasting methods and more adequate data, that predicting costs and demand for transport infrastructure projects has remained "remarkably inaccurate for decades". These errors can either be attributed to "optimism bias", whereby predictions are drawn-up in a more positive light than experience would suggest, or "strategic misrepresentation", where benefits are deliberately, and strategically, overestimated in order to increase the chance of being awarded funding (Flyvbjerg, 2008: 3). Figurational sociologists argue that these kind of actions are always likely to lead to a greater number of unintended outcomes, because, as Elias suggested, "the more fantasy-laden the basis for… interventions, the more likely… interventions are to have a higher degree of unintended relative to intended consequence" (Dunning and Hughes, 2013: 47). Of course, such plans are likely to be further compounded by the interweaving power balances that are generated within figurations as part of implementation processes.

Of final relevance to the analysis is the way in which Elias explained how a person's position with a given network can strongly influence their tastes, interests, and dispositions. At the centre of this is the term habitus, used to describe an individual's second nature, which is ultimately a product of their socialisation within their figurations (Elias, 1978). Elias (1991) proposed that it is these fundamental dispositions that influence us in our interactions with others. We can assume, therefore, that policy makers and implementation groups constantly find themselves in power negotiations with many others within their figurations. Indeed, research tells us that LA actors are increasingly working with partners from beyond their professional organisation to deliver their transport goals (Stead and Meijers, 2009). These increasingly complex transport policy figurations have widening interdependency chains comprising those with varied predispositions towards AT. The extent to which those most closely involved in AT are able to manage these differing goals of the figurations in which they are a part is likely to influence the outcomes of the intended project. This is especially important in places such as England, where AT is not a core service for LAs, and there are currently no legal stipulations for LAs to improve AT provisions (Bloyce and White, 2018).

The above concepts have been used as sensitising concepts to inform the research process, from asking questions, to analysis and explanation, in order to reveal the relational processes associated with Cycle Chester. Sensitising concepts are useful as they give the user "a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances… they suggest directions along which to look" (Blumer, 1954: 7). The ways in which these concepts were positioned in the research process are explored in the following section.

3. Methods

Adopting a case study approach to the study of competitive funding within the Chester CDT offered a way of studying social processes and thus relations and interdependencies across the cycling project figuration. In turn, this offered the opportunity of studying how actors' actions are enabled and constrained by the networks of which they are a part (Dopson, 2003). A case study approach is thus theoretically consistent with a figurational perspective as it provides a way of studying social relations: that is to say, actors are viewed relationally rather than as "atomised individuals" (Mitchell, 1983: 192).

In order to explore the processes at play in the implementation of Chester's CDT programme, semi-structured interviews were adopted. These interviews were conducted between three and four years after the conclusion of Cycle Chester so participants could consider the project retrospectively. The interview topics were: cycling experience and involvement; experiences of

Cycle Chester; views on the planning and implementation of Cycle Chester; relationships in the Cycle Chester delivery processes. These topics were chosen as they related to the overarching research question, namely, how the relational processes of Cycle Chester implementation were experienced and understood by key stakeholders. The purposive sample consisted of 15 individuals who were directly involved in delivering the project and other actively interested parties, such as charities and campaigners (see Table 1). Initial contact was made with officers who had recently been in charge of AT for the LA. From this process, various publications related to the project were accessed. The most important document in this regard was the Cycle Chester Masterplan (Cycle Chester, 2009). This document listed 'stakeholders' who met every two months as a 'steering group' to discuss how to promote and improve cycling in Chester (Cycle Chester, 2009). As many of these stakeholders were working in public sector roles, it was possible to obtain the contact details of 15 out of the 18 members. In total, seven of the stakeholder group agreed to take part.

The initial sample was supplemented by the two permanent project managers, who were acknowledged in project publications (Cycle Chester, 2009), and two members of national cycling organisations, whose support was consistently acknowledged in documents such as project newsletters. Furthermore, a snowball sampling technique was adopted (Bryman, 2015), whereby each of the initial group of contacts was asked whether they thought there were others who might be relevant to include as key informants. This process identified four further participants. This approach was informed by Elias's emphasis on the need to follow how "individuals' actions are embedded with other members in the figuration" (Baur & Ernst, 2011: 124). To that end, snowball sampling assisted in tracing the network of relations, as there were more opportunities to trace the span of participants' figurations.

Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically; the data were managed in MAXQDA11. The particular form of analysis adopted was reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) RTA "minimally organises and describes your data in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic". It is the latter that leads to the development of what Braun and Clarke (2019: 58) label fully realised themes, which are described as "patterns of shared meaning underpinned by a central organising concept". In this case, the central organising concept of each theme has been developed in relation to the figurational sociology concepts outlined above through an iterative process with the empirical data. In this way we did not seek to 'confirm' theory, but rather used the concepts to sensitise us to processes that could further understanding of our data in a way that would shed light on the research question. In other words, the themes that were developed provided a 'story' of the meanings behind the data.

Our RTA began with a process of coding (an illustrative table can be found in Appendix A). The codes were developed to capture the different ideas to emerge across the data. Once a list of different codes was developed, consideration was given to how these could be combined into overarching themes that could reveal the dynamics of the Cycle Chester figurations and help explain the unintended processes and outcomes. These 'candidate themes' were reviewed and refined to check that sufficient relevant data to support them were evident and that they appropriately represented the data set as a whole (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As part of this process, interview data was analysed and interpreted alongside the official project report from Cycle Chester, meeting minutes, and SUSTRANS evaluations. In other words, the analysis adopted a two-way iterative process between empirical data and literature (Elias, 1956). Four key themes were identified and are explored in the following section.

Table 1.   **Research participants**

Pseudonym	Steering Group Members	Sector	Sex
Council – Planning Officer	Yes	Public	Male
Independent Member	Yes	Private	Male
Community Trust Representative	Yes	Third	Male
University Representative	Yes	Public	Female
Police Representative	Yes	Public	Male
Cycling Campaigner A	Yes	Third	Male
Cycling Campaigner B	Yes	Third	Male
Project Manager A	No	Public	Male
Project Manager B	No	Public	Female
Council –Vulnerable Road Users Officer	No	Public	Male
CDT Programme Manager	No	Public	Female
Council – Regeneration Officer	No	Public	Male
Cycling Campaigner C	No	Third	Male
Cycling Club – Chair	No	Third	Male
Cycling Development Officer	No	Third	Male

4. Findings

4.1 Fantasy-laden bidding: Entering Cycling England's 'Beauty Contest'

When the opportunity to bid for CDT funding was opened, there was a perception amongst local cycling lobbyists that the Council was not willing or interested in bidding: "Basically the Council didn't really want to put a bid in, so we ended up trying to persuade the politicians" (Cycling Campaigner A). However, closer to the bid deadline SUSTRANS secured £1.25 million of National Lottery money for the area. This coincided with the appointment of a newly elected Council Chief Executive who encouraged Council officers to put a CDT bid together, using this grant as part of their proposed matched-funding:

> We weren't going to do it because we didn't have the support, we did mention it, but no-one backed it up to support it. Then with a week before the [bid deadline] day the new Exec said 'I want this, get a bid together' (Project Manager A).

When asked about the logistics of putting this bid together, participants who contributed to the document commented on how rushed the process was:

> Basically, we had six days to put the bid together. Someone in our team said 'what ideas have you got?'. We said 'oh, you could build an access here and there' (Council – Vulnerable Road Users Officer [VRU]).

> It was sort of like 'are we doing this? Let's get something together'. It was panic (Project Manager A).

The 'panic' referred to by Project Manager A led to hastily arranged discussions with local cycling lobbyists. However, without the ability to consult widely, both within the Council and beyond, the bid document was submitted with a lack of certainty about whether or not it was even possible to execute the proposals: "We won! But we had no idea whether these ideas were feasible" (Council – VRU). Indeed, it was not until after the CDT funding was secured that a consultant was hired to further develop the infrastructure plans: "Obviously the bid goes in with the best-case

scenario, with a sort of level of detail… When you say we are actually doing it now, you then start to find more detail" (Council – Regeneration Officer). It would therefore seem that those putting the bid together were conscious that they needed to develop a bid that would impress the funding committee and that they would concern themselves with the realities of delivering the project only if they successfully won the bid.

Those participants working for the Council at the time of the bid were aware that several of the proposed ideas in the plan, particularly the infrastructure improvements, were heavily fantasy-laden. For example, the first project manager of Cycle Chester stated that: "The two new bridges would have been the first bridges [built in Chester] since 1900!" (Project Manager A). However, it was felt that the proposals needed to be ambitious whilst also being aligned with the interests of those awarding the funding. As one of the project managers said: "We would basically go through the brief and try to tick all the boxes and say how fantastic we were and the exciting things we could do with the money from the project" (Project Manager A). This approach drew some criticism from local cycling lobbyists, however, as it was seen as somewhat superficial. One lobbyist, who was involved in designing the Cycle Chester bid, said: "The DfT didn't really know what they wanted… So again we had this beauty contest for the money and the DfT said 'we like that one, we don't like that one'" (Cycling Campaigner A). In describing this type of funding allocation process as a 'beauty contest', he implied that each bidding authority was obliged to present what were perceived to be more attractive bids than their competitors regardless of the veracity of what was being proposed. An additional consequence was that it encouraged "authorities to underestimate costs" (Cycling Development Officer). It was felt that the competitive process encouraged bidding parties to construct stand out bids whilst also appearing to be appropriately prudent, showing value for money. It was necessary, therefore, to 'look' the best, rather than necessarily having any detailed accounting, planning and preparation. Indeed, there was a perception that 'sensible', or more reality-congruent, bids would have less chance of winning the 'beauty contest'.

Chester Council employed someone whose role was simply to win funding bids across the council. It was this officer who was chosen to present the Cycle Chester bid to the DfT, despite having minimal prior experience of working with sustainable transport. That Chester then won the funding was said to be attributable to the experience and expertise of the officer who delivered the bid: "She knew what was required for the bidding process" (Project Manager A). Once the funding was confirmed, the project was then passed over to those with more knowledge of the practicalities of policy implementation. The overall Cycle Chester project was therefore constructed in silos, as the team who wrote the bid was almost entirely different from the eventual delivery team. As the proposed plans were then considered by transport staff, it became clear that there were going to be difficulties in delivering some of the larger infrastructure projects. In particular, feasibility studies for an entirely new bridge suggested that it would have "cost twice as much as the entire [Cycle Chester] budget" (Project Manager B). It was at this stage that plans for this bridge, one of the two flagship proposals, was removed from the project altogether. Thus, demonstrating how more reality-congruent plans were not developed until after the project funding was awarded. It is to an analysis of the enabling and constraining processes that developed as the Council's delivery team began to share their plans with a growing number of people that we now turn.

 4.2 *Accounting for individual and organisational habitus: Interdependencies in the Cycle Chester bid*
In light of the sudden decision to bid, the officers involved did not even have time to consult with the transport personnel who would be central to delivering the project: "The people who were going to deliver it weren't involved in the consultations. We didn't get that buy-in" (Council – VRU). Difficulties were then experienced at the implementation stage, as the team charged with physical delivery were not considered receptive to designing infrastructure for anything other than motor traffic: "The engineers just wanted to build for cars because that is what we were always told to do" (Council – VRU). These predispositions not only contributed to a bias towards motorised transport, but also a negative attitude towards AT interventions. For example,

participants suggested that the engineer team were automatically dismissive of particular elements of the cycling plans: "It just fell on deaf ears when we wanted to promote the more controversial stuff" (Project Manager A). The 'controversial stuff' was, in particular, the proposed infrastructure plans and road amendments that prioritised bicycles over cars. These plans were met with resistance because those whose job it was to design and modify infrastructure were already working from a position that favoured motor traffic. This was an issue which was further exacerbated by the lack of consultation from the bidding team, as the absence of engineer 'expertise' in the bid document meant that these officers found it easier to dismiss proposed plans on the basis of feasibility.

Council officers also suggested that delivery negotiations were not restricted to the LA's road engineers. Indeed, many discussed how there was a need to repeat these processes with several departments across the Council: "Working on projects within the Council is quite an iterative process, you have to engage with people at different times to make sure they know about the project and work out ways to get them on board if there are difficulties" (Council – Regeneration Officer). Different negotiations needed to take place, in turn, with different Council departments. That large AT infrastructure had never been delivered in Chester before was said to have heightened the need for these negotiations, as many were considering AT proposals for the first time:

> They got this money and threw together people who were highways maintenance, infrastructure, project managers, and they were asked to do these extra duties. None of these had any cycling experience or interest. They were expected to deliver something they didn't know a great deal about (Cycling Development Officer).

However, this led to complications as, like the LA's engineers, each individual now being included in the discussions had their own priorities and experiences, which very often conflicted with the AT work they were being encouraged to promote. This meant that the Cycle Chester project was never a priority for many of the staff only now being asked to get involved: "We had people saying 'I have loads of schemes to work on, that one is last on my list, am I bothered?' If it's not on their main list of schemes, then they are not going to do it for you" (Council – VRU). These individuals were heavily guided by pre-established professional concerns, which meant that the delivery timelines for Cycle Chester became harder to manage and predict, thus decreasing the ability of any one project manager to maintain effective oversight of the project. It was suggested that the Cycle Chester project managers would have been able to facilitate greater 'buy-in' from those responsible for implementation had the Council's executives been more overtly supportive of the project: "You need to have your man at the top say we are not interested in cars, we need to get pedestrians and cyclists through the junction first. Until they are told to do that they will always do cars first" (Council – VRU). It seems once funding had been secured the Council's leadership were less interested in really pushing the main elements of the project, which then gave officers greater opportunity to be guided by their own priorities. However, this is not to say that power and control over this project lay firmly in the hands of council leaders. Whilst their involvement and support may have had degrees of power and influence on priorities within council teams, this was not the only limiting factor in implementation. Indeed, participants described how those working on Cycle Chester experienced a number of constraining processes as some of the more advanced intentions were shared beyond the council. It is to this discussion that we will now turn.

4.3 Cycle Chester's wider interdependency chains
The majority of work from the first 18 months of the project consisted of consulting with the city's residents: "We spent the first year or so asking people what they wanted" (Council – Planning Officer). As with other consultations related to the bid, this had to be done retrospectively as no time was afforded for this prior to the bid deadline, subsequently delaying the project's progress. This process was hindered by the merging of the two councils into a unitary authority, which gave

rise to staffing alterations such that the Cycle Chester project manager role was changed twice within three months. This concerned participants from outside of the council, many of whom had expected to see more tangible progress with infrastructure by this stage. This was something that was considered especially problematic given that the funding for the project was limited to three years.

Given there was also no time devoted to consulting with the general public before the bid was submitted, it is unsurprising that some of the most notable delays came from the Council trying to respond to the concerns of residents upon discovering the proposed cycling infrastructure changes:

> I was a little naive and thought, you know, I always think of cyclists as very happy, who has got issues with cyclists? They are healthy and doing their bit for the environment, [laughs] no. It was quite a smack in the face to suddenly go 'we don't want cyclists, we don't want them in the city centre, we don't want them on the pavements, we don't want them on the roads' (Project Manager B).

This quotation referred to the reactions of residents when plans for Cycle Chester were presented at public forums. Whilst this may not have reflected Chester residents as a whole, it was clear that many of the residents who vocalised their opinions on Cycle Chester were doing so in order to demonstrate distaste towards the development of AT infrastructure. As suggested by Project Manager B, that this group of residents felt so strongly about AT infrastructure came as a surprise to a number of Council officers. However, upon reflection, participants suggested that many of the objections were related to concerns about road congestion and fears that the introduction of AT provisions might worsen such issues: "Changing space for cars in a city that is already deemed as congested by residents, was there a lot of support to do that? Definitely not!" (Council – Regeneration Officer). Despite the fact that none of Cycle Chester's major infrastructure proposals would have altered road space, the resistance from residents suggested that they were not willing to support improvements for 'additional' travel modes whilst they were already experiencing issues with their preferred travel mode, the car. For some, these habitual preferences were so strong that they wanted to actively lobby against AT work.

The most prominent example of constraining processes to arise from wider interdependency chains was when various members of a sports club argued against one of the four major infrastructure plans of Cycle Chester, the replacement of an already established foot-bridge: "They gave all sorts of reasons why they didn't want it outside the entrance to their club and they put the blockers on it" (Cycling Campaigner B). This club was able to exert considerable power over proceedings as the proposed plan meant that the Council would require a very small section of land owned by the club: "Even though it [the land required] was already part of a banking for a railway bridge. They gave all sorts of reasons why they didn't want it" (Cycling Campaigner B). These objections were heard by members of the Council, and this translated into a lack of appetite to push through the plans for the bridge: "We ran into so much trouble that we couldn't go back and change it, it was too late in the day, we just had to scrap the idea" (Council – VRU).

Knowing that they did not have the support of residents and land owners, it was assumed by Council officers that any negotiations or legal processes would have pushed implementation beyond the DfT's deadline for the entire project. The proposed plans for a replacement bridge were therefore 'scrapped'. However, as the decision to halt these plans was not taken until the latter stages of the project's timescale, it was not possible to explore alternative solutions. Many participants suggested that this was the primary reason for the overall underspend for the project, as the Cycle Chester team did not have the time to make use of their remaining capital funding, meaning that around £400,000 of available money was not claimed from the DfT. This leads us to a discussion on the eventual outcomes of Cycle Chester and how these outcomes were explained by the different groups within the sample.

4.4 Cycle Chester's 'unintended' outcomes: The tendency towards 'soft' interventions

When discussing the eventual outcomes of Cycle Chester, participants suggested that many of the interventions were heavily weighted towards promotional activities: "Slightly gimmicky bikes around roundabouts with flowers on them, new signage, new branding, new fingerposts" (Community Trust Representative). However, in the absence of tangible infrastructure, there were concerns about the longevity of these interventions: "Even a lot of the branding has been wasted, because if I think of the average person, what will all this mean to them now, 3 years on?" (Community Trust Representative). Furthermore, there was a view among cycling lobbyists that the failure to deliver two of the four major infrastructure projects meant that the Council had missed an opportunity to increase the profile of AT in Chester:

> I think most people's view [from the steering group] was missed opportunities, those two bridges could have been really iconic crossings that would have created a high-profile route for people (Cycling Campaigner C).

Of course, the detailed costings for one of these two bridges suggested that it would have been wildly over budget. It therefore never had the chance of being delivered. What this does demonstrate, however, is that participants' expectations for the project were very much attached to significant infrastructural change. Without these 'iconic' additions, there were fears about the impact that Cycle Chester might have had.

When it came to the infrastructure that *did* get delivered, local cycling lobbyists were often disappointed by what they perceived to be a lack of ambition. However, when elaborating further on some of the constraints that councils face when delivering projects, Council officers argued that even the most unimposing physical interventions can take a large amount of resource and time to implement:

> What should be a straightforward "let's go and put a line down a road and make a cycle path" takes 12 months because you have to consult and then you have to get state agreement to do certain things (Project Manager B).

> When you are trying to implement a complicated project, things can slip because in the legal processes things come out of the woodwork that you hadn't really thought of. The net result of that means that the whole timeframe is skewed (Project Manager A).

The officers therefore suggested that any failures to meet the delivery standards agreed by the steering group were not due to a lack of cycling expertise, but instead, constraints such as legalities, public opinion and documentation, which often meant that proposals were 'scaled back': "We would get asked 'We have a masterplan in place, why can't you deliver it?'. Well because it is against the law. It was a masterplan which was a bit of a wish-list" (Project Manager B). Clearly some of the Council officers had, through experience, a more realistic understanding of implementation processes, and had, therefore, already assumed that parts of the masterplan would not come to fruition. This more 'realistic' understanding of events may have also been influenced by knowledge of the fantasy-laden approach to the bid document, which was not made apparent to interested lobbyists. It was also compounded by the very late decision to even bid for funding.

The conflicting aspirations of Chester's residents became one of the most significant constraints encountered by the Council's delivery team: "Sometimes things just don't get done because someone is not happy. So, you have the conundrum really, are you better off keeping 95% people happy and 5% not or just not do anything, that is just the conundrum of public life" (Council – Regeneration Officer). This 'conundrum of public life' was explored further, with the same officer suggesting that proposals can become diluted when authorities attempt to deliver outcomes that suit all parties: "You have to find a happy medium that is often vanilla flavoured, it's alright,

nobody loves it, nobody hates it" (Council – Regeneration Officer). The 'vanilla flavoured' outcomes described here referred to the Council's retreat towards 'soft' interventions when discovering they did not have public support for significant infrastructural changes. However, Chester's Regeneration Officer suggested that the alterations, or down scaling, made in order to please certain residents actually meant that no one party was completely satisfied with many of the outcomes. It was therefore argued that LAs have to be prepared to disappoint people if they wish to facilitate real change: "There are competing priorities, to keep everybody happy all of the time is a very challenging task, so you either accept that there is going to be change and people might be upset by that, or you don't do anything. That is politics for you" (Project Manager A). However, participants questioned the extent to which authorities in Chester were prepared to 'upset' their residents and begin to prioritise AT infrastructure: "To increase cycling you really have to decrease other areas, so basically cars. Was there really that mandate? Possibly not" (Council – Regeneration Officer). This suggests that, without the mandate to tackle the more 'car-centric' views of residents, the Cycle Chester delivery team were unable to sufficiently control the implementation of their plans, an issue compounded by the tendency towards a more fantasy-laden approach from the off.

5. Discussion

AT did not become a visible policy concern in Chester until someone more supportive was occupying a central position in the figuration. This is perhaps indicative of how AT policy is still dependent on the cycling 'champions' who operate at a political level (Aldred, Waston, Lovelace, and Woodcock, 2019). Indeed, AT is not a core service for England's LAs, allowing local politicians to decide their favoured approach. Furthermore, the continued use of competitive funding means that money is available to those who demonstrate an active interest in improving AT infrastructure, or at the very least, are prepared to bid for pots of money made available for it. It is, therefore, likely that AT growth will continue to be haphazard and disjointed across England's authorities. Furthermore, whilst the new council leader in Chester was supportive of the bid for CDT funding, it was also assumed that it was still worth attempting to submit a bid with just six days remaining. However, it could be argued that the Chief Executive perhaps sensed the expediency of launching a programme when new to their role at the LA, despite not being aware of (1) what the bidding team would be able to develop; and (2) how any plans put together might affect local residents. According to Weiss (1993: 99) this is a theme that is often found across policy planning and implementation, as politicians emphasise "take-offs, not… landings". This is said to be due to the fact that "it is often more important to a politically astute official to launch a program with great fanfare to show how much he [sic] is doing, than to worry about how effectively the program serves people's needs" (Weiss, 1993: 99).

Prioritising take-offs over landings was a theme that continued throughout the Cycle Chester project, as those with bidding experience, considered to be best placed to make a great fanfare to the funding committee, took charge of the project at the early stages of planning, whilst the delivery team, who were able to develop more reality congruent plans, were not consulted until after funding was secured. These decisions follow the same pattern as other bidding processes, such as the right to host the Olympic Games, where it has been suggested that "the winning of the competition is a distinct exercise from the actual budgeting for the event" (Greater London Authority, 2007: 8). We argue that a similar process was adopted for the Cycle Chester bid, where not only budgeting, but all of the stated targets and infrastructure proposals, were purposefully detached from the realities of implementation. However, the bidding team presented these ideas to the funding organisation as they felt that attractive plans were what was needed to successfully win the 'beauty contest'. Indeed, Flyvbjerg (2009: 15) suggests that competitive funding means that it is not necessarily the best projects that get funded, "but the projects that look best on paper". We would therefore argue that there is much for bidding parties to gain from being overly ambitious,

and few incentives to do otherwise, especially when "negotiations are authorised and expected after bids have been received" (Whitford, 2007: 68). However, this means that the 'winning bids' tend to be those which hold the least reality congruence. Issues are then encountered during implementation, especially as these projects produce fewer benefits than first stated for greater costs (Flyvbjerg, 2014). Figurational sociologists would suggest that this is to be expected under the constraints of a bidding process which incentivises ambition and overestimations, as Elias argued that fantasy-laden thinking is always likely to generate a greater ratio of unintended outcomes (Dunning and Hughes, 2013). Even after the bid was won, there was still a felt need to at least pursue some of the ambitious aims, most notably the bridge replacement. This meant that the Council allocated considerable resources in pursuit of infrastructure that they might have known to be problematic had they developed a more reality congruent picture of residents' feelings. That the decision to stop was made so late then actually reduced the LA's ability to deliver some of their 'softer' proposals, as there was little time to spend the remaining funding elsewhere. We argue, therefore, that organisations attempting to gain competitive funding are placed in something of a double-bind process (Elias, 1956), that is, on the one hand, there is a felt need to make the bid highly ambitious so as to stand out above other bids, but this wish-list, or 'beauty contest', approach actually undermines the ability to implement more realistic ideas once the bid is won.

It is clear the delivery group's ability to implement even their more realistic plans became increasingly constrained as the interdependencies associated with implementation became more complex. This process first emerged when 'handing over' the implementation of the project to multiple Council departments, many of which contained staff who did not feel prepared to support AT interventions. Similarly, Cole et al. (2010) found from their sample of transport officers in Australia that road engineers were largely indifferent towards AT interventions, as they did not consider walking and cycling to be important travel modes. We would suggest that such professional predispositions, or habituses, are not only influenced by previous training and typical ways of working, but also the way in which individuals in low cycling countries are socialised towards prioritising cars. This form of silo-working, and rejection of new plans, exemplifies how the figurational concept of human interdependency does not suggest that humans 'work in harmony', in a functionalist sense. Rather, it implies theoretically that interdependent bonds can influence project implementation in a number of ways, including what actors *do not* provide, as much as what they do. This became particularly important in the project, as the officers who favoured dominant traffic modes tended to have more relative power over the path of implementation and were rarely encouraged to prioritise AT provisions by their seniors. Similarly, Aldred et al. (2019), who, after surveying over 400 LA stakeholders, found that respondents felt there was little pressure on LAs to challenge dominant thinking around travel modes. In the case of Cycle Chester, this was, in part, due to the fact that AT was still a 'fringe' policy area within this figuration, where many were trying to negotiate such interventions for the first time. Some participants therefore suggested that a number of these issues would have been ameliorated had delivery staff been consulted earlier in the process. However, our findings suggest that it is highly unlikely that amendments based on the realities of implementation would have been sought, regardless of the timeframe available, as this might have undermined the bidding team's ability to win the required 'beauty contest'.

Finally, we suggest that a more accurate term for the processes associated with turning a bid document into reality would be implementation, and not delivery. This is because the use of the word delivery assumes that there will be a definite endpoint and that this endpoint is always planned and expected. However, this does not take into account the human elements of these processes and the unintended outcomes that, according to Elias (1978), will always be a feature of human figurations. For example, that a small group of dissatisfied residents were able to develop enough relative power that the replacement bridge was halted altogether demonstrates how LAs are significantly influenced by public opinion. This is not uncommon, as previous studies from

England have shown that local politicians have a tendency to favour the anecdotal evidence of residents over more pragmatic forms of decision-making (Gatersleben and Uzell, 2003; Kelly, Atkins, Littleford, Leng and Michie, 2016). In the case of Cycle Chester this meant that the project's proposals often shifted towards 'vanilla outcomes' that did not intrude on the priorities of residents. It could, therefore, be suggested that there remains a need to raise the level of awareness of, and acceptance for, AT amongst communities before 'champions' can hope to gain general support for their proposals (Pojani, Bakija, Shkreli, Corcoran and Mateo-Babino, 2017). However, when considering the car-centric predispositions of most residents in England (Pucher & Buehler, 2008a), some of whom will dispute the rights of cyclists on roads, it is likely that there are always going to be cases where people and organisations are willing to lobby against the development of AT infrastructure. Participants therefore suggested that authorities need to be more prepared to 'upset' people – at least in the short term – in promoting AT. Elias's work is valuable in this regard, as he suggested that policies only have a chance of being successful if they consider the workings, values and desires (or habitus) of their target group (Stuij and Stokvis, 2015). We would therefore argue that a policy which focuses on a higher degree of 'hard' interventions is one which better recognises the limited mandate for an increase in AT amongst residents. Indeed, it is to this type of approach that Pucher and Buehler (2008b) attribute the 'success' seen in the Netherlands and Denmark, whereby the construction of infrastructure has been reinforced by polices that make car-use less attractive. However, as the British government continue to locate AT policy "outside the core" of state business (Aldred, 2012: 100), it is unlikely that such policies will be mandatory for England's authorities in the near future[10].

6. Conclusion

This paper sought to explore the outcomes, both intended and unintended, of a competitively funded AT project in England. Our key findings were that the bidding process constrained those applying for funding to, often intentionally, over-promise on their plans for the project, in order to impress the bidding committee. This impacted on the process of implementation, such that there were many setbacks and amendments as project officers sought to develop a more 'realistic' AT infrastructure package, whilst also negotiating the views of others within their figurations. Consequently, implementation often drifted towards less ambitious approaches.

Our theoretical contribution can be generalised beyond the specific Chester CDT case study as it can be used to explain how competitive bidding processes can give rise to unintended consequences in other cycling projects as well as beyond this field. In other words, generalisation is through theoretical insight. To that end, the above discussion has demonstrated how those closer to the centre of power dynamics within figurations are able to establish a degree of control on the development of projects, yet as the chains of interdependency continue to lengthen, a greater number of people are able to assert their priorities on project outcomes. For example, in this case, there was a notable impact from council leaders, by firstly making the late decision to bid, but then latterly, by not supporting the development of the project to the extent that some within the council had hoped. However, as we have explained, the path of this project was influenced by a number of people, within, and beyond, the Council, as the lack of reality-congruence in planning, followed by disputes at the implementation stage, gave rise to a number of delays and alterations, with several proposals being halted altogether.

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[10] At the time of writing, we in are in the midst of the first global 'peak' of the Covid-19 pandemic. As in many other countries, this pandemic has meant that the British government has been forced to consider how regular practices can be adapted whilst adhering to physical-distancing measures. In England, this has led to the introduction of new legislation that supports LAs to implement temporary AT infrastructure, as a way of providing an alternative to public transport. Importantly, these guidelines were also supported by funding, totalling £225 million in the first instance (DfT, 2020). It will therefore be vital to trace how these processes affect attitudes towards AT in England.

When analysing the planning and bidding for Cycle Chester, we have seen several features that directly relate to other competitive funding streams, such as those for highways projects, and major events such as the Olympic Games. Whilst the Cycle Chester bid was created in a much shorter timeframe than we can justifiably assume was the case for these other projects and events, our findings suggest that even if the bid *had* been influenced by more substantive and longer-term intentions, the nature of the bidding process meant that the bid was always likely to feature a significant amount of fantasy-laden aspects. However, what was perhaps different between this project and some of the more politically expedient, competitively funded processes, such as mega events, was that, after securing funding, the CDT project was not approached with a high level of 'seriousness' or desire by many within the Council. Indeed, Flybjerg's (2008; 2009) research demonstrates how there has been a long history of large infrastructure projects that overestimate their bids, yet are still implemented, albeit with an extended timeline and extended costs. However, the Cycle Chester project was heavily amended, and in many ways, downscaled, once key actors became aware that the project was met with resistance by some local individuals. This was explained by AT being a 'fringe' policy idea, that could feasibly be 'left alone'. It would therefore seem that governments in low cycling countries have much work to do in convincing LAs of the benefits of shifting their core transport agenda towards more sustainable activities.

Finally, we argue that the awarding of funding to Chester's rushed and fantasy-laden bid reflects the extent to which the funding committee gave little priority to (i) the realism of infrastructure proposals; and (ii) the attitudes and priorities, or professional habitus, of those working within authorities. In other words, they tended to favour the 'take-offs' that were made possible by optimistic proposals. We therefore conclude this paper by making recommendations for future rounds of national infrastructure funding.

6.1 Future recommendations

There have been suggestions that the British government is starting to change their approach to appraising bids (Flyvbjerg, 2014). For example, the HM Treasury's (2013) Optimism Bias Guidance, asks all government departments to negate the optimism of budget estimates by encouraging bids that are "based on data from past or similar projects, and adjusted for the unique characteristics of the project in hand" (HM Treasury 2013: 1). Despite this, Cycle City Ambition Grants, the latest round of competitive funding for AT infrastructure, invited authorities "to set out ambitious long term plans" (DfT, 2013a: 4), whilst demonstrating good value for money (DfT, 2013b). As we have demonstrated, such criteria only encourage ambiguous optimism from authorities, especially when there are very few 'long term' AT infrastructure projects that can be used as benchmarks for estimates. This is further exacerbated by the absence of legislation requiring authorities to create their own AT strategies in England. Consequently, most infrastructure bids are reactive to the funding announcement. We would therefore recommend that such legislation is introduced, on the premise that it might encourage a continuous AT dialogue across local governments, something that has proved fundamental to the development of AT infrastructure in the Netherlands and Denmark. If successful, this might give rise to (i) more thorough bids that contain longer-term, evidenced-based, AT intentions; and (ii) a growth of support, or at least knowledge, from a greater number of people within the organisation that the bidding party is attached to. These developments may well give rise to fewer unintended outcomes, as more reality congruent plans are established and supported by key actors. With fewer objections, and a greater sense of shared goals within the relevant figurations, project leaders may be more likely, and better able, to have greater control of the path of implementation. However, this is not to say that evidence-based bidding removes the propensity for unintended outcomes entirely, as our analysis has suggested. What seems to be important is that planning teams are encouraged to monitor their plans and adjust accordingly, on the basis of the accumulating evidence available to them. This might help promote a processual approach to infrastructure design that, in turn, prevents disjuncture between bidding and implementation.
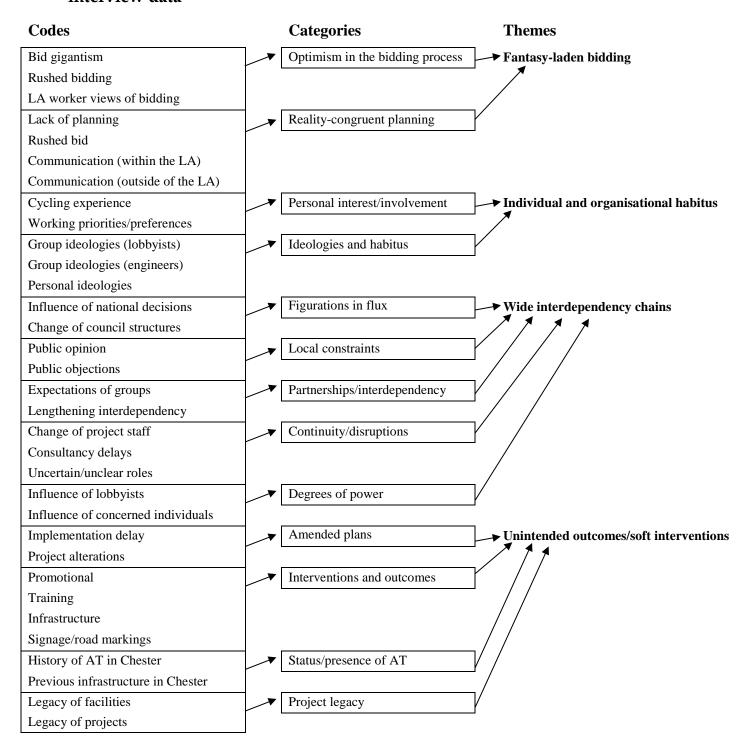
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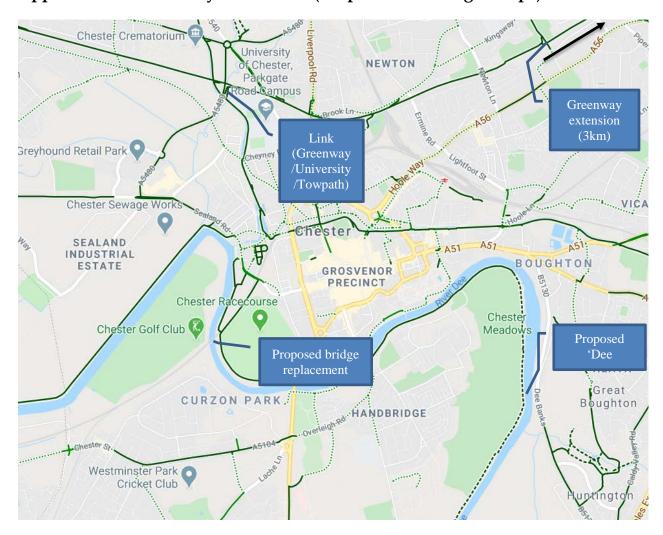
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Appendix A: Representation of the coding process for the Cycle Chester interview data

Codes	Categories	Themes
Bid gigantism Rushed bidding LA worker views of bidding	Optimism in the bidding process	**Fantasy-laden bidding**
Lack of planning Rushed bid Communication (within the LA) Communication (outside of the LA)	Reality-congruent planning	
Cycling experience Working priorities/preferences	Personal interest/involvement	**Individual and organisational habitus**
Group ideologies (lobbyists) Group ideologies (engineers) Personal ideologies	Ideologies and habitus	
Influence of national decisions Change of council structures	Figurations in flux	**Wide interdependency chains**
Public opinion Public objections	Local constraints	
Expectations of groups Lengthening interdependency	Partnerships/interdependency	
Change of project staff Consultancy delays Uncertain/unclear roles	Continuity/disruptions	
Influence of lobbyists Influence of concerned individuals	Degrees of power	
Implementation delay Project alterations	Amended plans	**Unintended outcomes/soft interventions**
Promotional Training Infrastructure Signage/road markings	Interventions and outcomes	
History of AT in Chester Previous infrastructure in Chester	Status/presence of AT	
Legacy of facilities Legacy of projects	Project legacy	

Note. The purpose of this figure is to demonstrate how the codes identified across our data were developed into full 'story' themes. It is important to stress that coding in our study was not as linear as this representation would suggest, as a number of codes could not be siphoned into just one particular theme.

Appendix B: Chester's cycle network (adapted from Google Maps)

Note. This map shows the positioning of the four major infrastructure projects that were proposed as part of the Cycle Chester bid document. The green paths signify Chester's current cycle network (the bold lines are off-road paths and canal towpaths, and the dashed lines are on-road paths or quiet routes).