

PLACE, SOCIAL NETWORKS AND ADOPTION OF UTILITY CYCLING IN JOHANNESBURG

N MORGAN

School of Architecture and Planning, University of the Witwatersrand

E-mail: njogumorgan@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Social networks have been identified in the literature as important in shaping the adoption of innovations. They can act as proponents providing financial, technical, political and even moral support towards innovation developments. They can also facilitate user learning not only with respect to competencies but also help in shifting habits, dispositions and other mental frames that allows acceptance of innovations. These networks which might be defined as formal and informal institutions may operate at multiple geographic scales. There is ongoing interest in the literature in understanding the nature of social networks and their intersection with place, in innovation adoption. This paper contributes to this literature by exploring an empirical puzzle. Due to growing realisation of the myriad problems associated with car dependency, state and non-state actors in Johannesburg have encouraged shifts towards alternatives including commuter cycling. There is however limited evidence of significant modal shifts. While transition to utility cycling in Johannesburg is marginal, observations reveal that a fraction of middle class populations that can potentially afford private motor cars are using bicycles for transport. This shift is perplexing given limited nature of dedicated bicycling infrastructure to address road safety concerns. Using insights from mobilities biographies research, a survey questionnaire was developed to investigate the reasons for utility cycling amongst middle class populations in Johannesburg. This paper results from the survey.