

STS Conference Graz 2015 “CRITICAL ISSUES IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY STUDIES” - Abstract Submission

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Abstract:

Contemporary or “smart” bike share schemes have exploited the capacity of information and communications technologies to effectively automate systems and deliver improved mobility and convenience for citizens in a way that is both sympathetic to the environment and cost effective for service providers. However research in the sector has tended to view schemes as technically homogenous and uniform in character, with little attention paid to the potential of creative design to deliver on goals which transcend quite narrow definitions of efficiency and sustainability. As the industry develops and new concepts emerge, creative design has the potential to integrate riders in knowledge sharing and decision making practices which frame them, not as passive recipients of information and services, but as active participants in the creation of the systems they appropriate.

This paper reports the findings of two case studies designed to explore these themes. Using a critical perspective derived from constructivist technology studies we argue that the architectural and ideological content of systems is not technically determined but is a product of the socio-cultural milieu within which the design and implementation processes occur. These processes in turn are conditioned by, and reflective of, the goals and expectations of dominant institutional and bureaucratic actors. Accordingly our analysis demonstrates how design supports the way of life of one or another influential social group and how these processes are related back to the implementation strategies and design parameters of the schemes.