



Lessons from London

撰文/Findlay A. Nicol

This morning I read a most amazing piece of news. It claimed that every morning during the rush-hour London is the place in the UK which has the lowest per capita carbon emission readings. This is the London which we all know from our textbooks is one of the world's most smog-affected cities, the London of "Orphan in the Foggy Metropolis" (Oliver Twist). How can this be?

Well one of the answers is the increasing use of public transport as people realise the absolute pointlessness of driving to work in private cars which are much slower, much less environmentally friendly and, in the era of congestion charges and surcharges for "gas guzzlers", certainly far more expensive. The use of the money raised from the charges on cars has been used to improve and expand the underground train system and to put on more low-emission buses. In a city which sees an influx of commuters who outnumber the resident population at least two to one the local government has realised long ago that private cars are the problem not the solution and adopted many sensible policies to deal with this of which the chief one is, of course, to make public transport a viable and attractive alternative.

However, in the last couple of years an even more dramatic initiative has produced quite dramatic results. This is the movement spearheaded by the Mayor of London to encourage as many people as possible to cycle or walk to work. This is publicized as being great for the health of ordinary people but also wonderful for the health of the environment. Employers are urged to encourage their employees to consider changing their habits and their life-style and many make a contribution to the fight against global warming by paying a bonus to their staff when they buy a bicycle. There are also schemes where London residents can apply for a grant from the local authority to help them with the cost of buying a

new bike. There are also publicly owned bicycles that can be hired at various places.

It may seem that these attempts to curb the carbon will make little impression on a nation I love with their cars, but in fact the results have been impressive so far. On any busy street in London these days you can see people dressed like something from the Tour de France cycling to work with their business suit in their backpack. They ride confidently through the traffic knowing that they are the pathfinders of a new era. You will also see many commuters taking a thirty-minute walk from the main-line station where they disembark from the suburbs to their office building rather than waiting for a bus or catching a taxi. The campaign to turn London into a cycling city which only started in earnest last year is proving a remarkable success. It is claimed that on some routes in the city bicycles now outnumber cars.

The influence of the cycling frenzy spreads out along the commuter tracks from central London to the dormitory towns from where the commuters come. At each station now you will find a special parking shelter for bikes which is usually full, while the very expensive parking spaces in the station car parks are becoming more and more deserted. The healthy and carbon zero option of a 15-20 minutes cycle run instead of a 5 minute car trip to the station is becoming increasingly popular. Parents are beginning to walk their children to and from school instead of driving them there and sitting with engines running and exhaust fumes polluting the atmosphere. Today I saw a father on his bike heading off to catch the train to work escorting his two young children who were heading for school on their scooters.

Of course the economic crisis and especially the rocketing costs of petrol and diesel are bound to play a large part in the decision of so many people to reduce their use of the private cars. However, there are other reasons too.

Improving the safety of cyclists has been a major contributory factor. The provision of dedicated cycle lanes and strictly enforcing regulations designed for the safety of all road users so as to moderate the sometimes selfish behaviour of car and truck drivers has been a very important incentive for cyclists. At the same time properly organised training for cyclists so that they also behave in a sensible and safe manner helps to prevent accidents and avoid confrontation between cyclists and other road users.

It seems quite remarkable that such a transformation should have taken place in such a relatively short time. As cities all over the world wrestle with the problems of traffic congestion and governments struggle to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide and other noxious gases which are rapidly destroying the environment, it is quite ironic that a city with a reputation as one of the smog capitals of the world should be providing such a striking example of an alternative scenario.

No two cities are the same far less any two countries. Solutions which seem to work in one place may be of no use whatsoever in another environment and society. Nevertheless, there are surely some lessons for politicians everywhere who are responsible for transport and for the environment to draw from London's brave and so far successful experiment. It would be interesting to see how successful congestion charges would be in solving traffic problems. It would be even more interesting to see more people using and having access to modern public transport. Most interesting of all would be to see citizens in cities worldwide using their bikes or their legs instead of their cars.

China used to be the nation of the bicycle while now it is the nation of the traffic jam. London used to be the city of smog while now it is the city of the bike. Perhaps there is a lesson for us all there. Should we not investigate it further?

来自伦敦的启发

今天早上我读了一条最令人惊奇的新闻，说的是在英国，每天早上交通高峰期间，伦敦是拥有最低人均碳排放的城市。这就是我们从书本上了解到的世界上受雾的影响最严重的城市之一，也就是《雾都孤儿》里的那个伦敦。那么，新闻中所说的现象是怎么形成的呢？

首先，答案之一就是公共交通工具使用量的增加。人们认识到开私家车去上班是完全无意义的，因为速度更慢，更谈不上环保，另外在“油老虎”引起的各种费用和附加费时代，这样做的代价更昂贵。用在私家车上的花费如今已经用在扩大地铁的使用范围和增加更多低排量公共汽车上面。在一个城市里，上下班的人流至少比常住人口多了一倍，当地政府很久之前就认识到私家车并不是解决问题的办法，并采取了许多明智的政策解决关键的问题，当然，就是让公共交通成为切实可行和有吸引力的选择。

然而，在过去的几年中，一个更富有戏剧性的举措已经产生了相当戏剧性的效果。这就是由伦敦市长带头发起的运动，鼓励尽可能多的人们骑自行车或者步行去上班。此运动意在为老百姓的身体健康着想，同时也为了保护环境。雇主们被要求鼓励他们的员工考虑改变自己的生活习惯和方式。许多雇主为阻止全球变暖做出了一定的贡献，每当他们的员工买一辆自行车，他们就会给员工一定的奖金。伦敦的居民买新的自行车时，还可以向当地政府申请津贴。许多地方还有公共的自行车供居民租用。

看上去这些低碳的尝试对我所爱的国家中的汽车并没有产生多大的影响，但是实际结果到现在为止还会让人印象至深。这些天，在伦敦繁忙的路段，你会看到打扮的像环法自行车赛运动员样子的

人们骑车去上班，还背着装有职业装的背包。他们骑着自行车自信满满地驶过车流，并深信自己是新时代的开创者。你还会看到很多人步行30分钟从到达后的地铁站到办公室，而不是等公交车或者打出租车。这个从去年才正式开始的运动取得了显著的成功，它将伦敦转变成一

没有完全相同的两个国家，同样，也没有完全相同的两个城市。在一个地方有成果的解决办法并不一定在其他环境和社会同样适用。然而，对每个地方负责交通和环境的官员们来说，伦敦的勇气和成功的经验一定会让他们有所启发。

个自行车城市。据称在伦敦的某些路段，如今自行车的数量已经超过了汽车。

单车热潮的影响已经随着上下班人们的行程路线从伦敦市中心蔓延到城镇。如今在每一个车站，你都会发现一个专门的自行车停车棚，这些车棚通常是满的。同时，那些在车站附近收费昂贵的停车场开始变得越来越冷清。一段15至20分钟的健康并且零碳排放的自行车行程代替5分钟开车行驶到车站的做法变得越来越流行了。父母们正在开始步行接送孩子上学，而不是坐在正在发动和污染环境的引擎上开车接送孩子。今天我看到一个父亲骑着自行车去赶火车上班，还护送着他的两个滑着滑板车去上学的孩子。

当然，经济危机，尤其是飞涨的汽油和柴油的价格，让很多人选择减少用私家车。然而，还有其他的理由。改善骑自行车人的安全问题已经成为一个主要的因素。对于自行车使用者来说，提供专用的自行车道，严格执行为所有道路使用者的安全所设计的规章制度，以限制那些汽车和卡车司机有时的自私行为，已经成为非常鼓舞人心的事情。同时，适当组织骑自行车者的培训，使他们能够切合实际并安全地行驶，有助于防止事故的发生，避免骑自行车者和其他道路使用者之间的冲突。

在这么短的时间内达到如此的转变是非常了不起的。当世界上的各个城市为交通堵塞问题角力、政府们为减少破坏环境的二氧化碳和其他有害气体的排放量而奋斗的时候，一个被称为世界上的雾都之一的城市，向我们提供了一个如此突出的例子，这是十分有讽刺意味的。

没有完全相同的两个国家，同样，也没有完全相同的两个城市。在一个地方有成果的解决办法并不一定在其他环境和社会同样适用。然而，对每个地方负责交通和环境的官员们来说，伦敦的勇气和成功的经验一定会让他们有所启发。看到交通拥挤附加费用来解决交通问题，是件有趣的事。看到更多的人正在使用现代公共交通是件更有趣的事。最有趣的事，是看到全世界的市民们用他们的自行车和双腿来代替汽车。

中国过去被称作自行车王国，现在同样是交通拥挤的国家。伦敦过去被称作雾都，现在成为自行车城市。也许我们可以从中学到些什么，我们是不是应该进一步研究？

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