Election Briefing 6
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The LTN spinners in action

Rather than acknowledge these weaknesses in evidence… pro-LTN actors have shared evidence that could be positively and straightforwardly interpreted as a decrease in traffic.

Demos Report 2024 (See SEJ Briefing 2)

Since so many of the studies were flawed (SEJ Briefing 4) the way they were spun was critical to how they influenced thinking and policy about LTNs. The spinning was not done by the main authors of the studies, Rachel Aldred and Anna Goodman, but by other groups, their friends in the media plus an often vicious campaign on social media. We obviously don't know if Aldred and Goodman said anything to the spinners in private but they were silent in public.

Case Study 1

Spinning by Possible

The climate charity Possible claimed the report it commissioned from Rachel Aldred showed:

Low traffic neighbourhoods are having a verifiable, positive impact for the people living on these streets. But, importantly, it shows that they have no consistent impact on boundary roads.
https://www.wearepossible.org/our-reports/changes-in-motor-traffic-inside-londons-ltns

Its headline was that on average there was only a 1% increase in traffic on boundary roads.

What the report actually showed:

Of the 412 internal road count sites, 303 (73.5%) saw any decline in motor traffic, compared to 109 (26.5%) which saw any increase. For the 175 boundary road count sites, 83 (47.4%) saw any decline in motor traffic, against 92 (52.6%) which saw an increase.

Possible's spin masked the fact the use of percentages in the report hid the *actual* increases on many boundary roads, and that it did not look at what was happening beyond boundary roads nor state it relied on council data, some of which undercounted vehicles due to flaws in the counting equipment.

Case Study 2

Disregard the Disbenefits

This health study found LTNs bring health/economic benefits 100 times their costs but only looked at the benefits! The health disbenefits were not studied (such as the health impacts of the stress of relying of buses caught up in extra congestion caused by the traffic displaced from LTNs). But the spinners had their figure, a nice round figure, repeated by their friends in the pressure groups and the media. The figure becomes 'fact'. The flaws in the report are forgotten. The figure becomes the basis of policy-making.
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214140524000173