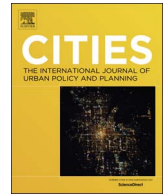




ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Cities

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/cities

Understanding the public acceptability of road pricing and the roles of older age, social norms, pro-social values and trust for urban policy-making: The case of Bristol

Alexandros Nikitas^{a,*}, Erel Avineri^b, Graham Parkhurst^c

^a Department of Logistics, Operations, Hospitality and Marketing, Huddersfield Business School, University of Huddersfield, Queensgate, Huddersfield HD1 3DH, UK

^b AFEKA, Tel-Aviv Academic College of Engineering, Afeka Center for Infrastructure, Transportation and Logistics (ACITRAL), 38 Mivtza Kadesh St, Tel-Aviv 699812, Israel

^c Centre for Transport & Society, Department of Geography and Environmental Management, University of the West of England, Frenchay Campus, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1QY, UK

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Road pricing
Congestion charging
Attitudes
Pro-social value orientations and social norms
Public acceptability
Older people and ageing
Urban transport planning and policy

ABSTRACT

Cities looking to embark on more sustainable development pathways may need to evaluate the controversial but usually impactful measure of road pricing as a means of reducing their reliance on conventionally fuelled automobiles. Understanding the mechanisms determining the public acceptability of road pricing could be critical for its implementation. Studying the attitudes of older people is of particular significance because of their increasing demographic and political importance and vulnerability to transport-related social exclusion. Prior research identified that older people's social norms and pro-social values affect their attitudes to road pricing. The present paper extends this understanding based on the results of three focus groups conducted in Bristol, UK. According to these, there are three distinctive expressions of pro-sociality: pro-environmental values and generativity, which are mainly drivers of support for road pricing, and pro-equity values, which are mainly drivers of opposition. Social norms have two particular expressions: subjective norms (i.e. norms reflecting participants' immediate social environment) and norms about others and society in general. Furthermore, a theory-driven thematic analysis indicates that trust on the integrity of the concept and older age as a life stage associated with ageing, retirement, lower income, mobility barriers and deteriorating health are important in how attitudes reflecting and affecting public acceptability to road pricing form. Finally, the paper highlights the need for packaging road pricing with measures promoting its pro-social potential and the importance of peer-to-peer communication and accepting citizens as "social influencers", tailored consultation, pro-social branding, pre-implementation trials, clear administrative roles, transparency, and "political patience".

1. Introduction

Road pricing is a travel demand mechanism detailed as long ago as 1844 (Ison & Rye, 2005) aimed at making the allocation and use of existing road space in congested cities more efficient. Nikitas, Avineri, and Parkhurst (2011) define road pricing as a concept that covers a range of policy measures, which involve payment for road access in direct relation to usage criteria, rather than paying a fixed network access fee unrelated to use, or paying proxy charges such as road fuel duty. It is widely recognised that road pricing could be an effective measure to solve environmental and congestion problems in urban areas; an instrument that would also normally generate a net welfare surplus (Eliasson & Mattsson, 2006), provide funds for needed roadway and public transit investments (Börjesson, Eliasson, Hugosson, &

Brundell-Freij, 2012) and improve air quality (Coria, Bonilla, Grundström, & Pleijel, 2015). Moreover, the changing technologies of road transportation, notably the promotion of electric vehicles, which have (currently) higher fixed costs of ownership and lower variable costs of use, threaten to increase road traffic levels while reducing taxation revenues from the sale of liquid fossil fuels, on which many governments have come to rely (Johnson, Leicester, & Stoye, 2012; Parkhurst, 2002). As a whole, road pricing is traditionally acknowledged as a first-best solution or benchmark for containing externalities and optimising traffic flow (Seik, 2000). Some cities have implemented road pricing schemes, namely Singapore (1975), Rome (2001), Durham (2002), London (2003), Stockholm (2006), Valletta (2007), Milan (2008) and Gothenburg (2013); most of them according to May, Koh, Blackledge, and Fioretto (2010) have achieved reductions in traffic

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: a.nikitas@hud.ac.uk (A. Nikitas), Avineri@AFEKA.ac.il (E. Avineri), Graham.Parkhurst@uwe.ac.uk (G. Parkhurst).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2018.02.024>

Received 7 July 2017; Received in revised form 22 December 2017; Accepted 25 February 2018
0264-2751/ © 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

entering the charging zone in the range of 14% to 23%.

Despite being a theoretically well-developed transport policy based on a sound economic rationale, which has been successful when applied, road pricing has proven notoriously difficult to decide and implement (Orski, 1992; Sørensen, Isaksson, Macmillen, & Åkerman, 2014). With exceptions such as those few cities noted above, efforts to introduce significant reform in charging for road use have fallen largely on politically non-supportive ears (Hensher & Bliemer, 2014). This is because politicians tend to see road pricing as a complicated, controversial charge for something that has typically been free (Jones, 1998; King, Manville, & Shoup, 2007) and as a measure that would receive limited public support; being an “infringement” on freedom of access (Jakobsson, Fujii, & Gärling, 2000). The potential discontent from the motoring public that could put in danger the possibility of re-election has therefore prevented politicians from introducing road pricing (Santos & Rojey, 2004).

The low public acceptability of road pricing thus is one of the strongest barriers hindering its applicability (Fujii, Gärling, Jakobsson, & Jou, 2004; Langmyhr, 1997; Schade & Baum, 2007), with the most important reasons for opposition being social or moral norms of fairness and freedom of choice (Jakobsson et al., 2000). Imposing a cost on something that used to be free at the point of use, such as access to roads during peak driving times which usually, despite some exemptions, is fixed, raises equity issues, especially when considering the likely impacts on exclusion from mobility opportunities and those groups of people more susceptible to them (Ecola & Light, 2010; Rajé, 2003; Rajé, Grieco, Hine, & Preston, 2004). Nikitas et al. (2011) provided evidence that according to the extent to which schemes are identified as having net exclusion-reduction benefits and are seen as “pro-social” the more likely it is that they will be sustained through the implementation process.

The acceptability of any respective system has been seen primarily as determined by attitudes (Schade & Schlag, 2003) and influenced by local scheme-specific characteristics (Grisolía, López, & de Dios Ortúzar, 2015). In many cases the social psychological Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), which conceptualises a causal relationship between attitudes and behaviours, has been used as a theoretical basis or as a starting point for forming a more subject-specific theoretical perspective. Although at present a theory of general acceptance does not exist, it is undisputed that attitudes are of great relevance for agreeing or disagreeing with something (Schade & Schlag, 2003). This is why developing an in-depth understanding of the public attitudes to road pricing is crucial in cases where implementing road pricing is a viable policy-making scenario. In this context, studying the attitudes of older people is of particular importance because of their vulnerability to transport-related social exclusion, their increasing dependence on automobility, their unprecedented demographic growth and their high political engagement (Nikitas et al., 2011; Rosenbloom, 2001). This is because some of them could be potential “losers” from such an introduction; being among those unable to afford paying more for accessibility by car (Richardson, Isaksson, & Gullberg, 2010).

Henceforth, the paper provides, in the next section, a more detailed background justifying the need for this study and a synopsis of some key results from previous studies of relevance: it is important in particular to link this work with the authors' previous research, which provided evidence that older people's attitudes, pro-social value orientations and social norms referring to the acceptability of road pricing are of a distinctive character when compared with those of younger people. This is followed by a description of the methodology employed. The core section of the paper presents a detailed report of the key findings of the qualitative analysis. It informs the reader on how attitudes relate to social norms and pro-social value orientations and provides a classification for them. This section also examines the ways with which old age per se and other ageing-induced characteristics like retirement, health, time flexibility and income can influence this social psychological process and the critical role that the lack of trust in public

authorities can have. Finally, the paper concludes with a section that integrates the findings by presenting a normative framework that describes how attitudes (and particularly older people's attitudes) towards road pricing may form, thereby providing relevant policy recommendations for the adoption of the measure.

2. Theoretical and empirical background

This section aims to describe the theoretical and empirical background of the study. Relevant points of a broad and diverse literature are identified and synthesised in a way that assists the understanding of the study's primary research contributions. The latter will be presented, analysed and discussed in the following sections, with links to existing knowledge drawn out.

2.1. Defining older age

While there are commonly-used definitions for framing older age, usually relating to retirement age, there is no universal consensus about a specific chronological threshold at which a person becomes old. At the moment, the United Nations agreed reference point is 60 years or older (World Health Organization, 2017a). The UK Department for Transport (DfT) has linked the eligibility for free, off-peak, local bus travel to the state pension age, which is currently in transition. Prior to that pensionable age was 60 years for UK women. Given that the data collection was conducted in Bristol, UK the age of 60 was selected as the most applicable reference point for marking “older age”. Nikitas (2010) reviewed a significant number of studies and proposed that older people could be classified in two categories; those aged 60 to 74 years old (“young older people” or “younger old”) and those aged 75 years old and over (“old older people” or “older old”). These definitions have been adopted for the present paper.

2.2. Why focus a study of road pricing on older people?

Over recent decades, ageing has emerged as a socio-demographic phenomenon unprecedented in human history for both the developed and developing world. The number of people aged 60 years and over has doubled since 1980 and by 2050 the global population of seniors is projected to be close to 2 billion, with almost 400 million of these people being aged 80 and older (World Health Organization, 2017b). It is notable, then, that older people are more interested in local democracy (Jordan & Avineri, 2008) usually being over-represented in community activity and engagement (Shergold, Parkhurst, & Musselwhite, 2012) and more likely to vote than younger people (Goerres, 2007, 2008). Thus it can be hypothesised that their views may be particularly influential on social policy in general, and on the acceptability of road pricing in particular.

There is another important dimension to older people's emergence as a significant factor in urban policy-making: older people have been identified by various studies (e.g. Gaffron, Hine, & Mitchell, 2001; Hine & Mitchell, 2003; SEU, 2003) as the age group most likely to be subjected to transport-related social exclusion. Social exclusion, widely appreciated as a concept difficult and complex to fully describe, has given a new impetus according to Özkazanç and Sönmez (2017) to the discussions of disadvantageousness and inaccessibility with urban transport being one of its most important determinants. Social exclusion in old age is conceptualised, according to Scharf, Phillipson, and Smith (2005), as a multi-dimensional phenomenon comprising: exclusion from material resources; exclusion from social relations; exclusion from civic activities; exclusion from basic services; and neighbourhood exclusion.

Although older people tend to make fewer trips overall and the proportion of trips made by car also declines significantly from age 60 (Lucas, 2006), as Langford (2001) argues, “the need for mobility does not cease with old age”. Increased longevity and better health and social care

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7417096>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7417096>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)