



Changing frames of mobility through radical policy interventions?

- the Stockholm congestion tax

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Changing frames of mobility – points of departure

- Congestion tax is today often seen as essentially 'sustainable' (e.g. Banister 2008)
- But even flagship policies are often ambivalent about the car in the city
- How are efforts to combat congestion addressing the social and environmental burdens of urban car use?



AVGIFTER MED EN BÄTTRE MILJÖ PÅ KÖPET

När vi väljer att åka på Ringen eller Yttre Tvärleden betalar vi för att komma snabbare och säkrare till våra resmål, var de än ligger i regionen. På köpet får vi allihop en bättre miljö.

Aim of the paper

- To examine the place of the car in successive framings of mobility manifested in policy schemes to deal with congestion and other traffic-related problems in the city of Stockholm from the 1970s up till now.

Research questions

- What is the **main objective** of each mobility management strategy?
- Who are the future “**key mobile subjects**” referred to in each strategy?
- How do the **measures aim to change mobility** practices of these mobile subjects?
- Who are the **winners and losers**?
- How “radical” is each measure in terms of **confronting car-based automobility**?

Some groundwork: analysis of deliberative strategies

- Congestion charging is a politically risky policy
- The challenge of legitimately introducing a policy that the public may not want
- How to manage the engagement with stakeholders and citizens?

confronting public attitudes?



... in my view the most difficult challenges for introducing congestion charging are not technical ones, but social and political ones, the exact nature of which will differ from city to city... strong political leadership will be required'.

Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, 2004

Building public consensus?

The Council's 'preferred' strategy includes congestion charging and increased transport investment funded by it. Do you support the Council's 'preferred' strategy?"

No: 74.4%

Yes: 25.6%

(Turnout 61.8%)

'The idea is now dead and buried for Edinburgh but we are as committed as ever to further improving our city's transport'



post-Edinburgh reflexivity

- ‘The level, range and intensity of opposition to road user charging will determine the likelihood of its adoption.’ ... the importance of understanding and correctly gauging the local political dimensions in building any policy platform for the introduction of road user charging’ (McQuaid and Grieco)
- ‘local authorities will have to be brave in the face of their electorates’ (Wolmar)
- Congestion pricing cannot be sold as a policy that harms no one, or even as a policy that helps everyone a little. It can, however, be positioned as a policy that will benefit important political actors a lot. Its success depends, to paraphrase Machiavelli, not on convincing those who benefit from the status quo, but on finding others who will “do well under the new order of things” (King et al).

Avoiding conflict in Stockholm: but at what price?

- London: Livingstone's strong political leadership, confronting opposition
 - Edinburgh: consensus failure and lack of leadership
 - Stockholm: conflict avoidance and consensus through learning
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- Isaksson, K. & Richardson, T. (2009)
"Building legitimacy for risky policies: the cost of avoiding conflict in Stockholm".
Transportation Research A, 43: 251-257.
 - (in a special issue on the Stockholm congestion tax)



In Stockholm, measures to reduce congestion have been formulated since the 1970s

- 1970s : consensus to reduce urban motoring by 20%
- 1980s: district charges
- 1990s: road tolls for new road investments
- 2006: the congestion tax trial
- 2007: congestion tax financing new roads

1970s: consensus to reduce urban motoring by 20%

- Political consensus on the car as a problem for the city
- Motorists were the key mobile subjects to change behaviour.
- Plans for massive road investments abandoned
- Generally positive attitudes towards cong. charging, but no consensus reached over any specific measures

1980s: district charges

- An SL-card in the front window of the car
- Revenues to public transportation
- A fragile political agreement among the leading political parties in Stockholm
- The motorists were the target
- Winners: Public transport users and inner city residents

1990s: road tolls for new road investments

- Revival of old infrastructure plans
- Road tolls to pay for new road investments
- Less motoring in the inner city – but an overall increase in the region
- Agreement reached but no foundation of consensus
- Winners: motorists who are happy to pay, also residents in the inner city where traffic would decrease
- Losers: less wealthy car owners and people living in areas where traffic would increase

2006: the congestion tax trial

- Decreasing traffic and congestion while increasing accessibility by public transportation
- Motorists clearly targeted
- Citizen consent created in a referendum after the trial
- Winners: motorists who want (and can afford) to pay – as well as inner city residents and public trp users
- Losers: residents in districts where conditions got worse



2007: congestion tax supporting new roads

- Post election shift
- Decision to implement congestion taxation permanently
- New rules – making the tax part of a large infrastructure plan
- Drivers who wants to pay are now a stronger group of winners

Points for discussion

- Several decades of ambivalence about the car in the city followed by a decisive shift?
- Different mobility framings eventually reinforcing car based mobility
- Congestion tax is argued to be the paradigmatic policy of sustainable mobility – but, as shown in this case, not per definition!
- Stockholm´s transport policy discourse steering away from the international cutting edge?