

Project 327055: Politicians, citizen participation and the implementation of contentious measures for sustainable transport. Results report

Project objectives and background

The project is about politicians' views and citizens reactions' to contentious urban transport measures (parking management, roadscape transformation, car-free zones, congestion charging schemes). Such measures to increase the use of more sustainable modes of transport relative to the private car, and thus meet both the national zero-growth goal for person transport and climate goals. However, while effective, these measures typically also cause disagreement between technicians, politicians and some members of the public.

The project's objectives were, therefore, to provide advice on how to design and manage public participation and protest in order to reduce the political barriers to the introduction of more contentious transport measures and thus to be of practical use in the efforts to reduce the climate impacts of transport choices. The project also aimed to provide more insight into what and who motivates and influences political decision making (including protest movements), insight which intended to be of use to politicians, civil servants and NGOs when they propose in future the use of more contentious transport measures.

Results achieved in the context of the project objectives.

The project has enhanced understanding of the interplay between political decision-making and public protest and participation by carrying out case studies of the implementation of contentious transport measures (CTM), some which generated protest and others which did not, and it has evaluated the effect of different and novel forms of public participation for CTM on the legitimacy of the measures. The project identified three key dimensions of public interaction with municipalities in the context of implementing contentious transport measures (CTM). The three dimensions encompass the actions of protesters, the efforts of municipalities to engage the public in planning processes, and coherence between various municipal policy domains.

We observed that a combination of policy incoherence and certain forms of protest can significantly influence the outcome of planned projects. Our analysis indicates a relationship between low levels of public participation and the utilization of disruptive protest forms. To mitigate protest risks, projects must be firmly anchored at political, administrative, and community levels. Local authorities must be aware that garnering support among local inhabitants can be challenging, as public participation activities may not always be acknowledged, recognized, or remembered by their intended audience.

In addition, the project has significantly increased our knowledge of the perceptions and views of local politicians about CTM, and their experience of implementing them. From interviews with politicians, it was found that local politicians can be categorised broadly into three groups: those who do not support CTM as they see them as incompatible with their ideology; those who support gradual implementation of such measures; and those for whom there is an urgent need for CTM and that their task is to respond to their voters and lead society by implementing CTM even in the face of protest. These findings align with earlier work identifying some politicians as radical and some as incremental in policy change; and the self-definition of politicians as 'trustees', leading change as elected representatives, compared to those who see themselves more as 'delegates', representing the views of their voters. Politicians with specific experience of implementing CTM were in many cases sceptical of the value of public consultation, preferring to implement measures and let their benefits speak for themselves. Importantly, they saw CTM

in more suburban locations, and involving transformation of on-street parking, as particularly challenging to deliver.

In terms of practical knowledge, a Handbook, based on the project results, but targeted at local decision makers, traffic engineers and transport planners, and other practitioners, has been widely disseminated to its target audience both in Norway and in an English version in other countries. Summary lessons from the handbook have also been disseminated in the form of videos.

The most important R&D tasks carried out, and the actors playing a key role in project implementation.

The most important tasks carried out were as follows:

- Identification of case studies of protest against contentious transport measures, in Fredrikstad and in Oslo, the two cities where our initial non-research partner organisations (Oslo Kommun Bymiljøetaten, and Fredrikstads Næringsforening) are based.
- Document and press review in relation to the case studies, and interviews with key actors. This work was carried out primarily by Molde University College and CICERO Oslo.
- Our two non-research partner organisations played a crucial role in identifying documents and interview subjects, and also acting as interviewees for the cases.
- Identification of case studies of novel forms of public consultation conducted in the planning stages of contentious transport measures.
- Document and media review in relation to these case studies, plus interviews with key actors (project partners CICERO Oslo and VTI (Sweden) were most involved in this work).
- Data analysis of both sets of case studies.
- A survey of politicians in Sweden, Norway and Spain to find out their views on and experience of implementing contentious transport measures and in dealing with protest against these measures. The survey suffered from a very low response rate, particularly in Sweden and Spain. In the three countries, interviews were also carried out with 20 current or recently-retired local politicians. Most involved in this work were Molde University College and Malmö University.
- Whilst not an R&D task, non-research project partner Siklistenes Landsforening played a vital role in project dissemination, particularly that aimed at practitioner audiences.

Assessment of project implementation and use of resources.

The project was implemented as planned. The only planned action that was not successful was the questionnaire to politicians outside Norway which suffered from a very low response rate such that the sample was not sufficient for analysis. Some resources were shifted from Molde University College to VTI in WP3 (New forms of public participation) as two out of three of the case studies finally selected were in Sweden and Denmark. The involvement of non-research organisations in actual research proved challenging, particularly in Oslo Kommun, where other work on the organisation's own projects was prioritised. This led to resources being moved from this organisation to Siklistenes Landsforening for dissemination activities.

Anticipated significance/benefits of the results

In order to maximise the probability of direct impacts in practice (for example, in the way in which municipalities plan and implement contentious transport measures), the project has produced its findings and outputs in formats that were specifically aimed at practitioners and decision makers, not just researchers, and the majority of its dissemination activities took place at events oriented towards practitioners and decisionmakers.

In the research field, the project has contributed in the following ways:

- Its research with politicians in mobility is pioneering. According to our review of the literature, no previous research has interviewed local politicians from a range of cities and countries about their attitudes to and experience of implementing contentious transport measures, and the way in which they communicate these ideas, including their attitudes to public consultation processes.
- Its work on novel public participation methods in transport planning is also highly innovative and has shown how these can be shaped to increase legitimacy of contentious transport measures.
- It has added to understanding of the causes of protest against contentious transport measures.

Plans for disseminating and utilising the results.

Dissemination of the results to ensure that they were used by practitioners was a key element of the project. Key aspects of this were:

- The project Handbook, disseminated online, via the networks of partner Sivilisteneslandsforening, and to all people who have participated in the project. This Handbook was specifically designed to translate the findings of the project into practical lessons for practitioners.
- A policy workshop with approximately 20 Norwegian practitioners to discuss the implications of the findings for practice.
- Two workshops with individual municipalities to discuss contentious transport measures in their specific context and the value of the project's findings in relation to their plans for these measures.
- In total 43 reports, articles and presentations for meetings/conferences were produced during the project aimed at practitioner target groups.
- Finally, LinkedIn reached out to about 700 people during the course of the project.

Results expected to be finalised after the completion of the project.

Four further academic articles based on project results are currently under review by international journals (in addition to the four already published).

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