

Utopia Now!

A multi-scalar timescapes approach to understanding contested low carbon urban mobility transitions in Bergen

Devyn Remme

University of Bergen

Devyn.remme@uib.no

Advisors: Håvard Haarstad
& Siddharth Sareen



Illustration of a possible future by Bryggens Venner

Abstract

Bergen is undertaking a rapid mobility transition which is deeply political. Shifting power configurations have opened up political space for both low-carbon logics that view cars as the socio-technical embodiment of past mistakes and organized resistance to anti-car policies. The (re)allocation of space and money from private car users to public transportation infrastructure is a contested expression of the sustainable development paradigm which heralds cascading societal change. Multi-scalar timescapes surface through the geologies, histories, visions, targets, infrastructures and public expectations which shape practices and engender controversy.

Research Questions

How are temporalities mobilized by different actors to advocate for or contest mobility transition interventions?

What temporal scales surface through qualitative inquiry into mobility transition planning practices?

How does paying attention to temporalities help us understand conflicts and contribute to rapid transformation?

Three inter-related case studies:

- Suburban car free zones
- Light-rail expansion
- Organized resistance to toll roads

Timescapes entail relations to temporality in future making processes

Method

30 semi-structured expert and stakeholder interviews, 3 focus groups, 2 workshops with municipal planners, policy and media document analysis, 'reading' illustrations of possible futures in consequence analysis documents, a local NGO meeting and a community future workshop.



Cognitive map from focus group exercise.



Children playing on a newly car free street. Photo: Lars Kvalbein

"We had an opportunity to do something but it had to happen fast."

Municipal planner on implementing a car free zone

"If there are any delays the whole lightrail project could get derailed."

Pro-lightrail activist

"Businesses need time to prepare themselves, not a sudden shift as the current city council wants to introduce"

Leader for the Chamber of Commerce

"People are afraid of change. You have to explain that it's not new, what we are doing, its the way things were before the cars took over."

Municipal planner