

# Young Researchers Seminar 2013

Lyon, France , June 5-7 2013



Laboratoire d'Economie  
des Transports

Unité Mixte de Recherche du CNRS n° 5593  
Université Lumière Lyon 2 - ENTPE

Why do politicians include  
traffic increasing measures in a plan  
aiming at reducing traffic volumes?

Kjersti Visnes Øksenholt

Institute of Transport Economics, Norway





# The Environmental Package

- Trondheim is a growing city.
  - The population is expected to increase by approximately 25 000 inhabitants within the next 10 years.
  - With a growing population comes an increase in different challenges.
- The National Transport Plan (2006-2015) did not provide Trondheim with any subsidies.
  - Toll roads had been removed in 2005.
  - No financial room for maneuver.
  - To trigger public funds, the process of initiating a package were started.
- The package was adopted by the City Council at April 24<sup>th</sup> 2008
  - A political compromise between 6 parties (out of 9).



# How is the package composed?

- Primary objective - *“reducing CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions, limit the motor vehicle traffic and improve the conditions for those who travel by foot, bike or public transport”*.
  - Ten specific goals that will be evaluated during the set period.
- Measures
  - To facilitate for ecofriendly modes of transport, and reduce the car’s competitiveness.
  - These will, if necessary, be adjusted to reach goal achievement.
- Financial distribution
  - 50 % will be spent on public transport-, safety- and environmental measures.
  - 50 % will be spent on upgrading existing roads and building new ones.



# Methods

- Document studies
  - To gain knowledge on why the package was adopted at that point, contributing factors and the final decision document including objectives and measures
- In-depth interviews
  - 9 representatives from all the political parties
  - 6 interviews were used as basis for following analysis
- The aim was to identify possible explanations as to why traffic increasing measures were seen as appropriate.



# Framing

- *“A way of selecting, organizing, interpreting and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analyzing, persuading and acting” (Rein og Schön, 1993).*
- Multiple factors affect how we frame different situations and problems:
  - An individual’s understanding of society
    - main discourses, perceptions and context
  - An individual’s goals
    - objectives, interests, values and preferences
  - An individual’s background
    - knowledge, understanding and theories



# Framing

- Multiple factors affect how we frame different situations and problems:
  - An individual's understanding of society
    - main discourses, perceptions and context
  - An individual's goals
    - objectives, interests, values and preferences
  - An individual's background
    - knowledge, understanding and theories

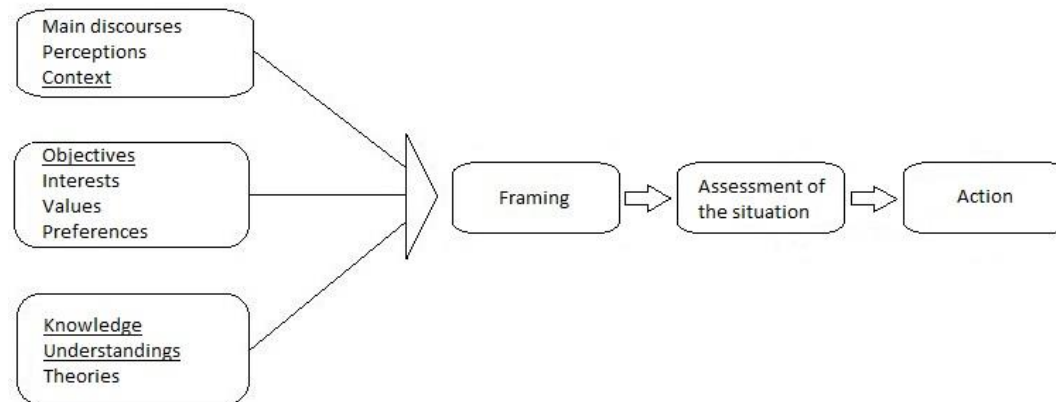


Figure 1: How frames occur (based on Tennøy 2012 and Schön and Rein 1994)



# Why increased road capacity is seen as an appropriate measure

- Local context
  - Increasing transport demand
  - Congestion affects public transport
  - The current road network are not equipped for future traffic situations
  - There is too much traffic in central and residential areas
- Understanding and knowledge
  - Congestion leads to increased emissions and noise
  - Congestion leads to increased costs for individuals and businesses
- Objectives
  - Congestion should be avoided
  - Traffic should be led outside central and residential areas
  - A more secure and coherent road network enhances traffic safety, and improves the level of service of public transport



# How the politicians think they can improve the chances of still achieving their objectives

- Understanding and knowledge
  - Rising traffic volumes can be counteracted with positive and restrictive measures
  - Technological development will reduce CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions
  - One did not believe the objectives would be reached



# The politicians' framing, assessment of the situation and actions

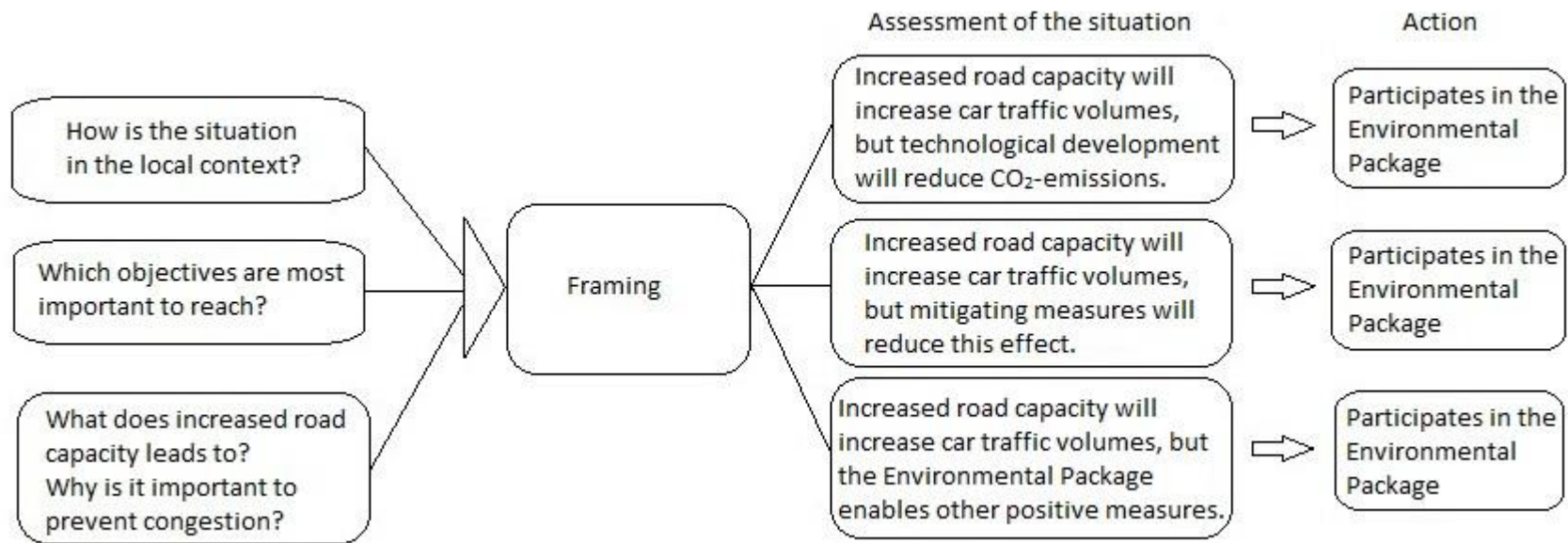


Figure 2: How does the explanatory factors contribute to the politicians framing, and thereby their assessment of the situation and actions



# Reframing the problem to find alternative to solutions?

- The plan will not solve the original problem.
  - The problem gets changed so it fits the original plan.
  - The problem itself may also be changed to make sure certain elements fits the plan.
  - Interests and objectives may lead to a reframing of the problem.
- The original problem is unsolvable.
  - The problem gets changed to enable goal achievement.
- **Hypothesis:** Road construction and increased capacity was important all along, and it was necessary to identify problems where road building actually were a solution instead of a part of the problem.



# Reframing the problem to find alternative to solutions?

- Whether road construction was *the reason* the package was initiated, one cannot know.
- The politicians are aware of the connection between increased capacity and increased car traffic volumes.
- Some politicians pointed out that the package was initiated for a reason - it was a way to receive funding for road construction desired by some.



# Reframing the problem to find alternative to solutions?

- **Hypothesis:** Road construction and increased capacity was important all along, and it was necessary to identify problems where road building actually were a solution instead of a part of the problem.
- There are strong indications that road construction has been an important element all along.
  - “the City Council believes that in the interest of the environment, traffic safety and accessibility, it is absolutely necessary to complete the development of the main road network in Trondheim [...]” (the decision document for the Transport plan for Trondheim 2006-2015)
- A possible explanation to why traffic increasing measures were included in a plan aiming at reducing traffic volumes might be that some problems were deliberately reframed so that road construction were a part of the solution, not the problem.



# How does scale influence framing?

- Scale affects:
  - how we frame the situation and the problem
  - which measures are seen as appropriate
  - which measures will be implemented
  - which outcomes are expected
- *“Analyzing problems at different scales will continue in planning, but planners and planning institutions can shift scale to identify alternative solutions” (Lowe 2011:58).*
- Change of scale can happen in two ways:
  - Positively - to alter an unsolvable problem so it becomes solvable.
  - Negatively - to justify measures that were not supported in the original scale.
- **Hypothesis:** The politicians deliberately changed scale to justify road construction and increased capacity.



# How does scale influence framing?

- **Hypothesis:** The politicians deliberately changed scale to justify road construction and increased capacity.
- The identified problems in the local scale in Trondheim are not unsolvable without road construction; the politicians could simply have chosen not to increase the capacity.
  - A positive change of scale has thus not occurred
  - Whether a negative change of scale has occurred is unknown.
- One explanation to why traffic increasing measures were included in a plan aiming at reducing traffic volumes, seems to be that local targets were prioritized above global targets.



	<b>The package says</b>	<b>Experts says</b>	<b>The politicians line of reasoning</b>	<b>Their solution</b>
<b>Reframing the problem</b>	CO <sub>2</sub> -emissions and increased traffic volumes is a problem.	CO <sub>2</sub> -emissions and increased traffic volumes is a problem. Road capacity should not be increased.	Congestion is a problem that must be solved, increasing the road capacity will help solve this problem.	Constructing new road capacity.
<b>Scale</b>	CO <sub>2</sub> -emissions and increased traffic volumes is a problem, as well as traffic through central and residential areas. Scale not mentioned specifically.	CO <sub>2</sub> -emissions is a global problem. Reduced traffic volumes will lead to lower CO <sub>2</sub> -emissions and fewer cars in central and residential areas. Road capacity should not be increased.	Congestion is a problem that must be solved, alongside with reducing traffic in central and residential areas.	Constructing new road capacity and new roads that leads traffic outside central and residential areas.



## Why do politicians include traffic increasing measures in a plan aiming at reducing traffic volumes?

- The politicians see road construction as a solution to other problems than those defined in the main goal.
- They mainly focus on local challenges when explaining the necessity of road construction
  - In a global perspective, road construction is not a solution as it can exacerbate the same challenges.
- Almost all of them truly believe they will be able to reach their main goal.
  - ...even though they have been told otherwise!





# How to improve the decision making process?

- Planner and advisors must ensure that politicians are actually aware of the consequences of their actions.
  - Effects from each measure should be clearly defined and displayed
  - Overall effects from combined measures should be clearly defined and displayed
  - Conflicts between wanted measures and stated goals should be emphasized and problematized.
- Alternative measures which meets stated goals should be shown.



# References

- Lowe, K. (2011): *Neighborhood, City, or Region: Deconstructing Scale in Planning Frames*. Berkeley Planning Journal, 24(1).
- Ministry of Transport and Communications. (2004): *National Transport Plan 2006-2015*. Report No. 24 (2003–2004). Oslo
- Municipality of Trondheim. (2006): *Transport Plan for Trondheim 2006-2015*. Exposure draft. Trondheim.
- Municipality of Trondheim. (2008a): *The City of Trondheim Environmental Package for Transport - a settlement between the six parties in Trondheim city council*. Case number 0167/08. Archive case number 01/23491. Trondheim.
- Rein, M. & Schön, D. 1993. *Reframing Policy Discourse (i ed. Fischer, F. & Forester, J. 1993. The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning)*. Duke University Press, Durham and London
- Schön, D.A. & Rein, M. 1994. *Frame Reflection. Toward the Resolution of Intractable Policy Controversies*. Basic Books, New York
- Tennøy, A. 2012. *How and why planners make plans which, if implemented, cause growth in traffic volumes. Explanations related to the expert knowledge, the planners, and the plan-making processes*. Thesis no. 2012:1, Norwegian University of Life Sciences UMB, Ås.