

## *Evidence based ex-post evaluations in the transport sector*

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Infrastructure plays a central role in modern society where well-functioning systems within transport, communication, power-supply, sewerage, etc. are necessities for the day-to-day life and for business/industry. They represent an enormous value to society and the annual expenditure on new infrastructure projects and on improvement, upgrades, and maintenance of existing infrastructure amounts to several billion kroner as presented by the Danish Productivity Commission (2014). Even though the public authorities spend vast amounts on these projects, very little information exists regarding whether they actually deliver value for money and whether they achieve their expected impacts. In recent years, there have been a number of studies indicating that *ex ante* appraisals of these projects are often inaccurate. In particular, the traffic forecasts and associated travel time savings have proven to deviate considerably when comparing expected and actual outcomes for completed projects. Due to the lack of systematic evaluation practices we are rarely able to determine whether the consequence of these inaccuracies leads to problematic policy-making, nor prevent us to learn about their causes.

The Danish transport sector is an under-evaluated policy field. While *ex ante* methods are well established in the sector, *ex post* studies of effects and outcomes are not included in current general planning, policy or performance management frameworks. When conducted, evaluation studies are usually *ad hoc* or sub-program specific and do not follow a consistent approach. This makes comparison of results from these studies problematic. This contrasts with more developed evaluation practices in fields such as education, health, social, and innovation policies.

The transport and infrastructure policy area involves spending very substantial public and private funds. *It is important for society to ensure the highest benefits in return for these expenses.* Recent reviews made by the Danish Infrastructure Commission and The Danish Productivity Commission have found that not all adopted policies and projects fulfil the desired objectives, despite the existence of well-developed *ex ante* assessment frameworks. Moreover, research projects such as UNITE<sup>1</sup> have shown how *ex post* evaluations can help reveal discrepancies between estimated cost and the actual cost, as well as over-estimation of benefits such as ridership, toll revenue or travel time savings

This short presentation, thus, will set the scene for future *ex-post* evaluations based upon findings and perspectives from UNITE as well as underpin the latter by proposing new visions and objectives within the evidence based *ex-post* evaluation in the transport sector.

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<sup>1</sup> Findings revealed from a recently completed research project *Uncertainties in Transport Project Evaluation* (UNITE) funded by the Danish Strategic research council (2009-2014)