



Managing transport futures: The problem of not seeing mobilities

Tim Richardson
tim@plan.aau.dk

Trafikdage på Aalborg Universitet 2007

turning the tide

‘Can controversial transport policy actions be implemented as originally intended, or is implementation contingent upon the original proposals being weakened to become acceptable?’

Banister, 2003: 249

two reasons for failing to see mobilities

- thin simplifications and making mobile subjects
- [in]effective deliberation

1. thin simplifications and
making mobile subjects

putting meaning into 'mobility'

- Mobility as empirically real 'brute fact':
 - getting from A → B
- Mobility as representation:
 - 'The brute fact of mobility becomes synonymous with freedom, transgression, with creativity, with life itself'
- Embodied mobility:
 - 'human mobility is an irreducibly embodied experience. Mobile people are never simply people – they are dancers and pedestrians, drivers and athletes, refugees and citizens, tourists or businesspeople, men and women'

thin simplifications

- effective governing needs an ability to forge tools of legibility
- render visible the territory and its population
- systematic creation of stylized facts
 - brute facts and disembodied representations

a typical example of the production of stylised facts and disembodied representations

Congestion delays grow as gridlock grips region

Most roads slower than a year ago

EXCLUSIVE

Tom Smithard
Political Correspondent

ALMOST two-thirds of the main roads in the region are more congested now than they were a year ago, the *Yorkshire Post* can reveal.

Motorists had to struggle through 1,180 more minutes of delays than the year before, figures released by the Highways Agency under the Freedom of Information Act show.

On one particular 30-mile stretch between Manchester and Barnsley, motorists are now subjected to 30 minutes of delay on average – up from 22 minutes in the year 2004 to 2005, when the figures were first compiled.

And the congestion is even worse on the return journey where motorists face delays lasting more than 36 minutes – up from less than 23 in 2004 to 2005.

Other problem roads include the M62, where drivers can expect 25 minutes of delay on average on the 49 miles from Manchester to Pontefract and 35 minutes on the return journey. In 2004 and 2005 it was 20 and 24 respectively.

The information comes from the Highways Agency's statistics that work out how long motorists are stuck in queues for every day – congestion during the rush hour is likely to be much worse. Congestion decreased on just 10 out of 28 routes analysed.

The *Yorkshire Post's* Road to Ruin campaign aims to highlight the lack of transport funding in the region and calls on the Government to provide more. It is hoped the figures will help pile pressure on Ministers to provide more money.



This year the Government spent £215 per person on transport services in Yorkshire against the English average of £305. Londoners received £614 per head.

Following last month's announcement that £5.5bn is to be spent upgrading the Thameslink rail line in London between 2009 and 2014, while mere millions are going towards improvements in Yorkshire, that disparity is only set to grow worse.



■ **Tory tax plan on lorries: P2**

■ **Editorial Comment: P12**

Tory MP for Shipley Philip Davies said: "These congestion figures are the inevitable consequence of under-investment in transport infrastructure in Yorkshire over a number of years."

"Everybody locally knows that the situation is getting worse but unfortunately that

doesn't seem to have come through to transport ministers yet.

"This is a huge issue for businesses locally and inhibiting Yorkshire's ability to grow economically. The situation is getting worse and it is high time the Government sat up and began to listen to what the *Yorkshire Post's* Road to Ruin campaign is telling them."

In a letter to this newspaper, the new Minister for Yorkshire, Caroline Flint, claimed that over the last six years Yorkshire had received the greatest increase in funding for road and rail projects of any of the English regions.

But she said she recognised that transport funding remains a key issue and one she promised to pursue with Government colleagues.

Mr Davies added: "These statistics completely fly in the face of what Caroline Flint said recently."

"I think these regional ministers are a complete waste of time but if we are to have one she should be fighting her Government colleagues to get extra investment for transport in the region rather than pretending everything is fine. We can clearly see now that it isn't."

The Highways Agency has picked 14 town-to-town journeys along all the major roads it controls in the region, including the M1, A1M, M18, M62, M180, A64 and A66.

It then analysed traffic flow in each direction, giving 28 routes.

Only the 12-mile section of the M1 between Wakefield and Garforth suffers negligible congestion, with just one minute of delay on average each way.

tom.smithard@ypn.co.uk

Comment



YORKSHIRE POST

"The Yorkshire Post will lay before the public information both exhaustive and precise."

FOUNDED AS THE LEEDS INTELLIGENCER, 1754

Gridlock on road to ruin

Brown must act over congestion

NO policy better exemplifies Labour's failure to tackle the North-South divide than transport. So, in the month when a new report highlighted the extent to which Britain is becoming a two-tier country, it is no surprise, therefore, to learn that Yorkshire's main roads are now more congested than a year ago.

This revelation will come as absolutely no surprise to all those commuters who are dependent upon their cars to travel to work. They can see with their own eyes, as they sit in lengthening queues, that Yorkshire's transport infrastructure is chronically out-of-date as a result of decades of under-funding.

The key question, as always, is how the Government intends to address this issue. As this newspaper's Road to Ruin campaign has highlighted, levels of transport funding in Yorkshire still lag behind the rest of the country, and especially London.

However the evidence suggests that Ministers are still in denial about the scale of this challenge, despite five local MPs now sitting in Gordon Brown's Cabinet. The first utterance of Caroline Flint, the new Yorkshire

Minister, was to suggest that the problem was not as serious as contended.

Furthermore, when it came to the recent launch of the Government's rail strategy, and how commuters can be encouraged to use public transport, the majority of Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly's speech, and the Conservative Party's feeble response, focused on costly new schemes for London and the Home Counties. It was as if Yorkshire does not matter.

Yet, if this region is to remain an attractive proposition for existing businesses and potential new investors, transport does matter. Road links are important. But so, too, is the provision of a reliable and affordable rail and bus service which becomes the preferred mode of travel for a far greater number of working people.

This, however, will not happen if the Government's transport vision remains so biased in London's favour. Mr Brown was elected to lead the whole country. He promised opportunity and fairness for all. But this will not happen if the Prime Minister's policy denies Yorkshire the transport infrastructure that the region requires if it is to prosper in the long-term.

making mobile
subjects:
new business elites

'given that Joburg's most dynamic and fastest growing sectors are service industries, it becomes important to take into account the efficiency of the movement of professional businesspersons in and around Joburg.... And around South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa' (Joburg 2030)

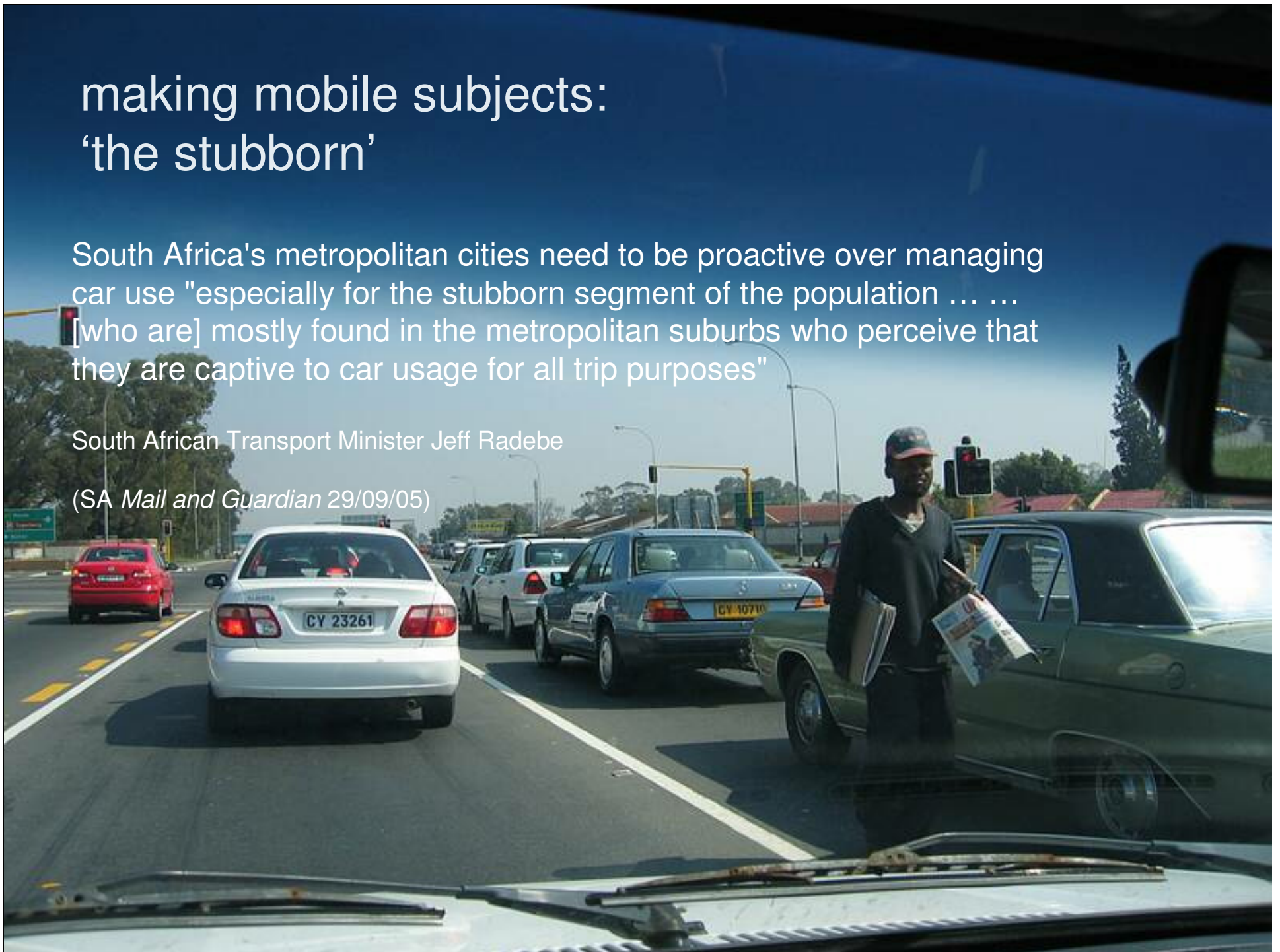


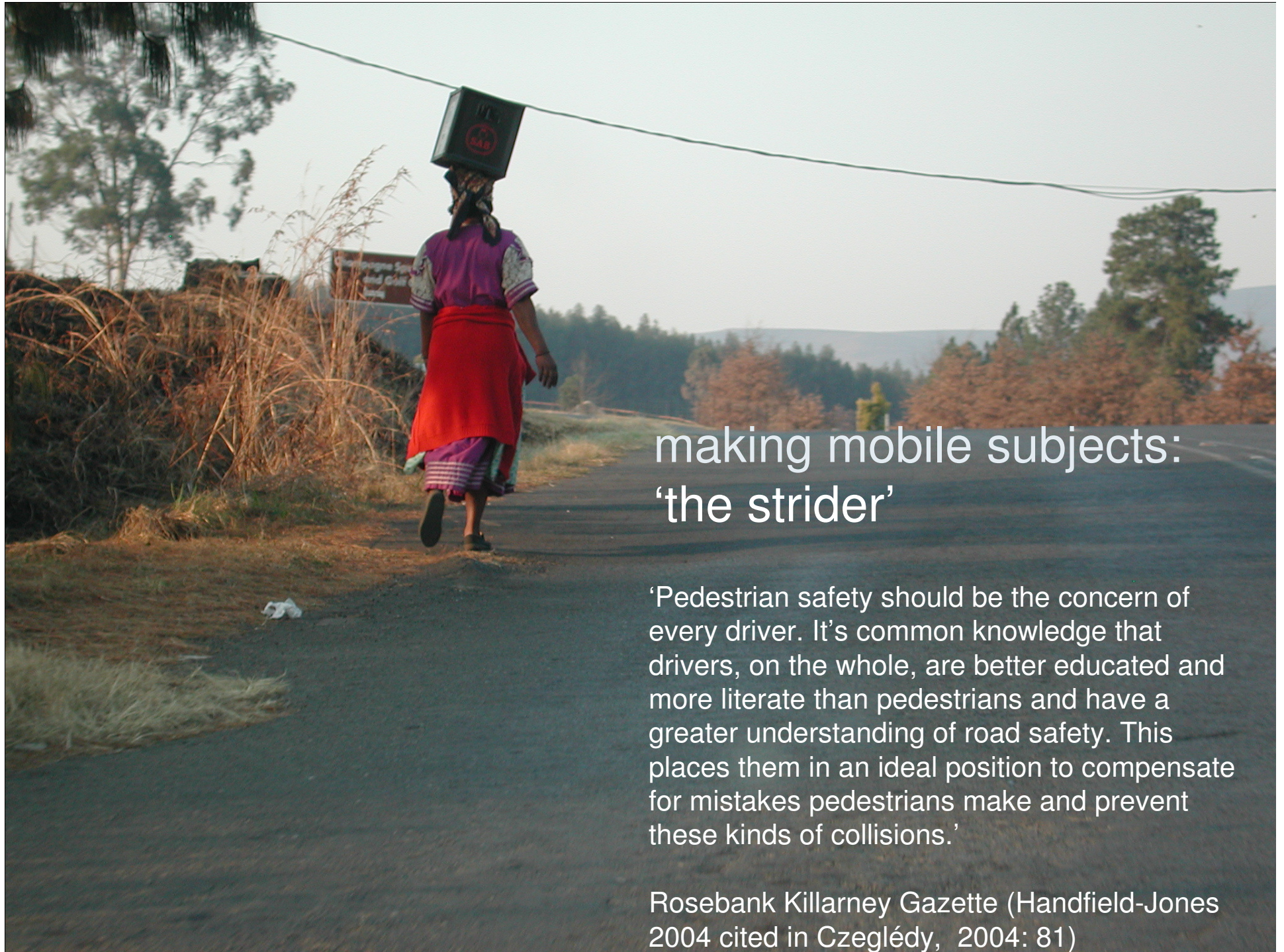
making mobile subjects: 'the stubborn'

South Africa's metropolitan cities need to be proactive over managing car use "especially for the stubborn segment of the population ... [who are] mostly found in the metropolitan suburbs who perceive that they are captive to car usage for all trip purposes"

South African Transport Minister Jeff Radebe

(*SA Mail and Guardian* 29/09/05)





making mobile subjects: 'the strider'

'Pedestrian safety should be the concern of every driver. It's common knowledge that drivers, on the whole, are better educated and more literate than pedestrians and have a greater understanding of road safety. This places them in an ideal position to compensate for mistakes pedestrians make and prevent these kinds of collisions.'

Rosebank Killarney Gazette (Handfield-Jones 2004 cited in Czeglédy, 2004: 81)

2. [in]effective deliberation

'Beijing traffic control system works smoothly on 1st day'



Shanghai Daily, 17 August 2007

<http://english.sina.com/1/2007/0817/122076.html>



‘If we had not had the traffic controls we could not have maintained this level because the temperature and humidity were very high. So we can see the restrictions worked’

Yu Xianoxuan, environmental director of the Beijing Olympic Organising Committee

Reported by Jonathan Watts, 21 August 2007, [The Guardian](#)

International

All news must be good news, says Chinese government

Jonathan Watts in Beijing

China has ordered its media to report only positive news and has imprisoned a pro-democracy dissident amid a clamp-down on dissent ahead of the most important meeting of the communist party in five years.

Media controls have been tightened, Aids activists detained and NGOs shut down as president Hu Jintao prepares for the 17th party congress, when the next generation of national leaders will be unveiled in a politburo reshuffle.

Chen Shuqing, who is a founder member of the banned China Democracy party,

suffered the toughest punishment meted out so far when he was found guilty on Thursday of "inciting people to overthrow the government".

The intermediate people's court in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, sentenced him to four years in prison. Chen was an outspoken critic of the Communist party, although because of the tightly controlled traditional media his campaigning in recent years was largely restricted to the internet.

The free-speech group Reporters Without Borders said it was appalled by the verdict. "Courts taking their orders from the Communist party continue to crack down on cyber-dissidents," the Paris-

based organisation said. "We reiterate our appeal for the release of Chen and the 50 other cyber-dissidents and internet users held in China."

With the congress nearing – the exact date is a secret, but it is expected in October – the domestic media have been banned from conducting independent investiga-



More than 1m cars were ordered off the roads in Beijing as an experiment. Editors have been told what they can report

tions of food and product safety stories. In Beijing the municipal propaganda department has issued detailed instructions to editors on how they should cover the test of traffic-easing measures, which started today. During the four-day trial more than 1m cars have been ordered off the roads. Local newspapers and TV stations can only report on the improvements to the environment and transportation. Interviews with inconvenienced commuters or images of overcrowded buses are forbidden.

Most state media have also been banned from reporting on the collapse of a bridge in southern China which killed at least 41 people. Reporters said local officials

punched them and chased them from the scene of Monday's disaster.

On Wednesday the government issued new regulations that prohibit false news and illegal TV coverage. This is ostensibly a response to a fabricated report last month about cardboard being used as a filling for steamed buns. Zi Beijia, the TV journalist held responsible for the fake story, has been jailed for a year.

"This crackdown is a legal gun to the head to responsible journalists who want to report on the basis of facts," said Sophie Richardson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch.

guardian.co.uk/china »

building legitimacy for controversial policies: which deliberative strategy?

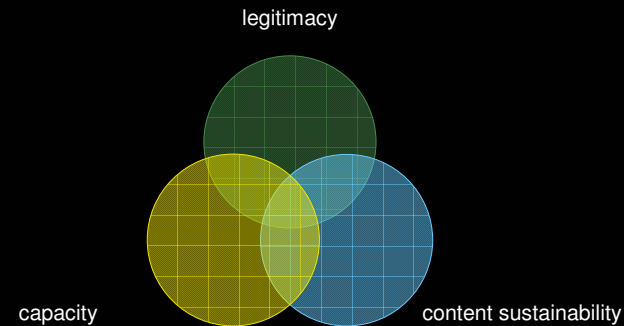
- politically risky
- urban planners, policy makers and politicians are forced to consider how they can legitimately introduce a policy that the public do not want
- should they seek full citizen support, or work strategically with key stakeholders towards implementation in the face of public opposition?

deliberation: just ripples on the surface?

- need for a 'careful analysis of these new practices of governance, without immediately suggesting that they all represent successful examples of deliberative democracy' (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003: 23)
- 'how much of the struggling is merely ripples on the surface of a settled modality of governance, what is shifting the parameters of established discourses and practice relations, and what is unsettling the whole culture of governance relations' (Healey, de Magalhaes et al., 2003: 67).

effective deliberation?

- **Content:** Advancing sustainable mobility?
- **Capacity:** Increased capacity for action?
- **Legitimacy:** Satisfy need for democratic legitimation?



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

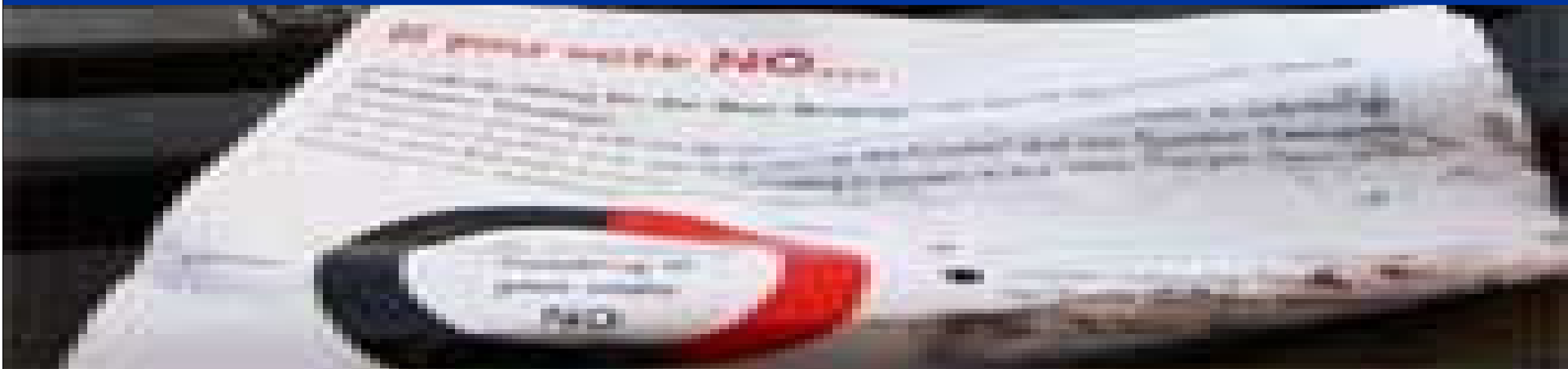
or public consensus?



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'



being strategic

- The level, range and intensity of opposition to road user charging will determine the likelihood of its adoption. The rejection of road user charging by the citizens of Edinburgh in March 2005, as well as the vigorous opposition to this proposal by adjacent local authorities and their citizens (Raje´ et al., 2004), demonstrates the importance of understanding and correctly gauging the local political dimensions in building any policy platform for the introduction of road user charging.
- R. McQuaid, M. Grieco (2005) 'Edinburgh and the politics of congestion charging: Negotiating road user charging with affected publics', *Transport Policy*, 12: 475–476.

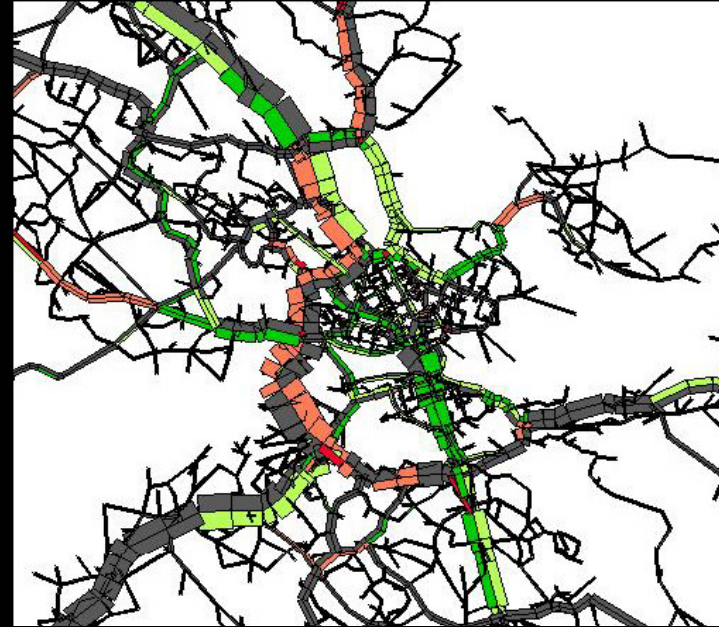
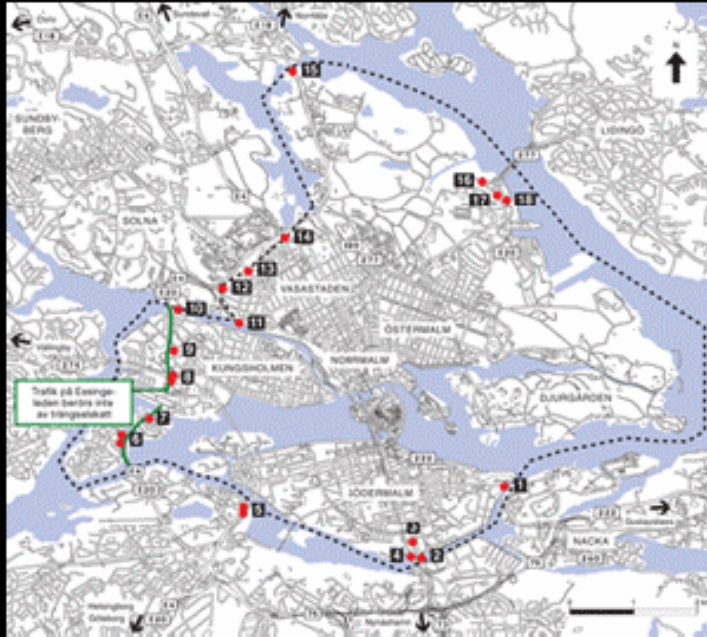
‘with’ or ‘against’ local consensus?

- ‘The experience of Edinburgh suggests that getting local voters to support a new tax is nigh on impossible.’
- ‘To implement schemes, local authorities will have to be brave in the face of their electorates.’
- Christian Wolmar (accessed 04/03/06 at http://www.christianwolmar.co.uk/articles/idea_knowledge/march2,06.shtml)

Machiavelli and 'political calculus'

- 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, D., Manville, M., and Shoup, D. (2007) 'The political calculus of congestion pricing', *Transport Policy* 14 (2007) 111–123.

the Stockholm trial



strategies revealed: a persuasive experiment creates the conditions for citizen consent

formal evaluation

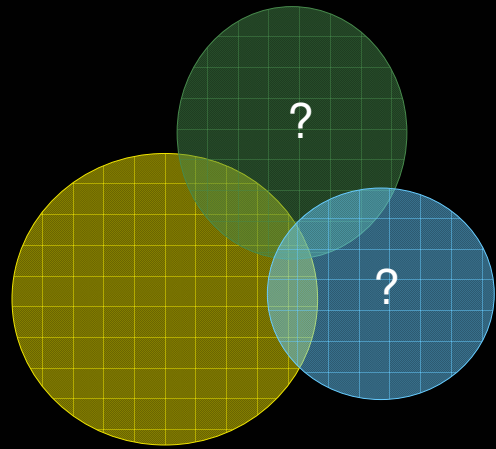
- 'For an entire day's charge period (24 h), the decline was about 22%, equivalent to 100,000 passages over the charge cordon.'
- 'People have become more positive as they have experienced the effects'
- 'In autumn 2005, about 55% of all county citizens believed that it was a "rather/very bad decision" to conduct the congestion-tax trial. Since the congestion tax was introduced in January 2006, this percentage has continuously fallen. In April and May 2006, 53% believed that it was a "rather/very good decision" while 41% believed that it was a "rather/very bad decision"'.

Beser Hugosson, M and Eliasson, J. (2006) *The Stockholm congestion charging system – an overview of the effects after six months*. Transek AB: Stockholm.

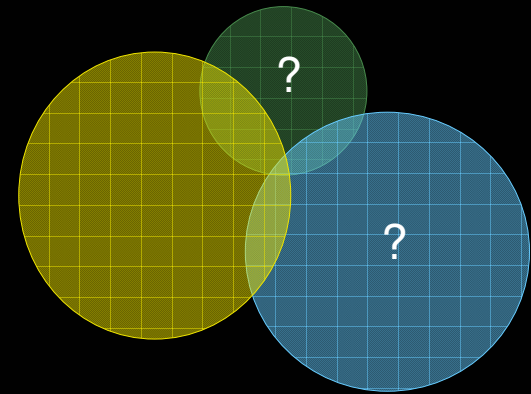
the deliberative strategy in Stockholm

- Trial + referendum = persuasion through experience
- Aimed to suppress deliberative conflict and work towards consensus
- Conflict free *but also content free*
- Lack of discussion over the issue of urban mobility

effective deliberation?

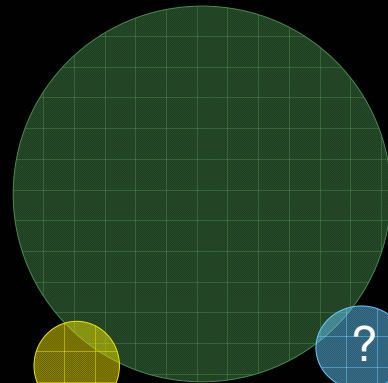


Stockholm



London

legitimacy



capacity

sustainability

Edinburgh

resonance in New York

- “When you want to change a fundamental pattern of living for a lot of people, you have to educate them. They have to believe that it’s going to be better than what they have, and you can’t do that in two months.”
- Richard Ravitch, former chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority

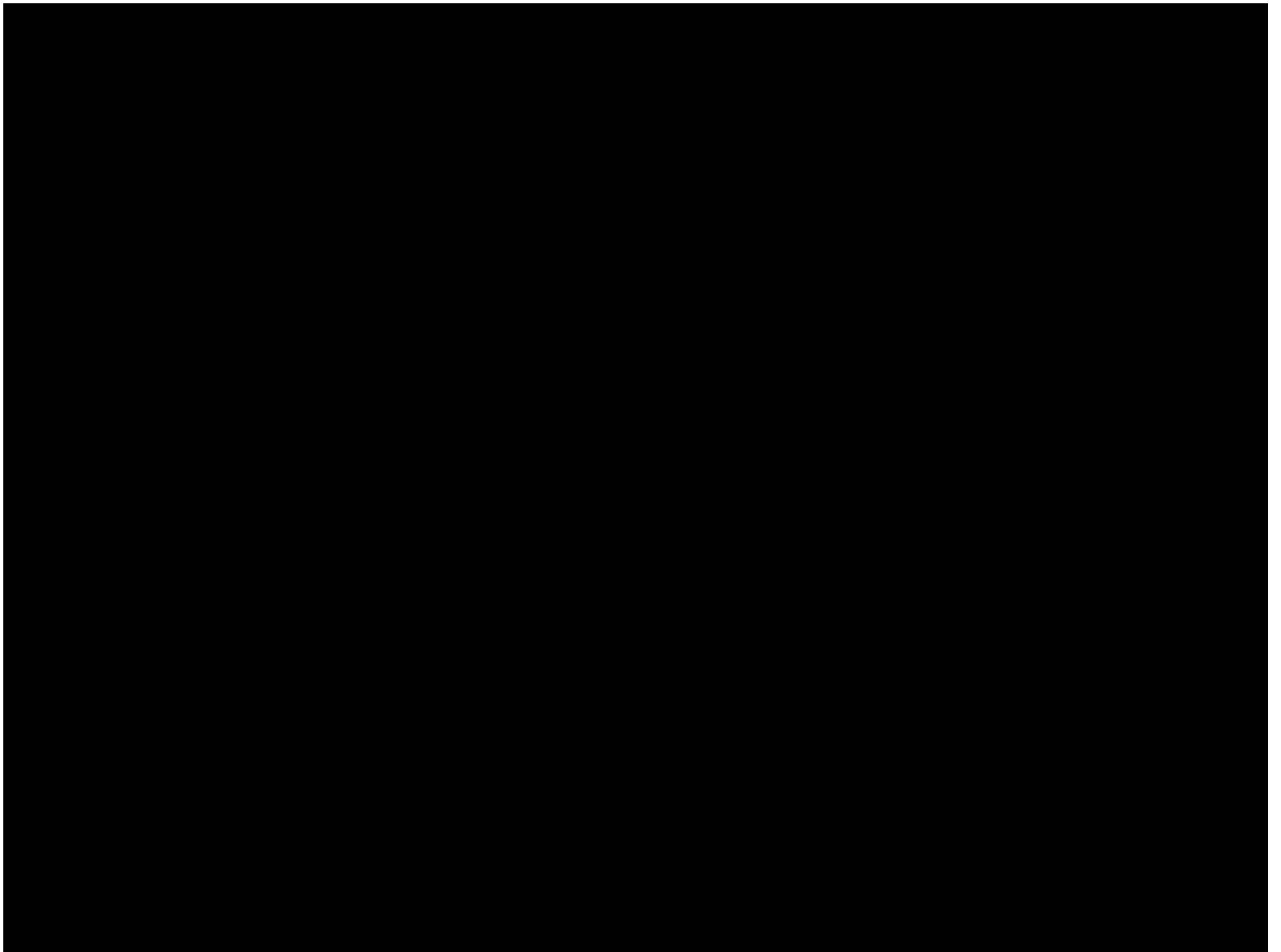
The New York Times, 18 July 2007

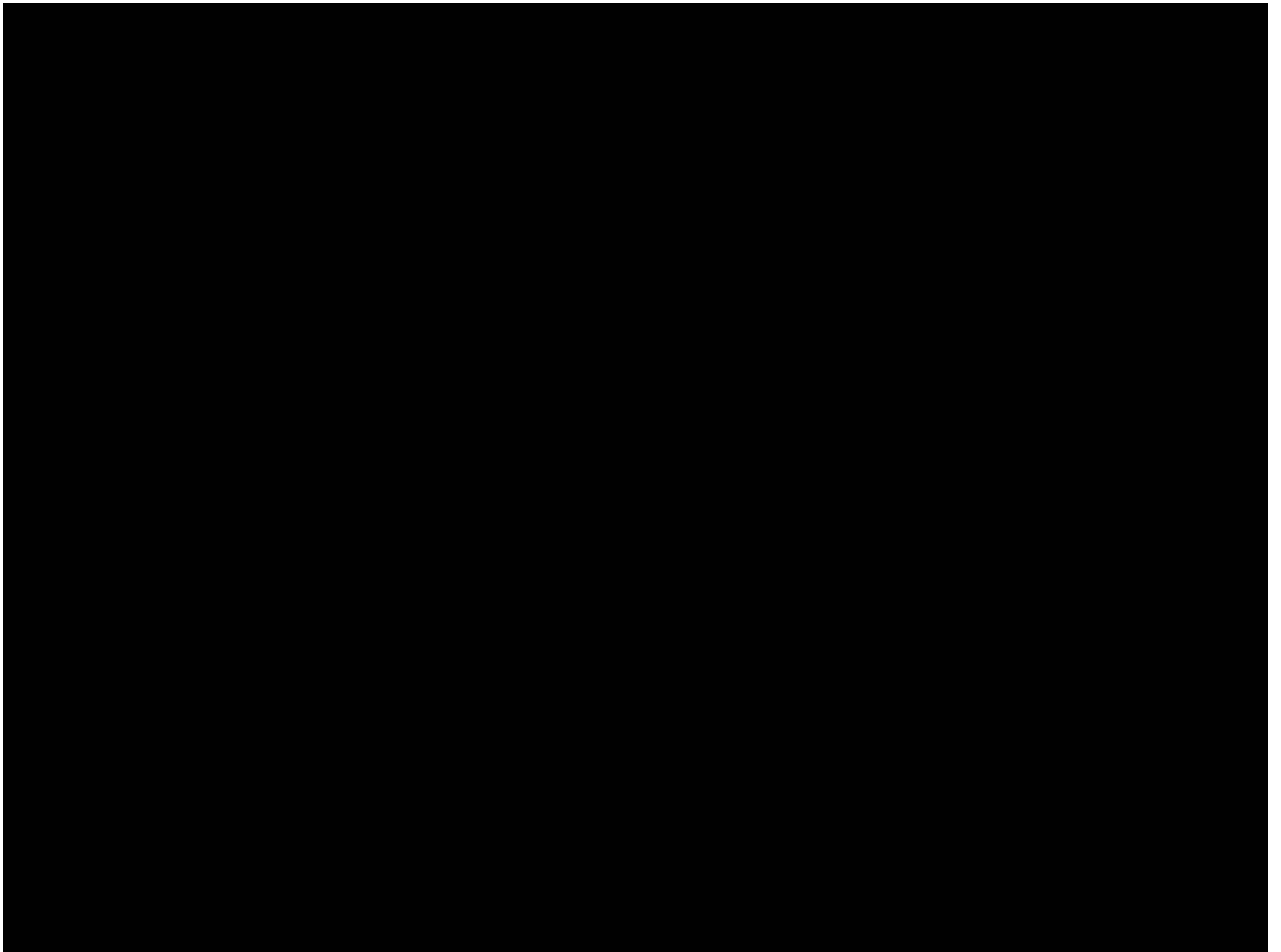
deliberative dilemma

- city politicians and planners are using complex deliberative strategies in engaging with citizens
- implications: reflexive engagements ask hard questions of our understanding and practice of 'good planning'

conclusion

- Thin simplifications: a need to understand more clearly how the 'brute facts' of transport planning reproduce certain ways of seeing, or not seeing mobility
- Need for a new ground for deliberation
- The value of multi-disciplinary perspectives on mobility





Critical contributions

- E.g. Goodwin
- From 'new transport realism' to government advisor to government critic
- Need for complementary perspectives

summary

- This paper addresses a central problem in managing transport futures: that the meaning of 'mobility' itself is often lost. That instead of engaging with difficult long term questions about mobile futures, there is instead a tendency to simplify the problems that need to be solved, using *thin simplifications*, which encourage the repeated identification of 'known' transport problems for which there are 'known' solutions. In this way, noticing the problem of congested roads often leads to demands for more roadspace, in spite of seemingly convincing argument and evidence to the contrary. The chance for reflexivity is lost, and 'traffic' becomes a proxy for 'mobility'. Often, in such situations, all important social and political questions about what sort of future mobilities are to be made possible, or alternatively restrained, is not opened up for deliberation. The paper argues that to avoid the tendency to policy lock in, which sustains logics such as 'predict and provide', there is a need to look beyond traditional disciplinary responses: beyond the critical economics which has been successful in challenging longstanding transport concepts, and towards the emerging mobilities turn in sociology (and other disciplines). This mobile sociology provides rather different tools which can allow mobility, rather than traffic, to be more fully understood. One particular approach, discussed here, is the identification of *mobile subjects* as a means to reveal the ways in which proposed transport interventions carry ideas about, and may result in, consequences for *who* should be mobile, and *how*. This may provide a reflexive moment in transport planning, which could in turn increase the prospects for *effective deliberation*, and a new ground for mobility dialogue. For example if 'we', as a transport planning community, consider sustainability to be important, then we cannot really avoid engaging in difficult and maybe risky dialogues about how tensions between modern life, mobility, and sustainability should be resolved. But to do this we first need to notice how our usual ways of seeing - or not seeing - mobility, can limit our chances to engage critically in such deliberation.
The paper departs from the problems experienced in Britain in moving away from a predict and provide approach to transport policy, and makes passing reference to urban policies for traffic restraint, in London, Stockholm and Beijing.
The past years have been difficult ones in Denmark for the transport discipline, but there is a fresh opportunity, with government reorganization and a new interest in transport issues, to recreate a reflexive transport planning community and a new ground for dialogue. There is a role for academics here, including those with trans-disciplinary perspectives, to engage with policy makers and planners as critical friends.