



Organisation does matter – planning for cycling in Stockholm and Copenhagen



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ABSTRACT

This article explores how the organisation of urban and transport planning departments affects the development of a sustainable transport system and the promotion of bicycling. Interviews conducted in Stockholm and Copenhagen showed that the organisation of the departments affects the social relations between the planners and creates power relations that either foster or marginalise cycling within planning processes. In Copenhagen, an integrated planning organisation allows for more knowledge exchange between urban, transport, and bicycle planners and creates an environment of understanding for different professional views on planning. However, this is not the case in Stockholm where cycling is marginalised in planning and in the existing infrastructure. This study concludes that the integrated transport and urban planning organisation in Copenhagen promotes cycling more than the less integrated planning organisation in Stockholm. Furthermore, it is concluded that the different organisations have led to different power relations that shape the outcome of the planning processes.

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1. Introduction

Cycling is frequently portrayed as a very sustainable mode of transport and has long been seen as an integral part of a sustainable transport system (e.g., Buehler and Pucher 2011, Handy et al. 2014). Because cycling has become a more important part of transport systems and of transport planning, it seems reasonable to take a closer look at cities that have successfully incorporated bicycling as a mode of transport compared to other cities. Previous studies (e.g., Buehler and Pucher 2012, Pucher and Buehler 2007 and 2008) have examined infrastructure and bicycle promotion, but it is also of interest to analyse other factors such as the organisation of transport planning departments. Such organisation might have a major impact on how prioritisations in transport planning are dealt with in a city, on the power relations between the planners, and on the modes of transport available. The relationship with other planning areas such as urban planning is also important. Urban planning affects what mode of transport people choose to get from point A to point B (Næss 2012 and Te Brömmelstroet and Bertolini 2010). Flyvbjerg and Petersen (1981), for example, stated the following:

Traditional planning theory does not go beyond the planning system itself and therefore cannot be used to analyse the relationship between planning and societal development. It is necessary to replace the subjective-idealistic conception in traditional theory by a more

materialistic understanding in order to explain why ideas, methods, and practices of planning and participation appear as they do. (Flyvbjerg and Petersen 1981:309)

Thus, understanding the social relations and the organisation of planning departments is very important for understanding why certain cities seem to plan for bicycling and certain cities do not. The aim of this article was to analyse and compare the organisation of transport and bicycle planning in Copenhagen, Denmark, a city that has managed bicycling very well, and in Stockholm, Sweden, a city that has not managed bicycling as well (Sick Nielsen et al. 2013 and Emanuel 2012). The empirical data for this article came from interviews conducted with representatives from the urban and transport planning departments in Copenhagen and Stockholm. It should be stressed that the empirical data in this article are qualitative data, and it should be made clear that this form of research cannot be generalised. Rather, it shows the importance of organisation when comparing Copenhagen and Stockholm. The three dimensions of power developed by Lukes (2005) and theories on integrated transport systems were used to analyse the data from the interviews. The interviews were connected to the theoretical framework on power relations in order to show how different types of organisations create different social relations from which power relations evolve that affect the outcome of the planning processes. It is argued that the interview material shows that the different organisations in Stockholm and Copenhagen created power relations that led to different levels of support for bicycling.

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2. Cycling in Copenhagen and Stockholm – explaining what is better or worse

Stockholm and Copenhagen are both Scandinavian capital cities and have good public transport systems. Both cities have similar weather conditions with mild summers and cold winters, although winters are generally slightly warmer in Copenhagen than in Stockholm (SMHI – The Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute 2014 and DMI – The Danish Meteorological Institute 2014). Copenhagen's population density is 6200 inhabitants/km² and Stockholm's is 4309 inhabitants/km² (Koglin 2014).

In the 1920s and 1930s, both Copenhagen and Stockholm had a high share of cycling in their modal split (Emanuel 2012). Calculating the modal split is not always statistically easy, but the two most recent national travel surveys of Denmark and Sweden show that Copenhagen now has a much higher share of cycling than Stockholm (see Table 1). Other calculations of mode share in Copenhagen and Stockholm exist, but the reliability of such data is quite questionable and this is why only data from the latest two travel surveys are used.

The higher share of cycling in Copenhagen might be explained by the city's greater density, but this explanation would leave many other factors out. In addition, the effects of population density are usually rather small, and urban design has a higher impact on the mode share than density (Næss 2012, Haugen 2012).

It can be argued that the differences in the modal split come from the much better bicycle infrastructure in Copenhagen compared to Stockholm. The backbone of Copenhagen's bicycle infrastructure is bicycle tracks that are separated from pedestrians and motorised traffic and frequently run alongside streets and roads. This system of bicycle tracks is a very good solution for improving the level of service, accessibility, and safety of cyclists (Koglin, 2013; Nilsson 2003). Special traffic lights for cyclists are installed at many intersections in Copenhagen, and these turn green before the traffic lights for motorised traffic turn green. At intersections that are regulated by traffic lights, the bicycle tracks are led into bicycle lanes that are marked in a different colour, and this arrangement contributes considerably to the accessibility and safety of bicyclists (Koglin 2013; Elvik and Vaa 2005).

The city of Copenhagen has plans and policies that deal with issues of bicycling in the city, including the Copenhagen Bicycle Strategy 2011–2025, which is a continuation of the Cycle Policy 2002–2012, and the Cycle Priority Plan 2006–16 (City of Copenhagen 2011, 2002 and 2009). The Copenhagen Bicycle Strategy includes directions for bicycle planning and lays out concrete goals, and the Cycle Priority Plan describes the implementation of measures and policies concerning safety, accessibility, etc., for cyclists. Additionally, the Traffic and Environmental Plan 2004 contains information about the planning initiatives for bicycling and how much funding is allocated for investments in bicycle infrastructure (City of Copenhagen 2005).

The situation in Stockholm is quite different. The bicycle infrastructure is built mainly on bicycle lanes (lanes painted on the streets), and this means that there is rarely any separate bicycle infrastructure. Bicycle lanes are better than no bicycle infrastructure, but they are not as good as bicycle tracks in terms of safety and accessibility (Koglin 2013; Nilsson 2003). Moreover, bicyclists in Stockholm are seldom prioritised at intersections as they are in Copenhagen, and this leads to reduced accessibility for bicyclists (Koglin 2013; Elvik and Vaa 2005).

In 2012 Stockholm developed a new and comprehensive bicycle plan to improve the bicycle infrastructure throughout the entire city (City of Stockholm 2012). Stockholm had some bicycle plans before 2012, but one only covered the inner city and one only covered the outer parts of the city (Trafikkontoret 2005, 2006).

Table 1

Bicycle share of the modal split in Stockholm and Copenhagen. Source: National Travel Survey Data Sweden and Denmark.^a

	Stockholm (%)	Copenhagen (%)
Bicycle share in 2005/2006	4	25
Bicycle share in 2011/2013	3	27

^a The data for the modal split come from the databases for the national travel surveys in Sweden 2005/2006 and 2012/2013 and Denmark 2006/2007 and 2012/2013 and calculate the mode share for all trips that start or end in the city of Stockholm or Copenhagen.

Differences in the bicycle infrastructure between Stockholm and Copenhagen are illustrated by the pictures in Figs. 1 and 2 that were taken during bicycle rides in Stockholm and Copenhagen by the author. Although these pictures clearly show that Copenhagen has a better bicycle infrastructure, it is important to note that there are currently 12 on-going bicycle infrastructure projects in Stockholm. Their goal is either to build new bicycle tracks or to improve the existing ones (City of Stockholm 2014a). However, Copenhagen has 14 on-going bicycle infrastructure projects designed to improve and expand the bicycle network (City of Copenhagen 2014a). When looking at the on-going projects in Copenhagen and Stockholm, it becomes clear that the projects in Stockholm are often concerned with minor improvements of the existing infrastructure such as broadening the bicycle tracks or building some smaller routes for bicycle and pedestrian tracks (City of Stockholm 2014a). In Copenhagen, the on-going projects are major infrastructure projects to develop large routes throughout the city and to broaden important commuting routes. The differences in infrastructure correspond to the funding allocated to bicycle measures by the two cities. Table 2 shows the funding allocated in the budgets of Copenhagen and Stockholm to bicycling from 2010 until 2014. Copenhagen invested more than twice as much in cycling than Stockholm during the past four years, and it is likely to invest even more in the future.

When one considers the history of cycling in the two cities, the difference becomes even larger. Cycling has been on the agenda in Copenhagen for a much longer time. In the late 19th century, the first bicycle track was built because accidents between cyclists and horses and carriages were seen as a problem and many streets were made out of gravel, which was not so good for cycling. The focus on cycling has been strong since then, but during the 1960s and 1970s the focus of transport planning in Copenhagen shifted more towards motorised traffic. However, the bicycle infrastructure had already been built and since the 1980s the focus has shifted back towards cycling (interview with persons G, 2010 and E, 2010). In Stockholm during the early 20th century, the streets were made out of cobblestone and different transport modes were mixed without any major problems. Thus, special infrastructure for cyclists did not seem important. The car entered Swedish cities in general earlier than Danish cities, due especially to the automobile industry in Sweden, and since the 1950s the priority of transport planners in Stockholm has been on motorised traffic and not on cycling (Emanuel 2012; Koglin 2013, 2014).

3. Transport planning organisation in Stockholm and Copenhagen

As described above, there are several aspects that have contributed to the fact that cycling has become such an important issue in Copenhagen and not in Stockholm (Koglin 2014). However, one important aspect of this difference is concerned with the organisation of the planning departments in the two cities. It is, of course, not easy to prove how much of an impact the organisations

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