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## The Politics of Transport Policy in the Greater Copenhagen Region

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This project was focused on understanding the political conditions and factors that led to the emergence and development of a sustainable transportation regime during the postwar period in the Greater Copenhagen Region.

In recent years the Danish capital of Copenhagen and the surrounding metropolitan region have been lauded by international observers as paragons of sustainable transportation. Through local and national government policy aimed at ensuring tight coordination between urban expansion and mass transit investments, Copenhagen's city-region has become famous for its transit-oriented development model. In the past two decades public resources have also been used to boost cycling rates to record levels as well as construct an expanding underground metro system. Taken together, these public commitments have resulted in the consolidation of a strong sustainable transportation regime. While much has already been written about the content of the policies and programs undergirding the emergence and development of this regime, the focus of this research is squarely on technical and financial aspects. In contrast, little work has been done to uncover the political conditions and factors that made it possible for sustainable transportation to emerge and take root in the Greater Copenhagen Region.

Drawing on the tools of historical institutionalism, the methodology of this project was firmly rooted in a systematic collection and organization of information on government policies and programs that helped and hindered the emergence and development of sustainable transportation over the postwar period. This involved locating and extracting relevant information from a large number of primary and secondary Danish-language and English-language source materials. Using this information, the project produced a highly detailed timeline of events covering a half-century of local and national government action. These events covered a wide range of phenomena: from the election of governments and cabinets and the appointment of particular individuals to public office, to parliamentary and council debates, and the passing and enactment of specific laws; from the publication of government and third-party reports and consultation proceedings, to the occurrence of street protests.

Analyzing the information contained in the project's events timeline has produced a number of important findings. What becomes clear from bringing together such a wide array of information is that the development of the sustainable transportation regime in the Greater Copenhagen Region has followed a non-linear path. Contrary to the suggestions of existing research, I find that there has been no single big bang moment of policy change that either radically recast the region's transportation system. Instead, Greater Copenhagen's sustainable transportation regime is the result of periods of forward movement as well as periods of regress. The key findings of this project relate to the ways in which political conditions and factors have determined the speed and scope of this non-linearity in the development of sustainable transportation in the Greater Copenhagen Region.

Given the central role played by large-scale public investments, it would be easy to assume that Greater Copenhagen's sustainable transportation regime was made possible by a central state that was both strong and electorally dominated by the left. The reality, however, is more complicated. Periodic state weakness has been crucial in producing not just positive change but also minimizing negative change in sustainable transportation in Greater Copenhagen. Most notably, the region's transit-oriented development model, the so-called Finger Plan, was developed and championed by non-state actors and became a reality, in the absence of state legislation, as a result of the influence of non-state actors. Private actors also played an important role in influencing the content of Denmark's national roads policy. This helped contribute to a comparative underinvestment in the motorway system in the capital region, which in turn later facilitated the expansion of non-car-based modes of transportation.

Decentralization has also been a key driver of the development of sustainable transportation. This is particularly true in the case of public-sector support for cycling in the past quarter-century. Whereas electoral support is more balanced between the left and right at the national level as a result of a proportional electoral system encouraging multi-party coalition politics, at the local level in Copenhagen and surrounding municipalities, the left is electorally dominant. Proportional electoral rules exist at the local level, too, but here they have worked to produce strong competition within and between parties on the left, which over time has gradually led to electoral outbidding and a race-to-the-top in terms of cycling infrastructure investments. In addition, as a result of decentralization, pro-cycling organized interests have been able to muster the resources necessary to influence council decision making across multiple policy sectors; something that would have been much more difficult to achieve if powers had been concentrated at the national level.

The electoral strength of the political right at the national level has also been an important determinant of public investments favoring the long-term development of sustainable transportation in Greater Copenhagen. In the early postwar period it was the right's electoral strength outside of Copenhagen that contributed to a de-prioritization of highway investments in the country's capital region. "Small-government" right-wing politics also played a crucial role in the canceling of large-scale car-based investments in Copenhagen following the international oil crises of the early and late 1970s. This reduced importance of motorways allowed modes of sustainable transportation to become embedded both physically and ideationally in Greater Copenhagen to a much larger extent than in many cities in other countries during the same period. Finally, by the time right-wing governments achieved strong electoral mandates at the national level in the 2000s, they had come to adopt new electoral strategies with a fresh focus on metropolitan Copenhagen. This spatial reorientation was heavily influenced by ongoing re-structuring in the global economy, which favored the promotion of competitive capital regions. Though the impetus for this change was exogenous in important ways, due to the nature of prior endogenous processes at the local and national levels already described, the right strategically accommodated itself to support the transit-oriented development model already firmly anchored by this stage.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from these findings. The first is that large-scale outside forces have played an important role, albeit either in very obvious ways on rare occasions or less obviously by exerting their influence gradually over time. This has been the case with the oil crises of the 1970s as well as the global economic restructuring and growth in environmental awareness that these crises set in motion. The role of these large-scale changes in producing a sustainable transportation regime is, however, far from a direct one. Instead, the import and impact of these exogenous processes have been mediated and moderated by the institutions and structures of local and national politics. Central here in the case of Denmark is the country's local and national proportional electoral systems and its high degree of decentralization. Finally, given the specific ways in which party programs and party competition emerge from and play out in such a context, the case of Greater Copenhagen demonstrates some surprising aspects of decisions and actions that promote sustainable transportation. Decisions that ultimately facilitate sustainable transportation in the long term may well have had another, even contrary, original intent. Moreover, decisions and actions that promote sustainable transportation in the short term may actually result from state incapacity as well as conscious strategic action by groups that in other contexts would resist investments in mass public transit.