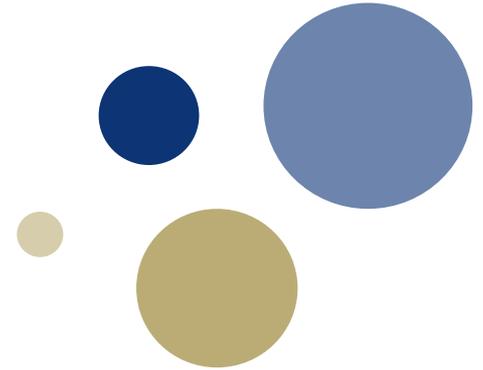




NTNU – Trondheim
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology



Bus or light rail? The shaping of urban public transport in Trondheim and Bergen

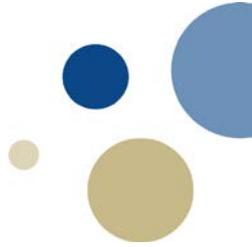
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CenSES, 2018

Alternative leading objects for Trondheim and Bergen



Trondheim and Bergen: a car-based mobility system - car as 'the leading object' (Lefebvre 1971)

Problems of congestion, land use, air pollution. Strong car frame in both cities

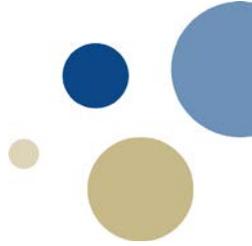
'Alternative leading object': public transport technology that dominates political discussions and investments

Trondheim: metro bus system

Bergen: light rail system

Research question: How do urban planners and local policy makers decide upon public transport systems in a specific local context, and with what effects?

Methods



Compare two cases of alternative leading objects

Data material:

1 month observational study in transport planning agencies

Interviews with planners and policy-makers

Document studies

Case 1: Alternative leading object for Trondheim

Previous debates concerned extending tramline, build separate light rail system or upgrade bus system

Put great effort in upgrading bus system since 2008

Trondheim as a 'bus city'



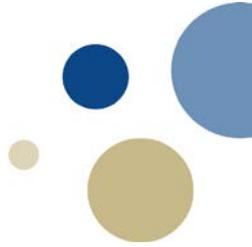
1: Topography and demography

‘Bus city’ framing overallly related to Trondheim’s topography and demography:

“The choice of public transport technology relates to size and settlement. A light rail is conducive to transporting many people over long distances, like in Bergen, but Trondheim is a circle-shaped and small city. The bus gives greater flexibility because Trondheim does not yet have clear axes of settlement like Bergen.”

(Urban planner in Trondheim)

2: Bus as socially inclusive technology



“A light rail only benefits those living close to it. The bus, by contrast, is for everyone, no matter where they live.”

(Representative County Authority)

3: Low costs, flexibility and quick results

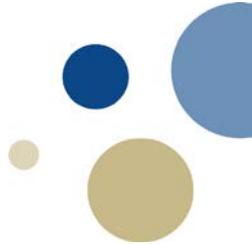
“If we had started planning for a light rail in 2008, we would not have had any results to show by now.”

(Representative County Authority)

“A bus system gives a lot more transport for the money than a light rail.”

(Urban planner in Trondheim)

Bus as a short-term solution?



“Our bus success from 2008 is now making problems for us. During rush hours, it is almost impossible to get through the city centre by bus. We will now introduce a new technology to solve this problem: the metro bus. The metro bus will be ‘the light rail’ of Trondheim.”

(Regional transport stakeholder)

Solution: metro bus

Metro bus system from August 2019 - vehicles with larger passenger capacity

- Metro bus as hybrid technology with similarities to light rail (accessibility, reliability, design, movement)
- 'A light rail on wheels'
- Three metro lines will contribute to densify settlement along the routes



Case 2: Alternative leading object for Bergen

Long history of rail transport (tram from 1897)

Tram system replaced with buses and trolley buses in 1960s'

First plans for light rail in 1970s' met massive resistance

City Council decided in 2000 to construct a light rail line





“There was a never-ending debate regarding passenger capacity, and I used to say jokingly ‘one more passenger and the light rail project will fall apart’.”

(Regional politician)

Make the light rail both a practical and *symbolic* project

1: Topography and demography

“Bergen has a linear city shape where the inhabitants are mainly concentrated in the Bergen valley, so it is easier to cover our transport needs with a light rail running through this valley.”

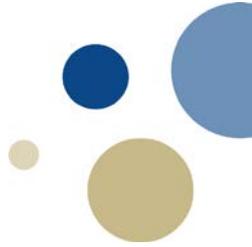
(Regional transport stakeholder)

2: Light rail as an attractive alternative leading object

“People choose the light rail because it has frequent departures, it is very predictable and it is comfortable to use. They even prefer to use the light rail during rush hours when it is very crowded instead of taking the bus, which runs close by.”

(Regional transport stakeholder)

Light rail promoted as in line with, but also contributing to the symbolic identity of Bergen as a modern and attractive city



Conclusion

Alternative leading objects (metro bus and light rail) presented as solutions to similar problems (land use, congestion, air pollution)

Trondheim and Bergen argued to have *different* city identities (topography and demography were important aspects)

Main point: Ideas, interpretations and expectations of the cities' identities guided the choice of alternative leading objects, and the alternative leading objects contributed in strengthening city identity

Important to make effective city identities and make particular alternative leading objects part of these identities

