

WP4. Citizen-Consumers and Voluntary Instruments for LETS

Project leader	Contact details
Mikael Klintman, Ass. Prof. Research Policy Institute Lunds University Box 117 221 00 Lund	Doctoral exam: 2000
	Pers. No: 680322-4135
	Tel: 046-222 38 97
	E-mail: mikael.klintman@fpi.lu.se
Deputy project leader	
Lena Winslott Hiselius, Ph.D, Traffic Planning, Dept of Technology and Society, LTH	
Core participants	
Mikael Klintman (Ass. Prof. Research Policy Institute, RPI) Lena Winslott Hiselius, (Ph.D, Traffic Planning, Dept of Technology and Society, LTH) Johannes Stripple (Ph.D., Dept of Political Science) Björn Wendle (MSc. Trivektor Traffic) Ph.D. candidate (Research Policy Institute)	
Summary	
<p>Voluntary consumer-oriented policy instruments will be crucial for enabling a transition towards low carbon energy and transport systems. Measures that coerce or force individuals to change their behaviour (measures such as road pricing, heavy taxation and the closing of streets to traffic) have received limited public support and are often politically contested. Previous research has shown that voluntary instruments influence individual behavior by raising the awareness of daily practices. Moreover, these instruments contribute to policy innovation and build legitimacy for mandatory policy making. The analysis in WP4 will be carried out at three different sites where voluntary measures are currently emerging as important rule-systems: (1) Mobility Management, (2) CO₂-labelling of food and transport (3) Voluntary carbon markets. By combining behavioural models used in Mobility Management with insights regarding the practice of CO₂ labelling and standard making in the voluntary carbon market, WP4 will give recommendations for how to use voluntary instruments in order to complement and optimize the effectiveness of voluntary as well as mandatory regulation towards comprehensive greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Stakeholder workshops, stakeholder interviews along with mutual learning between focus groups and programme researchers will enable WP4 to visualize opportunities for transformation towards low carbon energy and transport systems.</p>	
Sammanfattning	
<p>Frivilliga konsumentinriktade styrmedel är nödvändiga för att möjliggöra övergången till hållbara energi och transportsystem. Åtgärder som tvingar individer att förändra sitt beteende (genom t.ex. vägtullar, skatter och bilfria zoner) har begränsat stöd hos allmänheten och är ofta politiskt sett omöjliga att genomföra. Forskningen har visat att frivilliga styrmedel påverkar individer genom att medvetandegöra vardagsresandet, erbjuda en möjlighet att testa nya regleringsformer samt skapar legitimitet för framtida tvingade styrmedel. Forskningen i WP4 tar sin utgångspunkt i tre områden där frivilliga åtaganden/regleringar används: (1) Mobility Management, (2) CO₂-märkning (3) Frivillig handel med utsläppsminskningar. WP4 kombinerar modeller för resvanor inom Mobility Management med kunskap om koldioxidmärkning och standardiseringen av utsläppskrediter. WP4 utvecklar rekommendationer för hur frivilliga styrmedel kan användas för att göra offentlig reglering effektivare att genomföra, genom att öka legitimiteten hos allmänhet och företag samt åstadkomma en omfattande minskning av växthusgaser. Workshops med inblandade aktörer, intervjuer och en läroprocess mellan fokusgrupperna och forskarna lägger grunden för WP4s vision om hur en övergång till hållbara energi och transportsystem kan åstadkommas.</p>	

Project idea and objectives

The objective of WP4 is twofold:

- 1) to increase the understanding of the relationship between citizen-consumers, voluntary policies, and planning instruments directed towards a transition to reduced carbon emissions of the transport and energy systems
- 2) to examine the preconditions for improvements between voluntary policy and planning instruments and hard CO₂-regulation (such as legislative regulations and mandatory standards) as well as semi-hard CO₂-policies (such as CO₂-taxes or other mandatory fees).

Although it would be naive to believe that voluntary instruments alone will solve substantial energy and transport problems, it is fair to assume that voluntary, consumer-oriented policy instruments – in combination with stricter regulation, green taxes and so forth – will be crucial for future greenhouse gas emissions reductions, (Boström and Klintman, 2008). Measures that coerce or force individuals to change their behaviour (such as road pricing, taxation and closing streets to traffic) have usually received limited public support and are often politically contested (Jakobsson et al. 2000, 2002; Loukopoulos et al. 2004). This raises the question of what role *voluntary* instruments can play (in combination with mandatory instruments) in changing e.g. citizen-consumers' travelling patterns and choices of, for instance, food products. Our point of departure is that informative and voluntary measures influence individual behavior (through raising public awareness of CO₂-impacts of various daily practices). Furthermore, these instruments contribute to policy innovation, and may build legitimacy for mandatory policy instruments. This focus on legitimacy, in turn, is strongly tied to the objective of WP1 of proposing ways for handling possible dilemmas between comprehensive greenhouse gas reductions and democracy (as in limited public acceptance). The analysis in WP4 will be carried out at three different sites where voluntary measures are currently emerging as important rule-systems:

- 1) Mobility Management
- 2) CO₂-labelling of food and transport
- 3) Voluntary carbon market

WP4 will combine behavioural models used in Mobility Management with insights regarding the practice of CO₂-labelling and standard making in the voluntary carbon market. This will enable users to see new opportunities emerging at the crossroad of a public and business-related awareness of what daily practices mean for CO₂ emissions; this, in turn, has the potential of making voluntary reductions pave the way for certain stricter regulation.

Practical relevance, outcomes and results

Policy relevant outcomes and recommendations (“tools”):

- Recommendations for how to improve or create a more efficient, impact between soft and hard regulation
- Behavioural models for Mobility Management measures that can be used as prediction tools, support when designing campaigns, and support for evaluations
- Recommendations on improvement and application of CO₂ labelling
- Recommendations on standards in voluntary carbon markets with regard to environmental effectiveness, accountability and legitimacy.
- Recommendations on how to use voluntary instruments in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness of harder regulations and policies.

Deliverables		
D4.1	May 2009	Stakeholder workshop: Changing individual behaviour through soft instruments: Learning from experience.

D4.2	Jan 2010	Publication: Voluntary Measures for Low Carbon Energy and Transport Systems
D4.3	Jan 2011	Publication: Changing Citizen-Consumers through Mobility Management
D4.4	Jan 2012	Publication: Changing Citizen-Consumers through Voluntary Carbon Standards
D4.5	Oct 2012	Stakeholder workshop: Citizen-Consumers and Voluntary Instruments; The way forward.
D4.6	Dec 2012	Publication: Citizen-Consumers and Voluntary Instruments: A synthesis

Communication activities and target groups

Regarding user deliverables, all of the scientific results will be presented to users in different venues throughout the research process. The venues will include seminars, workshops and personal communications. Three basic target groups include (A) policy makers and national authorities involved in strategic planning and climate policy on the national level but also local planners and policy makers involved in implementation of voluntary measures such as carpooling, rideshare, trial periods of public transports, etc; (B) nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) involved in the voluntary measures studied in this project, for instance working with consumer issues, environmental consequences of various food production processes and modes of transport; (C) certain private companies highly involved in these voluntary instruments. Since governance (cf. WP1) typically refers to a closer collaboration of these target groups it makes sense to direct our communication to all three.

How the project relates to the programme objectives and other projects

WP4 is based on the general focus of the LETS program in steering instruments, planning, and power structures that may facilitate or hamper CO₂-reductions. In congruence with the rest of the programme, this WP aspires to give nuance to the foci on individuals and voluntary policy instruments in areas with high potentials for CO₂-reductions. The scenarios developed in WP0 will form the research base for WP4 for which the role of voluntary policy and planning measures are analysed and discussed. In the *Lifestyle changes* storyline (of WP0), it is necessary to halt and turn several consumption patterns that contribute to an increasing use of energy (e.g. car travel, aviation, freight transport, animal diet, electricity, consumer goods). For such a development to take place, more fundamental changes will be needed in values and priorities of governments, societies and individuals. The major challenge mentioned in WP0 is how to develop political institutions that can support such transformations. The direct and indirect roles of voluntary instruments in such developments will be the focus of WP4. Furthermore, the research of WP4 will be carried out in close connection with WP1, with regular meetings and possible co-writing, about how to increase the legitimacy of more far-reaching environmental regulation. Furthermore, there will be cooperation with WP2 (Urban and Regional Planning), in studying Mobility Management, since planning is a key factor when striving for behavioral changes and reductions in CO₂ emissions within transports. At the end of the project, there will be a synthesis with inputs from these parts of WP4 and WP2.

Review of the research field (Theory):

In environmental policy research there is an increasing interest in daily life, individual behaviour and, hence, in voluntary, ‘soft’, policy instruments (e.g., information schemes, green certificates, eco-labels, eco-standards; see Jordan et al 2003; Morgenstern and Pizer 2007). Looking at the transport mobility area in Sweden only, there are hundreds of ongoing Mobility Management projects like carpooling, campaigning for cycling, mobility plans, etc. However, Boström and Klintman (2008) argue that these trends are over-simplified in both research and policy debates. From this viewpoint, the empirical sites chosen for WP4 will all be analysed through the conceptual lenses of (A) *theories of behaviours and roles of citizen-consumers*, and (B) *environmental governance and voluntary standards*.

(A) Behaviours and roles of citizen-consumers

While much research has been carried out on factors that influence energy-related behaviour of citizen-consumers (e.g., travel behaviour in the Green Paper on urban mobility from the European Commission and car-use in Loukopoulos et al (2006), there is less focus on how *structural changes and strategies for implementation* can better support environmentally friendly habits. The orientation on the demand of citizen-consumers, as well as the focus on structural dimensions, are relevant to all three empirical sites. Mobility Management, for instance, aims to bring about behavioural changes using a wide range of voluntary measures. While the theories used for understanding and explaining these behavioural changes have been obtained from other sectors, mainly the health sector and commercial marketing, (MAX, 2007). However, these theories do not make it possible to follow the various stages from influence via campaigns or other measures to changes in behaviour. By including this process in WP4, we hope to develop this into a theoretical contribution. To this structurally oriented top-down perspective important to all three empirical sites we will add *the bottom-up notion of green empowerment of citizen-consumers* (sometimes called *political consumerism*, see Klintman & Boström, 2006). The question is here to what extent the market can function as a 'sub-political' arena for citizen-consumers – in the food sector, for instance – to manifest their environmental and social concerns, (Micheletti, 2003). WP4 will apply this theoretical perspective by scrutinising the preconditions for citizen-consumer groups' and companies' active involvement – in the *development of more effective structures* within CO₂-labelling schemes, carbon markets and Mobility Management.

(B) Environmental governance & voluntary standards

Since the fuzzy term 'structures' in the three sites of WP4 often can be concretised as voluntary arrangements and standards, our theoretical framework will incorporate previous concepts and ideas dealing with various voluntary policy tools. Previous research on environmental policy making has acknowledged the dramatic increase in new types of policy arrangements and standards, often voluntary ones. With regard to transport demand measures and voluntary programs, Schlag and Schade (2000), Thorpe et. al. (2000) and Prakash and Potoski (2007) all indicate that people's trust in the decision-making process, strategies, and standards is crucial for people's inclination to make use of these systems and instruments. Since trust and legitimacy in these arrangement are a main precondition for their effectiveness, social scientists have noted an 'audit explosion', for instance in voluntary environmental policy making, characterised by 'checking gone wild' in a vast number of organisations (Power, 1997). Voluntary carbon markets, for example, (e.g., when companies and individuals offset their emissions in order to become 'carbon neutral') are governed by voluntary codes and practices. Until very recently, voluntary carbon markets have lacked rules. However, different actors (business, NGOs, public agencies) are now trying to establish voluntary codes and practices aimed at enhancing the legitimacy and credibility of emission reductions as a commodity (Bayon et al. 2007). The same is true in the development of CO₂-labelling. In Sweden, for instance, there has been an agreement across political parties to develop 'CO₂-labeling of all goods and services without waiting for a joint EU initiative (Ny Teknik, 2007-04-12)'. However, as with CO₂-labelling (The Economist, 2007), and parts of Mobility Management, there is little consensus on the standards in the carbon market. In the analysis of all three sites, WP4 will make use of the previous literature of how to handle challenges in developing legitimate voluntary policy arrangements. Still, this project will add the typically overlooked dynamics between voluntary arrangements and mandatory, 'hard' policy instruments, a dynamics in which we perceive a very strong potential in the struggle towards future greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

Description of work: Implementation, Research Approach and Methodology

Implementation

Initially, the relationship between citizen-consumers, and voluntary policies and planning instruments directed towards reduced CO₂-emissions will be analysed for each theme separately. In addition, the interaction between voluntary measures, environmental and social awareness, and individual preferences will be analysed and synthesised. This knowledge will then constitute the base for a general analysis in at the end of the project on how voluntary instruments (and increased awareness) may be used to improve or create a link between soft and hard regulation, for instance through policy makers making use of voluntary instruments for creating political acceptance. This phase will begin with a workshop where the results from each theme is discussed. Thereafter there will be a synthesis with inputs from WP1 (Governance, Institutions and Policy) on democracy, legitimacy, public acceptance, regulations, etc and WP2 (Urban and Regional Planning) on how planning measures affects voluntary actions such as Mobility Management.

Research approach and Methodology

1. Mobility Management (MM): We will collect survey data on individual preferences, knowledge, and perceived effects in conjunction with some selected MM projects, e.g. use of carpooling or environmentally friendly cars, implemented in the beginning of LETS-research period. The survey data and existing theory will be combined to formulate a model for how MM can be used as a tool for implementing a sustainable transport system. The model will be tested and evaluated using SARA, a database on different MM projects developed by the National Road Administration.

2. CO₂-labelling: Three systems of CO₂-labelling in Sweden and elsewhere will be examined in depth: One on personal transport, another on food production and transport, and a third system to be selected. We will combine stakeholder interviews with an active type of focus group research. Through the latter method, the aim is to create a dialogue between researchers and active and experienced practitioners in the field. The idea is that all participants of the focus groups will share their understanding of these challenges.

3. Standards on the Voluntary carbon market: We will make use of official statistics (UNEP Risoe Pipeline as well as Institute for Global Environmental Strategies CDM project database) but since these excellent sources (so far) only cover compliance carbon markets, we will draw on material from Ecosystem Marketplace but also conduct a survey targeted at project developers, auditors, investors and carbon brokers. We will also make a case study of the “Gold Standard VER” and trace its emergence and establishment through interviews and archives.

Issues to be examined within each theme are the following ones:

- How can voluntary measures, such as Mobility Management, CO₂-labelling and carbon credit standards be created or modified in ways that strengthen the sustainability their CO₂-reducing potential and public engagement?
- What challenges of criteria-setting, legitimacy and public trust have the actors been confronted with, in terms of actual CO₂-reductions as well as the decision-making process, and stakeholder biases?
- What alternative criteria/limits have been excluded from the schemes, and on what grounds?
- What processes (expert led, state led, stakeholder led) will most likely enable credible and legitimate voluntary measures, such as a voluntary carbon credit standard?

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