Neighborhood, City, or Region: Deconstructing Scale in Planning Frames

By Kate Lowe

Abstract

Plans usually try to address problems at a certain scale—neighborhood, city, region, or beyond. The field of planning has not engaged in geography's extensive debates on scale, perhaps since the relevance to planning has not been apparent. I argue planning should attend to scale, based on the literature that describes frames. Frames powerfully direct attention to some problems and solutions, while overlooking others. I illustrate how scale can be part of planning problem definition and solutions with qualitative analysis of a regional transportation plan from the San Francisco Bay Area. The plan contains two distinct, scaled frames: one addresses mobility and economic vitality at the regional scale and the other concerns itself with accessibility from a neighborhood perspective. I call for critical reflection on the use of scale to help the field of planning see problems and possibilities in new ways.

Keywords: Scale, planning theory, metropolitan transportation, regional planning, community development

Introduction

Plans typically have a discrete spatial extent: neighborhood, city, region, or even mega-region. The spatial extent and scale of a plan may align with political or social boundaries. Documents, however, rarely describe why the selected scale is appropriate or what solutions might be possible at a different scale. Likewise, planning research often has a spatial component and may explain the case study *place* selection but not necessarily the *scale* selection.

Scale and its deconstruction have been major themes in the geography literature, with an increase in critical accounts of scale in the last twenty years. These analyses have asserted that scale is not a given: any scale is socially constructed. Although a scale may connect with material reality, scale is neither natural nor a fixed, nested hierarchy. For example, regions are not fixed geographic entities, as the diverging delineations of regions show. However, policy makers or researchers may define the boundaries of a region based on meaningful measures, like the spatial extent of the labor force, as suggested by Clark and Christopherson (2009). Even the scale of political boundaries, like city, county, state, and nation, may

be relatively fixed but are socially constructed. Planning literature and practice have not considered critical accounts of scale, perhaps because the literature in geography has frequently been theoretical, rather than empirical. Furthermore, the direct implications for planning have not been apparent.

I use the concept of frames to explain why planning should attend to questions of scale. Frame and framing literature demonstrates that conceptual frames influence how actors perceive problems and what solutions they identify. I argue that scale is an understudied but important component of the frames through which planners understand and act upon the world.

To illustrate how scale can be a component of framing an issue, I analyze scaled frames in transportation planning in the San Francisco Bay Area. Much of the framing literature describes conflicting frames and parties, while my illustration demonstrates that one actor can create different frames for different scales. The metropolitan planning organization's 2030 plan (MTC 2005) frames accessibility for low-income and minority groups primarily as a neighborhood scale issue, as I describe below. At the same time, the metropolitan planning organization and its plan seek to enhance mobility and economic growth at the regional scale. These frames represent only one moment in politically contentious, ongoing decision-making, but analysis creates a useful illustration of scale's importance in planning frames. I conclude by suggesting that practitioners and researchers reflect on frames through shifting scales.

Frames and Planning

Planning research has used multiple concepts to describe the critical role of meaning-making and the use of interpretative lenses in defining problems and solutions. Throgmorton (2003) describes planning as storytelling. Planners create a coherent story, select elements to include, and help constitute the future. Forester (1999) asserts the importance of constructing problems and practice stories:

> The very messiness of thickly described practice stories has its own lesson to teach: before problems are solved, they must be constructed. Before we can consider options and choices, we must have a decent sense of what is at stake, of who and what is involved, to whom and to what we need to pay attention. (p. 40)

Other planning literature considers the role of myths (Richmond 2005) and paradigms (Banister 2008; Schiefelbusch 2010; Willson, 2001) in shaping perceptions, meanings, and solutions. González (2006) uniquely

ties together space—via scale—and discourse through the concept of scalar narrative. However, she limits her analysis of the "cultural politics of scales" to "scalar narratives" about the global. As planning literature has not fully coalesced around one of these ideas, I use the concept of frames to draw on policy and geography literature. Extensive frame and framing literature also exists in social movement (Benford and Snow 2000) and communication (Dewulf and others 2009) studies.

Frames are conceptual and discursive schemata that shape our perceptions of reality and policy issues. In a world of unlimited data and information, frames selectively direct one's attention to some pieces of information and color how we interpret them. George Lakoff (2004) argues the political right's use of frames affects how the public understands issues. The phrase "tax relief" is one of his examples. Relief conjures affliction and "a reliever who removes the [tax] affliction…is therefore a hero. And if people try to stop the hero, those people are villains for trying to prevent relief" (p.3).

In policy studies and planning, Schön and Rein (1994) explain that actors may reframe "intractable" issues through reflective practice and co-design of policy solutions. Disagreements in policy processes may not simply be about desired actions, but result from tacit, conflicting frames defining the "problem" (Valve 1999). Frames are socially constructed and actors always see the world and phenomenon from their particular positions. Thus, frames cannot be proven or disproven nor correct or incorrect (Schön and Rein). Schön and Rein provide several examples of reframing in policy processes, including homelessness programs in Massachusetts. Initially, state agencies "saw housing as a scare resource" (p.141). Underlying the state's approach was the "core idea of the *market* frame" (p. 142). In this frame, "the state's first response to market failure should be restorative. In the case of housing, the state may restore markets by supporting the supply of housing…and/or the demand for housing exerted by low-income and homeless families" (p. 142). Meanwhile, advocates framed housing as a legal entitlement. By focusing on the perverse incentives in the state's homelessness programs and using the metaphor of "closing the front and back doors," stakeholders were able to reflect on and programs and hence redesign them successfully.

Because actors identify problems and solutions through frames, frames can have policy effects and thus warrant analysis. Policy frames and stories construct problems and identify solutions (Schön and Rein 1994). For example, Richardson, Isaksson and Gullberg (2010) consider the frames through which policy makers have created congestion strategies for Stockholm. They find some shifts in attitudes toward the private car and the persistence of a "car-based automobility frame" and a goal for "ever increasing mobility." Because of these guiding concepts,

implementation measures (including a "radical" congestion tax) aim to control congestion and manage infrastructure systems efficiently, rather than reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled.

Recent literature has emphasized the dynamic and continually (re) constructed nature of frames. For example, Fischer (2003) studies (re) framing as a process, rather than as distinct frames. Likewise, Tennøy (2010) adapts Schön and Rein's work to describe framing as: "a way of selecting, organizing, interpreting and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analyzing, persuading and acting. Framing will thus influence how a problem is understood, the means and strategies that are considered, the analyses and tools that are chosen, etc." (p.218). I understand frames as a momentary product of the ongoing process of framing, undertaken by multiple actors and drawing on durable but dynamic concepts and structures. My distinction between frames and framing is somewhat artificial, but it allows for a simplified illustration of scale in issue frames.

Deconstructing Scale

Spatial concepts, including scale, are integral to how planners see and frame issues, but generally are not explicit subjects of discussion. Healey explains the influence of spatial ideas in discourse and material practices: "Spatial concepts and vocabularies not only carry strategic ideas from the arenas of their articulation to these sites of material and imaginative use. They also affect the structuring of political debate and struggle over the impacts of projects" (Healey 2004, p. 64). Scale is one such structuring spatial concept, and like frames, a scale "sets bounds on the types of problems to be addressed, [and] the solutions to be found" (Karstens, Bots and Slinger 2007, p.386).

Scale has multiple meanings. It can refer to the ratio of distance on a map to actual distance, the boundaries of a study area, or "level at which relevant processes operate" (Marston, 2000, p. 220). Scale can be the extent and resolution of a study, wherein "a model may have a spatial extent of a country and a resolution of 1 km by 1 km" (Karstens, Bots and Slinger 2007, p.388). Similar to resolution, researchers refer to the level of aggregation as scale. For example, the distribution of income can be analyzed at various scales of census geography: individual, household, block, block group, census tract, place, county, state, metropolitan area, etc. Analysis at different scales can show quite different results (Most, Sengupta, and Burgener, 2004).

Scales, like neighborhood and region, may seem obvious to practitioners and researchers, but geographers have extensively dissected the social

construction of scale. In the critical geography literature, "the fundamental point being made is that scale is not necessarily a preordained hierarchical framework for ordering the world – local, regional, national and global. It is instead a contingent outcome" (Marston 2000, p. 220). Scale is socially constructed, but simultaneously meaningful and consequential. For example, the boundaries of a city are politically and socially determined. Yet the boundaries have consequences, such as who can vote in elections and perhaps where the city's sewer infrastructure ends. Concepts of appropriate scale can be based on real, material processes. The U.S. Census Bureau, for example, uses the spatial distribution of population and commuting patterns to define metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). These real material practices, however, are outcomes of specific times, places, and processes. As a result, "we cannot assume a priori anything about the characteristics of a particular scale or scalar arrangement" (Marston 2000, p. 197).

In addition to emphasizing scale's social construction, much of the critical literature on scale characterizes it as "both fluid and fixed" and "fundamentally a relational concept" (Born and Purcell 2006, p. 197). Scale is constantly (re)produced, but "scalar arrangements, once produced, can become routinized into enduring and hegemonic structures for certain periods of time" (p.198). For example, city boundaries are durable, but local actors can shift them through annexation and lobby for enhanced city powers in state statutes. Born and Purcell provide the example of the nation-state that must "be reproduced continually" but "has endured for an extended period and has very real effects" (p. 198). Finally, scale is relational, since a particular scale is meaningful only in comparison to other scales. For example, a region is a meaningful size in relation to larger and smaller scales, such as nation and neighborhood.

Recent geography literature diverges on the continuing utility of scale as a concept. Marston, Jones and Woodward (2005; also Jones, Woodward and Marston 2007) argue geography should move away from the concept of scale and toward a "flat ontology." Despite agreement that scale is socially constructed, they argue that a "vertical view of scale as a series of nested spaces—from the neighbourhood to the locality to the region, nation and globe—continues to hold sway" (Jones, Woodward and Marston 2007, p. 265). Moore (2008) contends that while some geographers state that scale is socially constructed, they then treat scales as natural, fixed and ontologically real "material sociospatial entities" (p. 204). In other words, Moore claims authors use the acknowledgement of scale's social construction as license to ignore its social construction in their analytic frameworks. Yet, a "flat ontology" may fail to incorporate issues of power in social processes that create scale (Leitner and Miller

2007). More broadly, a retreat from scale as an analytic category and the new relational geography can lead researchers to overlook emergence—how individuals and smaller processes create more powerful large-system phenomena (Sunley 2009).

Regardless of scale's conceptual potential and limitations, social actors continue to incorporate scalar concepts in political processes. This provides another rationale for continued attention to scale (Moore 2008). Moore suggests that analysis can treat scale as a social phenomenon, rather than an analytic category, as does the literature on scale and framing in political processes.

These studies consider how actors incorporate scale in their frames during political contention or decision-making (Kurtz 2003; Lindseth, 2006; Mansfield and Haas 2006; Martin 2004; McCann 2003). McCann explains how the city of Austin, Texas shifted to neighborhood-scale planning as part of its urban redevelopment agenda to lure development into inner city neighborhoods to control sprawl. While this neighborhood initiative lacked a community development motivation, "social equity issues…have been a traditional focus of neighborhood planning" (Rohe 2009, p. 228). Urban riots, social activism, the civil rights movement, planning's attention to the city at the expense of neighborhoods, and finally urban renewal together encouraged local governments to turn toward neighborhood planning (Rohe 2009). The new attention to and power in neighborhoods represented a break from past treatments of the neighborhood in planning (Silver 1985).

In another study of scale framing, Martin describes frames constructed by opposing groups in a controversy over hospital expansion. Neighborhood activists emphasized the immediate area surrounding the hospital, characterizing the neighborhood as a social community. The hospital authority explained expansion was necessary to meet the health needs of the region and support the city's role as a regional economic center. At the same time, when the hospital dealt with land acquisition, it focused on individual parcels, a strategy which Martin claims bypassed the neighborhood scale and ignored its potential importance. Kurtz (2003) develops "scale frames" to explain how environmental justice advocates connect problems, likely to be experienced "locally," with the site ("scale") where the problem can be regulated or fixed. Given the specificity of Kurtz's definition, instead I use "scaled frame" to describe a frame in which scale is significant. Examining scaled frames can help us identify tacit ideas that shape planning processes and influence outcomes. In the following section, I explore scaled frames in regional transportation planning.

Regional Mobility and Neighborhood Accessibility

To illustrate why planners should deconstruct scale, I next describe the solutions embedded within the scaled frames for planning in the San Francisco Bay Area. I selected the region and its 2030 transportation plan because of an especially visible distinction—an extreme case—between issue frames for neighborhood and region, as constructed by the regional planning agency. Typically, framing literature describes conflicting parties and frames, while this illustration describes distinct frames used by the same agency. Transportation planning and investment in the Bay Area merit much more attention than this example provides. Advocacy efforts, including a lawsuit, raise critical questions about race, the distribution of subsidies, preference for capital expansion, and remedies for transit inequities.[1] The purpose of this illustration, however, is to provide an example of scaled frames and their relationship to proposed plan elements, not to conduct a comprehensive analysis of political struggle for transit equity.

I conducted interpretative analysis (Yanow 1996) of the 2030 transportation plan. Here I supplement this analysis with documents released by the transportation planning agency between 2001 and 2006 (studies, resolutions, and legal documents). Documents can be an important source for interpretative analysis (Ginger 2006). After identifying two central scaled frames, I used ATLAS.ti's auto-coding feature to identify key words in the planning documents that indicate central concepts such as region, community, mobility, and equity, as summarized in Table 1. Then I used the program's "co-occurrence explorer" to identify where these concepts appeared together in a document.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is the regional transportation planning agency and metropolitan planning organization for the San Francisco Bay Area. The area is home to approximately 7 million residents and more than 3 million jobs (MTC 2005). It is among the United States' most congested metropolitan areas, and approximately two dozen transit operators provide a mix of heavy rail, bus, light rail, and ferry transit service (MTC 2005). Federal regulations require that metropolitan planning organizations create long-range, regional transportation plans (covering at least twenty years) through a

1. For more information on activism for transit equity in the area, see Public Advocates' webpage on transportation justice: http://www.publicadvocates.org/transportation-justice/civil-rights-enforcement. The nonprofit firm is part of the *Darensburg v. Metropolitan Transportation Commission* lawsuit, which alleges discriminatory transit subsidies based on the subsidies per trip that correlate with the share of white riders using each service. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission has extensive information available on all of its plans and policies, as well as its various equity analyses: www.mtc.ca.gov

Code	Indicating words
Neighborhood	Communit*; neighborhood
Region	Region; Bay Area
Economy	Econom*, competit*
Equity	Equit*, environmental justice
Mobility	Mobility, congest*
Accessibility	Accessibility, access to, Lifeline

Table 1: Codes

cooperative and multi-stakeholder process (Goldman and Deakin 2000). MTC produces both long- and short-range regional transportation plans listing the allocation of regional, state, and federal funds.

During the early 2000s, MTC's long-range plans and its supporting and related documents show two contrasting scaled frames for transit: neighborhood accessibility and regional mobility. MTC sought to address the needs of low-income and minority populations—as well as to meet federal requirements to consider the agency's effects on them—at the *neighborhood* scale. Meanwhile, plans also aimed to enhance mobility at the *regional* scale to promote the economy. Of course, these are not the only frames or issues in MTC's plans, but they provide an illustration of scale's role in frames and planning.

Enhancing Regional Mobility

MTC's 2030 long-range plan (MTC 2005) includes a scaled frame that considers economic growth and increased mobility at the regional scale. In this scaled frame, the "problem" is the need to reduce congestion and enhance regional mobility to benefit the region's economy. Congestion reduces mobility, whereas transit investment and better connectivity enhance it and thus the economy. A report on the need for further rail expansion articulates this scaled frame:

[The transportation system] also is the lifeline of the region's economy. Without a coordinated effort to increase transportation capacity and optimize the efficiency of the existing system our transportation problems may dramatically worsen. The economic, environmental and social consequences for the Bay Area would be dire (EarthTech and Korve Engineering 2006, p. 2).

Key words referencing the *region* appeared with a high frequency in my textual analysis of this report, and in many instances appeared with economy-related concepts and sometimes mobility, as seen in Table 2.

		Co-occurrences						
	Code total	Accessibility	Economy	Equity	Neighborhood	Mobility	Region	Co-occurrences
Accessibility	49	n/a	0	1	5	14	1	21
Economy	36	0	n/a	0	1	2	17	20
Equity	13	1	0	n/a	1	1	0	3
Neighborhood	**113**	**5**	**1**	**1**	**n/a**	**4**	**19**	**30**
Mobility	103	14	2	1	4	n/a	8	29
Region	**393**	**1**	**17**	**0**	**19**	**8**	**n/a**	**45**

Table 2: Co-occurrence of codes

In the context of the regional mobility frame, rail infrastructure investment is one critical solution. The 2030 plan lists several transit infrastructure expansions to facilitate regional connectivity:

This next generation of transit expansion projects will forge key transit network connections between southern Alameda County and the Silicon Valley, provide a new southern transbay link, enhance the Bay Area's central transit hub in San Francisco, and extend the reach of rail to the North Bay and the outer East Bay (MTC 2005, p. 72).

These projects are part of the Regional Transit Expansion Program (RTEP), which was authorized in 2001 by MTC Resolution 3434. RTEP's transit investments are meant to "improve mobility and enhance connectivity for residents throughout the Bay Area" (MTC 2002, p. 3) and address "the crushing congestion on our system" (MTC 2001, p. 3). At the time the board adopted the RTEP projects, the estimated cost was $10.5 billion. Cost projections continue to increase; RTEP's estimated cost was almost $18 billion by 2009 (MTC 2009b).

Ensuring Accessibility for Neighborhoods

Another scaled frame in the plan addresses accessibility for low-income and minority residents at the neighborhood scale. The "problem" in this frame is the need of these residents to reach opportunities like jobs, health

care, and education—in other words, providing adequate accessibility. An individual's accessibility is her ability to reach opportunity sites. It is related to mobility (the ability to move through space), but also depends on her location and the spatial distribution of opportunities. The relationship between mobility and accessibility might explain the similar frequency at which these two words appeared with the word neighborhood, as shown in Table 2. MTC explains that "another and equally pressing concern is the ability to provide a cohesive, reliable system of transit for those who depend on it most—individuals who because of economics, physical disability or age cannot (or choose not) to drive. Many of these service needs are oriented to the *neighborhood* and *community* level" (MTC 2001, p. 5, emphasis added). The 2030 plan explains the need for sufficient access, "whether the destination is work, school or the doctor, all Bay Area residents—regardless of income, age or disability status—must be able to get from place to place" (MTC, 2005, p. 52).

This scaled frame identifies several solutions and actions. MTC had launched a community-based transportation planning program for low-income and minority communities. Each process resulted in "a *community*-based transportation plan that includes prioritized, *locally*-identified transportation needs, as well as solutions to address them" (MTC 2005, p. 14, emphasis added). The agency also identified a network of critical "Lifeline" bus routes to which it has directed funds. For these and some related programs, MTC allocated $216 million in its 2030 plan and soon thereafter increased funds to $300 million (MTC 2009b).

In addition, MTC estimated accessibility for low-income and minority populations at the neighborhood scale in 2030, using different scenarios. MTC aggregated traffic analysis zones with high shares of low-income and minority residents, labeled them "communities of concern," and measured access to essential destinations from these communities/neighborhoods (MTC, 2004, p. 1-1). [2] The study found improved accessibility with implementation of the projects in the 2030 plan, and that the communities of concern would have accessibility generally equal to or better than the rest of the region.[3] These findings may partially be due to the central location of many of the communities of concern, where opportunity sites are close and densely distributed.

2. As noted in MTC's report, a standard methodology for equity analysis does not exist, and the U.S. Department of Transportation cited MTC's previous equity analysis in a compilation of best practices.
3. Its subsequent equity analysis, MTC (2009a), shows that communities of concern generally have better access to opportunity sites when analyzed by type of site (jobs and non-work activities) and mode (auto and transit). The exception is transit access to low-income jobs, to which communities of concern have less accessibility by transit than the rest of the region (see summary, MTC 2009a, p. ES-3 and section 4.2). The 2009 equity analysis also incorporates the distribution of funds by household.

Implications: A Two-Track Program

As noted in the discussion of frames, there are no "correct" or "incorrect" frames. Likewise, planners and other actors have rationales for incorporating particular scales in their issue frames. For example, if low-income residents do not have access to transit in their neighborhood, they cannot make use of the larger regional system. Some members of MTC's Minority Citizens Advisory Committee have even urged the agency to conduct more neighborhood (rather than regional) equity and accessibility studies, especially for within-neighborhood travel (MTC 2009a, p. 45).

Scaled frame	Problem	Solutions
Neighborhood accessibility	- Low-income and minority residents need access to essential activities (health services, schools, jobs) - Low-income and minority groups must have equitable access relative to other groups	- Lifeline Transportation Program ($216 million) - Community-based planning - Community scale for equity analysis
Regional mobility	- Need to enhance regional connectivity - Congestion - Need for economic growth	- Regional Transit Expansion Program ($10.5 billion)

Table 3: MTC's scaled frames

In its 2030 long-range plan, MTC articulates scaled frames of regional mobility and neighborhood accessibility. As part of these frames, it identified different problems and solutions for neighborhoods and the region, as seen in Table 3. Enhancing regional mobility, and thereby the economy, provided a basis for major transit infrastructure projects. The plan identified different solutions for accessibility in low-income and minority neighborhoods, including community-based planning. It is possible that these scaled frames not only helped identify problems and solutions for planning, but also rationalized pre-existing decisions. Already in 2001, the Executive Director explained that the agency was separately pursuing two different programs for transit:

> Because the evaluation criteria will be different for the expansion and lifeline programs—including considerations of cost-effectiveness and certain funding eligibilities—it is preferable not to merge the initiatives together. Instead, a parallel advocacy program must be developed for each, so priority consideration is given to both programs in pursuing and securing necessary funding. (Heminger 2001, p.3)

My co-occurrence analysis is exploratory, but it generally aligns with the qualitative assessment. The region code co-occurred with economy and mobility much more than with equity or accessibility. Neighborhood, however, co-occurred only once more with accessibility than mobility and only once with equity. Coding more supplementary documents, such as the plan's equity analysis, would likely generate more instances of the codes for neighborhood, equity, and accessibility, as well as their co-occurrence. Interestingly, the region and neighborhood codes co-occurred more with each other than with any other code. In sum, co-occurrence analysis of only the 2030 plan provides more indications of the regional mobility frame than the neighborhood accessibility frame.

While a strong rationale exists for both scaled frames, one result may be to displace questions of access and equity from investment at the regional scale. In fact, it is the agency's pursuit of the regional rail expansion program (Resolution 3434) that a judge identified as contributing to disparate impacts *(Darensburg v. Metropolitan Planning Commission* March 27, 2009*)*. Of course, there are other factors—for instance the dominance of economic arguments for and business actors in regionalism—but scaled frames may contribute to this bifurcation of investments, planning, and funding. Interestingly, the Federal Transit Agency (FTA) recently withheld funds from the area's heavy-rail transit provider (BART). BART's plan to extend rail service to the Oakland Airport, which would facilitate long-distance travel, failed to consider local effects along the project's corridor. Because of this and perhaps in response to local activism, the FTA withheld stimulus funds for the project (see www.publicadvocates.org on transportation justice).

Conclusion and Directions for Research and Practice

Frames, constructed through ongoing processes, help us understand the world, identify problems, and create solutions. The field of planning has not generated a cumulative body of work on the role of our spatial concepts in framing, although some geographic and environmental studies literature has treated scale as one aspect of frames in political processes. Based on the framing literature, I argue that planning must deconstruct scale in order to reflect on how this component of our frames

influences our visions and analysis. I use the example of planning in the San Francisco Bay Area to demonstrate how integral scales can be in frames and resulting solutions.

Government-led neighborhood planning was an important response to the social upheaval of the 1960s, including the mobilization against urban renewal. It may continue to be a useful and critical scale at which to address equity issues. It can also be an effective arena for mobilizing low-income and minority residents, since the neighborhood is a meaningful scale of experience (Rohe, 2009). Nonetheless, the neighborhood is only one scale at which to act or to frame issues. Purcell (2006) warns against the "local trap, in which the local scale is assumed to be inherently more democratic than other scales" (p. 1921). He explains that any scale is socially constructed and outcomes are dependent "on the agenda of those empowered by a given scalar strategy. The paper does not reject the local *scale,* therefore; it argues that we should reject the local *trap"* (p. 1922, emphasis original). Pastor, Benner and Matsuoka (2009) describe the potential of and current efforts towards *regional* equity.

Scaled frames could have material implications, as in the two-track investment program in the San Francisco Bay Area. Transit interventions to improve accessibility at one scale can increase or decrease accessibility at other scales (Occelli 2000). Occelli explains*: "*For example, improving regional accessibility in an international context will not necessarily have positive effects on all local areas. Conversely, higher accessibility levels in a local area do not necessarily guarantee the improvement of its connections with regional or international markets" (p. 295). This insight—that improving travel at one scale may have effects at other scales—may have implications for the federal high-speed rail program. Like the Interstate program, high-speed rail may have metropolitan and neighborhood mobility effects, despite its focus on longer-distance travel. Given the extent of the federal and local investment, planning should deconstruct the scaled frames in the program. High-speed rail is sometimes promoted to enhance mega-region connectivity, but what is the problem addressed by this solution? Will the program facilitate accessibility? Or simply mobility? For whom and at what scale?

Analyzing problems at different scales will continue in planning, but planners and planning institutions can shift scale to identify alternative solutions. As Most, Sengupta and Burgener (2004) note, environmental justice analyses at different scales can yield different findings. Even individual planners can simply try different scales of analysis to look for different results, since powerful geospatial software and digitized data are increasingly accessible. Institutional requirements for multiple scales of analysis could be useful. For example, environmental review processes

could require multiple scales of analysis. While incremental, these are feasible steps to expand ways of seeing in planning.

A more challenging transformation would be to make scale justification part of the planning process, perhaps through changing norms of planning. Rather than automatically crafting a city plan—or whatever the corresponding scale of the agency—planning departments and agencies could conduct analysis on why the city or another scale might be a useful for intervention. Plans could justify their scalar focus and identify problems and potential action at other scales. Shifting scales and frames may help us see new solutions and our existing assumptions more clearly. What would accessibility solutions look like when treated as a regional problem? What would mobility for economic growth and decreased congestion look like if planned at a different scale?

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Kate Lowe received the PhD from Cornell and is Visiting Assistant Professor in the Planning and Urban Studies Department at the University of New Orleans.

Kate Lowe is Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Planning and Urban Studies at the University of New Orleans. She recently completed a PhD in City and Regional Planning at Cornell University.