



IMPACTS Annual Conference

Paris - June 2012

“Shared Mobility / Shared Spaces” Statement

Each year IMPACTS selects an important mobility issue as the theme for its annual conference which will stimulate debate amongst its member city delegates because the topic resonates with each of them. For the 2012 conference the City of Paris identified “Shared Mobility / Shared Spaces” as the focus for presentations and debate at the event held over 28-29 June 2012.

Rarely has a topic generated more debate; both in the conference sessions, round table discussion and during the social gatherings associated with the event. Copies of PowerPoint presentations given by speakers can be found on the IMPACTS website:

<http://www.impact.org/euroconference/Paris12.htm>

The theme created a truly unifying event, which is all the more important since it also demonstrated the broad spectrum of opinions on how shared space and shared mobility can, or should, be implemented in the diverse cities that make up the IMPACTS network. Delegates heard a keynote address which covered the many urban planning schemes being pursued in Paris (e.g. experiences from sharing public space in Place de la République, Place de Clichy and the Riverside Expressway project) and shared transport initiatives such as Vélib & Autolib. The success of these schemes is mirrored in comparable applications reported by other member cities (e.g. Cycle hire schemes in Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Gothenburg, Lisbon, London, etc and electric car experiments in Amsterdam, Berlin, Lisbon, London and Paris).

Elsewhere the application of similar policies has been targeted at improving the quality of life in cities through reducing noise and emissions from vehicles. This has been extended in some cities with experiments in urban freight delivery and consolidation centres being implemented as they strive for quieter environments with zero emissions by encouraging the use of electric vehicles in narrow inner city road networks.

A shared space policy removes the traditional segregation of motor vehicles, pedestrians and other road users. The increased availability of shared mobility systems such as bike sharing and car sharing complements the policy. These schemes are gaining popularity with users and municipalities alike as an alternative to using private cars as a sole means of transportation since they have the advantage of reducing traffic congestion, parking space shortages, and air pollution. Delegates observed there are unique characteristics that correspond to shared mobility systems, which raise the need to develop new models and solution methods.

Car-oriented planning has dominated urban mobility thinking for too long. There is now an emerging consensus amongst planners that streets are for everybody and that a fair distribution of the available area must be considered. Key to this thinking is the need to create conflict free coexistence for all road users that provides increased security and enhanced amenity values. Vienna, a strong advocate of this philosophy is already reaping the benefits for its citizens.

Delegates agreed that citizens need ‘space to live’ and supported the concept of better, more equitable and inclusive approaches to sharing the street. They noted this entails fewer rules and more responsibility for road users. In particular, it needs a change in attitudes that gets people to behave better on streets. Mixing modes in a common space on the street induces this behaviour to occur; slowing drivers as they have no clearly defined priority. Beneficial though this mixed use of

space is, it comes with a risk of increased pedestrian/cyclist conflicts; especially as there is a growing trend in cycle use. Monitoring of these initiatives needs to be sustained and widely reported. Whilst some measures have proved themselves, others still have to do so.

Cities need to set priorities to create integrated and coherent schemes that demonstrate benefits for citizens and businesses in the shared space zones. The commercial need for deliveries cannot be forgotten, nor can residents desire to have access and parking. Permitting delivery spaces to be used overnight for resident parking is an approach that has already been successfully tried. More experiments in the allocation of space and organisation of its use throughout the day need to be conducted, reported and communicated to planners throughout Europe. IMPACTS members are striving to do this within the network.

There was broad agreement amongst delegates that criteria for successful measures need to be defined which encompass: efficiency, impacts on the environment, impact on the quality of public space, safety, and cost considerations. The list is not exhaustive.

It was also apparent to all that successful implementation of shared space schemes and shared mobility is greatly enhanced where they are combined and linked with coordinated infrastructure planning and mobility plans. Cities need to change the planning focus away from vehicles and towards the movement of people. An attempt to adapt cities to cars and transit could lead to the destruction of public space and the urban realm. Rational land use planning and mobility strategies are essential. The “walkable city” concept of Stockholm exemplifies this thinking with more mixed use development to reduce the need to travel. Planners need to create attractive streets that optimise the capacity of the available space, provide travel choices that offer equality of access for all modes and where necessary utilise demand management measures to achieve goals.

Delegates considered successful shared space schemes are only partly about creating the right physical environment. Creating the right psychological environment is also important. Future work should build understanding and tolerance and educate road users with tips on how to share road space safely.

A political lead is needed across cities to priorities transport and urban development options to achieve these commonly accepted goals. European cooperation on sustainable mobility from EU initiatives (e.g. CIVITAS and international associations such as ECMT, IMPACTS Europe and C40) has established best practice which is now being communicated/diffused via collaborative networks. This should include links to fast emerging countries (China, India and Brazil) where urban mobility demands in megacities are even more intense than in Europe.

Conclusions

Summarising the two days of debate the assembled delegates observed a pleasing note of optimism as attitudes to sustainable urban development and the sharing of space and mobility are changing. They identified several messages to take back to their administrations and to communicate to decision makers across Europe. These include recognising:

- The benefits of engaging closely with local neighbourhood groups and inviting opinions of citizens to identify and prioritise options. Such arrangements achieve successful compromise and consensus more easily.
- A goal of creating more efficient mobility through linking urban development planning with transport planning to create complementary strategic plans that assist cities to comply with EU policies and directives (e.g. air quality and noise).
- That shared space schemes should be considered at locations with substantial pedestrian movements (e.g. close to stations, schools and public facilities); in inner city areas with

narrow streets; and at junctions with high levels of pedestrian users and less than 20,000 vehicles/day.

- The distinction between schemes that truly share space and those that allocate/distribute space to each mode (e.g. bus lanes that change use by time of day, or share space with taxi & bicycles). Mixed spaces are still relatively rare and the benefits of these are becoming more apparent as case studies from major cities are showing.
- A need to support shared space developments with clear designation of permitted use on standardised signs (including lower speed limits) and road markings and surface treatments to reinforce the message that all users must take more responsibility for their actions.

To avoid a fragmented approach and lack of harmonisation/standardisation there is a continued need for support from EU programmes to stimulate cooperation on sustainable urban mobility and propagate the exchange of experience.

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