



IMPACTS-SUMITS Conference

16-17 May 2013 Vienna

With the support of the Citizens Programme of the European Union

Following the award of the SUMITS project under the Europe for Citizens programme our annual conference programme over the coming years will be designed to incorporate the interest of citizens in our debate.

The 2013 Vienna conference embraced this approach by considering the topical issue of **Redistribution of Public Space** which is emerging as a theme in the mobility management strategies of many of our member cities. In particular, the conference offered sessions focussing on “Walking Strategies”, “Cycling Strategies” and “Mobility Planning”.

Presentations are available on both the IMPACTS and SUMITS websites.

<http://www.sumits.eu/id4.html>

As always the conference proved to be informative, both for the city representatives and the invited attendees, who included a large number of transport planning students from Warsaw.

The event was set against a political landscape in which the climate and energy goals of the European Union are impacting on city planning. In a speech given before the European Parliament Transport Committee Commissioner Connie Heedegard - European Commissioner for Climate Action - made clear that:

“Business as usual is not an option. Reductions are needed by all actors in the transport sector, if we as EU want to meet our agreed overall GHG reduction targets.”

Taking up this point Deputy Mayor of Vienna **Maria Vassilakou** acknowledged the response of cities is extremely important if these goals are to be met and noted that the Covenant of Mayors has concluded that:

“The fight against climate change will be won or lost in urban areas”

With road transport accounting for 70% of transport emissions finding low emission options that citizens will accept has tremendous potential to provide economic benefits for the community.

Since 2010 urban populations have exceeded rural populations (and urban areas are predicted to be home to 70% of the world’s population by 2050).

Sharing public space effectively by redistributing its use in the city landscape is one way forward. The examples of walking and cycling policies that are being promoted in Vienna address interrelated challenges including: traffic, air quality, creating a sense of community, and public health.

The examples presented resonated with other cities experiences, generating a sense of consensus that strategies around non-motorised transportation infrastructure can be successfully incorporated into wider sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP) which are being encouraged by the European Commission.

Such strategies, however, need to be part of a holistic approach that includes complementary mobility planning to influence behaviour. These might include public transport promotion and infrastructures for cleaner transport (e.g. electric vehicles).

Without doubt pilot projects in our cities provide clear evidence of success. Vienna has seen car use down from 40% to 27% in the



last 10 years, whilst public transport increased from 29% to 39% in same period. Cycling doubled to 6% with a 10% target.

Delegates recognised that success cannot be guaranteed simply by transferring experience between cities and that much depends on local conditions. The hilly geography of Lisbon, for example, has created the reverse experience.

Like many other cities Lisbon aims to promote an increasingly “accessible city”, seeking to boost community engagement in this social welfare area by promoting active citizen participation.

Gender, age and mobility characteristics must be considered. These give rise to designing shared spaces where citizens feel safe, can interact and move freely between modes. Residents and visitors alike call for attention to detail. Wayfinding needs attention in Masterplan guidance, together with factors such as more seating to create social spaces. Presentations demonstrated that creating “walkable cities” delivers successful regeneration of zones, where shops benefit from increased custom and residential property values rise.

A common question voiced by speakers was “*What kind of city do we want to create?*” All present agreed that this must have quality of life as a criterion. Vienna is rightly proud that it has been rated top for Quality of Life, with its transport planning and urban design making a significant contribution. Other cities have similar experiences, for example Copenhagen, is leading the way in sharing space with cyclists.

Copenhagen has set an ambitious target with its carbon neutral agenda by 2025. Its bicycle strategy 2011-25 strives for more than 50% of trips within the city to be by bike, in a safe, comfortable and secure environment. Citizens have already embraced the bicycle in its many forms, including as a freight delivery option and planners are prioritising the bike

with trials of a Green Wave for cyclists at traffic lights.

Mixing pedestrians and cyclists in a given space comes with the risk of accidents. However, the shared experiences of delegates demonstrated that true shared spaces for cycling and walking can be achieved. Risks can be mitigated by appropriate design (e.g. wide space) where pedestrians and cyclists mix.

Delegates endorsed the idea of a smart city approach to make better use of infrastructure. They agreed that this entails a holistic approach in which:

- Smart citizens build smart cities; and
- Where citizens make change happen.

This approach is already embraced by many cities as they engage with EU policy in this area. A clear benefit from the smart city approach is its engagement with citizens of all ages and its potential to influence travel behaviour, especially amongst the younger generation.

The diverse presentations and debate they generated illustrate the point that the same problems exist in all cities, but different solutions are emerging that are tailored to local need. These experiences need to be shared and knowledge transferred between cities to disseminate and quicken the implementation of beneficial strategies.

A prominent issue is the general concern that financing implementation of sustainable urban mobility policies is a persistent problem. New infrastructure is not cheap (e.g. charging points for electronic cars). Funding through additional tax or congestion charging schemes is not generally welcomed by voters, so alternative funding strategies are needed. In an innovative move Tallinn has introduced free public transport for residents to gain comparable results to congestion charging at lower cost with quicker implementation.

Roundtable Debate



Veronika Haunold - IMPACTS President (from Vienna) with political representatives **Claude Dargent** (Paris Councillor -Head of Transport Commission) and **Johan Nyhus** (Deputy Mayor –Gothenburg).

In an open discussion session political representatives compared and contrasted expectations from strategic policies with technical implementation on the ground. They agreed that faced with the same decisions there was much to learn from each other.

At the political level there has been a clear trend in the last decade towards addressing the needs of non-motorised travellers by prioritising shared space schemes that mitigate the dominance of the car. In many cities the majority of citizens have no car, so policies to promote other modes of travel are critical. Making this happen necessitates getting everyone to move together with the courage to demand change.

It is not always possible to find the physical space in urban areas to provide dedicated segregated lanes for pedestrians, cyclists and cars (particularly in historic old city centres). Redistributing and sharing space is the logical solution. Delegates noted that this is stimulating behavioural change and that there is a growing acceptance of the strategy as it becomes better understood.

When asked to identify the main driving force/problem influencing city mobility policies, climate change was the clear determinant. Despite difficulties the recent economic conditions impose there was, nevertheless, a feeling that Europe must take a lead in cutting CO2 and demonstrate to the world that cities can play their part.

Conclusions

The assembled delegates observed a pleasing consensus around attitudes to sustainable urban mobility planning and the redistribution of space to improve mobility and the quality of life in cities. Mobility is not a bad thing; the issue is how citizens travel and its effect on the urban environment.

Whilst each IMPACTS city has its own approach (reflecting local conditions and national characteristics), delegates found much common ground and identified lessons they could take home to their administrations and to communicate to decision makers across Europe to shape the future of sustainable transport planning in our cities. These include recognising:

- Every mode of transport has its own role in urban mobility, from car to pedestrian, from public to private, from collective to individual.
- Developing complementarities between modes of transport is a strategic issue to guarantee more environmental friendly mobility.
- A bold decision to redistribute and share space in urban areas improves the quality of life for residents, whilst delivering economic benefits for businesses in those areas.
- Promoting “ecomobility” means that soft modes of transport should be developed as network systems, integrated in the urban transport system.
- That to mitigate car dependence and its pressure in the urban scene, we have to act both with traffic and parking restrictions and in promoting attractive alternatives.
- Initiatives are needed to convince the young generation to change their mobility habits by using mobile technology to demonstrate alternative travel options.