



27/2017

SHAPING URBAN CHANGE AND PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

AT A GLANCE

Important shifts in urban geography and mobility culture demand a new mobility politics focused on quality of life. One that initiates and organises processes of change, shaping them in dialogue with all stakeholders. Strong functional diversity is a must. All modes of transport must be coordinated, sustainable mobility strengthened and public space upgraded. This will require adequate funding and opportunities to influence the process at the local level.

We travel on a daily basis – to get to work, school or university, to go shopping or to visit friends. The places we want to – and have to – reach are often far from where we live. And our trips are often hard to combine. For example, there is rarely a supermarket nearby work, so we end up travelling long distances every day and spending a lot of time in traffic. Many journeys are made by car and the significant expansion of road traffic over recent decades affects smaller towns, as well as the major cities. The upshot of these shifts has been growing noise pollution, a tangible rise in emissions harmful to human health and the earth's climate, and a deterioration of urban quality of life overall. Growth in delivery traffic – which is not addressed in this contribution – represents another drag on urban quality of life.

On one hand, mobility is fundamental to participation in the life of society; on the other, its current manifestations are eroding quality of life, especially in the cities. People living near busy roads, motorways and airports are exposed to especially high levels of noise and particulate pollution.

WANTED: A PROACTIVE MOBILITY POLICY TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE

In cities with a high quality of life for all their residents, everyday needs can be met mainly on foot, by bicycle or using public transport. The benefits include participation for all,

less noise pollution, reduced emissions, attractive public spaces, higher household income and more available time. Positive examples are already showing the way. But many cities suffer strong functional separation and are sharply divided by transport axes. However, promising developments are afoot, in both growing cities and shrinking ones. The time is ripe to harness the transformation processes affecting urban geography and mobility culture with proactive mobility policies designed to improve quality of life. What is needed here is a politics that initiates and organises processes of change and shapes them in dialogue.

This will mean securing a high level of functional diversity, networking existing and new modes of transport and promoting the emergence of a new urban and mobility culture.

PROMOTE FUNCTIONAL DIVERSITY: MORE ACCESSIBILITY WITH LESS TRAFFIC

A lively, safe and attractive neighbourhood is characterised by an adequate supply and quality of homes, schools, child-care, shops, recreational opportunities, commercial space, a range of jobs, healthcare facilities, green space, leisure and sport activities, and cultural establishments. This enables all residents – irrespective of age, state of health, income and background – to access the central needs of daily life. Greater functional diversity also means having to devote less time to mobility and minimising the negative aspects of traffic. An accessible urban quarter increases quality of life for all its residents. Harnessing urban redevelopment to that end means (a) improving planning and approval processes, (b) conducting local mobility reporting and (c) creating mobility plans at city or district level.

>

(a) Improving planning and approval processes

Development, modernisation and change of use often offer opportunities to stabilise and optimise the existing urban land-use mix. In the course of such interventions, diverse opportunities also arise to improve transport and mobility. Incorporating the objectives of mixed use and reduced traffic in the corresponding approval processes is a precondition for realising these gains.

Necessary action:

- amend the principles and purposes of urban development planning as laid out in the German Building Code, by specifying mixed land use in paragraph 1 (9);
- in the context of planning applications for construction, modernisation and change of use, assess the effects on land-use mix and traffic reduction within an expanded environmental report.

(b) Mobility reporting

If transport and mobility are to be shaped at the municipal level, knowledge of mobility needs and their implementation is required. Along the same lines as the statutory health reporting system, national government should establish an obligation for states to conduct mobility reporting (for details, see Schwedes/Daubitz 2017), with implementation at the municipal level. Such a system of mobility reporting should record the destinations (shopping, school, doctor's surgery and so on), actual behaviour (who travels where and why), socially desirable but unfulfilled mobility wishes and satisfaction with mobility options and local reachability. Such a dataset would reveal the actual mobility situation and enable targeted locally coordinated solutions to be found, and is a precondition for evaluating implemented changes. In order to expedite this form of reporting, national government should support data collection by states and municipalities.

Necessary action:

- national government to create a mobility dataset¹ in consultation with states and municipalities;
- grant all municipalities free access to the mobility dataset;
- enable municipalities to expand and improve the mobility dataset.

(c) Mobility plans at city/district level

New developments, construction projects, modernisation and change of use must be employed to maximise diversity of land-use mix and move away from the model of purely residential and purely industrial areas, which produces excessive traffic. Improving local accessibility should also be central to development work in public transport and transport infrastructure. This requires city or district mobility plans that embed existing and new offers in a network of pedestrian and cycle routes and a good public transport network.

Necessary action:

- develop state public transport laws and plans into mobility laws with mobility plans;
- create compulsory municipal (city/district) mobility plans in cooperation between local authorities, neighbourhoods, business and civil society, mapping the connectivity of all public and private services and activities;
- take account of district mobility plans in all approval processes, in transport network development and in public transport planning.

NETWORK MODES TO STRENGTHEN SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY

Mobility is changing. Younger people are less enthusiastic about learning to drive, while a growing number of cyclists brave adverse weather and topography, often in connection with bike-/car-sharing arrangements. And public discussion about multimodal offers is intensifying, with people combining all the available means of transport on a daily basis. Public transport is thus becoming even more important as the backbone of urban mobility. Politicians at all levels welcome this development, but rarely intervene to monitor or support, still less guide or steer. That is puzzling, because current developments offer great potential to reduce negative effects, such as noise, emissions and accidents, improve participation and thus enhance quality of life for all.

As well as improving the attractiveness of public transport, we also need to (a) increase the visibility of bicycles and car-sharing, (b) create physical interchanges and (c) provide better information.

(a) Greater visibility

Our urban spaces are currently dominated by the motor car. Alternative means of transport play a comparatively minor role in both planning and use. In order to improve take-up they need to be given a more prominent place and thus made easily accessible.

It would therefore make sense to:

- oblige municipalities to provide decentralised, easily accessible parking for sharing arrangements on public streets, as part of their district mobility plans;
- support municipalities in preparing urban cycling concepts and in developing and improving cycling infrastructure and supplying safe and accessible cycle parking, in dialogue with citizens, property owners and businesses;
- promote the implementation of cycling concepts in municipalities through a national support programme;
- introduce extensive parking management in the municipalities.

(b) Create physical interchanges

Diverse mobility options are available in our cities. As well as making the options more visible, transfers from bus to tram to car-sharing or bicycle must be made as easy as pos-

sible. This means turning public transport stops into multi-modal mobility interchanges.

We therefore recommend:

- amending all state public transport laws to make multi-modal mobility interchanges part of the public transport plan (or of the new mobility plan);
- turning public transport stops into mobility interchanges that network pedestrian routes, cycle traffic, car-sharing and public transport;
- a national programme to promote multimodal mobility interchanges.

(c) Better information

How can I get to the DIY store by bus? Will there still be a bus when the cinema finishes? How do I join car-sharing? Where is the nearest bus stop, secure bike parking or car-sharing drop-off? Where can I buy a ticket? How do I board the bus or train with a wheelchair, pram or walker? Mobility for all means not just providing services, but also supplying people with the necessary information. If we want to go a step further and break established routines, information needs to be precisely targeted, especially when personal circumstances change. In both cases the information needs to be supplied via traditional routes, such as timetables, ticket offices and call centres, but the new media must also be used.

This requires:

- a national programme for multimodal mobility interchanges to provide a neutral platform into which existing IT-based mobility platforms can be integrated; here it must be ensured that the mobility platforms include information on flexible, needs-driven and sharing services for users with special mobility needs (children, parents, older people, people with disabilities);
- calls for tender for mobility services to stipulate that enquiries and booking can be conducted by phone and in person at ticket offices, alongside IT-based public mobility platforms;
- IT-based public mobility platforms to offer fare information, access guidance and ticket purchase, as well as timetable information, nationally coordinated for reasons of compatibility;
- a mobility information competition run by national government to promote innovative communication;
- use of gathered data to improve coordination of mobility services in regional public transport plans and local mobility plans (for example, coordinating timetables, optimising routes and stops);
- encouragement for municipalities to inform citizens about mobility services when circumstances change (for example, a move into or within an area, birth of a child, starting school, retirement).

PROMOTING A NEW URBAN AND MOBILITY CULTURE – MAKING THE CITY MORE ATTRACTIVE

The changing mobility culture alters the urban culture as a whole. This process can be consolidated and improved – and in some municipalities, achieved for the first time – by reconfiguring and upgrading public space. Alongside improving public transport services, encouraging walking and cycling can release space for enhancing urban quality, thus boosting aesthetic and environmental attractiveness. The example of Copenhagen shows that it is possible to generate liveable urban conditions with a new quality of life – from the use of street-side balconies through to lively street spaces with cafés. Such conditions should be realised across the board in all neighbourhoods, and affordable for all sections of the population.

As well as harnessing construction and redevelopment to improve urban land-use mix, a reconfiguration of urban space for cyclists and pedestrians must be factored in, in order to promote active mobility and public transport. The street space also includes the adjacent buildings, which can contribute to an urbane atmosphere through bike parking and attractive design of entrances.

This requires (a) strengthening sustainable urban mobility, (b) enhancing and reconfiguring space and (c) ensuring that municipalities possess the requisite resources.

(a) Strengthen sustainable urban mobility

The new mobility culture is more in tune with urban life. Instead of focussing exclusively on car ownership, it builds on the use of different mobility options. Attractive public transport forms its backbone. Politics must guide and shape this development, pushing towards a liveable city.

The possibilities include:

- replacing parking provision regulations in state building codes with locally tailored mobility codes and arrangements, to secure accessibility (in the case of new-build and redevelopment) in the sense of a new mobility culture on the basis of city/district mobility plans;
- encouraging and requiring the use of quieter and more efficient public transport vehicles and modern propulsion systems through subsidy programmes and specific clauses in calls for tender issued by national government, states and municipalities;
- targeted national government support (special depreciation) for modern cycle technologies (standard bicycles with electric assistance and new electric transport bikes);
- steadily tightening national and EU emissions and noise limits and guaranteeing compliance through realistic testing procedures (add corresponding tests to vehicle roadworthiness inspection);
- a comprehensive national concept for supplying renewable energy and publicly accessible charging infrastructure for electromobility, prepared in consultation with states and municipalities;

- obliging municipalities and transport companies to enable persons with special mobility requirements (children, parents, older people, people with disabilities) to access public transport stops and vehicles.

(b) Enhance and reconfigure public space

In many places major transport infrastructure detracts from urban quality of life, cutting through public space and worsening air and noise pollution. At the same time, the transformation of mobility intensifies competition for land use. Urban (re)development processes must therefore reconfigure street-space and, above all, make it more accessible to hitherto disadvantaged users. In addition, more urban space should be dedicated to parks and recreation, to improve the inner city climate and quality of life.

Important steps include:

- requiring redevelopment of street-space, squares and recreational spaces to pay special consideration to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists in the interests of quality of life and road safety;
- reassessing and lowering the national urban speed limit, and continuing to permit municipalities to deviate from them;
- establishing municipal concepts to reduce air pollution;
- revising the road width guidelines to make more room for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

(c) Ensure municipalities are adequately resourced

If they are to be able to shape mobility, municipalities require not only willingness and opportunities to influence events but also adequate funding. They therefore need new sources of funding for local mobility planning. At the same time, the question of which national (and EU) road traffic regulations need to be observed or modified must be considered. Revenues must be earmarked for public transport and/or sustainable mobility. It would make sense to set up a municipal mobility management system to build and integrate the necessary structures, and supply information about developments through a mobility reporting system.

Authors

René Bormann, head of the transport and urban development/housing desks in the Division for Economic and Social Policy at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Michael Groß, spokesperson for construction and planning in the SPD parliamentary group, member of the German Bundestag.

Prof. Dr. Helmut Holzapfel, head of Zentrum für Mobilitätskultur, Kassel.

Kirsten Lühmann, spokesperson for transport policy in the SPD parliamentary group, member of the German Bundestag.

Prof. Dr. Oliver Schwedes, head of the integrated transport planning department, Technische Universität Berlin.

Note

1 – For one example of practice see the current pilot project “Langfristige Sicherung von Versorgung und Mobilität in ländlichen Räumen” conducted by the Bundesministerium für Verkehr und digitale Infrastruktur (BMVI) and the Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung (BBSR).

Bibliography

Schwedes, Oliver; Daubitz, Stephan 2017: Mobilitätsberichterstattung: Ein politisches Instrument zur Gestaltung einer nachhaltigen Verkehrsentwicklung, IVP-Discussion Paper 2 (2017), Berlin.

Imprint

© 2017

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Published by: Division for Economic and Social Policy

Godesberger Allee 149, 53175 Bonn

Fax: 0049 (0)228 883 9202, 0049 (0)30 26935 9229; www.fes.de

Responsible for this publication at FES:

René Bormann, Division for Economic and Social Policy

Orders/contact: wiso-news@fes.de

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Commercial use of FES publications in any media is prohibited without written permission from the FES.

ISBN 978-3-95861-952-4