

Conference kommunal mobil – 7th and 8th June 2018:

## **Reclaiming streets and squares – jointly shaping the transport transformation**

Summary

**Transforming the (German) transport sector - with civic engagement and committed administrations!**

Tilman Bracher

In the past few years the transport sector has failed to meet both its air quality targets for particulate matter and nitrogen oxides across the board, and also to curb the growth in transport demand. Moreover, sufficient progress to meet the climate targets has yet to be made, highlighting that the need for "transport transformation" is greater than ever. Debates about the future of mobility often focus on decarbonisation, automated driving and the question of whether car and ride sharing can replace driving in one's own car, but rarely on public space. "Before-and-after images" like those from the city of Siegen, where the removal of car-centric infrastructure uncovered the city's river, symbolize the increase in quality of life that brings new ways of dealing with urban motor traffic.

"Reclaiming streets and squares – jointly shaping the transport transformation" was therefore the topic of the sixth symposium "kommunal mobil". The event organized by the German Environmental Agency (UBA) and the German Institute for Urban Affairs took place on 7 and 8 June 2018 at the UBA in Dessau-Roßlau with the participation of the German Cities Association as well as with citizens and representatives of municipalities, planning offices and science.

Federal Environment Minister Svenja Schulze welcomed the participants in the light of the current discussion about the diesel scandal with a short plea via video for clean air and environmentally-friendly mobility. She also pointed to the term 'transport transformation', which was for a long time avoided by the federal government: "It is not surprising that the term 'transport transformation' is on everyone's lips."

Dr Harry Lehmann, Head of Environmental Planning and Sustainability Strategies at the UBA, informed the audience that in recent months the German Environment Agency has also developed and published a vision of "Tomorrow's Cities". It is characterised by being environmentally-friendly mobility in an environment with a high quality of life - low noise, green, compact and mixed.

Hilmar von Lojewski, head of the Department of Urban Development, Building, Housing and Traffic of the German Association of Cities, announced in his introductory lecture that the German mayors will be pro-active towards a 'transport transformation' in the near future. Following intensive debates in the German Association of Cities on the need to effectively reduce noise and pollution levels, they have jointly and across party lines agreed on a shift towards sustainable mobility with efficient public transport, electric mobility, bicycle and pedestrian traffic in the cities. This should significantly reduce the number of cars with internal combustion engines. The Paper of the German Association of Cities "Sustainable Urban Mobility for All – an agenda for 'transport transformation' from a local perspective" was finally adopted and published on 21 June 2018.

Torben Heinemann, head of the traffic and civil engineering department of the city of Leipzig

("promote active mobility in Leipzig"), and Henrik Schumann, city building council of the city of Siegen ("Siegen to new shores - from the parking lot to the liveable public space"), highlighted in lively presentations that the transformation of public roads belongs to the repertoire of urban and transport planning. Discussions about the goals and measures of traffic planning in Leipzig have a long history. Using the example of the ExWoSt project Leipzig Stötteritz, Mr. Heinemann explained various stages and phases of public participation from top-down to bottom-up. These are seen as the basis for planning to promote active mobility in neighbourhoods. In Siegen, in association with the local citizens, they succeeded in "sawing" the Siegplatte, a concrete parking lot, into pieces and along with it its 200 inner-city parking spaces. This helped uncover the inner-city river Sieg and enabled the transformation of the bank area into an attractive urban space.

Other encouraging examples of successful street transformation can be found in publications of the German Environment Agency and the German Road Safety Council (DVR). Tim Schubert, German Environment Agency, presented the project "MONASTA - Model Project Sustainable Urban Mobility" and the corresponding publication. The DVR's project "Good roads in city and village", which was presented by Isabelle Vogt of the Technical University of Cologne, has a similar focus. In an open marketplace, participants had the opportunity to get to know these and other public space transformation projects.

The examples from Cologne and Berstedt showed what civic engagement is capable of: Elisabeth Rohata and Ralph Herbertz, Agora Cologne, reported on the "Day of the good life" in Cologne, organized and financed by many citizens. Bernd Hegner and Helga Radziejewski, as representatives of a citizens' initiative ("Everyday cycle paths for our region") from Berstedt, Thuringia, reported on how politicians and actors in rural areas could be persuaded to build the cycle paths required by the Berstedt population within a very short amount of time. Another interesting example of excellent civic engagement is the "Wuppertal Movement e.V.", which has pushed for the building of a cycle path on a former railway track, the Wuppertal Nordbahntrasse. The movement lobbied for its realization on both the political and the planning level – at times against the city of Wuppertal, and currently helps to maintain the cycle path.

The central theme in the examples discussed with the participants was how to deal with the parking spaces available in public spaces. Even where there are free parking spaces in multi-storey car parks or in the neighbourhood, the resistance to reorganization measures is usually high at first. It is therefore a good idea to introduce revisable measure during a testing phase. Municipalities as well as citizens who want to advance the transformation of their community and to make sustainable mobility alive can now find practical help in addition to a number of inspiring publications.

The European Mobility Week (EMW) offers an ideal framework for civic and municipal involvement. Claudia Kiso, German Environment Agency, and Norbert Krause, Krauses project design, presented "Nine tricks for crisp ideas that encourage rethinking" and invited the participants to a "Speed Dating"-session to develop new ideas themselves with the help of the EMW toolbox. European Mobility Week is an annual initiative of the European Commission for Sustainable Urban Mobility since 2002. It calls on European cities and towns to devote one week to sustainable mobility in order to promote change. It starts every year on the 16th of September and ends with the "Car Free Day" on the 22nd of September. The EMW National Coordination, which lies with UBA, offers support materials, a toolbox and many good ideas for both interested citizens and municipalities.

Dr Bernd Schuster from the Hessian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Transport and member of the Expert Group on Urban Mobility of the EU pointed out opportunities for cities as partners in EU research projects. Thomas Stein, German Institute for Urban Affairs also presented the funding instruments for the transformation of public space offered by the Federal Government.

The closing panel with the key question "'transport transformation' from above - or 'transport transformation' from below?!" was moderated by Dr Katrin Dziekan, German Environment Agency. Martin Schmied from the German Environment Agency, Jobst Kraus, Protestant Kirchentag / BUND, Thomas Kiel, German Association of Cities, and Kerstin Stark, Changing Cities e.V. / Volksentscheid Fahrrad Berlin, discussed with each other and with the participants of the symposium, coming to the following conclusion: 'Transport transformation' needs both: pressure from below and support from above. In particular, the request to the federal government to revise road legislation was made clear. Moving and stationary car traffic must no longer be privileged on public streets.

The closing debate demonstrated the potential that can be achieved through the combination of civic engagement and committed administrative action. Even in times of limited resources, the common goal of sustainable transport can be attained if pursued consistently.