PARALLEL SESSION:
PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Session Conclusions

Date: 25th February, 2020
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1. KEYWORDS

City, citizen, community, safety, sustainability, public transport

2. TITLE OF THE SESSION

Promoting sustainable cities and communities

3. TOPIC OF THE SESSION

In recent decades, the world has experienced unprecedented urban growth. By 2050, nearly 7 in 10 people will live in cities (today this ratio is 5 in 10). Rapid urbanization has brought enormous challenges, including many linked to the lack of safety on the roads. Better urban planning and management are needed to make roads and transport systems safe for all who use them as well as to ensure that transport is affordable, accessible and sustainable. Urban design itself should favour and promote a modal shift away from private motor vehicles towards active forms of transport such as walking and cycling and public transit. If successfully implemented, a modal shift towards these more sustainable forms of mobility would not only lead to improvements in safety, but also impact favourably on congestion, noise and air pollution. This session has also addressed Sustainable Development Goals beside Sustainable Development Goals 3 on health and 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe and sustainable.

The aims of the session were:

- Indicate how urban design can improve road safety and other SDGs in both new and existing cities
- Discuss the many benefits of the shift to more active forms of transport
- Indicate how to best protect those who are most vulnerable on the roads
- Identify key priorities for the next decade

4. SHORT SUMMARY OF SESSION

a) Introduction, Skye Duncan

Cities are experiencing a growing pressure on public space. Policies and design decisions in the past have created a dangerous environment where Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs) are battling against traffic. An astonishing number of 38 million people die every year in the world from chronic diseases, many of them related to air pollution, and from physical inactivity. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death among young people.

But, what if the available space was able to serve more people? This is actually possible as, for instance, multimodal streets are more efficient and capable of accommodating 2.5 times more people. We need to start with master plans that stop subsidizing private transportation, that "make easier for people not to drive", that lower speed limits in the city… This is how Oslo achieved the record number of just one fatality in 2019. The master plan must consider a city-wide level but also a block level and a micro-level (design of pedestrian crossings, for instance).

City environments should allow people and children to play, learn how to ride a bicycle, walk and spend more time in the outside. Transformational work must happen in dialogue with the police, journalists… and of course traffic engineers. Evidence and metrics must be at the heart of the decision making.

And, finally, cities also need the advocacy of the civil society and the young population to challenge the *status quo*, and this must start today. Comprehensively addressing the Sustainable Development Goals should not be forgotten either.

Let's put people first: enough is enough!

b) Key remarks and highlights from the panelists

The "journey of London", a city of 8.5 million inhabitants, has not ended yet. It started back in the 80s with a massive road building program that reshaped the ancient Roman road network into a new city centre, which had to represent a real hub for sustainability. Different measures were adopted: more space for buses, for bicycles and also the introduction of the congestion charge. The congestion charge required a strong political leadership and resulted in a 20% reduction in traffic. The freed new space was given back to public transport. Another landmark measure was the introduction of the bike rental scheme. During the last 15 years, the number of fatalities has been cut by 50%. The goal now is to reach 80% of trips to be made by public transport, walking and cycling.

Not only every city is different from the rest, starting with Indian ones, but they are living organisms that change in time and space. The modern city all over the world is going to be very different from, for instance, current European cities. Delhi, in fact, does not have a single central district but 20 central districts and this brings large challenges for the public transport system. And this is a problem because sustainability is normally based on single business district with a large car ownership and well-developed metro networks, while in many cities the reality is that metro systems are working just at 15% of their capacity. Delhi has the largest share in the world of walking trips: 50% of people already walk and car ownership is very low as only 7% of the families own a car. The car however is still being used for trips of just 500 m.

Thinking that the same solution will work in all cities is a big mistake. We need to be humble, give people the benefit of the doubt and try to understand why people make their choices. For instance, people use motorcycles in South America and Egypt and 90% of families in Vietnam own a motorcycle because they are always faster than public transport and cost half the price of public transport.

Another key issue for the future of cities is traffic calming and speed reduction. We need to have a more reflective life. This is the approach embraced in the Basque Country capital cities Vitoria-Gasteiz, Bilbao-Bilbo and Donostia-San Sebastián, where a transformative process has been taking place during the last decades focusing on creating a new city culture. Our society created a need to use the car and we must now develop a new mentality. The aim is to preserve the public space for the people. The process is based on good governance and policies that are shared and accepted by all, in a participatory environment and citizenship engagement. The reduction of the speed limit to 30 km/h, an important example, required a lot of dialogue. Some argued that it could produce congestion, and this was proved to be wrong. A clear message is that it is possible to be brave and get results: the number of crashes in Bilbao, for instance, was reduced by 10% in 2019. The process included a large communications campaign in public transport and public spaces and now the citizen's perception is that they live 30 times better because of the reduction of speed: cities are less stressed.

The Basque Country has a population of around 3 million inhabitants and the number of traffic fatalities has been cut from more than 200 in 2000 to 51 in 2019. But nowadays we face a serious challenge as most of the fatalities now are VRUs: ageing population, pedestrians, bicyclists and motorcyclists… so there is still a lot of work to be done.

Cycling is now also a top priority in Luxembourg and, as a radical innovation, public transport is free since October 2019. But it has not always been like that. In 2013 the country had one of the highest shares of private mobility (Qatar being another one). When the new transport strategy was introduced, some fellow politicians said that it was a "political suicide" and that the Minister in charge would not be reelected. All major cities designed after World War II had the private care at the core of the design and it is necessary now to completely reshape them: we need to give back the streets to whom they really belong to, developing new walking and cycling spaces. Do we really need cars that seem to be designed for the Moon and that require XXL parking spaces? Currently, Luxembourg has the biggest investment in public transport per inhabitant: 600 Euros per inhabitant and year just for the railway system. Quality is the most important parameter: the population will change behavior if public transport quality is high and transport represents the most convenient alternative, although in many areas or regions people still use public transport because they are compelled to it. And multimodality represents the

ultimate solution: there is no single mode as there is no silver bullet. People finally understood the benefits of the new policies and… the Minister was reelected!

Many specific policies are crucial for transport. Parking policy, for instance, is one of the key policy: if there is parking at destination, then people will keep using the private car. This is true in Indian universities and in cities around the globe. Transport systems must make parking difficult. Decentralization is also an important issue, as well as the impact of large shopping malls, something that should also be carefully addressed. Population density also matters: public transport in low density areas remains a big challenge ahead as, for instance, outer London has very low density and public transport needs to be subsidized there. City centers are more and more sustainable, but outskirts lag behind.

Many other matters are also part of the debate. For instance, new incumbents in the city such as e-scooters and micromobility represent another urgent matter of discussion. Where should we allow them to drive? Do we have space for them? How must they interact with other VRUs? Speed enforcement is still an open issue in many cities: some say this enforcement is not needed any more as drivers are already law abiding. But the reality is that when finally introduced, radars and other checks result in a 50% reduction in fatalities.

London is in fact currently reconsidering one more time what type of vehicles should be allowed in the cities: there is no doubt that buses and logistics vehicles are needed. But they must become safer: the improved direct vision requirement initially introduced in the City has now become a European Union standard. Electric buses represent another opportunity for cities: Bogotá just bought 300 units of this type of mobility, for instance.

c) Policies, public transport and other concluding remarks

According to Skye Duncan, traffic is both a complex issue with many policies interacting and a living evolving organism. Many policies and regulations are completely outdated as they were design for high-speed inter-urban traffic. Land use, for instance single family house neighborhoods, may become a problem in itself because of their low density and associated high public transport costs. We are all vulnerable to the same basic laws of physics. Capacity building is also a key matter: old-school traffic and urban planning technicians were trained to move large amounts of cars as fast as possible. Academic syllabi should now help shape a new generation of young leaders.

Public transport, according to Francois Bausch, is a fundamental public service. Some people see is as a profitable service but it should be considered a public one. Mobility is a basic need for humanity: if you can move, you can participate in society. Before making public transport free in 2019, Luxembourg already had the cheapest fares. Income from tickets only represented 10% of the cost: moving to cost-free transport was the next logical step. The city wants to move now to a fully sustainable transport system that also considers the cars, but not for 500 m trips!

5. OVERALL FINAL MESSAGES

- Cities must be more inclusive, healthier and safer: in short, more "livable".
- The first step is to give back space to public transport, this action reshapes the whole public space and the entire city is consequently redesigned.

- Political leadership is important, as well as individual decisions. Political leadership pays off as citizens normally understand the benefits of sustainable policies.
- Access to mass transportation is a basic right. But quality is the most crucial issue to persuade citizens to use it.
- Speed limits should protect our lives, otherwise we will not promote bicycling or walking. Tremendous safety gains are possible with 30 km/h speed limits and the associated education and enforcement.
- Restrictive parking policies are a key issue to discourage irrational private car use.
- "One size does not fit all", also when it comes to solutions and road safety approaches: every city is different and unique.
- Making cities more sustainable should also contribute to transforming them into safer cities. We need to be able to enjoy our cities: this represents also sustainability. Sustainability should not be limited to business or central districts but also to less dense parts of the cities. Cities need real sustainable mobility strategies.

6. PREPARATION OF THE SESSION

In addition to the panellists listed below, the session benefitted from the logistics support from Hanna Emilia Dunning | WHO, and Hala Sakr Ali, Regional Advisor on Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability | Eastern Mediterranean Region Office (EMRO), WHO.

7. SESSION PROGRAM

Chair and moderator: Claudia Adriazola. Deputy Director, Urban Mobility Program | World Resources Institute | National Association of City Transportation Officials

Rapporteur: Jesús Monclús. Director, Prevention and Road Safety | Fundación MAPFRE

Session coordinator: Melecki Kayesi. Technical Officer | WHO

Plan and timing (Note: only the session start time is indicated below, as different rounds of interventions took place during the session):

Approx. Time	Topic/Presentation title	
9:00	Chairwoman/moderator (Welcome and session objectives)	Claudia Adriazola. Deputy Director, Urban Mobility Program	World Resources Institute	National Association of City Transportation Officials
	Expert (Introduction)	Skye Duncan. Director, Global Designing Cities Initiative	National Association of City Transportation Officials	United States of America
	Panelist	Francois Bausch Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Mobility and Public Works	Ministry of Mobility and

		Public Works | Luxembourg
	Panelist	Lilli Matson. Chief Safety, Health and Environment Officer | Transport for London | United Kingdom
	Panelist	Sonia Diaz de Corcuera. Director of Transport | The Basque Government | Spain
	Panelist	Dinesh Mohan. Honorary Professor | Indian Institute of Technology | India