

Conference Report

International EPSA Knowledge-Transfer Conference on “Urban Development for Healthier Cities: A Cross-Cutting Approach to Innovative Local Governance”

- Barcelona, 13-14 June 2016 –

During 2 days in Barcelona, participants from several European countries had the opportunity to listen to external experts and talk and discuss about how Cities can be made healthier for their inhabitants and how personal health can be improved.

Marcus Grant, from the WHO, inspired us during an excellent start of this conference. We have to design cities in the future and think of all opportunities offered rather than of problems and warnings. Innovative leadership and active citizenship are necessary. Health is more than absence of diseases or infirmity. You can't have healthy people on a sick planet or in a sick city.

The Provincial Council of Barcelona presented their cross-cutting model. It was impressive to see how one combined goal is realized within different governmental layers. Throughout both conference days it became clear from several presentations how successful their policy is. And this all after a short presentation by Alexander Heichlinger, showing the proud Award Winners of the Cross-Cutting Award EPSA 2015.

We saw examples from three cities (Turin, Utrecht and Hamburg and as fourth of course Udine) on how to improve Metropolitan Areas through innovation and participatory government, all aimed at improving health in Cities and changing energy delivery. We learned that smart use of Public Private Partnership is necessary and the use of modern technologies. One example to mention here is the case of Utrecht where the energy activities of individuals impressed us as the starting point and description of the Network Society. Furthermore the fact that 70% of the adults are exercising impressed many conference participants.

For Turin the Smile (**S**mart, **M**obility, **I**nclusion, **L**ife & Health, and **E**nergy) project showed how a Metropolitan Area can be improved using all these topics in governmental policies. Hamburg showed us how enormous the change was within the “Energiewende” and Udine and Turin furthermore explained how governmental structures need to be improved and changed to make all these developments possible.

Green Capitals, in the past, now and in the future. Three excellent examples from Vitoria-Gasteiz, Essen and Ljubljana and Mollet del Vallès. We were enlightened by how they made and will make their cities green. And the goal was: Just do it. Regulation was not the topic. You have to believe in it. Essen changed areas from Black (Coal mines) to Green Parks and with sustainability as the main goal of policy. Ljubljana presented the 12 indicators of sustainable development, which are used as basis for assessing the European Green Capital applicants. These are reflected in Ljubljana's concept by assigning each month of 2016 to one or several specific indicators. A good initiative to monitor the green developments in a city.

The second day started with the topic 'Mobility' with examples from Modena, Tallinn and Barcelona, showing the struggle to get people out of the car into public transport and on bikes or even walking. It helps to promote sports and get people to move. A more holistic view is necessary to combine measurements. As a starting point cities made often a choice for the WHO regulations about Healthy Cities. The message from Barcelona: Go for the Olympic Games! It helps to improve the health of the city and inhabitants.

In health the economic situation of an individual is always very important. Examples from Liverpool, Sant Cugat del Vallès and Ghent showed how we can help the poorest people in our society. Satisfaction with housing is an individual feeling, but it must be in a healthy way. Energy consumption has to be measured and compared between parts of cities to look how energy consumption can be decreased. It is not always possible to go for easy solutions. Sometimes you need to use an unorthodox road. There is a link between quality of housing, energy saving and health.

Afterwards the conference concentrated on architecture, including landscape, since beautiful cities and landscape do have a positive impact on the wellbeing of inhabitants. We have to be careful with trees and use public space in a multiple way. Examples from Rennes and Vienna were testimony of it, not to forget the examples brought in by the last keynote speaker: Isabela Velasquez.

At the end we may summarize our journey as follows: We learned about the need to have healthy cities, the ways how we can achieve it and that this can even result in beautiful architecture.

Finally:

Cooperation between governmental layers is important to reach the goal of a healthier city/healthier region. We learned how to reach this necessary goal by very practical examples. It made it all very tangible.

One of the key messages is that urban planning has to be people-centred and that transversal ways of working have to be sought, even if they are not always the easiest solution. Proactive attitudes are important too and change processes, after all, require political support and a lot of patience.

But we also learned: Just Do it in Small Steps!

We are looking back at a very successful Transfer Conference of knowledge and experiences.

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