

Demographic challenges for urban mobility and public space

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1 ABSTRACT

Decreasing fertility rates, ageing and the diversification of society can be seen as a ‘mega trend’ on a European scale. Although most of the cities are affected by these processes of socio-demographic change, the concrete local effects vary significantly, however. Urban mobility and planning policy is affected by these fundamental changes in society in various ways. Ageing and diversification of society particularly means that urban planning has to deal with new and manifold requirements and expectations. The paper provides an overview of the way selected European cities – Berlin, Copenhagen, London, Vienna and Zurich – react towards the challenges associated with socio-demographic change focussing on urban mobility and public space. Each of these cities has set the issue on the urban agenda during the last years and exhibits an interesting range of good practice examples focussing on different aspects of the issue (e.g. Demography Concept Berlin, London’s Mayor’s strategy for older people, approaches of barrier-free planning and building and pedestrian-friendly urban spaces in Vienna and Zurich, lifestyle-based planning in Copenhagen). Based on the comparative analysis of the five cities a set of principles and key areas for action can be defined which identifies crucial aspects in formulating a political response towards the upcoming challenges.

2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES FOR URBAN MOBILITY AND PUBLIC SPACE

The public and in some cases also the scientific debate on demographic change very much focuses on ageing, the analysis of five cities – **Berlin, Copenhagen, London, Vienna and Zurich** – however shows a wide variety of (anticipated) development paths in relation to the future composition of their population. ‘Demographic change’ how it is understood in this study, therefore refers to changes in the number as well as in the composition of a population including ethnic and cultural diversity, the diversification of lifestyles as well as changes in family and household structures.

With Berlin, Copenhagen, London, Vienna and Zurich five cities have been selected, which have set the demography topic on the urban agenda during the last years and offer an interesting range of good practice examples.

2.1 Demographic challenges ...

Out of the five cities four (Copenhagen, London, Vienna, Zurich) expect significant population growth within the next years. Only Berlin, situated in a geographic area predominately faced with population loss, is expected to stagnate in the next period.

Population prognoses:

- Vienna: +21% until 2035
- London: +11% until 2026 (conservative projection)
- Copenhagen: +6% until 2018
- Zurich: +4,9% until 2025
- Berlin: -1% until 2030

Demographic change must not be associated with ageing alone – this is clearly demonstrated by the five cities. In fact, if ageing is measured by the share of the age group 65+ in relation to the total population, only Berlin and Vienna will experience a “greying” society. In contrast, Zurich will even get younger in the next years. Also London will experience the most significant population increases not within the age group 65+, but rather in the group 50-60, while Copenhagen will see a stagnation amongst the elderly.

A growing ethnic diversity is a common phenomenon in all the investigated cities. This goes hand in hand with a growing multitude of urban lifestyles which create new ways of using the city and new expectations in

relation to what a city should offer to be attractive. A broad understanding of the demographic changes affecting the urban society is necessary to react in a pro-active and successful way in urban planning and urban mobility policy.

2.2 ... and mobility challenges for cities

Already in the last years all the five cities have experienced an increase in total traffic amount, and as a result a rise in car traffic. This trend is likely to continue, although cities like Vienna set the political goal to reverse this trend in the next period. However, in general a further rise in the total amount of motorised traffic is considered to be very likely. Despite growing absolute traffic volumes and thanks to major investments in infrastructure (and awareness-rising), the cities were successful in changing the modal split in the direction of sustainable carriers. London e.g. has seen the share of public transport growing at about 4% since 2000.

2.3 How do European cities react towards the challenges associated with demographic change regarding urban mobility and space?

The analysed cities have, to a different amount, integrated the challenge of demographic change in their strategic planning documents dealing with urban mobility and space. Whereas Berlin is currently developing a comprehensive demography concept for the city, London deals explicitly with the requirements of the elderly in its Mayor's strategy for older people. With the London Authority's Race Equality Scheme the city has developed a specific impact assessment in relation to race equality defining key activities for transport policies. Vienna specifically pursues the approach of barrier-free planning and building as well as of pedestrian-friendly urban spaces similar to Zurich, where pedestrian traffic is also regarded as a key focal point in urban planning and transport policies. A very broad understanding of diversification can be found in Copenhagen, where the concept of diversity also covers different lifestyles of the citizens.

Based on the comparative analysis of the five cities a set of principles and key issue can be defined which identifies crucial aspects in formulating a political response towards the upcoming challenges.

2.4 Principles ...

- Surveying different requirements: Demographic change brings about a multitude of expectations and requirements of what a city should offer to its inhabitants. Different life phases as well as different lifestyles play a role in determining collective needs. Growing ethnic diversity and the related societal consequences should be an integral part in this process as well. The City of Copenhagen accommodated this concern when developing its City Development Strategy. A lifestyle analysis in the preparatory phase helped to secure that the wishes and expectations of the city 'users' had been taken into account when formulating planning and development goals of the city.
- Integrating different politics: In the field of urban mobility and public space it is of utmost importance to be aware of the interactions with other policy fields, especially public health policies as well as integration and diversity policies can be identified as crucial policy fields regarding the challenges of demographic change. The ageing urban society develops specific requirements in terms of using urban spaces and participating in urban mobility. The City of Vienna's pilot project "sALTo", where new quality standards for ageing in the neighbourhood have been set, demonstrates how the urban planning and health care fields can be integrated.
- Developing visions & harmonised strategies: When dealing with the challenges of demographic change it is of decisive importance to define widely accepted policy goals in a broad consultation process, which work as a framework for specific strategies and the realisation on project level. Visions and mission statements define overarching goals (e.g. becoming the most pedestrian-friendly city in the world, cf. London) which have to be concretised by sectoral strategies. With its mission statement Stadträume 2010 the City of Zurich has developed such an overarching strategy focussing on the design of the public space. The related checklists Quality of Urban Space and Security Checklist break down the vision into concrete aspects that have to be considered in planning and implementation processes.

- Participation & multi-stakeholder planning: Demographic change causes a diversification of mobility needs. Therefore different viewpoints and diverse mobility patterns have to be considered and relevant stakeholder groups have to be involved. The City of Berlin organised the whole development and implementation process of the Urban Transport Development Plan to be accompanied by representatives of relevant stakeholder groups in the guise of a 'round table' as well as by a scientific advisory board. Whereas the 'round table' acted as a forum for integrating different views and interests, the scientific board secured high and innovative methodological and technical standards.

2.5 ... and key issues for action:

- Public space: Barrier-free design emerges as an essential criteria, which lays the foundation for an equal use of the public space. All analysed cities recognise their responsibility for barrier-free design of the public space and have undertaken activities at different levels (e.g. Handbook on barrier-free urban planning and building, Berlin). Against the background of demographic change the design of public spaces must more than ever reflect and meet the diverse needs resulting from a multitude of urban lifestyles. Especially London and Copenhagen take the diversity of the urban population and their requirements as a starting point for planning the public space (e.g. Urban Space Action Plan Copenhagen, Open Space Strategy London).
- Security: In the context of street safety the analysed cities work on awareness-rising measures (e.g. Traffic behaviour campaigns in Copenhagen) and some cities also strive for better monitoring systems in order to gain knowledge for integrated programmes to enhance traffic safety (e.g. Vision zero, Vienna). In the context of security the analysed cities for example have defined common security standards for projects (e.g. Security checklist, Zurich) or consider gender specific requirements in relation to safe urban spaces.
- Statistics & data collection: Concerning the challenges of demographic change, the necessity to reproduce the diversity of life situations, social roles and specific requirements of certain groups grows and asks for advanced methodologies of data collection. London disposes of very advanced data on the mobility behaviour of special user groups (differentiated by gender, age, ethnic group, working status), other cities put priority on the spatial differentiations within the city (e.g. Mobility study, Vienna).
- Urban structure: Against the background of suburbanisation cities have to tackle the question of how to stay attractive for certain groups of citizens, e.g. young families who tend to move to the suburbs or how to attract people wishing to return to the city due to altered life situations respectively (e.g. single elderly people). Innovative housing models, such as multi-generational or intercultural housing can help to stabilize the urban structure (e.g. Information centre for multi-generational housing, Berlin; 'themed housing' projects, Vienna).

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