URBACT CITY LAB

ON METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

12th February 2010, Lille

Workshop 3: Light Footprint Urban Environments

Report by Shandi Miller, URBACT Secretariat

European Union
European Regional Development Fund

Connecting cities
Building successes

URBACT

Workshop 3: Light Footprint Urban Environments

MODERATOR: PHILIP STEIN, URBACT II THEMATIC POLE MANAGER
RAPPORTEUR: SYLVIE HARBURGER, CAISSE DES DEPOTS ET CONSIGNATIONS (FR)

The 'Light Footprint Urban Environment' workshop included 3 presentations in the morning session on energy use and production and integrated sustainability planning, followed in the afternoon by a presentation on sustainability in 'local' development design and planning, as introduction to a wide ranging open round table discussion among participants.

The key questions suggested to orientate this workshop were:

How do cities deal with the complexity of **managing** both the **morphological and functional city regions** which are cleaved by **national, regional and local administrative boundaries** ?

How can cities develop forms of governance appropriate to functional and morphological city regions at supra municipality level in order to manage environmental questions (considering possible differences in approach with regard to morphological, functional & administrative urban areas, relevant spatial scales, partition of competences...) ?

What are the important obstacles to achieving effective, integrated environmental management for cities, which require to be recognised, understood and countered ?

What types of **innovative arrangements** do cities develop in order to overcome the resulting political, financial and/ or administrative **divisions**?

How can national finance, taxation and pooled funding be organised across boundaries and form part of the metropolitan response package in relation to environment issues ?

How can the metropolitan framework best support or integrate local area or resource based initiatives in order to maximise impact at city level ?

3 MORNING PRESENTATIONS & DISCUSSION

The morning session included three speakers using energy production as a common entry point to issues of environment and governance. The wider context of these discussions being the climate challenge and disappointment following the 2009 Copenhagen Summit, urbanisation is recognised as being at the heart of environmental challenges. Progress requires adaptability and an innovative integrated approach which is often constrained by outdated structures of governance.

Biogasmax project, Lille (FR)

Gildas Le Saux of the Communauté Urbaine de Lille, presented the case of a pioneering biogas project. The project aims to fight climate change through integration of transport policy and sustainable waste management at metropolitan level. The resulting renewable energy production and utilization involves a sustainability circuit which is as 'closed' as possible – converting waste into methane fuel to power the public transport bus fleet.

The explanation of the development of the project highlighted the elaboration of a sophisticated organisational structure based on cooperation between different operators (i.e. road and canal transport), careful locational and network planning and a strong coordination by the "Communauté Urbaine". Getting it right implies dealing with and effectively managing complexity.

The initiative has however been constrained by several issues. The structure of governance and the need on occasion to adapt legislative frameworks has had an impact . Administrative approval for a dedicated pipeline was not immediately forthcoming for instance and in France it is prohibited for public authorities to treat private waste, so this means that an important potential source of raw material (from shops, hotels etc.) is not accessible for the project. Furthermore, contrasting local (FR) and regional (BE) incentive programmes create distorted market competition— incentives provided by the Belgian government results in French feed stock (a valuable potential source of biogas from agriculture or industrial processing) going across the border to the highest bidder.

Although the aim is to develop alternatives to petrol instead of replacing supply entirely or finding a *profitable* alternative, a mismatch in production and demand has also been a challenge of the project.

There is an undersupply of raw material to make enough biomethane for the bus fleet. And at the same time, when an oversupply is produced, the particular legal framework (for authorization to fuel buses with biofuel and to transport such gas) means that storage is an issue. There is legislation in the pipeline to be able to inject temporary oversupply into the national gas grid, hopefully in place by 2011. This delay highlights some of the challenges of working in a groundbreaking policy area, i.e. waiting for legislation to catch up with what is technologically possible. There is also still ongoing activity being carried out to find ways of optimising waste segregation in apartment dwelling types to further extend the scope of the Global Waste Treatment Plan operating at the Metropolitan level.

European level partnership and sharing practice has contributed to the project as it is part of a 28-member partnership which runs until September 2010 (funded by the European Commission through the sixth framework programme).

Minewater project, Heerlen (NL)

Gerrit van der Bijl, former Director of City Development, Municipality of Heerlen, presented the case of re-adaptation of abandoned coal mines to use ground water in a heat/cooling exchange system.

The opportunity for this initiative came out of a unique combination of factors, including the collapse of the mining industry (closed in the 70s), the resulting unused mine corridors which filled with groundwater, and the undersupply of energy production in relation to growing global demand.

It was a challenge to convince the relevant local and other authorities to invest in the project for several reasons: It was a groundbreaking idea so hadn't been conclusively tested elsewhere at the time, required high investment with a long

payback time including a need for new infrastructure, and went against the norm that investment in new energy initiatives shouldn't cost more than other types of energy available.

Surprisingly, getting local stakeholders on board was not too difficult although the development meant a lot of noise for nearby residents, as many retired miners live in the area they were supportive of finding a way to reuse the mine, despite any temporary inconvenience.

Although the initiative was seen as risky at the outset as it was unknown whether or not the system could work as planned, it is now considered to be a success as several important buildings (library, office of statistics) are now heated and cooled using this system and several similar initiatives have been implemented in former mining towns across the world.

This project benefited from European funding and exchange programmes (48% Interreg, ERDF) as well as investment by the city council (29%) and Ministries / province (23%) to realise a significant but specific localised contribution to the total energy equation .

Making sustainability reality, Malmö (SE)

Ola Nord, City of Malmö EU office, presented the city's integrated strategic plan for sustainability including their goal to be carbon neutral by 2020, and aspiration to be Sweden's most climate smart city and a global example in sustainability.

Some of the unique success factors in the case of Malmö's broader sustainability planning include very strong political support for environmental issues (with a broad political consensus) as well as a very strong leverage from public finances. This support is evident in the city's interest in testing new technologies, including small and large scale solutions, and in the existence of 10 staff in the city council's environment department dedicated to getting funding from EU and national sources for such initiatives.

A specific area-based intervention in the Western Harbour area of the city with a 20 year development perspective was presented briefly, illustrating the key role of stakeholders in environmentally innovative development—both retrofitting and new builds in this case. There must be local buy-in in order to share investment costs and to change practices around energy use, so the role of public education is key, and particularly developing awareness at an early age. Similarly important for buy-in are large scale innovative initiatives which tend to get more public and political attention, as well as getting the issues in the news and getting people talking.

The basic principles that it should be 'easy' to do the right thing (e.g. sorting waste), and that it is important for citizens to have pride in their city and such initiatives guide Malmös's approach to sustainable development at local level.

Malmö participates actively at an international level in sharing of practice and making joint commitments on issues of environment (Covenant of Mayors, Eurocities Climate Change Declaration, Ålborg Commitments), which is recognized as a success factor in their work.

Discussion on morning session

The audience generally expressed much interest in good practices, and were from cities / countries with varying experience of mainstreamed sustainability in city policy, ranging from new member states with nascent local sustainability initiatives to groundbreaking city-wide strategic sustainability policy.

The morning discussions illustrated the possibility for endogenous development, and that sometimes the possibilities are quite literally 'right under our feet'. In this way they highlight the importance of knowing what could work given the particular circumstances of a particular city—so combining and exploiting pilot projects, specific resources, simple solutions to create the multiplier effect in a composite grid model synchronising policy, strategy and intervention.

A common success factor of the cases discussed was networking and cooperation including European partnerships. The EU is recognised as having a pilot role in what's being experimented and supported. New member states are discovering a wide range of funding possibilities and experience of practice; many member states (new and old) can improve how they access EU funds (e.g. Malmö dedicated staff). The question remains as to how the European level can best support mainstreaming of such experiences, particularly in relation to the complexity and variety of diverse legal and administrative contexts.

Because local (regional, national) factors can play such an important role in such initiatives, some can be more easily mainstreamed and shared as good practice than others. In parallel, there is a

clear governance need for harmonization of different national legislations in order to lessen competitive distortions and benefit more complementary between areas.

Also in relation to metropolitan governance, environmental considerations are recognised as being cross-border / international issues. Impacts are rarely limited to the ‘local’ level so must be addressed at the level of international agreements and cooperation.

Another common factor in the discussion is that sustainability requires an integrated perspective. This was evident in all of the cases which included discussion of housing, transport, etc, regardless of the key dimension of the initiative.

Some of the potential ‘levers’ discussed include using building permits and land owned by the city to influence the type of development. This is of course not possible in all cities however, as the role of property and ownership varies according to context, and is linked to the key role played by political will.

Some of the prerequisites for successful sustainability planning are not always in place either. The need for a technically skilled labour force is not always available at local level. And the importance of relationships with citizens and their role in making these initiatives a success—in terms of sharing expenses, changing behaviour, public education, finding simple solutions, and the role of local pride—were also highlighted.

Additional constraints discussed included varying legislation, regulation, administrative competencies depending on the country in question. There was general agreement that governance is a main issue but there are many other constraints.

The morning session concluded with a sense that similar issues were feeding through the presentations and discussion, including the need to **convince** stakeholders, politicians, to **mobilize** different levels of authority, different agencies, and to **overcome** technical and legal constraints.

Although there are clear challenges in sharing practice on these kind of sustainability initiatives due to specificities of location, one of the common success factors is networking and cooperation including EU partnerships.

AFTERNOON PRESENTATIONS & DISCUSSION

The afternoon session approached the workshop topic from the angle of local planning, design and development, specifically in the Brussels context, as a means of stimulating an open round table debate where a Benelux and EU perspective were also represented.

Canal-Midi

Patrick Moyersoen, Project leader Sustainable Development (SUM project), presented the case of the Canal-Midi district in Anderlecht, together with other Belgian experiences from Ghent and Antwerp. The local level was proposed as a kind of 'lab' for thinking about the broader strategic level of these issues—in this case the sustainability dimension of a major masterplan for a 'local' scale intervention in central Brussels.

The challenge of attempting to integrate sustainability into an ongoing urban development process (i.e. an agreed masterplan) were illustrated. There is much less flexibility when it is not integrated from the earliest stages of planning, as an agreed masterplan means that in effect it's already been built as contracts have been signed. A chain of actions needs to be brought into the construction and this implies engagement of different political levels. This chain or the thinnest lines of a network fail at the weakest link where appropriate levels are missing or are not operational. An important starting point is the building of a reference base where establishing energy audit at local level is a key instrument.

As this 'local' development plan is situated at the centre of a European and regional 'hub', there is a necessity to consider the micro – meso – macro level up to the scale of the metropolitain area and even further in terms of responding to EU 2020 objectives. The ideal in sustainable development being to move towards relatively 'closed' cycles, the task is to map local resources and demand as well as related chains of actions in order to develop an energy strategy which contributes to an efficient interactive multilevel 'system'.

Discussion

This case provides the perspective of a 'local' initiative, contrasting a strategic approach to sustainability (eg. as presented in the case of Malmö), and demonstrates some of the real constraints and perhaps limits of mainstreamed policy. The difference in sustainability being integrated into planning from the outset versus being 'tagged on' to an existing plan was evident.

Similarly, the contrast between the existence of innovative ideas and technology used in new development plans, and the need to translate such potential solutions to address existing buildings (ie. retrofitting) is demonstrated in a kind of tension between finding ways to respect and work with the heritage of local frameworks while still pushing forward the sustainability agenda.

The metropolitan governance 'factor' in the discussions to this point is the need for a common strategy, structure, conditions, to make such work possible. The 'canvas' for all the cases presented so far includes EU structures, national policy and infrastructure, multilevel policies, and the imperative for sustainable development to address these multiple levels for it to be effective.

How can these considerations be brought into governance structures in a workable way? How to harmonize instead of being in competition? Is this an area for sharing practice?

And how to best tie in different levels of governance, for instance in terms of the gap between national legislation, local consumption, and monitoring at city level? These competencies and policy aims are often different but need to be effectively joined up.

Inefficient government or governance make revolutionary aspirations of sustainable development policy much more difficult; it requires leadership and a clear vision.

Private or more grassroots initiatives are not necessarily more effective because they must still be integrated into the broader 'system' in order to work. But the questions about how to generate awareness, political will, and involve people remain.

Participants agreed that potentially significant differences in how the public sector is organised (e.g. legislative timelines are shorter in Sweden, whereas Belgian approaches to consensus require strong negotiation and can take much longer), coupled with political change, and the complexity of legislation regarding state aid and public procurement can potentially slow down desired progress in sustainable development. And of course

other ‘local’ specificities such as stakeholder characteristics and size, urban fabric, etc. can also have a considerable impact.

Intergovernmental planning in Benelux

Peter Janssens, Planning Director for Benelux, spoke briefly on the necessity of intergovernmental cooperation and how political influences affect the technical agenda.

Everyone has their own timeline of interest and commitment (political term), and a technical perspective is too limited in identifying what needs to happen and who should work together.

He underlined the importance of demonstrating the urgency of this need for cooperation, by showing how each partner’s own tasks would be complicated if they don’t collaborate for mutual success, and what the benefits of overcoming competition and political agendas are.

But unfortunately there is no one recipe for how to make it work. And it requires some experience and skill in terms of working with politicians and ability to influence agendas in order to make progress.

The need to consider environmental issues at the Benelux level is evident, as it’s a core and highly urbanised area of Europe, and there is a need to respond to environmental issues together because the source and impacts are not always in the same place. Benelux is surrounded by many urban areas which are not always friends but are nonetheless neighbours, and what one city does will impact another. The reality is that there may always be a dimension of competition but also of complimentarity.

EU dimension

Jean Peyrony, European Commission – DG Regio, spoke briefly on the EU dimension of the day’s topics, acknowledging that there is EU added value particularly on two aspects of the discussion: (1) common knowledge and awareness about climate change, as everyone contributes to problems and solutions, and (2) on certain topics, transfer of experience is possible (e.g. innovative processes in technological solutions).

However, issues of governance, complex urban systems, taxes, technical norms versus fiscal incentives, how to finance new developments, role of market or public policy all present significant challenges in terms of linking in with national systems, regional property systems, etc. On these points it would be harder to share experience and capitalise. (For instance, Malmö is exciting but on a practical level it requires very sophisticated and committed multi-level networking because it implicates regional and national level initiatives.)

Discussion on afternoon session

Participants commented on the complexity of EU guidance, and acknowledged that there are some demands on the Commission to improve the coherence of various legislation in order to reduce confusion at the level of local authorities.

There was also an observation that although the EU Agenda has the potential to advance a common strategy (eg. Agenda 202020, Covenant of Mayors), the legal framework at EU level is not always well adapted. For instance, in terms of issues of ‘overflow’ related to cross border environmental pollution, where fines for smog levels are imposed at national level, and impacts are ‘local’, when the source can be international).

RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

So if governance is a kind of ‘methodology of cities’, how do we understand the potential levers or constraints, and how can we raise the benchmark to help cities advance their programmes and organise better public-public partnership for example?

Potential levers or constraints

Some of the transversal ideas raised included issues of **ownership** (of land, precondition to intervene as public authority), **public interest** in energy issues and the need to generate awareness through education (political prerequisite), and **a meeting of top-down and bottom-up** practices (pressure from local level and new opportunity for politicians to get more involved). Also the contrasts in bringing these approaches to **new and existing development** (and associated considerations of stakeholder acceptance or buy in, effective financing systems, etc) is challenging. The tension between innovative practices and **outdated policy and legislation** was also highlighted.

Requires an integrated approach

The cases discussed demonstrated the need for an integrated approach, to consider various scales in terms of governance, as well as combining and accumulating various related ‘systems’ linked to question of energy use, sustainability, and environment more broadly. Similarly, for development to be most effective in this sense, environmental issues need to be integrated early into the project.

Role of EU and sharing practice

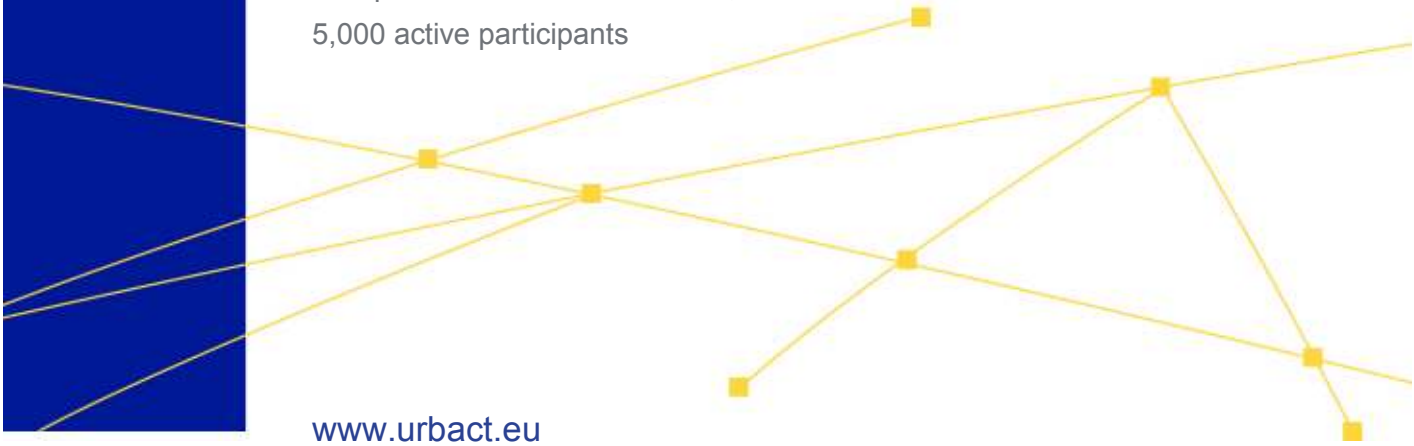
The EU agenda serves to advance the “local” agendas related to sustainability, energy and environment more broadly. It plays an important role in terms of supporting innovation through programmes such as Civitas, Life +, Interreg, ERDF, Concerto, ICT Programme, 7 PCRD, Convent of Mayors, etc. But complicated legislation and a legal framework which is not always completely adapted present ongoing challenges.

There is a clear role to be played in sharing knowledge and transfer of experience, but inherent challenges remain due to the complex differences in various legislative or tax systems, as well as state aid and public procurement rules

URBACT II

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 255 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants



www.urbact.eu

European Union
European Regional Development Fund

EUROPEAN PROGRAMME FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

URBACT