

CIRIEC International

Public and social economy for the benefit of the community

12 to 14 September 2012

Workshop A

Innovations in the public, social and co-operative economy

Michael Carmincke

Aachener Straßenbahn und Energieversorgungs-AG (ASEAG)

Mobility is moving

The innovative factor of local public transport

More than 50 million vehicles were registered in Germany in 2011 – more than ever before. Four billion vehicles will be driving on our roads in 2050 – according to the latest forecasts. A sea of cars everywhere, with hardly any way of moving forward. This scenario could become a reality if the number of cars worldwide grows as predicted. Ever-growing transportation needs in high-density areas will similarly be reaching the limits of their transport capacities.

Organisational, architectural and information-based networking of various modes of transport provides ways to strengthen multi-modal mobility behaviour. This is particularly a challenge for transport companies, because they are the ones helping to create efficient, eco-friendly, networked and future-oriented transport services in the metropolitan areas of tomorrow.

Once a trend, already a reality

Triggered by various developments and trends, mobility and the way in which we deal with it is changing dramatically. People are ageing, but are also becoming increasingly mobile. Metropolises are growing, while people are migrating from rural areas. The demand for personal transport services is increasing.

The rapid development of information and communication technologies has created a completely new relationship with space and mobility. Mobile communication has long been more than just making a telephone call. The dynamics of information enables access to various modes of transport or current traffic situations anytime, anywhere. Digital, social networks are replacing cars as a mean of social integration – at least for digital natives. So, although our own car continues to be the most important mode of transport, the issue of needs-based availability – i.e. use, but not necessarily ownership – is gaining importance. There is a very gradual shift in values from the “automobile society” to a “mobility society”. The need for eco-friendly, affordable, individually available transport options is growing. Society is becoming multi-modal. That means: car today, bike tomorrow, and bus or tram the day after. Choices are made based on the mode of transport deemed to be the “most convenient”. What is today the driver’s licence for one’s own car could, in future, be a transport card for several public cars – the individualisation of local public passenger transport.

The number of car-pooling stations and their users is constantly growing, with more than 200.000 entitled car-sharing participants recorded in 2011 in Germany alone. In a current study, international corporate consultancy firms such as Frost & Sullivan see good growth prospects for car-sharing in Europe. Nine million car-sharing users are thus predicted in Europe in 2016. But bike and electric bike-sharing is also becoming increasingly prevalent. The automobile industry has responded to this, and is taking the trend so seriously that it is getting involved in car-sharing systems which could reduce sales in their own industry. But the change on the mobility market could also provide completely new business fields for other industries.

Local public transport must take advantage of this opportunity by opening up to new trends in mobility behaviour and catering to the increasing demand and desire for transport-sharing, “green urban mobility” and mobile communication using innovation alliances.

Local public transport in Germany – a major economic factor

More and more people are already using local public passenger transport in Germany. Passenger numbers of the approximately 450 transport companies in the municipal sector have been increasing by an average of one percent a year for the last ten years. This particularly applies to the well-developed transport systems in large cities. In rural regions, on the other hand, decreasing student numbers and a declining overall population are also having a curbing effect in some places. Right across the country, the Association of German Transport Companies (VDV) recorded 9.74 billion passengers in its latest annual report – a growth of 0.7 percent compared to 2010. Buses and trains are thus replacing 18 million car trips on German roads every day.

But cars continue to be the mode of transport with the highest percentage demand. The mode split is 49 percent – i.e. 49 percent of the distances covered in Germany are done so by car. 27 percent is covered on foot, and ten percent by bike. Local public transport is currently at 14 percent.

The automobile industry still has the great advantage of being able to offer the right car for every target group – from highly motorised off-road vehicles, to economical small cars. Local public transport, on the other hand, cannot develop a separate product for each target group, but it does guarantee basic benefits: fast, safe, clean, punctual and environmentally-friendly – designed for the masses. And it has the potential to network mobility in such a way that people will be able to switch from one mode to another as conveniently and smoothly as possible. Cross-modal information, sales and accounting systems are a basic requirement for this.

Combined mobility innovation

Personal choice of transportation will significantly change and shape urban living environments in future. Access to public transport continues to be a major barrier. The idea of a Smartphone-based mobility card is one way of unlocking this world: the concept of mobility could be completely revamped by providers having access to an

information medium and accounting system, and by interlinking transport systems designed for the masses. Tailor-made for every customer thanks to a personal mobility profile offering users the journey best suited to their needs – including an accounting and information platform.

This gives local public transport the chance to minimise the risk of possible customer losses, gain new customers, increase benefits for existing customers, and achieve positive economic effects by expanding business fields. Striving to effectively interlink all additional transport services available in a city for customers, control mobility and reduce capacity shortages also creates ways to generate social and environmentally-friendly developments in urban areas.

What remains is the issue of predictions. In 1977, Ken Olson, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp., said “there’s no reason why anyone would want to have a computer in their home”.

Personal information



Michael Carmincke is the executive board member at Aachener Straßenbahn und Energieversorgungs-AG, ASEAG. After stints in the marketing, controlling and purchases departments at various companies, he joined the local public transport industry in 2001 as the manager of Deutsche Nahverkehrsgesellschaft mbH Hannover (DNVG), before switching to the Leipziger Verkehrsbetriebe (LVB) GmbH in 2002. As the managing director, he was responsible for various subsidiaries in regional and urban transport with buses and trams until his move to Aachen in 2010.