

1. Videos

Mobile Politics – Lessons Learned from 20 Years of Governing Mobilities in Munich

By
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German sociologist Sven Kesselring discusses the importance of collaboration and reflexivity among different stakeholders when designing the present and future urban environment for sustainable mobility. The city of Munich provides a valuable case study.

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What I'm doing now is talking about Munich as a case study; the issue is governing mobilities, that's an issue which has been part of my research for more than 20 years so far. The reason why I'm doing that is because I think that learning from some case studies about how actors, how stakeholders are working together by finding new solutions, new ways, new strategies to deal with sustainable mobility or to deal with the unintended consequences of mobility and transport is something we need to learn more about. For me, Munich is a very important case study for how to govern mobility in the mobile risk society. The risk society is a concept that I've been working on for many, many years.

Greater reflexivity to develop desirable mobilities

Sustainable mobility is not only a question of finding the right concepts, finding the right policies, the right strategies, it's also an issue of finding the right way of working together, of collaborating on problem issues, finding ways to deal with the consequences of mobility, of a mobile lifestyle, of the mobile lives that we live today. The major issue is actually how we can increase the level of reflexivity in the mobile risk society in urban environments, in cities; how can we reflect about the consequences, about the historical developments, about the future of mobility in a proactive way so that we actually find ways to develop mobility and transport or mobilities into a desirable future – into a future where we think it's good to live in, it's good to be there and not to threaten the future of the generations which are coming after us.

1990s mobility in Munich

So what I'm doing now is I'm telling what I call a sort of urban narrative, it's a story about Munich, about how the last 20 years have been working in the southern capital city in Germany. One of the historical momentums in that story is that in 1993 a new Lord Mayor was elected in the city of Munich. At this time, there was something that I would call a social explosivity in that issue of transport and mobility, which was kind of explosive for the whole social structure of the city. One of the major issues, the

discussions and this discourses at this time was about building new tunnels in the city of Munich, let's say moving on with the car-dependent city, moving on with increasing infrastructures, moving on with increasing capacities for car traffic in the city of Munich – and that was a really, really heavy, and nearly a violent fight in the urban society of Munich. This happened in a situation in the 1980s and the early 1990s in Munich where collaboration, cooperation between the City of Munich, the planning department, the different departments of the city, the industry, the civil society was actually nearly impossible. So nobody was actually able to sit around the same table and think about what kind of solutions we can find for increasing mobility, increasing traffic in the city of Munich.

Post-confrontative setting produces principles for spatial planning and mobility

And then something came up – one of the advisors of the new Lord Mayor said 'We should think about getting the enemies on board and row a little bit slower with that' - not to go into the well-known and so far successful strategies but to think about how we can change actually the way of working together and bringing new ideas, new innovations into what the mobility policies had been at this time. What they did is actually part of the argument, because I started by saying we need to think about how to increase the level of reflexivity. The City of Munich together with the BMW Group - which is one of the most important car producers in Germany, is located in Munich, has its headquarters in Munich and is one of the powerful players in the city of Munich – decided together to go to a remote place somewhere in the mountains, which is called Inzell. This was actually a sort of turning point in the whole governance structure in the city of Munich because BMW, the City of Munich, together with the trade unions, together with the public transport providers and many other - more than 20 - different stakeholders went to that place and they did together what they called a Future Workshop: 'Let's think about the future of mobility and transport in the city of Munich'. What came out of that, on the first hand, is a new institution which is called the Inzell Initiative – and it's still alive, it's still working, it's still one of the major deliberative institutions in the city of Munich. What also came out of that was 11 principles for spatial planning and mobility in Munich – 11 principles which have kind of re-structured and re-framed the discourse on mobility and transport in the city of Munich and which is important still today. It's always a reference point when a new plan is made to think about 'Does it fit with these principles which were developed in 1995'. So what I'm saying is that what came up is a new post-confrontative situation actually, a new situation where collaboration and collaborative planning was the new paradigm of making transport and mobility policies in the city of Munich. This new post-confrontative setting and this post-confrontative interaction structure amongst the stakeholders in Munich has generated a few results – significant new policies came out of that.

Significant new mobility policies

One thing is that a long discussion in the city of Munich actually ended in this Inzell Initiative ended by developing a new parking scheme for cars in the city centre. It has been a strong, heavy fight to let cars into the city and how to deal with that and it took many, many years – until the end of the 90s – to find a solution for that. But it was actually possible in this new collaboration structure. The other thing, and I'm just mentioning a few aspects of that, is that something like corporate mobility management has become some kind of new frame for dealing with the consequences of mobility and it has become one of the major issues in mobility; the planning department and other departments in the City of Munich promoted it. Another direct outcome of that, but it's in connection with that, is that in later years, in the recent years actually, Munich started to make a new bicycle campaign. The bicycle share in Munich has been increasing from 14% to about 20% in the last years and it's about to increase further. The very recent development in that new governance structure is that the members of the Inzell Initiative have been starting to think about the future of mobility, so what could mobility in the city of Munich look like, say in 2050.

Mapping the future

What they did was to develop a 'Vision 2050' of mobility and transport in Munich. A few years ago, there was a workshop where they tried to bring together all the different ideas about how to shape and to structure the future of mobility. And the Munich-based company Innioventionsmanufaktur they made a picture out of that. They mapped out all these different ideas on the regional scale of the region of Munich and in that workshop they started to develop a structure which says "Planning and organisation structures infrastructures and new mobility concepts". And they mapped out really a lot of different ideas which are currently in the air and how the future of mobility can look like.

What we need to say on that is that I think the whole development which started in 1995 until today made it possible that all these different stakeholders from the City of Munich and the Chamber of Commerce and industry and civil society groups have been working together on that vision. I think it's a big achievement to come to that point which is kind of symbolizing a social and also a cultural change in the interaction of these actors. It documents that there is a new mobility of ideas - that new ideas, new concepts are travelling through that space of possibilities to shape and to govern mobility in the future. But what is also important to say is that this is so far, if we look at that map it's like a to-do list for politicians, for urban planners and the industry.

Increasing the knowledge of people's mobility practices and needs

All these projects and concepts that are mentioned in this map are more or less already there or more or less in the air – so that means things like mobility cards, seamless mobility, mobile ticketing, new forms of data management, intelligent transport systems are already there. But what is actually missing in that perspective is kind of what I call 'the subject-oriented perspective'. In a more economic language I would say 'Where is the end-user in that?' So where do we think about what is the mobility practice of people and what are the specific needs of people to shape and form and organise their mobility in that urban system, in that urban space? One of the problems I think is that what's happened there is a kind of stabilising and an institutionalising of an expert discourse which is somehow de-coupled from people's needs, people's situations, the citizens as such, or the users of mobility systems - and in the end their social realities and social mobilities and everyday mobility practices.

Increasing the embeddedness of reflexivity

And I think that brings me actually to the beginning of my talk – how can we increase this level of reflexivity? And how can we increase the let's say embeddedness of these processes of thinking about the future of mobility to society and how can we link that together? I've brought you a short video from a Munich artist, Mark Weiss, and in that video – actually it's not only one artist it's a group of two, they're called M+M - what they do is they have a nice idea about a reflexive loop. In that video, these two artists show that people are driving on a motorway and then they are entering this kind of reflexive loop and from that reflexive loop they can decide by themselves when they go out and go back to that main road of the highway. And probably they have the opportunity to decide if they stay on that road or if they take the next exit to change into a new direction. And I think this what we can learn from the story that I've been trying to tell you - that these reflexive loops or these possibilities to think out of the box, they can change mobilities discourses and they can change the structure of how we think about the future of mobility.

Mobility

For the Mobile Lives Forum, mobility is understood as the process of how individuals travel across distances in order to deploy through time and space the activities that make up their lifestyles. These travel practices are embedded in socio-technical systems, produced by transport and communication industries and techniques, and by normative discourses on these practices, with considerable social, environmental and spatial impacts.

En savoir plus x

Lifestyle

A lifestyle is a composition of daily activities and experiences that give sense and meaning to the life of a person or a group in time and space.

En savoir plus x

Associated Thematics :

Lifestyles

- Living environments

Policies

- Civic Action
 - Ecological transition
 - Cities & Territories
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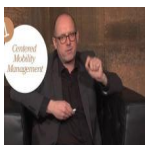


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Dr. Sven Kesselring is a sociologist and a leading authority on mobility. He is professor in mobility, governance and planning at Aalborg University, Denmark, and the head of mobilities research at the Munich-based Innovationsmanufaktur GmbH. In 2004 he was the founder of the Cosmobilities Network.

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Video by Sven Kesselring

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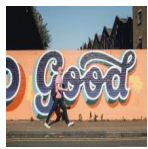
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