

Sustainable Urban Mobility in Europe – Implementation Needs Behavioural Change

Statement of issue

The overall objective of the H2020CIVITAS SUITS project¹ is to enhance the capacity of small and medium local authorities to develop and implement sustainable, inclusive, integrated and accessible transport strategies, policies, technologies, practices, procedures, tools, measures and intelligent transport systems that recognise the end-to-end travel experiences of all users and freight.

SUITS is a CIVITAS project, which is a network of cities dedicated to cleaner, better transport in Europe and beyond. CIVITAS has implemented over 800 innovative urban transport measures and solutions in over 80 cities across Europe since 2002.

SUITS' outputs support cities developing sustainable transport measures. A key aspect of the development and implementation of transport measures is to consider organisational factors such as organisational structure, climate and human behaviour and expectations of the implementation process. When local authorities are fostered to implement sustainable transport measures they first of all have to become a learning organisation to be able to plan and implement such measures successfully. What does this mean?



The field of mobility has undergone major changes in recent years. People's mobility needs are constantly rising, mobility behaviour is changing and numerous innovative transport services are entering the market. Mobility has become a central social topic receiving public attention, especially with regard to the general discussion on climate change and environmental protection. Many local authorities are facing extremely challenging situations, affecting and disrupting their business model and their institutional logic, which threaten public sector employees in a number of substantive ways. To meet these challenges, local authorities have to increase their organisational capacity. Special attention has to be paid to the employees in the local authorities, as they are the ones who have to deal with the challenges and have to develop themselves and their organisation further in order to pursue a more sustainable mobility planning in the future. Thus, the employees have to trust that the required changes are important for the future (Nienaber et al., 2016). Local authorities are faced with major obstacles when it comes to people that have to adopt new sustainable transport measures. First: people are not

¹ SUITS has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no 690650 (www.suits-project.eu).

able to adopt and implement sustainable transport measures as they lack important knowledge and/ or skills. Training will help to overcome these competency-related obstacles. Second and even more important: people are not willing to adopt and implement new sustainable transport measures since they are not convinced about the importance and the benefits or they are rather sceptical (distrustful) towards the ongoing changes in their local authority in relation to the implementation of new sustainable transport measures (see for innovation and trust, Nienaber & Schewe, 2014). Thus, they are not willing, to change their routines and prepare themselves for the challenges connected to the implementation of sustainable transport measures. So, what can be done to cope with these challenges?

With this policy briefing, an answer will be given to this question. First, the necessity to take people on board when it comes to implementing change will be highlighted. Second, this policy brief demonstrates what a successful implementation process in local authorities may look like when it comes to the implementation of new sustainable transport measures in the local authority (an eight-step procedure is proposed). The policy brief is based on the work of Work-package 6 of the SUITS project during the implementation process of sustainable transport measures in nine local authorities: Alba Iulia (Romania), Dachau (Germany), Kalamaria (Greece), Palanga (Lithuania), Rome (Italy), Stuttgart (Germany), Torino (Italy), Valencia (Spain), West Midlands (UK). The intended audience are local authorities, transport planners and consultants, and user groups. The Work-package 6 team applied a very interactive approach to work with the nine local authorities during the implementation process to foster learning and knowledge exchange between the different cities. 11 different workshops have taken place that guided the different local authorities through the needed organisational change together with face to face meetings, individual phone calls, emails and discussions. Furthermore, an online forum was developed to foster the knowledge exchange of experiences between the different local authorities in-between the face-to-face workshops.

Implementation requires organisational change: Bridging the technical and social side

“There is nothing as unchangeable as the change”. This quote based on Heraclitus of Ephesus (around 500 years BC) highlights the most important aspect of change. Change is a continuing process but due to recent challenges regarding sustainable mobility it will become even more important in the future. The global climate change requires change in particular in local authorities as it calls for a critical examination and reorientation of the goals and strategies in the field of mobility. The accelerating pace of technology is constantly bringing new challenges to local authorities and transport planners. Local authorities and transport departments have to become more effective and resilient to organisational change when developing and implementing transport measures. In this context, it is imperative to develop the capacity building of local authorities making sure they take advantage from developments in areas such as innovative transport schemes, innovative procurement, urban freight measures, safety and security measures in transportation, among others. However, for transport measures to be successfully implemented it is not enough to change the technology or the technical aspect. Most change programmes that focus solely on technological and/or technical change, ignoring the importance of social and behavioural aspects, end up by failing.

By bringing technological/technical and social/behavioural change together, organisations can achieve better operational performance. Recognising the importance of these two facets of change, a socio-technical approach to change throughout the entire SUITS project was adopted, with especial emphasis during the implementation stage. Socio-technical systems combine the human, social, organisational as well as technical factors when designing organisational systems (Baxter and Sommerville, 2011). The leverage of the knowledge and capabilities of employees results in better operational performance as they become in a better position to deal with technological uncertainty, variation and adaptation (Pasmore et al., 2019), and makes them more resilient when there are organisational changes. Ultimately, bringing together social and technical change will help to reduce the gap between social and technical capability (see Figure 1).

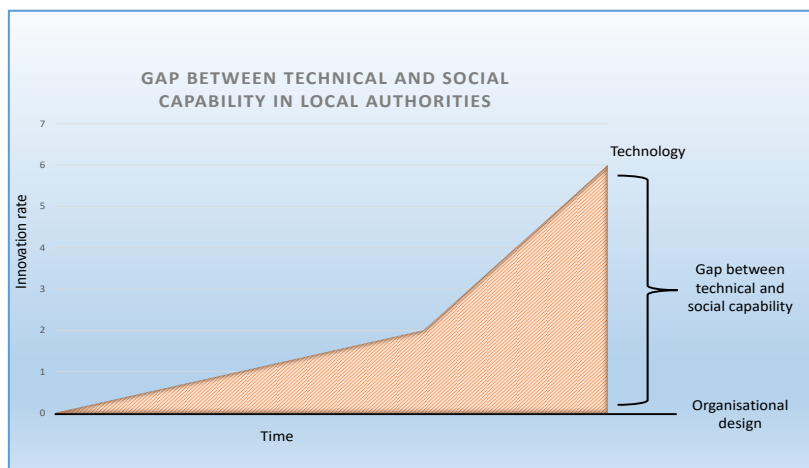


Figure 1. Gap between technical and social capabilities in local authorities

When implementing socio-technical change, it is important that local authorities are open to the input of people into the design of both social and technical systems. There is evidence that employees not only do a better job than those farther removed but also benefit from the challenge, variety, feedback, and teamwork involved in the development of the system (Pasmore et al., 2019). Thus, as long as employees are not willing to support the organisational change, new technology will not be adopted and used and innovation opportunities are lost. Therefore, it is most important to get the people on board in an organisation when organisational change is required. Based on the experiences from guiding nine different European cities through their change processes, some key learnings will be highlighted in the following summary.

The 8 steps approach to implement sustainable transport measures in local authorities

For the implementation of sustainable transport measures, the process for organisational change outlined by Kotter (1995) is applied and adopted according to the needs of local authorities. This process of organisational change is divided into eight different steps

(see figure 2) which will be now briefly discussed before highlighting the three key learnings during this process with the local authorities in Europe.

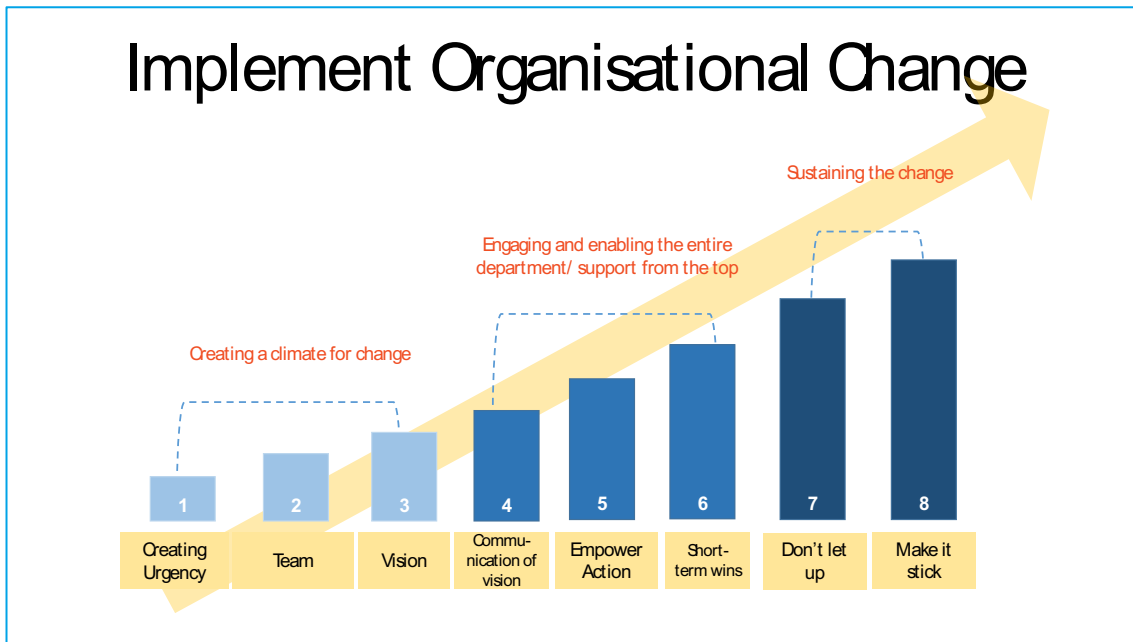


Figure 2: Implementation process (based on Kotter, 1995)

Step One: Create Urgency

First of all, the urgency of the idea of developing and implementing sustainable transport measures has to be created. This idea can be very powerful. This step creates the 'need' for change. It is not just a 'want' for change. Change has to be understood as needed by the local authorities' employees otherwise it will not be fully supported.

Step Two: Form a Powerful Coalition

Most important is the coalition to support the organisational change. This coalition has to be built by employees with a range of skills, a range of experience and different areas of departments in the local authority, to maximise its effectiveness. The task of this coalition is to drive the change, meaning it has to become a role model for the wider organisation, helping to spread messages throughout the organisation, delegating tasks and ensuring support for the change organisation-wide.

Step Three: Create a Vision for Change

The development of a vision is often underestimated or not well understood. A vision has to be easy to understand to ensure support from the whole organisation, and it also has to be 'inspirational' to have maximum effect.

Step Four: Communicate the Vision

A vision that is developed but not communicated will be not known. Thus, it is very important that the vision is communicated throughout the whole local authority and later even wider to the whole society in the city. It is important to continuously communicate this message as it is likely that competing messages are also being spread.

Step Five: Empowering broad-based action

Whether due to individuals, traditions, legislations or physical obstacles, it is most likely that barriers will pop up to block the organisational change. These barriers have to be identified as early as possible, if they are to be overcome. Intensive employee involvement is important when it comes to operationalising the vision and to defining concrete starting points for change at the work level. Therefore, it is very important to rely on available resources to break down these barriers, without disrupting any other areas of the business, otherwise employees will not be empowered to take broad-based actions.

Step Six: Create Short-Term Wins

While organisational change needs time, and thus, rewards may be not seen in the beginning, it is most important to create and celebrate short term wins to keep the employees motivated to support the ongoing change processes. Shorter term targets are useful tools for motivation and direction. Using these wins to justify investment and effort can help to re-motivate staff to continue backing the change.

Step Seven: Build on the Change

Many organisational changes fail in the end as they are not finished properly. It is mandatory that every local authority should keep setting goals and analysing what could be done better for continued improvement along the change process.

Step Eight: Anchor the Changes in Corporate Culture

For a change to be sustainable and successful, it is crucial that it becomes anchored in the corporate culture. The implemented sustainable transport measures, as well as changed procedures and principles have to be anchored within the organisational culture of the local authority, for example through Guidelines that are known about and utilised. The changes have to become part of the core way of working within the local authority to have a lasting effect – meaning an organization has become a “learning organization”.

Policy Recommendation: What is most important to implement sustainable transport measures in local authorities?

In the following, three most important aspects are highlighted, learned from the implementation process of sustainable transport measures in the nine local authorities.

(1) Identify the “correct” change agent to turn a local authority into a learning organization

Most important for all cities has been the identification of the “ideal” change agent. A change agent may be identified internally within the local authority or coming from outside, but most important is that the identified change agent has **strong relationships with the decision makers** in the local authority. Based on the experiences of our nine cities, the most important reasons for a rather slow change process or huge barriers to get the change initiated have been missing direct relationships with the chief executive or chief executive’s department. The rather bureaucratic organisational structure in most of the local authorities was identified as a big obstacle to get senior management attention for the SUITS project. Thus, a change agent should have the power to get in contact with the top management in a local authority and even more important the change agent has to have the power to get the support of the top management when it is needed, e.g. changing organisational structures, implementing guidelines

Beside this power, a change agent has to be **flexible**, very **positive towards change**, and possess the necessary social skills in working with the affected employees **to be open for innovation**. He or she has to be understood as a role model for other employees and thus, has to **be respected** and **well known** within the local authority.

Furthermore, it seems that it is very useful when the agent has a clear **focus on the results**. In creating change, it is often helpful to tie specific priorities to the overall goals. As people respect courage and accountability a change agent has to take responsibility for his or her local authority. It may be the case that the chief executive has to make decisions that go against dissenting opinions and this can cause conflicts, but doing so with conviction and being ready to handle the consequences will ultimately demonstrate that the local authority's intentions are motivated by the best interests of the city, thus gaining the trust of their employees and wider society.

Finally, the change agent has to be able to **explore perspectives** and take them into account when looking for solutions. This will help in getting buy-in to a change; people want to feel that others are listening to their ideas. Those who do will develop stronger relationships with their people by gaining trust.

The change agent functions as a role model for the whole local authority, first for his or her team, then the department and finally for the whole local authority, such that over time the local authority will be turned into a learning organization. A learning organisation is "an organisation skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights" (Garvin, 1993 p.3). It is crucial that local authorities continuously re-invent themselves in order to adapt to constant technological, social, political, economic and legal change. They have to make sure that they "learn to learn" which will not only make them more adaptable to changes but also facilitate the emergence of innovation. During SUITS the local authorities learned to become learning organisations.

So it is most important is: **get the "correct" change agent on board!**

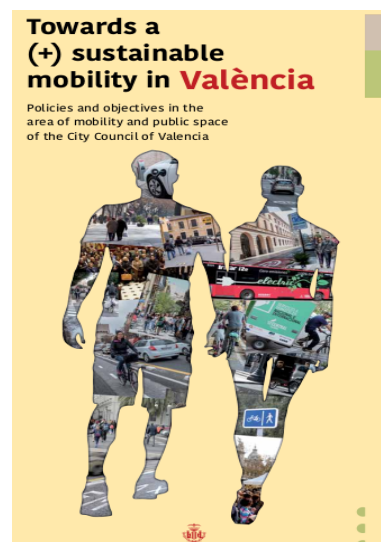
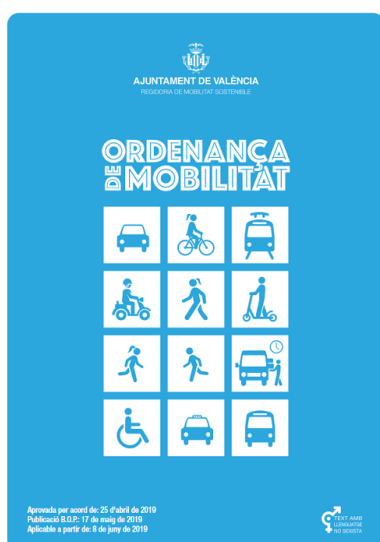
(2) Communication (understand and reflect)

Once the vision for change has been developed, the big challenge is to communicate this vision to all those involved in implementing the change processes. A general awareness must be created. Everyone must understand the need for change as well as the long term target. The support of all employees is important for the definition of concrete activities aimed at achieving the big goal. Everyone is invited to participate and to consider which concrete steps can be implemented at work level to achieve the big goal. The development of mobility measures usually involves several departments in the authority, and the vision must also be communicated among them. The vision as such must be clear and transparent so that it can be easily understood. Other departments should not be expected to fully support the vision and will give priority to the goals set on their own agendas. The lack of support from other departments can become a major barrier in the change process.

*The **City of Alba Iulia** for example, partner in the SUITS project, is working with the procurement department to trial innovative procurement practices for the purchase of new buses. The responsible procurement department was initially not too open-minded about the application of new practices. So far, the lowest price criterion still applies in most cases. A big hurdle was the lack of willingness to engage intensively with the comprehensive guideline on innovative procurement, developed in the SUITS project. In a number of internal meetings, the change manager has worked out the principles of the guideline, showed the benefits and proposed concrete recommendations for action, and thus was able to get the procurement team on board. (Change agent: Tudor Dramborean; Alba Iulia Municipality, Romania)*

Especially when other departments and politicians have to be convinced of certain projects, it is always good to work 'evidence-based' - through the provision of good practice examples, feasibility studies, data collected through surveys or through cooperation with interest groups and citizens.

Valencia (Change agent: Angel Navarro, Las Naves, Spain) for example communicated its vision also to the wider society with the following posters or brochures:



Figures 3a-c: Documents from the city of Valencia

(3) Celebrate little steps

The word change may sound very fundamental and quickly cause uncertainty, but the change will take place in small steps, all of which follow a big goal. In order to keep the motivation of all participants high, small steps that lead to short-term success are meaningful and important.

The organizational change must be initiated with concrete, target-oriented activities that can achieve clear results. The goals must correspond to the capacities of the departments, they must be achievable and, above all, measurable.

A sustainable mindset is not a thing that can be dictated from leadership - it has to develop among the staff, for which time and many small impulses are needed. The topic must be given priority on the agenda and for each new project it must be examined which concrete activities can contribute to achieving the big goal. Only this way can the changes in routine ways of working, that are important for change, occur.

Working with cities, it became clear that one of the biggest challenges is to **keep up the momentum**. Very often daily based operations overlap with the long-term strategy. The implementation of sustainable transport measures requires a lot of discipline and stamina.

*To improve cooperation between the various departments, the **city of Stuttgart**, for example, has set up a steering committee. Representatives of the departments meet about once a month to discuss ongoing projects and to shape the cooperation. (Change agent from City of Stuttgart, Germany)*

As part of the change process, the **West Midlands Combined Authority (UK)** organizes in-house workshops, on the one hand with external trainers, but also internal workshops in which staff jointly try to develop ideas for concrete activities. Furthermore, employees are encouraged to use a special teamwork software to share and discuss issues they have found on specific topics of sustainable mobility. Weekly Newsletters are created and sent to employees. These contain, for example, news about ongoing projects, or give more transparency about concrete team activities, what challenges need to be tackled, what knowledge is available and what is needed. This creates a general awareness for specific topics as well as the entire change process. (Change agent: Keelan Fadden-Hopper, West Midlands Combined Authority, UK)

The knowledge to carry out change processes is often limited in the departments. Especially at the beginning, an effective strategy can be to purchase external consulting services.

What SUITS project will contribute - outcomes and learning

SUITS takes a socio-technical approach to capacity building in local authorities with special emphasis on the transfer of learning to smaller and medium sized cities, making them more effective and resilient to change in the judicious implementation of sustainable transport measures.

The SUITS approach to organisational change demonstrates impressively how important it is to be aware of the social/behavioural side of organisational change in local authorities. Without the support of the employees no change will be successful. This policy brief describes the different steps a local authority has to take to enhance their local authority's resilience when coping with change and highlights three key learnings from the implementation process of sustainable transport measures. Most important for other small and medium sized local authorities in Europe are:

- (1) Identify the “correct” change agent as a decisive driver for successful change in your local authority
- (2) Communicate your vision authority-wide if you want to become effective and resilient to change
- (3) Celebrate little successes in your local authority to keep your employees motivated to support the change over the long term

It becomes very clear, that the behavioural side of change, while often underestimated, needs more attention in the future, when it comes to prepare more local authorities in Europe to become more effective and resilient to change in the judicious implementation of sustainable transport measures.

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Contact details

Authors: Ann-Marie Nienaber, Sebastian Spundflasch and Andre Soares

Professor Dr Ann-Marie Nienaber

Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University

ann-marie.nienaber@coventry.ac.uk

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