

How the Shareplace Pilot Regions Deal with the Corona Crisis

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1 ABSTRACT

The Interreg Central Europe co-funded three-year project SHAREPLACE (“Shared mobility and Regional transport integrated Planning for a better connected Central Europe”) addresses, among others, the development and implementation of new mobility services in order to enhance the existing transport network based on the current needs of travellers. These new tools and services are being developed for five pilot regions, located in Croatia, Germany, Hungary and Italy. One objective of the project is to show how a co-design approach can support the design and implementation of new mobility services. Although the situation in terms of availability and quality of services as well as strategic planning processes are quite different in all pilot regions, they all profited from using living labs and stakeholder involvement for the development and design of services. Due to COVID-19 the situation change and the pilot regions are facing new challenges.

How can participation work in times of COVID-19 and social distancing? This paper shows how the SHAREPLACE pilot regions deal with the new situation and which new experiences they made.

Keywords: Covid-19, pandemic, Interreg procect, co-design approach, stakeholder involvement

2 THE SHAREPLACE PROJECT

The Interreg Central Europe co-funded project ‘SHAREPLACE’ (“Shared mobility and Regional transport integrated Planning for a better connected Central Europe”) tackles mobility needs and existing transport options in five pilot regions, located in Croatia, Germany, Hungary and Italy by developing and implementing new tools and services for better connected local, regional and transnational transport networks. The quality of transport networks in hinterland regions in Central Europe varies in terms of provided public transport services, infrastructure for environmental friendly transport modes and moreover, of interoperability between existing services. All pilot regions have in common a general lack of connectivity to the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN) for passengers.

Moreover, they show a common need to fill the gaps in the networks to make their territories more accessible, and the intention to implement and better integrate shared and flexible solutions to reach their objective.

The overall goal of SHAREPLACE is to develop an innovative approach to improve the connectivity of local, regional and transnational transport systems. SHAREPLACE is open to all types of passenger transport and target groups.

The challenge in each region is not only to set up new mobility services but to integrated them with the existing services. The current development within the project is to use the platform digitransit (<https://digitransit.fi/>) as a basis and develop, where needed, the relevant add-ins. Digitransit is a journey planner that uses several open source components to provide features such as mobile routing and real-time information support. Although data availability varies from region to region, European ruling (DR EU 2017/1926) will make it mandatory for transport operators to provide their data by 2021 in formats that can be integrated in different platforms.

Mobility solutions are tested and evaluated in the pilot regions. Lessons learned and technical developments from the implementation will be made available in order to allow other regions to benefit from the experiences. Business models will be examined for each pilot area, covering the different aspects necessary to make transport viable both for users as well as operators. SHAREPLACE will provide learnings from the co-creation process and how they helped shape new transport solutions.

2.1 The Shareplace Pilot regions

The overall goal of SHAREPLACE is to develop an innovative approach to improve the connectivity of local, regional and transnational transport systems. By implementing Living Labs and actively engaging stakeholders, transferable solutions for a more integrated, accessible and harmonized mobility system in five

central European regions will be created, tested and change of behaviour will be monitored. These solutions will be supported by innovative business models and strategic guidelines for policymakers and planners. The Living Labs will be set up on municipality level whereas concrete implementation areas will be found together with local and regional stakeholders during the course of the project. The SHAREPLACE regions vary in terms of their geographical, socio-demographical, economical and structural characteristics, also the pilot activities are different.

2.1.1 Bergamo (Italy)

Bergamo province is located in the middle of Lombardy, economically the most important region in Italy.

With 1.100.000 inhabitants and 242 communities, it is the third most populous centre of the region after Milan and Brescia.

The pilot activities in Bergamo are focussing on the integration of sharing options (especially carpooling) in to local and regional transport networks. The co-creation process was set up on municipality level and the concrete pilot area was defined by the co-creation process and according to the innovation potential and feasibility. The University of Bergamo was chosen as the concrete pilot area. The results of the experimentation will be scaled up at municipality level to improve the connectivity of peripheral areas to the regional transport system. The second pilot activity includes a DRT system with the bus company ATB Consorzio S.c.r.l. on the route between the Bergamo railway station, the University of Bergamo - Caniana headquarters, the Bricoman car park of Dalmine and the University of Bergamo - Dalmine headquarters. This service will increase the accessibility of the university by connecting two important strategic urban mobility hubs to the campus.

2.1.2 Crema (Italy)

Like Bergamo, Crema is also part of the Lombardy region, located in the north of Italy. The pilot activities in Crema are focusing on developing and optimizing flexible transport options through collaboration. On municipality level the co-creation process was started and the test results will be scaled up with the Miobus offer, which is provided by the regional transport provider Autoguidovie.

2.1.3 Osijek (Croatia)

The City of Osijek is the centre of Osijek – Baranja County and one of four macro-regional centres in the Republic of Croatia. It is also a gravitational point of the entire Eastern Croatia (Slavonija, Baranja and Srijem), a region where 84.9% of settlements face depopulation. The city of Osijek implemented a pilot activity focusing on planning and governance for seamless mobility-based systems. It will allow further integration of City operated bus and tram services, with other mobility providers (e.g. ride, car and bike sharing services). The pilot activities in this region include a Bus DRT pilot element and a multimodal trip planner. The aim of this Bus DRT pilot is to identify the conditions and obstacles for the implementation of this kind of services and to propose development guidelines and recommendations. The multimodal trip planning service should include national railway transport and urban public transport (bus and tram), as well as FlixBus GTFS database with the possibility of future integration of bike and car-sharing services.

2.1.4 Ulm (Germany)

Ulm is located in the southeastern region of Baden-Württemberg (Germany) right on the border to Bavaria. The city is situated on the slopes of the Swabian Alb, which means that the topography is partly hilly. The various hills in the city's area represent a significant challenge for sustainable mobility solutions.

The pilot activities in Ulm are focusing on the integration of sharing services into regional and local transport networks. Especially the growing commuter flows will be used for testing and involve several companies and the employees of the City of Ulm.

2.1.5 Zalaegerszeg (Hungary)

Zalaegerszeg is located in the western Transdanubia region, in Zala county. The western Transdanubia region is the second smallest region in Hungary depending on the size of the territory. At the southwestern parts of the town hills are typical. The central and northern parts are located in a valley area, while the eastern areas are at the edge of a hilly area. The pilot activities focuses on developing and optimizing flexible options through collaboration. The area for the pilot actions is the commuting, suburban area of the city

consisting of 111 settlements, summing up relevant commuting flows (ca. 3,400 students and ca. 14,600 workers), and highlighting public transport unserved areas and poor connections to main transport hubs within the city (main railway and bus station). On the one hand a DRT system is planned and will be tested and on the other hand a carpooling system will be implemented, which links the local/regional buses and the trains to the nearest bus stops.



Figure 1: Location of the SHAREPLACE pilot regions (AustriaTech, basis from Interreg Central Europe)

2.2 Co-design approach in Shareplace

As powerful spatial planning tools, co-design approaches represent a key element of the SHAREPLACE project. The term co-creation refers to user and stakeholder involvement during the product design and development process.

Co-design reflects a shared design process, where designers and not trained people in design are working together to develop products, tools, processes and services. The co-design approach combines the collective creativity of diverse actors across the whole range of a development process (Sanders & Stappers, 2008).

In the SHAREPLACE project we use co-design as a collective creative process which is facilitated as workshops, with diverse stakeholders who sketch, ideate, experiment, learn and develop concepts together (Mattelmäki & Sleeswijk Visser, 2011). A co-design process as several phases with different steps, which are interlinked. The process is started by understanding and framing the problem through sharing and comparing the experiences of the participating stakeholders. On this basis, diverse alternatives will be explored, by identifying the local resources and capabilities. The aim is to find and develop a shared solution supported by all stakeholders, which can be tested and developed further within an iterated co-design process.

In SHAREPLACE, each pilot followed a similar work plan defined within the project, but then carried out the different activities such as living lab meetings and co-design workshops according to local needs and with their respective groups of stakeholders. However, a general approach could be identified, comprising several project phases, which are interlinked and can be applied in other settings as well. Part of our approach is the testing of the developed services in each pilot region. This phase should have started in February/March 2020 but had to be stopped abruptly due to restrictions due to COVID-19. Pilot regions cover hotspots such as Bergamo and Crema in Italy, but also other regions, less affected, at least in the beginning of the outbreak, such as Osijek in Croatia.

3 CO-CREATION IN TIMES OF COVID-19

As a key element of the SHAREPLACE project co creation is also during COVID-19 important. In SHAREPLACE, each pilot followed a similar work plan defined within the project, but then carried out the different activities such as living lab meetings and co-design workshops according to local needs and with their respective groups of stakeholders. Due to COVID-19 there were shifts and changes in the planned activities.

Because of COVID-19 the implemented carpooling service in Bergamo, which was launched in the area of the university had to be stopped. The University of Bergamo was closed and the target group that consists of students and university staff was not available. Additionally some other research about working from home was carried out and the planned seminars and meetings were held online.

In Crema testing was planned to start in April but it was postponed and will have a shorter testing period. Fewer people use public transport because of COVID-19 and holiday season. The plan is to hold online living labs in the end of summer. Since many schools and universities will probably continue online, there will be less regular bus services. If no testing is possible, experiences from other cities will be evaluated to prepare the implementation of the service later this year.

The routing application for the pilot projects in Osijek was completely finished and prepared for users but unfortunately, the living labs had to be cancelled in April. Right now, there is less public transport because of COVID-19 and additionally they are using the summer schedule because no students are there. In September when school restarts, testing with a smaller group of people should start. Two surveys and a co-design workshop are planned. They will be held online which could have an influence on the number of participants.

In Ulm events and talks with politicians and on mobility conferences had to be cancelled. The bike sharing service is available but with less users because of home school and home office. An online living lab was conducted and a public online webinar and workshop with transport operators took place. Other virtual meetings and workshops are planned. Instead of some events, Ulm will make a video about the implemented services instead.

In Zalaegerszeg the first testing phase was done but other planned pilot activities had to be postponed. They should start by the end of August and last until October. The testing has to be adjusted to the changed local schedules. If it's not possible to conduct tests with many people, it will be done with a smaller group. The results will be used to prepare everything for testing at a later point of time. Online meetings are planned to involve different stakeholders.

4 CONCLUSION

The new situation with COVID-19 and the social distancing showed us that it is possible to make co-creation processes also without physical meetings. But it is important to think about different things.

On the one hand it is important to stay in touch with the target groups and different stakeholders and to make them aware that the projekt continue. This can happen through E-mails, phone calls or newsletter. On the other hand it is important to think about the target groups, for example are they students or elder people, who maybe do not have access to online tools. In some cases it was necessary to change the target groups because they were not available.

Furthermore, it is important to evaluate the timing of participatory processes and define essential and non-essential activities. This analysis will provide a shortlist of selected activities. Which activities can maybe be done at a later stage.

Another challenge is the testing of new online tools to include different stakeholders in the co-creation process. It is a chance for the pilot regions to gain more flexibility and had the chance to reach a larger number of people because they did not have to be on site but the preparation of online meetings and co-creation processes is more complex and different. An additional possibility to reach different stakeholders is to create videos for target groups instead of meetings. Our pilot region Ulm will make a video about the implemented services instead of events.

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