The SUMP process of Gdańsk — tailor-made and participatory

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In brief

The city of Gdańsk is the largest city in the north of Poland and together with Sopot and Gdynia, forms the tri-city on the Baltic Sea. Gdańsk’s 468,000 inhabitants have to travel long distances due to the city’s structure — it stretches along the coastline and is divided into a lower and upper terrace, which creates additional obstacles to travel for residents.
Gdańsk is internationally recognised as the cycling capital of Poland and has a history of implementing projects to promote sustainable mobility. However, like many other European cities, Gdańsk faces transport challenges such as high commuter traffic volumes, congestion, the need to improve public transport services and parking problems. In 2016, Gdańsk decided to develop a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) for the city as a project of the URBACT III Programme, which facilitates learning from, and the exchange of knowledge with, other cities across Europe.

The SUMP development process saw the implementation of a wide and detailed participation strategy which started with the working team itself and was extended to city districts, stakeholders, inhabitants, interest groups, politicians and a wide range of experts of different professions.

Specific elements of the process involved a step-by-step approach to working with different transport topics starting with the greatest challenge — parking — and the most promising growth areas: the promotion of cycling and walking. Gdańsk developed its SUMP based on the results of these ‘sectoral’ steps and developed a comprehensive and coherent SUMP for the future development of transport in the city. The process was based on an early definition of the main objectives and involved a large-scale mobility analysis of modal choices and transport options. Gdańsk used the integrated planning approach employed by URBACT III Programme projects and made use of unconventional but effective methods and tools such as the ‘OPERA co-creation method’ or the ‘problem tree’ acquired from its participation in the URBACT CityMobilNet project.

The Gdańsk SUMP was unanimously adopted by the City Council in April 2018. The plan includes objectives and analysis, and also describes the way in which stakeholders and residents were involved in its development. It also outlines the measures proposed — indicating timelines, resources and responsibilities. The SUMP highlights the need for inter-sectoral cooperation.

Gdańsk translated its SUMP into English which is available online.

**Context**

The city stretches along the coastline with a lower and upper terrace which results in limited space to dedicate to transport. The city’s transport network must manage internal traffic and a high number of commuters entering and leaving the city each working day: more than 120,000 cars (and 150,000 vehicles in total) cross the city limits each day in the morning and evening.

Gdańsk has a history of implementing projects to enhance traffic management and promote sustainable modes. One of the city’s priorities is to foster active mobility, notably cycling. This has been facilitated by a range of initiatives since 2010, when — as a result of a BYPAD audit — Gdańsk created the Active Mobility Department devoted to walking and cycling. A recent transport survey on mobility choices of Gdańsk inhabitants demonstrated the positive impact of investing in cycling promotion. The modal share of cycling tripled from 2% to 6% between 2009 and 2016, but at the same time trips made by private car also increased by 2%. The modal split gains made by cycling and private car use took place at the expense of public transport.

While public transportation in Gdańsk is extensive, the annual Passenger Satisfaction Survey reveals a number of concerns. These include the travelling time required, punctuality, insufficient connections between the different public transport modes and the quality and reliability of the rolling stock, as well as the design and quality of public transport stops, and the paths used to access these stops.

The recent growth of car traffic, which has been exacerbated by an increasing number of cars per household (412 per 1000 households in 2006 increasing to 572 per 1000 in 2016), generates
increased pressure on the road and parking infrastructure of Gdańsk. Parking in the city centre is a particular problem, and the range of challenges includes the lack of a comprehensive, single parking policy for the entire city, as well as its impact on cyclists and pedestrians and the public space it takes up.

It was in the light of recent urban transport developments, and the strengths and weaknesses of its traffic network described above, that the City of Gdańsk decided to develop a comprehensive strategy for the future development of urban mobility.

In September 2016, the Mayor of Gdańsk set out a regulation to establish a team for the development of a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) for Gdańsk. The SUMP was created in the context of the Gdańsk 2030 Plus City Development Strategy, which details the global development objectives for the city. The SUMP is the mobility element of the Gdańsk development strategy.

In action

Gdańsk’s objective was to create a SUMP embracing all transport, both of people and of goods, including all modes and their intermodal use. As the aim was for the SUMP to be developed in the framework of the Gdańsk 2030 Plus City Development Strategy, spatial and socio-economic developments were central elements in its creation. The development of the SUMP was undertaken in the frame of the URBACT III Action Planning Network CityMobilNet in order for it to benefit from the joint exchange and mutual learning with 10 other local and regional authorities from across Europe.

Initially, in order to develop the SUMP, Gdańsk established an interdisciplinary team led by the municipal agency Roads and Greeneries Management in Gdańsk, which involved 31 people representing different stakeholder groups and professions. The team was later enlarged to bring in expertise from academics, representatives of NGOs and local emergency services. The SUMP development team took an inclusive approach to creating the SUMP by involving as many stakeholders as possible and by adapting the development process to local needs.

Inclusive approach

The main team alone conducted 30 meetings during the development of the SUMP between May 2016 and April 2018. In addition, workshops were held for each city district to consult on the specific details of each district and separate workshops were held for the city councillors. Additionally, general meetings involved residents, NGOs and all parties with an interest in sustainable mobility. Representatives of the main team also took part in seven transnational meetings as part of the URBACT network CityMobilNet to exchange and collect methods and technical knowledge to help design the SUMP process and content.

Local SUMP development process in Gdańsk

The development process for the SUMP tailored actions to local needs. The primary determinant was, however, the European Commission’s Guidelines on SUMPs.

The first step was to screen all relevant policies, strategies and regulations at the European, national, regional and local levels. This included transport-related documents, as well as those of other policy fields of direct relevance, such as strategic, spatial, environmental, economic and public space development. Matching the SUMP development process and its result to the Gdańsk 2030 Plus City Development Strategy was one of the core aspects of screening existing policies and strategies.
The second step was to define the main objectives of the SUMP in order to set a clear objective right at the start of the process. This allowed for focused work on creating scenarios, assessing the state of play and developing appropriate indicators and packages of measures. The main objectives were developed jointly with residents, NGOs, political and administrative bodies and aligned with a first set of indicators. They are:

1. **Improved conditions for pedestrian and bicycle traffic** resulting in an increased modal share for walking and cycling.
2. **Increased safety of all road users** resulting in reduced road accidents figures as well as increased perception of safety.
3. **Improved access city-wide to alternatives to car use** resulting in investments into infrastructure improvement for active modes, specifically for people with reduced mobility.
4. **Increased share of public transport travel in the total amount of travel** resulting in increased quality of public transport connections, increased service areas and better connectivity to walking and cycling.
5. **Reduction of the negative impact of transport on people, health and the environment** resulting in reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, noise, and space used for transport — and specifically in the space used for parking.
6. **Increase in the quality and accessibility of public spaces for all users in all city areas** resulting in an increased quality of life in Gdańsk.

These objectives served as the main guideline for further development of the SUMP.

As the third step, the city performed an analysis of the current transport choices in the city to determine the present modal split. Gdańsk took a step-by-step, prioritised approach: having determined the main challenges, the SUMP and its measures were developed to meet these. Different transport fields — such as parking, cycling and walking, and public transport — were tackled one by one, starting with a topic-related detailed analysis of the status quo to identify strengths and weaknesses. Detailed objectives were then set in the light of this, and appropriate packages of measures defined to meet them, taking account of the existing set of circumstances. Work on each transport field was combined with consultations with experts as needed — in workshops, for example. Since parking was the most pressing transport issue in Gdańsk it was tackled first, followed by cycling and walking, public transport and mobility management (including mobility plans), urban logistics and spatial planning.

This topic-based approach to developing the SUMP allowed Gdańsk to tackle a large number of issues in their entirety and to align these with each other within a comprehensive SUMP. This included the identification of actions and their interdependencies, indicators to measure the effectiveness of the plan’s implementation and a detailed elaboration of the way in which the plan should be evaluated and monitored.

**Methodologies used for the work and participatory measures**

As Gdańsk developed its SUMP alongside the URBACT III APN CityMobilNet, the city was able to exchange information and experience with 10 other local and regional authorities that were following the same timeline in their SUMP development; this information exchange included peer reviews and site visits. Additionally, Gdańsk could employ methods and tools in local groups — a core feature of any URBACT III network. The elements transferred to the Gdańsk SUMP development process were:

**Problem Tree:** a method to identify the core problem and to clearly distinguish effects from causes.
**OPERA**: a method to create a high number of ideas and suggestions and then - as a group - narrow down the scope to the most promising ones and setting priorities amongst these.

**Given/Taken Market**: an exchange market method to collect knowledge and experience of participants on ‘Given-Boards’, collect interest in the posts of the others at a ‘Taken-Board’ and then facilitate the exchange.

**Measure plan exercise**: putting a number of desired measures in the context of time and resource constraints to decide on which measures to choose and how to prioritise them.

**Future dialogue role-plays**: a method to imagine the future desired situation and develop a scenario for it to happen, followed by working on how to get there.

Furthermore, Gdańsk employed the Urban Transport Roadmaps tool to develop three possible scenarios for the city's mobility development, being:

- a pessimistic scenario, focusing development on the road network and access by car (variant 0).
- a neutral scenario, maintaining the present state of play and thus stopping current modal share developments, except for the growth of the modal share of active modes (variant 1).
- an optimistic scenario, reversing the recent increase in car use and decrease in public transport use, along with further growth in active mobility (variant 2).

For variants 1 and 2, Gdańsk defined the necessary actions needed to follow the respective development paths. The three scenarios were put to the public and their views were collected. The result of this consultation was that people favoured variant 2, which was consequently chosen as the desired development path for the SUMP and its implementation.

**Results**

Gdańsk’s SUMP was adopted by the City Council in April 2018 with unanimous support. The specific local application of a SUMP development process - as characterised by a strong participatory element and a stepwise approach to tackling the most challenging areas of urban mobility - resulted in a comprehensive and holistic urban mobility development strategy.

On the basis of the six objectives listed above, the SUMP analyses the current state of play and discusses the need for change. It makes use of a scenario-building technique to align the objectives with public opinion, and is based on existing strategies from the EU- to the local level.

One specific result from the development process directly visible in the SUMP is the description of the planned activities. For each activity, the plan defines:

- The responsible organisation
- The partners/other organisations to involve
- A timeline indication
- The financial sources
- A summary of the action
- The key activities
- The expected results

The activities are thus well defined, to better enable their actual implementation, in alignment with the SUMP’s objectives.
Spatial patterns and how they develop were carefully analysed in developing the SUMP. The analysis was structured by the city’s division into a lower and upper terrace - and assessed how each section of the city was affected by recent transport projects, as well as prospective future measures. Socio-economic data was also used during the analysis. Assessors identified trends and the needs of a changing population in relation to transport. An increasingly ageing population, as well as the large community of students were the main demographic factors to consider when developing sustainable urban mobility measures. In addition, the main economic factors also had to be analysed and the results integrated into the findings that formed the foundations for the SUMP: the factors to be analysed included the existence of a strong maritime industry around the port, and the role of tourism and a quickly growing market of finance and IT industry — focused in the centre as well as at university and transport-oriented locations. It is clear that the analysis of spatial and socio-economic patterns and planned developments are essential to developing transportation solutions that allow the improvement of sustainable urban mobility patterns.

The SUMP of Gdańsk provides a dependency matrix, a set of indicators with development goals and the outline of a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan. Indicators give the values for the current state of play, while their development is expressed in increase or decrease trajectories only. The section on monitoring and evaluation indicates further provisions needed for a detailed plan. The main element to this is a progress report every four years, covering changes in the general conditions and trends, developments regarding the indicators and a review of the past and future measures. The analysis of these data will allow for the identification of any necessary revisions or adaptations to the SUMP measures. Detailed measure planning and implementation is monitored on an ongoing basis.

**Challenges, opportunities and transferability**

The city of Gdańsk’s SUMP development process provides a number of conclusions.

Employing a large development team proved to be worthwhile. It allowed the integration of various perspectives and addressed most aspects of city life: the interests of the city’s districts and the residents in general; of special interest groups, experts, including those from outside the city, and political decision- makers were all fed into the final plan. The success of this integrated planning approach is evident from the adoption of the SUMP by a unanimous vote of the City Council. However, motivating stakeholders and residents to actively take part in the development process was resource-intensive and the desired participation levels were not always reached.

The decision to work with transport issues on a topic-by-topic basis, starting with the most challenging and/or promising ones, was also successful. Dealing with transport modes and issues in turn rather than in a comprehensive all-at-once approach might be unusual, but served the purpose of tackling the main challenges and creating a comprehensive and coherent SUMP.

The main driver of the SUMP development process was the agency Roads and Greeneries Management in Gdańsk. Allocating responsibility outside of the city administration departments worked well, as the Roads and Greeneries Management successfully integrated all relevant stakeholders and administrative departments into the process of developing the SUMP.

Additional benefits for the development process could be drawn from the URBACT III APN CityMobilNet project in terms of the exchange of information and experience with peers across Europe. The tools enabled the SUMP team to break out of their usual work structures and tackle the tasks at hand in a new setting, without existing bias. The URBACT III Programme’s approach to integrated planning, called ‘the URBACT method’, provided a useful approach.
The Metropolitan Region of Gdańsk is about to start a SUMP development process for its area and has plans to make use of the resources of the Gdańsk Roads and Greeneries Authority.

**In Depth**

The City of Gdańsk produced an English translation of its SUMP which is available [online](https://example.com).

**Keywords**
sustainable urban mobility plans

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