Car Sharing Across Europe

In this Bulletin:

- Car sharing: state of the art
- Lessons learned & shared
- Car sharing across Europe at a glance

Car sharing is an organised short term use of vehicles owned by a dedicated organisation, also known as car clubs in the UK. As a form of mobility it has taken off: In 1997 there were less than 50,000 users worldwide whereas in 2006 there were almost 350,000 users. The personal advantages of car sharing are clear. Users save time and money not owning a car. They will always drive a nearly new car and have the possibility to select car type according to their requirements. In addition, car sharing is one of the few possibilities to reduce mobility costs and combat climate change at a personal level.

In terms of global advantages, car sharing is a crucial element of multimodality and contributes to reducing the negative impacts of car traffic such as pollution, waste of energy and misuse of urban space. Car sharing not only reduces mileage but also the number of cars in inner city areas—an aspect often neglected in the sustainability debate.

A close look at car sharing also offers insights into the cultural aspects of mobility. While the advantages have always been clear, the uptake was rather small in the beginning and there is still a lot of potential. It is clear that the rational use of the car is still not common in our societies and the private vehicle is still a status symbol rather than a mobility option among others.

Experiences of different car sharing cities have shown that some user groups are difficult to reach eg suburban dwellers, poor people, ethnic communities and less educated persons. While the spatial aspect might be difficult to overcome, it would be advantageous to involve different user groups with different socio-economic backgrounds since they could also benefit from cost savings and the comfort of car sharing.

The preconditions for car sharing are improving. Various countries are removing legal bottlenecks and car sharing is clearly winning weight on the political agenda, while integration with other models is progressing.

The first scheme was founded in 1946 in Zurich and since the late 1980s to now there has been impressive growth. Existing schemes keep growing while new schemes in new cities/regions are being established.

Its potential is not yet exploited and a growing number of Europeans are rethinking car use also in the light of increasing maintenance and energy costs.
Car sharing has direct and indirect benefits, for example, 4-10 vehicles are replaced by one car sharing vehicle in Europe. Users tend to develop more rational mobility behaviour and switch to sustainable modes (such as walking, cycling and public transport) for a higher portion of their trips. Households can also save money.

However, car-sharing will only work and people will only reduce car use if there are suitable alternatives - be it attractive public transport or short distances to various kinds of facilities making motorised transport void. Car sharing acts as the missing link here: it is probably not used very often but indispensable in order to facilitate life without a car.

While the first users were private households, the advantages have also been recognised by small businesses. Local authorities and larger companies have also recently started joining car sharing schemes.

Typical car sharing members show clear socio-demographic attributes: they are often in their thirties or forties, have middle to higher incomes, often have an academic background and are concerned about environmental and social issues.

Car sharing uptake is particularly high in inner city areas with high density, parking pressure and a good environment for sustainable modes and mix of uses. Parking pressure has been identified as one of the reasons for high acceptance in Switzerland as compared to France. While car sharing can be successful in campus areas, many schemes in suburbs failed. However, it seems that socio-demographic factors are more important than spatial influences.

Parking is one of the crucial issues concerning car sharing. This applies firstly to the creation of sites where reserved parking places are required, preferably within residential areas and close to public transport stops. However, these are scarce and expensive. While in some cities, local authorities reserve some parking spaces for car sharing, other organisations have to rely on open-minded landlords or churches (a model practised in Munich for example). Some cities offer special advantages for car sharing users, e.g. on-street parking for free, access to environmental zones or use of public transport lanes. These benefits vary from city to city, however, Italy has developed a national regulation dealing with these issues.

In general car sharing has no legal status. Some authorities consider this a major barrier for them to foster car sharing: as it is not legally defined, other car drivers, particularly of rental cars, could also claim the same exemptions and discounts. France is therefore currently creating a law on car sharing, clearly defining it as a mode similar to public transport. Italy already undertook efforts 5 years ago in order to establish a favourable climate for car sharing.

In the Nineties car sharing was often managed from small offices where users had to pick up the keys through reservation by phone was possible. Nowadays customers reserve by internet or at terminals and either find the keys in a safe close to the parking space or open the car with a dedicated e-card.

Alternative fuels and power-train technologies play a certain role in car sharing. Many fleets include LPG and CNG cars or electric vehicles.

**France**

In 2007 there were circa 4400 car sharing users in France, mainly in Paris. In distinction to other European countries, the operators are mainly organised locally. Eight French providers have joined in the Strasbourg based “France-Autopartage” network.

Use of car sharing is still not common but it is currently considered an important element of sustainable urban transport policies.

In France a new law concerning car sharing is underway. It foresees a clear definition of car sharing in terms of operational and environmental standards. It also mentions

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**Car sharing across Europe at a glance**

This section briefly summarises some of the car sharing experiences across Europe.

Within CIVITAS about 15 cities have addressed this topic so far not counting those who have car sharing outside the MOBILIS frame.

The CIVITAS MOBILIS workshop on car sharing across Europe was held on the 28th of February at the Palazzo Franchetti Institute in Venice. It comprised a number of excellent informative presentations on car sharing across Europe. Key information from these presentations is included here below.

**Lessons learned and shared**

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possible funding by public authorities. In addition, car sharing is one of the measures promoted in the “Grenelle de L’Environment” (October 2007) in order to combat pollution and improve urban quality of life. National institutes and organisations such as GART, CERTU, ADEME, PREDIT and CETE have started to work intensively on the topic.

Robert Clavel of CERTU presented the development of car sharing systems in France: context and perspectives. He reiterated that car sharing has had a rather slow start compared to Switzerland and the Netherlands and that its development has suffered from French legislative rigidity and lack of promotion. The importance of communication is stressed as a survey in Paris showed that 28% of the people interviewed mixed car sharing with car pooling and 60% didn’t know what car sharing was. However, 40% were keen on trying the service after being informed of what it is. Emphasis was given to the need to promote the integration of less car strategies and urbanism as well as multimodal management in the form of electronic passes.

Alexandre Blaquiere presented the current measure, part of the CIVITAS MOBILIS project, in Toulouse aimed at a feasibility analysis, definition study and small demonstration of car sharing in the City. The aim is to create 22 stations with 2 vehicles each in an area with a potential of 1500-2000 users.

In Toulouse, they are currently deciding on the most appropriate administrative model to create and fund the service with the objective of launching the car sharing scheme by the end of 2008.

The importance of integrating car sharing with other mobility services such as car parking policy and public transport was also highlighted in this presentation.

CIVITAS SUCCESS has given the opportunity to La Rochelle to improve their car sharing system. As presented by Anna Trentini, in La Rochelle, all innovative mobility services, including Car sharing are now under delegated management of public services. As a result of improvements, subscribers of the scheme can be seen to be rising. Future plans are an increase in stations, cars in the fleet and a provision of internet booking for tourists and visitors.

Germany

Car sharing in Germany has been developed since 1988 with the first scheme in Berlin. Since then various bigger car sharing organisations have been formed, operating in more than one city. New forms of cooperation, for example, with local business companies or public transport have also been established. In 2007 there were over 100,000 car sharing members using 2900 cars in 260 municipalities. 4 large companies share most of the market.

In Germany, the Minister of Transport is currently preparing an amendment to the Road Traffic Act. It shall enable the creation of car sharing sites on public space whereas they had to be in private areas before and the free use of dedicated public transport lanes and dedicated parking spaces at public transport interchanges and train stations.

Michael Frömming presented the very successful car sharing experience in Bremen where the car sharing operator is CAMBIO with a fleet of over 100 cars in 34 locations and 4300 customers. In Bremen car sharing is estimated to have replaced 900 private cars. The presentation focussed on car sharing and sustainable urban development. Firstly in terms of space allocation, ie replacing parking spaces with activities for social, green and business use purposes. As part of housing policies, ie in inner city areas, less parking spaces means more flats and also the possibility of urban regeneration where car sharing stations can be part of housing developments.

In Bremen, factors for the growth of the system have been found to be awareness, service quality, efficiency and integration with other mobility services.

Italy

Italy defined a national policy some years ago. Car sharing vehicles have special rights and most car sharing organisations in Italy are part of ICS (Iniziativa Car sharing). The first schemes started in 2002 in Venice, Bologna and Turin. By the end of 2007, ICS united about 9500 users and 360 cars. In most cases, car sharing activities are still dependant on public funding.

A presentation was given of the successful car sharing experience in Venice by Claudia Bordenca for ASM and of the local corporate car sharing scheme by Alessandro Leon for the Province of Venice.

In Venice, the objective within MOBILIS is to expand the pre-existing car sharing fleet by 30% and to increase the proportion of clean cars and alternative fuels to 50%. Car sharing is also extended to new users groups such as local businesses and made accessible to customers with disabilities. To date ASM has bought 20 new cars with the contribution of MOBILIS while subscribers have increased...
from 2509 in 31/01/05 and 4205 in 31/12/07. The well established experience of car sharing in the City of Bologna was presented by Giancarlo Sgubbi and highlighted the integration of such a scheme with limited traffic zones and other sustainable mobility measures promoted by the City. The city intends to work further on car sharing in the forthcoming CIVITAS MIMOSA project.

**Switzerland**

When talking about car sharing in modern terms, Switzerland must be considered as a pioneer country. The first scheme was established in Zurich as a citizens driven association. Other organisations have since been founded in some Swiss cities. When the two biggest providers merged in 1997, de facto a national car sharing scheme with some 17000 users was created. The company is the largest in Europe with circa 76000 users in 2007. Just to give an example, in Zurich alone there are 365 cars at 163 locations for 18000 customers. Mobility, as presented by Peter Muheim, the company’s CEO, was the first to use on board computers and has also started cooperation with various stakeholders. Agreements with the national rail operator, regional public transport operators and authorities have led to close integration of modes and discounts for users. It also cooperates with car rental companies while providing business car sharing for larger companies. In Switzerland, car sharing is available in all major cities but also in many smaller towns and even tourist destinations. As sites are often at railway stations, car sharing perfectly complements the travel chain. It also offers new options to people not owning a car.

**Denmark**

In Denmark Hertz is the only major provider with about 4000 users in the entire country. Car sharing is offered in all major cities such as Copenhagen, Aalborg, Odense and Aarhus.

Claus Bodker of Hertz Odense presented the car sharing scheme in Odense. Hertz Delebilen took over Odense car sharing club in 1999. It is the only commercial operator in Denmark. Car sharing is seen as a natural extension to other Hertz services. Given that car sharing is perceived to become a vital part of future urban transportation, Hertz wants to lead this development and become car sharing leader in Denmark. Users can use all of the cars in the fleet and benefit from services offered to car rental clients such as free road assistance and break down service in Europe and free parking in central Copenhagen and Odense.

**Additional information**

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