SUMBA+ - Twinning Regions Report - WP 2.5

Learning from each other – Municipalities exchange experiences how to boost sustainable mobility

Content

Introduction

Work package 2.5 of the SUMBA+ project, the twinning of regions was designed to enable interaction and exchange between the pilot regions in the project. The idea was to focus on direct experience exchange amongst municipal experts from the SUMBA+ pilot regions Tallinn & Harju County, Riga Planning Region, Växjö, Hamburg-Altona and Tartu and to give the opportunity to discuss important topics with other municipalities to learn from each other's experience. As the time on the normal project's partner meeting was often not sufficient to go into detail, the twinning wanted to allow enough time to go into details. The idea was to give each partner the opportunity to visit another municipality for 3 days and to choose a municipality with similar challenges from which a good learning effect could be expected.

We started with the matching process in Spring 2021 and planned the different visits for late summer/autumn of the same year. But at the time the twinning idea found its way into the workplan of the SUMBA project it could not be foreseen that the COVID19 pandemic would make face to face meetings and travelling at least risky if not impossible, depending on the season and the current number of infections in each country. So, by the time the twinning was organised in spring 2021 it was already clear that up to 5 international visits could be problematic but nevertheless with available COVID vaccines and relatively few infections during the summer 2021 some hope was left to be able to visit each other.

But finally, it became clear that the situation would not allow extended travelling. In a few partner countries the number of infections got critical again and additionally some partner organisations did not allow international travelling for their employees.

As a result, it was discussed to minimise the risk of travelling and do just one partner meeting in Tartu (19.10. – 21.10.2021) instead of several bilateral meetings. This partner meeting had to be organised in a hybrid format because some partners needed to join online as they were not allowed to travel. To make the twinning sessions effective, two major challenges had to be tackled: The first was to melt down the 6x3 days bilateral meetings into a format where all

partners take part in the same session. Secondly, the session could not last much more than one day overall, because of logistical problems and being just a part of the general partner meeting. The third problem was to make everything possible in a hybrid format where one of the municipalities (Altona) could not attend due to internal COVID rules and some of the presenters where also not physically attending.

During some discussions we developed the idea to discuss 4 different themes in 4 consecutive sessions. In each of these sessions experts from the partner municipalities would present their case studies and findings. The twinning was organized in 4 consecutive sessions with 4 different identified key topics, each of them being discussed by the consortium and for each theme one or more experts leading into the discussion.

Theme 1 *Streets for people – moving space from cars to people. How to get residents and politicians on board.*

This included presentations from Raimond Tamm, deputy mayor from Tartu, who provided experiences from his city; Carola Baier and Sebastian Schröder-Dickreuter from Planersocietät, who talked about traffic calming and "Quiet Areas" in Altona; and Dr. Julia Jarass, DLR Institute of Transport Research, whose presentation "From crossroad to town square" was about experiences from a real-world experiment in Berlin.

Theme 2 *Sharing systems – How to establish them beneficially for the whole society and city.*

This theme included presentations from Meeli Kuul from Anija municipality, who talked about cross-border bike sharing in rural areas and Jaagup Ainsalu who talked about MAAS in Tallinn.

Theme 3 *Mobility hubs – "Come together": good practices and perspectives*

Benjamin Heldt from the DLR Institute of Transport Research introduced integrated mobility concepts in (new) residential areas.

Theme 4 *Mobility trends in planning – new technologies and mobility options: A boost for better transport?*

Kay Gade from DLR presented research results and current discussions on autonomous driving with a focus on public transport.

Learning reports from partner municipalities

A deliverable of the twinning activity was that each region was sked to write a short summary of the lessons learned from the twinning and what they take home as interesting inspiration for their work in their home municipality.

Altona:

The overall take away message from the SUMBA+ Partner Meeting was that tackling the climate crisis is a challenge every city or region must face at the same time. Main goal is climate neutrality – in this case with the focus on the mobility sector. One important area of action is the strengthening of public transport as the backbone of the transport system. Some cities or regions have a focus on implementing MaaS on a bigger scale to integrate with public transport, others push to increase walkability and cycle friendly inner cities to offer incentives for less individual motorized traffic. Apart from different approaches that were presented within the frame of the partner meeting the goal is the same – making sustainable mobility happen for the people and shifting away from car traffic towards a higher share of alternative transport modes.

Especially helpful were the insights during the *twinning Tartu session* about the bicycle library since plans in Altona are quite similar to increase cargo bike share. It was interesting to hear that the trial period with a less central location was successful so that the library now can transfer to a new inner city lending point. Furthermore, the information that mostly families were interested in the offer, and many considered a purchase of cargo bikes for private use afterwards, was a valuable insight.

Streets for people session – moving space from cars to people. How to get residents and politicians on board.

The knowledge exchange in this session was particularly interesting since we are currently working on a car reduction in the central Altona district Ottensen as well. The insights from Dr. Julia Jarass' pilot in Berlin (which will be transformed permanently in the future) about noise were very helpful since we are also experiencing a shift towards more recreational noise as we reduce traffic noise. Ideas like an opinion board, town square furniture built by neighbours, open children assembly and cultural events to increase acceptance of a transformed public space are take away messages for our municipality and will be discussed further in Altona. Another helpful information from this session was that elderly were specifically sceptical about moving space from cars to people while young families are more open to support the transformation of parking spaces to social meeting points. A scientific evaluation and reliable numbers were agreed on as important factors for gaining political awareness and neighbourhood support.

Sharing systems session– How to establish them beneficially for the whole society and city.

The session on sharing systems shed light on the challenges smaller cities face wanting to attract operators for MaaS. It was interesting to hear that large companies dictate the rules when it comes to customization of MaaS platforms and roll out in the city. Findings from the discussion were that MaaS -including thoughts on autonomous driving from the mobility trends in planning session - can only be an addition to public transport and are so far not profitable. A larger roll out (nationwide or in a metropolitan region depending on the size of

the country) can be a more feasible approach. The different perspectives on that topic of scientific research and municipalities were helpful to understand the larger context.

Harju County

"Quiet Areas" in Altona: Ms Carola Baier from Hamburg Altona presented the idea of defining "Quiet Areas". Modern urban settlement is more and more torn between good connectivity, traffic flows and wish for nice and quiet residential areas. The "Quiet areas" concept is intriguing and tackles the issues that are universal in all urban areas.

The concept is created by studying what is considered as a quiet area (both during day and night) and how to organize sustainable commuting, create public space, and all other local activities so that the concept would be a good compromise for residents. Local resident's engagement is important, and a public participation process can be used to assure the best possible outcome.

The wish to develop "Quiet areas" started to develop together with the preparations for a "climate plan". The idea came up in discussions with local residents. The noise topic was brought up by the residents as they wish that intensive traffic would not have to pass through their neighbourhood. At the same time though, it is important to look for solutions that guarantee good connectivity and access to transport connections.

The definition of „Quiet Areas/Zones" will be developed in two different core areas of Altona. One of those two pilot areas is a former 20th century „industrial area", the other new and partly under construction. In the future the plan is to use the "Quiet areas" concept for whole borough of Altona.

The idea is to map needs and expectations of the local residents. For both neighbourhoods it is important to define what "quiet" exactly means. Define "noise conflicts" coming from traffic, local industries, and recreational noise for example. Noise pollution thresholds are studied and measured as well as different acceptable noise levels are defined for day and night. The health risks of noise pollution are also taken into consideration.

Quiet areas are areas without unwanted sounds which is subjective. Noise pollution can be caused by traffic – the faster cars are allowed to drive the louder the noise. Quiet areas can be a solution to noise conflicts and problems can be tackled by traffic avoidance and a modal shift away from private cars towards low noise modes of transport such as pedestrian traffic, bicycling or public transport. At the same time though, it can be argued that if the streets are closed for the traffic, then the concern of nightlife noise or other recreational noise can be an issue. Potential problems with raised noise levels from recreation (music, playing children etc.) can be also a result of "active streets".

As the quite areas are a new concept in Altona we are very much interested in the outcome and transferability. How these areas are managed is still very much work in progress, but it seems to reflect very well in Tallinn just as well as in other larger urban residential areas. The discussion can be quite different in different types of urban settlements, and therefore public participation seems very important to avoid conflicts. It seems that in our area the overly car-centred traffic model can be tackled with this concept. We would like to study the "Quiet areas" idea further and see how it could work in our city.

For implementation, we are looking for local municipalities that have appropriate urban settlement where we can test the idea in our local context. We have already discussed the

idea with the City of Tallinn, Harku Municipality and Rae Municipality. In case of further interest, we would like to organize a presentation case and start designing the implementation of "Quiet Areas" on a local level. The idea is on the table, but as the Union of Harju County Municipalities is not an actor on local level, we need to find a collaboration partner within our region to take the idea further.

Tallinn

For us the most valuable learnings form the Twinning sessions were

1) learning from experiences and good practice from Tartu City
2) The presentation about the cross-border bike sharing in rural areas (Anija municipality)
3) The discussion about mobility hubs – "Come together"

- In the Tartu session the best part was to listen to Jaanus who explained how they managed to implement the bike rental scheme in Tartu and how much it costs to run such a system. Because mostly urban bike rental schemes are operated by private companies, but Tartu managed to implement a system on their own and it was very valuable information to get an idea of how this was done. Very good information was also to understand what the costs of repair and maintenance for such a system are. In Tallinn we would also like to open a bike rental scheme but right now the political level made the decision that this system should be implemented by a private company not by the municipality. So, it was very interesting to hear Jaanus presentation.
- From Anija municipality it was interesting to hear how the municipality has taken the lead to implement a bike rental system on their own. On one hand it is understandable because in rural areas it is not possible to get private companies running such a system without financial support as it is not a business case outside city centres. But it was very interesting to hear how it was done and what the plans are to further develop the system in the future.
- The mobility hubs presentation was also very interesting for me because in Tallinn we are now doing feasibility studies for our mobility hubs. We are planning to implement 4-5 big mobility hubs because we see that this kind of solutions can help us to develop a more sustainable city transport system. Also, a very important fact is that we are planning to build new tram lines and we see that at the ends of these new lines we need to build mobility hubs to make it possible to change modes of transport and make commuting easier. Due the fact that about 40.000 private cars are coming into the City of Tallinn every day we see that building new mobility hubs at the city borders can help us to reduce the number of private cars that enter the city.

Riga planning region/BEF Latvia

Theme 1 Streets for people – moving space from cars to people. How to get residents and politicians on board.

What kind of arguments/facts/figures were used to convince politicians?

Tartu: It was found that the main arguments to convince politicians were negative impact of traffic and environmental pollution. Also, more people were asking for the cycling possibilities in the city. An interesting fact is that by raising the level of people traveling abroad, people experience good examples of mobility in other cities. When people come home, they demand the same services and infrastructure. For example, people from Tartu asked why we don't have such cycling infrastructure as they have in Copenhagen.

Urban sprawl is also going on in Tartu – new residential areas, more and more people living in relatively close (but not walkable) distance from Tartu centre. Tartu is facing challenges with "through-going" cars. Not only because of that it is necessary to improve the walkability and cyclability in the city to decrease car use.

An important learning from Tartu's experience is that clear aims and approaches lead to higher environmental quality in the city because citizens choose to use mobility services that are fast and comfortable to use – if the infrastructure is optimized for cars, people use cars. If public transport and cycling work well in a city, these modes of transport will be chosen by more and more people.

Data: The access to data was improved through the years – automatic modal split data is available in real time. "Smart" cameras and sensors were implemented and provide commuting data.

Good cyclability requires reducing the number of cars. Parking spaces were reduced in many streets after a reorganisation. The feedback after these kinds of reconstructions was not always positive, but there are still possibilities to park a little bit further away from these areas. The more cycling infrastructure exists, the less cars are entering the city centre.

Altona: A new concept named "silence quarters" was presented by Altona. The aim is to create a framework for areas where noise pollution is reduced with various matters, such as tempo limits, car free zones etc. The idea came up when developing a sustainable energy action and climate plan and incorporate mobility improving solutions.

Berlin: Julia Jarass (DLR) presented a case study that temporarily transformed parking places into community space. As this was a pilot project, the main aim was to gather experiences, how such a transformation could be done, and what kind of arguments can be used, to convince the audience.

How long time & effort it took to prepare necessary data to justify these changes?

Tartu: Mobility data was an important factor to convince the politicians. It took around 10 - 15 years to convince the need for changes.

Altona: The data was gathered initially from the Sustainable energy and climate action plan and afterwards used for the noise related analysis.

Berlin: Data was gathered from resident surveys and individual interviews.

Theme 2 Sharing systems – How to establish them beneficially for the whole society and city.

What kind of supporting mechanism the city ensures, to facilitate share system development.

It was found out that the government of Estonia provides financial support for municipalities to create own development strategies. A part of these strategies is a list of the projects, that

municipalities would like to realize in cooperation with at least 5 other municipalities. There is an extra fund available for the realization of such cooperation projects. This instrument is a good way to encourage the development and implementation of cooperation projects.

One of such cooperation projects was presented by Meeli Kuul from Anija municipality - bike sharing in rural areas. There are 68 bikes in the system and the price to rent a bike is 1 EUR per hour. The main reason why the project was realized was the tourism. The lending spots are located near strategic points – bus, train stations, also touristic spots. 1 employee ensures the maintenance of the bikes and runs the logistics. The budged for the project was 176 077,60 EUR.

Theme 3 Mobility hubs – "Come together": good practices and perspectives

How to develop mobility hubs in areas with already developed infrastructure, how to ensure the cooperation and common vision of mobility hubs among different stakeholders.

It was found out that a common vision of the mobility hub role in the district or neighbourhood is essential to make it functional and well used. A close cooperation between the main stakeholders - developers of the district and the city planners is the only way to ensure the best results of the project realization.

There are two important aspects that need to be considered. First, a common design for mobility hubs in the area. Second, different functions of different mobility hubs. It leads to significant conclusions for the actual design of the mobility hubs, so the best approach is to create mobility hubs based on a modular approach.

During the twinning sessions, the example of Berlin was introduced to the participants. The example was given how to develop mobility hub first and then develop new neighbourhood in cooperation with house developers.

What if there are different mobility hub developers? How to ensure a "common design"?

Depending on the system in the state, its local, regional, and national level stakeholders are the ones who should be responsible to create common design guidelines that are mandatory to use for all mobility hub developers.

General Conclusions:

Accessibility is the key. Many municipalities and cities are facing the same urban sprawl and car-dominating problems but solutions in most cases are quite different. If you want to promote good changes you need to ensure good service and accessibility as much as possible – an easy-usable and comfortable system is a very important driver & behaviour changer. Valuable arguments for the discussion with society (and colleagues as well) are provided by data from your location – if you want to justify changes in the mobility status quo – for which some comparable data about fixed time period can be crucial. Great if the city is willing to invest in smart sensors by itself and can gather the necessary information independently from external companies. If the data availability for the public, it is even better – e.g., when mobility information is made accessible for everybody online.

Communication with all society groups – there will always be someone who is unhappy with changes, therefore it is important to communicate about benefits from changes as well as to show alternatives and prepare people for these changes.

Service level may convince – if you put winter tires to shared bikes, take care of cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, and offer good connectivity (e.g., in the ticketing system) than the reasons to use car are decreasing.

Tartu

In general, changes and new services in mobility are relatively easy for people to accept. Attention must be paid to the ease of use of services and solutions. Whenever possible, it is always worth carrying out pilot projects to get feedback from users and, as a result, design solutions that are also working on a large scale. The most important thing to achieve goals is, in fact, the existence of political will.

Theme 1 – streets for people

More and more various pilot projects are being carried out in cities to transform urban space. The aim is to make urban space more human-friendly and the living environment healthier for people. This is mainly done at the expense of the space previously occupied by cars. The presentations highlighted both long-term trends (Tartu presentation) and various pilot projects. The Altona approach and the project of quiet city streets were interesting, where the main measure was traffic noise. The Berlin pilot project to redesign an intersection was instructive. In both cases, it appeared that with relatively modest resources and measures, excellent results could be achieved in transforming the urban environment. At the same time, several problem areas were pointed out: the preferences of different age groups are different (many older people do not like the noise of playing children), the opposition of interest groups (mainly active car users), etc. At the same time, it was seen that in general, the majority (more than half of the respondents) are positive about changes in the urban environment. One of the most important observations of all these projects is that, despite opposition, such changes in the urban environment do not have a significant negative impact on people's mobility. On the contrary, people are starting to adjust their mobility and find ways to use more sustainable ways of moving on a daily basis.

Theme 2 – sharing systems

Different mobility sharing solutions are already well established in most cities. The most we can talk about here is the distribution of electric scooters and bicycles (bike-sharing schemes). At the same time, more and more service providers are coming in and the younger generation is happy to use sharing instead of owning vehicles. Sharing services are one of the main tools for reducing car use in cities and an alternative to public transport. The introduction of MaaS solutions has not been very successful so far, and there are no effective commercial solutions today. There was an understanding that in the case of MaaS services, the only possible solution is probably if the service is developed by the public sector (local governments, the state). However, it is worth taking the development of the MaaS solution seriously because it allows to solve / address several problems important for cities in a complex way: integration of different information and payment systems, promotion of sustainable modes of transport, data management. A great initiative came from the presentation of Anija's municipality, which presented a solution for sharing bicycles for both locals and tourists. With a relatively small budget, it was possible to offer a bicycle sharing service over a fairly large area. The solution used smart bicycle parking lots, which make it easy to manage the service and collect fees. The success of the pilot project is likely to lead to an extension of the system in the

coming years. In the case of the project, it became clear that in cooperation with different municipalities, it is possible to offer an alternative to a car for people to move quite cheaply. This project combined public transport and bicycle use.

What is very important about such projects and the encouragement to others is that, in practice, people are quite interested and willing to make their mobility habits more sustainable if the services are made comfortable and convenient enough for people.

Theme 3 – mobility hubs

Mobility hubs are an important part of a sustainable transport system, enabling people to combine different modes of transport quickly and conveniently. There is no doubt that mobility hubs are a good way of reducing car use. As with other mobility services, the functionality and ease of use of these hubs are very important. Both in the examples presented in the presentation and in the study of the mobility hubs of different cities, it is reasonable and necessary to integrate both mobility and other support services. For example, parcel machines, etc. mobility hubs combined with the MaaS solution provide even more synergies. It can be seen from various examples that people quickly come up with innovations when the number of services offered is larger. It is also important to pay attention to details, such as the uniform design of such centres.

We do not yet have such conceptual mobility hubs in Tartu, but according to the city's plans, it is planned to build such centres on the city border as well as in the city centre. The presentation provided a number of ideas to keep in mind when designing mobility centres.

Växjö

Reflections from Tartu, presentation and generally from the meeting: Tartu is a city with a size comparable to Växjö. Their track record with mobility projects, both permanent and pilot or temporary, is impressive and the sense is that the city is quite progressive in this area, from a redeveloped city bus network to their bike share program and the start of their bicycle library. In addition, they have already tested closing a street for cars during the summer months and next year a self-driving bus will be tested. This is forward-thinking for a city of its size. Self-driving vehicles are not on the radar of traffic planners in Växjö and the thought of closing additional streets is talked about but rarely implemented in the last six years. As Raimond Tamm said during his talk on the first theme, streets for people, they involve the public in decisions and changes - if you remove car parking spaces, what do you replace them with? What do you give back in exchange?

Theme 1: streets for people

This theme is important for Växjö and relevant for implementing the circulation plan that we are studying as part of the SUMBA+ project. If we reduce car through traffic with street closures, we should also make use of that otherwise unused street space, so residents see it as a positive change and not just something that hinders car drivers. Doing this during the summer months is a good strategy to make it more feasible for politicians and those doubting the effectiveness of such measures. This has been the experience including Tartu, Berlin, and some Swedish cities. During Julia Jarass's presentation, her example from Berlin showed that residents favoured space allocated to green space and benches for sitting and relaxing. Alternative parking spots were seldom used but this could be because of the restrictions on

access to the alternative location. No transport alternatives (for example cargo bikes) were made but in Växjö's case this could be a good use of the bicycle library.

One other interesting result from the survey in Berlin was the negative feedback on the change from car noise to "recreation" noise such as children playing. Is this a common view of those who primarily answered the survey (older residents) or would other residents of different age groups think similarly? Would families complain of increased noise due to child play in the nearby street in Växjö?

Theme 2: sharing systems

The presentation from Anija municipality (Estonia) showed that rental bikes in rural areas can be useful for promoting intermodal travel, especially for recreation use, extending the use of the train for example by providing last mile solution. It is doubtful however how relevant this is for Växjö. The smaller villages are not necessarily destinations in themselves.

During Tallinn's presentation on MAAS (Mobility as a service), one participant said that *MAAS can be an entry to so-called bullshit bingo.* While having a complete MAAS system that offers combined payment for a variety of different mobility services, it is not necessarily an important factor in shifting travel towards more sustainable modes and has become quite a trendy word to use. Discussion with Tallinn showed that while they might have an attractive option from a private actor, it may not be wise to depend on a private application despite cost benefits and a product ready for market today. Two disadvantages with using a private company:

- They have access to travel data that would be sold to other third parties (this is how they finance the application)
- The ticket purchasing system is dependent on the sustainability of the company. If the company is not profitable and is forced to close, it also closes the local ticket purchasing capability.

For these reasons, it was concluded during the discussion that a MAAS system is perhaps best developed in-house by the municipality or transit operator. We in Växjö have considered applying for project funding to study how to implement a MAAS system in our municipality. First, we need to find a way to bring mobility providers to the city and second the transit operator needs to be involved at the regional level, or even better, at the national level, as in Denmark.

Theme 3: mobility hubs

During Benjamin's presentation he mentioned the importance of housing companies working with parking policies in new residential areas. Companies like Gewobag make sharing services available to house owners in the new Waterkant district in Berlin. The company maintains the bikes that are located in a secure garage. Different modules are available depending on the different services that should be available. Additional services like post outlet, package delivery, cash machine, wifi point, water fountain, toolbox etc. Housing companies in Växjö have started to offer carpool services in accordance with detail planning and policy regarding replacement of parking spaces with share services. The scale of this change however is limited to few areas and with few cars. It is important therefore for Växjö municipality to hasten this movement to reach a broader target group beyond a few new housing areas. Research, according to Benjamin from DLR, requires co-financing by the public sector. There are

examples from rural areas in Germany as well as from Bremen which are worth looking into in more detail.

Theme 4: mobility trends in planning

According to Kay from DLR, cities are often unaware of the power they have to regulate the market.

This is true, and something I personally hope we can realize in Växjö, for example making carpool cars available to residents after work times and on weekends. This really shouldn't be a complicated thing to do and shows progressive and forward-thinking initiatives with respect to resource use, share economy and sustainable mobility. It is a win for the municipality and residents by making a public car share system available but has also the opportunity of creating a lower cost system since the cars are partially subsidised by private persons with their use. The municipality could do more to promote sustainable mobility in the same way that we regulate building with wood construction, for example building wooden housing on land with high value because of lake view. On the contrary, the municipality's own p-norm or policy for parking places could hinder developers' own interests for building larger apartments instead of ground parking.

General reflection of the Twinning activity: It was a shame to miss the opportunity to work closely with an individual municipality that faces similar struggles, challenges, and works with perhaps different approaches and measures. The workshop form of the twinning activity that we had in Tartu brought additional information and experiences from other cities and other projects and helped create discussion in the defined themes that were identified by the partner cities and regions. Discussions extended even to the coffee breaks and more one-on-one. In some cases, we left with more questions than answers but this is an indication of a deeper learning in the different themes and issues. And this brings about new ideas for future projects and partnerships.

Conclusion

Apart from the learnings that every partner could take away from the twinning sessions a few general conclusions could be drawn.

In many cases excellent results can be achieved in transforming the urban environment with relatively modest resources and measures (for example pop up bike lanes, tempo limits, car free zones). The most important thing to achieve goals is, in fact, the existence of political support. To convince decision makers it is helpful to have good practice examples from other regions at hand. Also, (traffic) data can help justifying decisions.

To change living environments, it is advisable to establish temporary pilot cases first, see how they work and then collect feedback for adjustments. Many opponents will probably change their mind if they get the opportunity to experience the benefits of the changes themselves. This said, to implement successful measures, it is helpful to stay in constant dialogue with stakeholders and citizens. Even if it is unlikely that everybody will support new ideas it is easier to be successful when being in cooperative relations with people.

The issues municipalities face when they establish climate friendly transport systems and more liveable city centres are relatively similar. This makes exchange amongst municipalities even more important as the experience of others might already have brought up solutions that can be more widely implemented. It is not necessary that every municipality invents the wheel by itself.

Usually, people are only interested to make their mobility habits more sustainable if this brings additional advantages. There are a few key factors people look at which can make them change their car for another means of transport. Some of these are: Time effort, costs, comfort, accessibility, fun, health. Nobody will turn towards alternatives if they are not better than the car in at least some key areas.

In general, it was a shame to miss the opportunity to work closely with other municipality that face similar struggles, challenges and work with perhaps different approaches and measures. But the situation did not allow this, so as an alternative the twinning workshops brought additional information and experiences from other cities and helped create discussion in the defined themes that were identified by the partner cities and regions. Discussions extended even to the coffee breaks and more one-on-one. In some cases, we were left with more questions than answers, but this is an indication of a deeper learning in the different themes and issues and possibly brings about new ideas for future projects and partnerships.