



Grenoble (France) hosted the 1st International Creative Mobilities Forum

Last September 29th, the 1st International Creative Mobilities Forum was launched in Grenoble, France.

« Creative Mobilities » founded by Valeria Marcolin and Hervé Fournier in 2016, aims to promote innovative synergies between culture, creativity, and transports for sustainable development.

In view of the Conference, over than 80 case studies had been identified worldwide, stressing how the arts, culture and creativity can offer users in public transports and mobility strategies meaningful experiences beyond simple entertainment.

Fostering a sense of belonging and ownership to local communities, as well as social inclusion, change and economic innovation based on local resources are some of the findings from the analysis of good practices.

The 2017 pilot edition of the Forum took place under the patronage of the UNESCO French commission and was co-organised by a multi-stakeholder consortium including non-governmental organisations (Culture et Développement, its programme « Territoires Associés » and Terra21) the Public Transport Authority in Grenoble (SMTC), Grenoble City Council and Grenoble Alpes University. In excess of 20 national and international partners supported the initiative, including UCLG and its culture committee, Alda Europe, Europe Asia Foundation, ICOMOS.

« Creative Mobilities » opened with Jeremy Rifin (American economic and social theorist) and Jean Viard (sociologist) as key-note speakers, gathered more than 70 speakers from 16 countries and hosted international delegations from Medellin, Mexico City, Jeju (South Korea), Leewarden (the Netherlands), Quito (Ecuador), Mantova (Italy), Lyon, Strasbourg, Grenoble, Paris (France), amongst others.

The starting position of the Forum, recalled by Valeria Marcolin its Delegate General was that for many problems and challenges we are facing in our communities, societies, companies, simple or complex solutions may have already been found and implemented elsewhere. She continued that international cooperation, cultural diversity and joint efforts for sustainable development are key resources for human-driven innovation. « We wanted to create a shared space for transport authorities, cultural and creative leaders, private companies active in the field of mobility, urban planners to create new visions for the future of our society through innovative partnerships ».

The city of Medellin was in the spotlight for the « France-Colombie » year and since the « Cultura Metro » programme was a source for inspiration for the « Creative Mobilities » initiative. Long time considered as the most dangerous city in the world, the city and its

metropolitan area have been vastly transformed in just 20 years thanks to an integrated approach adopted by the public authorities supported by international cooperation, focusing especially on innovation, education, culture and new mobilities.

The Metrocable of Medellín is "the pride of the people" more than a means of transport; it has taken the poorest out of their isolation and saved a lot of time. A real « Cultura Metro » has been deployed with the dissemination of campaigns focused on behaviors to be followed during displacements.

Beatriz Villa (PhD in sociolinguistics from Medellín), explained how by means of voice messages, posters and resource persons, the standard is reminded. Jean Souchal (President and CEO of the Poma group who built the cable in Medellín), declared "we grew up together through the Metrocable construction experience. The idea was also to prepare people for a cultural shock. To do so, we took for example the challenge of integrating children as a specific audience for educational and cultural activities that would allow them to take ownership of these new transports ».

Vincent Kaufmann (Université de Lausanne, urban sociologist and mobility specialist) stated that « Never before Western societies have faced so much diversity within them ». This multiplicity of behaviours, cultures, lifestyles in itself creates common goals and fosters a feeling of belonging to a same group, society or life style. This is what we call contemporary challenges for all public and private stakeholders.

How mobility can support new societal issues, how we will live together and move in 2050? Through what strategies we can foster community development while working on customisation of services for specific customers and users, avoiding unsustainable solutions? Those were some of the key questions raised by the 1st International Creative Mobilities Forum and its founders.

Yann Mongaburu (President SMTC) declared that the importance of the « Creative Mobilities » is to help transport authorities and mobility stakeholders to think out of the box, as technology is only one part of the solution. The cultural dimension of a territory and the increased need of new imaginaries to be developed through mobility, fostering innovation and cohesion through partnerships with the cultural sector are key elements for the future of public transports.

Since 1960 world population has grown from 3 billion to 7, 6 billion today and if projections are confirmed, population will be in excess of 8 billion by 2024. Today over 50% of world population is urbanized, by 2050 this is expected to reach 70%. Anne Leemans (Yellow design Foundation Secretary General Brussels) and partner of the Creative Mobilities initiative observed that more is not just merrier. « We see the sea levels rise, increased frequency of storm and hurricane weather, urban heat, air pollution, endless traffic jams, the rise of asthmatic diseases, human migrations, which urges that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris climate agreements are applied and the Intended Nationally Defined Commitments are met. In other words that we all think, decide, act, and operate differently now ».

As Jeremy Rifkin (American economic and social theorist) underlined, next to these staggering demographic figures, climate change constrains us to move from fossil to renewable, from analog to digital and from linear to circular economies. It requires us to think and move about differently and engage in mobilities that change our perspective of time, space and our awareness.

The technologies to support us in this endeavour and conditionally allow us to be successful, are readily available. It follows, the choice for technology needs to be contextualised and this involves people. People will adopt or break the solutions provided.

Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi (President UCLG Africa) maintained there is a key cultural dimension of mobility solutions and a reason to partner with the cultural sector as it was done in Medellín, in Nairobi and elsewhere to address the ownership by users of new sustainable mobility solutions.

Today countries and regions that have been early-adopters are thriving. In the remaining cases, too often openness to change has been hampered by old habits, fear of the unknown, vested interests and other considerations that happen between our ears.

Amongst others we urgently need to rework and design our cities putting people/users first, as the Forum main message states.

Considering the importance to shift to soft travel modes, accessibility, interconnectivity and proximity of facilities and services become key priorities. They come with a number of collateral conditions and measures. The route must be secure, attractive, reliable and convenient to all. Not just functional since we know that humans are social and emotional, that urban life is not about bricks and technology – but about people, their habits and attitudes, about people from many different backgrounds and with a wide range of interests, yearnings, skills, competencies, and much more.

Perfectly laid-out urban public space, infrastructure, buildings, offices, stations will either trigger boredom or speak to us depending on how they are programmed, i.e. by the names they are given, the stories they come with or create in our minds, their content, accessibility and recognisability.

The way they are perceived by their users, the interaction between inside (visitors and residents) and outside (passers-by) of buildings, and the balance between spontaneity/room for chaos and pre-defined layout prevent spaces from becoming impersonal non-places and allow them to create confidence and well-being.

This is exactly where culture*, creativity and art come in and where they can “serve” as communication tools to promote integration and cohesion. Not just as “hi, here I am and I want my piece of the cake”, but rather as “hi, here I am and this is what I can do, bring to you and contribute”.

Under this scenario, we stop thinking in silos or operating by fields of expertise and adopt an inclusive and participatory approach and invite cultures/creativity to take up some of the public space. This implies that cities and operators consult citizens prior to the elaboration of the design specs with questions probing new kinds of functions and desiderata. Similar participative approaches engender a good sense of ownership amongst the public.

To allow stations to be more than a physical hub and trams and busses not just people and advertisement carriers but rather integrators of cultures and neighbourhoods that provide a stage for “expressions of creativity” that have come to fruition under the impulse of different neighbourhood stakeholders.

Considering this, and the need to opt for increased integration, inclusiveness and transversality, it seems highly recommendable to integrate culture, art and creativity in urban life and mobility.

To discover existing initiative and to promote UTP member initiatives you can access the « [Creative Mobilities](#) » website and platform for actions.

Those initiatives help integration, increase the sense of ownership and well-being as well as the level of confidence in authorities. Is this not also what urban life is all about?

Edited by

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