

# Project planning vs. strategic planning: Promoting a different perspective for sustainable transport policy in European R&D projects



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## ABSTRACT

The European Commission is heavily engaged in financing R&D projects to support the development of sustainable transport. One of its largest initiatives is CIVITAS, which was launched in 2002 to re-think transport initiatives and policies in order to create cleaner, better transport in cities.

The European Commission has stated that, despite all the efforts, the transport sector is not yet on the path to sustainability. In view of the discrepancy between its programmatic goals and current transport development in Europe, the CIVITAS initiative needs to be scrutinized: is the initiative able to effectively promote the development of sustainable transport? In dealing with this question, the authors draw on more than ten years of active participation in projects of the CIVITAS initiative. Focusing on the MIMOSA project, a cooperation between five European cities in five different countries, the authors show how shortcomings within the organizational framework of the initiative lead to immense transaction costs.

In conclusion, the authors propose a programmatic shift from project planning to a strategic approach and make recommendations concerning the political and administrative structures needed to implement this strategic approach.

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## 1. Introduction

According to the European Commission (EC), the transport sector constitutes one of the most pressing challenges in European policy. Today, transport accounts for around one quarter of EU CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Scenarios developed by the European Commission based on unchanged policy and an annual economic growth rate between 1.2% and 2.2% predict an increase in personal transport of 51% and in freight transport of 82% in the EU in the period 2005–2050 (COM, 2011b). Moreover, the transport sector is the only one in which carbon dioxide emissions are still increasing (EEA, 2015b). Against this background, the most recent White Paper for transport, which reflects on ten years of European transport policy, concludes that, despite the success in establishing an internationally competitive single market, the transport sector is not moving in the direction of sustainable development (COM, 2011a). Should there be no changes in the political circumstances, the EC outlines a rather dramatic scenario:

“If we stick to the business as usual approach, the oil dependence of transport might still be little below 90%, with renewable energy sources only marginally exceeding the 10% target set for 2020. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from transport would remain one third higher than their 1990 level by 2050. Congestion costs will increase by about 50% by 2050. The accessibility gap between central and peripheral areas will widen. The social costs of accidents and noise would continue to increase” (ibid., p. 4).

The recently published *Report on the Implementation of the 2011 White Paper on Transport* confirms this statement and thus recommends that “the list of the initiatives and action points proposed in the White Paper should be adapted and complemented on a regular basis, and evaluated against their effectiveness to reach the overarching long-term objectives” (COM, 2015, p. 30). The principal message is that the European Union still has no planning strategy and has not used its power to formulate a sustainable transport policy. Business as usual is not an option and all past activities have to be reviewed in order to learn from the failure to reach the goal of developing a sustainable transport system, formulated in the White Paper (ibid.). In addition, a fundamental decarbonization of the transport sector will require not just technological solutions but also policies that encourage significant changes in behavior (EEA, 2015a).

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One particular field that the EC is heavily engaged in is financing R&D projects to support the development of sustainable transport. One of its largest initiatives is CIVITAS (CItY-VITality-Sustainability), which was launched in 2002 to rethink transport measures and policies in order to create cleaner, better transport in cities. Over the last ten years, the initiative has provided support for more than 200 cities with EU-funded investments of well over EUR 200 million, and thereby succeeded in examining about 800 measures and urban transport solutions. With regard to the continuation of CIVITAS in the context of the overall research initiative HORIZON 2020, it is time to take a closer look at its impact on the development of sustainable transport and to learn from the experience gained.

The present paper focuses on the CIVITAS project MIMOSA, in which the Technische Universität Berlin played a vital part, and also evaluated the measures. This has provided us with distinct insight into the overall mode of operation and into the corresponding results. The findings will be situated in the context of European transport planning and policy as a fundamental part of market integration. On the basis of a political-economic approach to European integration, the case study MIMOSA will be interpreted in the context of conflicts concerning European transport policy and planning for a competitive and sustainable transport system (Section 2).

In order to ensure a sound interpretation, we will place the CIVITAS project MIMOSA in the theoretical frame of European Policy, Economic Sociology and European Transport Planning (Section 3). In referring to the theoretical insights of European Policy we interpret European integration as a primarily market-driven integration process. The theoretical approach of Economic Sociology reveals the supposedly “natural” market integration to be a social construct, which can be politically shaped. This fundamental insight leads us to understand European Transport Planning as a constant tension between economic competition and political cooperation, which has been pushed forward in favor of the former over the last thirty years, but which can be politically rectified in the direction of positive integration, in favor of more cooperation. With regard to this theoretical background we will discuss the MIMOSA case study, in the process identifying three so-called “traps” (Section 4), before we present three recommendations concerning how to escape the identified traps by setting as a goal a politicization in the field of European transport (Section 5).

## 2. Furthering innovation in mobility and sustainable actions: the case of CIVITAS PLUS MIMOSA

### 2.1. CIVITAS, CIVITAS PLUS and MIMOSA

CIVITAS is an initiative of the European Commission to promote cleaner and better transport in cities. The initiative is designed to assist European cities to achieve a more sustainable, cleaner and more energy-efficient urban transport system, by implementing and evaluating an integrated set of technology and policy-based measures. The CIVITAS Initiative has been carried out in four generations of demonstration projects over the last decade: CIVITAS I, CIVITAS II, CIVITAS PLUS and CIVITAS PLUS II. It started in early 2002 within the 5th Framework Research Program of the European Commission Directorate General for Energy and Transport (DG TREN) and included 19 cities clustered in four projects (MIRACLES, TELLUS, TRENDSETTER and VIVALDI). Following the success of the first phase of the Initiative, CIVITAS II was launched in 2005 to provide support for 17 cities in four additional projects (CARAVEL, MOBILIS, SMILE, SUCCESS), funded by the 6th Research Framework Program. CIVITAS PLUS, funded by the 7th Research Framework Program, began in 2008 and included 25 cities (three of which were part of CIVITAS I or II) in five demonstration projects (ARCHIMEDES, ELAN, MIMOSA, MODERN, RENAISSANCE). The current CIVITAS PLUS II is much more modest in scale: only two projects are being funded (DYN@MO, 2MOVE2), providing support for 8 cities ([www.civitas.eu](http://www.civitas.eu)).

Hence each phase has included several projects, or clusters of demonstration cities with similar interests and areas of emphasis, such as clean fuels, mobility management, etc. To implement the measures concerned, the cities involved formed partnerships with other local stakeholders, both public (e.g. public transport providers, universities) and private (technology vendors, freight logistics companies, and employers, etc.). CIVITAS is thus centered on municipalities, but strongly encourages the integration of other public and private parties and therefore offers co-financing to these as well. Since the inception of CIVITAS more than ten years ago, the basic structure and key elements have remained the same. The four key elements of CIVITAS are:

- CIVITAS is coordinated by cities: it is a program “of cities for cities”
- Cities are at the heart of local public-private partnerships
- Political commitment is a basic requirement
- Cities are living “laboratories” for learning and evaluating

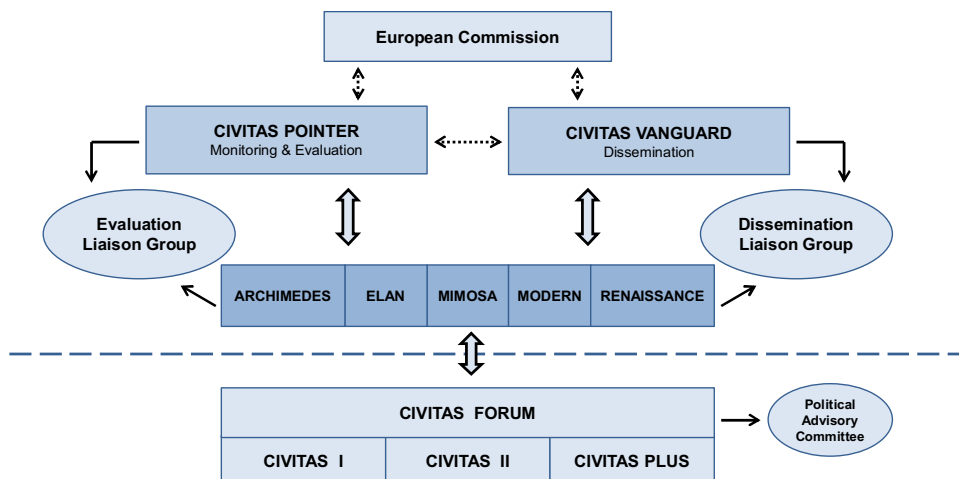


Fig. 1. Organizational Structure of CIVITAS PLUS.

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