

A PARKING TRANSITION

WRITTEN BY
NIKLAS SCHMALHOLZ
IVO CRÉ

Cities must navigate the complexity of parking policy, as it is an often-heated debate between opposing positions.

On one side, many motorists have the inherent feeling that 'left-wing liberals are taking away their parking space'. On the other, policymakers and active mobility activists see parked cars as a 'wall of metal that encloses most streets'. As always, the reality lies in between.

The solution could be rather simple: if inner-city parking space is limited, fewer cars can access the area. Does this plain assumption always apply and how can cities achieve this transition without restraining the mobility of citizens? What is the current state of play concerning (integrated) parking management?

The EU-funded Park4SUMP project and several POLIS Network members provide some smart answers.

Car-dependent cities – counteracting an 80-year-long love affair

Most European cities that were rebuilt in the post-war period focused on car-centric transport planning – a significant decision that still bears consequences. Car-oriented policies, lack of investment in public transport and lenient parking policies incentivised car use and increased parking spaces. Taking a quick look at some large cities in Europe, one can clearly see that parking has a significant impact on the use of public space, as well as pollution and traffic congestion.

Berlin serves as a great example of the significant impact that cars exert on the urban fabric. All privately owned parked cars in Berlin are taking up an area of 17 square kilometres, or more than 1,500 football fields, which amounts to 13% of the entire street space of the German capital.

When parking space is distributed unevenly, search traffic is increasing significantly. For example, inhabitants of Frankfurt search 41 hours per year for a parking spot, while Londoners spend an eye-watering 67 hours per year, or around a quarter of an hour per workday. Additional externalities cost the average Londoner a staggering £1,104 in wasted time, fuel, and emissions.



How can EU-funded projects like 'Park4SUMP' promote a transition towards sustainable parking?

The CIVITAS Park4SUMP project, which supported 16 cities from across Europe in their endeavour to change their parking management strategies, is the only EU-funded project that solely focuses on the topic of parking management. Thanks to a diverse group of selected cities, Park4SUMP has a holistic approach, which includes all stages for parking management, ranging from cities without a coherent strategy, like Shkodër (AL) to very advanced cities such as Rotterdam (NL), which already implemented digital parking enforcement strategies.

Such diversity helps to find universally applicable best practices based on the strategic parking management adaption of more than a dozen cities. Thus, Park4SUMP drew several conclusions and encourages messages to support cities in their effort to reform parking management:

- Parking management is not political self-destruction.

Parking management does not necessarily lead to strong political tensions – that is, if the management strategies are fair, transparent, and effective in improving the city's parking situation and quality of life.

- Slow and steady progress are already sufficient.

First, low-key restrictions can be introduced. Measures can be tightened in a second step, once public acceptance of the restrictions is achieved.

The Park4SUMP Consortium

Niklas Schmalholz

The Park4SUMP project created several brochures that provide guidelines and arguments for a parking management strategy which is integrated into a wider SUMP.

Read now:

'Good reasons and principles for parking management'



'Enforcement, as a key to a successful parking strategy'



An organised street in Krakow (PL) after on-street parking management was restructured
City of Krakow

What are the innovative aspects of parking policies among Park4SUMP partner cities?

Besides the measure of reducing the overall number of on-street parking spots, several POLIS members have developed parking strategies related to the aspects of digitisation, shared mobility, and space management. For example, POLIS member Rotterdam (NL) invested in new enforcement technologies for on-street parking.

This new technology is a passenger vehicle equipped with sensor technology that can identify the location of the parked car and recognise its number plate, while simultaneously verifying the data with several databases for geographical data and parking regulations. Eight of these so-called scan cars are operating on the streets of Rotterdam.

The scanning process significantly increases the enforcement efficiency, since only those vehicles which potentially infringe parking regulations need to be manually checked.

The long-term plan is to perform these enforcement checks remotely from the office, which would increase the efficiency by another 30%. The impacts of the increased checks are visible, as the number of car users with a valid parking ticket rose from 60% in 2015 to 87% in 2018.

The German city of Freiburg is taking another approach with the introduction of legislation on zoning and parking standards.

A parking maximum for new residential developments was set, which shifts car parking to the outskirts of the development area while establishing minimum standards for bicycle parking within the area. In two new districts, car sharing, bicycle rental, and cargo bikes are being integrated into the parking offer.

These opportunities are used by the city to test the new parking management framework, as Dr Peter Schick, Project Coordinator for the City of Freiburg, concludes 'We now have an opportunity to experiment with new parking strategies in these new development areas'.



Properly structured on-street parking can free up a lot of space

De Visu / Shutterstock

The scan-car is a new and efficient digital enforcement solution in Rotterdam (NL)

Martina Hertel / Difu

