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ABSTRACT

The aim of this document is to examine the theory of policy transfer and its application to the implementation of Local Travel Plan Networks across the European Union.

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Executive Summary

Policy transfer relates to a process where knowledge relating to policy, administrative arrangements, and institutions present in one geographical location or period of time is utilised in order to develop policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in another geographical location or period of time. The issues surrounding policy transfer are all important when considering the implementation of Local Travel Plan Networks (LTPN's) and their adoption throughout the European Union. Any relatively new initiative such as LTPN's involves elements of uncertainty and as such policy transfer makes for an attractive proposition not least since drawing lessons from other locations can clearly result in resource and time savings.

Public transfer can take a number of different forms ranging from direct copying through to inspiration, where the problems encountered in a particular location stimulate new ideas in the country or location undertaking the adopting. In terms of LTPN's it is possible that emulation/hybridization are likely' whether it comes about through site visits, word of mouth, information leaned from the use of a website, exposure through articles or through distance learning course materials. Policy transfer can be either voluntary or coercive. Voluntary transfer refers to a situation where there is an element of dissatisfaction with respect to a particular problem. The need for a reduction in energy consumption could fit this situation. Coercive transfer however involves policy transfer directly imposed from one situation/location to another. The objectives of transfer include: policy goals, structure and content, policy instruments, institutions, ideology, ideas, attitudes and concepts and negative issues. With respect to LTPN's general policy ideas and specific policy instruments are transferred. Lessons learnt can be negative as well as positive and a policy which finds favour in one locality may not automatically be transferable to another locality. In saying this negative lessons learnt are all important in undertaking the process of policy transfer.

In terms of policy transfer the role of a policy champion is central, someone/or group able to drive the policy transfer initiative. It must however be recognised that the severity of the problem may not be perceived as being bad enough to merit the development of a particular policy initiative and thus timing is therefore crucial in any policy transfer success.

Based on Stead et al (2009) the success of policy transfer can be summarised as:

- Drawing on a number of sources is better than a single example;
- Copying is unlikely to succeed;
- Local champions are required;
- Policy transfer should be easier between countries that are culturally similar;
- Programmes have to be incorporated into the institutional framework;
- Timing is all important.

Various actors can be identified with respect to policy transfer, namely: elected officials, political parties, bureaucrats/civil servants, pressure groups, policy entrepreneurs/experts and supra-national institutions. Catching the vision is all important, vision as to *why* LTPN's are being considered, *what* they hope to achieve



and *how* they can be successfully implemented. In the case of LTPN's then site visits have an important role to play in this regard.

1. Introduction

Understanding the nature of policy transfer is all important when considering the issues surrounding the implementation of LTPN's throughout the EU. Clearly, locations considering LTPN's can glean knowledge and an understanding of processes, implementation issues and potential pitfalls from localities that have already implemented such a measure. Policy transfer theory can be useful to help us understand how LTPNs might be implemented in different settings, and how we can learn from experiences (both positive and negative) elsewhere.

One of the earliest and most commonly cited definitions of policy transfer comes from Dolowitz and Marsh (1996), who define it as:

“a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions etc in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in another time and/or place”

Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) state that:

“... over the past decade or so, as technological advances have made it easier and faster for policy-makers to communicate with each other, the occurrences of policy transfer have increased”.

Randma-Liiv (2005) suggests that:

“Isolation is impossible in the contemporary world, and policy transfer has become a fact of everyday life in various countries”.

Most of the previous studies pertaining to policy transfer, according to Stead et al (2009) have tended to focus on highly developed countries, with little explicit reference to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Policy transfer can however be seen as a relatively easy, quick and indeed attractive option for CEE countries (Tavits 2003).

There are a number of reasons put forward for taking on-board policy transfer. As stated by Stead et al (2009) the uncertainty which surrounds the whole area of policy which makes policy transfer an attractive option. It can be seen as a solution which avoids the necessity of reinventing the wheel.

It is clear that every country faces problems of one kind or another and the demand for transport use and its associated energy, congestion and pollution issues are no exception. However, as stated by Rose (1991)



“Every county has problems, and each thinks that its problems are unique to its place and time...However problems that are unique to one country... are abnormal ... Confronted with a common problem, policymakers in cities, regional governments and nations can learn from how their counterparts elsewhere respond. More than that, it raises the possibility that policymakers can draw lessons that will help them deal better with their own problems.”

Clearly looking to other localities who have implemented a particular programme/s is likely to result in savings both in terms of resources and time.

Overall, it would appear that little is known with respect to how policy transfer takes place at the local level, especially in the transport sector and/or in CEE countries (Stead et al 2008). In terms of this review of policy transfer section 2 provides details of the types of policy transfer, section 3 covers the reasons for involvement in policy transfer, section 4 with what is transferred, the actors involved in section 5, the need for vision in section 6 and the potential limitations of policy transfer in section 7.

2. Type of Policy Transfer

There are different degrees of transfer, ranging from direct copying at one end of the scale through to inspiration at the other. Emulation and adaptation fit somewhere in between these two points (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000). These four types of transfer are defined by Rose (1993) as follows:

- *Copying* involves the adoption of a programme from another locality in its entirety;
- *Emulation* involves a rejection of copying but suggests that a country accepts that a programme in another locality provides a standard which can be used when developing a particular programme;
- *Hybridization* and *synthesis* refer to a situation where elements of various programmes are combined so as to create a programme that more adequately meets the needs of the adopting country; and
- *Inspiration* – exposure to common problems in another environment stimulates new ideas in the adopting country.

With respect to the EU and LTPN's then it can be envisaged that each of the above are likely to find favour over some period of time. Clearly the specific sites selected, the type of activity undertaken on the site, the institutional framework, the stakeholders involved, the social and economic environment within member states of the EU and time scales will be all important and for this reason it is unlikely that pure copying will be undertaken.

Emulation and hybridization are more likely, as is inspiration whether it be via site visits, word of mouth, the use of the website, exposure through articles published in the area or through taking part in the distance learning course material.



In fact, it could actually be the case that step-wise improvements or incremental change are the way to implement programmes. This could be the way forward for programmes which can prove problematic with respect to public and political acceptance (see Ison 2004).

3. Reasons for involvement in policy transfer

Policy transfer can either be voluntary or coerced, namely exogenously-driven (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000).

Voluntary transfer relates to a situation where there would appear to be some dissatisfaction with the current situation policy makers find themselves in or a problem which needs to be addressed. The need for a reduction in energy consumption fits this situation perfectly. In saying this however it is an issue that may require government involvement, whether local or central, since organisations/groups of organisations are unlikely to instigate change with respect to LTPN's in a voluntary manner – unless they are experiencing other problems, be it site congestion, constrained site location or health related environmental issues. In such a situation there is a need to search for lessons. In terms of voluntary transfer the reason for the search relates to policy failure. As stated by Dolowitz and Marsh (1996):

“Uncertainty about the cause of problems, the effects of previous decisions or the future causes actors to search for policies they can borrow”.

Coercive transfer relates to a situation in which one government forces another to adopt a policy. Policy transfer directly imposed by one country on another is unlikely and it is certainly not likely to occur in terms of LTPN's. On the other hand you could envisage a situation where indirect coercive transfer may take place, particularly where there is interdependence, working to solve common problems, such as externalities (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996). It is fair to say that energy demand and supply is likely to become more of an issue over time and as such the desire for coercive transfer is likely to grow. In fact governments who are unable to deal with particular problems may in fact turn to each other for ideas and also precedents.



4. What is transferred and how?

Dolowitz and Marsh (1996) identify seven objects of transfer namely:

- Policy goals
- Structure and content
- Policy instruments or administrative techniques
- Institutions
- Ideology
- Ideas, attitudes and concepts
- Negative lessons

In terms of LTPN's the intention is that the general policy idea and specific policy instruments are transferred. Clearly the design and structure are likely to vary from location to location, based on the specific implementation site chosen.

Clearly the lessons learned can be negative as well as positive and as such a policy which finds favour in one particular locality may not automatically be transferable to another space. For example, the author considered the lessons that could be learnt from Hong Kong, Cambridge and Central London in terms of the implementation of Road User Charging with trial schemes in Hong Kong and Cambridge failing to be implemented. Issues were raised in terms of the role of a policy champion, public support given the severity of the problem to be addressed, timing, clarity of objective/s and clear presentation (Ison and Rye 2005). These are all issues which require attention with respect to LTPN's. A particular locality may favour a particular course of action with respect to LTPN's, however without a policy champion/policy entrepreneur, someone to drive the initiative then policy transfer may not 'find root' and develop. The role of actors is an area which will be returned to in the following section. The severity of the problem may not be perceived as being bad enough to warrant the development of a particular policy initiative. The problem may be seen as 'bad' but not 'bad enough'. In this respect it is most likely that congestion or even health related environmental issues are seen as being more serious than are energy supply issues and as such, these may well be the types of issues worthy of consideration when selling the concept of LTPN's. In terms of energy then not until individuals experience significant difficulties in accessing energy supplies will they realise the problem as being severe enough and actions required. It would appear to be the case that preventative action rarely takes place prior to the problem arising (Stead et al 2008) or the realisation that a problem exists. This is perhaps an over exaggeration but it serves to indicate that it is important to sell the concept of LTPN's or indeed any other policy initiative very carefully. This raises the issue of clarity of objectives. In terms of policy transfer then the recipient location has to be very clear as to what the objective of the exercise is. A lack of clarity in this area can result in a failure to enact policy transfer. Policy makers and advisors need to be aware of this issue.

A related issue to the role of a policy champion, severity of the problem and clarity of objectives is timing. Failure to carefully consider timing of policy transfer can result in a



failure to successfully implement the policy initiative. In terms of research undertaken by the author with respect to road user charging *timing* has been seen as a major factor in successful implementation (see Ison and Rye 2005). For example, Hau (1990) identified timing as being one of the reasons why Electronic Road Pricing was not implemented in Hong Kong. The new Mass Transit Rail infrastructure development came on stream and this coupled with a downturn in economic activity resulted in an improvement in the level of congestion and as such the severity of the problem had dissipated somewhat. Timing is a vital ingredient in terms of any policy initiative and as such is an important ingredient in terms of the implementation of LTPN's. Overall, all this requires clear presentation and central to this is the dissemination phase of Travel Planplus.

Reinforcing the importance of a policy champion, timing and severity of the problem. The following based on Stead et al (2009) is that according to the literature the success of policy transfer can be summarised as follows:

- In terms of inspiration examples drawn upon from a number of sources is better than a single example. Clearly in terms of the LTPN's the implementation sites are likely to provide just those examples.
- Simply copying a programme is unlikely to succeed. The success of any programme is likely to be context specific. This is something that is implementation of LTPN's needs to be very much aware of.
- Local champions and policy entrepreneurs are required in order to achieve a change in policy. In this respect then the role of the LTPN advisory panel and policy champions, those with vision, able to sell the concept to a wider audience have a pivotal role to play.
- Policy transfer should be easier between countries that are culturally and legally similar. Though it is appreciated that the four LTPN implementation sites are socially, legally and politically very different, this can act as a strength for while as stated, copying is unlikely, there will be aspects of each scheme which will be of relevance to other localities contemplating such an initiative.
- Programmes have to be incorporated into the institutional framework which exists in the country seeking to take advantage of policy transfer.
- Timing is all important in terms of policy transfer. Here Stead et al suggest that the opportunity for change is likely to increase if there is perceived to be either a crisis or emergency. Organisations and key individuals are likely to be more receptive to change in such periods, seeking out innovative programmes which can be transferred to their own situation.

Rose (1993) identifies six *hypotheses* relating to transferability (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996) suggesting that it is more likely if there:

- is a single goal to the programme;
- is a simple problem which needs solving;
- is a direct relationship between the *problem* and the *solution*;
- are seen to be fewer perceived side-effects;



- is more information available as to the operation of the programme;
- are outcomes which are easily predicted.

These points are all important in terms of the successful implementation of LTPNs throughout the EU and need to be carefully considered by the various implementation sites. In more detail:

- There is the requirement for a single goal which is clearly articulated, namely the vision that LTPN's can be delivered in order to achieve reductions in transport energy use.
- There is a simple problem of car use for accessing work sites which requires addressing if there is to be a reduction in transport energy use.
- The problem and solution are inextricably linked.
- There may well be side effects but LTPN's are simple/straight forward in concept/structure, such that the side-effects are likely to be much smaller than TDM programmes such as a road user charging strategy.
- Programmes such as road user charging are information hungry whereas LTPN's being relatively simple in construct require far less information which is clearly advantageous when contemplating transferability. In addition, it is intended that the implementation sites act as a catalyst for change.
- Predicting outcomes on a Network basis is relatively easier when compared to other programmes designed to bring about mode shift and in particular reductions in car use.

In saying all this previous policy will impact on those attempting to bring about change. Change will also be affected by the political system, resources available for implementation and the country's technical capabilities. As stated however LTPN's are likely to be less resource intensive than other programmes.

Looking at the potential transferability of different dimensions of policy, the OECD report on Best Practices in Local Development (OECD, 2001) identifies the extent to which various dimensions might be transferred (Figure 1). At one end of the spectrum are ideas, principles and philosophies which have low visibility (since they can be difficult for the outside to fully understand and specify) and may be difficult to transfer because it can be difficult for others to make them relevant to their own situation (although this is not always the case). At the other end of the spectrum are programmes, institutions, modes of organisation and practitioners which tend to have high visibility and are relatively easy to understand but are not very transferable since they tend to be specific to particular areas or contexts. According to the OECD report, it is components such as methods, techniques, know-how and operating rules, with medium visibility, that make the most sense to exchange or transfer. The report also highlights the need to examine who is involved in the process of transfer in order to gauge transferability (directly related to section 5 below).

Figure 1. Components of development practices and their transfer potential (source: OECD, 2001)

Visibility	Component for exchange	Transferability
Low	Ideas Principles for action Philosophy	Low
Medium	Methods Techniques Know-how Operating rules	High
High	Programmes Institutions Modes of organisation Practitioners Joint projects	Low

5. Actors involved in policy transfer

According to Dolowitz and Marsh (1996) six categories of actor can be identified with respect to policy transfer namely: elected officials, political parties, bureaucrats/civil servants [a group which could equate to local transport officials in the UK], pressure groups, policy entrepreneurs/experts (a group which is very much central to the success of Travel Planplus) and supra-national institutions.

With respect to policy entrepreneurs/experts Rose (1993) highlights that in terms of lesson drawing they are not only important in terms of their advocacy of lessons but because they are concerned with a particular subject area or problem. This concern leads them to develop a national or indeed international network of contacts that are vital in terms of stimulating new ideas in relation to specific programmes.

Ison (2005) is very much aware of this in terms of congestion charging and the role of the then Mayor of London Ken Livingstone. He included the concept of congestion charging in his electoral manifesto and when elected he subsequently revealed strong political will and leadership in bringing about the successful implementation of congestion charging.

Forward-looking leadership among officials can ensure that initiatives are not disrupted when there is a change of political persuasion (Stead et al 2009).

Even more specific Stead et al (2008) states that:

“The existence of a small, tight network of participating actors is ... extremely important: some of these act as talented and motivated champions (in the form of change agents or policy entrepreneurs), while others contribute their personal networks”.



Political actors may have an important role to play since they may urge their own government to adopt or consider a particular policy if they see it working in another country/setting or in fact they perceive their own country as falling behind with respect to certain policy initiatives. Care must be taken however in order to “avoid imposing their views or setting the agenda, even if they find it hard to suppress this urge” (Stead et al 2008).

Politicians may seek out solutions that are ‘quick-fix’ and thus by definition based on either copying or emulating, whereas bureaucrats are likely to be more interested in a mixed approach (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000).

In terms of the actors it is in fact the case that policy makers are increasingly seeking the advice of transport consultants as ‘policy experts’ in developing new programmes and policies, not least since they often base their advice on best practice obtained from elsewhere (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000). There is clearly a role for such experts in terms of LTPN’s.

In addition to existing actors it is the belief that policy transfer ‘brings new actors and ideas into the decision making, expanding the number of actors involved in the policy process. This is very much a central tenet of Travel Planplus attracting policy shapers, makers, implementers, through tools including a website, reports, journal articles and a distance learning short course.

6. Catching the vision

Catching the vision is all important in terms of policy transfer and the implementation of LTPN’s is no exception. There has to be an awareness of the benefits that can be derived from bringing about a mode shift and change in travel behaviour, be it for reasons of addressing congestion, environmental degradation or for reducing energy consumption.

An awareness from the outset is vital (Stead et al 2009), and vision as to *why* LTPN’s are being considered, *what* they hope to achieve and *how* they can be successfully implemented. In the case of LTPN’s then site visits are all important in this regard.

As stated by Stead et al (2009):

“site visits help to create both ideas and inspiration about what alternatives can look like and how they might work in practice. Site visits ... can help to develop confidence and reassurance that certain policies or actions can also work”.



7. Limitations to policy transfer

Stead et al (2009) detail an interesting case study in which support was given to Wroclaw by the German Federal Environment Agency in terms of improving the links between various regional public transport operators. The transfer of policy however was deemed to be unworkable since:

- funding streams were not available; and
- the legal framework differed, with a administrative complexity requiring lengthy consultation/coordination.

If the legal framework is not conducive to policy transfer then it might well be worth simply focusing on short-term measures which are achievable rather than longer term institutional issues, which may or may not result in a successful outcome (Stead et al 2009).

In addition, it may well be the case that local planners may lack flexibility or room for manoeuvre in terms of championing or indeed implementing a particular policy initiative. There are many reasons why this might be the case, be it a lack of political will or differences of emphasis with respect to the local actors. For example, long term more high profile capital intensive projects may be favoured over shorter time cheaper organisationally specific programmes. Overall the pragmatic approach would appear to be the most sensible in terms of policy transfer.

It is important to state that programmes which are successfully operating in one locality may not be successfully transferred to another locality. As stated by Stead et al (2009):

“What works in one situation does not necessarily work in another: context is crucial. Policy transfer requires the right combination of individuals, ideas, incentives and interests, and the time has to be right”.

In saying this there are still lessons that can be learnt even though implementation that has not been achieved. For example see Ison and Rye (2005) for details pertaining to the implementation of road user charging. Lessons can be learnt from schemes that have failed to be implemented.



The transfer of policy can be constrained by a number of factors, not least in terms of how complex the programme is. This is something that will need to be guarded against in terms of LTPNs since the more complex a Network is developed then the harder it will be for the transfer of the concept from one locality to another and one country to another.

What is clear is that policy transfer requires the right individuals (including policy champions) in sufficient number, with adequate resources, a collective vision (in that there needs to be a common awareness of the problem), an incentive to want to see change and above all the right timing. In terms of common awareness then first hand experience of the problem faced can be advantageous, and that experience over a period of time.

Finally, as stated by Stead et al (2009):

“Donor organisations ... should avoid imposing their views or setting the agenda”.

This is certainly the case in terms of the implementation of LTPNs and as such there is a need for flexibility.

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