West-east policy transfer: the case of urban transport policy[1]

Dominic Stead, Martin de Jong and Iveta Reinholde

Abstract

European policies on urban transport policy attach great importance to the role of best practices in promoting urban sustainability. The underlying assumption appears to be that best practices are equally applicable and effective in other parts of Europe. However, the current size of the European Union and the diversity of member states, especially since the accession of 12 new member states since 2004, draw this assumption into question. There are after all substantial differences in governance, administrative cultures and professional capacities across the 27 member states of the European Union. To date, research in the field has neither fully nor satisfactorily explored the issue of transferability of best practices, especially from west to east Europe (i.e. from 'old' to 'new' member states).

What is already known about the transfer of policy models, concepts, ideas, goals and instruments from west to east Europe is that drawing lessons from the west has often been seen by countries in central and eastern Europe as a way of catching up politically and economically (Rose, 1993). The uncertainties of policy making in some of these countries have made policy transfer a particularly attractive option, as politicians see it as the quickest solution to many problems without having to reinvent the wheel (Rose, 2005; Tavits, 2003). However, the technological, economic, political and social situations in the 'lending' and 'borrowing' countries are often very different. So too are the institutional frameworks. As a consequence, the transfer process is far from straight-forward and certainly not just a matter of copying or emulation.

The paper employs a case study approach to examine two closely related projects (funded by the German government) that both sought to transpose policy concepts between west and east Europe. Both projects focused on transferring the underlying concepts and principles behind German public transport executives (*Verkehrsverbünde*) as a way of promoting public transport and improving environmental quality in two cities in new member states of the European Union: Riga in Latvia and Wroclaw in Poland. In both cases, The paper draws on policy transfer theory to help explain the transferability of policy models, concepts, ideas, goals and instruments between west and east Europe, and to help evaluate the factors of success and failure in the specific cases of Riga and Wroclaw.

1. Introduction

Isolation is impossible in the contemporary world, and policy transfer has become a fact of everyday life in various countries… post-communist countries have been especially willing to emulate the West. (Randma-Liiv, 2005: 472)

Various examples can be found where countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)[2] are seeking to catch up politically and economically by drawing lessons from policies in more developed countries (Rose, 1993). The uncertainties of policy-making in some of these countries have made policy transfer a particularly attractive option: politicians often see transfer as the quickest solution to many problems without having to reinvent the wheel (Rose, 2005; Tavits, 2003). This chapter focuses on international policy-transfer, focusing specifically on two examples where there have been attempts to transfer sustainable urban transport concepts from western Europe to CEE countries. In the two cases examined here, attempts were made to establish German-style public transport executives (*Verkehrsverbunde)* to Riga in Latvia and Wroclaw in Poland. In these cases, the social and economic situations in the 'borrowing' and 'lending' countries are very different. So too are the institutional frameworks. As a consequence, the policy transfer process is much more complex than mere copying or emulation.

The subject of transferring policy ideas, institutions, models and programmes between national, regional and local authorities has received a significant amount of attention in politics and policy sciences over recent years under various names, including terms such as policy transfer, policy convergence, legal transplantation, institutional transplantation,

institutional transfer, institutional change, imitation and emulation, policy learning and lesson drawing (see for example Bennett, 1991; de Jong et al, 2002; de Jong, 2004; Dolowitz, 1999; Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996; Evans, 2004; Evans & Davies, 1999; Greener, 2002; Héritier et al, 2001; Holm-Hansen, 2005; Jacoby, 2000; James & Lodge, 2003; Knill, 2001; Ladi, 2005; Radaelli, 2004; Rogers, 1995; Rose, 1991, 1993 & 2005; Stone, 1999 & 2004; Wolman, 1992). Various definitions of policy transfer and its related concepts exist. Dolowitz & Marsh (1996) for example define policy transfer 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' (p344).

Policy transfer can involve a number of processes and can focus around a number of possible objects of transfer including policies, institutions, ideologies or justifications, attitudes and ideas, and negative lessons. Transfer can take place across time, within countries and across countries (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). There are different degrees of transfer: ranging from pure copying of policy, legislation or techniques through to emulation, synthesis and hybridisation or, in its most simple form, inspiration and ideas (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). Policy transfer can be either voluntary (endogenously-driven) or coerced (exogenously-driven) (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). Holm-Hansen (2005) suggests that most real examples of policy transfer lie in a continuum somewhere between these two extreme points. Related to this, policy transfer can also be demand-led or supply-led. According to Randma-Liiv (2005), demand-based policy is based on the initiative and acknowledged need of a recipient administration, whilst supply-led policy transfer is based on the initiative of the donor and the donor's perception of the needs of the recipient (e.g. foreign aid initiatives).

Most previous studies of policy transfer have focused on highly developed countries (e.g. Bennett, 1991 & 1997; Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996 & 2000; Majone, 1991; Robertson, 1991; Rose, 1993 & 2005; Stone, 1999; Wolman, 1992; Wolman & Page, 2002). Of the theoretical works on the topic, only Rose (1993) makes explicit reference to the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, citing these as examples of nations seeking to catch up politically and economically by drawing lessons from highly developed countries (Randma-Liiv, 2005). According to Randma-Liiv (2005), supply-based policy transfer was more predominant in the early 1990s at the start of transition in many CEE countries whereas by the late 1990s, borrowers became more proactive in policy transfer activities. At the beginning of the 1990s,

both politicians and senior civil servants in most CEE countries lacked not only the know-how about how to build up governmental structures but also an understanding of the very basic functions of an independent democratic state. The role of foreign expertise in this regard was twofold: it helped decision-makers acquire a grasp of the basics of governmental structures, their functions and the fields of state intervention, and it also contributed to the analysis of specific fields or policies. In a situation mainly characterised by a lack of policy-making skills combined with poor competence levels on the part of public servants, it was easier to copy or emulate a foreign program than to start from scratch. In this way, policy transfer provided a means of avoiding newcomer costs: using the experience of other countries was cheaper because they had already borne the costs of policy planning and analysis, whereas creating original policies required substantial financial resources.

Various common messages regarding the success factors of policy transfer can be synthesised from the literature on policy transfer and closely related concepts. A number of these messages (mainly derived from de Jong et al, 2002), are briefly summarised below and form a general analytical framework for examining the policy transfer processes in two case studies:

1. Inspiration from several examples is better than from just one. Looking across several examples can help to identify the useful and constructive elements of each of them and allow the various policy actors to enter into a process of negotiation regarding appropriate policy options.
2. Making a literal copy of one example is unlikely to succeed. Such an approach is not generally conducive to generating locally suitable solutions or implementation mechanisms.
3. Strong domestic champions and change agents (or ‘policy entrepreneurs’) are often necessary to achieve policy change. Their creativity and agility in dealing with other (sometimes more powerful) policy actors can make a big difference to policy outcomes.
4. Transferring policies from legally and culturally kindred nations should in principle be easier to achieve than from countries that are very different. However, even similar countries have subtly different preferences, circumstances and institutional arrangements, which are often not well anticipated.
5. Policy ideas, solutions, models, programmes or instruments invariably have to be incorporated in the existing institutional structure of the recipient constituency. Adopting generic ideas or instruments provides leeway for making refinements that are appropriate to the formal and informal institutional environment.

6. Ideas, interests, institutions, individuals are all crucial to policy change but so too is timing.[3] Windows of opportunity for policy change are only open at certain times. The opportunity for changes in policy or institutional arrangements can increase in periods of crisis or emergency.

2. CEE Policy Context

The last decade and a half has been characterized by profound and ongoing political and economic changes in CEE countries which have had significant implications for urban transport policy (Lijewski, 1996; Pucher & Buehler, 2005; World Bank, 2002). There have for example been substantial shifts in transport modes (decreases in rail transport, rapid increases in car ownership and use), transport flows (more flows to and from Western Europe), passenger travel patterns (more international travel, less subsidized commuting), the types of goods transported (fewer raw materials, more consumer goods) and the organisation of transport companies (decrease of the state sector, emergence of the private sector). Even before the events of 1989 (the 'Autumn of Nations'), various political and economic changes had already started across many CEE countries: trade and prices were being liberalised, public expenditure was being cut, protectionism for public-sector enterprises was being dismantled, the government's role in the economy was being scaled down and the privatization of the state companies was starting to take place (World Bank, 2002). The events of 1989 very much accelerated these processes.

Since the late 1980s, CEE countries have moved towards decentralization of decision-making, albeit with large variations in the scope and depth of the transfer of power and resources from the state to the regional and local level (World Bank, 2002). In fast-reforming CEE countries such as Poland, city governments were given the jurisdiction over the provision of most local infrastructure and services, the ownership of the local utility enterprises, and the ownership of housing and certain road infrastructure. This development meant that local matters were put into the hands of the local leaders but had the drawback that there was a mismatch between the local governments' new responsibilities and the funds immediately available. Cities were given the unenviable task of increasing previously very low user fees for various municipal services and infrastructure on a population whose real incomes had fallen, and/or increasing local taxation on the damaged and fragile local economy. The alternative was to cut services at the same time that the new electoral democracy made local politicians dependent on their

voters' satisfaction. Most cities failed to solve this dilemma. This resulted in a gap between costs and revenues for companies providing various municipal services. Over time, under-spending led to poorer services, lower efficiency of production and a decline in equipment and infrastructure. The sudden gap between the total revenue and the aggregate expenditure responsibility was very difficult to fill even in the richest cities of this region such as Budapest, Prague and Warsaw, and services faltered.

Up to the end of the 1980s, public transport services in CEE were generally extensive, frequent and cheap (Pucher & Buehler, 2005). Low incomes meant that public transport use was high and car ownership was low. Regulated prices and supply of cars and fuel in most CEE countries ensured that private car ownership and use was extremely expensive and difficult. Consequently, most people simply could not afford cars, and certainly not to use them on a regular basis. Urban transport service providers up to the end of the 1980s were typically state-owned or city-owned enterprises, organized by vehicle type (e.g. bus, tram, metro) or united into a single company with a monopoly on intra-urban travel. Almost all had a range of structural problems, as was the case in most state-controlled sectors: unwieldy management and organizational structures, overstaffing (especially in the administrative departments), incompetence, lack of a motivated workforce, excessive bureaucracy and extreme inefficiency (Pucher & Buehler, 2005; World Bank, 2002).

In the 1990s, the public transport system in CEE was in deep decline as a consequence of a wave of macro-economic reforms and economic recession. Much of the transport rolling stock was worn out and out of date, and levels of fuel consumption and pollution emissions from most vehicles were very high (Güller, 1996; Judge, 2002; Suchorzewski, 2001; World Bank, 2002; Zachariadis & Kouvaritakis, 2003). The revenue base of the public transport companies collapsed because of inadequate local government budgets and a drop in income of the fare-paying public. The funding squeeze first affected the companies' expansion and replacement plans. Maintenance and repairs were the next to suffer. With sharp reductions in subsidy, public transport systems were forced to raise fares drastically, both in absolute terms as well as relative to inflation, wages and the cost of car ownership and use. Not only were public transport fares increased, services were curtailed, especially in smaller cities. Although budgets were strained at every level, many central and local governments still devoted considerable expenditure to improving and expanding road networks, focusing particularly on high-speed arterial roads, ring-roads around cities, bottlenecks at key intersections and

connections to the main intercity and international routes. Thus, the supply of roadway infrastructure was increased, although much more slowly than the rapid increases in car use.

The increasing reliance on private transport, which had already started during the later years of the socialist era, was greatly accelerated in the 1990s. Virtually all restrictions on car ownership were removed, almost immediately opening up the market in CEE countries to foreign car manufacturers, which greatly increased the quantity and quality of cars that residents of formerly socialist countries could buy. Some central governments (e.g. Poland and the Czech Republic) promoted their own car industries as part of their national economic development strategy, through loans and subsidies for expanding and modernizing car production facilities (Pucher, 1999; World Bank, 2002). In general, local and national government policies in CEE became much less favourable for public transport and much more accommodating to private car ownership and use, leading to a vicious downward cycle of public transport decline (Judge, 2002; Pucher & Buehler, 2005). Non-segregated public transport services (i.e. those sharing the same roadspace as private transport), which included most bus and trolleybus lines, were hardest hit by traffic congestion generated by the rapid increases in car ownership and use. This then further reduced the attractiveness of public transport services, further increased their operating costs and fuelled the demand for private transport (World Bank, 2002).

Whilst car ownership and use were increasing in the 1980s and 1990s in CEE countries, public transport use plummeted (Lijewski, 1996; Pucher & Buehler, 2005). Passenger-kilometres by bus and coach for example dropped by almost 70% in Latvia between 1990 and 1995 (European Commission, 2006). Similarly, passenger-kilometres by train dropped by more than 70% in Latvia and almost 50% in Poland between 1990 and 1995 (ibid). After the turbulent decade of the 1990s, the new millennium has brought more gradual changes to CEE countries. Car ownership and use seems set to continue to grow, just as it is continuing to grow throughout the whole of Europe, but the growth is unlikely to be as explosive as during the 1990s. There are some indications that the use of public transport may now have stabilised in CEE countries. Public transport systems throughout CEE are now making efforts to expand and improve their services although it is unlikely that usage will return to the extremely high levels of the communist era (Zachariadis & Kouvaritakis, 2003).

Substantial land-use changes also took place in CEE countries as a consequence of the major political and economic changes over the last two decades. Many of the changes in land-use worked against public transport and in favour of private transport and/or informal transport operators (World Bank, 2002). A number of old economic activities folded, leaving behind large areas of derelict land in urban centres. New economic activities sprang up, often in 'unplanned' locations in the suburbs, especially along major roads, causing urban sprawl. Whilst some cities retained strict land-use regulations and building codes, much new suburban and exurban development took place beyond the city's jurisdiction, where land-use regulations were often far less demanding, and where virtually any kind of development was permitted in order to attract local jobs, tax revenues and economic development (Pucher & Buehler, 2005). Wealthier urban residents began to move out of inner cities to the suburbs. Unlike the high-density apartment complexes of the communist era, most new housing developments were low-density family homes. Shopping centres appeared along the exits of ring-roads in most large cities. In Warsaw for example, nearly 30 out of town shopping centres and megastore complexes had been built in the suburbs of the city over the space of 10 years up to 2002 (Transit Cooperative Research Program, 2003). These developments were heavily biased towards access by car and put new pressures on the road network and created bottlenecks in outlying locations. The suburban locations of new businesses generated tangential and circular travel patterns in contrast to the traditional radial orientation of the existing public transport networks. Transport modes based on rail infrastructure (tramways, metros and suburban railways) were especially hard hit by these shifts in land-use and travel patterns.

By the end of the 1990s, the economic, social and environmental problems associated with the sudden increases in private transport and the equally dramatic decline in public transport use were becoming widely recognised in many cities in the CEE countries. City authorities realised that their urban transport policies were in need of adjustment (Pucher & Buehler, 2005). For the most part, however, political support tended to favour policies that accommodated wider car ownership and use. Thus, policies that inconvenienced motorists or significantly increased the price of driving are still not widespread across cities in CEE countries. Buses and trams often still do not have traffic priority to insulate them to some degree from the seriously congested streets in many cities. Whilst most Western European cities instituted bus lanes and priority traffic signals long ago as a way of ensuring smoother flows of buses and trams, only a few Central European cities have begun to adopt such

measures. Nevertheless, local governments have at least given more attention to public transport as an essential part of the urban transport system. Sometimes in partnership with Western European officials or other experts, some urban public transport operations in CEE have tried to improve the quality of their service, modernize their vehicles and infrastructure, and increase the efficiency of their operations. The case studies examined in this chapter provide two examples of this type of activity.

3. West-east policy transfer: two case studies

To what extent are transport policy instruments, which have proved to be successful in one urban area, transferable to another, given that the latter has a different historical, cultural or political background, or is in another phase of economic development? Are there 'best practices' which are convertible like currencies? If not, how and to what extent must one take account of specific circumstances? (Güller, 1996: 25)

These questions posed by Peter Güller in 1996, are just as resonant and valid today, perhaps even more so, and are very closely related to the content of our analysis. Two case studies of East-West cross-city policy transfer are examined: Wroclaw in Poland and Riga in Latvia. Both cities have recently been involved in similar projects funded by the German Federal Environment Agency (*Umweltbundesamt* – UBA) under its advisory assistance programme for environmental protection in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Both projects primarily aimed to establish German-style regional public transport authorities (*Verkehrsverbunde)* or similar cooperative administrative and organisational structures in the two respective cities as a way of promoting public transport and reducing the overall environmental burden of transport in the two cities and the wider region around them.[4] The specific outcomes that the projects sought to achieve were more coordinated public transport services and timetables, common information, communication and marketing for transport services, and integrated ticketing across different transport operators. Whilst the public transport situation was (and still is) quite different in the two cities, there was nevertheless the belief that changes in the administrative and organisational structures were of central importance to both cities (Seifert, 2004). As we show however in the two case studies, the experiences and outcomes of the projects in the two cities were quite different.

The information for the case studies was obtained from reports and documents as well as interviews with key players involved in the process of policy transfer. In addition, two of the authors attended workshops in Berlin and Riga in which detailed information was presented on the Wroclaw and Riga projects (and other similar projects). Both case studies are presented below following a broadly similar structure. First, the sources of inspiration for policy transfer are identified and information about the evolution of the transfer process is outlined. The case study description then identifies the main actors involved in the policy transfer process, both on the donor and recipient side, their main influences on the process and the results of the transfer process.

Wroclaw

Wroclaw is Poland's fourth largest city and the capital city of Lower Silesia in south-west Poland. The population of the city is currently around 630,000 whilst the population of the city region is approximately 1.1 million. Car ownership in the city of Wroclaw is significantly higher than the Polish national average – 378 cars per 1000 inhabitant in Wroclaw (in 2005) compared to 323 cars per 1000 population in Poland as a whole (Polish Central Statistical Office, 2007). The city has an extensive public transport system, consisting of 61 bus routes covering 546 kilometres and 25 tram routes covering 84 kilometres.

From 2000, the German Federal Environment Agency provided support to the city of Wroclaw to improve the cooperation and coordination between different regional public transport operators. The initial idea was to establish an integrated public transport system based on the German model of regional public transport authorities. During the early course of the project however it became apparent that the German model was not feasible in Wroclaw, although there was the belief that improved cooperation and coordination in public transport could still be achieved via different means. There were a several reasons why the German model was considered unworkable. Firstly, integrated public transport authorities in Germany and other Western European countries have recourse to funding that is not available in Poland. As a consequence, Wroclaw had to find a solution that involved fewer costs but nevertheless strengthened cooperation between regional transport contractors. Secondly, after analysing the legal situation in Poland, the study came to the conclusion that a regional public transport authority was not really feasible in Poland: too many competing administrative levels would have to be involved, with the consequence that there would be long periods of consultation and coordination, as well as very uncertain project outcomes. Promoting and

developing bilateral arrangements between two municipalities were considered to be more appropriate and realistic options. The project was therefore re-orientated and a locally adapted solution to the German model was developed (UBA, 2006).

The Polish city of Wroclaw is atypical in the sense that, contrary to many other Polish cities, awareness grew early that public transport is an important part of the urban transport systems. One of the reasons why policy-makers and civil servants in Wroclaw were eager to adopt these ideas was a desire to reduce the growth in car traffic and turn around the decline in public transport use that they saw happening in their own city. They believed that this could be achieved by the stepwise improvement of an updated tram system in the city and improved coordination with surrounding municipalities and all transport operators. What made the case of Wroclaw different from many other cities was the presence of forward-looking leadership among these officials, combined with relative political and administrative stability, ensuring that initiatives were not interrupted when other political parties took office.

The project's main source of inspiration was the German *Verkehrsverbund* and study trips were made to several German regional public transport authorities during the course of the project (e.g. Darmstadt-Dieburg and Hannover). Some Dutch cities were also visited (e.g. The Hague and Rotterdam). In addition, there was a study trip to Prague, which also gave inspiration to officials from Wroclaw and its surrounding municipalities. Prague helped to convince the Polish officials that, in spite of having the disposal of only limited resources and little experience collected over years, cities in Eastern Europe were still able to improve the quality of the transport system. Prague's public transport system was perhaps not the most advanced example if compared to many cities in western Europe, but it was inspiring enough to convince the officials from Wroclaw that reforms and investments were possible and that they could make a difference.

The Wroclaw city government and administration were not able to push through change without outside support. There were a number of important actors in the process. The main supporting institution was the German *Umweltbundesamt,* which provided financial support for the project. More active advisory activities were taken up by the German NGO *Euronatur* (European Nature Heritage Fund). Regular visits took place between *Euronatur* and the policy-makers in Wroclaw to exchange information. According to our interviews, *Euronatur's* approach played a vital role in opening up doors within Poland because it

encouraged local participation in the project, and did not try to adopt a superior role. In turn, a Polish organisation, the Lower Silesian branch of the Polish Ecological Club (PKE), was crucial in opening doors for *Euronatur*. PKE had less know-how on the subject but allowed *Euronatur* to get in touch with many other players in and around Wroclaw. Since the Polish administration relies on personal networks to a much stronger extent than Germany or much of western Europe, PKE's involvement in the project was crucial. Other key players in the process were the adjacent local authorities through which the regional services had to be arranged, and the city tram and bus operators who were responsible for providing the delivery of public transport service. In most cases, these players were also supportive of the project's activities. In addition, somewhat against the expectations of most other players, the Polish National Railways (PKP) was cooperative in adapting its timetables to fit with the other public transport services in spite of its centralised and bureaucratised reputation. It also accepted the idea of a single ticket for the Wroclaw agglomeration. This fortunate situation can best be explained by the desire on the part of PKP to boost its economic performance.

The transfer and learning process took a number of years and was assisted by resources from the German *Umweltbundesamt* and later from a German-Polish strategic collaboration agreement. Part of this money consisted of donations and part was a loan to the city of Wroclaw at low interest. After this, Euronatur and the city of Wroclaw submitted a proposal for European funding to conduct a feasibility study for the refurbishment of tramline 7, for which a subsidy of €15 million was granted, subject to co-funding from the City of Wroclaw. During the whole project, the actors found that Polish legislation and financial constraints made the simple adoption of the German institutional model for regional public transport authorities quite impossible. It was not legally feasible and it would take far too much time, effort, political manoeuvring and money to go through a process of institutional reform. In addition, the official adoption of local and regional transport plans was considered a far too difficult procedure. A sort of plan was drafted ('Integrated Plan for Public transport Development in the City and Agglomeration the years 2004-2008') but this was a much more pragmatic document than is produced in Germany and did not have the same official status as a German transport plan. In the latter stages of the project, Wroclaw preferred to focus on practical, physical improvements. Instead of focusing on institutional issues, the focus was on short-term visible achievements, such as refurbishing tramlines, improving transfer points and acquiring new rolling stock.

As in most other cities in CEE countries, the city-owned bus operators had been privatised but their shares were still held in public hands. Since these contractors still depended on licences from the local government for their services, their deregulation had a positive effect on their willingness to be integrated into the regional system. The way in which regional cooperation between operators was arranged in Wroclaw was by means of bilateral agreements with neighbouring municipalities. Instead of a regional authority, limited cash-transfers between local municipalities were agreed as a way of balancing payments for regional public transport operations. Together with a neighbouring municipality (Swieta Katarzyna), the city of Wroclaw also successfully managed to set up a tender procedure to select a regional bus operator providing integrated bus services between the two authorities. The experience led to plans for similar arrangements with other municipalities.

Overall, the results of the policy transfer process have been moderately positive, even though the initial idea of the project had to be re-orientated. With relatively limited resources, a brake has been put on the decline in the use of public transport in Wroclaw, which can be considered a success. Another important point is that no significant budget cuts have taken place in Wroclaw in the past few years, which is very much unlike other Polish cities. Apparently, political and public support for collective passenger transport has increased and the policy transfer process has perhaps made a difference. It is more than probable that the pragmatic approach of the partners was a major factor leading to this outcome. There are plans to further improve the new regional ticket system using electronic chip cards and proposals for a new type of rail system in the city region that will be fully integrated with the other public transport modes. Whether the latter comes to fruition is to a large extent dependent on cooperation with Polish National Railways.

Riga

Riga, the capital of Latvia, is the largest city in the Baltic States. The city's population is currently just over 720,000 whilst the population of the urban region is approximately 1.1 million, which almost half of Latvia's population. Car ownership in Riga is currently close to 290 cars per 1000 inhabitants, somewhat lower than car ownership in the country as a whole, which is around 315 cars per 1000 inhabitants (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2007). Riga's public transport network is extensive (62 bus routes, 21 trolleybus routes and 11 tram lines) and run by a publicly owned body (*Rīgas Satiksme*). A fleet of privately operated minibuses also form part of Riga's transport system. During the last 15 years, the

development of the transport sector (as in all other sectors of industry in Latvia) has been considerably influenced by the triple transformation of politics, economics and administration that was initiated by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Latvia's present administrative model for public transport was strongly influenced by western experience, market pressures and EU requirements. As in the case of most CEE countries, local municipalities in Latvia now have the responsibility for public transport services (ECMT, 2001). The current spatial plan for Riga identifies a number of shortcomings of the city's present transport system: a large proportion of the city's public transport rolling stock is outdated and lacks modern standards of comfort; there are gaps in the coverage of the public transport network; a parking policy has not yet been developed and the demand for parking spaces in the city centre exceeds supply; and the potential of the rail system is underused for passenger transport (Riga City Council, 2005a).

In Riga, as in the case of Wroclaw, the initial aim of the project supported by the *Umwelbundesamt* was to promote regional cooperation in public transport along the lines of the German regional passenger transport authorities (UBA, 2006). The project began in 2000 and the key players in the project were Riga City Council's traffic department, two private consulting companies from Riga (one responsible for project management; the other for technical advice), a German transport consultancy (Institute for Transport Ecology) and the city of Bremen as partner city.[5] Discussions with representatives of Riga City Council, Riga's transport companies and the Latvian Ministry of Transport soon however established that, while the idea of integrated transport was both important and appropriate for the city, public transport in the city and outside the city were two separate and very different things. Against this background, an integrated transport system based on the German model was not considered as the appropriate way forward for the activities funded by the *Umwelbundesamt* in Riga. There was however great interest in an integrated system at the local level. As a result, the original idea of a regional passenger transport authority was abandoned in favour of a more appropriate local solution, mainly focused around giving greater priority to public transport in the city.

The main elements of the project were new park and ride sites, new priority lanes and signals for public transport, and new public transport routes. None of the elements of the project were particularly new to Riga. The issue of park and ride had for example been at the centre of public debate in Riga for some time. In the mid 1990s, the prospect of western European

transport problems such as traffic congestion, air quality problems and the shortage of parking space (especially in the city centre) was already identified in Riga's Transport Policy for 1999-2003. In 2001, the City Council agreed to a park and ride pilot project in the suburb of Jugla although the pilot project was never implemented. It was not until 2006 that Riga City Council finally passed a motion to introduce park and ride (Decision 1760) and to acquire land for the development of the park and ride sites. The decision also gave the responsibility for the implementation of the park and ride system to the City's Transport Department, the Development Department and the Property Department. On the positive side, a formal decision had finally been passed (after years of discussion). On the negative side, three departments have been given the shared responsibility for the system, which is likely to be administratively problematic and lead to difficulties in implementation.

The policy transfer in Riga started some time after the project in Wroclaw but there is still little evidence of impact and few visible outcomes on the ground. There are no new park and ride sites and no new public transport priority lanes or signals. Most of the recent changes in urban transport have been either of an administrative or a regulative nature. Instead of infrastructure improvements, Riga City Council has mainly concentrated its activities on administrative fines for parking in restricted areas and raising parking prices which has caused public protests since the money collected has not resulted in traffic improvements. In the meantime, the city's inhabitants are inventing their own solutions by for example parking their cars at shopping centres outside the city centre and taking public transport from there. As a result, some car parks at these out of town shopping centres are often full for large parts of the day, thus undermining access and economic viability of these shopping centres.

Residents of Riga have recently faced sharp increases in the price of public transport: the cost of a single trip increased from 20 to 30 santims in February 2007, and from 30 to 40 santims in January 2008.[6] *Rigas Satiksme*, the enterprise operating public transport in Riga, argued that the increase was necessary to cover increasing production costs. Many passengers on the other hand argued that prices have been increasing without visible improvements in the quality of public transport. Increasing traffic congestion had in fact led to slower and less reliable services. At the same time, little action to address congestion was evident. The situation is typical of the downward spiral of public transport to have affected many CEE countries: out of date infrastructure, public pressure for modernization, decreasing ridership, increasing operating costs and the fear of politicians to take responsibility and initiative to

resolve problems. Regarding the latter, Abolina & Zilans (2002) contend that Latvian local politics is often tainted by political patronage and vested interests. At the local level, planners frequently have their 'hands tied' when it comes to promoting and implementing best urban practices. Either it is not practical to go against 'political winds' or political decisions are simply made contrary to adopted planning policies and measures (ibid). In this case, local politicians in Riga, as in many other cities, have preferred cheaper (or even money-raising) short-term measures instead of expensive, long-term projects such as major infrastructure improvements. In summary, the overall effect of the *Umwelbundesamt*-funded project in Riga has been limited: there are few visible outcomes on the ground and little evidence of policy transfer.

Whilst Riga has many of the necessary preconditions for successful policy transfer, inaction prevailed for a variety of reasons. First of all, donor-funded projects in Latvia were (and still are) perceived as separate activities and not part of the general policy framework. Secondly, development programmes and plans do not necessarily result in implementation. The lack of political and administrative continuity, which is inherent to Latvian public administration, has contributed to the lack of success. Thirdly, substantial resources and administrative effort has been channelled into larger transport projects (e.g. the southern road bridge over the river Daugava, currently the largest construction project in Latvia) to the detriment of other schemes, such as the ones that formed part of the project supported by the *Umwelbundesamt*.

5. Conclusions

Countries in Central and Eastern Europe have experienced dramatic and rapid economic, social and political changes in the last two decades. Since the general direction of these changes has been towards western Europe, it might be logical to assume that CEE countries should be looking to learn lessons, both good and bad, from western Europe since this can help decision-makers prevent problems before they arise and avoid newcomer costs. However, there is more to policy transfer and lesson-drawing than simple copying or emulation, particularly in the case of west-east policy transfer. 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. It also seems apparent that taking preventative action to address problems before they become more serious (e.g. parking shortages, congestion) rarely occurs: most administrations seem to have

to experience the problems first-hand, and experience them to a critical degree before taking action. Achieving policy change in the transport sector in CEE countries may also have a psychological dimension. More than in western Europe, the car is seen in CEE countries as a symbol of social status, wealth and self-confidence – not just as a means of transport. Policies and actions that affect car ownership and use are therefore as unpopular (perhaps more so) in CEE countries than in western Europe. Policies to improve public transport on the other hand are unlikely to be considered important.

Both of the case studies examined help to confirm the importance of many of the strategies for improving the success of policy transfer, lesson-drawing and institutional transplantation. Donor organisations for instance should avoid imposing their views or setting the agenda. The existence of a small close network of participating actors is also extremely important: some of these act as talented and motivated champions (in the form of change agents or policy entrepreneurs), whilst others contribute their personal networks. Strong awareness straight from the beginning is vital that each country and each city is institutionally different, has different practical circumstances and different preference structures. Flexibility and adaptation in the policy transfer process is beneficial. In the case of Wroclaw, moments of crisis have helped to create the opportunity to push through change. Moreover, local awareness that pragmatic solutions with shorter time horizons were needed, rather than large-scale institutional transformation, precluded direct copying of the original policy model. A combination of forward-looking individuals, relevant policy ideas, incentives for change and the alignment of various actor interests was in place during the transfer process. These conditions were lacking in the case of Riga, where few visible outcomes of urban transport are evident.

We identify four general key lessons for the transfer of urban transport concepts from west to east European cities. Firstly, large-scale institutional reform is not a very promising way to improve policy system performance, especially when policy actors have to make do with limited resources. Neither is large-scale institutional reform likely to make public support strong or appease actors that may stand to lose from institutional change. It is much more fruitful to focus on achievable practical goals that can boost enthusiasm among involved parties and the wider public. Secondly, site visits help to create both ideas and inspiration about what alternatives can look like and how they might work in practice. Site visits to other cities in CEE countries can help to develop confidence and reassurance that certain policies or

actions can also work outside western Europe. Thirdly, cultural differences are important in the interactions among partners from various countries involved in the transfer process. These are not always predictable, but a high tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity helps. In the Wroclaw case, the German partners came to understand that structured procedures and solid planning are not features which can be relied on in Poland and that communication within an organisation is often more top-down. By taking these differences into account, more realistic estimates can be made about what goals are achievable and how these might be achieved. Fourthly, policy transfer is likely to be more successful where the recipient is able to set the agenda for the transfer process and identify its main priorities. The transfer of shorter-term, practical, visible solutions are often both simpler and more acceptable to achieve that longer-term, less-visible, institutional changes: the former may also help in paving the way for the latter.

6. References

Abolina, K. & Zilans, A. (2002). Evaluation of urban sustainability in specific sectors in Latvia. Environment, Development and Sustainability 4(3) 299-314.

Bennett, C.J. (1991). How States Utilize Foreign Evidence. Journal of Public Policy 11(1) 31-54.

Bennett, C.J. (1997). Understanding Ripple Effects: The Cross-National Adoption of Policy Instruments for Bureaucratic Accountability. Governance 19(3) 213-33.

Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (2007). Statistical databases (online at http://www.csb.gov.lv).

de Jong, M. (2004). The Pitfalls of Family Resemblance; Why transferring Planning Institutions between ‘Similar Countries’ is Delicate Business. European Planning Studies 12(7) 1055-1068.

de Jong, M., Lalenis, K. & Mamadouh, V. (2002). The Theory and Practice of Institutional Transplantation; Experiences with the Transfer of Policy Institutions, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht/London/Boston.

Dolowitz, D. & Marsh, D. (1996). Who learns from whom: a review of the Policy Transfer Literature. Political Studies 44(2) 343-357.

Dolowitz, D. & Marsh, D. (2000). Learning from abroad: the role of policy transfer in contemporary policy making. Governance 13(1) 5-24.

Dolowitz, D. (1999). Learning from America: policy transfer and the development of the British Workfare State. Sussex Academic Press, Brighton.

Dudley, G. & Richardson, J. (2000). Why does policy change? Lessons from British transport policy 1945-99. Routledge, London/New York.

European Commission (2006). European Union in Figures. Energy and Transport 2006. European Commission Directorate-General for Energy and Transport/Eurostat, Brussels/Luxembourg.

European Conference of Ministers of Transport – ECMT (2001). Transport Policy Forum. Transport Policies in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe. A Decade of Integration: Results and new Challenges. Report prepared by the Latvian Delegation. Document No 6. ECMT, Paris.

Evans (ed.) (2004). Policy Transfer in Global Perspective, Ashgate Publishing.

Evans, M. & Davies, J. (1999). Understanding Policy Transfer: A Multi-Level, Multi-Disciplinary Perspective. Public Administration 77(2) 361-385.

Greener, I. (2002). Understanding NHS Reform: The Policy Transfer, Social learning and Path-Dependency Perspectives. Governance 15(2) 161-183.

Güller, P. (1996). Urban Travel in East and West: Key Problems and a Framework for Action. In: ECMT (ed.) Sustainable Transport in Central and Eastern European Cities. ECMT, Paris, 16-43.

Héritier, A.; Kerwer, D.; Knill, C. & Lehmkuhl, D. (2001). Differential Europe: The European Union Impact on National Policy-Making. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham MD.

Holm-Hansen, J. (2005). The Transferability of Policy Instruments; How New Environmental Policy instruments strike Roots in Russia and Latvia, NIBR Report 2005:16. Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR), Oslo.

Jacoby, W. (2000). Imitation and Politics; Redesigning Modern Germany. Cornell University Press. Ithaca.

James, O. & Lodge, M. (2003). The Limitations of 'Policy Transfer' and 'Lesson-Drawing' for Public Policy. Research. Political Studies Review 1(3) 179-193.

Judge, E. (2002). The Development of Sustainable Transport Policies in Warsaw: 1990-2000. In: Rydin, Y. & Thornley, A. (eds.). Planning in a Globalised Era. Ashgate, Aldershot, 359-386.

Knill, C. (2001). The Europeanisation of National Administrations: Pattern of Institutional Change and Persistence. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Ladi, S. (2005). Globalisation, Policy Transfer and policy research Institutes, Edward Elgar Publishing.

Lijewski, T. (1996). The impact of political changes on transport in Central and Eastern Europe. Transport Reviews 16(1) 37-53.

Majone, G. (1991). Cross-National Sources of Regulatory Policymaking in Europe and the United States. Journal of Public Policy 11(1) 79-106.

Polish Central Statistical Office (2007). Wrocław na tle województwa dolnośląskiego i kraju w 2005 r. [Wrocław as Compared to the Dolnośląskie Voivodship and to the Country in 2005]. Polish Central Statistical Office, Warsaw [http://www.stat.gov.pl].

Pucher, J. & Buehler, R. (2005). Transport Policy in Post-Communist Europe. In: Button, K. & Hensher, D. (eds.). Handbook of Transport Strategy, Policy and Institutions. Elsevier, Oxford, 725-743.

Pucher, J. & Kurth, S. (1995). Verkehrsverbund: the success of regional public transport in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Transport Policy 2(4) 279-291.

Pucher, J. (1999). The transformation of urban transport in the Czech Republic, 1988-1998. Transport Policy 6(4) 225-236.

Radaelli, C. (2004). The Diffusion or Regulatory Impact assessment – Best Practice or Lesson-Drawing. European Journal of Political Research 43(4) 723-747.

Randma-Liiv, T. (2005). Demand- and Supply-based Policy Transfer in Estonian Public Administration. Journal of Baltic Studies 36(4) 467-487.

Riga City Council (2005a). Spatial Plan of Riga for 2006–2018. Explanatory Memorandum. City Development Department, Riga City Council, Riga.

Riga City Council (2005b). Sabiedriskais transports. Attīstības modelis. [Public Transport. The developmental model.) Riga City Council, Riga.

Robertson, D. (1991). Political Conflict and Lesson-Drawing. Journal of Public Policy 11(1) 55-78.

Rogers, E.M. (1995). Diffusion of Innovations. The Free Press, New York.

Rose, R. (1991). What is Lesson-Drawing? Journal of Public Policy 11(1) 3-30.

Rose, R. (1993). Lesson-Drawing in Public Policy: A Guide to Learning across Time and Space. Chatham House, New Jersey.

Rose, R. (2005). Learning from Comparative Public Policy: A Practical Guide. Routledge, London/New York.

Seifert, K. (2004). Establishing Public Transport Executives for Local Public Passenger Transport – Challenge and Opportunity for Environmentally Benign Transport Development in Central and Eastern Europe. Research and Development Project prepared for the German Federal Environmental Agency (FKZ 201 96 103). European Nature Heritage Fund (Euronatur) Report, Rheinbach.

Stone, D. (1999). Learning Lessons and Transferring Policy across Time, Space and disciplines. Politics 19(1) 51-59.

Stone, D. (2004). Transfer Agents and Global Networks in the 'Transnationalization' of Policy. Journal of European Public Policy 11(3) 545-566.

Suchorzewski, W. (2001). Transport Policy Forum. Transport Policies in The Countries of Central and Eastern Europe. A Decade of Integration: Results and new Challenges. Document No 1. ECMT, Paris.

Tavits, M. (2003). Policy Learning and Uncertainty: The Case of Pension Reform in Estonia and Latvia. Policy Studies Journal 31(4) 643-660.

Transit Cooperative Research Program (2003). Transit Operations in Central and Eastern Europe. International Transit Studies Program Report on the Fall 2002 Mission. Research Results Digest Number 62. Transit Cooperative Research Program, Washington DC.

Umweltbundesamt – UBA (2006). Attractive public transport through regional co-operation; Experiences and suggestions from Wroclaw. UBA, Dessau.

Wilson, T.K. & Bell, M.C. (1985). Transport Co-ordination and Integration in West Germany. Highways and Transportation 32(10) 5-12.

Wolman, H. & Page, E. (2002). Policy Transfer among Local Governments. An Information Theory Approach. Governance 15(4) 477-501.

Wolman, H. (1992). Understanding Cross-National Policy Transfers: The Case of Britain and the United States. Governance 5(1) 27-45.

World Bank (2002). Urban transport in the Europe and Central Asia Region: World Bank Experience and Strategy. Report No 25188 ECA. World Bank, Washington DC.

Zachariadis, T. & Kouvaritakis, N. (2003). Long-Term Outlook of Energy Use and CO_2 Emissions from Transport in Central and Eastern Europe. Energy Policy 31(8) 759-773.

Notes

1. This paper will be published later in 2009 as a chapter of the book '*Planning Ideas and Planning Practices*', edited by Patsy Healey and Robert Upton and published by Routledge. The material is partly based on a study funded by the Dutch government through the Habiforum Innovative Land Use Program and by Delft University of Technology through the Delft Research Centre for Sustainable Urban Areas.

2. The term 'Central and Eastern Europe' refers to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland, Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

3. Here we draw on Dudley & Richardson's analysis of key variables influencing policy change: ideas, interests, institutions, individuals and time (Dudley & Richardson, 2000).

4. Various references in the transport policy literature can be found advocating the benefits of German-style regional public transport authorities (*Verkehrsverbunde*) as a means of providing integrated regional public transport services (see for example Pucher & Kurth, 1995; Wilson & Bell, 1985).

5. Whilst Bremen provided the main source of inspiration for the project, examples from other German cities were also important. Recent documents from Riga City Council's traffic department also mention the German city of Karlsruhe as an interesting example of intermodal transfer (see for example Riga City Council, 2005b).

6. 20 santims was approximately €0.28 in 2006.