Mobility Centres as Key Elements for Multi-Modal Services – Results from the MOST Project

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Abstract - **Mobility centres provide multi-modal services to the customer and are a central instrument of a mobility management approach. Being developed in the 90's in Germany they have now spread to several countries. With their evolving operation, their effect within a sustainable transport policy is an important issue. The EU-project MOST has evaluated existing data of several mobility centres with regard to use, customer satisfaction or their influence on travel behaviour. The mobility centres experience rising customer numbers and generally a good customer satisfaction. There are slight indications about positive impacts on travel behaviour but more evaluation work is certainly needed. For support MOST has developed a specific Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit. Overall multi-modal mobility centres have by now demonstrated their value for a sustainable transport policy. Their integrative nature, however, poses practical challenges regarding co-operation and secure financing.**

1. Mobility Centres - multi-functional customer interfaces

Mobility management aims to contribute to a more sustainable transport pattern by means of information and organisation. This can only be achieved if the individual travel behaviour is the focus of attention. Clear information before and on the trip and the offer of multi-modal mobility services is at the core of tasks. Mobility centres are a central instrument within mobility management that should integrate these tasks to offer services in a customer-oriented way. The idea of a Mobility Centre as a service point for all mobility-related information and organisation is not new anymore. Originating in Germany in the early 90's similar institutions can now be found in a number of European countries, e.g. Austria, Switzerland, Netherlands, Italy. By definition, this is where mobility services are initiated, organised and provided. Previous research projects have established only two basic requirements: a multi-modal approach and public access (MOMENTUM/MOSAIC 1999, p.52). In practice we will find a large degree of variation in structure, scope and organisation. Especially the degree of multi-modality, co-operation and service integration – the main distinguishing features from conventional (public transport) service centres – differs quite substantially across mobility centres.

Former EU-projects such as MOMENTUM have established mobility centres, e.g. mobilé in Münster/Germany or Mobil Zentral in Graz/Austria (MOMENTUM 2000). The task for MOST[1] as a successor project in mobility management was to follow up on the development of some existing mobility centres and contribute to a better evaluation to learn about the long-

[1] MOST is a EU funded project from the 5th Framework programme and stands for "Mobility Management Strategies for the Next Decades" (2000-2002). For reports and further details see http://mo.st.

term effects. This article will give a comparative overview on the results. The article is mainly based on the MOST report on evaluation results (MOST 2003b).

The main objectives of mobility centres are in line with the general objectives of mobility management, i.e. encouraging greater use of sustainable transport modes and improving sustainable accessibility for all people. For mobility centres this translates into:

- providing quality multi-modal information to the public and specific target groups
- establishing useful (additional) services in order to keep existing customers
- gaining new customers for the sustainable modes, especially from car users
- supporting the overall aim of modal shift

In practice a mobility centre calls for strong partnerships because generally no single institution can offer integrated services alone with a sufficient quality. Main stakeholders to be involved are local and regional public transport companies/associations, the local and/or regional administration, other public or private transport providers and user organisations. Besides these there are many potential others who can play a role depending on the specific profile of the institution (cf. MOMENTUM/MOSAIC 1999, 47f.).

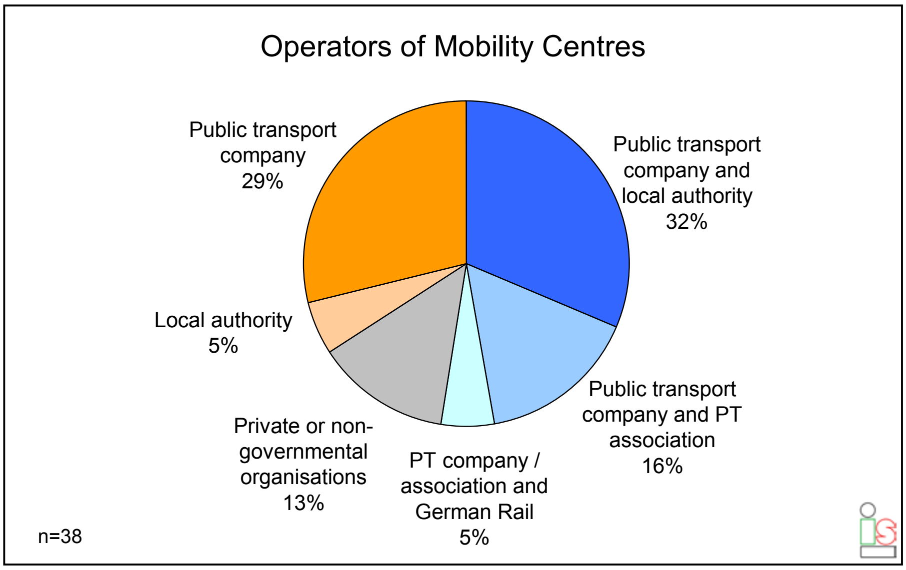

Fig. 1: Operators of mobility centres in Germany (n = 38)

Fig. 1 shows the different operating models for the mobility centres in Germany. In over 80 % of the cases a public transport company is one of the operators. Even these centres which have a single operator usually depend on co-operation. Since there is no single organisational model and since the integration of providers, services and modes makes great demands on the mobility centres, they are often developed in steps. The scope of a mobility centre depends very much on the operator and partnership. In Germany for example, a development seen in some cities is co-operation between transport service providers and tourist information to establish a joint mobility centre.

2. Evaluation of Mobility Centres: the MOST results

2.1 Mobility Centres in MOST

The following part will give monitoring results and comparisons for several mobility centres included in the MOST project. One of the aims is to contribute some insight on the long-term development of mobility centres. For this reason four existing mobility centres had been included within the demonstration cluster "Mobility Centres and Mobility Consulting"[2]:

***Atcittá* / Bologna** is a system of six customer service points which belong to the customer care system of ATC, the public transport company of Bologna. As such the focus is on public transport, but with information on parking and car-sharing and other modes gradually having been included.

***Mobil Zentral* / Graz** started in 1997 as Austria's first mobility centre. Due to its ambition to become focal point for all mobility-related questions it has developed a wide range of services and staff has received specific training.

***mobilé* / Münster** is a good example for a fruitful co-operation of the City and the public transport company. Having started as a pilot project, the rising number of customers have made it a permanent institution now which has just moved and been enlarged in 2002.

The ***MobiCenter* / Wuppertal,** already opened in 1995 in Wuppertal-Elberfeld, is one of the forerunners of the mobility centres idea. It shows the possibilities of such an instrument. This has been made possible by strategic thinking of the operator, the public transport company WSW. In 2002 a second MobiCenter was opened in Wuppertal-Barmen.

For comparisons also new mobility centres from the other MOST demonstrators are used.[3] These three mobility centres have a different background and operational model, mainly combining public transport and tourist information.

***Camden Direct* / London** is a travel information centre, which links public transport information with information about Council services and for tourists. As such it shows the first stage of a mobility centre developed in partnership with Transport for London (TfL, which is the new the city-wide public transport authority).

***Loja de Mobilidade* / Porto:** Being the Cultural Capital 2001 Porto took the opportunity to integrate formerly fragmented public transport information. Now information on the accessibility of events is combined with tourist information supported by a considerable alliance of partners.

The temporary ***Calypso* / Rotterdam** has not been a mobility centre in the exact sense. This "special transport information point" was part of the visitor centre for the Cultural Capital 2001 and provided all possible information on the accessibility of events, with public transport services as a focus.

[2] All of these cases had been demonstration sites in the MOMENTUM and MOSAIC projects.

[3] Other mobility centres from MOST are not being compared for various reasons: in *Lund*, the mobility centre is rather an organising unit instead of a public centre; in *Karlstad* the centre aids in the site-related project; *Prague* and *Sintra* are not yet operating.

Table 1: Overview over basic data of the mobility centres

	Bologna	Graz	Münster	Wuppertal	Camden	Porto	Rotterdam
Name	Atcittá	Mobil Zentral	mobilé	MobiCenter	Camden Direct	Loja da Mobilidade	Calypso
Opening Date	Dec. 1999	Sept. 1997	May 1998/ June 2002	March 1995/ May 2002	March 2000	Sept. 2001	Jan.-Dec. 2001
Operators	Public transport company (ATC)	Public transport association; City of Graz; Land Steiermark; FGM-AMOR	City of Münster; Public transport company (Stadtwerke)	Public transport company (Wuppertaler Stadtwerke)	Camden Council; Transport for London	City of Porto	City of Rotterdam: Cultural Capital 2001 organisation
Partners		cycling lobby , car-sharing company	regional public transport providers, user association	German Rail, cycling lobby, consumer association	Transport for London (TfL)	University of Porto, public transport association, taxi association, public transport companies,	public transport company (RET), public transport information, tourist information
Location	city centre (main centre near city hall, four outlets in Bologna, one in Imola)	city centre (public transport node)	city centre (across main station)	city centre (pedestrian zone; second location since 2002)	city centre (Camden Town Hall)	city centre (in the tourism office)	city centre
Services	information on public transport; car-sharing, parking; sale of tickets; complaint management	information on public transport, cycling, walking, car-sharing, tourism, for mobility impaired; sale of public transport tickets; bicycle rental; consulting for companies, schools and traffic producers; campaigns, awareness raising, complaint management	information on public transport, cycle routes/ rental, car-sharing, parking, car routing, tourism; sale of public transport tickets, events and hotels; campaigns, exhibitions, awareness raising	information on public transport, cycling, walking, car-sharing, tourism, city information; sale of public transport, tickets, tickets for cultural events; organisation of car-sharing, delivery service, luggage storing; consulting for companies, schools households and traffic producers; campaigns, awareness raising, mobility education, ideas and complaints	information on public transport, council services and tourism; sale of public transport tickets, tickets for tourist attractions	information on public transport; parking, transport guide; sale of 3-day public transport passes, ideas and complaints	accessibility information (mainly public transport) for tourists and visitors (in connection to CC 2001 events); sale of public transport tickets
Transport Modes	public transport, car-sharing, car	public transport, walking, cycling, car-sharing	public transport, walking, cycling, car-sharing, car	public transport, walking, cycling, car-sharing, car	public transport	public transport, car	mainly public transport
Information Channels	personal, phone, letter, fax, e-mail	personal, phone, fax, letter, e-mail, Internet	personal, phone, fax, e-mail, Internet	personal, phone, fax, letter, e-mail, Internet	personal, phone, fax, letter, e-mail	personal, phone, e-mail	personal, phone, fax, letter, e-mail, Internet
Opening Hours	main centre: mo-su 7-20	mo-fr 9-18 sa 9-13 phone: mo-fr 7-19 sa: 9-13	mo-fr 7-19 sa 10-16 phone: 24 hrs. (via state service line)	mo-fr 9-19 sa 10-14 phone: 24 hrs	mo-fr 9-18 sa 9-17	winter: mo-fr 9-17.30 sa-su 9-16.30 summer: mo-su 9-19	mo-fr 10-19 sa-su 10-18
No of Counters	17 (in total) + 8 (call centre)	2 (+2 phone)	6 (before 2)	10 (+ 9 in call centre)	3	1	3
Staff	40 (in total) (+ 19 call centre)	7 (all part-time)	16 (8 part-time) (before: 5)	24 (+ 5 mobility consultants)	3 (on rotational basis)	4 (3 part time)	3
Max. Staff Peak Hour	17 (in total)	3	6 (before 2)	14	3	2	3
Qualifications of Staff	n.a.	public transport related training, four with specific training as mobility consultants	public transport related with additional training	public transport related, five with specific training as mobility consultants	public transport related	communications, public relations, languages	n.a.

The presentation of monitoring and evaluation results for the mobility centres follows the structure established by the MOST Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit (MOST 2003c)[4]. At least five levels can be distinguished, which trace the path of changing behaviour:

- Knowledge level
- Usage level
- Satisfaction level
- Individual Behaviour level
- System Impact level

These distinctions offer the possibility for transparent comparisons. It has to be kept in mind though, that these analytical separations are deeply entwined. There is no gain, for example, if many people know the mobility centre but there is little use, or if there is high use, but a low degree of satisfaction.

A remark needs to be made on the existence of monitoring data. The four existing mobility centres have been information providers within the MOST project. This implies that only their existing data could be used for MOST evaluation purposes. Additional monitoring activities have not been undertaken, which results in heterogeneous data, difficult to compare. As such most of the following results and conclusions are based on selected cases according to data availability.

2.2 Knowledge

To make a new offer known to the target group is the first step for successful mobility management. In the case of mobility centres the target group is usually the general public. In Münster after one year of operation a street survey showed that 27 % of the respondents knew mobilé. This is a respectable result, since marketing experts speak of a known brand, when one-third of the citizens know it (Poth/Poth 1999). In Graz and Wuppertal data is available from annual citizen surveys which supports the evidence from Münster. The development shows that is difficult to reach beyond the 33%-level, which can only be achieved after several years of operation:

Knowledge (in %)	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Mobil Zentral Graz			28	29	26	27	26
MobiCenter Wuppertal	25	31	34	32	34	40	39

If differentiated according to age groups the results do not correspond. Whereas in Münster and Wuppertal the knowledge is higher among the younger adults (especially between 18-29 years), in Graz the older citizens have a higher degree of knowledge (peak above 50 years).

Generally there are no significant differences in knowledge according to car ownership or use of public transport. In Wuppertal we can find an interesting result in a large mobility study from 1999/2000. While non-users of public transport know the MobiCenter the least (23%), knowledge increases up to persons which use public transport about 11-19 days /month (49%). Among the daily customers only 40% know the MobiCenter. This evidence supports

[4] The latest version of the MOST Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit has elaborated the assessment levels further, e.g. to differentiate for experimental and permanent travel behaviour.

the claim that mobility centres are of less interest to non-users, not as much needed by regular customers, but the groups in between are the main target groups.

When looking at the *knowledge of specific services*, it is clear that the multi-modal nature of a mobility centre's offer needs much effort to disseminate. In Münster mobilé's public transport services are well known, followed by cycling, but only less than half of the users know about their services for car drivers and pedestrians. The same picture is apparent in Wuppertal: while its role as a ticket sales point is universally known, in 2001 only 34% knew about the car-sharing service that is offered. And the knowledge about information on parking has remained at a low level of 11-21% for the last six years.

2.3 Usage

Knowing a mobility centre is one thing, using its services the other. In Wuppertal the number of users has gradually increased. In 2001 57% of those knowing MobiCenter state that they have used it, compared to 48% in 1996. In Graz this number increased from 10 to 23% in the last four years so that 6% of the population have now used Mobil Zentral.

The *absolute number of customers* depends on many factors. The size of the city, size of the mobility centre, existence of other transport information facilities and, of course, level of marketing are among them. Therefore, the absolute numbers by themselves are not meaningful.[5] Of more value is the development of customer statistics. Both in Münster and Graz, comparable in city size, the average customer contacts are rising.

Customer contacts (per month)	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**
Mobil Zentral Graz	2165	2571	3429	3966
mobilé Münster	859	2150	4150	4765

In Graz these are only personal and phone contacts – together with rising e-mail and also mail contacts Mobil Zentral currently averages about 4500 customer contacts per month. In Wuppertal the total number of customers is around 11.000 per month. (Graz has about 240.000 inhabitants, Wuppertal 370.000, and Münster 280.000).

The two mobility centres in Porto and Rotterdam are different as their main emphasis has been the integration of travel information with tourism. Calypso received about 4150 contacts per month and – according to their own judgement – almost all resulted in travel advice in connection to events. In Porto the tourist information averaged about 1600 visitors per month from October 2001 to March 2002 – the share of customers which also visited the new and integrated Loja de Mobilidade climbed from 11% to 15% in its first half year, which is about 500 customers per month. Both centres experienced the natural tourism cycle: in the summer months the number of customers was substantially higher.

The ratio of *telephone contacts vs. personal contacts* depends on the character of the mobility centre. In Wuppertal it is about 80:20 in favour of the phone. Due to the high number of callers to the mobility centre, since April 2000 a separate telephone service centre handles the calls during the day, whereas during the night the mission control centre guarantees a 24 h accessibility to information. In Graz the relation is similar, but with personal contacts growing faster: the ratio was 84:16 in 1998 and is at 75:25 in 2001. Münster, however, has put more

[5] In Germany the customer numbers of mobility centres range from 300 to 17.000 per month.

emphasis on personal advice. The location has been integrated with the citizens office and the phone number has not been promoted in the beginning. Thus, their ratio has started with 32:68 and is 36:64 in 2001. Bologna has strictly separated these information channels. Atcitta is only for personal information and all telephone contacts go through a call centre. This receives up to 1400 calls a day, of which 97% can be answered within 20 seconds.[6]

The *duration of customer contacts* differs quite substantially – from a short timetable information up to longer consulting sessions. In Münster there is a statistic on the relation of short information and longer advice (which is defined as lasting more than three minutes). The share of longer contacts is rising gradually from 55% in 1998 to 67% in 2001 – maybe a sign that customers need some time to realise the potential for in-depth information. For the newly opened Loja in Porto only 12% of the customers ask for advice vs. 88% for quick information.

When it comes to the *use of different services*, it is obvious that many customer contacts relate to the same core services. The backbone for any mobility centre is integrated public transport information and ticket sales. In Münster the demand for local and regional bus-related services in the mobility centre is at about 64%. The train-related services have risen from 20 to 32%. Together the public transport services this accounts for more than 90 % of all customer contacts. The demand for cycling and car-sharing information is at about 2-5% each. This is in line with the experience of many other mobility centres. For the other mobility centres, there is no available statistics to differentiate use of services.

Sale of public transport tickets is an important service since the customer should access the whole service chain information-advice-sales at one point. In Bologna the Atcitta network experienced a growth in ticket sales of 9% from 2000 to 2001. In Münster ticket sales for the local buses reached a peak after one year of mobilé's service and have been decreasing lately. But the sale of nation-wide rail tickets, which was not expected by the customer in this city centre location, needed some marketing first. In 2001 monthly sales on have been 4-5 times as high as in 1999 and average about € 12.000 per month. In Wuppertal, the mobility study also showed that from customers in general, 16% mainly buy their tickets at the MobiCenter, compared to 26% from the driver, 23% at ticket machines or 17% in private sales points. In Wuppertal, there is a high level of regular customers, as 36% stated that they possess a season ticket. Whereas regular customers have season tickets and occasional users buy from the driver or ticket machines, the Mobility Centre is most important for the medium public transport user (which use public transport about 11-19 days /month).

A specific focus in Bologna is the *complaint management*. ATC receives, via Atcitta, Call Centre and mail, around 3500-4500 complaints per year with falling tendency. Less than 1% of all phone calls are positive remarks – as usually. The complaints refer to regularity and quality of service and behaviour of personnel, which make up for about half of the complaints but they are decreasing. Various requests, e.g. to change routes or fares, have risen. ATC promises a reply within 30 days – otherwise they will give out five free tickets or the amount in cash.

2.4 Satisfaction

The aspect of acceptance of the services relates closely to customer satisfaction. In order to convince users to adapt their travel behaviour, satisfied customers are a must. Therefore all customer-oriented companies are trying to monitor customer satisfaction. In the case of the presented mobility centres the extent and the methods for monitoring customer satisfaction

[6] Unfortunately, the number of personal customers at Atcitta is not monitored.

differ widely. As such comparison is difficult and the following part is rather descriptive due to the lack of coherent data.

The most *general assessment* can be made through surveys where users give a general mark for overall service. In the case of Wuppertal a question on the satisfaction with the MobiCenter service has been included in the annual city survey. In 2001 MobiCenter received a good mark with 2.2 (on a scale from 1-6 with 1 being the best) with no difference due to age. In general 76% are (very) satisfied with the service. The offered event ticket service received a similar 2.3 rating. Bologna and Graz have been asking the same opinion for several years and can offer time series data. In Bologna the customer satisfaction with "the quality of answers to requests about information and complaints" remains stable at 6.8 for the last three years (on a scale from 1-10 with 10 being the best). This mark is slightly lower than the overall rating of ATC services (7.3). Since there are more customer contacts than just at Atcitta centres, this question does not exactly measure the satisfaction with the mobility centres. In Graz a similar time series is available, although caution is necessary. Since only respondents which had already used Mobil Zentral services have been surveyed the sample of only 20 to 50 persons for each year is quite small. Here the satisfaction is also on a high level ranging from 80% to 91%. Only in 2001 has it slightly dropped to 73%.

To understand the process of building customer satisfaction and the contribution of single elements in order to establish and manage a positive framework in the sense of quality management these general judgements are not reaching far enough. In many public transport companies this process has been established in the last years. Many mobility centres, though, still depend on their subjective judgement instead of measured facts when it comes to the customer satisfaction with single elements of their service. Very few mobility centres have been surveyed in detail, and this is mainly if the mobility centre has been part of a research project.

In Münster a detailed analysis of the assessment of both customer and general public has been undertaken in 1999 after 1½ years of operation. Whereas the overall judgement of customers received a medium 2.7 (on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being the best) there is a clear variation in detail. The best values are given for integration of services (!), the availability of information, the location but also for the service of personnel. mobilé receives lower marks for their phone and Internet service (which at that time was in the build-up phase), the visibility of the location and their promotional activities. The survey of the general public revealed that a majority considered a service centre for mobility and traffic as necessary. Besides the core public transport services (information, ticket sales) which any ordinary customer centre would offer, especially the complaint management, but also information on cycling and a cost comparison between car and public transport, such services were placed high on the list of important elements of such a centre. Recommendations with regard to the improvement of mobilé's service have gone in the following direction. There is a need for general information, which means to give orientation also for those who are distant from the use of alternatives to the car. There are several directions as to how to gradually widen the services offered. Also, the communication effort needs to be increased, with a wider use of information channels (phone, Internet etc.) and mobility centres need to incorporate business service standards e.g. as set by banks. Some of these suggestions have been followed in the extended mobilé that has opened in 2002.

2.5 Travel Behaviour and System Impact

Since influencing travel behaviour towards the sustainable modes is an inherent goal of most mobility centres, insight as to their possibility to support modal shift is a significant question. Gaining new customers for public transport (and cycling and walking) from the target group of car users, no matter whether just once in a while or more regularly, is a main objective.

This quest needs a mix of measures and the extent of the mobility centres' contribution is hard to determine. The exact analysis poses methodological challenges and so far there is little knowledge on this matter. Due to the structure of MOST with the mobility centres not being demonstration partners no further insight could be gained.

From the Münster survey there is some weak indication on the extent of changed behaviour. 8% of the respondents stated that they had changed their travel behaviour due to the services by mobilé in the past. Since this was posed as a retrospective question and it did not ask about intention to change behaviour, the data can be considered to be valid. Given that it is difficult to reach routine car drivers and to acquire them as customers, this result seems fair. But this is only isolated evidence which needs to be confirmed by more surveys in the future.

3. Conclusions and Outlook

Objectives, tasks, set-up and services of the instrument "mobility centre" are flexible. There is no single organisational model for it. Nevertheless, some general conclusions can be drawn. With regard to the *objectives*, two main strands can be observed. One main objective is to offer and integrate high-quality mobility services for (existing) customers. In this case the use of services already is one success criterion. But with most mobility centres, to a varying extent the goal is to reach out to new, mainly car-driving customers and to facilitate a modal shift. This is harder to achieve and to measure. There is strong evidence that mobility centres are usually able to fulfil the first goal. But for a judgement on the modal shift, the basis is still lacking. Although some first evidence indicates that mobility centres with a high use and predominantly satisfied customers can contribute moderately to modal shift, the level is not yet clear.

The general public *knowledge* about a mobility centre is usually good. To reach a higher level of market penetration, the threshold is difficult with the given level of marketing activities. The increase in knowledge about the mobility centre rather comes in incremental steps. The usually quite low knowledge about the multi-modal service offer is a much more critical finding. The character of a one-stop shop on mobility is mostly still unfamiliar. To match this image to the target groups poses challenges and needs a continuing and targeted marketing effort.

The mobility centres experience a steady *growth of users*, particularly in the first three years. Up to 90% of the demand is for rather traditional services (PT information, ticket sales etc.). Since these services have long been offered, the questions comes up, whether an integrated mobility centre is needed. Findings from Münster show that other functions of a mobility centre such as a partner for suggestions and complaints or for in-depth advice on mobility are highly-rated – but of course much less frequently requested. Therefore, the task of a mobility centre is to establish this integrated service, where possible. A demand for this integrative service is not given, but can be stimulated. It is important to offer the full service chain of information-advice-sales.

The Wuppertal results give an important indication on the right target group. Although the mobility centre is open for everyone, certain groups are more inclined to use its services. One is certainly the medium user of public transport. Regular customers do not have a high need for information, regular car drivers are hard to reach. Bringing the medium user to a higher use of public transport and making him/her a regular customer will be the most important task of any mobility centre. This contribution to a modal shift is often underestimated in the discussion that often focuses on the ambitious quest of how to turn regular car drivers to regular public transport riders. A possible way to reach the habitual car driver is also to include services such as the ticket sale for events, as in the Wuppertal case.

Among the possibilities of *information channels* the use should be manifold. The telephone seems to be a main focus for any mobility centre and there are different organisational options up to a complete separation in a call centre. Electronic media play an increasing role but need to be incorporated more actively. Nevertheless, the personal contact with qualified mobility consultants is of high value, especially for some target groups such as the elderly or persons with a need for extended advice.

Customer satisfaction and as such the acceptance of services is very important for long-term customer retention. This is dependent on local circumstances and needs a detailed look. From the existing data a general satisfaction can be assessed, but with room for improvement. Generally, mobility centres need to adopt the same standards in customer service as set by businesses. For example, the possibility to sit in a calm atmosphere with sight on the computer screen and maybe a cup of coffee is the appropriate setting for a consulting conversation.

The *impact of mobility centres on travel behaviour* and its consequences for the general traffic situation is still largely unknown. Rising ticket sales and a higher number of users lead to a positive assumption but more work is needed to verify this. It has to be considered within the context of the effects of a mix of measures and findings ways to identify the impact of individual measures.

Regarding the *practise of regular monitoring and evaluation* the situation in the mobility centres is mixed. For many a tally sheet to count customers is already the principal activity. More differentiation is essential to get a complete picture. In addition, surveys on customer satisfaction should be carried out regularly using the full range of market research techniques. The MOST Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit offers some advice on how to monitor mobility centres (MOST 2003c)

Besides the question of monitoring the effect, *financing* of mobility centres is a relevant question. Mobility centres should be seen a instruments of local transport policy, but in many countries the funding mechanism and programmes are still geared towards infrastructure funding. For mobility centres the largest part of funding is for the qualified personnel. A feasible way to support a mobility centre is to share the funding between the co-operating partners, using synergies from re-structuring existing customer and/or service centres. Since public transport companies play an important role, a central issue will be the evolving controlled competition in the public transport market. The role of public transport companies is changing. If they will be regarded as mere carriers the local authorities will become more important for the implementation and operation of mobility centres.

To conclude, the idea of a multi-modal mobility centre for all questions around mobility is intriguing and has by now demonstrated its value in a sustainable transport policy. Its integrative nature poses practical challenges regarding co-operation especially in a changing environment. A particular chance is to link a mobility centre with traffic management approaches and telematics, where it can serve as the (personal) interface to the mobility customer. And there is positive development: in Germany, in a survey among 33 mobility centres 85 % stated that they aim to expand their services in the future (ILS 2003).

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