



ENABLING CYCLING CITIES INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

INTERVIEW WITH LISA RÜCKER

Deputy mayor of the city of Graz, Councillor for urban mobility, transport planning and environmental affairs





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GRAZ

Interview by **Oliver Hatch**, Urbrans.org

Since the late 1980ies Graz is a city for cyclists with a speed limit of tempo 30 all over the city (except main roads). In the last 5 years we've got the title "Austrian's Cycling Capital" which shows the importance of cycling as a mobility policy in Graz and recognises Graz a spirit for cycling. The last mobility survey in 2008 attested a modal share of 16,1% for trips done by bicycle, in the inner city 20%. In 2013 we will do the next survey but we already know that the modal share has increased in the last 5 years noticeably: Bicycle accounts showed in winter time 2011/2012 an increase of 17% more cyclists on the main routes.

In your view, how important is political support and commitment for pro-cycling policies?

In all Austrian wide and also Graz' wide strategic papers you find a commitment for pro-cycling policies but the problem is that in many cases where you have to decide and therefore implement pro cycling measures, there is resistance against - mainly if we speak about space for cars (meaning parking places or car traffic lanes) or private properties.

Have you a particular success story you can describe in respect of this?

In 2011 we opened a cycle lane in the inner city of Graz. Graz is a medieval city with narrow streets and a high building density in the city center. Therefore we have (as many other European cities as well!) restricted space. We took away 15 parking places for more space of cyclists.

Is a well-planned and steady flow of finance for cycling measures necessary?

Of course enough money is necessary! We invested yearly (2009 - 2012) a budget of 2 Mio Euro, that is 7,5 Euro per inhabitant.

What is the position of cycle planning within your wider land-use and transport policies?

In 2008 we installed and signed 13 main cycling routes which connect the city of Graz with the surroundings of Graz. The unsolved problem is a failing - respectively missing - land-use policy on the regional level (province of Styria, 1,2 Mio inhabitants). The focus on the regional transport planning policy stays on a theoretical stage stating indeed a paradigm change towards a sustainable spatial and settlement development following public transport infrastructure, intermodality - bike & ride - and proclaiming a network also for daily bicycle users - but not providing enough budget. The regional budget as a whole is decreasing year per year because of the regional austerity policy.

Does your city have a cycling department or team and if so, how vital are they in promoting cycling?

Our transport planning department is a team of 12 people. For more than 10 years Mr. Helmut Spinka is the cycling coordinator of the city of Graz (helmut.spinka[at]stadt.graz.at). There is also one person who is the responsible project leader for mobility management, Mrs. Daniela Hörzer (daniela.hoerzer[at]stadt.graz.at). The cycling agenda is therefore a regular and vital topic within the transport and mobility policy, provided with an own budget (240.000 Euro for campaigning, trainings and actions).

Do you consult with your cycle user groups and neighbourhood groups on cycling and how useful are their views and their role?

The city of Graz is on a local level in regular contact with ARGUS, the Styrian cycling lobby. We meet each other in regular meetings - so called cycling forums - at least twice a year, do cycling expeditions on-site and discuss about future cycling projects. Additionally we support their promotion project for more safety in traffic "light & techniques". They always have a point of view of user groups which is very important and vital, sometimes we have also conflictive but fruitful discussions. We have also installed a public transport forum where the cycling lobby is also involved.

How necessary for cycling is it that different city departments cooperate and work together?

It is necessary in 3 dimensions: first of all cycling infrastructure has to be part of a sustainable urban planning and city development: e.g. building new settlements, constructing new road infrastructure with bicycle lanes or in authority project processes: e.g. transforming parking places in bicycle places. A second dimension is awareness raising where the city of Graz is a forerunner in networking and working together with different partners and departments (intern and extern): school department is as well concerned with children's bicycle education - also financially - as well as the transport planning department or the department for sports. The department for environmental affairs is sponsoring bicycle trailers for companies or supports the purchases of cycling facilities and bicycle boxes. The third dimension is implementation planning where different players - e.g. construction companies (instructed by the holding company - a daughter of the city of Graz -) and different city departments has to coordinate a whole road building project: e.g. a tramway project including new cycle lanes, pavements considering green spaces, public seats, public transport stops etc.

Has your city been able to learn and adapt ideas from other cities for cycling - if so, how?

We have learned a lot from other cities: from Odense, Groningen, Ghent, Copenhagen, Bolzano and from different CIVITAS partners via excursions and personal contacts. E.g. bicycle traffic lights, traffic light circuits privileging pedestrians and cyclists or our tailor made bicycle rental "Graz Bike".

To what extent do your city transport planners listen to the views of residents on cycling?

Personal contacts - every question (phone call, email, mail) is answered by the bicycle coordinator, the service center or the political office. B) Every wish to get a bicycle facility (via phone call, email, mail) is recognised and checked in an on site visit/hearing conducted by the local transport authority. C) Regular exchange with the citizen board of adviser. D) Regular meetings with ARGUS, the Styrian cycling lobby in so called "cycling foren" and personal contact via funny events: from car free day to monthly city cycling tours, from full moon cycling events till the party of the environmental department. Personal residents' visits with Lisa Rücker or her mobility officer Gudrun Uranitsch are part of a cycling friendly communication.

How does your city balance the provision of 'hard' measures for cycling (infrastructure) with the provision of 'soft' measures such as maps and promotion measures?

Relation is about 8 (infrastructure) to 1 (soft measures), see question 3 and 5

How necessary are the communications and marketing of cycling initiatives to all your city residents?

Very important - see also our brochure "Come on, let's cycle! - Why cycling is fun in Austria's cycling capital" - there you find a summary about all offers, services and communication programmes of the city of Graz: <http://www.graz.at/cms/beitrag/10200547/4787419/> (only in German but the pictures explain the activities, pages 12 to 18).

Why is cycling important to you and your city?

After 30 years it's part of our city culture. A responsible health and environment policy has to promote cycling as a healthy, sustainable and environmental friendly activity of every day. Especially in Graz, where we still have a big particulate matter problem, cycling is one relevant alternative means of transport for short trips under 5 km. From a point of view of political economics cycling has a brilliant cost benefit calculation. Last but not least the potential for a modal shift towards cycling is not at all exhausted: There is a potential of 35 to 40% of all trips that could be done by bicycle in the city of Graz.

How did you become convinced that cycling has an important role in your city?

I'm already convinced! 20 years ago the city of Graz set one big and influencing milestone: Tempo 30 all over the city. That means speed limits for safety and environmental and social reasons, providing space (!) for soft means of transport (instead of cars) and a broad communication and promotional program including bicycle training offers for people who never cycled before, who do not cycle anymore or simply want to learn to cycle (children and youth!) are key factors for a successful cycling policy.

If you had one recommendation to make to another city starting to plan for bicycles, what would it be?

Maximum speed 30 KM / hour all over the city, providing space (!) for soft means of transport instead of cars and a broad communication and promotional program including bicycle training offers in real traffic for every generation and different target groups.

The interviews were taken by Oliver Hatch,
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THIS INTERVIEW IS PART OF 'ENABLING CYCLING CITIES: INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS'

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