The Urban Lab of Europe!

THEORICAL BACKGROUND
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BACKGROUND

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According to the United Nations, the world's urban population is expected to nearly double by 2050. This is a challenge for city planners because the more activities are concentrated in a given area, the more congestion, traffic dangers, and pollution (NO_2, CO_2) are generated. It is now well-established that these phenomena have adverse effects on health and local GDP. All of which has put urban mobility in the front line of the task of making cities liveable and functional. At the same time, cities are also in the front line on global warming.

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EU Urban Authorities have been working on delivering a new mobility model for many years within local, national, and European initiatives (such as CIVITAS or Europe on the Move, 2017). Many have put in place Sustainable Urban Mobility and Logistic Plans (SUMPs & SULPs), which embed a shared long-term vision in cities' mobility strategies. To address the challenges, and given that conventional solutions have already reached their limits, cities have become living laboratories for the design, development, and testing of new mobility options. For example, in its 2nd call for proposals, the EU's Urban Innovation Actions initiative called on cities to innovate in transport and mobility by taking action on:

- **Mobility infrastructures and services.** By exploiting soft solutions such as ride-hailing or car-pooling apps and creating hard infrastructures such as charging points for self-charging vehicles, cycling lanes, or logistics hubs.
- **The integrated urban transport of people and goods.** By addressing mobility challenges in a holistic way through a long-term strategy, developed with stakeholders (citizens, firms etc.), with emphasis on multimodality, functional areas, and producing replicable and measurable resource-efficient solutions.

Eighty-six proposals were received. Five projects were selected from five front-running European cities (Albertslund, Lahti, Ghent, Toulouse Metropole, and Szeged). These projects take a holistic approach as they include initiatives and measures that see mobility as intricately interwoven with economic, social, and environmental challenges.

[1] Traffic pollution still harmful to health in many parts of Europe, Jacqueline McGlade, EEA Executive Director, Press Release, 22 Nov 2012.

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