

How to build political and public acceptance for parking policy

Tom Rye, Urban Planning Institute of Slovenia and Professor, Molde University College, Norway tom.rye@himolde.no

**Parking is a peculiar thing,
politically...**

On-street parking often seen as a right

Generally, parking is perceived as a public good and, as such, people think it should be subsidized or free – unlike with most other goods and services.

I bought a car but the government hasn't given me a free place to park!



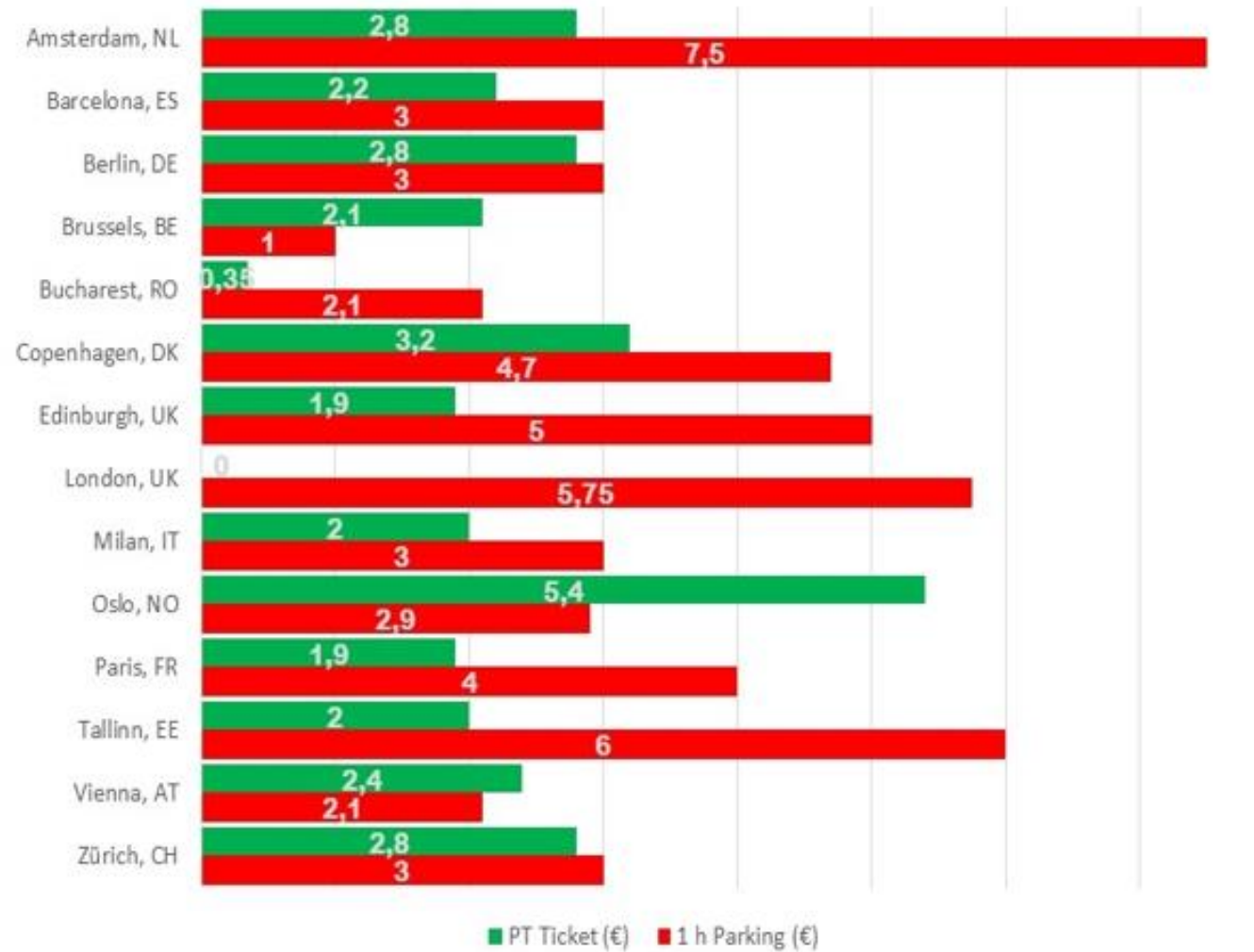
I bought an air conditioner but the government hasn't given me a free house in which to install it!



Source Illustration: IDTP Parking Guidebook for Beijing

In contrast - who ever talks about this?

Most expensive 1h parking compared with single ride PT-ticket (2018)



Political decisions required – political benefits

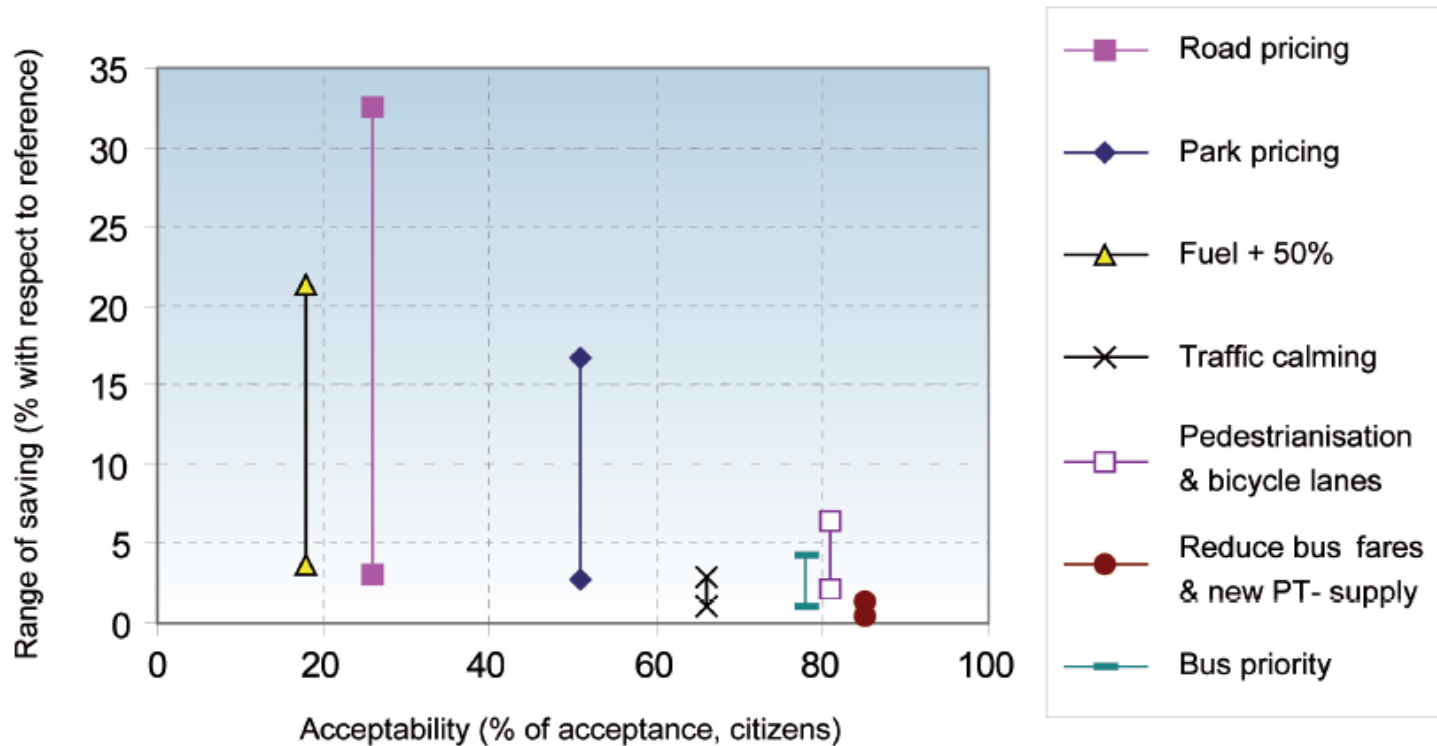
Krakow 2016:

- Grodzka street for pedestrians!
- Significant increase in acceptance
- Shop and restaurant rents quickly increased
- (More examples later)



Parking management quite acceptable compared to other “stick” measures (as measured by survey)

Fuel saving vs. public acceptability of measures

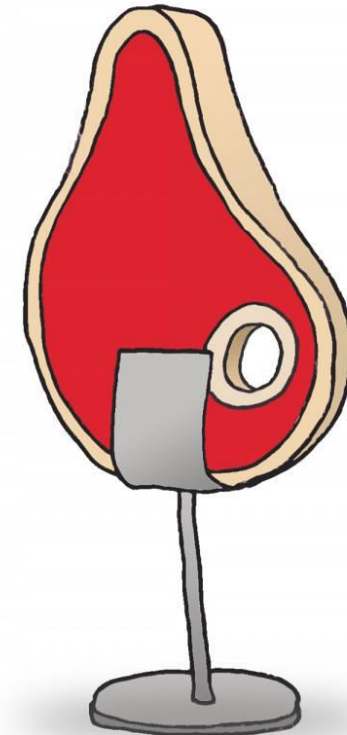


Source: EU-project: PORTAL 2003

But – parking still controversial with lots of sensitive stakeholders

- Local residents
- Local retail businesses
- Property owners
- Large institutions under a single management
- Local employees

"STEAKHOLDER"



How politician Carl Hanssens deals with sensitive stakeholders who complain about parking

- Carl Hanssens is a centre-right local politician in the Belgian city of Sint Niklaas (80,000)
- SUMP includes removal of on-street parking in city centre to create better pedestrian environment
- “I don’t have to be popular – I just want to make this city a better place”
- “I can’t just make no changes”
- He was Alderman for Mobility when this interview was done
- He’s now Deputy Mayor
- BUT – not all politicians are like him!



Experiences of implementing parking management in face of protest

Example Vienna: (Non)- acceptance of policies

Protest against cycling parking measures from the conservative party **before** implementation.
 But wait ...who remembers **after** implementation



Activities in Vienna to raise acceptance

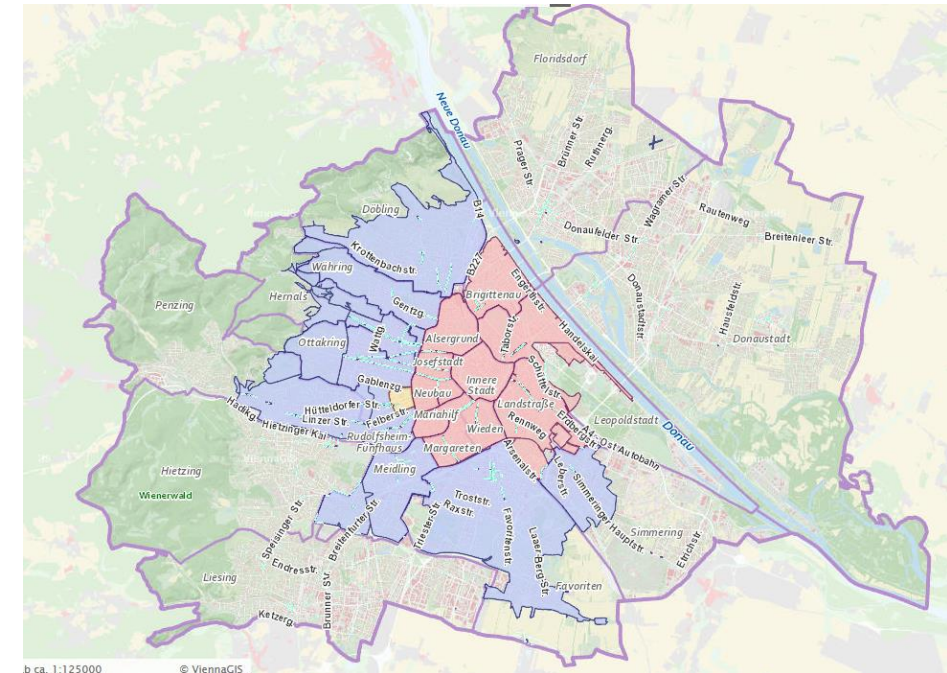


Vienna implemented first paid parking in the inner city district. In the period 2012 – 2018 the area extended district by district.

Elected district leaders have a key role.

Opinion polls carried out in some districts

- Even when the result was negative, parking management was implemented in 2 districts
- Only one district rejected the idea (after 2 negative polls)



Lesson learnt: Opinion polls like in Vienna with little prior knowledge, doubtful formulation of the question and not correct communicated - not recommended!

Vienna – dealing with media



- Media played (and still play) in Vienna an important role at each extension of on-street parking management (paid parking).
- Portray **horror-scenarios**.
- **Result often wide rejection** – even from stakeholders like residents who benefit from parking space management.
- **Politicians** were often **attacked**.
- **After implementation and when positive results were visible - negative reactions mostly disappeared.**

Lesson learnt: Do not be discouraged. People / media often can't judge a situation that they don't know but react with rejection based upon negative future fantasy-scenarios. Give them time to have positive experience, work with a longer test phase.

Activities in Vienna to raise acceptance



Two activities were really successful and supportive:

- 1.) **Before – after surveys** on impacts with results publicised
- 2.) **Good preparation for implementation** which included
 - Information brochures for each household in the district
 - District assemblies (on request)
 - Advice (also in local radio) to apply well in time for residential parking permits
 - Well trained staff that deals with parking permits which guaranteed clear information and little waiting times
 - Online application service for parking permits
 - (Not in Vienna but sometimes in UK) – warning not fine for first offence

Strategies to persuade stakeholders of benefits of parking management

- Collect basic data on parking occupancy and use it, and visualisations, to inform consultation activities
- Special arrangements for key stakeholder groups such as e.g. residents' permits at low cost
- Visible complementary improvements hand in hand with parking management
- Using revenues of paid parking for local needs (e.g. also by involving stakeholders in a co-creation / co-decision process.) Example: Parking Benefit Districts, participatory budgets
 - Example Sofia BG: whenever paid parking is implemented, pavement alongside is renovated with the revenues

Photo: FGM-AMOR



Sandnes, Norway – Ruten city centre park

- City of 85,000
- Conversion of car park to park
- Test phase first (temporary conversion)
- “Usual suspects” opposed it
- Young people, people whose voice normally not heard – supported it
- Original plan was to build underground parking to replace – not done
- Politically not uncontroversial but not a game-changer
- Mayor stayed in power



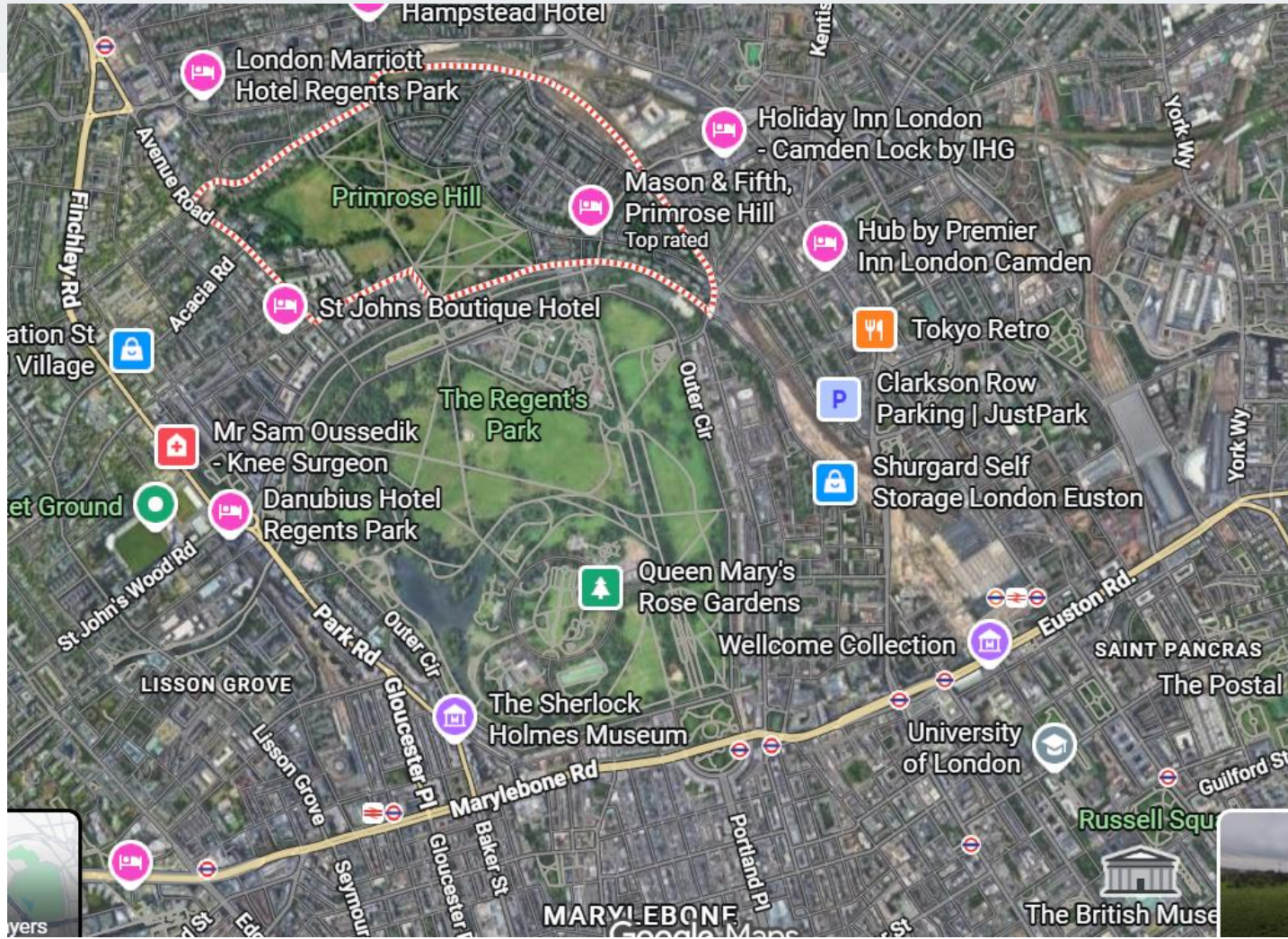
Lessons learnt for communication in parking management

- **Do a test phase with possibilities to modify!**
- **People need time to adapt to changes**
- **Show the benefits**
- **In participation, don't just listen to the "usual suspects"**
- **Do it and be patient !**

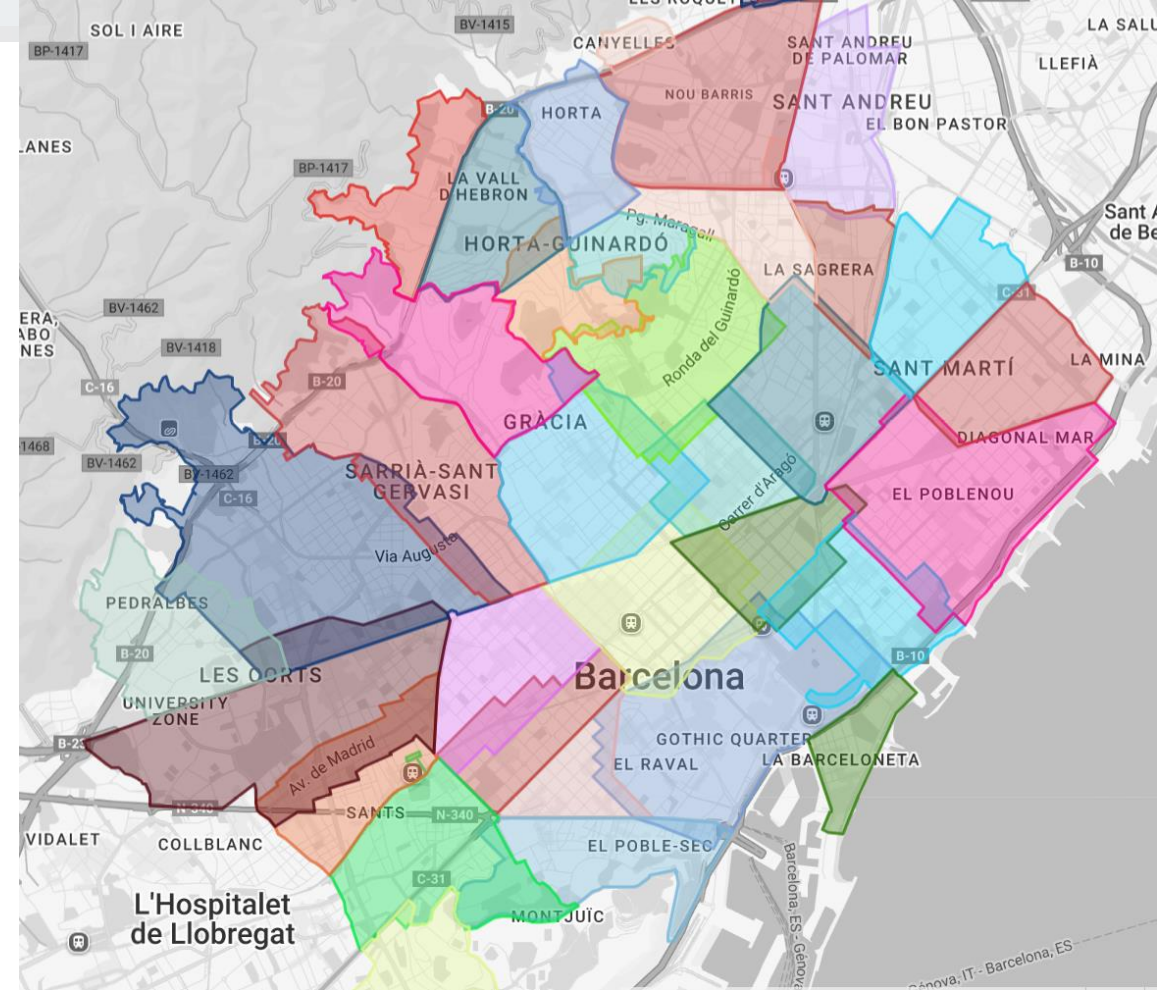
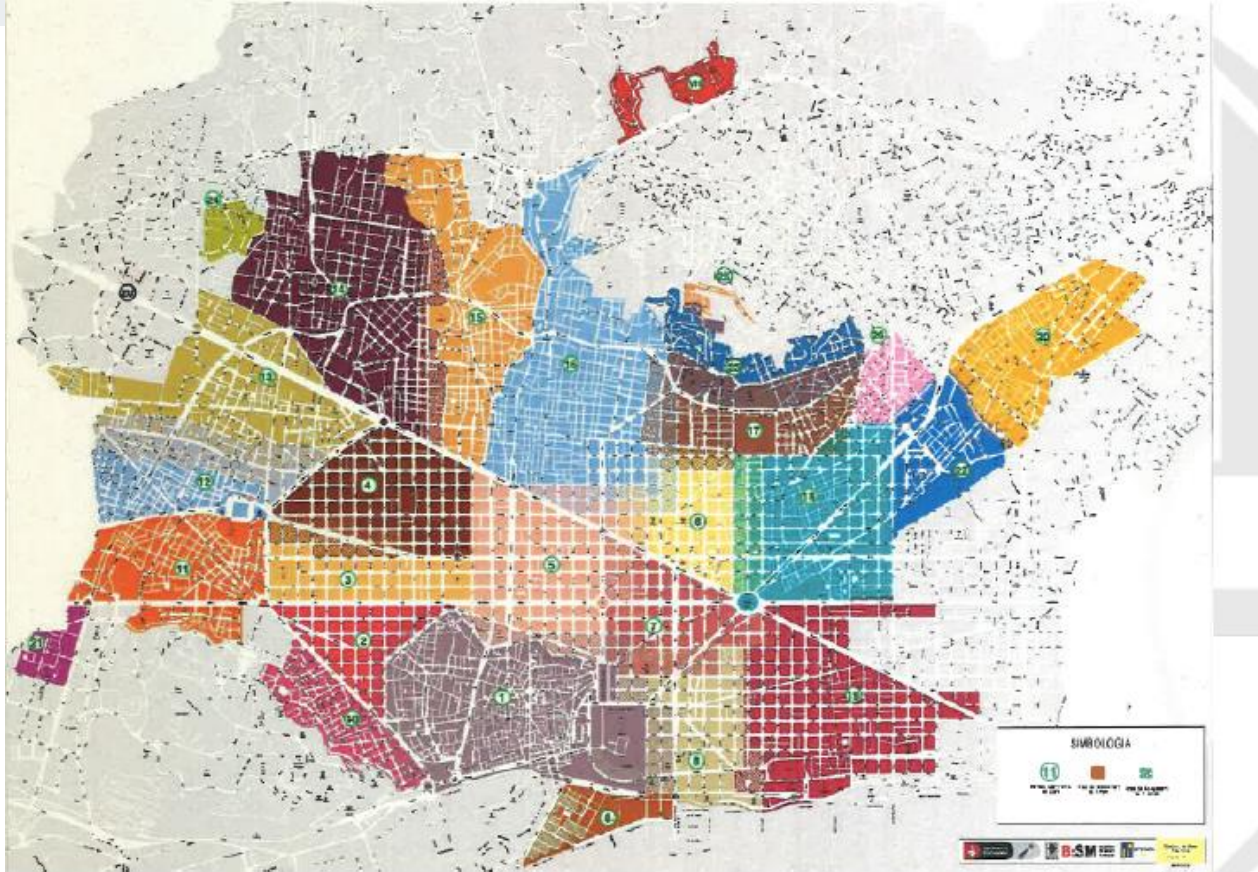
Source: PROSPERITY, Gregor Stratil-Sauer

If parking management is politically risky – why is it spreading?

London spread of parking management



Barcelona spread of parking management 2020 to 2026



Scotland footway (sidewalk) parking ban



- New national law December 2023
- Pics (Edinburgh) from 2023 and 2025
- Very little political fallout

Conclusions: basic steps in raising acceptance for parking management

- **Clear reason for parking management. Gaining revenues from paid parking not the primary goal.** Should be **solving problems**, and achieving **objectives of transport policy**.
- Make system **as simple as possible**.
- System must not be open to **legal challenge**.
- **Say how you will use the money**.
- Penalties e.g. size of fine **proportionate to the offence**.
- **Communication** must be **clear** and without misunderstanding
- **Timing**: Combine new parking management implementations with improvements of sustainable modes or new supply in public space.
E.g. In Vitoria Gasteiz, ES overnight tripling of parking fees was implemented alongside new PT system (incl. trams)
- **Start small**, build from there



Relationship between parking and local economy

Parking management supports the local economy

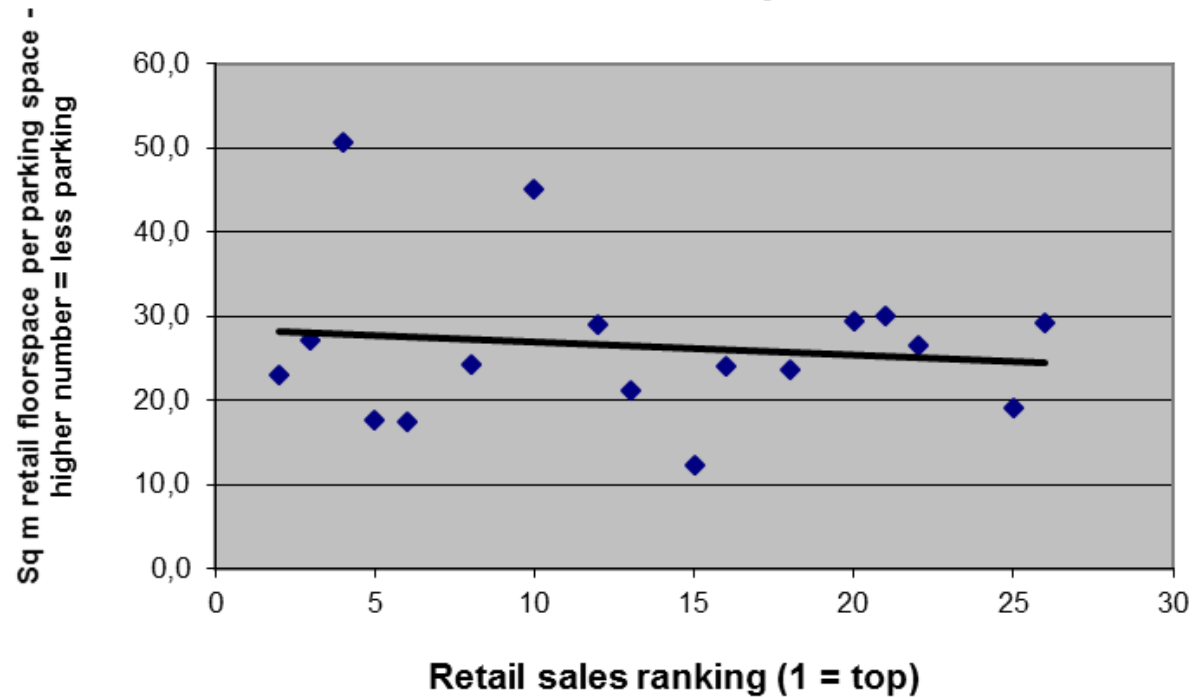
- Contrary to general beliefs, parking management supports local economy
- Paid parking does not reduce the number of visitors!
- On the contrary, by managing mobility, it keeps the city center accessible
- There is **no direct relationship between** turnover of shops and the transport mode used by customers **and/or the amount or price of parking spaces**



Photos: FGM-AMOR

Parking capacity vs. retail sales (UK)

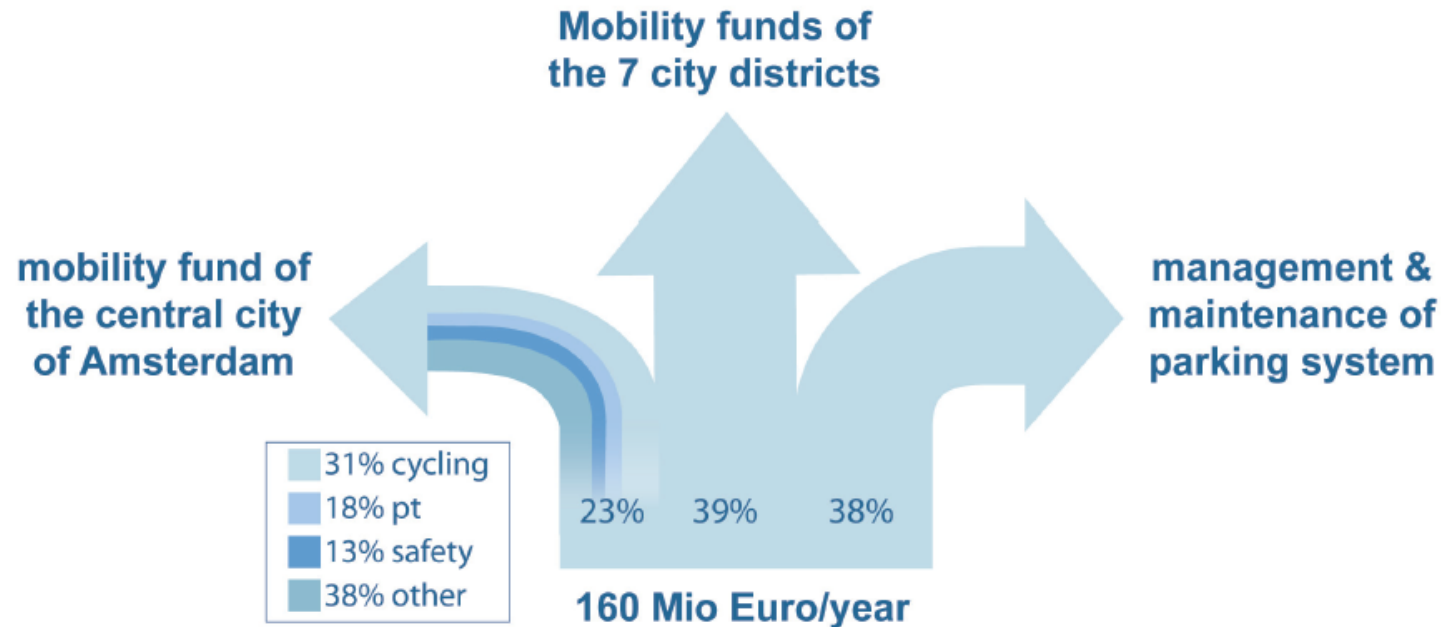
Retail floorspace per off-street parking space related to retail sales, GB city centres



The amount of parking per m2 does not influence the retail sales

Parking management pays for itself!

Use of parking fees in Amsterdam



Source: The Amsterdam Mobility Fund, 2014

Example: Use of revenues of paid parking by law in Krakow

New regulations (effective from 2020):

- Not less than **69%* of income** from paid parking zone fees – for PT, walking, cycling and green areas
- **100% of fines income** – for PT, walking, cycling and green areas
- Separate **bank account**

* *65% required by new national law*



Slide taken from Tomasz Zwolinski's presentation at Civitas Forum 2019 in October 2019