

Transport Day – COP22, with a focus on: Adaptation to climate change for waterborne transport

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Transport day 2016 (13.11.2016), a side event to COP22, had the aim of gathering all actors active or interested in transport in relation to climate change. The event was held in addition to roughly 20 other events scheduled during the official COP22 proceedings with a focus on transport. SLoCaT organised the day and the main message from the organisers was 'Dream Big'.

The turnout was good, with approximately 80% of those signed up for the event turning up on the day (a significant improvement from last year which may indicate that transport is being taken more seriously).

The introductory panel had a largely positive message to inspire the proceedings:

- 75% of all NDC's now include transport (however only 9% have real targets!)
- The transport sector is now seen as a model sector by many and ahead of the game in many ways
- We have achieved very much over the past few years, but there is still much to do...

The president of SLoCaT mentioned: adaptation is also very important and there is more and more happening in adaptation.

Although it was mentioned that adaptation is very important, only one 1.25 hour slot was allocated to adaptation during transport day. In this slot, representatives from the World Bank, the International Road Federation, railways (John Dora Limited) and waterborne transport (PIANC WG178) presented for their sectors.

The messages from the different sectors were largely similar with some small differences:

World Bank:

There is a fundamental uncertainty in climate change adaptation. A resilience strategy must include:

1. Maintenance. This is critical
2. Structured vulnerability assessment
3. Design standards
4. Data, data, data
5. Preparedness

Key message: maintenance is critical and we must develop a common language

International road federation:

- A need for strategic planning that can be implemented on the ground
- Identify vulnerability, with asset inventories
- Local information – data

France was highlighted as a good example, going through 800 standards that required change to accommodate for adaptation

Key message: monitor to plan and find out when is the most effective time for action.

John Dora Consulting:

New standard with working group: ISO 14001

- Deterministic design is not the right approach for the future, it must be adaptable

Key message: We must provide new standards, engineers can do the rest

Norconsult - PIANC WG178:

Adaptation should be flexible and may be implemented in stages.

- Monitoring is key and should be promoted at any stage, also non-high tech log keeping
- Adaptation measures must be flexible, including responsive measures (adaptation management)
- The measures must include physical, but also social and institutional
- Some examples of measures were presented

Key message: Start monitoring and don't have foregone conclusions about adaptation, all measures must be considered.

The similarity in the responses from 3 different transport sectors, show clearly that cooperation between the sectors should be possible and is probably advisable.

As a final comment the representative from the World Bank was asked what he thought the next step should be:

To establish a common language so that we can communicate throughout the sector on matters of adaptation, and produce standards that can be used to implement change.

Comments from participants were few and quickly cut short because of the lack of time.

Side note: The fact that so little time was allocated to adaptation sends a clear message as to the level of interest for adaptation measures and the importance it is allocated.

General Reflections from 2 days as the COP:

Today's NDC's are steering towards a 3.5 degree warming of the global climate and even now countries are struggling to keep to the limits laid out in these. A relatively positive outlook may therefore forecast a possibility of reaching a 2 degree warm up. The one thing that we know is that there will be a raise in the global temperature and the climate impacts that accompany this change. By ignoring this problem and acting only through reactionary measures, the world may have a very large cost to bear in the coming decades. Through forward planning and early action (though it may be argued that early action is no longer a possibility) costs and impacts of a changing climate can be **managed** over time.

Statistics from SLoCaT showed that most attention in the transport sector is attributed to passenger transport and 'freight is being largely neglected'. In so saying, it may be assumed that waterborne transport is equally neglected, seeing as this largely constitutes of freight transport, and it was indeed clear from both, the COP schedule and Transport Day proceedings, that waterborne transport was far from the prioritized sector. There is clearly a huge potential for improvement here for the whole transport sector and arguably particularly the waterborne transport sector.

Side note: It might be argued that waterborne transport finds itself between 2 worlds, one world which is interested in the oceans and climate change science and the other interested in transport, focusing on rail, road and aviation. (The aviation industry interestingly has made significant progress over the last few years with a sector wide agreement on CO2 limitations and plans for electrical power when planes are on the ground.)

Mitigation strategies, lowering the output of CO2 into the atmosphere are very important and will be key in limiting the impacts of climate change in the long run. However, a focus on mitigation, with a lack of focus on adaptation may result in a situation where all efforts and investments are futile, as for example, new train line projects are washed away by excessive flooding events or a new fleet of electrically powered vehicles is brought to a standstill because the power supply is vulnerable to climate change impacts. Adaptation should therefore always be considered in parallel to mitigation projects as well as considered for existing infrastructure.

The focus on governance and standards is a very relevant key point, as well as the collection of data in the form of monitoring.

- Standards are an effective method of taking the ideas on adaptation from high level institutions and experts down to the projects on the ground and ensuring that adaptation is not only considered but also implemented.
- Monitoring is required to have more detailed knowledge of what should be done where and determining when the best time to act is.

As a combined sector (road, rail, air and waterborne) the feasibility of achieving a real improvement in the dissemination and implementation of both may be greatly improved.

Side note: from my experience at transport day I would argue that SLoCaT is not the organisation to front the interests of adaptation seeing as it is too far from their main priority. Instead a separate, but connected, organisation with focus on adaptation is required.

Interesting quotes from conversations at the COP:

- A Nigerian representative responded when asked about adaptation plans in Nigeria: 'we are very much dependant on the West when it comes to technology. When the West find a good adaptation method we can apply it in Nigeria.'
- The Moroccan government is planning a large transportation upgrade with significant investments into roads and new railway lines. It boasted a new and sustainable transport network. When asked if there was an adaptation plan for this large new investment, the representative responded that 'I'm not sure... I think there might be one at the governmental level... I believe.'





