

Cities facing COVID-19: What's worked, what hasn't, and what is next?



Elke Jakubowski

Hamburg



Javier Buron

Barcelona



Elke Jakubowski

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Tricia Hackett

Moderator

Questions and Answers:

Question:

For Mayor Cunha, what measures has Vila Nova de Famalicão put in place to protect seniors living in group homes/institutions?

Mayor Paulo Cunha:

We implemented a program of individual protection for every employee, and we made a covid19 tracking for every senior, and employees in all institutions.

Question:

Hello everyone from Quadrilátero, in the north of Portugal.

Do you believe that the current situation in which we live, will "compel" us to think about new ways of doing politics, new ways of interaction and coordination between institutions? Thanks

Elke Jakubowski:

Absolutely. We need more international collaboration in such situations. At European and global levels. From our experience in Hamburg, collaboration within the country worked fairly well, but there was not enough time to attend to international collaboration to my perspective.

Question:

To all speakers: What is the trigger for opening up the economy, etc. Here in Belgium, the key indicator seems to be a daily rate of new hospitalizations of less than 100 persons (peak was 620). Do you have a trigger for re-opening in your city, and, on the other side, a trigger in the event of a second Covid wave which would lead you to closing down again?

Elke Jakubowski:

It is a combination of several indicators. Incidence is one, Rt and Ro rates play a role, as well as the duplication rate; and hospitalization rate in particularly intensive care rate. We do not have a trigger for re-closures but it will likely be a combination of the above.

Question:

What are the measures that cities adopted to guarantee social distance in public space?

Javier Búron:

Individual responsibility and police patrolling. But take into account that most of the population is living completely at home for the last 42 days. Not many people are actually allowed to use the streets.

Elke Jakubowski:

Mainly recommending and controlling adherence to social distancing, and as of yesterday the use of masks. We have extensively built on public advice and communication.

Question:

Are you planning to adapt future measures to the specific region/local contexts - in terms of number of cases, population density, etc? How the role of local authorities would change? What has been and will be the role of local NGOs and voluntary sector in the response to the COVID? This question is for Elke

Elke Jakubowski:

Yes, actually we had a lot of debate about this: is it better to do things all the same, or should we opt for locally specific solutions which will then also give us the opportunity to compare the results? I guess that we decided pretty much to move in unity both concerning regions as well as between local communities. But the reason was political, there were a lot of pressures to have common and similar approaches. Also in view of equity. The role of NGOs and the voluntary sector is very large. They are particularly active in providing advice, in organising practical help and filling gaps (e.g. medical care to people without insurance).

Question:

For Elke, how are the local governments collaborating within the region? Is there a regional organization dedicated to coordinating actions, such as consistent protections among businesses?

Elke Jakubowski:

We collaborate very actively between the regions, both at the technical level as well as the political level. The coordination is now with the national government. This was introduced with very recent legislation for the case of a pandemic

Question:

For Elke, which measures have been planned to reopen the city ?

Elke Jakubowski:

We have opened shops, and schools to some age classes of children. Others are planned to follow. We are discussing to open museums, and some sport sides. We are also discussing opening hotels.

Question:

For all speakers: What is being done for the protection of women in your cities given the increase in cases of gender based violence all over the world during COVID-19?

Elke Jakubowski:

We have introduced special settings for women and have also intensified phone counselling and advisory services.

Question:

To all: Which changes do you envisage in the post-COVID19 time that are linked to the new ways of working you had to implement in order to respond to this emergency?

Elke Jakubowski:

We will certainly be more digital in future. Spend less time in traveling to conferences and meetings; and do much more online. It works, doesn't it?

Question:

For all speakers: What are you doing to plan for economic recovery? How are you planning to reopen without increasing the risk for a second wave?

Javier Búron:

We'll follow the instructions of the health authorities, of course. But when it's allowed, we'll try to be Keynesian and disruptive (mitigation) at the same time. Something quite difficult in a context of tight public budgets.

Elke Jakubowski:

To your second question: we are trying to monitor the epidemiological effect of the gradual openings. We still rely on contact reduction measures and contact tracing. We are currently discussing the introduction of a tracking App for people who wish to register to help contact tracking.

Question:

To all: Are you working on contingency plans to cope with potential new COVID-19 waves? In your opinion, what would be most critical?

Elke Jakubowski:

For a next wave we feel a little more equipped, since we have extended our testing capacity and our COVID-19 care infrastructure. I think we also experienced what worked in terms of compliance to lockdown measures. But we are still nervous that when we open, we might not get as good a compliance as first time around. This makes us a little careful in the opening phase.

Question:

It's clear about the present presentation that we need to reconsider our public and private spaces!

Elke Jakubowski:

Yes. I think we learned to value our private places. In my own family, we moved closer together also with neighbors. But we realized just how tough this situation has been for those without a home. And those living with many people in a tiny home.

Question:

While Barcelona has a robust social culture, what kind of impact do you think modular housing without a pedestrian friendly urban design interface might have on the safety, "eyes on the street", and social connectedness + resiliency long term?

Javier Búron:

We love Jane Jacobs. :-) I don't think that modular / industrial production of public housing has to have a negative impact in the socio-spatial fabric. At least we are trying to avoid that.

Eduard Cabré Romans:

Very interesting reflection! So far, the APROP modular construction project in Barcelona includes a community center in the ground floor precisely to ensure the social connection/interaction with the surroundings. In terms of the architectural quality, it is actually better than many private residential projects.

More info: https://habitatge.barcelona/en/noticia/first-aprop-temporary-homes-in-ciutat-vella-ready-to-tackle-the-housing-emergency_893737

Question:

To all: looking at the positive side of this crisis, which opportunities and changes towards a better cities you think the pandemic is opening to us?

Javier Búron:

Debureaucratize. Use technology as much as possible. Program less, act more and reevaluate constantly. Tiring. But more effective.

Elke Jakubowski:

I think it has been a very good experience to work between sectors, internal, health, economic affairs, education, finance etc. Also between disciplines. And we certainly learned how to quickly mobilize resources :-). Using digital technology has also made us advance in the public sector much quicker than without the crisis. Javier brought it down very nicely, I could not agree more!

Question:

For Guiletta. Is this a good opportunity to make major changes in the city? Can we use this to jump years ahead in adopting a more sustainable community?

Giulietta Fassino:

Yes sure. Crisis is a good opportunity to try to accelerate processes & projects. I'm also thinking about implementing test of tactical urbanism to make cities more livable (paths, pedestrianized squares & streets, etc)

Question:

Although "Glocalization" concept (instead of globalization) is not absolutely new, it has become much more important at this moment. Are your municipal government planning any initiative or strategy about it?

Elke Jakubowski:

Yes, we are for instance really trying to push local/regional production of medical supplies; in fact some supplies e.g. masks and disinfection agents are now produced in the city. The dependence on global markets and global supply chains has been very painful. These considerations are not yet at overall strategic levels, but I am sure this discussion has only started.

Question:

How does the adaptation of residential stock for intensive use relate to Barcelona's Right to Housing plan?

Javier Búron:

The decline of short-term touristic demand opens a new window of opportunity to public private cooperation in terms of mobilization of private stock to public rental. We are working on it as much as we can right now.

Question:

Did you increase pedestrian and bicycle spaces?

Eduard Cabré Romans:

Barcelona: <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/barcelona/20200425/barcelona-ampliara-aceras-y-carriles-bici-para-minimizar-los-contagios-covid-7940149>

Javier Búron:

Yes, we are in the process.