

German-Malaysian Project: Approaches for Reduction of Air Pollutants, Sustainable Urban Traffic Systems – Kuala Lumpur as a case

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Like many major cities in Asia, Latin America and Africa, large Malaysian cities face severe air quality and traffic congestion problems. The German-Malaysian project (2002 – 2007) provided scientific, technical and organizational support to the National Dept. of Environment (MY). Although each city has its own local circumstances and social, economic, and political conditions, the MY project benefited from previous experiences gained in Mexico City and Santiago de Chile during the 1990s. These experiences led to a project design integrating both technical as well as urban and transport planning elements.

Fields of cooperation were

- revision and development of existing and new emission standards, respectively, for mobile and stationary sources and their enforcement;
- improvement of fuel quality and introduction of fuel quality monitoring procedures;
- development of a more sustainable urban development by integrating transport and land-use planning with clean air issues;
- promotion of inter-institutional cooperation and commitment to air quality;
- development of effective strategies for social communication and participation;

While reduction of actual air pollution was the focus of the project, urban transport emissions have to be dealt with in various time scales. Continuously increasing transport emissions and fuel consumption are the consequences of several driving forces, including traffic growth, poor fuel quality and insufficient vehicle maintenance. As technical fixes alone fail to bring sustainable solutions, paving the road towards more sustainable urban transport systems requires a more fundamental approach.

While the project was attached to the national DOE, which is responsible a. o. for national vehicle and fuel standards, other important aspects, including urban planning and public transport services, are ruled by local and regional institutions. At community level, broad participation of stakeholders, including local NGOs, is needed.

As can be seen in many cities in Europe and in the US (with metropolitan areas like Los Angeles), extended road construction and sub-urbanization establish a feed-back system of fleet growth, increasing vehicle kilometres driven, less efficient public transport, and degrading urban quality of life. Integrated planning approaches, as applied in some European cities, but also in Japan and Singapore, may be a decisive element to foster sustainable urban transport system in Asian and Latin-American cities.