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# SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY IN ITALY: MODERN ANSWERS TO RECURRING PROBLEMS?

How companies like Volvero help foster a green economy

ph credits Denys Nevozhai



Sustainable mobility is a widely discussed topic - both nationally and internationally - within the European Union. Actually, European policy has been increasingly focused on urban development, environmental sustainability, transport and mobility. In Italy, private cars are responsible for 66% of travels occurring on Italian roads, according to an "Urban Policies and Mobility Trends report"

in 2017 by the department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Architecture, University of Cagliari. In addition, this research has found that Italy has the second highest number of private vehicles registered in Europe, with 604 vehicles per 1000 inhabitants. For this reason, the fairly new implemented National Law 28 December 2015, No. 221 stating that "Environmental dispositions to promote the green economy measures

and the excessive use of natural resources containment” is particularly important for Italy. This law includes the provision of funds equivalent to 35 million euro for municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants to finance sustainable transportation projects that will limit road traffic and pollution. These projects include car sharing, carpooling, walking and public bus initiatives, bike sharing, the creation of protected routes for travel like construction of bike paths and walking trails, and the list goes on.

While the government is putting into place financial initiatives and promoting the idea of a greener economy, sometimes the execution can't be perceived by everyday travellers. In the northern Italy area, the common perception about current offered solutions, is that there are many limitations and the State isn't doing much to help so citizens have to figure

out alternative mobility solutions on their own.

In fact, the public-initiative transportation system and the provided infrastructure have still have problems to tackle. The biggest identified issues could be summarised in:

### 1. Unreliability

Unlike countries like Germany who are notorious for having an on-time public transportation schedule, Italy has the opposite. Most people have to account for an unreliable time-schedule when planning their journeys. Therefore, there's a lack of trust on public transportation.

### 2. It's hard to access

Italy is a country that has a general lack of valid alternative transportation options and that problem gets worse the more south you go. Many people live relatively far from a public transport stop and have to walk or ride a bike

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ph credits Jurre Houtkamp

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long distances to get to that stop.

### 3. It's not cost or time effective

Because the public transportation is not usually integrated well within the medium to smaller sized cities, often times, citizens have to take multiple different modes of transportation within one day. This can waste loads of time and can really add up in costs.

We interviewed some people living in Italy, coming from different age groups and lifestyles who struggle with transportation in Italy:

Anastasia, Age 24, Master's student in Padua

“Part of my University program is a mandatory internship. I started a position in Vicenza that required me to go to the office in person 5 days a week. My apartment is not close to the train station so I can either take a bus or I can ride my bike. On my first day I wanted to make a good impression with my new employer, so I planned out my travel schedule. My bus was 15 minutes

late causing me to miss the connecting train. Because of this unpredictability I don't trust taking more than one mode of transportation in a day. Indeed, to increase the chance of being on time, I ride my bike to the station and take the train to Vicenza.”

Author's comment: “With the current mobility system, described by unreliability of public transportation solutions, it is hard to think about integration and intermodality. The unreliability of the system has negative social effects not allowing people of the mentioned area to reach job offices if they don't own a private vehicle. This is a cause of social inequalities, limiting the chance of working growth and income.”

Joshua, Age 36, an American who moved to Italy

“I moved to northern Italy to be with my wife. I'm accustomed to owning a car because Colorado is a spread out and huge State that often requires you to drive a car. The problem that I found



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when I came to Italy is that I don't always need a car because most things have the ability to get to on foot or by bike, bus or train. However, there are a few times a month that I actually do need a car whether it be a meeting for work outside of the city center, a doctor's appointment or a weekend getaway to the mountains. I feel bad about my carbon footprint, because the ownership of my car negatively impacts on my personal budget and on the planet when I'm actually just using it just sparsely."

Author's comment: "The financial aspect of owning a car can be counterintuitive, especially when you are using it sparsely. Users are also more aware of the waste they contribute to the earth."

Giorgio, Age 20, Italian University Student

"I moved to Venice for University from Trento and I wanted to move my things. It was impossible for me to rent a van because of my age. I didn't know anyone with a car or van big enough

to move all of my things so instead of dealing with the hassle of moving things and not having the possibility of renting a moving van I decided to buy everything brand new when I got to Venice. Of course, this took a toll on my finances and wish I had a better option as a young person."

Author's comment: "Students also feel the burden public transport in more ways than one, this can be another example of social inequalities within Italy."

The Italian government is committed to the pivot towards a green economy, but it is taking a while for the gap to be filled by the public. The bottom line is represented by people living in Italy who still have a hard time accessing greener solutions even if it is available to them. There should be an easier way to improve the mobility of transportation for Italian citizens. Some Italian companies already see this disconnection and are making an effort to fill this gap for the public.

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Among these, for example, there is **Volvero**: a vehicle sharing app in which private citizens or companies such as car rentals and car dealers can share their vehicles with those users who need to borrow one for medium or long periods. **Volvero**, an Italian startup with offices in northern Italy and London and a leader in sustainable mobility solutions, has realized that 95% of the time a car remains unused: instead of leaving it parked or in the case of dealers, unsold, the owners or retailers can monetize ownership by sharing it through a cutting-edge technology platform and insurance product. This type of service promotes sharing and the green economy, decreases the number of vehicles circulating on the streets and reduces pollution and the complexities for drivers in dealing with car rental agencies.

Traditional car sharing apps like Enjoy are already a reality. Instead of adding more vehicles to the streets, however, apps like **Volvero** help reuse those already on the road and at the same time fight the status quo of how car ownership has been understood up to now, which was a kind of status symbol, especially for generations over 40. **Volvero** also allows citizens to increase awareness of their environmental footprint in relation to daily mobility services and how their behavior can have a strong impact by contributing

themselves to the green economy.

The CEO of **Volvero**, **Marco Filippi**, reports in a statement that: “(..) we help solve inequalities, increase environmental sustainability and safety through a safe and reliable app for our users”.

The European Union and Italy specifically, see the obvious problem of having too many cars on the road and are contributing with massive investments to fight the problem. Sharing mobility options are improving communities by addressing a range of social issues such as inequalities, lack of security, driving behaviour, obstacles to access to transportation. Mobility apps can reduce inequality between social layers providing the possibility of mobility to those who do not own a vehicle, eliminating the concept of being underprivileged if not owning one.

The only prerequisite to making a sharing economy fully functional is trust. We already see a shift more towards a sharing economy, i.e., Airbnb, Bla Bla Car, etc. and the proven concept of interacting on the same level for products and services shows that a community focused economy is the latest trend. Going forward it will be likely to see more and more sharing economy services to help with mobility solutions.



ph credits Mikita Yo