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Luka Mladenovič, PhD<sup>1</sup>  
e-mail: luka.mladenovic@uirs.si

Aljaž Plevnik, PhD<sup>1</sup>  
e-mail: aljaz.plevnik@uirs.si

<sup>1</sup> Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia  
Trnovski pristan 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

## CHALLENGES OF BETTER SPATIAL AND TRANSPORT PLANNING INTEGRATION IN SLOVENIA

### Key Words

Spatial  
planning;  
Transport  
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Sustainable  
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Integration

### Abstract

Sustainable urban mobility plan (SUMP) is a relatively new approach to transport and mobility planning in Slovenia. The biggest steps in this field were taken in 2016 when more than 60 municipal SUMPs were developed. Through the development and implementation several challenges were reported by local communities related to Municipal spatial plans. Quickly it became clear that it is necessary to ensure a stronger integration of both documents in terms of procedural as well as content integration. The process of integration should probably involve adjustments of both documents regarding development processes, harmonization of goals, measures, indicators, implementation and results. A study was carried out to establish current level of integration. The approach combined a survey and structured interviews among experts leading the development process of both types of documents, as well as experts managing spatial and transport planning in local communities. Results showed that current level of integration is relatively low. Even though experts from both fields were often involved in development of both documents, objectives, targets and measures are not equally included in both plans even if the topics overlap. To increase the integration, activities will need to take place on several levels: capacity building, exchange of best practice, tools and supporting guidelines and later development of new legislation.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Transport and land use have a strong influence on each other. More intensive land use generates more transport. But also, good transport connections generate more intensive forms of land use. Relationships between the two are complex, with various interactive effects such as vehicle ownership and number of vehicle trips mode share, use of active transport modes [1] and after all health and well-being of the citizens [2]. Cities and municipalities use various approaches to deal with planning of land use and transport, but quite often the topics are divided by sectors into departments with limited coordination.

In Slovenian Municipal spatial plan (MSP) have been used as the main land use planning tool under different names practice for decades. MSP preparation is legally binding and highly formalized. Because it needs to be coordinated with several high-level stakeholders its development takes several years. It can be updated but as well the update process is complex and time consuming. Transport and accessibility are an integral part of the MSP, but only on the level of networks and their spatial components.

Sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP) are a relatively new approach to transport and mobility planning. Their preparation has been promoted by the European Commission for more than 15 years and is still actively ongoing [3]. While the first practical implementation in Slovenia took place more than 10 years ago. The biggest steps in this field were taken in 2016 when more than 60 municipal SUMP were developed within the call of the Ministry of Infrastructure which was financed by the European cohesion fund.

A SUMP defines a long-term development vision and measures for a balanced development of all forms of mobility. Its preparation is based on thorough research of the current state regarding mobility, stakeholder involvement and strong citizen engagement. The development process takes about a year and the document should be refreshed every 2-3 years. The document is currently not legally prescribed but is required in order to be eligible to apply for financing of the measures from different sources.

MSP and SUMP are two key strategic documents for land use and transport planning at local level and their content and processes overlap or complement in many aspects. Through the development of SUMP it has become clear that it is necessary to ensure the mutual integration of both documents, but also strategic approaches. Pozoukidou [4] proposes integration on several levels: strategy oriented, target oriented, through evaluation and through final impact assessment. But before reaching a high level, the development of integration can go through several phases. Stead and Meijers [5] define three: policy cooperation, policy coordination and the final policy integration.

In order to determine the extent and level of current integration, challenges arising and possible steps for improvements, a research project was set up by Ministry of Spatial Planning, Ministry of Infrastructure and Slovenian Research Agency. The study took place in 2018 and 2019 and included several steps, such as overview of current national legislation regarding integration, interviews and surveys, pilot

projects, planning simulations, workshops with representatives of municipalities and experts and research of best practice and approaches from abroad. The main result of the project was definition of current state and decision on next steps to be taken by both ministries in charge.

The paper presents results of the segment of the project focusing on experiences of experts leading the development process of both types of documents, as well as experts managing spatial and transport planning in local communities.

## 2. METHODS

Main methods used for data collection in the study were two, survey to cover a larger number of representatives and structured interviews to get an in-depth information about the current state. Both approaches have been used on two types of experts. In the first group there were experts working in the field of land use and transport planning in municipal administration. Since those two topics are often covered by different departments, we tried to include experts from same municipalities to gain view from both perspectives. Second group consisted of experts working for private consultancies which were involved in development of MSPs and SUMP. Within the study we focused on consultancies which were involved in development of both documents.

The survey took place in June 2019 and managed to collect data from 25 respondents from experts working for municipalities and 10 from consultants. Interviews took place in the following months and included 3 experts from municipalities and 3 consultants.

In order to describe the current level of spatial and transport planning integration a 4-level scale was used, which is used in several policy related quality management scheme such as BYPAD [6], ISEMOA [7] and PARKPAD tool [8]. The scale is intended to help the evaluator to describe the current stage of development and propose appropriate actions in order to reach a next level. The first level is described as ad hoc-oriented, where there is some form of policy in place, but it's level of development is minimal and mainly limited to problem solving. Second level, also described as isolated approach is, when there are elements of a policy in place, but are neither embedded in the overall development policy nor inter-coordinated with other sectors. There might be some success stories related to this level, but there are limited to individual examples of policy aspects. Third level of development is already system-orientated. The policy in question is regarded as a system, which is integrated into the overall development policy. Besides that, there is the political will to support the policy and the allocation of sufficient personnel and means to deal with the topic. The highest, fourth level, is also called the integrated approach. On this level the policy is regarded as a continuous task with strong relationships with other policy fields. Besides political support, systematic networking and strategic partnerships characterize the considered policy.

### **3. RESULTS**

#### **3.1 Land use and transport planning in practice**

First part of the research focused on general aspects related to land use and transport planning. The participants were asked to think about recent development projects that took place in their local community and consider if both fields were taken into consideration adequately.

Only 48% of the experts working within municipalities were positive regarding the principles and guidelines available in their MSP to be enough in securing appropriate accessibility conditions for placing new programs. The role of SUMP here is therefore essential.

MSPs often include strategic principles that are generally helpful within strategic thinking of spatial development. But they become a big burden when considering actual projects. Some demands, written in these documents are not tested and can pose impassable obstacles or unreasonably high costs to the investors.

In practice the available criteria put too much focus on car accessibility and good parking conditions. On the other hand, the MSPs are not securing development of direct, continuous, safe and pleasant connections for pedestrians and cyclists. But these topics became more important only with the activities related to SUMP development.

But already MSPs do not provide enough leverage to local administration to influence how new development projects are placed, designed and accessible. 50% of respondents claim that the municipality can only partially influence such decisions. Partially this is related to lack of tools and mechanisms to influence the design after MSP is in place. In many cases local communities are also not willing to push the investors into better solutions because the investor might change his mind and move the project to another location (municipality). It is therefore up to knowledge and initiative of local experts to what extent the existing tools are used. But their success is depending on conditions surrounding each individual case which corresponds to ad-hoc solutions.

#### **3.2 Relationship between MSP and SUMP**

Second part of the research dealt with the actual documents available in municipalities. There are significant differences between municipalities regarding understanding the relationship between the documents. As many as 74% of municipal representatives and 70% of experts consider MSP as the parent document. Only 24% of municipal employees and 20% of experts regard the MSP and SUMP documents as equal. This is probably due to the fact that the MSP is significantly more regulated and involved in legislation, and the preparation of a SUMP is optional.

Comparing the availability and timeframe of both documents in municipalities there are different situations regarding the status and adoption of MSP and SUMP. Some municipalities developed their MSP long before the SUMP, other are still working on it. This is of course a challenge that must be anticipated in development guidelines for both documents. But even so, currently only 36% of experts working in municipalities and only 10% of the experts involved in development of SUMP estimate that SUMP and MSP are well integrated. As many as 18% experts working in municipalities and 20% consultants involved in development of SUMP do not. All other report on partial integration.

Even where they are, it is mainly about integrating infrastructure projects from SUMP into the MSP, where this requires a change in spatial documentation and has already been an opportunity. Such involvement is reported by 30% of experts. More complex integration elements that require both infrastructural changes and the introduction of mobility management elements are largely absent. Some mobility management approaches are in place, especially in cities, but they lack efficient mechanisms for implementation. The situation regarding the integration is far from system oriented. We could say that in most cases we can find ad-hoc solutions and in some cities isolated practices of integration.

### **3.2 National level support**

Last part of the survey was dedicated to expectation of experts regarding future activities carried out by national level administration in order to address the described challenges.

In order to better integrate MSPs with SUMP, only 33% of municipal employees and 40% of experts are proposing changes in the legislation. Several experts are aware that non-obligatory approaches such as guidelines and position papers are much less efficient, but since development of MSPs is already a very complex task, they are against further steps in making the process even more complex. Some experts noted that there are already strategic level national documents in place which could support the integration but are not translated into practice.

On the other hand, 67% of municipal employees and 60% of experts support development of knowledge and exchange of experiences in this field. Proposals for activities vary from trainings, development of tools and guidelines, but also extending the topic to other administrative scales such as regional planning level.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

The responses of both groups of experts were rather consistent. Both groups agree that the current level of the integration is rather low which influences the planning processes in local communities. The overall level of development could be described as a solid level one: ad hoc-oriented. In some local environments, especially larger cities with stronger administrations and more experts working on

topics related to land use and transport planning, some elements of the system are already on level two: isolated approach.

The described level is also consistent with expectations of experts from the national level. They are cautious with expectations on the system-oriented level, such as changes in legislation or additional standards. Most of them see the way forward in development of guidelines and trainings for experts in order to build capacities and increase awareness of the importance of the topics such as placing new large transport generators, designing network of mobility points, circulation plans, comprehensive parking planning and introducing efficient mobility management plans.

The conclusions of the project were directed in similar direction. The objective for next steps regarding the integration of spatial and transport planning should work to develop a system in practice to support a solid second level integration (isolated approach) and start developing knowledge, tools and approaches for third level (system-orientated). The focus of both ministries should be directed in development of best practice examples which are thoroughly evaluated. Results should be communicated to all experts working in urban administrations with similar challenges. Parallel to these, trainings for experts should take place in order to build capacities. The changes in planning approach should be tested first in various local contexts before they are implemented as the actual legislation.

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