

Survey on the State of the Art of Transport Governance Tools and Local Sustainable Mobility in the Italy-Slovenia Cross-Border Area

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1 Introduction

This chapter deals with sustainability-oriented strategic planning tools in transport, and the role they play in the decision process of policy makers local authorities and stakeholders involved in various ways with decision-making roles into transport policies planning and management.

Integrated strategic planning is certainly not new in management disciplines. However, only recently it has been taken into consideration in local transport planning. In local authorities, in fact, the shift from a typically administrative vision (linked to the provision of the necessary public transport services and to local regulation) towards a strategic vision came only after a precise and decisive orientation towards increasing the sustainability of mobility. The issue has emerged especially since the beginning of this century, with

the growing awareness of the damage that traffic, and poor mobility in general, does to health and quality of life. The political focus on sustainable mobility first emerged in Europe's major cities and then spread, thanks above all to incisive political action and technical and financial support from the European Union.

In fact, the issue of sustainability has become central to European transport policies, particularly in the field of urban mobility, over the last twenty years, with increasing attention from institutions at national, cross-border and EU level (EUC 2001; 2005).

In addition to the environmental aspect, the social sustainability of transport is one of the most topical issues and has been gaining increasing attention over time among operators and scholars as well (Lanzini, Stocchetti 2020). At the urban level, the social sustainability of transport is one of the main reference points for inclusion policies, while at the cross-border level the social role of transport is mainly identifiable in the benefits in terms of cohesion and the closing of socio-economic gaps within the European Union.

In this study, developed in the framework of the project CROSSMOBY (Interreg Programme 2014-2020 V-A Italy-Slovenia), the focus on the Italian side of the programme area, that includes the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region and the Metropolitan area of the city of Venice. In particular, the study is based on data and information collected in the framework of a wide survey on the state of transport planning carried out involving more than 250 Italian municipalities.

For the survey, a series of interviews with pilot cases and a questionnaire were carried out, with the aim of identifying the main problems met by local actors in determining policies and actions for territorial government, in terms of: strategic planning, sustainable mobility and accessibility.

In the introductory section of this chapter a few basic concepts are presented, with a focus on strategic planning in the local context. The next part deals with the relationship between recent local transport planning tools, SUMP, and strategic planning, with particular reference to sustainable development aspects and accessibility as a *measure of the ability to access a destination, activity or group of activities using different transport methods*. Then, a summary of the results of the above-mentioned survey are presented, with a commentary on the actual state of diffusion of what are considered to be good practices in strategic planning and sustainable mobility.

2 Integrated Planning for Sustainable Mobility

Planning in transport plays a crucial role as it aims, among other things, to integrate and summarise often very different and divergent orientations and needs into operational decisions. In this, planning is a process of contextual analysis involving a platform of various stakeholders. Strategy is a decision-making process, based on the objectives to be achieved by the organisation, its constituents, the available resources and the policies to achieve them, defining the use and allocation of available resources.

Planning and strategy are therefore two closely interrelated and partially overlapping elements, aimed at analysing the reference environment in order to foresee its possible evolutions and implement a process capable of achieving the objectives in the face of the evolutionary dynamism of the environment itself. In this regard, we speak of strategic planning to indicate the process of defining long-term plans and actions starting from the analysis of several alternative scenarios that can be realised, with different probabilities, in the time span considered (Mazzara et al. 2010).

Applying these concepts to strategic territorial planning, and more specifically to mobility and transport planning, the result is a scheme for the assessment of different intervention scenarios, based on a participated and inclusive vision about guidelines and strategies, whose definition process have involved both decision makers and stakeholders, followed by an implementation process monitored by measurable target and milestones. During the whole process, the potential effects of the action on the various environmental and anthropic components involved (territory, urban spaces, infrastructures, communities, natural and ecosystem resources, etc.) are monitored **[fig. 1]**.

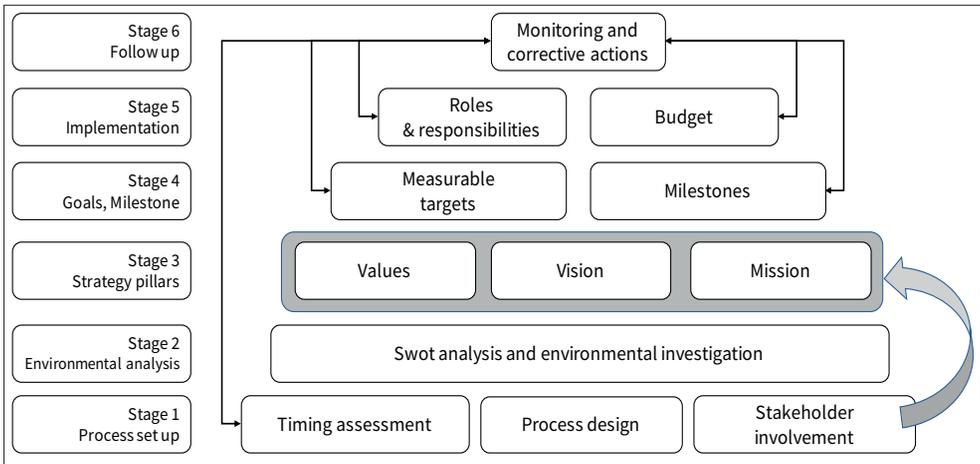


Figure 1 Strategic planning: process and relations between phases

As regards, in particular, the Italian case, only in recent years local authorities and public institutions have begun to deal with the concepts of strategic planning, as a consequence of changes in both the socio-economic structure and in the national and local regulations. Among the emergent trends in such context, a growing tendency to prefer medium, long-term actions (e.g. overall mobility plans) to the typical short-term ones (like, for instance, just focusing on the support to public transports), somehow aiming at developing realistic and sustainable visions and development paths in accordance with the local communities. Such a change in the political approach has been mainly a response to the a more restrictive regulation, in particular the so called 'legge di stabilità', a new administrative regime for public bodies, and local governments in particular) introduced in 2009, which sets particularly strict limits on the administrative and spending actions.

Such law introduced rules that significantly reduced the discretion of local authorities in terms of investment and financial debt. Moreover, the overall amount of funds that can be directly committed by the administration have been limited and a more effective control over public spending have been introduced.

It is the writer's opinion that the strong limitations introduced by this law, while certainly increasing the complexity, has also created a condition in which it became essential to establish priority criteria in investment plans. As a result, participatory processes have also taken on a more important role, as they are necessary in a context of scarce resources to minimise the conflict between stakeholders and administrations.

In a nutshell, today we more and more see local authorities playing a key-role as decision makers and social aggregators in the planning processes, therefore going far beyond the typical role of service provider.

A series of choices destined to influence in a systematic way, according to a medium-long term logic, the orientation of a determined urban area, in terms of development paths of the Administration, in coherence with the variegated system of constraints and opportunities that the local fabric will be able to support in a prospective path. (Mazzara 2009, 56)

Consequently, the strategic planning process at the local level has also assumed a crucial role for local authorities to the extent their contribution on the long-term *mission and vision* of the strategic planning has become a key element of social cohesion (Lanzini, Stocchetti 2020).

Such a strategic planning process, strongly characterised by stakeholder participation and by the achievement of a shared vision, is more effective in anticipating changes in socio-economic environment, since it gathers input from a wide and heterogeneous range of stakeholders, who provide insights into innovative ideas and approaches (Bach, Ravaioli 2007). In this sense, a strategic planning process conducted according to appropriate methods and criteria provides a higher *quality of* decision-making, understood as the ability to combine social and environmental needs. Specifically, it provides advantages such as:

- the possibility to focus on strategic issues relevant to the creation of long-lasting public value;
- a better communication and participation between key actors (therefore, less conflicts);
- a mediation among different interests and values and the identification of common goals;
- a leaner implementation process and an improved social reporting for the overall implementation;

Among the various areas of policy action, mobility planning and management is certainly one of the sectors that can benefit most from the advantages of integrated strategic planning. Mobility problems, in fact, a) present a significant operational complexity; b) involve numerous stakeholders; c) have a significant impact on the quality of life of local communities; d) are affected by numerous sustainability problems.

For these reasons, mobility management is an ideal terrain for the implementation of advanced strategic planning practices, especially in view of the need to ensure sustainable local development.

3 Role of Strategic Planning in the Quest for Local Sustainable Mobility

Together with the growing emphasis on sustainable development, both in the scientific and operational communities, there is also a growing attention placed on the issues of strategic planning and its role in promoting and implementing sustainable practices.

In recent years, the European Commission has drawn up various documents aimed at fully defining sustainable strategic planning on an urban scale, recognising that long-term local strategic planning can make the pursuit of national and European obligations more effective (EUC 2005). In the Commission's view, local strategic planning is therefore a governance tool that is more effective than macro-territorial addresses alone to steer decision-making processes towards sustainable development.

In this logic, some general research questions emerge:

- How many and which local authorities have adopted strategic planning processes? Which of them have published a strategic plan?
- To what extent do the published strategic plans comply with European sustainable development guidelines? Which elements do they consider most relevant to the achievement of sustainable development?

Research has been carried out on this issue. For example, Counsell (1998), proposes an analysis of the content of 46 strategic plans published by regional councils in England and Wales, concluding that: "whether there is the political will to take measures that are in the long term interest of the environment but which might be unpopular in the short term" (Counsell 1998, 191).

In this research, focused on aspects of sustainable mobility, the above questions are declined in relation to the role between Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) and strategic planning. Therefore, the questions are:

- a. in operational terms, is there really a close link between SUMP and strategic planning, or do these two instruments follow different tracks?
- b. what are the relationships between strategic planning and sustainable development from the point of view of urban mobility in the SUMP?

The interest in this topic is also legitimate in view of the fact that mobility trends show that the mobility in Italy is changing in a more sustainable way. According to a research developed in 2018 (Isfort 2018), in the daily commuting Italians have increased walking, cycling and the use of public transport, while decreasing the use of the car, although the private car remains the dominant means of transport. Unfortunately, the national data we have on this subject is not

up to date, but it is still worth mentioning. Walking increased from 17.1% in 2016 to 22.5% in 2017, as did cycling, which reached 5.1% for the first time, almost 2 points more than in 2016. Public transport increased slightly from 6.6% in 2016 to 7% in 2017. The modal share of the private car fell in 2017 to 58.6% from 65.3% in 2016 (almost 7 points lower), returning to early 2000s values.

Of course, it is difficult to understand whether these are the results of a process induced by the choices of the sustainable mobility and strategic sustainable plans developed in the last decade in Italy, rather than the result of changes on the mobility demand side. Probably this is the outcome of several different causes. However, it is possible to understand if and to what extent the process of integration between SUMP and strategic planning mentioned above is under way. This will be discussed in the next section, where the results of the survey carried out for this research, involving more than 250 municipalities, are presented.

4 The Survey

To answer to our research question, the CROSSMOBY team has developed a survey through both questionnaire and interviews involving the municipal administrations of the Friuli Venezia Giulia region and the Metropolitan City of Venice (formerly the province of Venice), for a total of 259 municipalities involved.

The main objective of the survey is to collect targeted data and information on the mobility system, transport governance and local public transport from all 259 municipalities of the Italian area of the Interreg Europe Italy-Slovenia Programme, in order to: a) promote the co-ordination and updating of existing sustainable urban mobility planning practices at local and regional level, b) promote the tool of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) together with the (more common) Urban Traffic Plan (UTP), c) support local communities in improving municipal and inter-municipal mobility planning.

In this chapter are presented the main results from the questionnaire survey, which consists of 72 questions. Such questionnaire has been addressed to officials/managers/technical staff in the field of mobility and transport of the municipalities.

The general objectives of the questionnaire-based survey are set within the general framework of the specific objectives of the Interreg Italy-Slovenia programme and of the CROSSMOBY project in particular. Such objectives are here summarised:

1. To implement a database on the status quo of territorial transport planning.
2. To define the dissemination of recent transport planning tools such as the SUMP - Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan.

3. To understand, at the municipal territorial scale, what territorial information is available to administrations (e.g. diffusion of Local Public Transport services, infrastructures such as roads and cycle paths, the availability of parking spaces and speed-limits zones, etc.), which of this information is more complex to obtain, and how it is managed.
4. To assess whether and how a monitoring system for infrastructures and environmental aspects (e.g. air quality, vehicle flows on the road network) exists and how it is managed.
5. To build a geo-referenced database of data collected from this survey and other possible sources of information on SUMP implementation at the local level.

As far as we know, such comprehensive information analysis on local mobility planning is presently a unique achievement in Italy.

5 Method and Sampling

The questionnaire has a very deep level of detail, since it aims at understanding the level of knowledge that the local administration has about its territory, not only in terms of mobility, but also of in terms of services, infrastructures and socio-economic development.

The structure of the questionnaire consists of 4 macro-groups of multiple-choice questions [fig. 2].

The first two groups are used to collect data on the services and infrastructure provided by the municipality. This part is useful for understanding the level of knowledge and tools available to the administration for governing its territory.

The third part, related to the first two, is more specific and is aimed at collecting information on the state of the art of infrastructural and non-infrastructural interventions, both specific and networked, carried out in the last decade which have some relevance to sustainable mobility: for instance, introduction of speed-limit zones, traffic restricted zones, traffic calming interventions, and so on.

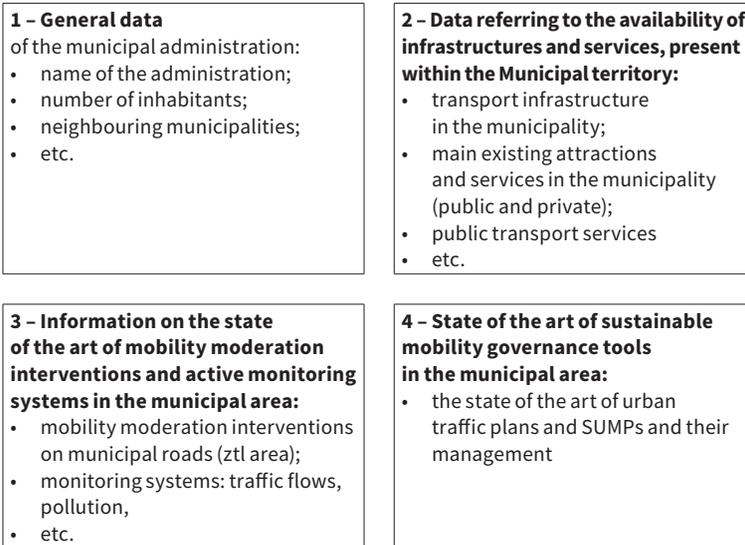


Figure 2 Overall structure of the questionnaire adopted for the survey on SUMP and Strategic Planning in local administrations

The fourth and last part is more specific and is the core of the questionnaire. It allows to understand which governance tools the administration has at its disposal from the point of view of mobility, and more specifically of sustainable mobility.

The questionnaire has been sent to 259 administrations in north-eastern Italy. The procedure started in February 2020 and concluded in November 2020. A significant part of the research period was characterised by restrictions on work activities in attendance due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, the questionnaire requires the respondent to consult numerous documents and administrative acts that are only available at the administrative offices. Nevertheless, out of 259 questionnaires sent out, we received 160 complete responses (55% response rate). 117 questionnaires are from Friuli Venezia Giulia Region (54% of the total number of municipalities) and 26 from the metropolitan area of Venice (59% of the municipalities) [fig. 3].

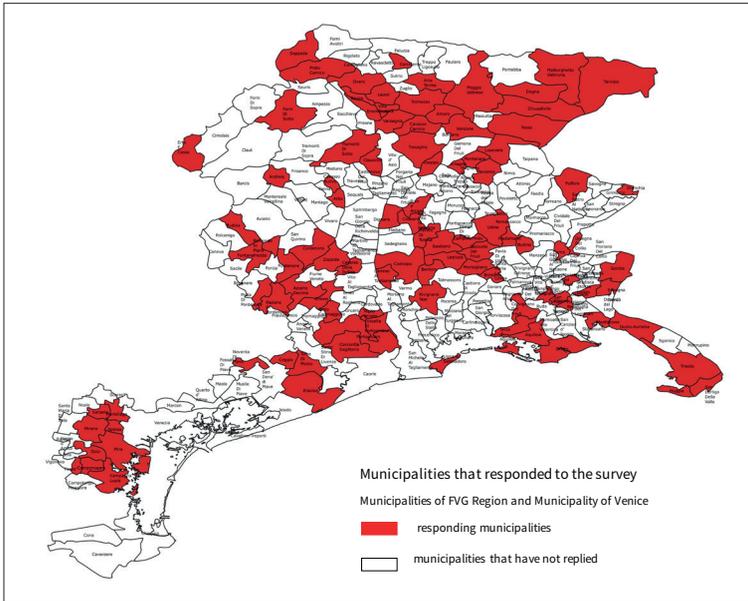


Figure 3 Geographic diffusion of questionnaire respondents

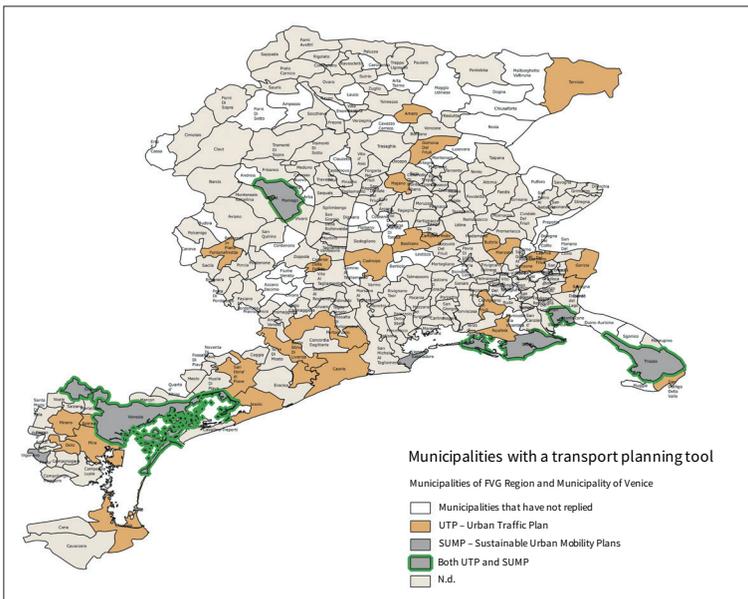


Figure 4 Map of municipalities with a transport planning tool

6 Main Results

The survey has provided a unprecedented knowledge of strategic planning processes in local mobility in the programme area. Moreover, it has practical consequences for transport planning to the extent it provided a database correlated to a geo-referenced dataset that allows to treat the data through cartographic tools and that gathers a variety of information relating to the status quo of transport planning, with a particular focus on the level of planning aimed at sustainable mobility issues.

There are many possible ways to adopt an infographics approach to summarise key information for transport strategic planning. A few examples are here reported. Such examples cannot be exhaustive of the work carried out, however they depict somehow the potential contribution to the strategic planning process.

Figure 4 represents the municipalities that have adopted strategic transport planning tools, such as: UTP - Urban Traffic Plans, SUMP - Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, or both.

It is interesting to note that a relatively small size of the municipality does not represent an obstacle to the adoption of the strategic approach to transport planning, given that the survey shows that even small municipalities (from 500 to 5,000 inhabitants, like for instance Amaro, Aquileia, Butrio, Basiliano, Manzano, etc.) have adopted traffic planning tools [fig. 4]. Figure 5 is another example about the possibility to monitor the diffusion of sustainable mobility practices and the disparities in a geographic area. Specifically, it shows which municipalities in the survey area have implemented sustainable mobility projects in the last 5 years, such as: introduction of speed limit zones, e-vehicles sharing, etc. [fig. 5].

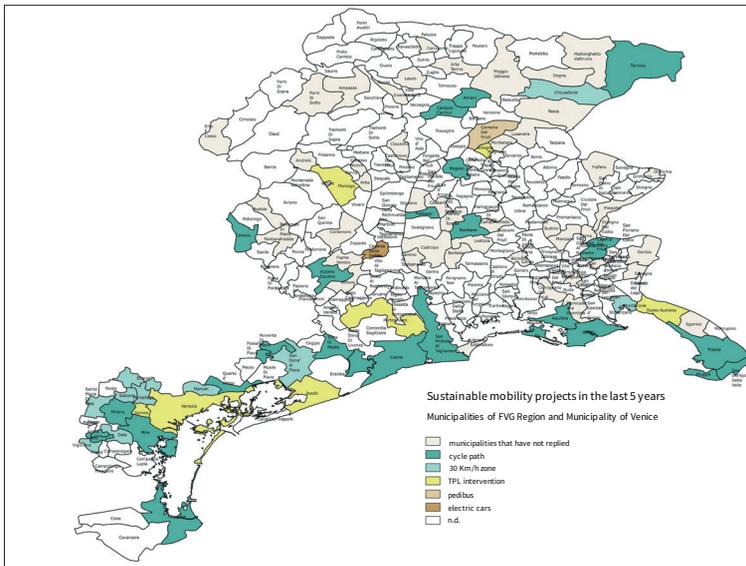


Figure 5 Map of municipalities that have implemented sustainable mobility projects in the last 5 years

7 Conclusions

Within the limit of this chapter, it is not possible to show all the results that we've been able to draw from the survey and the interviews, but apart from the specific case of the Italy-Slovenia INTERREG Programme, the methodology adopted provided an adequate answer to more general questions, showing that there is an actual link between SUMP and strategic planning that goes beyond mere procedures and has instead a substantial relevance,

The data collected shows that not only the main cities and the most densely populated municipalities, but also many smaller administrations have already started the SUMP process, which is, by its very nature, a strategic tool implying at least a 10 year-long vision ahead.

In fact, it has emerged that even municipalities with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants, which traditionally tend to have a more circumscribed and short-term vision about the development of the territory, have drawn up the SUMP, or alternatively have developed projects (both stand-alone and network-based project) aimed at introducing and/or encouraging sustainable mobility interventions. In our opinion, it is unequivocal the tendency to encourage and invest in the direction intended by European and national strategic planning for sustainable transport.

We also noticed a somewhat contradictory effect of the process triggered by strategic planning, consisting in a not-unusual inertia in transforming the strategy into an operational project. This occurs particularly in areas that are marginal with a low density of population. We think that this occurs since in such territories the criticalities of mobility and transport are less evident, but also because both the financial resources and the know-how in this field is less advanced than in major cities. Actions and projects are often impromptu, dictated by emerging needs or promoted by others through financial incentives, while framed into a strategic vision.

A further point that emerged in the course of the survey, and which maybe it is worth emphasising, is that local authorities have often complained about the lack of coordination and direction from a higher institutional level (i.e., metropolitan area, region or state), for instance through guidelines or through actions aimed at a more organic and coordinated development.

In conclusion, it seems that in the programme area of the Italy-Slovenia INTERREG Programme the spread of the concept of strategic sustainable mobility, appears on the path for a concrete translation into operational policies. Although there is still need for a greater involvement of the authorities at the various institutional levels, short-term sustainability policies are no longer perceived unpopular. A right balance between short term needs and the adoption of long-term actions aiming at safeguarding the environment is far from being complete, but the awareness of environmental issues and of the crucial role of strategic planning is gradually consolidating among the decision-makers and the stakeholders involved.

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