

PARADIGM SHIFT

Transport planning is not just about getting from point A to point B. The **Transformative Transport Planning Research Group** of the **Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia** knows this and is committed to a paradigm shift in transport, one based on **people, accessibility and creating better places to live in.**

POLIS: With over 20 years of experience, the Transformative Transport Planning Research Group has advocated for a paradigm shift in transport planning. What are the main objectives of this shift, and how can cities and regions effectively transform transport planning? Could you share any innovative examples?

Aljaž Plevnik: At the Transformative Transport Planning Research Group, we advocate for a paradigm shift in transport planning that moves the focus from facilitating mobility to ensuring accessibility to everyday activities and a high quality of life.

INTERVIEW WITH
ALJAŽ PLEVNIK
LUKA MLADENVIČ
ANDRAŽ HUDOKLIN
MOJCA BALANT
TOM RYE

ELABORATED BY
VITTORIA MADDALENA

Members of the group (Balant, Mladenovič, Hudoklin) as cyclists on Plečnik's promenade

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Rather than expanding road infrastructure based on projected traffic growth ('predict and provide'), we promote the 'decide and provide' approach, which defines a desired future and develops the transport system to support it.

This shift aims to reduce car dependency, tackle environmental and social challenges, and prioritise walking, cycling, public transport, and digital access. We believe this transformation calls for moving beyond outdated professional practices, challenging powerful interests, and learning from countries, regions, and cities that have already made accessibility and sustainability a priority in planning.

POLIS: Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) play a central role in shaping more inclusive and efficient transport systems. In your view, what makes a SUMP successful?

Luka Mladenovič: The process of preparing a SUMP is based on a clearly defined vision, objectives, and target values. A SUMP is successful if it achieves the intended changes. However, in our practice, it has become evident that SUMPs do not always fully achieve their initial goals. Nevertheless, we have observed that the activities involved in preparing the plan and engaging municipalities, stakeholders, and the public have positive effects on general awareness and understanding of the changes the SUMP aims to achieve: a SUMP can sometimes be considered successful even if it has not yet led to changes in travel behaviour, as it establishes the conditions that will make the implementation of such changes easier in the future.

POLIS: How does the Triple Access Planning (TAP) approach enhance the impact of SUMPs?

Mladenovič: Triple Access Planning (TAP) stems from the recognition that the transport challenges we face—and address within the framework of SUMP—cannot be solved solely through transport measures.

The approach is based on an understanding of accessibility as the main goal, where mobility is just one of three pillars on which planning must be based. In recent years, we have devoted considerable attention to integrating the transport system with spatial planning, which represents the second pillar. Additionally, it has become clear that the development of digital tools has reached a level where many services can now be accessed equally well remotely. TAP proposes that the planning of these three forms of accessibility should be integrated within the SUMP framework.

POLIS: You collaborated with us on the Park4SUMP project, which focused on integrating innovative parking management solutions into mobility planning. What were some of the key lessons or outcomes from this project?

Andraž Hudoklin: We joined the Park4SUMP project in 2021, which was late in its lifetime. However, we organised several training events and ParkPAD audits, which helped introduce parking management to municipalities and consultants in Slovenia and other countries in the region, such as Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, as well as further afield, including Portugal. We are now further developing this topic in the NXTLVL Parking project.

In recent years, Slovenia has experienced a significant increase in motorisation rates, which has intensified pressure on parking areas. Through the Park4SUMP project, we brought valuable knowledge and experience to Slovenia, establishing a foundation for addressing various parking issues. Effective parking management can solve many challenges and even gain public support, though it has traditionally been unpopular with both the public and politicians.

Ultimately, the decision about when and whether these solutions are to be implemented lies with political leadership at both national and municipal levels.



Aljaž Plevnik

Head of the Transformative Transport
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Luka Mladenovič

Senior Researcher
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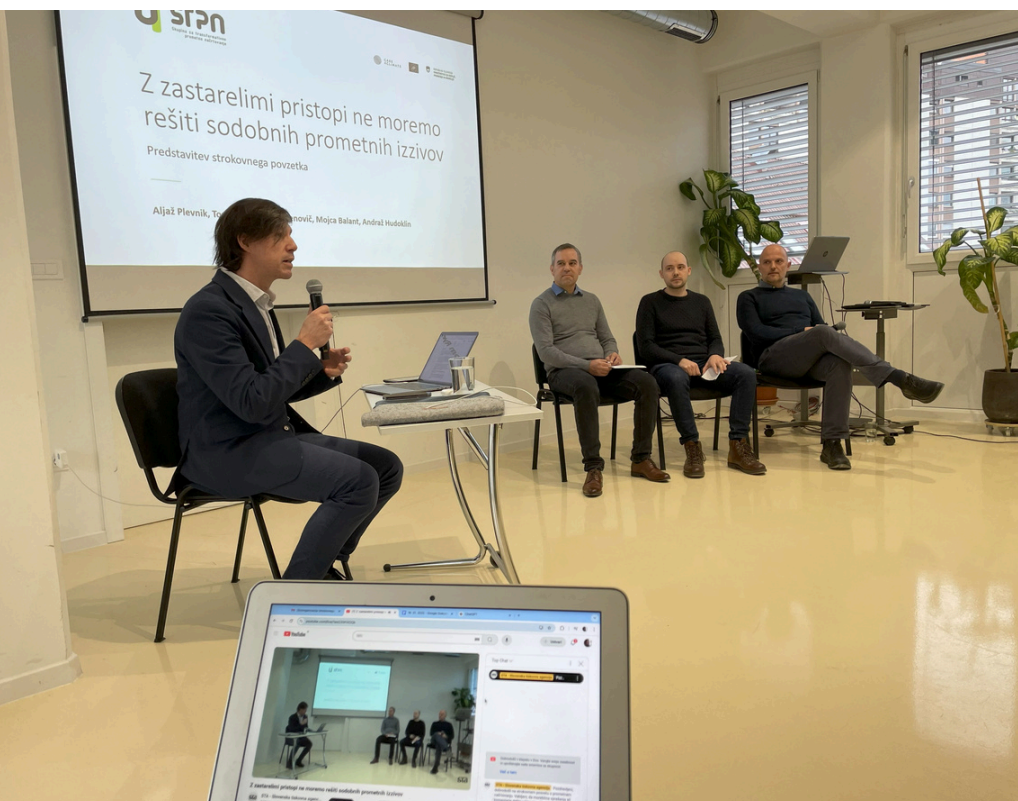


Andraž Hudoklin

Junior Researcher
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**Presentation of a policy paper in
January 2025 in Ljubljana**

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POLIS: You are quite active on the topic of the National SUMP Support Programme (NSSP). How does this programme support Member States in not only developing but also effectively implementing and monitoring high-quality SUMPs, and what do you see as the biggest challenges in ensuring consistency and impact across diverse urban contexts?

Plevnik: As co-authors of the Slovenian National SUMP Support Programme and contributors to the development of NSSPs in several European countries, we emphasise that the biggest challenge is not technical capacity, but the paradigm shift needed in how transport planning is approached and implemented.

While the NSSP offers essential tools, guidance, and coordination mechanisms to support the development and monitoring of SUMPs, its true value lies in helping cities and national authorities move beyond outdated, car-centric approaches toward accessibility-focused, integrated planning.

Ensuring real impact across diverse urban contexts requires more than formal compliance—it requires changing mindsets and practices, which the NSSP must actively encourage and support.



**Study visit in Barcelona
(Mladenovič, Balant, Rye, Plevnik)**

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Mojca Balant

Researcher
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Tom Rye

Senior Researcher
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POLIS: Drawing from your experience working both in Slovenia and internationally, what inspiring examples of sustainable transport have stood out to you? Are there any best practices from abroad that you have successfully adapted in Slovenia?

Mojca Balant: Over the past decades, our work in comprehensive transport planning has increasingly shifted away from car-centric approaches toward more holistic, people-oriented ones. Recently, we found strong inspiration in this shift in Professor Susan Handy's 'Shifting Gears' (2023), which reinforces our confidence that we are headed in the right direction.

A central part of our work involves adapting proven international practices to Slovenia's challenges and context. We emphasise effective measures that simultaneously address multiple aspects of the transport system and the built environment.

Inspiring examples include circulation plans (Groningen or Leuven), roadspace transformations (like school streets in Paris, street redesign in Sint-Niklaas, and superblocks in Barcelona), as well as public transport improvements (like in Styria in Austria). Equally inspiring are projects that integrate mobility and spatial planning to create multifunctional, people-centred environments (like Aspern Seestadt in Vienna or Houten in the Netherlands).

POLIS: Looking ahead, what do you envision for the future of transport? What key shifts are needed to achieve truly sustainable and inclusive mobility systems? And how do you see SUMP's playing a role in shaping that future?

Tom Rye: We would like to see a transport system focused on providing better access to the things people need, not just on facilitating ever more travel—while also making our towns, cities, and rural areas better places to live.

Achieving this is not easy. It requires recognising that building new roads is self-defeating and that there is no direct link between travelling more kilometres, faster, and overall economic growth. It needs political commitment to measures like road space transformation, which may be unpopular in the short term. It requires putting an end to urban sprawl and promoting denser towns and cities where long-distance travel is less necessary. And it demands that cities and regions treat SUMP's not as just a procedural requirement for funding, but as a transformative tool to fundamentally change transport systems and travel behaviour in our communities.

The Transformative Transport Planning Research Group

The Transformative Transport Planning Research Group of the Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (UIRS) supports communities in overcoming transport challenges. Committed to a paradigm shift in transport planning and management, the group has over 20 years of experience in delivering professional recommendations and solutions grounded in research, practical testing, and real-world insights. Their expertise lies in developing planning tools—including guidelines and transport strategies—as well as providing training for professionals and decision-makers.