OBSERVATIONS

on urban planning

transport governance at the Alpine level

Stakeholders, competencies and scope of interventions
Summary notes

1. Introduction - Objectives of the study

An analysis of governance systems in the different partner countries was conducted as part of the European MORECO project. The objectives were to:

• Improve the understanding of different types of institutional structures in the MORECO partner countries and their consequences for urban planning/transport/housing/land-use governance.

• Identify the framework for links between urban planning, transport, and land-use stakeholders.

• Identify the key challenges for integrating MORECO issues into current modes of governance.

The full document is available as one of the MORECO project deliverables. The following information is provided as a summary. MORECO's mission is to educate local stakeholders in the fields of transport, urban planning, housing as well as land-use about cross-functional approaches to improve urban life and bring inhabitants closer to existing infrastructures and major sites. The project seeks to analyse cooperation between a broad array of stakeholders and competencies. It thus examines governance structures at the European level, along with the rules, measures and practices that enable governance structures that strive for transparency, participation, responsibility, effectiveness and coherence[1].

All the research and interviews were conducted between 1 July and 31 October 2013 under the joint leadership of the Rhône Alps Region and the PACTE-Territories Laboratory at Joseph Fourier University in Grenoble.

2. Institutional landscapes - Intersections

The five countries in our study (Germany, Austria, Italy, France and Slovenia) all had different political-administrative structures, but their diverse administrative levels had similar competencies. The purpose of comparing different institutional frameworks is **to get a sense of their diversity** as well as **promote the sharing of best practices for implementing urban planning** - transport projects. It also seeks to bring commonalities to light, which could lead to new ways of improving existing situations.

At the time the study was written (Autumn 2013 - Spring 2014), we noticed an increase in regionalisation in four out of five of the MORECO project partner countries:

• In Italy (Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto) and in Germany (Bavaria) **regional resources increased** following the implementation of recent laws on fiscal federalism (2011).

• In Slovenia **the government presented a new regionalisation project** creating six regions.

• In France **the three texts of Act III of the decentralisation** programme were presented to the Council of Ministers on 10 April 2013.

Regardless of whether the governance structure was federal or centralised, its functions were relatively similar in all countries. Germany, Austria, France and Italy have a similar hierarchical structure: a National

Government, States ("Länder") or Regions, Provinces, Departments or Districts, and a communal level (communes and EPCI - Public Establishments for Inter-communal Cooperation). Slovenia's binary system is fairly original, with the National Government on one side and Communes on the other, but its regionalisation process is still being developed. The National Government remains the most important legislative body, establishing a legal framework that is imposed on the lower levels, even in countries like Germany and Austria, which are highly autonomous at the local administrative level.

The differences between federal and centralised structures are mainly at the intermediary administrative levels. In the German-speaking countries "Länder" often have legislative competences in the fields of planning and transport and can directly manage urban planning and transport - unlike their French and Italian counterparts (Regions). It should however be noted that the lack of direct taxation in Austrian "Länder" makes them less autonomous than their German counterparts.

As true intermediaries between the national and local levels, "Länder" and Regions are the pillars of the link between standards and levels. Though some still lack normative powers and their own taxation powers, they all face the same governance issues. The hierarchical nature of standards creates problems relative to

[1] *European Governance - A White Paper, EU Commission, 2001*

on urban planning
transport governance at the Alpine level

the time-frame during which planning documents are drafted and there is the risk of inconsistency in the short-term. All the models that we studied had fragmented competencies in regards to land-use, land preservation, housing, rail transport, bus transport and soft modes of transport. The effect of this fragmentation is that it is difficult to organise cross-sector projects at the regional level. As such, these projects need support and coordination from an intermediary between national expectations and obligations and the reality and impact on the local level. The intermediary level could therefore serve as a mediator between the different regional levels.

As a means of comparison and an example of a transferable best practice, Italy has powerful Regions that are able to create prescriptive regulations. The Italian Regions develop their urban planning and transport documents in cooperation with different lower levels and undertake public participation with local partners. They fully assume their role as lead manager on this issue. In terms of transport, the Austrian "Länder" are the most competent and have an innovative governance structure. As the funder, planner and maintainer of transport in the respective "Länder", they delegate network operations to a transport association they own, which guarantees an efficient supply in the entire area. Governance is thus simplified, unlike in Italy, Slovenia and France where they rely on private operators.

These various regional layers make multi-level governance hard to implement, particularly because of the multiple stakeholders. Issues related to urban planning-transport and the impact of urban planning on household behaviour (choice of where to live and modes of transport) are undeniably most significant at the local level. Municipalities (communes or inter-communal organisations) are the key players and the pivots for urban planning-transport governance, whether part of a federal or centralised system. Given that communes bear the direct impact of all national laws and regulations, they play a key role in creating all the urban planning and transport organisation documents that apply to the local level. Since spatial planning policies have a direct impact on resident behaviour, and communes develop these policies, they are the front-line players that are essential to the MORECO project's prevention and awareness-raising measures.

Limiting urban sprawl requires planning focused around employment areas, potentially even covering several employment areas that could be connected via rail. However, the planning boundary is not necessarily related to residential sprawl. Coordination between exterior and integrated areas is always possible and in any case institutional areas can never be congruent with where individuals live.

3. Challenges and possibilities

The MORECO project partners have established the following common actions:

• **Promote urban projects** focused on existing and future transport hubs.

• **Provide households with tools** to make choices about where to live based on the optimum balance between housing and mobility.

• **Reduce individual mobility** needs by reinforcing urban centres.

Based on these objectives, we can identify several governance obstacles that need to be overcome:

> **Adjusting urbanisation** to transport networks raises the issue on how to link stakeholders and scale. It requires strong coordination at the communal level, which is far from optimal in any of the countries. Given the complexity of different levels and the multiple stakeholders, spatial planning should be thought of more in terms of inter-regionalism rather than planning boundaries. This criterion for urbanisation also raises the risk of introducing new inequalities between communes.

> **Influencing household behaviour** with decision-making tools for more informed choices about where to live, raises the question of how to create, advance and disseminate these tools. The question is raised on how users will access and use these tools, both in terms of data collection and more importantly, the right implementation scale. Awareness of costs must also be followed by action. Effective decision-making requires systems that impose constraints or modulations: for example, requiring that transport costs be incorporated into household solvency calculations for mortgage loans. The National Government, or Regions in federal systems, are the appropriate level in this case.

> **The Reduction of individual motorised transport** and the promotion of public transport depend on pro-active public policies. The descriptions of institutional systems show that these objectives must be applied to all levels. Yet, each level's contribution will be different - from infrastructure development policies to pricing policies. Lastly, if we consider the user's perspective, we must take into account all the modes of transport that make up a single journey, and thus coordinate public transport with soft transport and motorised transport, as well as individual and collective modes. This itinerary-based logic requires coordination between stakeholders that have sectoral competencies over a large area. In this respect, German regional transport associations could inspire these kinds of measures at the employment area level.