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On the Road to Change: The transfer of Sustainable Mobility
Policies in Post-Socialist Chisinau.

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Zusammenfassung

Die neuen Trends in der politischen Entwicklung von Chisinau legen einen neuen Ansatz für die Mobilitätsplanung nahe. Infolge des kürzlich erfolgten Beitritts Moldaus zur EU zielt die Studie darauf ab, zu verstehen, wie das Paradigma der nachhaltigen Mobilität, das im westeuropäischen Kontext stark gefördert wird, die Kultur der städtischen Mobilitätsplanung beeinflusst. Die Studie untersucht den historischen Kontext der städtischen Governance und Planungskultur, um die sich verändernde Rolle und den Begriff der Mobilitätsplanung zu analysieren. Sie untersucht die Praktiken der Mobilitätspolitik in Chisinau im Rahmen des von Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) entwickelten Konzepts des Politiktransfers, um Einflüsse auf die neue Mobilitätspolitik im Zusammenhang mit dem Paradigma der nachhaltigen Mobilität zu finden und zu analysieren, inwieweit der Politiktransfer zur Entwicklung des fortschrittlichen Diskurses und der Praxis der städtischen Mobilitätsplanung in Chisinau beigetragen hat, indem ermittelt wird, in welchem Maße die Politik stattgefunden hat und auf welcher Grundlage die politischen Entscheidungsträger diese bestimmten Praktiken ausgewählt haben. Die Forschung verwendet einen Einzelfallstudienansatz, der das politische Umfeld der Stadt Chisinau untersucht. Die Fälle des Politiktransfers werden durch eine Umweltanalyse ermittelt und durch Dokumentenanalyse und eingehende Befragung analysiert. In dieser Studie wird der Prozess des Politiktransfers in Chisinau in Bezug auf die Entwicklung nachhaltiger Mobilität anhand des Rahmens von Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) beschrieben. Die Ergebnisse veranschaulichen zwei Fälle von Politiktransfer: ein vom UNDP initiiertes SUMP-Projekt und ein SUMP-Projekt, das im Rahmen des Move it like Lublin-Projekts initiiert wurde. Beide Projektbeschreibungen werden anhand des Rahmens von Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) analysiert und identifizieren den Zweck der beiden Projekte, die relevanten Akteure, den Kontext der Projekte, die strukturellen Probleme, mit denen die Projekte konfrontiert sind, und die möglichen Ergebnisse. Diese Untersuchung zeigt, dass der Politiktransfer in Chisinau über den bloßen Ideentransfer hinausgeht. Dennoch ist der Transferprozess auf erhebliche Schwierigkeiten gestoßen, die sich aus dem schwankenden politischen Interesse, dem alten Planungsparadigma, dem Haushaltsdefizit, dem Mangel an Daten und Wissen und dem geringen öffentlichen Engagement ergeben. Darüber hinaus ist die künftige Umsetzung des SUMP „Move it like Lublin“ aufgrund fehlender gesetzlicher Grundlagen auf regionaler und nationaler Ebene gefährdet und der Ausgang des Politiktransfers ist ungewiss. Die Studie schließt mit der Empfehlung, in den Aufbau von Kapazitäten zu investieren und das eigene Fachwissen der Stadt zu entwickeln, was ein nachhaltigerer und dauerhafterer Ansatz ist als die Investition in einen politischen Plan oder spezifische Infrastrukturprojekte.

Schlüsselwörter: Paradigma der nachhaltigen Mobilität, Politiktransfer, SUMP, Chisinau, städtische Verwaltung, öffentlicher Verkehr, postsowjetischer Übergang, Planungskultur

Abstract

The new trends in Chisinau's policy development suggest a new approach to mobility planning. Following Moldova's recent candidate membership into the European Union the study aims to understand how the sustainable mobility paradigm, which is heavily promoted in the Western European context, influences the city's urban mobility planning culture. The study examines the historical context of the city's governance and planning culture to analyse the changing role and notion of mobility planning. It investigates mobility policy practices in Chisinau through the framework of the policy transfer concept developed by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) to find influences in new mobility policy related to the sustainable mobility paradigm and analyse to what extent has the transfer of policies contributed to the development of the advanced discourse and practice of urban mobility planning in Chisinau, by identifying the degree in which the policy has taken place and on what basis did the policy makers select these certain practices. The research uses a single case study approach, exploring the policy environment of the city of Chisinau. The policy transfer cases are identified through an environmental scan and are analysed through document analysis and in-depth interviewing. This study creates a narrative of the policy transfer process in Chisinau regarding sustainable mobility development following the Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) framework. The results illustrate two cases of policy transfer: a sustainable urban mobility plan (SUMP) project initiated by United Nations Development Programme and a SUMP project initiated under the Move it like Lublin Project. Both project narratives are analysed using Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) framework and identify the purpose of the two projects, the relevant actors, the context of the projects, structural problems the projects face, and the possible outcome. This research finds that the policy transfer in Chisinau has reached beyond the mere transfer of ideas. Nevertheless the transfer process has experienced significant difficulties because of shifting political interest, old planning paradigm, budgetary deficit, lack of data and knowledge and little public engagement. Moreover, the future implementation of the Move it like Lublin SUMP is under jeopardy due to lack of legislative basis on regional and national levels and the outcome of the policy transfer is uncertain. The study concludes with the recommendation to invest in capacity building and develop the city's own expertise, which is a more sustainable and durable approach than investing in a policy plan or specific infrastructure projects.

Key words: Sustainable mobility paradigm, policy transfer, sustainable urban mobility plan (SUMP), Chisinau, urban governance, public transport, post-soviet transition, planning culture

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List of Acronyms

CBA cost benefit analysis

CEE Central and Eastern European

DGMU Department of Urban Mobility

EC European Commission

ECOPRO Ecological Production in a Post-Growth Society

EU European Union

GEF Global Environment Facility

IGO international governing organisation

IMF International Monetary Fund

NGO non-governmental organisation

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PAU Parcul Urban de Autobuze

RTEC Regia Transport Electric Chişinău

SUMP sustainable urban mobility plan

ToR terms of reference

UN United Nations

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

USSR Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

UTM Technical University of Moldova

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Across many different contexts, transport has assumed a crucial role in metropolitan governance (Boussauw and Vanin, 2018; Hickman et al., 2013; Kębłowski and Bassens, 2018). The globalisation-driven competition for the global movement of individuals and goods entails growing demands on spatial mobility. Nevertheless, it has often been said that transport planning is at a crisis point, with authorities across different levels of governance underestimating key challenges facing urban planning (Banister, 2008). Within the contemporary context of growing ecological problems, finding sustainable solutions for urban mobility development becomes more and more challenging.

The neo-liberal paradigm in academic mobility discourse suggests spatial mobility's crucial role in economic development (Canning et al., 1994; Sanchez-Robles, 1998). The neoclassical approach comprises transport engineering and economics perspectives that approach transportation as an essential rational discipline and envision it as a significant contributor to economic growth. Neoclassical conceptualizations and methodologies are structured around being expert-led and highly technical (Hoyle and Knowles, 1998; Owens, 1995) and improvements of transport infrastructure and transport development that led to higher speed, lower travel time, lower transaction cost, and urban economic development (Lyons and Urry, 2005; Rodrigue et al., 2013). Following Rodrigue et al. (2013), transport is critical in promoting, developing, and shaping the national economy. Mobility is viewed as a geographical endeavour that trades space for cost. A significant development in urban studies in the field of transport has been the birth of a sustainable mobility paradigm, in which the Global North situates its mobility and spatial development plans (Banister, 2008; Boussauw and Vanin, 2018; Kębłowski and Bassens, 2018; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004). According to Banister (2008), sustainable mobility provides an alternative paradigm to strengthen land use and transport links. The perspective advocates building large, dense, and "mixed-use" cities through limiting distances between activities and functions. The author recognizes four actions in transport planning: reducing the need to travel, encouraging modal shifts, reducing trip length, and encouraging greater efficiency in the transport system (p. 74). The principles of the sustainable mobility paradigm need to combine these "actions" into a series of consistent policy measures, promoting a shift from cars towards "soft" transport modes and public transport. In their analysis, Banister and Hickman (2013) explain three possible future scenarios of transport reorganisation in Delhi and conclude that the sustainable transport scenario is the most effective. According to the authors, the sustainable transport paradigm is the most effective in reducing CO2 emissions; it pushes

hard on available policy levers and implements the technological and behavioural options to a high-intensity level (p. 289). Opposed to the depoliticised approach of the neoclassical school and sustainable mobility paradigm is the movement of political economy scholarly research (Brenner, 2009; Farrington and Farrington, 2005; Harvey, 1989; Kębłowski and Bassens, 2018; Kębłowski et al., 2019; Soja, 2010). The political economy approach is characterised by engaging in socio-spatial analysis and investigations of social class issues focusing on gender, class, race, disability, etc. with the aim to highlight causes behind socio-spatial exclusion, inequality and poverty in relation to mobility and transport.

Two fundamental principles are used nowadays to understand mobility (Banister, 2008). First, travel is not an activity that people undertake for its own sake and is a result of the value of the activity at the destination. Second, people minimise the net cost of travel, which equals the cost of travel minus the time for travel. These two principles explain most decision-making behind individual behaviour and policy elaboration. Travel time may have remained constant as cities spread, but distance and speed have increased substantially. As a result, local public transport, cycling and walking become less attractive, resulting in greater car use. Therefore, cities face a hard-truth reality: car dependence, uncontrolled suburbanization, and urban sprawl.

Based on Banister's (2008) concept of sustainable mobility, in the global north exists a sustainable mobility paradigm that forms the basis of most local mobility plans and an important component of spatial development plans (Boussauw and Vanin, 2018). The key to understanding this paradigm of planning is that it must be situated in the context of developed economies. In other contexts, such as developing societies for example, the severity of social problems such as unemployment, political and financial instability etc. largely overshadows the concern with regards to sustainable mobility. Nevertheless, mobility-related social issues have become even more problematic in those environments, suffering from road safety issues, noise, air pollution, and heavy car dependency. Moreover, the paradigm of sustainable mobility has found its way out of the Western context, driven by globalisation and exchange of knowledge, as well as the influence of international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Bank and the European Union (EU).

Chisinau is the capital of Moldova which is a small land-locked country in Southeastern Europe located between Romania and Ukraine. The cultural traditions of this country are at crossroads between the Balkan, Eastern European, Ottoman, Slavic and Romanian cultures. In the 1990s the territory joined the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and became known as the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova. As part of the USSR Moldova had a central role in agricultural production, making the country one of the wealthiest soviet republics (Ledwoch, 2014). After independence the country became Republic of Moldova, and until nowadays is struggling with a weak and lowly technologised economy, heavily affected by the Covid-19 crisis and the war in Ukraine. Today Moldova is Europe second least developed country (World Bank, 2024), performing in the middle range across all categories in the Global State of Democracy framework (Republic of Moldova, nd) and ranking 76 out of 180 in terms of Corruption Index (Transparency.org, 2024). As of 2022 Moldova and Ukraine have been granted the candidate status for EU accession (Parker et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the accession is a years-long process,

where countries are required to make judicial, economic and institutional reforms, before joining the EU. The recent political events introduce a new dimension for analysing urban policy and governance in the republic of Moldova.

As with many cities nowadays, Chisinau suffers from a boost in motorised traffic, bringing road infrastructure to its limits. As a result, the city suffers from a severely congested traffic flow, high levels of pollution, road deterioration, road accident risk, loss of green space, etc. (Mihai, 2007). Transport planning in the Republic of Moldova is what Kębłowski and Bassens (2018) refer to as traditional thinking of mobility. The current mobility plan (that is still in use since the 1980s) uses the standard ingredients of transport planning such as: building roads, separating pedestrians and cars, and providing parking spaces in the city centre. Chisinau is an example of a post-socialist city that has not yet accomplished urban transformation, since urban transition is delayed by poor economic development, and the transformation of the transport structure is lagging behind its Eastern European neighbours (Ledwoch, 2014).

It is essential to position Chisinau's urban experience in the framework of the general post-socialist institutional transformation and the context of rapid economic and political change. By the end of 1980, Central and Eastern European cities had been, for almost half a century, part of the socialist political and economic systems. The collapse of socialism caused transition economies in these countries to experience highly dramatic changes in political, economic, and social terms. Thirty years later, inequality and poverty have been much more significant in all countries of the region than during socialism. Countries in the region's west have (mostly) joined the EU, become functioning market economies, and moved to decentralised political power. In contrast, those in the region's east experienced an uneven economic and political transition (Tsenkova, 2006). In the urban areas, the pursuit of private-sector-driven growth and macroeconomic and social reforms has delivered mixed results concerning economic performance, provision of essential services, and the effectiveness of social safety nets.

There is no doubt that the political complexity has created unique challenges in Chisinau for planning and urban policymaking. The change in the economic, social, and political structure has profoundly influenced the spatial adaptation and repositioning of the city. The transition from a centrally planned to a market-based economy has brought rapid social polarisation, poverty, and environmental degradation into Chisinau's urban area (Hamilton et al., 2005; Tsenkova, 2006). The crisis of the transition period in the Republic of Moldova has exceeded even the worst expectations in terms of the depth and duration of the economic decline. The sharp deterioration in the quality of maintenance and provision of public services during the transition period is a direct result of the drastic withdrawal of state funds supporting local government actions. Meanwhile, in comparison to some other transitional countries, Moldova did not succeed in attracting the attention of global investment capital, either through natural riches or competitive labour force reserves (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009). The absence of well-developed governance structures across post-socialist cities is responsible for more cases of contradictory development processes, reflecting an insufficient regulatory environment, unsuccessful coordination between different lines of government, and insufficient and asymmetric opportunities for the cooperation of various actors. This is caused by little transparency and the transition towards neoliberal approaches to urban development policy, especially during the first decade of the century (Buček,

2016). The recent candidate status of the Republic of Moldova into the EU and the geographic neighbouring position with the EU borders suggest a possibility of borrowing certain practices, potentially linked to mobility and sustainable mobility paradigm. Nevertheless, path dependency is an important aspect to keep in mind when engaging in policy transfer as historical experiences and the developments these countries have been through have a decisive impact on capabilities, preferences, physical structures, and legal and cultural context.

To classify and explain a multitude of processes occurring both within and between different political contexts scholars developed a concept known as “policy transfer”. Policy transfer refers to “a process by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system” (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000, p. 5). Research into policy transfer underwent an exponential growth starting the 1990’s and nowadays is a well established concept (Benson and Jordan, 2011; Dolowitz et al., 1999; Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; Glaser et al., 2022; Marsden and Stead, 2011; Stone, 2000, 2012) explaining processes of Europeanisation (Bulmer and Lequesne, 2020; Jordan and Liefferink, 2004; Radaelli, 2000b; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2020; Stone, 2007), globalisation (Stone, 2007, 2012), actions by non-state actors, and an outcome of policy innovation activities (Tantivess and Walt, 2008). The old approach used to analyse policy transfer by focusing on the ‘voluntary’ act of transfer by rational actors working in specific political contexts (Rose, 1993). The new model developed by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) encompasses both voluntary and coercive forms of practice which occurs when a government or supranational institution is either pushing or forcing another to adopt certain policy innovations. The existence of imposed policy transfer occurs in situations where countries are in dependent position to international organisations (Boussauw and Vanin, 2018). According to Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) when a government searches for a solution to an urgent problem, it is more likely that there will be a transfer of practices or ideas. Policy transfers that occur in Eastern European countries within the framework of the accession process to the EU serves as an example (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2018).

It remains unclear how the Western European planning and governance traditions have an effect on the cities of the Republic of Moldova. The focus of the research is to explain recent trends in relation to mobility policy practices in Chisinau through the concept of policy transfer. The new trends in policy development suggest a new approach to mobility planning described by the concept of sustainable mobility paradigm heavily promoted in the EU countries. This research hypothesises that a borrowing of practices from the EU context into the context of Chisinau due to the recent candidate membership status. After the cases of policy transfer have been identified this research explores to what extent has the transfer of policies contributed to the development of the advanced discourse and practice of urban mobility planning in Chisinau. The aim of the study is to identify the degree in which the policy has taken place and on what basis did the policy makers select this certain practice.

The research uses a single case study approach, exploring the policy environment of the city of Chisinau in the Republic of Moldova concerning mobility planning domain. To answer the research question the thesis is structured as follows. First, the historical context of

the city of Chisinau is described, to illustrate how governance and the planning culture has influenced mobility planning. Secondly, to identify policy transfer cases this research performs an environmental scan of news, policies and strategies. After the policy transfer cases have been identified, the relevant stakeholders are mapped and contacted for an in-depth interview, and at the same time key documents are collected for analysis. At the later stage of the research, discourse analysis is performed on the interview outputs and relevant policy documents. Finally, the research applies the Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) framework to create a narrative about the current state of mobility planning and the process of policy transfer that took place in recent years. Based on the findings, policy recommendations are elaborated and limitations of the study are discussed.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 The concept of policy transfer

Scholars in political and urban studies have closely paid attention to the policy transfer process and the importance of this concept for urban planning. The notion that policies move across the globe is not disputed by academic literature, however, what is debated is whether these processes are distinct phenomena that need to be differentiated from general policy making James and Lodge (2003); Marsden and Stead (2011). Different frameworks are used to study the questions of policy transfer. The conceptualisation of policy transfer took a significant turn with the widely cited research by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000), which understands policy transfer as a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, and ideas in another political system (p. 5). According to Dolowitz and Marsh (2000), the increase in the occurrence of policy transfer has led students of comparative politics, public policy, organisational sociology, and developmental studies to focus on the process. However, relatively few of these studies identify the process directly; that is, they describe the transfer of ideas or policies between countries but do not analyse and explain the processes involved (p. 7). The authors developed an analytical framework to classify and evaluate practices of policy transfer; the term policy transfer incorporated both 'voluntary' and 'coercive' forms of practice. This enabled researchers to move into analysing many processes occurring within and between different political contexts.

There has been a noticeable exponential growth of the concept since the 2000s due to Europeanisation, globalisation, and policy innovation that changed the classical Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) framework in several different aspects (Benson and Jordan, 2011; Dolowitz et al., 1999; Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; Glaser et al., 2022; Marsden and Stead, 2011; Stone, 2000, 2012). The introduction of the policy transfer concept by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) has opened many research questions on actors and their roles, particularly within the setting of the EU. The understanding of why actors engage in the transfer has also changed, pinpointing the role of dissatisfaction among policymakers, political competition, and uncertainty. In terms of who transfers policy, lately, there have been a lot more discussions on the role of policy entrepreneurs, experts, international bodies (EU), and the influence of international organisations, transnational corporations, and financial institutions (Bulmer and Padgett, 2004; Jordan and Liefferink, 2004; Radaelli, 2000a; Stone, 2000, 2007, 2012). Several studies are

sceptical towards global think tanks or international organisations involved in policy transfer, emphasising their rising influence on the transfer choice, and questioning the motivation of those actors as they intervene in the political realm by placing particular ideas and topics into the local agenda (Montero, 2020).

Since Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) introduced their framework, the list of things that could, in theory, be transferred has expanded from initially "hard" transfer, meaning policy goals, instruments, and administrative techniques, to a "softer" transfer of ideas, ideologies, and concepts Stone (2007, 2012). When talking about the sources of policy transfer, the original framework by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) assumed peer-to-peer transfer between national governments. With time the framework expanded and adopted a Europeanisation, globalisation, multi-level governance, and policy network perspective that includes multiple spatial and temporal scales (Bulmer and Padgett, 2004; Jordan and Liefferink, 2004; Radaelli, 2000b; Stone, 2007, 2012). Finally, the continued expansion in policy transfer research influences what factors have been so far considered to enable and constrain policy transfer. Building on Dolowitz and Marsh's (2000) framework, scholars have classified four types of apparent constraints: demand side, programmatic, conceptual, and application-related. Contextual factors include path dependency, historical and cultural background, institutional structures, political context, and ideological incompatibilities that influence the emergence of policy constraints (Bache and Taylor, 2003; Page, 2000). Questions remain however about the role played by learning with regards to policy transfer and the extent to which this learning influences policy outcomes, if at all (Bulmer and Padgett, 2004; Glaser et al., 2022; Marsden and Stead, 2011). Marsden and Stead (2011) in their conclusion, find that although the transfer of policies and ideas does occur and can be influential in the implementation of the policy, the role of learning remains overlooked. If a government chooses policy transfer as an instrument, the role played by learning must be further clarified (Glaser et al., 2022; Marsden and Stead, 2011).

The Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) framework was criticised for its rationalist underpinnings as well as its inability to explain learning processes involved in policy making. This movement grew under the concept of "policy mobility". This concept pays attention to aspects of power, politics and rationality in the study of policy (Cochrane and Ward, 2012; McCann and Ward, 2012; Peck and Theodore, 2010). Moreover, academic research focusing on the Global South have been problematising the notion of "best practice", considering it to be loaded with non-neutral political power (Montero, 2020). Although this perspective links learning to sites of encounter, motivation and persuasion, and position learning in an environment where elites direct and invigorate ideas, Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) criticise the approach for downplaying the importance of institutions and structures.

The EU has been portrayed as a 'massive transfer platform' or 'supranational idea hopper' due to exchange of policy between member states (Bulmer and Padgett, 2004). The diversity of the governance structures that coexist within the EU can be expected to generate a variety of transfer types: hierarchical governance leads to coercive forms of transfer, consent governance leads to negotiation, and facilitated unilateralism (or voluntary transfer) occurs when member states retain their sovereignty and co-ordinate policy via EU institutions. Coercive transfer occurs when a state is obliged to adopt policy as a condition of membership in an international

organisation, or as a condition of financial assistance from the latter, whereas voluntary transfer occurs when a sovereign state unilaterally adopts policy from an external source (Bulmer and Padgett, 2004; Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; Purkarthofer, 2018; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2020). Europeanisation refers to the process in which states adopt EU rules and a domestically driven process focusing on the transformation of political institutions and processes (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2018). When it comes to countries outside of the EU but aspiring to become part of it, the key instrument of Europeanisation is considered conditionality. It implies that the EU sets the adoption of its norms and rules as conditions that the target states have to fulfil in order to receive a ‘reward’ (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2020). Conditionality is the linking of perceived benefits (e.g. political support, economic aid, membership in an organisation) to the fulfilment of a certain program, in this case the advancement of democratic principles and institutions as a criterion for EU membership. It is employed to persuade, induce, and at times coerce states into adopting the desired policy: through the promise of EU membership, good ties with Europe, and economic assistance (Kubicek, 2003, p. 7). States are free to accept or reject EU’s conditions, depending whether the reward is more important than the cost of compliance.

2.2 European Urban Policy

There exists no dedicated urban policy in the European Union, and due to complexity and plurality, urban planning topics at the European scale are associated with soft planning (Faludi, 2010; Purkarthofer, 2016, 2018; Stead, 2014). The classification proposed by Etzioni (1975) distinguished between three types of acEU policy interventions: regulatory, remunerative, and discursive. While this classification refers to governance on a general level, it could be applied to specific policy fields, for example, such as transport policy Givoni et al. (2012). The three types of policy intervention differ in their conceptualization at the European level and responses towards them among domestic actors. When it comes to the implementation of discursive policy interventions, domestic actors can use ideas and rhetoric represented at the European level and refer to European documents in their policies. If they do not attach importance to these documents, there are no legal or financial consequences, as in the case of implementing regulations and directives. Nonetheless, discursive policy implementations can exert normative power through the presentation of knowledge and data, and the transfer of knowledge (Purkarthofer, 2016, 2018; Vedung, 1998). Instead of developing binding plans or regulations, European interventions focus on strategy development, coordination, cooperation, negotiation, and learning within the different topics of urban development. In recent years the European Commission (EC) has been focused on developing policies regarding sustainable urban transport regulation and planning. As a result, several projects were created (CH4ALLENGE, CIVITAS (SUMP-UP), within which guidelines have been created to develop sustainable urban mobility plans. Having a sustainable urban mobility plan (SUMP) is mandatory for cities of all sizes inside the EU (Kiba-Janiak and Witkowski, 2019).

2.3 Academic approaches to theorising mobility

The existence of multiple approaches toward mobility raises the critical issue of how academic knowledge about transport and mobility helps legitimise and reinforce policy discourse and action. Produced academic expertise in transport and mobility often becomes appropriated by practitioners, planners, and policymakers. According to Kębłowski and Bassens (2018), there are three main scholarly approaches to urban transport and mobility: neoclassical, sustainable, and political-economic.

The neoclassical approach comprises transport engineering and economics perspectives that approach transportation as an essential rational discipline and envision it as a significant contributor to economic growth (Kębłowski and Bassens, 2018, p. 418). Neoclassical conceptualizations and methodologies are structured around being expert-led and highly technical (Hoyle and Knowles, 1998; Owens, 1995) and advocate for higher speed, lower travel time, lower transaction cost that result from urban economic development improvements in transport infrastructure and transport development (Lyons and Urry, 2005; Rodrigue et al., 2013). Following Rodrigue et al. (2013), transport is critical in promoting, developing, and shaping the national economy. Mobility is viewed as a geographical endeavour that trades space for cost. Nowadays, transport planners utilise multi-disciplinary teams to broaden the scope of the planning process and manage both demand and the transport system. Lyons and Urry (2005) reflect on mobility planning from an economic perspective, arguing that the benefits of urban mobility are that journey times are being reduced while maintaining the level of access, which is achieved either by moving the opportunities closer to people or by moving the people quicker to the options. (p. 259). Therefore, people minimise their generalised cost of travel, which combines the cost-making of infrastructure plans and others, aiming to provide an integral overview of the estimated costs and benefits of alternative plans time taken. The policy is directed towards alleviating concerns over traffic congestion, road expansion, and other environmental concerns at the expense of broader social equity goals (Enright, 2019; Farmer, 2011; Garrett and Taylor, 1999; Grengs, 2004). Hence, neoclassical thought reflects on the ties between transport policymaking, civic engineering, and economics.

The neoclassical approach has been concentrated on a tool called the cost benefit analysis (CBA). It is a widely used evaluation tool to support the decision-making of infrastructure plans and others, aiming to provide an integral overview of the estimated costs and benefits of alternative plans and to translate them as much as possible into monetary terms of comparison (Beukers et al., 2012). Academics have noticed several process-related problems related to the use of CBA. Firstly, the assessment should not be seen as a blunt “yes or no”; instead, it should focus on drawing out issues and proposing a way forward (ECMT, 2004). Secondly, the CBA tool should involve stakeholders in the process and help them agree on a consensus on the project’s problems, addressing alternatives and solutions preferred (ECMT, 2004; Haezendonck, 2008). However, both critiques are quite difficult to incorporate because the CBA is based on welfare theory and compensation criteria, whereas each stakeholder has its own set of costs and benefits (Beukers et al., 2012; Haezendonck, 2008). Planners also recognized that CBA does not give an understandable and recognizable output due to the tool being used in plans related to

liveability or a region's economic competitiveness. This points out a struggle between the views of planners and transport appraisers.

However, it is often said that transport planning is at a crisis point and underestimates urban planners' challenges (Banister, 2008). A significant development in urban studies in the field of transport has been the birth of a sustainable mobility paradigm, in which the Global North situates its mobility and spatial development plans (Banister, 2008; Boussauw and Vanin, 2018; Hickman et al., 2013; Kębłowski and Bassens, 2018) and is the second approach recognized by Kębłowski and Bassens (2018). According to Banister (2008), sustainable mobility provides an alternative paradigm to strengthen land use and transport links. The perspective advocates building large, dense, and "mixed-use" cities through limiting distances between activities and functions. The author recognizes four actions in transport planning: reducing the need to travel, encouraging modal shifts, reducing trip length, and encouraging greater efficiency in the transport system (p. 74). The principles of the sustainable mobility paradigm need to combine these "actions" into a series of consistent policy measures, promoting a shift from cars towards "soft" transport modes and public transport. In their analysis, Banister and Hickman (2013) explain three possible future scenarios of transport reorganisation in Delhi and conclude that the sustainable transport scenario is the most effective. According to the authors, the sustainable transport paradigm is the most effective in reducing CO₂ emissions; it pushes hard on available policy levers and implements the technological and behavioural options to a high-intensity level (p. 289). Baeten (2000) critiques the sustainable urban transport paradigm by highlighting how planning transport infrastructure generally leads to a clash between opposed mobility interests that generate winning and losing groups and how this conflicting character of transport planning is absent in the sustainable transport discourse. The author sees the dangers of a sustainable mobility paradigm caused by generating a new optimism among transport planners as there is a political consensus about the necessity of sustainable development and transport implementation, which allows them to launch new pragmatic planning measures (p. 70).

Moreover, scholars and practitioners opposed to the sustainable mobility paradigm have noticed significant overlaps and similarities between it and the neoclassical approach (Kębłowski and Bassens, 2018). Particularly, sustainable approaches refer to the necessity of highly expensive technological innovations and fixes such as electric vehicles and bus networks, biofuel research, car sharing, urban trams, electric scooters, and bikes, etc., seen as the potential to regenerate and improve urban areas (Hickman et al., 2013; Offner, 1993). According to Kębłowski and Bassens (2018), the sustainable mobility paradigm research uses "technological determinism" to escape discussions on contemporary problems while paying little attention to political and social innovations. Therefore, instead of a significant shift from the neoclassical approach, the sustainable mobility paradigm has focused on improving the neoclassical tool of the cost-benefit analysis instead of rejecting it altogether. Moreover, it has not prevented representatives of the "sustainable mobility paradigm" from joining the neoclassical vision of transport research as a politically neutral and objective activity. Influential in this regard have been the calls for a more profound acknowledgment of issues related to accessibility, equality, social justice, social exclusion, and transport disadvantage in transport planning (Kębłowski and

Bassens, 2018).

The strongest characteristic of the sustainable mobility paradigm is the “rationalisation” of mobility decisions and an emphasis on individual choice connected to selecting housing locations, employment opportunities, and transport modes. According to Farrington and Farrington (2005), the perspective introduces an essentially normative and moral geography by praising particular behaviours, lifestyles, and modes while condemning others. This suggests a division between being a “good citizen” and a “bad citizen,” where the good is the cyclists, walkers, public transport users, car-poolers, electric car users, and condemned are the car commuters and those flying (Farrington and Farrington, 2005; Green et al., 2012). The new moral economy of sustainable mobility embodies ecological responsibilities to the city and global ecosystem, as well as responsibilities to enact the “new citizen” as a knowledgeable and alert risk assessor.

As an opposite of the depoliticized approach of the neoclassical and sustainable mobility paradigm, many critical political economy works have emerged, with an attempt to provide a re-politicised perspective on urban transport (Brenner, 2009; Farrington and Farrington, 2005; Harvey, 1989; Kębłowski and Bassens, 2018; Kębłowski et al., 2019; Soja, 2010). The political economy approach is characterised by engaging in socio-spatial analysis and investigations into issues of social class focusing on topics like gender, class, race, ethnicity, disability, age, etc.. This perspective recognizes political processes and regulatory frameworks that condition mobility, highlighting the causes behind socio-spatial exclusion, inequality, and poverty related to transport. In other words, the approach understands power relations as an inherent component of mobility. The main recommendation of this scholarly approach is to generate policies in a more participative manner, by ensuring the participation of a wide spectrum of stakeholders and providing new political opportunities for informal and bottom-up urban movements. The political economy literature suggests a new paradigm of thinking that requires moving away from neo-liberal forms of governance to initiate fundamental sociocultural change. This implies looking at mobility problems through the disparity between the highly unequal environmental contributions between the mobile-rich population and the less mobile poor population, the unwillingness of the highly mobile to reduce their level of mobility, and the inefficiency of market-based or technology-based solutions in terms of facilitating such a reduction (Kębłowski and Bassens, 2018).

The example of Brussels used by Kębłowski and Bassens (2018) shows the different policy agendas of the three mobility approaches. The neoclassical approach sees problems in traffic congestion due to insufficient road and parking infrastructure; the sustainable mobility paradigm sees car-based mobility leading to diminished quality of public transport and urban environment; and the political economy approach sees car-based mobility as a contributor to socio-economic and spatial inequalities and urban sprawl. The policy solutions of these approaches are based on their policy agendas. Following the neoclassical approach, the policy solution is seen through a) the development of the metro system, b) the development of car infrastructure c) entrepreneurial solutions. The sustainable mobility paradigm suggests a variety of technological and behavioural interventions from investing in a metro system to “mobility coaching”. Finally, the political economy approach suggests solutions through the continuous development of tram networks, the reduction of car infrastructure, and the abolition of public transport fares.

2.4 Transfer of mobility policies

Attempts to pursue sustainable mobility agendas face a variety of challenges. One often promoted way of approaching these challenges is through “learning from abroad”. Following Glaser et al. (2022), learning from elsewhere is and continues to be a common practice in contemporary transport planning research and practice. Nevertheless, it is not regarded as a fixed practice – learning from elsewhere encompasses a host of activities, actors, geographies, contexts, and other dimensions. An important milestone in the literature on policy transfer of mobility practices has been the work of Marsden and Stead (2011). According to Marsden and Stead (2011), policy transfer in the transport sector is a highly politicised process that is used to justify preferred decision-making. Nevertheless, the authors note that there has been relatively little attention to policy transfer in the public transport arena and that the process of new policy adaptation is rarely studied in transport as the tradition for examining sustainable transport innovations is primarily based on forecasts rather than actual results (p. 7). In their conclusion, the authors state that even though the transfer of practices and ideas occurs to some degree, the role of learning remains overlooked and poorly understood. A decade later, Glaser et al. (2022, 2019) reinforce the conclusion made by Marsden and Stead (2011) and say that academic research continues to know little about how learning occurs in the context of policy transfer and to a lesser extent how learning is transformed into local action, triggered by experiences in other contexts.

2.5 From urban government to urban governance in the post-socialist context

During recent decades a substantial body of literature has addressed the emergence of new urban governance arrangements (Bjorna and Aarsaether, 2010; Blanco, 2013; Peters and Pierre, 2016). This literature is based on the idea that structural transformations linked to the globalisation process are radically changing the conditions under which urban policies are formulated and implemented. The old bureaucratic paradigm of local government does not fit well with modern challenges (mainly related to climate adaptation and resilience), and as a consequence of this, new forms of governance are being developed (Blanco, 2013). The most widespread narrative refers to a process of transition that would be leading us from a traditional local government scenario to an emerging local governance one. According to Peters and Pierre (2016), governance is about formulating and pursuing collective goals at the local level of the political system. It refers to developing governance styles in which boundaries between and within the public and private sectors have been blurred. Following Bjorna and Aarsaether (2010), in contrast to the classical government mode, governance implies not a hierarchical structure, but horizontal relations between private and public actors (p. 304). The essence of governance is to focus on governing mechanisms that do not rest on the resources of the authority and sanctions of government. The difference between national and urban governance is that cities, to a much higher degree, are deeply embedded in a web of institutional economic and political constraints,

creating a set of complex contingencies in the governing process. Therefore, urban development and the functioning of cities are separate agendas for local governments. Decision-making in this field is now based on wide-scale interactions of many actors representing various sectors and institutions (Peters and Pierre, 2016).

Post-war West-European urban development policy reflected goals in economic growth and welfare expansion driven by the central state, with a strong perception of urban policy, such as providing local public services and infrastructure. This pragmatic policy scope was challenged and changed during the 1970s and '80s (Buček, 2016, p. 8). A critical development point in the Western governance regime was the period of the 1980s, which was caused by the decline of traditional industries. Harvey (1989) describes the change as one from “managerialism” to “entrepreneurialism,” defined by a shift to the promotion of projects and strategies by urban governing elites to reconfigure and reposition urban local economies. By the 1990s, changes in urban governance processes reflected a shift in the ‘mode of regulation’ to parallel the change in ‘modes of accumulation’ from Fordism to post-Fordism (Healey, 2006, pp. 358-359)). Since then, Western European and North American cities’ governance range has been conceptualised as “cities as growth machines” and “entrepreneurial cities.” This urban regime embeds a design- incentive fashioning of urban centres featuring a proliferation of mega-projects of iconic development and associated infrastructures, globality-mediated prestige exhibitions, magnetic arts, cultural and sporting venues, and events. All these events and projects are being orchestrated by state-led coalitions and special-purpose agencies aiming to boost urban economies through global capitalism and revive economic fortunes after the breakdown of the Fordist accumulation regime (MacLeod, 2011). The consequences of these new urban development policies have triggered urban social movements: defensive movements that seek to protect themselves from the effects of intensified intra-urban competition and movements of politicised struggles over whose city it is supposed to be (Mayer, 2009, p. 365).

Within the context of Central and Eastern European cities, governance structures are still under formation and have been expanding over the last decade. This development is not without controversies and a search for suitable arrangements, for example, asymmetries in treating actors (Buček, 2016, p. 12). Due to the period of communism that stifled autonomy and strictly regulated all forms of social activism, Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries have only recently started to observe the urban mobilisation processes visible in Western countries since 1960 (Domaradzka, 2018, p. 608). After 1989, the environment of the post-socialist states was characterised by the need to restructure the economy, dismantle old institutions, and replace them with new and effective ones. The legacy of communism has often been identified as “the legacy that needs to be overcome” for successful reform implementation (Meyer-Sahling, 2010; Mussagulova, 2021). It is important to position the post socialist urban experience in the framework of overall institutional transformation on the one hand and in the context of rapid economic and political system change on the other. The undeniable complexity creates unique challenges for planning and urban policy (Tsenkova, 2014). Moreover, the absence of post-socialist contexts from international discussions is well acknowledged by now and the core reasons for this detachment have been observed within the scholarship on post-socialist cities (Galuszka, 2022; Mussagulova, 2021; Petrovic, 2004).

2.6 Policy transfer in post-socialist cities

The transplantation of policy models, concepts and ideas from one city to another has grown significantly in Europe, with more projects including the aspect of trans-European policy learning. A slightly different situation arises when talking about post-socialist cities, where the technological, economic, political and/or social advancement is very different from the western standard. Most previous studies of policy transfer have focused highly on developed countries (Dolowitz et al., 1999; Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; Glaser et al., 2022; Marsden and Stead, 2011). Tsenkova (2006) makes an explicit reference to the new democracies of Central and eastern European countries as examples of nations seeking to catch up politically and economically by drawing lessons from the western world.

Some authors were voicing scepticism as to whether post socialist countries could be successful in transferring policies from the western world due to path dependency of institutional development (Campbell and Pedersen, 1996; Mussagulova, 2021; Rose, 1993). When thinking about socialist and post-socialist cities, path dependency is often presented as a general theoretical perspective of institutional sluggishness that specifies factors that have blocked the road towards plausible development (Borocz, 2000; Mussagulova, 2021; Petrovic, 2004; Tsenkova, 2014). Path dependency is the idea that once a set of institutions or practices is in place, actors adapt their strategies in ways that reinforce the system (Thelen, 1999). History matters for institutions ranging from economic transition and democracy building to corruption, and foreign policy. The legacy of the Soviet Union has proven beneficial in cases such as education or infrastructure (Asatryan et al., 2016) and harmful for democratic institution building, rule of law, institutional structures, and ideas (Libman and Obydenkova, 2013). According to Mussagulova (2021), no academic efforts have been undertaken in establishing the role of path dependency in innovation policy and performance in Central Asia, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia and Transcaucasian republics. Nevertheless, path dependency is an important aspect to keep in mind when engaging in policy transfer as historical experiences and the developments these countries have been through have a decisive impact on capabilities, preferences, physical structures, and legal and cultural context. Significant differences between the ‘donor’ and the ‘recipient’ countries raise the question of whether policy transfer and lesson drawing between them is possible and under what conditions.

Therefore the aim of this study is to explore the academic gap in literature regarding policy transfer in post-socialist countries. The research will focus on western theories regarding policy transfer and the sustainable urban mobility paradigm. The study is contributing to the broader academic debate by acknowledging the role of path dependency and historical and cultural context when engaging in policy making, oriented specifically towards urban sustainable mobility development.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Theoretical framework

The following section highlights the main theories, frameworks, and concepts used to facilitate the analysis of policy transfer of sustainable mobility practices in the context of Chisinau, Moldova. The working process of this study included a sequence of steps: explaining what this study understands as the concept of sustainable mobility, defining a framework for policy transfer, identifying and categorising relevant stakeholders, and mapping their interests and resources.

3.1.1 Sustainable mobility concept

A conceptualisation of the sustainable mobility paradigm is necessary to understand what kind of mobility practices countries are most likely to transfer, from the EU context into an Eastern European context. Following Boussauw and Vanin (2018) nowadays there exists a paradigm of sustainable mobility in which the Global North situates most of its mobility development plans. The paradigm of sustainable mobility was elaborated by Banister (2008) and focuses on technological innovation, the substitution of trips, modal shift, and the reduction of distances between potential destinations by compact spatial development. The sustainable mobility approach supports designing large, dense, and “mixed-use” cities by establishing stronger links between land use and transport policy, thereby helping reduce the number, scale, and length of journeys by limiting distances between activities and functions. In other words, sustainable mobility promotes a shift from cars to " soft " and public transport modes. The core aspects of the paradigm are a city that economically performs, is socially cohesive and diverse, environmentally friendly, healthy, and participative.

Adopting the sustainable mobility model carries significant implications for transport planning, where the primary physical dimensions of urban form and traffic should be balanced by the social dimensions of people and proximity and the environmental dimensions (Banister, 2008, p. 75). First is the reduction of the need to travel by substitution, which means that a trip is no longer made, and it has either been replaced by a non-travel activity or has been substituted through technology. Second is the modal shift in transport policy measures, where policy measures can reduce car usage through the promotion of walking and cycling and the

development of a new transport hierarchy. Third is distance reduction through land use policy measures, intending to build sustainable mobility into the patterns of urban form and layouts. Finally, fourth is the efficiency increase through technological innovation, which impacts the efficiency of transport by ensuring that the best available technology is being used in terms of engine design, alternative fuels, and the use of renewable energy sources. Summarising the four sustainable mobility actions, it is important to note that transport planning must involve stakeholders and civil society so that there is an understanding of the rationale behind all the policy changes. The sustainable mobility paradigm suggests that public acceptability is core to the successful implementation of radical change, and it must involve community and stakeholder commitment to the process of discussion, decision-making, and implementation.

Nevertheless, this study acknowledges that the sustainable mobility paradigm approach must be situated in the context of developed economies. In the context of the Global North, social support grows to pursue development aiming at environmental equity and social involvement, when mobility no longer equals more wealth or well-being. In the context of developing nations, difficult circumstances such as unemployment, political and/or financial instability, weak welfare state, and educational and health institutions, largely overshadow concerns about sustainable mobility. Meanwhile, the cities heavily suffer from car dependency, road safety issues, noise, dust, and air quality problems in city centres (Boussauw and Vanin, 2018).

3.1.2 The Dolowitz and Marsh model for policy transfer analysis

Attempts to pursue sustainable mobility development face a variety of challenges. One way to approach those challenges is through “learning from abroad”. There exists a rich body of literature that focuses on issues related to transferring, defusing, or drawing lessons from policies from abroad. These processes are defined as a practice in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, and ideas in another political system (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000, p. 5). The principle is that if certain policy problems are comparable across political and geographical borders, their solutions may also be compatible. The following section presents a theoretical model designed as a foundation for the study’s analysis.

A noticeable milestone in research regarding “learning from abroad” is the widely used policy transfer framework developed by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000). The framework proposes a catalogue of concrete questions to define the process under review:

1. Why do actors engage in policy transfer;
2. who are the key actors involved in the policy transfer process;
3. what is being transferred;
4. from where lessons are drawn;
5. what restricts or facilitates the policy transfer process; and

6. how effective the outcome is, and what barriers there may be for policy implementation.

The model highlights the overarching trends when looking at policy transfer: What are the characteristics of the transfer, what are the reasons for the transfer, and what are the outcomes?

Why policies are transferred, who is involved, and what is transferred all affect whether transfer occurs and how effective the outcome is. Reasons for transfer differentiate based on the nature of the transfer: it can be purely voluntary or it can be entirely coerced, although mostly the policy transfer process lies in between these two extremes. Examples of coercive policies are Directives elaborated by EU institutions that enforce direct implementation onto member states, which in case of breach receive penalty from the Court of Justice. A reason for voluntary policy transfer is usually a response to domestic dissatisfaction with the status quo (Rose, 1993, p. 10). Following this logic, if a government searches for a solution to an urgent problem, it is more likely that there will be a transfer because the need for a “solution” is imperative. New solutions are sought either by looking at how the problem was dealt with in the same place in the past, or by examining how the same problem is (or has been) dealt with elsewhere (Marsden and Stead, 2011). According to the lesson-drawing model, non-member states adopt EU rules without EU incentives or persuasion. Whether a state draws lessons from EU rules depends on the following factors: a state must (i) start searching for rules abroad; (ii) direct its search at the political system of the EU and/or its member states; (iii) evaluate EU rules as suitable for domestic circumstances (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004). A great example of the EU’s role in the policy development of candidate states is the policy of conditionality. According to (Kubicek, 2003, p. 7), conditionality is used to directly influence others by using the tactics of “carrot and stick” to persuade, determine, and sometimes force the states to adopt the desired policy. As Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) underlined, the EU advances its rules of functioning as conditions that a state with European aspirations should accomplish to receive aid and institutional ties, varying from cooperation and trade agreements to association agreements and EU membership.

Examining who is involved in the process raises important questions regarding the degree to which transfer occurs and to what extent countries can choose to engage in the process. In understanding the importance of different actors in the transfer process it is important to consider issues of both structure and agency. Policymakers at local, national, and international levels rely on the advice of consultants, who act as policy experts in the development of new programs, policies, and institutional structures. Their role is important because they offer advice based upon what they regard as the “best practice” elsewhere, often paying little attention to the context of the borrowing political system (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000, p. 10). Moreover, international governing organisations (IGOs) such as the OECD, International Monetary Fund (IMF), UN, and its various agencies, are increasingly playing a role in the spread of ideas, programs, and institutions around the globe. These institutions can influence policy directly and/or indirectly: through their policies and loan conditions, and/or through the information and policies spread through their conferences and reports. Additionally, international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also increasing their influence over global public policy through their ability to spread information and ideas.

While almost anything can be transferred from one political system to another, the Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) model identifies eight different categories: policy goals, policy content, policy instruments, policy programs, institutions, ideologies, ideas and attitudes, and negative lessons. Moreover, it is important to distinguish between policies, which are broader statements of intention that generally denote the direction policymakers wish to take, and programs which are the specific means of the course of action used to implement policies. Policy therefore can have multiple programs, while a program is a complete course of action in and of itself (p. 12).

Policy-makers can look to three levels of governance: the international, the national, and the local. Actors engaging in policy transfer can draw lessons from other political systems or units within their own countries or draw lessons from another nation. Lastly, lessons can be drawn from or forced upon a political system by the international level. Finally, according to Dolowitz and Marsh (2000), policy transfer is not an all-to-nothing process. The framework distinguishes four different degrees of transfer: copying (=direct and complete transfer), emulation (= transfer of the ideas behind the policy or program), combinations (= mixtures of several different policies), inspiration (= policy in another jurisdiction inspired another policy change, with a different policy outcome).

3.2 Case Selection



Figure 3.1: Monument of Stefan cel Mare si Sfânt (photograph taken by author).

3.2.1 Regional context: the Republic of Moldova and the city of Chisinau

The case selection is a single case study of Chisinau, Moldova, and its policies regarding sustainable urban mobility. This case was picked as Moldova is an EU candidate with an economy described as a "developing nation," making it a relevant case study to investigate policy transfer issues. Chisinau is an interesting case as it allows us to trace frictions between two different 'philosophies' of planning: the more recent Western-oriented type of planning, and the historical soviet planning. This thesis identifies policy transfer in the current state of Chisinau's public transport city planning, by taking into account the historical background of the city and observing the possible frictions between the old urban planning and new urban planning trajectories.

Moldova is a small landlocked country located between Romania and Ukraine in southeastern Europe, a cross-zone between Balkan, Central European, Ottoman, and Slavic cultures. Being part of the USSR, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova had a central role in agricultural production. After independence, the country became the Republic of Moldova, and since then it has struggled with a weak and lowly industrialised and technologized economy (Ledwoch, 2014). With the collapse of the socialist system, the country has experienced significant political and economic transformations. The Republic of Moldova, with a historical function as a food supplier within the USSR, is failing to disengage from exporting lowly processed agricultural goods. Now Moldova is facing unprecedented challenges due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which resulted in an energy and refugee crisis, straining household budgets, the economy, and public finances (World Bank, 2024). While a moderate economic recovery is expected for the 2024 year, there are significant microeconomic risks including the potential intensification of the war in Ukraine, additional energy disruptions, and upcoming elections in 2024 and 2025 (World Bank, 2024).

European integration has been the main objective of Moldova's Government for more than a decade. The EU plays an important role in preparing all states that intend to obtain EU membership, and in the case of Moldova which was proclaimed a candidate state in 2022. The role of the EU is realised through actions, declarations, and opinions presented by EU structures and officials, in this way influencing the evolution and development of EU relations and causing domestic transformations by playing the role of the "mentor of those changes" (Morari, 2016).

Chisinau is the capital and the largest city of Moldova. It is the country's main industrial and commercial centre, making it the most economically prosperous locality in the country with a third of Moldova's population living in the Chisinau metropolitan area. The municipality consists of the five administrative sectors of the city – Telecentru, Buiucani, Râșcani, Botanica, Ciocana, as well as six towns and twelve communes/Villages in the outskirts of Chișinău (UNDP, 2020). The settlement structure of Chisinau shows a strong trend towards suburbanization and relocation of urban functions, generating undesired effects in terms of transport structure and demand, including the growing number of motorised private cars affecting the city's transport structure and quality (Ledwoch, 2014). According to Ledwoch (2014), nowadays Chisinau planning is stuck in the transition process. Therefore, this study expects that to achieve urban transformation the city is looking for help at the international scale and trying to find suitable sustainable urban mobility practices to apply to its context.

3.2.2 Road and Street Network Context



Figure 3.2: Bucuresti Street (photograph taken by author).

Chisinau has partly a bypass for through traffic: the city has no real highways but there are double-lane roads and occasionally there are grade separated connections. Both in the centre area and in the peripheral areas there are main arteries around which the improved road network has developed with a rectangular priority scheme. Soviet infrastructure planning tradition would be characterised by inner-urban high-capacity corridors, with the city's main traffic axes running concentrically between the large housing estate areas. The roads are largely dimensioned (2-3 lines per direction). With the transition from the ideology of collective to individual, capacity limits are reached with rising car ownership. Infrastructure for non-motorized private transport is very limited: walkways are badly maintained, and cycling infrastructure does not exist. Non-motorised transport is heavily subordinated and exposed to motorised transport (Chisinau City Hall, 2024b).

In recent decades, the number of private transport and the share of passenger traffic with private transport have increased significantly. As a consequence, the intensity of traffic on the city streets increased and the road network was obviously overloaded with means of transport. For these reasons, during peak hours, the situation becomes significantly more complicated, traffic jams appear on almost all the roads that connect the suburbs to the centre. During peak hours, the speed of traffic decreases noticeably. (Civitta Strategy & Consulting, 2022). The recent explosion in the number of personal vehicles has eroded the system of public transit developed by soviets, increasing political interest for road infrastructure works and decreasing it for public transport maintenance. The takeover of the auto-mobile has substantially worsened urban congestion and environmental pollution.

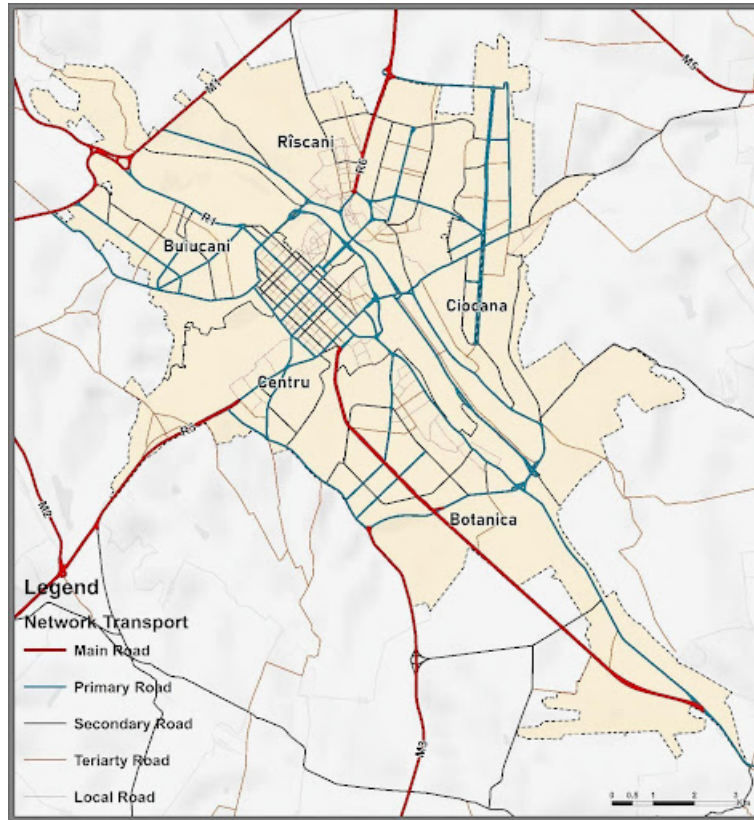


Figure 3.3: Road Network Chisinau (Civitta Strategy & Consulting, 2022)

People are buying a lot of cars because public transportation is not good enough, the suburban connections are even worse, alternative transportation is non-existent, and there are no policies to discourage cars from “existing” in the city (like paid parking). In Moldova, regulations allow you to bring used cars from Europe which are quite affordable - around 2000 euros. All the focus is on servicing the auto-mobile system which is growing exponentially. The number of cars in Chisinau is growing by 20,000 a year. (Victor Chironda 2024)

In 2019 there were 222 electric vehicles registered in Moldova. The rise in electric vehicle popularity is reinforced by the development of charging station infrastructure. Approximately 12,000 electric cars were registered in the Republic of Moldova at the beginning of 2022. By June 2022 the number doubled, with 731,332 cars registered in the Republic of Moldova, of which 238,810 were in Chişinău municipality. Currently there are 90 charging stations in the Republic of Moldova, majority located in the city of Chisinau (Green City Lab, nd).

In Chisinau the management of the parking system is totally non-existent. Since 2010, several attempts have been made to implement the pay parking system, but they have not led to a practical result. As a result of the lack of any regulatory mechanisms, parking in Chisinau is a chaotic and uncontrolled phenomenon. At the moment most of the parking in the city is free and limited only by the physical availability of parking space. In 2020 the City Hall has removed parking of private vehicles on the sidewalk and roadway on: Stefan cel Mare si Sfânt Blvd., Pushkin street (on the right side), Mateevich street, Metropolitan Banulescu-Bodoni street, K. Tanase street, G. Vieru blvd. and Kiev street (Chisinau City Hall, 2020b).

3.2.3 Public Transport Context

The end of the socialist era brought about multiple transformations in how cities were managed and how they functioned. While at the end of the 20th century, Western Europe was having its public transport renaissance with bringing back the trams into the city, eastern European countries have experienced an opposite direction. In Chisinau the tramway system has completely disappeared; the rapid eradication of tram networks was followed by use of the depot territories for real estate development. The nowadays public transport system of Chisinau comprises trolleybuses, conventional buses, and leftovers of minibuses operations, with no significant rail transport offering urban or short-distance services (Civitta Strategy & Consulting, 2022). Metropolitan public transportation in the city of Chisinau is provided by Regia Transport Electric Chişinău (RTEC), Parcul Urban de Autobuze (PAU) and private companies. RTEC operates trolleybuses, PAU operates buses and private companies operate minibuses in the city. Fares for travel are 6 lei for travel on all modes of transport, both city and suburban routes and may be updated biannually to the inflation index by the Mayor General's Order (Civitta Strategy & Consulting, 2022). For a number of categories of citizens (pensioners, schoolchildren, socially vulnerable people, etc.), the city authorities offer free travel. Students and teachers are offered preferential monthly passes for trolleybus and bus travel - costing between 113-164 lei depending on the period of validity. There is no electronic payment in the city, making the current charging system an obstacle to the success of necessary policy measures. A pilot project on the implementation of an electronic payment system was carried out in 2021, however wasn't very successful (Civitta Strategy & Consulting, 2022).

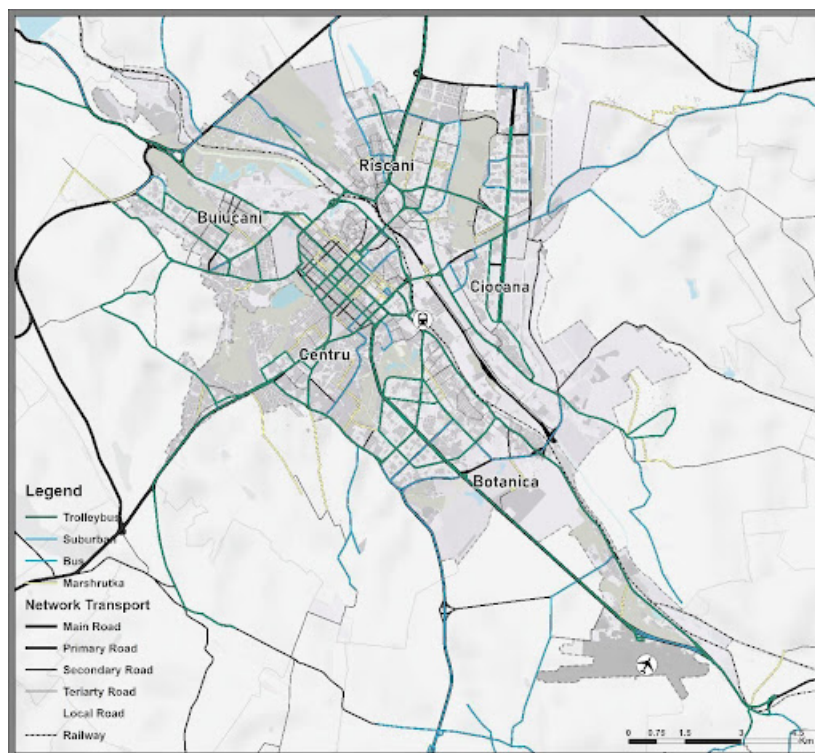


Figure 3.4: Metropolitan Public Transport (Civitta Strategy & Consulting, 2022)

There are 32 trolleybus lines in Chisinau. Trolleybuses offer good service to the city centre and main attractions (points of interest such as hospitals, universities, shopping malls, etc.) with sufficient frequency, but their speed is very slow. Trolleybuses are the main means of transport in Chisinau: they cover and connect the main parts of the city. Almost all (but not all) trolleybuses pass through the city centre. 56% of the fleet is less than 10 years old and only 12% of the fleet is more than 20 years old. Statistics for 2022 have shown that the annual number of transported passengers made up 146,6 million people (Invest.Chisinau, 2022).



Figure 3.5: Trolleybuses in Chisinau (photograph by author)

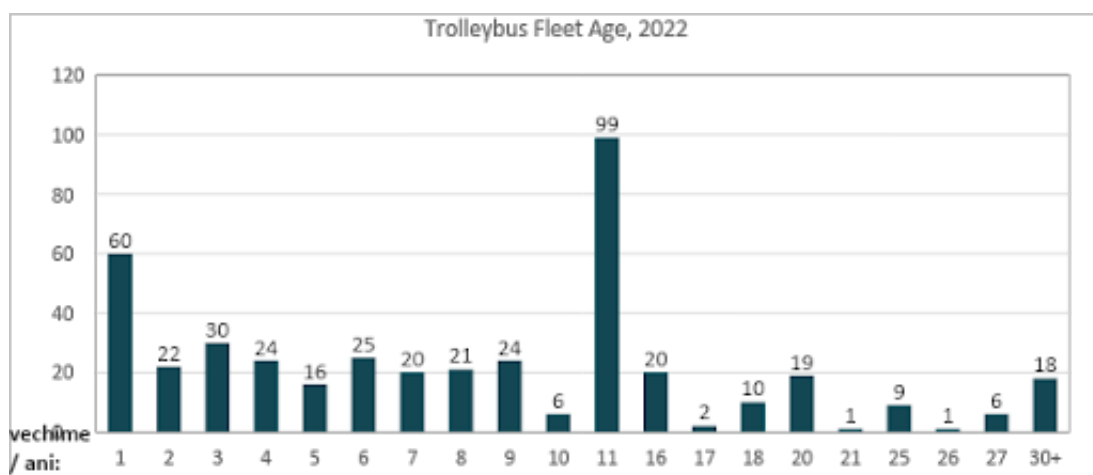


Figure 3.6: Trolleybuses in Chisinau (Civitta Strategy & Consulting, 2022).

Bus lines often overlap with trolleybus and minibus lines and they have no specific role in the city centre. Unlike trolleybuses that run only inside the city, buses connect the centre of Chisinau with the suburbs. Conventional buses serve 31 routes to more peripheral urban

areas, with service frequencies being generally lower than the trolleybuses. The fleet consists of mostly diesel buses. In 2021 100 new buses were added to the fleet. With this investment, the average age of the fleet has dropped considerably. 6% of the fleet is in preservation and 66% of the operational fleet is less than 10 years old. It has been reported that the annual number of transported passengers made up 29 482,7 thousand (Invest.Chisinau, 2022).

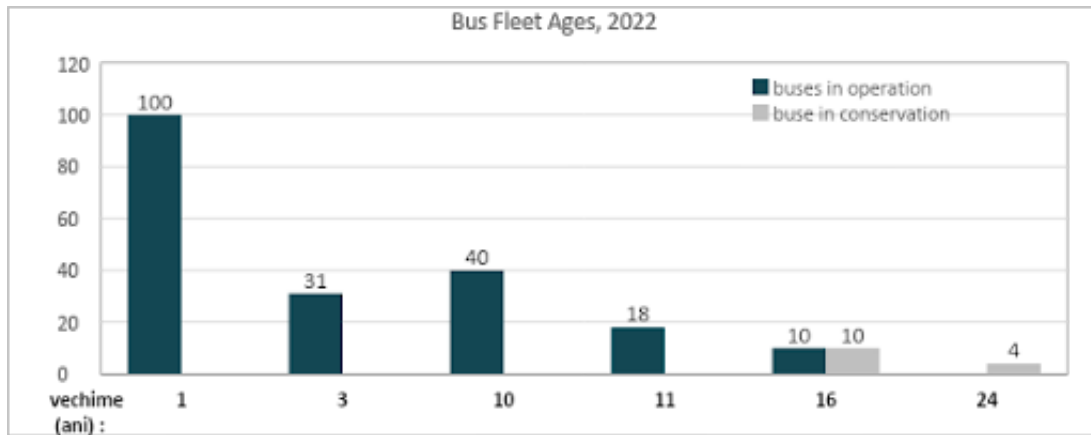


Figure 3.7: Bus Fleet Ages (Civitta Strategy & Consulting, 2022).



Figure 3.8: Buses in Chisinau (Invest.Chisinau, 2022).

By the year of 2022 there were 488 minibuses with 37 lines in the city that covered the entire city and suburbs. Minibuses operated the most extensive and dense route network. The network covered the entire urban area and had no special focus area. Minibuses were an example of semi-private transport supply, which is highly dependent on demand. The fleet was old and inadequate for the city's passenger demand. By the time this research has been carried out (years 2023-2024) almost all minibus providers were dismissed, however with no alternative to

substitute the public transport supply. No alternative public-private partnership functions in Chisinau at the moment.



Figure 3.9: Minibuses in Chisinau (Ziarul de Garda, 2022).

There is no line hierarchy in the public transport system. According to the Existing Conditions report 2022, high-capacity public transport vehicles should come to the city centre, and low-capacity vehicles (minibuses) should be operated as a feeder to large-capacity public transport lines from settlements with low travel value. However in Chisinau, vehicles with different capacities work in all lines. Public transport mostly runs together with general traffic. The mixed mode of operation significantly reduces the attractiveness of public transport, given that transport units are stuck in traffic jams, especially in central areas. At the institutional level, the transport system is not planned in an integrated way. Chisinau has recently started to implement dedicated lanes for public transport that are designed to separate buses and trolleybuses from other modes of traffic and therefore insure movement through crowded areas to become faster and more efficient. The main issue related to urban development of Chisinau in urban mobility is the lack of adequate public transport capacities despite a growing population, resulting in substantial uncoordinated urban expansion and recurrent traffic jams.

3.2.4 Alternative Transport Context

The cycling infrastructure is underdeveloped - there is a lack of cycle route connections between sectors, cycle routes do not create cyclist safety, have a lot of obstacles, are not separated from roads. There are currently 9 registered cycling routes in all 5 districts of the capital. Public Association Ecological Production in a Post-Growth Society (ECOPRO) in partnership with UNDP has developed a guideline for the municipality called the “Bicycle Infrastructure Development Plan” that is currently in the process of being updated (Chisinau City Hall, 2024a). In 2020 the pilot project on scooter rental developed by UNDP was launched. Currently, 3 private companies providing this service operate in the city area with a fleet of over 1000 scooters (Civitta Strategy & Consulting, 2022).

According to the Existing Conditions Report 2022, in terms of modal split of Chisinau citizens, it was observed that non-motorised trips have a very low share of only 16%, of which 15% are pedestrian trips. The remaining 84% of trips are made by motorised means of transport, of which public transport is dominant with 49% of trips, while 34% are made by car. The report has identified a rather low average car use rate of 1.67 persons/car for each trip made by car, illustrating a less responsible use - most users choose not to share the car with other people on their trips. The car is occupied by the driver alone in 54% of trips, by 2 people in 30% of the trips and only 16% of trips there are 3 or more occupants in the car.

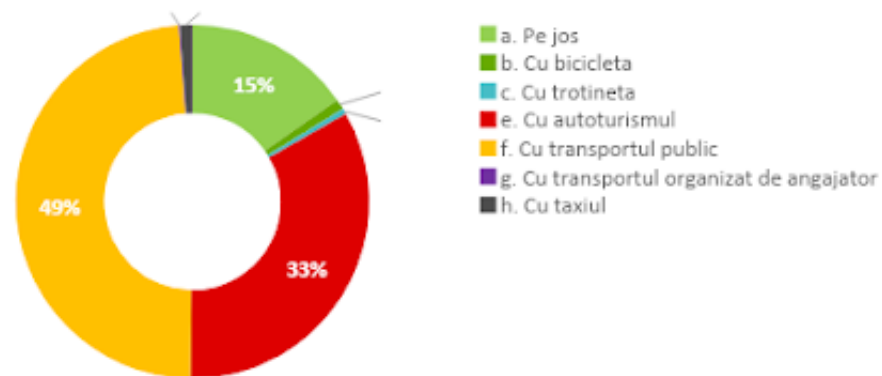


Figure 3.10: Preferences in modal choice.

3.3 Data Collection Method

3.3.1 Environmental Scan

To identify potential policy transfer practices in the domain of sustainable mobility, this research has conducted a preliminary media scan using web engines. The media scan focused on specific sources such as national/international news websites, Municipal/national websites, and policy programs: (draft) action plans, SUMPs, etc. Throughout the search, this research has utilised a coding scheme by creating categories and codes to classify the content related to sustainable urban mobility development:

“Sustainable Mobility development/Chisinau”, “public transport/Chisinau”, “SUMP/Chisinau”, “urban development/Chisinau”, “Funds/Chisinau/urban development”, “Funds/Chisinau/urban mobility”.

After screening the collected data two potential policy transfer practices were identified and related to sustainable urban mobility: “UNDP SUMP elaboration” from 2018 and “Move it Like Lublin SUMP” from 2020.

3.3.2 Identifying Stakeholders

Upon finding the two practices for potential policy transfer, the relevant stakeholders were identified using Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) categorisation. The authors identify nine main groups of political actors that can be engaged in policy transfer processes. For this study, stakeholders are defined as groups or individuals who affect the project, are affected by it, or exhibit an interest in it. Stakeholders across different domains, such as public (local, and national governments), private (enterprises and businesses), and society (residents, community-based organisations, and academic institutions) play important roles in sustainable mobility planning and development. A stakeholder analysis is vital in the formulation of a strategy for implementation. According to (Crosby, 1992, p. 5), a solid analysis of stakeholder expectations is key input for the design of strategies to handle certain groups, knowing what pieces of the policy should be emphasised, or how to assume future support. The Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) framework helps to define categories of stakeholders and select participants able and willing to participate in an in-depth interview. Following the method, a generic list of six subgroups of stakeholders was created for this study: (1) local/city governments, (2) regional/national government, (3) supranational entity, (4) civil society/NGOs/ not-for-profit organisations, (5) research institutions and experts (6) transport providers, and (7) local residents, users. This list was further used for the collection of site-specific data through in-depth interviews.

Category	Relevant stakeholders
Local urban government	Municipality of Chisinau: Mayoral Office City Council Department of Urban Mobility (DGMU) Move it like Lublin consultants Lublin City hall
Regional/national government ¹	Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure
International/Supranational organisations	EU OECD UNDP Global Environment Facility (GEF) European Space Agency/ European Space Agency Earth Observation Clinic World Bank
Civil society/NGOs/ not-for-profit organisations	Centrul de Urbanism Radio Europa Libera Civitta consultancy
Research institutions, experts	Technical University of Moldova (UTM): Transport department Architecture department
Transport providers	RTEC PAU
Local residents, users	/

Table 3.1: Table of relevant stakeholders

All the relevant stakeholders have been identified through preliminary web-search/media scan. This research has acknowledged the local resident and users category as a relevant stakeholder, however, does not include it into the collection and analysis. Once the categories were defined, participants were selected and contacted for an in-depth interview.

3.3.3 Document Analysis

As the UNDP SUMP has never been elaborated and Move it like Lublin SUMP has not yet finished its elaboration phase, this study cannot analyse the discourse of the SUMP documents. For the UNDP SUMP projects this study analyses the following documents: terms of reference (ToR) for Chisinau SUMP Development 2020. For the Move it like Lublin project the study analyses the following documents: Full Application Form 2020a which is the application for funding to the EC, and Existing Conditions Analysis 2022, which is an assessment of the current state of mobility practices in Chisinau. Moreover, the discourse in these documents are later compared with the second edition of EU Guidelines on Developing and Implementing a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan elaborated by Rupprecht et al. (2019) to add to the narrative about the policy environment in the Republic of Moldova. This document was developed within

the framework of the SUMPs-Up project co-funded under the EU's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme. It illustrates each step of the SUMP development process and is intended for local authorities, urban practitioners and other relevant stakeholders involved in the process.

3.3.4 In-depth Interviews

The bilingual interview questionnaire (Romanian and Russian) was designed to capture what resources and challenges the selected stakeholders saw in connection with the two highlighted projects: “UNDP SUMP” and “Move it Like Lublin SUMP”. The theoretical section helped conceptualise and formulate the questions. The interview guide was divided into four conceptual blocks: (i) Introduction, (ii) interests and resources, (iii) identifying challenges, and (iv) Policy transfer block. In the introduction block, general questions about the actors are asked, such as:

What does the group do? What are the links to Chisinau? What project(s) exist(s) connected to urban mobility planning that the group is partaking in?

The identifying challenges block focuses on the challenge categorization, where stakeholders were asked to identify and describe challenges that might hinder the processes of moving towards sustainable urban mobility development. Identifying challenges helps analyse the situation in which a certain policy is being elaborated and implemented. By understanding the challenges to the policy making process, this study critically analyses the effectiveness and adaptability of the policy transfer process. The interview identifies challenges by asking the following key questions:

What are the challenges of the Chisinau public transport system that the group identifies? What structural difficulties have the project(s) faced(s) (cultural, implementation capacity, political context, ideological incapacibilities)? How has been the cooperation between stakeholders?

Finally, the policy transfer block is elaborated based on the Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) framework to be able to identify transfer, distinguish between different types of transfer, and address the relationship between policy transfer and policy “failure”:

Why do actors engage in policy transfer; who are the key actors involved in the policy transfer process; what is being transferred; from where lessons are drawn; what restricts or facilitates the policy transfer process; and how effective the outcome is, and what barriers there may be for policy implementation.

The six questions were then adapted to the context of each actor which was interviewed. In total eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted across four identified categories of stakeholders.

Relevant Stakeholders	Interviewees
City Council DGMU Move it Like Lublin	City Councillor, Victor Chironda Anonymous Project Manager, Olga Lozan Transport consultant, Roman Cozma
Centre of Urbanism Radio Europa Libera Independent journalist Center for Policies and Reforms Moldova	Co-founder, President, Alexandru Munteanu Journalist, Virginia Rosca Journalist, Victoria Coroban Vlada Ciobanu
UTM	Head of department, Faculty of Transport Planning, Victor Ceban Associate Professor, Faculty of Urbanism and Architecture, Ilie Bricicaru

Table 3.2: Table of interviewees .

3.4 Data Analysis Method

The following section analyses the data collected through document analysis and in-depth interviews. This research is primarily qualitative, with a limited number of quantitative results coming out of the data collection. The responses were labelled and coded into categories using Atlas.Ti software. After the key-word coding was done, specific codes were categorised under the themes of the Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) framework for organisational clarity: ‘reason for transfer’; ‘key actors; transferred content’; ‘transfer source’; ‘policy restrictions/facilitations’; ‘outcomes and implementation’. The study observed a theme based on frequency of a code’s appearance, with an intent to create a general narrative of the opinions and discourse that exists in the Chisinau society.

For the document discourse analysis there were 15 codes created following the discourse of the documents: ‘budget’, ‘data’, ‘degree of transferability’, ‘EU integration’, ‘investments’, ‘learning’, ‘legislation’, ‘political interest’, ‘old planning paradigm vs new planning paradigm’, ‘actors’, ‘Lublin’, ‘structural problems’, ‘sustainable mobility paradigm’, ‘transfer destination’, and ‘transfer process’. For the interview discourse analysis a total of 22 codes were created following the narrative of the interview respondents: ‘soviet past’, ‘transition period’, ‘current state’; the code ‘transition period’ incorporates subcodes such as ‘minibuses’, ‘cars’, ‘public transport’, and ‘public private partnership’ as they also refer to the transition period time of urban planning; ‘about UNDP’, ‘about Move it like Lublin SUMP’, ‘Lublin’ ‘EU legislation’, ‘Transfer’; ‘budget’, ‘data’, ‘human capital/capacity’, ‘climate’, ‘legislation’, ‘discrepancy between urban planning and mobility planning’, ‘old planning paradigm’, ‘term mobility’, ‘political interest’.

Table 3.3 illustrates the frequency with which codes appear in the discourse of the documents and the interviewees responses. The highest frequency as well as the highest number of codes has the ‘Policy restrictions/facilitations’ theme with 66 appearances. Many respondents were concerned with the transition period (17), lack of political interest (21) and little public

and civil participation (9). Next group by amount of frequent trends is the outcomes and implementation theme with 49 appearances, with the topic of ‘political interest’ being most referred to. ‘Transferred content’ made up 24 appearances, ‘Key actors’ made up 17, and ‘Transfer source’ - 14. And finally with the smallest frequency came the theme reason for transfer that made up 10 appearances.

For this research frequency analysis has been relevant for identifying the most dominant themes displayed in the documents and discussed in the interviews. While frequency analysis is a statistical tool, this research does not aim to compare the identified codes with statistically significant values, but merely support in creating a narrative of the present conditions regarding mobility development and planning in Chisinau. The final steps of the analysis include applying the Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) framework onto the findings.

Reason for transfer	10
EU integration	4
Investments	2
Structural Problems	4
Key actors	17
About UNDP	7
About Move it like Lublin	9
Actors	1
Transferred content	24
Term mobility	3
EU legislation	4
Sustainable mobility paradigm	3
Learning	8
Public transport	6
Transfer source	14
Transfer	2
Lublin	11
Transfer destination	1
Policy restrictions/facilitations	66
Old planning paradigm	6
Transition period	17
Political interest	21
Public and civil participation	9
Data	4
Climate	1
Capital City	2
Discrepancy in urban planning and mobility planning	5
Degree of transferability	1
Outcomes and implementation	49
Political interest	20
Legislation	13
Budget	12
Human capital/capacity	4

Table 3.3: Table of code frequency.

Chapter 4

History of Urban Governance and Planning

4.1 Soviet Union



Figure 4.1: National Library of Moldova (photograph taken by author)

Academics distinguish the socialist city as a general model, due to specific urban development characteristics in Eastern Europe up to the demise of socialism. The socialist city characteristics appear from the unique interaction between elements of socialist ideology, the parameters set by the state policy, concrete implementation measures, and the legacies of pre-socialist urban structures (Sailer-Fliege, 1999).

The concept of rational scientific planning was one of the ideological pillars of communism. The economy was governed by five-year national economic plans that were prepared by teams of technocrats and approved by the state supreme legislative body and had a strict hierarchical system composed of hundreds of smaller-scale industrial plans, which translated into objectives and strategies for every republic, region, country, city, town, and factory. The exceptional control level was ensured through the communist state assuming ownership of most urban land,

large real estate, and production means. These 5-year plans were not spatial; however, they influenced spatial organisation and laid the foundation of spatial planning by prescribing all major infrastructure investments (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009).

The general physical structure of the socialist city is that of a compact town expanding its wedge form along the arterial roads and railway lines. The City centre is characterised by the location of the communist party and the public administration institutions, cultural facilities, retail trade outlets, and other service facilities, along with a considerable volume of housing stock as the district was planned to be most accessible by public transport. The monumental squares and allées were built to fit political parades. The city centre was of major functional importance in the communist times given the insufficient amenities of the sub-centres in the new and old residential districts (Ledwoch, 2014). In Chisinau, the city centre typology corresponds with the district Centru. Near the city centre are located areas built in pre-socialist times, largely used for residential function and multi-family dwellings constructed in the early years after World War 2. Between 1950 and 60, state funding of the housing sector was concentrated on creating small, standardised apartment blocks in housing estates. Generally, five-floor blocks of flats were erected using traditional building materials. From the mid-1960s there was a move towards prefabricated construction in the form of panel-type, high-rise estates. The ground plan of the populous neighbourhoods is characterised by a block arrangement of large housing estates constructed in concrete and large panel construction typology, aligned alongside a magistral connecting to the city centre. The satellites were designed to act as functionally independent subdivisions. The socialist city had a structure of decentralised concentration, which helped reduce travel necessities and potentially reduce transport demand (Ledwoch, 2014).

Cities were seen as the essential point of economic modernisation and the development of a classless society. Pre-socialist urban structures were seen as the legacy of the capitalist past and were to be gradually demolished. Hence, productive industrial sectors of the economy were regarded as fundamental to the rapid economic growth, and living conditions between cities were to be equalised (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009). Given economies of scale and the economic efficiency of agglomeration, this inherently implied the deliberate expansion of major cities and larger urban areas in the compact form. The salient point distinguishing the communist from the capitalist city is that the allocation of land use and infrastructure investments took place with little regard for market-based principles. In contrast to capitalist cities, the goal was equalisation of housing conditions for all households, and the idea of housing as a commodity was to be eradicated. Urban land and the private rental market were transferred to state ownership and land rent lost its significance for urban development.

USSR planning in the 30s-50s was conducted by urban design institutes that had strict architectural rules, for example, based on theories such as the wind rose, sectorial differentiation and zoning (industrial, residential, commercial, etc.), population distribution density, etc. Depending on building density, the transport was planned accordingly - how much transport was needed in the neighbourhood, how many lanes the roads should be, and what public transport lines should be main. In Soviet transport planning emphasis was placed on public electric transportation. And therefore, where the population density is high, metro and trams were planned, where it is medium - trams and trolleybuses, where the density is even lower - buses,

and where there is almost nothing at all - minibuses. Everything was proportional to demand which was proportionate to population density. (Victor Ceban 2024)

Urban planning and transportation studies have noticed poor coordination between transportation planning and land use during the soviet era (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009; Pucher, 1990; Sailer-Fliege, 1999). The main reason is seen to be the result of inadequate cooperation and competition among ministries responsible for industrial location decisions, housing, and transportation. The need for housing forced local governments to adopt short-term solutions that increase the transportation problems. According to Pucher (1990), due to greater land availability and lower construction costs in the suburbs, almost all new housing over the past few decades has been constructed at the periphery of the urban areas. New housing was rarely equipped with adequate social infrastructure making long trips to other parts of the city necessary. New industrial plans were also located in the periphery, due to greater availability of land, however, there has been no effort to match up the residencies with workplaces. These policies have led to excessive travel times.

The urban transportation system in the socialist states had very distinct features. This drastic difference between the socialist and the Western world can be attributed to several causes, the most important ones being public policy towards transportation, including the degree of state intervention, and the overall importance of the public sector in each country. In the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe socialist governments have directly set the costs of auto ownership and operation extremely high through the system of regulated prices and restricted auto production, thus keeping it limited. At the same time, they have offered extensive public transport services at extremely low fares. According to Pucher (1990), for the year 1987, 88% of urban travel in the Soviet Union was by public transport, while the auto-mobile accounted for 12%.

Nevertheless, even though public transport was widely available in Eastern Europe, it was often overcrowded, uncomfortable, and slow. The citizens would rely on motor and trolley buses, street-cars, and in some cases metro. Transfers among lines and modes would be difficult and time-consuming, and there are often long walks from housing complexes to public transport stops. Excessive travel time was viewed by socialist transport officials as the major transportation problem facing socialist cities (Pucher, 1990). Urban transport providers were state-owned or city-owned enterprises. Almost all transport providers suffered from a range of structural problems (as in most state-controlled sectors): inefficient management and organisational structures, overstaffing, excessive bureaucracy, incompetence, etc. (Stead, 2014).

4.2 Transition Period

The transformations of the urban landscape in post-socialist cities are associated with three aspects: transition to democracy (a systemic political change), transition to a market economy, and transition from a centralised modus operandi to decentralised and devolved power of the local governments (Tsenkova, 2006).

The period of transition from a centrally planned to a market-based economy has been associated with dramatic increases in the level of poverty, unemployment, and regional inequality. The crisis of the transition period in the Republic of Moldova has exceeded even the worst expectations in terms of the depth and duration of the economic decline. During the 1990s Moldova saw an approx. 50% drop in gross domestic product, a rise in unemployment rates exceeding a quarter of the population, an explosion of inflation rates into double and triple digits, removal of government-provided safety nets, and a decline in living standards. In comparison to some other transitional countries, Moldova did not succeed in attracting the attention of global investment capital, either through natural riches or competitive labour force reserves (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009).

The leitmotif of the post-communist transition has been privatisation – the process of transferring land, real estate, and means of production from the communist state to private actors. This process of privatisation reformed the basic context within which planning functioned. The transfer was backed by new laws, which elevated the importance of private property and sharply reduced the power of public institutions to control urban development. Once controlled by the communist state, urban development became much more complicated, having to incorporate multiple parties in the planning processes such as citizens, land and property owners, builders, realtors, developers, and various special interests. This brought conflict and confusion for which planners trained to function under the communist system, were ill-prepared (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009).

Another major challenge for Moldova, besides finding a way out of the severe economic crisis, is the need for implementation of successful institutional reform. Since the fall of the communist regime, the decentralisation of powers from central to local governments has been carried out as a main tenet of political reform. The process of transferring responsibilities has not been paralleled by a comparable transfer of means through adequate adjustments in national and local policies (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009).

The process of decentralisation was characterised by post-communist states first terminating the practice of national economic planning and then transferring all planning powers to local institutions. However, municipal governments had little expertise and hence were not prepared for this transition: their performance has been significantly complicated having to do with a shortage of financial, legal, and institutional resources. Therefore, the initial period of transition for post-socialist countries is characterised by an unnerving state of institutional disorganisation. In the absence of well-established democratic institutions, finding a balance between economic and social goals presented an enormous challenge (Tsenkova, 2006).

Moreover, according to Tsenkova (2006), new intergovernmental institutions and new fiscal systems devolve many responsibilities from the central to the regional level without ensuring adequate budgetary capacity to deliver urban services (p. 23). To curtail expenses, local governments have embraced the strategies of expedient privatisation, and in the sectors where privatisation could not be carried out, budgets were slashed through a reduction in the level of services (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009, p. 27). This development is not without controversies and a search for suitable arrangements, for example, asymmetries in treating actors (Buček, 2016,

p. 12). Due to the period of communism that stifled autonomy and strictly regulated all forms of social activism, CEE countries have only recently started to observe the urban mobilisation processes visible in Western countries since 1960 (Domaradzka, 2018, p. 608).

Since post-socialist cities are increasingly drawn into a system of global relations, the position of the respective nation-state within the international economic system exercises considerable influence. Therefore, a critical link exists between national-level policies and types of responses at the local level. Tsenkova (2006) recognizes that political regimes have moved from right to left and back again, with various nuances of the neo-liberal agenda for economic and social change (p. 30). With post-communist governments making a sharp turn to the political right and the neo-liberal doctrines adopting the dominance of the free-market systems has led to what is referred to as a “legitimacy crisis” of planning. This new system of planning tends to support the short-term interests of private capital (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009, p. 3). Post-socialist countries need more national urban policies, and the frequent changes in political regimes lead to a need for more consistency in urban policy and party politics at the city level. As a result, these changes have made urban politics less predictable and socially and economically more conservative than those of socialist times (Tsenkova, 2006, pp. 30-31).

The sharp deterioration in the quality of maintenance and provision of public services during the transition period is a direct result of the drastic withdrawal of state funds supporting local government actions. Meanwhile, the local authorities’ efforts to secure funding through attracting international investment, borrowing money, and increasing use fees haven’t reached the targeted levels needed to sustain adequate service.

Ledwoch (2014) states that the crisis of sustainability in mobility practices observed in Chisinau during the period of transition was caused by changes in the spatial structure of the city and its surroundings, the rapid growth of motorisation, and the deterioration in public transport. Since the early 1990s auto-mobile use has skyrocketed, placing a heavy burden on the existing road infrastructure, designed to accommodate traffic several times below the current levels. To decrease congestion, urban governments have concentrated most public investments on road capacity improvements, which has not improved traffic flows as it simply generated more auto-mobile use, hurting the existing public transport system.

With the state authorities transferring the responsibility to run public transport to municipalities, municipalities were left in a difficult position of maintaining public transport while being severely financially constrained. While some of them managed to find funds to keep public transport running, others just let them gradually die out. In a way, municipalities also held the obligation of caring for the population, meaning that the fares were still free for some categories of citizens such as children, school children, elderly and disabled at the cost of lower service quality and scope (Tuvikene et al., 2019, p. 12). Therefore the “soviet principle” of public transport as a social necessity lived on, while mass motorisation and disinvestment characterised the transition period of the urban transport environment.

As mentioned earlier, the political system in the Soviet Union excluded the possibility of providing public transport informally, services being provided by publicly owned transport operators. During the transition period liberalisation took place, simplifying the development

procedures of small and medium-size companies. In the transition period, this semi-informal mode of public transit would not only serve areas where public transport is inadequately developed, but also compete with formal public transport operators hence reducing the financial efficiency of their operations. This and objections concerning technical standards and safety, are the main reasons for criticism (Suchorzewski, 2013).

In Chisinau by the year 2014, there were 23 private minibus operators, operating the most extensive and dense route network, offering 94 service fixed routes. The *textitrutieră* (rom. for minibuses) function was highly demand-oriented, during peak hours the operation frequency can be as little as one minute, and off-peak and late-hours travel contains longer waiting times, to pick up as many passengers as possible. The appearance of *rutiere* in Chisinau was one of the most radical developments in post-socialist mobility, becoming an important and even prevailing mode of transport. It changed the cities' ecology, people's commuting habits, and the image of public transit in the urban imagination

The "private transportation companies" aka *rutieră*, appeared in the mid-90s out of necessity. Municipality had no money, no gasoline, economic ties were broken, and the demand for transportation was still there. The first months was when mobilisation across the population started, with anyone who could drive and had a vehicle of significant size. The tariff was also minimal - 1 leu. When they realised that such a state of mobility will be for a long time, and that it could bring significant profit, those who wanted to invest in this business, began buying [ten years old] diesel minibuses. Their investments paid off in 2-3 years. And this state of city mobility continued for almost 10 years. The first years - with what people could mobilise, then from 1997 to 2005 small old buses, and from 2005 the "entrepreneurs" bought newer - and higher capacity minibuses. More capacity meant more people per transportation. But then inflation (which was a recent phenomena for the post-soviet society) started eating up the tariff, and 1 lei turned out to not be enough any-more. The investors set the price to 2 lei and for a while it worked, but after 3 years they were forced to raise it already to 5 lei (which was double the tariff of the municipal public transport). Private investors invest only until it is profitable. As soon as it stopped being profitable - interest dropped. While the business was profitable (1990 till 2010), a lot of these operators appeared. (Victor Ceban 2024)

In most cases one can observe a negative correlation between the significance of buses and trolleybuses and the presence of private minibuses in particular locations. Where there is good public transport connection, the *rutiere* would pass rarely.

The *rutieră* network went in parallel with the lines of the main public transport - with trolleybuses and buses and therefore creating disloyal competition. Let's say there is the 10th trolleybus. In parallel was running the 110 *rutieră* line. For 1 trolleybus there would be 25 *rutiere*. And this contradicted all principles of route organisation. The principle is that the route is given into the hands of 1 operator. It is an unpleasant situation when more than half of transportation is in the hands of private operators, municipal transport has no income, while at the same time the public transport fleet needs to be maintained. (Victor Ceban 2024)

In Moldova, Soviet era legislation, procedures and norms with regards to line operations, safety standards and reporting were maintained, but rarely enforced. This allowed the *rutieră* sector to flexibly address mobility needs:

The minibuses appeared in the '90s, when there wasn't enough transportation, and it was a public-private partnership, but not thought through. It was a natural partnership, but very much degraded. The idea was that the municipality gave "entrepreneurs" licence; and all the profit went into the pocket of these entrepreneurs, the municipality didn't and could not claim it. And over time the quality of the minibuses degraded a lot. (Victor Chironda 2024)

4.3 Recent Years

Twenty years after the start of the transition to market and democracy, most socialist countries have become functioning market economies and have come close or exceeded the level of economic output of the early 1990s. Cities have moved to decentralised political administrative local governance, although with some large variations in the scope or the depth of the transfer of power and resources from the state to the regional and local levels. According to Tsenkova (2014), progress in economic terms has been uneven, and social reforms have delivered mixed results. Inequality and poverty has increased with significant implications for cities where the majority of the country's population live and work.

Nevertheless, it has been recognised that planning has been slowly re-establishing itself, at least partially, as a societal function across the post-socialist countries. Recent positive developments include a direction toward articulating clear institutional frameworks for urban planning, increasing public input in the planning process, and focusing on sustainable development. Since 2000 planning institutions have gradually strengthened and planning has partially regained its professional legitimacy. Recent national planning acts have established a better-defined hierarchy of responsibilities between the various institutional levels (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009).

By the beginning of the century, the economic, social and environmental problems associated with the sudden increases in private transport were becoming recognised. Nevertheless, for the most part, political support tended to favour policies that accommodate private car use. Parking became very problematic, nevertheless, the total supply of parking spaces has greatly increased. New environmental standards were introduced in various Eastern European cities, however, policies that inconvenienced the motorists or significantly increased the price of driving were still not widespread across the post-socialist environment (Stead, 2014). Buses and trolleybuses still do not have priority on seriously congested streets in many cities. After the initial shock of transition towards a capitalist system, the public transport system has been gradually recovering in recent years.

Although many municipal governments across the post socialist cities are trying to improve the public transport system, their efforts are restricted by car friendly central governments that provide little funding, technical support, coordination, planning and policy framework. The ambitious road-building policies of transport ministries encourage more urban sprawl and car use. Funds for public transport are very limited in most cities, so only small improvements can be implemented once at a time. Nevertheless, this makes it difficult to keep up with the private car competition (Stead, 2014).

4.3.1 Chisinau towards sustainable planning



Figure 4.2: Mitropolit Garviil Banulescu-Bodoni street (photograph taken by author).

Hirt and Stanilov (2009), argue that since the 90s, the cities of the transitional countries have moved in an unsustainable direction. Significant challenges appear along all aspects of urban sustainability such as: spatial structure, functional organisation and green space, urban transport and construction practices. Moreover, beyond the environmental challenges the social and gender implications of post-communist sprawl and the decline of the public transport sector has affected the liveability of the cities. According to Hirt and Stanilov (2009) women are affected unequally by post-communist suburbanisation: since women have more limited mobility patterns and heavier reliance on public transport as opposed to car transit they are greater difficulties in accessing urban jobs and services than men (p. 65). And in the majority of the post-socialist cities municipal plans assume no gender disparity.

Planning has a critical role in guiding the multi-layered process of urban transformation. As sustainability issues have become more pressing, most transitional countries have adopted national environmental plans. Chisinau's master plan was approved in 1989, at the turning point of changing political regimes, and was never fully implemented (Petrisor et al., 2023). The master plan did not include any provisions for the infrastructure, except for relocating the industries from central areas to the periphery to reduce its environmental impact.

The new Master Plan, which included the newly adopted concept of sustainability, was approved in 2007, followed by attempts to update it, but was never finished. The 2007 plan proposed extending the radial forest wedges and connecting them with green corridors, starting from the lack of green spaces. From 2008 to 2015, the sustainable development strategies of Chisinau municipality were compromised, which generated an adverse tint to the image

of Chisinau today due to its many structural constraints. The mechanism for implementing public-private partnership projects initiated in 2010 and completed in 2015 was compromised and used only to take over publicly owned land – components of parks and green spaces. None of the 29 approved public-private partnership projects were implemented. The integrated revitalization of the Historic Center of Chisinau, developed in 2008 with the support and efforts of external partners, lacked applicability and implementation. As a result, the city witnessed an urban regression of the Historic Center of Chisinau by demolishing historical monuments and constructions illegally authorised by the executive authority of the municipality, to which locals reacted desperately without an apparent response to objections to competent bodies. Pavalean (2020) illustrates the imbalances of sustainable development in Chisinau regarding the lack of capacity to consolidate financial, institutional, and professional opportunities for the region's socio-economic development.

The *rutieră* (rom. minibuses) transport system in the past two decades has received a lot of criticism from the citizens as well as municipality due to the mode of transit being extremely polluting, insecure, not providing subsidised travel for the elderly and vulnerable population:

The minibuses are the most utilised transport method, but they cannot supply the demand and are a competitor to the public transport. (Civitta Strategy & Consulting 2022)

Starting from 2014, the municipality of Chisinau made attempts to incorporate the minibus system into the municipal public transport network, with a wish to create a solid public-private transport partnership. However, negotiations failed, and by 2024 most of the minibus routes have been cancelled. The factor that explains best the failure of the negotiations is the difficult work conditions for private entities that are implied when working with the City Hall.

No private operators exist at the moment in Chisinau. Dealing with city authorities is challenging because they are politically sensitive. I doubt any private entity would want to enter this business; it's pure chaos. The city hall lacks the capacity for this kind of work; it requires thoughtful consideration of the technical aspects, financial implications, payment strategies, and cost estimations. (Victor Chironda 2024)

The local administration of Chisinau is determined to make the city sustainable. In 2019, several action plans were announced concerning different aspects of sustainable development. The Green City Action Plan for the city of Chisinau aims to define development priorities focusing on energy, water, waste, industry, buildings, land use, and the transport sectors. Besides this action plan, Chisinau was opting to elaborate its very first Urban Sustainable Mobility Plan with UNDP's support, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Nevertheless, the project failed due to budgetary constraints and minimal political interest in the topic. In 2020, the City Hall came up with a new idea for a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan: "Move it like Lublin" – a partnership between Chisinau and the Polish city of Lublin, co-funded by the EC. Chapter 6 will go into more detail about the UNDP project and Move it Like Lublin SUMP.

The comprehensive planning during socialism has been subject to a devastating critique on the basis that comprehensive plans were neither practically feasible under market conditions nor politically viable.

If we take the 2007 plan, it is cosmic - this kind of infrastructure capacity only a big city can generate - Moscow or London, etc. Even in the EU small cities cannot afford this level of infrastructure.
(Victor Chironda 2024)

The whole process of elaborating a master plan then becomes ridden with conflicts, particularly in cases where short term bargaining rather than long term goals and objectives are being prioritised (Tsenkova, 2014, p. 297).

Tsenkova (2014) argues that the new planning institutions have different ability to direct these processes of change, depending on the legal environment, the availability of plans, and the institutionalisation of the plan implementation process. These institutions are perceived as agents of change in a new planning order with complex interdependencies defined by rights, resources, power, law, and democratic governance. Therefore, despite the diverse urban experiences, planning institutions are viewed as path dependent, influenced by a common socialist legacy (p. 279). Path dependency is the idea that national institutional configurations remain stable for long periods, helping explain the difficulties of institutional change. Once a performance paradigm is established, actors adapt their strategies in ways that reflect and reinforce the logic of the system (Mussagulova, 2021, p. 90). It's an important phenomenon to keep in mind when analysing urban development processes as historical experiences have a decisive impact on capabilities, preferences, physical structures, and legal and cultural context on the governing system. At the beginning of the century city authorities have realised that urban transport policies are in need of adjustment.

Citizen participation was never part of the planning process during communism. Nowadays, most countries have made significant steps towards democratisation, nevertheless, many obstacles to participation remain. Urban regimes are stable coalitions of actors with access to institutional resources. Such regimes include governments, businesses and various civil organisations. Whereas one could assume that the end of communism represents the replacement of the old, with a new 'democratic' urban regime, the path dependency concept claims that this is not entirely true. Many urban regimes have been dominated by the member of the old communist elites who seized the opportunity to gain power and capital assets during privatisation. According to Hirt and Stanilov (2009), urban regimes can be exceptionally friendly to big businesses that result in questionable urban development and planning projects.

The absence of well-developed governance structures across post-socialist cities is responsible for more cases of contradictory development processes, reflecting an insufficient regulatory environment, unsuccessful coordination between different lines of government, and insufficient and asymmetric opportunities for the cooperation of various actors. This is caused by little transparency and the transition towards neo-liberal approaches to urban development policy, especially during the first decade of the century (Buček, 2016). Therefore, urban development policy has been driven by private business initiatives (e.g., selected developers) in a less precisely

regulated planning framework and with a weak (or non-existent) position of environmental activists or the public. The sphere of public consumption can be regarded as one with the highest potential for finding parallels between socialist and Western urban development policies during this period. The urban development policy in socialist cities focused on rapid quantity-based and ideologically interpreted planned growth as a sign of the “regime’s success,” noticeable through industrialization and large housing estates. A locally initiated urban development policy focusing on economic development and based on market-oriented initiatives was not possible then. Incorporating environmental issues into urban development policy in post-socialist cities is still complicated. Those subject to the EU law experience a coercive approach to sustainable development adaptation. In contrast, those not part of the EU have more difficulties elaborating sustainable urban development policies (Buček, 2016).

Planning theory emphasises the need to integrate urban transport planning into urban planning governance regime. In the Western European context transport planning is done in an integrated manner. If coherence between different sectoral policies is being neglected, mobility policies and other planning policies are compiled in diverse planning documents, reflecting differences in governance and legal frameworks, elaboration processes and specific objectives. At the moment Chisinau still needs to address the inconsistency among planning approaches, for example related to land use regulations and infrastructure development:

Urban planning and transportation planning must be interconnected. If they are not interconnected, we have chaos. For example, you have a housing complex where 1000 people live and only 100 parking spaces (because building underground parking is expensive), plus the ground floor is commercial. But when they draft the housing development plan, they say "at some point here we will have a public transit station". And the city cannot provide the location of the transit station.
(Victor Chironda 2024)

Regretfully, urban sustainability challenges in the post-socialist environment of Chisinau have aggravated throughout most of the 90s as a result of economic crisis, chaos in the governance regime, and therefore de-prioritisation of environmental issues. However, in 2000 slow developments towards sustainable urban planning were made. To begin with, national planning documents have taken a stronger stand in promoting sustainable development (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009). However, in terms of infrastructure and mobility planning the paradigm shift towards sustainable urban mobility is still going slow at the national and local levels.

Chapter 5

Results

5.1 The two SUMP projects

While performing an environmental scan, two projects were highlighted by the web-search. One of the first news articles that one comes across when searching for “Moldova first SUMP Chisinau” is the article on the UNDP page titled as “Chisinau develops its very first Urban Mobility Project” dated January 29, 2019. The Move it Like Lublin project took some time to find, and was discovered mainly through browsing the Chisinau City Hall website. Through web-search the project comes up in 5th position after searching by keywords “Chisinau Mobility”.

5.1.1 UNDP project of the first Moldovan SUMP

The first paragraph of the UNDP Moldova newsletter starts out somewhat solemnly with words “Chisinau will have an urban Mobility Plan. The document will be developed by the Chisinau City Hall with the support of the UNDP “Moldova Sustainable Green Cities” project funded by the Global Environment Faculty ” (UNDP, 2019). The scope of the project was to provide the municipality of Chisinau with a SUMP that is developed based on the principles of sustainable urban mobility planning as referred to in the ToR (UNDP, 2020).

Chisinau aims for the development of a high-quality Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan that is guided by the principles of the EU acSUMP concept. With the existence of such a state-of-the-art mobility plan, the municipality aims to attract investments to facilitate the implementation of the measures identified in the SUMP. (UNDP 2020)

The development of the SUMP was incorporated into the broader scope of the Moldova Sustainable Green Cities project. The project was mainly focusing on low carbon green urban development based on an integrated urban planning approach, with mobility as one of the aspects of sustainable and green urban development. The expected results of “Moldova Sustainable Green Cities” was to create an innovation and knowledge platform “Green City Lab” that would support projects in: integrated and participatory urban land use and mobility planning; residential building energy efficiency and renewable energy use; low carbon mobility; resource efficient waste management (George Riciu, 2024). The project lasted for several years from 2018, until it was closed in 2023 without any development of the SUMP.

They created a Think Tank "Green City lab" which in 2018 was promoting urban mobility but now shifted its focus exclusively on energy efficiency. The biggest problem is that we in Chisinau don't have "data": neither quantitative (transportation flow, machine numbers) nor qualitative (surveys, interviews, questionnaires among citizens). 60% of a SUMP is data - it's time-consuming and expensive to collect it all at once. And at some point the UNDP realised that they don't have that much money, and at the end their output was just a guideline. GEF funded it, and they had money only for 2 experts, 2-3 study visits to the Czech Republic, and some small projects. Except these projects are not primary, it's a acUNDP project, therefore, just "to help" (Victor Chironda 2024)

The representative of UNDP, Gheorge Riciu, shared that at first, the UNDP was committed to create the acSUMP:

We have started the elaboration. At the beginning UNDP did the same meetings, initiating the discussion of the need for an urban mobility plan. We developed principles by which a SUMP needs to be created and also tried incorporating the objectives of and interests of the Municipality. (George Riciu 2024)

However, the initiative faced budget deficit, that ended up forcing UNDP to abandon the wish of a SUMP development:

Infrastructure investments are expensive. The UNDP's total budget was 2.8 million over 6 years - and that is clearly not enough for a SUMP development. Moreover, that's four years of activities that we had to invest effort and budget into. (George Riciu 2024)

The revised aim of the project, after UNDP shifted their interest of creating a SUMP for Chisinau was the following:

The new intervention focused on urban mobility as one of its key areas. It aimed to encourage the city to adapt to changing themes and adjust its policies to improve liveability for its residents. The main goals included developing strategic documents and revising model directives (George Riciu 2024)

Moreover, instead of elaborating a SUMP, the UNDP project focused instead on creation of a guideline for the municipality that focused not just on sustainable mobility:

We made design guidelines for green streets - how the streets in Chisinau should look like, how parking spaces should be arranged. The guidelines started to be adopted on streets that the city has found funding to repair. Moreover, the guideline included dedicated lines for public transportation. Initially there were only five of them, now there are many more. (George Riciu 2024)

The smaller projects developed by acUNDP in the scope of "Moldova Sustainable Green Cities" included:

- Development of technical requirements for dedicated bicycle lanes

- Smart Transport and Mobility Strategy and Action Plan for Chisinau City
- Innovative Solutions4Moldova Hackathon
- Development of an online monitoring system for transportation including monitoring of parking spaces and provision of support in analysing the functionality of these urban mobility interventions
- Investment in development of charging stations for electric cars:

In total 64 stations have been installed all over the country including Chisinau, to make a connection between Moldova and Ukraine for cars crossing this route. This was the biggest intervention in the mobility part of the project. (George Riciu 2024)

Nevertheless, the UNDP project has inspired the discourse on mobility in Moldova and in Chisinau. The attempt of SUMP elaboration, although unsuccessful, has promoted the importance of having a SUMP for urban mobility development. The “legacy” of the project lives on, as the UNDP representative Gheorge Riciu comments on the next municipal SUMP project - Move it like Lublin.

The effort was overtaken by the project Move it like Lublin. They became quite dedicated and they focus explicitly on mobility.

Move it like Lublin project application was written with the help of UNDP. They needed help to find a company to help with the writing of the project document. UNDP also supported the Move it like Lublin team on the negotiation side with the EU delegation.

(George Riciu 2024)

The city counsellor and ex-deputy mayor Victor Chironda has participated in the UNDP Greening Cities mobility part of the project, and was the one to conceptualise and apply for the new SUMP project Move it like Lublin.

In 2019 were the mayoral elections and I participated. The new mayor offered me the position of deputy mayor on urban mobility. I saw it as a window of opportunity. When I started the preparation for SUMP elaboration I realised that I don't have a unit of people, a team working specifically for this. And there was no funding for feasibility studies, data collection, etc. In 2020 we applied for the EC fund under EU's Partnerships for Sustainable Cities in the Southern and Eastern Neighborhood, based on a draft prepared by UNDP. Then the idea of partnering with the city of Lublin came up. The main applicant was Lublin which was looking for a partner city in the Eastern Partnership.

(Victor Chironda 2024)

In 2016, Chisinau already applied to become partners with Lublin, as proposed by the World Bank. But in 2016 Lublin did not take the project because they were the main applicant. But in 2020 Chisinau was the main applicant and therefore won the selection.

(Victor Chironda 2024)

5.1.2 Move it like Lublin

Two years after the initiation of the UNDP project “Moldova Sustainable Green Cities” the city came up with a new initiative for a SUMP, this time with the support of the EU. The project is being implemented on the basis of a partnership between the City Hall of Chisinau and the City hall of Lublin in Poland with a total budget of 3,5 mln euros (3,325,000 euros is the contribution of the EU in the form of a grant, and 175,000 euros are allocated by the Chisinau City Hall). The project will be finalised in 2025 (Move it Like Lublin, nd).

The Project Implementation Unit was selected to be under the control of the EU delegation in Moldova and at the same time under the Chisinau mayor’s office, with the mayor being the head of the supervisory committee. But the Chisinau City Hall has no influence over the project

(Victor Chironda 2024)

The main objective of the project, mentioned by Victor Chironda, is the reform of public transport.

Public transport is the most used system of the city with over 60000 users monthly, and therefore, it is being heavily subsidised by the city municipality. Nevertheless, the public transport system has aged severely: the vehicles, management, logistics, and financing - everything needs to be rethought.

(Victor Chironda 2024)

I spoke to two employees of the Project Implementation Unit, Roman Cozma (Transport Consultant) and Olga Lozan (Project Manager) about the project and the reason Lublin was selected as “transfer partner” for Chisinau.

The project is called Move it like Lublin, because we are trying to take the experience of Lublin which has been known as a city that has made a lot of progress in terms of urban mobility. And we are trying to take the experience and practice of Lublin and implement it in our city. Of course, this will be implemented at the level of pilot initiatives and pilot projects. It is not a system that will have all the functionalities that Lublin has. But still, the urban mobility plan will be an integral document. It’s quite a difficult ambition. And the budget that is offered is very little. When they applied for the grant, it was in the midst of the pandemic, before the war and inflation

(Roman Cozma 2024)

5.2 Dolowitz and Marsh Framework

To further analyse the data this research follows the Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) framework (defined by 6 leading questions) to answer the research question:

To what extent has the transfer of policies contributed to the development of the advanced discourse and practice of urban mobility planning in Chisinau.

(1) Why do actors engage in policy transfer;

According to Stead (2014), in a situation characterised by lack of policy making skills in regards to urban planning, combined with poor competence levels on the part of public servants, such as in most of post-soviet environments, it is easier to copy or emulate a foreign program than to start from scratch . In this way, policy transfer provides a means of avoiding “newcomer costs”: using the experience of others is cheaper as creating original policies requires substantial financial resources (p. 66). When starting the research on policy transfer cases in the Republic of Moldova, it was expected that due to recent admission as a candidate state to the EU, there would be an increased interest in searching for best practices at the EU level, with varying dimensions from national to local. Indeed, that was the case, as stated in the Full Application Form 2020a for Partnerships for Sustainable Cities in the Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood:

Although the Republic of Moldova is not yet directly subject to strategies, plans and priorities assumed at EU level, as a country with EU candidate status it is important that it already gradually adapts its planning documents. Therefore, the Chisinau SUMP will be aligned with EU priorities in the field of sustainable urban mobility in order to contribute, even indirectly, to Moldova’s accession to the EU. In itself, the adoption of a sustainable urban mobility plan is an important step towards a common vision with that of the European states. Based on the priorities assumed at EU level.

(Civitta Strategy & Consulting 2022)

According to the lesson-drawing model, non-member states adopt EU rules without EU incentives or persuasion. As Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2018) underlined, the EU advances its rules of functioning as conditions that a state with European aspirations should accomplish to receive aid and institutional ties, varying from cooperation and trade agreements to association agreements and EU membership. Moverover, according to Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) if a government searches for a solution to an urgent problem, it is more likely that there will be transfer. Indeed we can see even from the first attempt to create a SUMP guided by UNDP, the focus was to implement good practices of sustainable mobility, as no such document exists yet regarding mobility planning, and mobility planning in general requires urgent attention.

Chişinău aims for the development of a high-quality Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan that is guided by the principles of the EU SUMP concept. With the existence of such a state-of-the-art mobility plan, the municipality aims to attract investments to facilitate the implementation of the measures identified in the SUMP. This could be in the form of investments from international financial institutions / multilateral banks and private-public partnerships as well as project cooperation opportunities for example with the EU.

(UNDP 2020)

UNDP in the terms of references have highlighted increased investments into the city as a result of developing a SUMP:

As a European capital city, Chişinău is competing with international cities for investments. The existence of a high-quality SUMP and its successful implementation is a promising way to attract businesses to invest in the city.

(UNDP 2020)

Chisinau urban transformation is hindered by the lack of policy on local level that addresses the topic of mobility planning with awareness towards environmental, cultural and social issues. To conceptualise the approach towards transport and mobility planning Chisinau decided to adopt the EU model of a SUMP. The motivation to adopt a sump is also explained through the wish to harmonise local legislation with EU standards.

(2) who are the key actors involved in the policy transfer process;

In the UNDP SUMP elaboration project (part of Moldova Sustainable Green cities project), funded by the GEF. NGO “GreenCityLab” was established to help with data collection and analysis and drafting of documents and guidelines. After the ambition of elaborating a SUMP has not worked out, UNDP changed its role from the “benefactor” to “advisor”. Moreover, based on the work done for this failed SUMP attempt, Chisinau municipality has applied for a different funding project, this time supervised by the EU

In 2020 the deputy mayor Victor Chironda has initiated the application for a transfer partner and funding allocation in the context of EU Commission “Partnerships for Sustainable Cities in the Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood” project. The application was successful making the EC the main funding resource, and the OECD the funds policy advisor, with Lublin selected as the transfer of practices partner.

We are inviting Lublin to both become an important partner for Chişinău, our main expert provider, and also our learning counterpart. We believe we can offer the perfect learning ground, the perfect mutual growth opportunity.

(Chisinau City Hall 2020a)

The elaboration and drafting of the SUMP is in the hands of the Project Implementation Unit “Move it like Lublin”. The experts from the Project Unit act as “independent contractors” on a 4-year contract, which is different from employees of the municipality. Most of the data collection has been done by Civitta - an independently contracted expert organisation.

Stakeholders of the SUMP project are the Department of Urban Mobility (DGMU), the Supervisory Committee, the Management Board, the Working Group on Public Transport, the Lublin Department of Mobility team, and the EU delegation in Moldova. The beneficiary of the project is the Municipal Council of Chisinau which acts as the legislative body (making decisions on local policies and regulations). After the finalising of the SUMP in 2025, the elaboration stage will be in the hands of the Mayor’s office which is the executive body responsible for the implementation of policies and the DGMU. The Technical University of Moldova (UTM) and the civil society/NGO are represented in this research by the Urbanism Center and the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which have the observer role and therefore indirect influence in the policy transfer process.

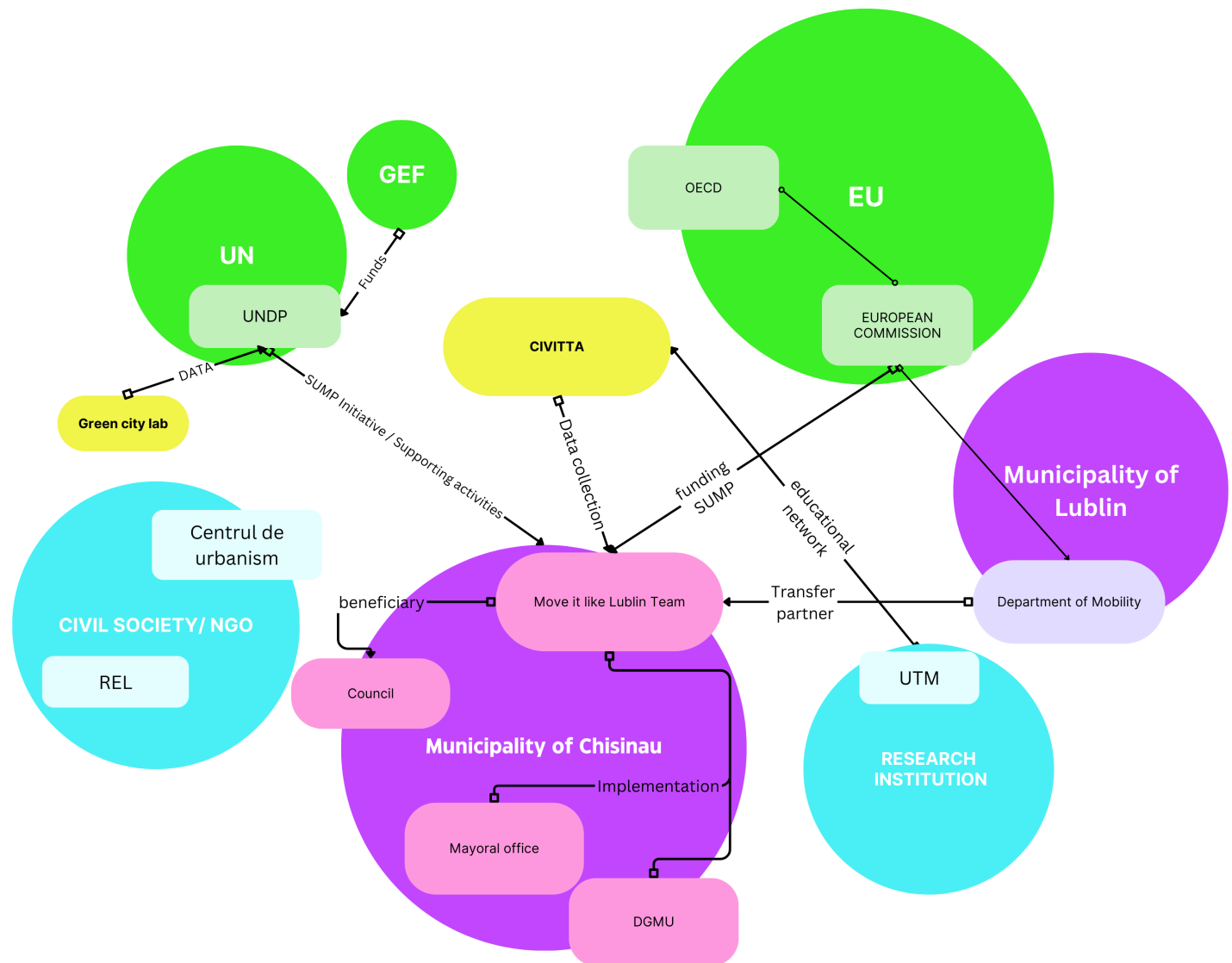
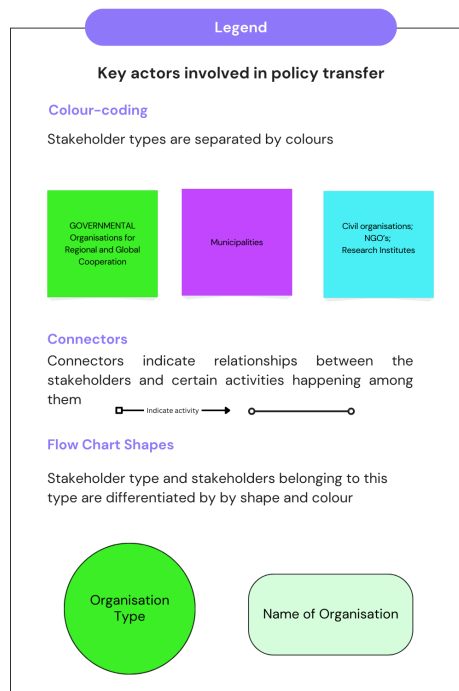


Figure 5.1: Actors mapping.

(3) what is being transferred;

Both projects, UNDP and Move it like Lublin, aim to establish Chisinau's first SUMP. A SUMP is a policy framework and a "cornerstone" of European urban mobility policy. "A SUMP is a strategic plan designed to satisfy the mobility needs of people and businesses in cities and their surroundings for a better quality of life. It builds on existing planning practices and takes due consideration of integration, participation, and evaluation principles." (Rupprecht et al., 2019).

The UNDP in Moldova is supporting the Municipality of Chişinău in the development of their first SUMP that will comply with the EU Guidelines on Developing and Implementing a SUMP.

(UNDP 2020)

The action will support Local Authorities in Chişinău in making the City's Public Transport more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. This will be achieved by the transfer of EU know-how and expertise primarily from the project partner, the Lublin Municipality.

(Chisinau City Hall 2020a)

We come with a new approach that implementation needs to be integral, according to EU guidelines and standards. All objectives are evaluated as real. This city can be transformed into a good and efficient city in terms of urban mobility. Just that the municipality must follow the list of measures and allocate the budget accordingly. Based on existing conditions report, based on existing data collection.

(Victor Chironda 2024)

Besides this concrete policy framework, the interview with the UTM professor of the faculty of Urbanism and Architecture, Prof. Ilie Bricicaru, has identified another potential for transfer related to mobility practices. The department of Road Infrastructure has been selected to become part of the Civitta's Educational Network. Currently the faculty is preparing a 2-years masters program focused on sustainable mobility:

Here at UTM we are preparing a master's program that we will launch in September - a sustainable urban mobility program. So the knowledge transfer has already started somehow, we here at the university are members of Civitta and Civitta's educational network, and things will happen, knowledge transfer is going to take place. In the next 5 years, things are going to get enormously complicated

(Ilie Bricicaru 2024)

According to Hirt and Stanilov (2009), when approaching city planning policy in a sustainable and resilient way, local authorities must go beyond regulatory planning, as this type of planning has powerful ability to prohibit unwanted growth and a limited ability to invite desired development. A SUMP can indeed be part of regulatory planning, but is broader in its scope, as it also encompasses strategic, operational and policy-oriented aspects that go beyond traditional regulatory planning.

(4) from where are lessons drawn;

The concept of SUMP was developed by European policy makers. The publication of the EC's Urban Mobility Package at the end of 2013 included a definition and concept of the SUMPs, making the concept Europe's de facto urban transport planning concept. The ambition of the UNDP project was to elaborate the SUMP with the help of external experts: "The development of an adoption-ready SUMP for the Municipality of Chişinău by a consortium of national and international mobility experts is expected to take about 18 months." (UNDP, 2020). The Move it like Lublin project is part of the funding program "Partnerships for Sustainable Cities in the Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood". The partner city of Chisinau is Lublin, a city in the east of Poland. But why was Lublin selected to be a partner city for Chisinau? The application document says the following:

The city of Lublin has successfully transformed its public transport system and has become a Polish success story. In recent years, Lublin has implemented one of the largest transport projects with a value exceeding EUR 100 million. Lublin focuses on eco-friendly and modern public transport, using new technology with impact on citizens and environment. Not only does the city consistently expand its fleet with electric buses (currently Lublin has the largest trolleybus system in Poland) but also it is a leader in electro-mobility. Moreover, Lublin has achieved 25% contribution to a zero-emissions standard of public transport. Lublin is a winner of many prizes in the public transport area: in 2018 Lublin received the prize Sustainable Mobility in ECO-CITY competition; in 2017 at the Aces of Public Transport competition – Lublin won as Most Ecological City of the Year.

(Chisinau City Hall 2020a)

The Move it like Lublin team have said that the decision to pick Lublin as a transfer partner was based on independent expertise that have studied the degree to which cities are compatible to engage in transfer of mobility practices.

We have the recommendations. These are actions to implement with the help of consultants. We contracted a consulting company, drew up specifications, consulted with the city of Lublin - overall its good. It's with European standards, there are no deviations in this plan.

(Roman Cozma 2024)

Nevertheless, some disagree on the level of compatibility between the cities, emphasising on the difference in the cities' characters; climate, density and size.

Lublin is not suitable for transfer. It's a county town, not a capital. The population is smaller, the density is lower, the metropolis is distributed with the private sector. What they did in Lublin is good because certain factors were observed. These factors need to be observed and accounted for when engaging in transfer of practices - it can work well in one environment, but not in another. Any system - economic, natural, develops ergonomically only if the proportions and symbiosis and balance of the main factors are observed. The biggest factor is the budget - in the EU there is a lot of money allocated for urban development, but Chisinau can't afford so much. The second factor is the climate. Our winters are harsher. (Victor Ceban 2024)

The SUMP concept is borrowed from the western European context, where the EU makes it mandatory for cities of all sizes to have a SUMP and member states to embed it into national

and/or regional planning policies. Whereas the UNDP SUMP project had a more generic approach towards the SUMP elaboration, the project Move it Like Lublin has partnered with another post-socialist city to learn from the best practices of Lublin. While the term “post-socialist” city can add a degree of compatibility between Lublin and Chisinau, the main factor that could differentiate the two contexts is Poland’s membership in the EU and hence, allocation of funds by EU for sustainable urban mobility development. Nevertheless, according to Glaser et al. (2019), policy networks and partnerships can contribute to building legitimacy for certain policy models, disseminate ideas and shape and structure knowledge flows. The authors refer to the practice of organised group travels and study visits in such partnerships (that have happened several times between Chisinau and Lublin authorities, according to the project Manager Olga Lozan), which are seen to advance the processes of learning, transfer or policy implementation (p. 633).

(5) what restricts or facilitates the policy transfer process;

The situation in Chisinau is unique, characterised by Moldova’s soviet past and transition period from socialist to capitalist society. But unlike its central European neighbours the transition period has been harder for the country, with development being hindered by political instability and turbulence, e.g. Transnistrian conflict and the recent war in Ukraine. Nevertheless, the EU candidate status suggests the country has chosen its political trajectory which will also shape urban development on many levels.

Old planning paradigm

The desire to reshape the approach towards sustainable city and transport development is recognised through the ambition to create a SUMP through the UNDP and Move it like Lublin projects. These projects suggest a paradigm shift from the old soviet planning culture to the new EU inspired urban planning. The ambition already suggests facilitating the transfer process. The last decade is when the “old paradigm” has been finally contested and its efficiency put to question. And elaborating a SUMP is one of the milestones to shift urban development in Moldova.

Planning how people move around the territory has undergone a paradigm shift from traditional transport planning to sustainable urban mobility planning and then to the concept of mobility as a service, the latter involving technological aspects to improve the mobility planning process.
(Chisinau City Hall 2020a)

Nevertheless, the SUMP projects feel resistance and difficulty coming from the old soviet planning culture that restricts the transfer process.

The idea of a transfer of practices from another country’s context is immediately repulsive. I am strongly opposed to copy-paste. There are good practices from the Soviet Union that should be revisited.
(Victor Ceban 2024)

The probability that the Urban Plan will "fail" is much higher than that it will succeed. Moldova is a post-Soviet country, and it has many specialists in urban planning and transportation and

now is the fight between the old school and the new school. After 1990 there was a temporary stop in planning practices, where planning had the opportunity to orient itself to the west. But they got stuck in time. Society here thinks transportation planning is only related to architecture, and engineering and not reality-oriented - towards funding, human behaviour, societal needs, etc. The fact that today people see things differently, that there are other types of transportation, other technologies, they [planners] are not interested. Because they live in the version of the universe where they are the specialists, and that is all that matters, but this new world they don't understand. Their weakness is that they don't know what governance means, how policies influence urban planning, and that synergies need to be created.

(Victor Chironda 2024)

We have had urban planning regulations since the 80s. And those who deal with urban planning in Moldova at professional or technical level are not in a hurry to change these standards to make cities more people friendly.

(Ilie Bricicaru 2024)

Political interest

The desire and ambition towards “western standards” is recognisable, nevertheless, Chisinau’s urban governance is lacking adequate restructuring and therefore is path dependent. Often when thinking about socialist and post-socialist cities, path dependency is presented as the explanation of institutional sluggishness that blocks the road towards plausible development. Path dependency is the idea that once a set of institutions or practices is in place, actors adapt their strategies in ways that reinforce the system (Thelen, 1999). Path dependency is an important aspect to keep in mind when analysing what restricts or facilitates the policy transfer process since historical experiences and the developments these countries have been through have a decisive impact on capabilities, preferences, physical structures, and legal and cultural context.

Similarly to the clash of old and new planning cultures is the political interest that drives the SUMP. On the one hand, Moldova is on the path of European integration and has the political interest to align urban development to European standards, which includes a different approach to transport planning and the necessity of a SUMP. And the political interest has been recognised through the appearance of such a project like Move it like Lublin.

The transport system in Chişinău is at a pivotal point in 2020, because for the first time in a very long period there is a team of young people working in public administration who have been trained in EU city management. The current Deputy Mayor, Victor Chironda, is a former civil society activist and together with his team, he launched the transformation of the city’s transport system with a focus on public transport and alternative transport development. Not only does the Deputy Mayor have the knowledge to launch the much-needed reforms, but he also has the support of the Mayor of the City, who has a majority in the Municipal Council. There is capacity and, at the same time, political will to drive reforms. (Chisinau City Hall 2020a)

Some time after the start of the Move it like Lublin project there was a court case involving the deputy mayor Victor Chironda that initiated the project and the mayor Ion Ceban. In the process of the scandal Chironda was dismissed from his post of deputy mayor. The controversy centred around Chironda accusing Ceban of protecting corrupt practices related to

city development projects involving illegal construction, as for example in the case of the National Hotel demolition. The case has not yet been fully resolved with ongoing legal procedures Carțin (2023). The court case and the deputy mayor's dismissal has put the finalisation of the Move it like Lublin project under jeopardy.

There was a window of opportunity from 2019 until now because the mayor was listening.
(Victor Chironda 2024)

Working with civil servants is difficult for the team - they are not interested. It is tough. But we try, we push, we implement.
(Roman Cozma 2024)

The project carries on and will still be finalised by 2025. Improvements have been recognised even by people not directly involved with the project:

Despite all the politics the city will still progress. Public transportation has improved, dedicated lines for public transportation have appeared. These are some actions that have appeared recently and are not very old, created based on the results of the Move it like Lublin project. It's clear that they're on the inside, they see things well.
(Ilie Bricicaru 2024)

The UNDP project have highlighted that creating a SUMP for Chisinau will be beneficial for the whole country as Chisinau is the capital and centre of the country, therefore, what Chisinau does, other cities will follow:

As a capital city, Chişinău is playing a frontrunner role for other cities in Moldova. A successful plan development and implementation is crucial for other municipalities in the country to observe the benefits and develop their own SUMP. These municipalities would look towards Chişinău in a similar way as Chişinău itself is now looking for best practices and lessons learned internationally

(UNDP 2020)

Yet, the UTM professor Ilie Bricicaru comments that "Chisinau has always been a struggle between the government and the mayor's office - because of that there are many impediments for developing policies such as a SUMP". And rather Chisinau setting the example to other cities, the facilitation of the transfer will happen the other way round - smaller cities helping Chisinau to change its planning paradigm.

We have cities which are much smaller in size but they move fast. And those smaller cities will be the drivers of development towards sustainable planning. For example Edinet (a city in Moldova) - they have elaborated a acSUMP and on its base brought investments and have procured green public transportation. This is a very good result. And these things will go one after another - it will be like dominoes. Things will move, even though a bit more pessimistic for Chisinau.
(Ilie Bricicaru 2024)

Lack of data

As part of the SUMP elaboration process, some data collection research has been carried out. The UNDP project has carried out preparatory work: identifying the thematic focus areas and developed suggestions for the strategic vision for mobility. An Existing Conditions Analysis was promised as a deliverable to help the elaboration of the project. An existing conditions Analysis was also performed for the Move it like Lublin project by Civitta Strategy & Consulting. The project builds on the data collection the Municipality is carrying out for the development of a Sustainable Urban Mobility plan: Strategy on Smart Urban Mobility Innovation carried out by local and Czech experts; digitalising the City's documentation and maps; financial and legal auditing of the Directorate of Public Transport and Communication Paths.

The ambition of the UNDP project is seen from its ToR 2020, where the SUMP was to be developed in 18 months:

This time frame is deemed realistic considering that preliminary work on the strategic vision for mobility was already carried out.

(UNDP 2020)

One of the objectives of the move it Like Lublin projects is to create the Chişinău Traffic Monitoring Center, a unit with competent trained analysts within the City Hall, that will have the task to not only organise on-going data collection, but also interpret those data sets and generate valuable insights. The intention is to enhance data-sharing by allowing for transport open-data to be published on the City Hall's website. However the Move it like Lublin team finds the lack of data one of the main elements that restricts the policy transfer process:

Until 2020, nobody from the City Hall has ever done automatic digital data collection, because, firstly there was no jurisdiction of the City Hall's Directorate over non-public transport vehicle traffic management, and secondly, because there was never such in-house data processing capacity.

(Chisinau City Hall 2020a)

The process of data collection is much more complex than in the EU. Because here there is no systematised data collection mechanism. Here there are institutions on paper, and you cannot request data electronically - only on paper.

(Roman Cozma 2024)

There is no precise answer to what restricts or facilitates the policy transfer process. The complexity of the area and the project, the historical roots and the socio-cultural aspects, the multitude of actors involved or to be involved, and the characteristics of the physical environment are context-dependent variables which influence the quality of the policy transfer process. These elements are then difficult to tackle due to lack of data and knowledge and limited time and resources the city authorities face.

(6) how effective the outcome is, and what barriers there may be for policy implementation.

According to Dolowitz and Marsh (2000), it is rare that actors are perfectly rational. Most act with limited information and are influenced by their perceptions of decision-making rather than

the real situation. Transfer may be based upon an inaccurate assessment of the “real” situation; in particular, it may be based upon incomplete or mistaken information about the nature of the policy and how it operates in the transferring political system or about the difference between the relevant economic, social and political consequences in the transferring and the borrowing systems (p. 14). Move it like Lublin project is at its finalisation stage, and in the interviews with key stakeholders the respondents have shared their opinions on the success of project implementation. During the conversation many structural barriers for implementation have been highlighted, but the overarching one is political interest that is influenced by components, such as: legislation and budget, and affects components such as adequate management (human capital) and public/civil participation. Political interest is key for policy implementation, and the dismissal of the project initiator - Victor Chironda, has affected not just the policy transfer process but also how effective the acSUMP outcome will be.

Unfortunately the primary reason is "lack of political interest". They don't want scandals, decisions that won't be popular, etc. Nobody really cares in the municipality. The project carries on its own, in 2025 it must finish, and all the outcomes are super ok, but if the municipality doesn't want to implement, it will not implement. "We will do it later. We have no budget etc. etc. etc..".
(Victor Chironda 2024)

Political interest affects several key components of a successful SUMP implementation according to EU Guidelines on Developing and Implementing a SUMP, that is usually the responsibility of the municipality.

Once the plan is finalised no one will want to implement it. They'll look at it like this - they'll see an act here, an act there, they'll steal a couple of ideas. Problem is, the actions have to be implemented exactly according to planning or it will have an impact on the final output and then it's hard to change anything.
(Roman Cozma 2024)

The EU Guidelines have 3 steps for implementation of the SUMP: managing the implementation, monitoring, adapting and communicating, and reviewing and learning. If these steps are not followed, there is no guarantee that the SUMP will be implemented adequately. To ensure that municipalities will actually start implementing the SUMP, without a deviation to the plan, adequate management of the implementation needs to be ensured. According to the guideline the SUMP is a strategic document that provides a framework for activities. It does not specify how each action will be implemented and what needs to be procured. The implementation tasks are not performed by the core 'SUMP team', but by the responsible technical departments. Therefore, a good handover to technical implementers and effective coordination of all implementation activities by the core team is important to ensure a coherent approach (Rupprecht et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the elaboration team of Move it like Lublin have highlighted that no implementation team is planned to be formed, and the current project management team have their contracts finalised by end of the elaboration phase.

I would opt for creating some units to implement the urban mobility plan. Which don't exist at the moment.
(Roman Cozma 2024)

The second phase for successfully adopting a SUMP following the EU Guidelines on Developing and Implementing a SUMP elaborated by Rupprecht et al. (2019) is monitoring, adapting and learning. The monitoring results need to feed back into the process to optimise further implementation and should be communicated with citizens and stakeholders. During this step, the wider public is usually directly affected by action implementation for the first time, and therefore expresses high interest in it. Accordingly, the local community needs regular engagement and information (p. 153). According to the project management unit, there has been no initiative to ensure management and monitoring of the action implementation and little public engagement during the process of SUMP elaboration. Therefore public participation during any sort of implementation activity is also not guaranteed:

Public participation in the development of SUMP is a part of the assignment. However, there are no initiatives in Chisinau of public education in this regard. Unfortunately, there is a very high risk that the authorities after the project will end, will not follow the SUMP action plan. A SUMP implementation unit is a highly necessary thing for monitoring the implementation process. Thus, there is uncertainty regarding the sustainability for implementing the SUMP.
(Roman Cozma 2024)

Involving the public during the implementation stage will help minimise the negative effects that accompany implementation (e.g. offer support to businesses affected by long-term construction of a new tram route). An interesting paradoxical activity related to Chisinau SUMP is that the political interest of implementing the plan in the first place is affected by the fear of public resistance.

The current mayor is very dependent on public opinion. This year will be the presidential elections, and then come the parliamentary elections, and he's the party leader. For him reforms in the city are not number one - because radical reforms are quite painful - you have to have human resource capacity (specialists), funding, and an understanding that after a radical reform, people might hate you for a year, until they realise that it actually works quite well, and it's not that scary.
(Victor Chironda 2024)

At the moment the public opinion is dominated by the opinion of car owners:

There are a lot of clashes with car owners. When we removed parking on just one street in the city centre, people were screaming that all business in the city is going to die. Urban planners in the EU know about these clashes and how to deal with them, but in Moldova planners are scared of resistance. There are a lot of clashes with car owners. When we removed parking on just one street in the city centre, people were screaming that all business in the city is going to die. Urban planners in the EU know about these clashes and how to deal with them, but in Moldova planners are scared of resistance.
(Victor Chironda 2024)

But the opinion of the mobility specialists is that if the municipality follows the adoption according to the EU guidelines and starts listening to its citizens, good change can be made, despite the obvious resistance from car owners:

When it comes to ensuring sustainable development you have to act quickly and have focused prioritisation. That's a bit tricky. When we implemented parking regulations in the centre the civil society went scary: "all business is going to die", "traffic is going to collapse". But of course nothing like this happened and now we have a very beautiful street. (Victor Chironda 2024)

Thanks to publicly vocal people like Victor Chironda, it has been observed that people would like to have a friendlier city. If the government and the state would like to change how mobility is organised in the city, there wouldn't be resistance to a great extent (I think), except from those who circulate by private vehicles. The one who circulates by car, doesn't understand why they shouldn't park in the central area of the city. For politicians (mayors, councillors, etc.), change is not interesting, they don't want to implement measures that will affect the drivers (for example restricting parking in the historical part of the city and implementing paid parking), as this isn't popular in terms of electability, and they are afraid of losing a lot of voters. Those who drive around in cars are the majority. This dilemma, this conflict is existential, and until we get more discerning minded politicians, the success of the SUMP is under question.

(Ilie Bricicaru 2024)

Moreover, the use of the term "Mobility" has been a recent development in the Chisinau environment of urban planning. Just recently the municipal department of transport planning was renamed into "General Department of Mobility Planning", showing that urban governance is starting to recognise the shift of transport planning paradigm to mobility as a whole. Nevertheless, the term and notion of mobility is still new for the city, and the public is not well aware of what mobility means and how different it is from transport planning.

Press and society don't really know what urban mobility means. Respectively if they don't know what urban mobility means they certainly don't know what an urban mobility plan means. People know that in principle they would like to have more walking and cycling facilities. It's just that they don't know how this should be correlated with motorised transport and those who are vulnerable users - pedestrians, cyclists. Those in the press are not far from popular opinion and don't know more.

(Ilie Bricicaru 2024)

Public-private partnerships in Chisinau are also influenced by political interest and have no more power to influence the successful implementation of the SUMP than the citizens' engagement.

With city authorities it's very difficult to get along - they are all politically sensible. I don't think a private business would like to enter this business because it's pure chaos. At the moment the city has a bus park and electric transportation park (trolleybuses). They have different operators. Plus there are a few more router lines. And the feasibility study, undertaken by the Move it like Lublin project, looked at how to unite all this into one big operation company and deal with management, accountant, audit, etc. But there has never been a legitimate public private partnership in the city - some individuals got together and made a deal. The city gave public transport licences to individuals who had very little expertise. Both operators have a lot of corruption between them, and cleaning up the corruption will make you many enemies. The mayor doesn't need that, he needs votes.

(Victor Chironda 2024)

Another big paradox in shaping political interest is the budget. Budget deficit is how the UNDP project and Move it like Lublin have appeared. The municipality had to find external

partners to be able to elaborate a SUMP: €450,000 has been allocated by UNDP, and €3,325,000 by the EC, therefore having now a political interest in developing a SUMP:

The biggest constraint is about budget and investments, is that the municipal budget is very small. That's why they must work with partners to mobilise resources so that the document is finally being developed. (George Riciu 2024)

But lack of budget also at the same time restricts the successful translation of the EU Guidelines into visible outputs, due to inability to finance different projects:

Moldova does not have the technical and financial capacity to do giant engineering projects. 2/3 of the country's population and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the country's economy is concentrated in Chisinau. Hence a significant number of taxes are being collected by the national government but back to the municipality comes just a little bit, because the government must diversify tax money across regions. If money stays in Chisinau then obviously there are risks of excessive urbanisation of the capital and total poverty in the regions and then everyone comes to live in Chisinau and its a never ending loop. Already the population of the city has increased by half over the last 20 years. (Victor Chironda 2024)

Respectively when to allocate money from the mayor's budget, allocating money by field (infrastructure, education, etc.) is not done on the basis of a strategy document, but on the basis of "political interests".

(Roman Cozma 2024)

The way to ensure that political interest does not dictate municipal budget allocation, management of the SUMP, sufficient public participation and adequate implementation of the SUMP is through national and regional legislation that ensures compliance. The EU Guidelines for SUMP include that cities need enabling support from higher levels of government, particularly in the areas of governance, legislation, funding, monitoring and evaluation, guidance and methodology, education and knowledge exchange when it comes to SUMP elaboration and implementation. Before starting the elaboration of a SUMP the local authorities need to make sure that urban mobility policies are harmonised on local as well as the regional, national or even the European level. Unless coordinated, such policies are compiled in diverse planning documents, reflecting differences in governance and legal frameworks, elaboration processes and specific objectives. The inherent risk of inconsistency and redundancy among planning approaches and outcomes needs to be addressed in the planning phase of a SUMP (p. 25). The application for funding and Move it like Lublin initiation and the existing conditions report supporting the application state that there are links between the the national and regional legislation and the soon-to-be SUMP:

Urban mobility is a priority at European level and the Republic of Moldova is taking concrete steps to align with European recommendations on ensuring sustainable mobility in urban areas. At national level, the Republic of Moldova has developed and approved a number of strategies for the sustainable development of the country, as well as a sectoral transport strategy. Priority strategies and projects for the municipality of Chisinau are highlighted below.

(Civitta Strategy & Consulting 2022)

The Existing Conditions report (2022) identifies correlations between the creation of a SUMP and national and local urban planning documents.

- National strategy for transport and logistics
- Public transport Strategy for municipality of Chisinau
- General urban plan
- Spatial development strategy
- Alternative infrastructure strategy in Chisinau city

(Chisinau City Hall 2020a)

Nevertheless the interviews have revealed discrepancy between SUMP implementations and existing legislative body:

We're behind on the legislative level. In the EU in any city with more than 30 000 inhabitants SUMP is mandatory, and it is included in the legislation as an urban planning document. Not yet in our country. We have the General Urban Plan, the zonal urban plan and the detailed urban plan - these documents exist in the legislation of the Republic of Moldova, and many plans do not exist.

(Victor Chironda 2024)

The Government is limited. It tries to harmonise EU legislation with that of Moldova. And to work on the agenda, on the mobility aspect. Unfortunately the municipality is not obliged to respect a mobility plan. The government only has zonal urban plans, which the city council elaborates, without consulting anyone.

(Roman Cozma 2024)

Mobility as a term has not yet appeared in any Moldovan legislation - local, regional or national (besides the two SUMPs developed in Edinet and Cahul and the Chisinau city which is being elaborated).

To this day, we in Moldova do not have in our legislation what is urban mobility. And in general, there is no such notion, or term as mobility. Neither is this notion found in the recently approved urbanism code, nor in any other law. Respectively the legal framework is quite weak. The normative framework is in the same situation. We have had urban planning regulations since the 80s. And those who deal with urban planning in Moldova at professional or technical level are not in a hurry to change these standards to make cities more people friendly.

(Ilie Bricicaru 2024)

The ones that have access to EU funds also don't just focus on road infrastructure, but approach it through the prism of mobility - develop rail links, metro, trams, and buses. Because they give money for "Mobility", not just transportation. First of all, to get funding for urban development projects, you have to have a sum of money, and secondly, the sum of money has to comply with EU Guidelines. Therefore, you cannot just invest in parking lots.

(Victor Chironda 2024)

The lack of legally binding policies and regulations on a regional and national level puts into jeopardy the possibility to implement the SUMP after the elaboration phase is finalised in 2025.

The problem comes when it's time to implement this document - because there is no legal basis that must impose the city in a mandatory way that they implement actions. Municipality will have this document, but it will sit and gather dust. Because they don't care about plans or frameworks, they just put bike lanes, who knows where. Without a legal basis the SUMP will not be implemented in a binding way, i.e. the ideas will not be respected as they are (the measures will not be fully considered, the emphasis will not be put on the recommended priorities of the urban plan, i.e. there will be chaos, between the proposed list and the list that will actually be worked with). (Roman Cozma 2024)

Lack of political interest, lack of legislative basis, weak public opinion represented only by car owners, no public participation in urban development activities give a pessimistic outlook towards a successful implementation of the SUMP.

Chapter 6

Discussion

This research explored to what extent has the transfer of policies contributed to the development of the advanced discourse and practice of urban mobility planning in Chisinau. Following the two projects - SUMP by UNDP and SUMP by Move it like Lublin, Chisinau has undergone policy transfer beyond the adoption of mere ideas. Nevertheless it faces significant challenges throughout the policy transfer process linked to the old planning paradigm, shifting political interest, budgetary constraints and lack of data and knowledge capacity. Moreover, the implementation of the elaborated SUMP by Move it like Lublin is under jeopardy due to lack of legislative basis of regional and national policies to ensure municipal compliance with the sustainable mobility plan. While the project has already brought some improvements into the urban environment such as dedicated bus lanes or parking removal from two central streets, there is strong scepticism whether the SUMP will be further implemented as intended.

The reason for policy transfer in Chisinau has a mixed nature. It was initiated by the desire of the municipality to “modernise” and explained by them through the necessity to align with EU norms due to Moldovan candidate status in the EU. However the political interest was based on the figure of the ex-deputy mayor and therefore internal aspirations towards having a SUMP have changed with the deputy mayor being dismissed from his position. Key actors involved in the policy transfer involved UNDP, the EC, and local bodies such as the mayoral office, the city council, the Directorate general on urban mobility and the Move it like Lublin project team. The involvement of the city of Lublin as a transfer partner shows an attempt to bring successful practices from one environment to another.

The policy transfer’s effectiveness is limited by several factors, including the gap between the Moldovan legislative environment and EU standards and the commitment of the local authorities to follow the SUMP recommendations. Nevertheless, even if the Move it like Lublin project is not a firm step forward, the process of learning has been initiated. According to Dolowitz and Marsh (2000), in order to understand policy transfer it is necessary not only to see what was transferred but also to consider the motivations involved. First, transfer is not an all-or-nothing process, therefore the framework suggests a longitudinal study to capture the shifting motivations involved. This research managed to catch the Move it like Lublin project and its final stage of elaboration and see a shift in political interest from being motivated to have a SUMP and applying for funding to the EC, to uncertainty about its implementation.

Second, it is important to identify the key actors because the different actors have different motivations. As a general rule when politicians institute the process they will be doing it

voluntarily, when international organisations become involved in the process, it is likely to result in some form of coercive policy transfer. In the case of Move it like Lublin, the policy transfer process was indeed initiated voluntarily and throughout the project the process has been supervised by the EC. Nevertheless, the implementation of the policy is not a requirement and therefore if it will be implemented it will also be a voluntary process. When aid agencies are making loans it is likely to lead to coercive policy transfer. However, in the case of Move it like Lublin only policy elaboration is funded and not policy implementation. Third, different policies will naturally result from different motivations. The move it like lublin project appeared from the will no harmonise legislation on a local with that of an EU city. However, the success of the SUMP has been hindered by the fact that regional and national legislations are not harmonised according to EU standards. Finally, when policy transfer occurs it is likely to affect the motivations of the actors engaging in the process. Indeed, the SUMP is being affected by inflation and political instability caused by Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine, and by the scandal between the ex deputy mayor and the current mayor of Chisinau, shifting the political interest from enthusiastic about the SUMP to rather pessimistic.

In cases of lesson drawing governments borrow with the expectation that this transfer will lead to policy success on policy transfer. In the case of Move it like Lublin some respondents understand policy success and the implementation of the SUMP and not leaving it “to collect dust”. The Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) framework call this kind of transfer an imperfect due to transfer occurring but crucial elements of what made the policy a success in the “country of origin” was not transferred (p. 17). And in the case of Move it like Lublin the biggest inconsistency with the European context is lack of harmonised legislation between the local, national and regional, that should have been taken into account at the SUMP initiation, following the EU Guidelines.

Ultimately, the goal of this research is not just to know that transfer occurs and to understand why but also to evaluate whether it is able to facilitate better policy outcomes than might otherwise be achieved, and under what conditions this is most likely. The question of how to quantify the “success” of transfer is more difficult to answer than simply whether or not a policy achieved its objectives. Many scales of influence are relevant to the process of transfer from elsewhere: the setting in which the transfer takes place, the inter-personal or interactor dynamic, and organisational and institutional factors.

This study finds that evaluating an institution’s capacity for learning through policy transfer is beneficial, but highlights that institutional factors need to be systematically addressed in policy-transfer projects to ensure their effectiveness. According to this study, leadership, communications systems, and organisational culture emerge as factors that can either facilitate or hamper learning through the policy transfer process. Inter-actor relations in Chisinau were identified as both drivers and barriers to the process of policy transfer. The degree of cooperation between local actors along with previous collaboration experience and stakeholder/civil society engagement were deemed insufficient for a SUMP implementation. Insufficient inter-actor relations jeopardises the legitimacy of the SUMP project. Organisational characteristics, including structure, capacity, and resources emerged more as a barrier than a driver of policy transfer learning. In Chisinau the lack of resources has been a major barrier to learning; the

capacity and resources of the municipality and the organisations are vulnerable to a multitude of constraints including workforce and finances. Moreover, the Move it like Lublin process suffers from organisation without leadership. Leadership usually refers to individuals based in the importing party who hold positions of power. According to Glaser et al. (2019) a clear leadership from politicians with vision and credible pathway to achieve the vision accelerates the process of learning through policy transfer for those in the “borrowing” position, whereas an ambiguous, disengaged and unsupportive leadership presents a barrier (p. 636). And indeed in the case of Move it like Lublin the “loss of leadership” in the face of Victor Chironda, has fostered the appearance of structural barriers to the project. Finally, in terms of institutional factors, the cultural values of those involved in the policy learning process of SUMP implementation have heavily impacted the accessibility of new ideas. This has been explained through the path dependency theory that is often observed in the post-soviet environment. Here, mobility planning and governance struggle to leave the soviet planning paradigm and the inefficient transition period mode of governance. This study has also observed that Moldova after the 90 became a country where “automobility” is the dominant mobility paradigm. This heavily influences the mindset and operations of policymakers, which later creates obstacles to importing sustainable policies from elsewhere.

6.1 Policy Recommendations

Going beyond analysing the process of the policy transfer in regards to sustainable urban mobility practices this study highlights several policy recommendations. These recommendations aim to address the existing barriers of implementing the Move it like Lublin SUMP project. Before starting such a project as a SUMP the environment needs to be ready for such a project. Adequate capacity needs to be ensured both for elaboration and implementation of the project. Power of the institutions need to be built and an adequate legislative framework needs to be present.

6.1.1 Capacity Building

Capacity building for cities like Chisinau is an important aspect for improving the performance and direction of the municipality towards integrated urban planning. In the context of sustainable mobility planning, mobility is a new phenomenon for Chisinau and therefore needs to be integrated properly into the functioning of city governance. Before developing projects such as SUMP there is a need to address the question of how to make sure that this project will last and what investments there need to be made that will ensure the reproduction of the policies. Capacity building can be performed in the following way:

Skill Development

Developing your own expertise is more sustainable and durable than investing into a policy plan or specific infrastructure projects. This entails providing training for: (i) civil servants, (ii) local consultants, and (iii) NGOs through workshops and job assistance. The municipality needs to be equipped with adequate skills, knowledge and capacity set to be able to elaborate

and implement a SUMP. Some other important aspects of capacity building is training in how to perform public and stakeholder engagement. One of the limitations mentioned by the Move it like Lublin team, there doesn't exist a project implementation unit inside the municipality. Therefore, as a preparatory step, capacity building needs to be oriented towards forming such a team and ensuring the competencies of the team and a synergy and "inheritance" with the project elaboration team. Building capacity can address other limitations mentioned throughout the interviews when addressing structural barriers such as stakeholder engagement. The municipal government needs to be trained in ways of citizen and other actors' participation. Finally, the municipality needs to ensure that it is able to develop and implement a SUMP on its own, with the DGMU being actively involved in all the processes of SUMP development.

At the same time, it is important to implement structural prerequisites to ensure that progress is maintained in an integrated and strategic manner. Therefore, it is important to store, develop and integrate knowledge and capacity so that the achievements are not lost and therefore meaningless, install feedback systems and mechanisms to transfer knowledge from one project to another, and finally safeguard the acquired knowledge due to the fluctuations of individual actors.

Synergies with research institutions

As part of skill development the city can create synergies with Higher Education and Research institutions by supporting programs on transport planning/mobility development. As mentioned by Associate Professor, Faculty of Urbanism and Architecture, Ilie Bricicaru, through their own initiative the UTM will launch a sustainable mobility masters program. This is a unique opportunity for the municipality of Chisinau to create relations with the educational institute and look into possible collaborations.

6.1.2 Institutional Strengthening

To ensure that political interest cannot jeopardise the SUMP implementation, structures, policies and procedures need to be updated and in line with the EU Guidelines on Developing and Implementing a SUMP.

National and regional policies

The situation nowadays shows that no legislative framework exists on a regional or national level that incorporates SUMP as an important policy element. This entails synchronisation of national and regional policies with the municipal context of urban mobility planning. Cities need help from higher levels of government, particularly in the areas of governance, legislation, funding, monitoring and evaluation, guidance and methodology, education and knowledge exchange. By supporting the development of SUMP, national and regional actors ensure:

- Coherence between different sectoral policies and governance levels,
- Removal of barriers to SUMP elaboration and implementation, including control over political will and commitment from decision-makers,
- Coordination of funding flows, and

- Promotion of innovation and markets

At the moment, no coordination between the national regional and local level on a legislative basis exists.

Cross-sectoral Coordination of actors and institutions

The shift from government to governance concerns the coordination of policy levels and sectors that might lead to policy formulation, integration and collective actions of social actors in regard to specific issue-based policy areas. For this a multitude of interactions between actors is required, that represent different policy sectors and have various interests. This mode specifically challenges hierarchical relations and the legitimacy of actions. This mode of governance offers to form reciprocal interdependent actor-relations for dialogue and knowledge exchange. Therefore, planning as a “collective effort” requires participation of very different interests and perspectives beyond primitive consultation methods (Schmitt and Well, 2016). This entails a strategic realignment of departments and their function through institutional reform and process optimisation. One step towards institutional reshaping was the recent “rebranding” of the Department of Transport Planning into the DGMU of Chisinau Municipality. This is one step forward towards accepting mobility as a primary concept of city planning into the governance structure of the city. In the Move it like Lublin project the DGMU acts as a beneficiary of the project, and will be in charge of implementing the project. However, the department has not been active in the elaboration phase of the project. It is crucial to ensure that restructuring of DGMU actively works and functions on topics of mobility planning as intended. Adaptive institutions encourage learning among political actors by questioning the socially embedded ideologies, frames and assumptions, roles, rules and procedures that dominate governance and planning cultures. To strengthen municipal capacity of implementations there needs to be an approach that creates synergies between the SUMP elaboration team and those who are responsible for implementing the plan. This means aligning objectives to achieve common goals and to move beyond isolated efforts when planning for urban mobility.

6.1.3 Promote Public and Stakeholder Engagement

The constellation of public and private actors triggers socialisation, problem solving, reflexivity, deliberation, and collective learning. At the moment public participation and engagement with various stakeholders in Chisinau is minimal to non-existent and the. The city municipality needs to work towards creating an active civil society and ensure adequate stakeholder participation. The involvement of these actors will help advocate for the necessary legislative and financial support. Moreover, sometimes when a strong core of stakeholders exist, they could control that the decision makers do not derive from the course of action and ensure adequate implementation from the side of the municipality. A dedicated strategy is needed for the involvement of stakeholders, drawing on different formats and techniques depending on the category of the actor. Public involvement is fundamental to ensure the legitimacy and quality of decision making. Moreover, by making sure to include citizens and stakeholders into the decision making process, policies and certain mobility practices have a higher chance of being accepted by the broader public.

6.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This study is not without its limitations. The biggest challenge of this thesis has been the lack of literature and academic research concerning specifically the republic of Moldova and the city of Chisinau. General assumptions were made about the governance regime and the planning culture of the city based on the overarching concept of the “socialist/post-socialist city”. Nevertheless, each country has its own unique political and cultural environment and a different development path after the collapse of the iron curtain, that needs to be taken into consideration. The limited research into the urban planning of the city both throughout the soviet era, transition period and the recent years has an impact on this study’s credibility, as it approaches most of the historical aspects of the city through western European literature on socialist/post-socialist cities. Nevertheless, the gap in literature strengthens the contribution of this thesis to academic research.

Moreover the generalisability of the study is threatened due to sampling limitations of interview representation from various stakeholders engaged in the policy transfer. This research failed to bring in the EU perspective on the funding allocation, Chisinau’s Department of urban Mobility opinion about the SUMP, and Lublin’s interest and mandate in the project. The research would benefit from a higher number of interview respondents and a more diverse set of stakeholders. Furthermore, a suggestion for further research would be to investigate the citizens’ experience with mobility development and challenges of the city.

Finally, according to the Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) framework the study of the policy analysis process requires a longitudinal perspective. The research benefited from starting the research right before the deadline of the Move it like Lublin project as it saw how the elaboration of both the UNDP project and the Move it like Lublin project have unravelled through time. Nevertheless, to analyse the impact of the Move it like Lublin project it is necessary to come back to the research in a couple of years, after the start of the implementation phase. That is when a final conclusion about the policy transfer process could be made and the status of policy implementation observed.

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