

Cyclists friendly traffic policy, case study Ptuj (Slovenia)

Marjan LEP, Sebastian TOPLAK, Radmilo PERUNOVIÆ
University of Maribor, Faculty of Civil Engineering
SI 2000 Maribor, Smetanova 17, Slovenija

Abstract

There is a quite well known problem in the Slovenian city of Ptuj (30.000 inhabitants): the old medieval city centre is dying in the economic sense. The main cause is the restrictive traffic policy in the city. The quite common thesis for the solution of such a problem is: let's invite the cyclists, motorbikes, and cars into the pedestrian zone. The 5-zones model was recommended. The methodology is not the new one – it is new in the Slovenian middle scale city. The idea is that the so-called “overlapping” zone (C/F – traffic calming zone/free foot zone) is to be the main zone and should cover almost all former pedestrian zone.

Introduction

Slovenia is a small European country (2 million inhabitants). The basic economic data shows quite well developed economy. Since 1993 the annual GDP growth is permanently more than 4 percent. Good economic situation and some other circumstances lead into a rapidly growing motorization. Level of motorization reached 470 vehicles per 1000 inhabitants in the year 1997. The logical consequence is that the modal split is typical for such development. Figure 1 shows the modal split in the passenger-kilometres for Slovenia in 1998. There are some other sources with higher share for the cyclists, pedestrians and public transport users, but the authors believe in this data (see Fig.1).

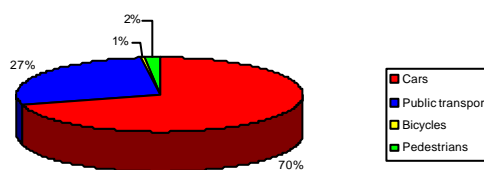


Figure 1: Modal split in the passenger-kilometers for Slovenia in 1998

The data shows a typical car-oriented society. The travel behaviour pattern is also typical. The figures 2, 3 and 4 show the way of thinking of the average Slovenian car-user.



Figure 2: A typical car-oriented society

City of Ptuj

The capital of Slovenia is Ljubljana with about 300.000 inhabitants; the second biggest city is Maribor with about 130.000 inhabitants. Thirty (30) kilometres southeast from Maribor the city of Ptuj is situated. It has about 30.000 inhabitants and quite dense populated gravitation area. It is the oldest Slovenian city. In the roman period this was Petoevio. Ptuj (Germans call it Petau) was also important medieval city. The city castle and the old city centre originate from this period and are well preserved. This old city centre is very attractive for the tourists. Tourism is one of the most important development options for the Ptuj region.

The problem

Today situation in the old city centre is not very optimistic. There is a quite well known problem: the old city centre is dying in an economic sense. The main cause should be the restrictive traffic policy in the city. There were two periods of traffic policy in the last years. Until 1980 the city centre was open for all kinds of motorised traffic. The speed limit was 60 km/h and there was no efficient parking policy. The city centre was very unattractive for the visitors and tourists. The city authorities decided to split the city centre into two zones. The very centre was totally closed for any kind of traffic, even the cyclists are not supposed to use it, the so-called "Free Foot Space". The rest of the city centre was so-called "Motor Space" with speed limit of 50 km/h. After several years of this traffic policy the results for the economy of the "Free Foot Space" were disaster. Diagnosis was (is) – the city centre is dying. The figure 3 shows the traffic policy motto through the last 40 years and the idea for the future.

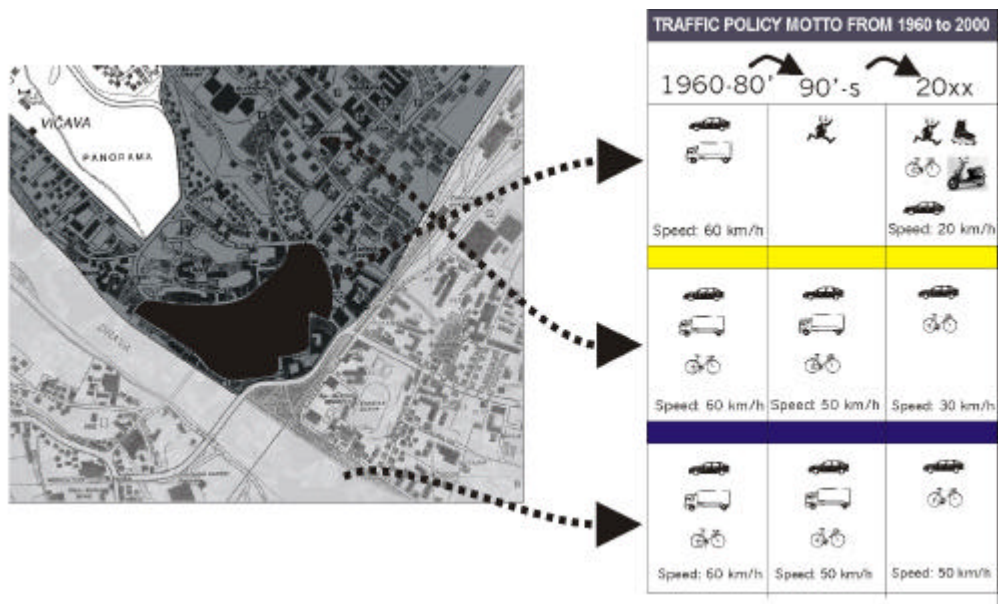


Figure 3: The traffic policy motto through the last 40 years

The thesis and the task description

The quite common thesis for the solution of such a problem is: let's invite the cyclists, motorbikes, and cars into the pedestrian zone. Let's make more zones, let's differentiate the city space more extensively (see Fig. 4). [2] There are two main problems – the first one is safety problem. Slovenian driving behaviour pattern is more Mediterranean (Balkan) – which means that simple traffic signs and speed limit recommendation would not guarantee the traffic safety for the vulnerable users. The second one is the legal basis. Slovenia has a new traffic safety regulation (Law) concerning the “traffic calming” and it is not quite clear which kind of traffic calming measures are “legal” (for example the 10 km/h speed zone).

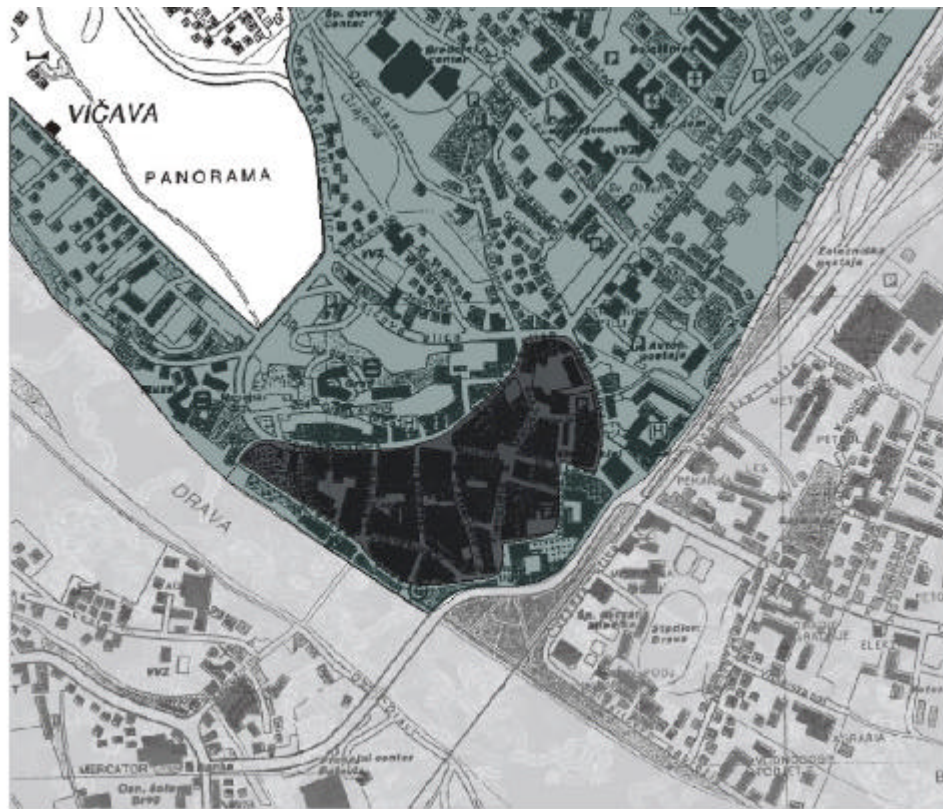


Figure 4: A extensive city space

Methodology

The 5-zones model was recommended (see Fig. 5):

1. The “motor space” (T) – is the zone without access limitation with the speed limit of 50 km/h. Enforcement is done by the regular police procedure.
2. Overlapping zone (“C/T”) – zone where the speed should be limited and some access limitation for the trucks should be carried out. Enforcement should be done by physical measures, there is also some telematics technology needed. This zone should be broader then it is now (it is frontier now).
3. Traffic calming zone (“C”).
4. Overlapping zone (“C/F”)– zone where speed should be limited from 30 km/h to 10 km/h. Access for the delivery vans and cars very restricted. Physical measures and telematics measures are to be favorised. Practically speaking – the whole former pedestrian zone should be overlapping zone “C/F”.
5. Free Foot Space (“F”) – zone where cyclists, skaters and even scooters are aloud but they should drive at the pedestrian speed (5km/h). These users category are considered to be “friendly” - so no physical measures and extensive police enforcement is needed. [1]

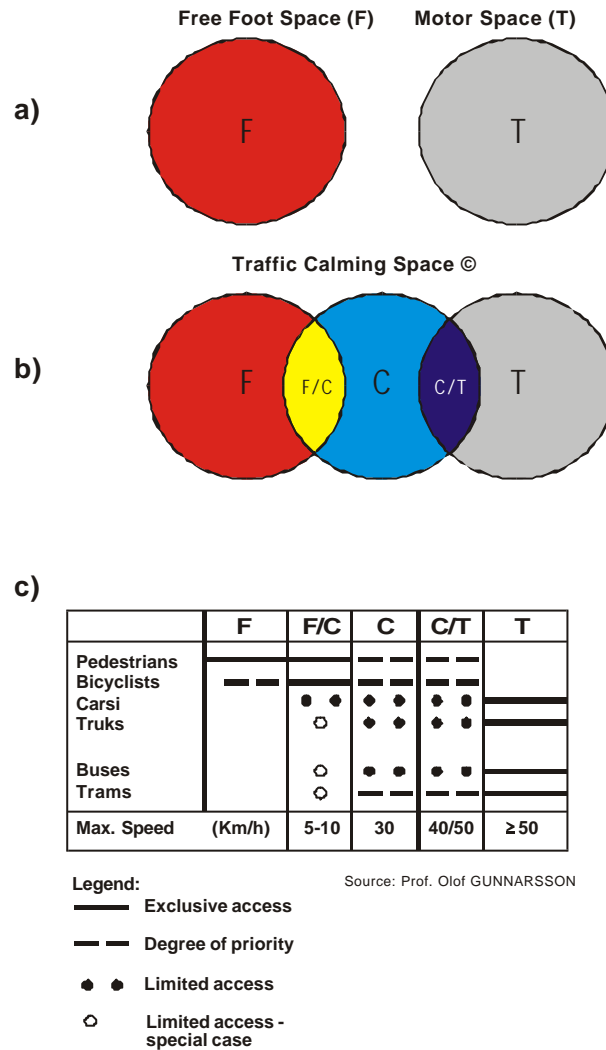


Figure 5: The 5-zones model

Conclusion

The methodology is not the new one – it is new in the Slovenian middle scale city. The idea is that the so-called “overlapping” zone is to be the main zone and should cover almost all former pedestrian zone. We believe that this measure is the most important to get people back into the old city centre and to compete somehow with the suburb shopping centres.

Literature

- [1] S.Olof Gunnarsson, PROBLEMS AND NEEDS OF PEDESTRIANS, 1995
- [2] K. Schürch, DIE BURGDORFER FLANIERZONE, Route et traffic N^o 11, 1999