OVERCOMING THE JOINT DECISION TRAP: MULTI-ACTOR MULTI-LEVEL DECISION MAKING IN THE BRUSSELS METROPOLITAN AREA

Geert te Boveldt
Cathy Macharis

MOBI research group, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

ABSTRACT

Planning problems that exceed a city’s administrative boundaries demand a metropolitan approach. The metropolitan area of Brussels is an extreme case of institutional fragmentation and layering, which means virtually all major planning projects in the area require the involvement of multiple actors at multiple levels. Lack of incentives to pursue common goals has led to political deadlock in most transport planning projects. This paper presents a multi-actor multi-level impact analysis and decision-making method which was devised with a double aim: improving the real-word applicability of socio-technical evaluation methods but also overcoming the mentioned political impasse. The method takes into account that impacts of projects vary according to location and scale, which makes actors likely to have diverging interests and preferences regarding a single project. The paper describes how the method was applied in several transport planning projects in the Brussels metropolitan area. It shows its contribution to the progress of planning processes of the respective projects by identifying critical actors and criteria or conditions, but also proposes possibilities for further development, such as taking into account the temporal dimensions of decision problems and demarcating systems boundaries.