

# **Integrated Spatial and Transport Development along European Corridors: A Look through the Lens of Stakeholder Cooperation**

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## **1 ABSTRACT**

International transport corridors are becoming increasingly important in enhancing the sustainable mobility of goods and people around the world. In Europe, such a mobility issue has a much deeper meaning. Namely, European transport corridors have a long tradition in constituting the backbone of territorial cohesion among the member-states of the European Union. Thus, European integration strongly depends not only on multilateral coordination of trade and transport flows, but also on the cooperation-building projects aimed at achieving integrated spatial and transport development, most easily perceivable at the local level, i.e. in the hot-spots – places with major spatial implications of transport infrastructure development. However, such an integrated approach is difficult to achieve. On the one hand, the impact of globalisation on urban development poses a threat to infrastructure investments in adjacent urban regions. On the other hand, the differences in dealing with large infrastructural and spatial development projects among various states, legal and administrative families, and finally, planning cultures also affect the transparency and inclusion of all the relevant aspects. For example, the ongoing transformation of former transport areas (railway nodes, harbours and airports) situated along the waterfronts into new urban centres is only one of many spatial conflicts between transport and urban functions. Therefore, multi-level strategic planning strategies to minimise the risks of spatial conflicts are needed. By reflecting on the findings of two bottom-up initiatives aimed at improving the cooperation among stakeholders along two European transport corridors – Rhine-Alpine and Orient/east-Med(iterranean), the paper emphasises the importance of the transportation nodes as strategic sites for inward development. Therefore, two hot-spots are presented – inland port in Basel and railway station in Belgrade. As the cases describe quite different approaches in dealing with integrated spatial and transport development, the paper concludes that the better stakeholder cooperation help to overcome the administrative obstacles and enhance integrated development at the local level. This is surely then to be transferred to the regional and transnational levels, too.

Keywords: Urban Nodes, Hinterland Hubs, Port and Urban Development, Transport and Spatial Development, Stakeholder Cooperation, European Corridors

## **2 TRANS-EUROPEAN TRANSPORT NETWORK: TWO CORE EUROPEAN CORRIDORS**

The TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Network) Core Network Corridors – “Connecting Europe Facility” (EC, 2011) is the most recently revised programme related to the development of transport infrastructure in Europe. Initiated for the first time by the European Union (EU) in the 1980s, the TEN-T was introduced with the general aim of addressing the main objectives of European development – economic, social, and territorial cohesion. More precisely, the idea behind is to remove bottlenecks, build missing cross-border connections and promote modal integration and interoperability among the core international transport corridors identified within the EU (EC, 2011). To ensure that the corridors are bounded into a network in an effective manner, numerous EU policies and programmes are directed at improving the interregional cooperation among stakeholders at the national, regional and local levels, and, respectively, increasing the mobility levels and enhancing the transport system – a precondition for a smart, inclusive and sustainable growth of Europe.

Looking through the lens of the EU, the TEN-T is of a great relevance for spatial planners: having in mind that TEN-T is of earlier date and contains more important premises than the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), as a key EU document on the spatial planning issue, the TEN-T can be considered the first spatial development intervention of the EU (Peters in Dühr et al., 2010: 300). Following this line of argument, we argue the cohesion among European countries can be improved through sustainable spatial and transport development. However, in order to establish the interconnections between transportation, spatial development and broader socio-economic context as an inevitable background within which all the

developmental processes are deeply embedded, there is a clear need for spatial planners to understand and coordinate integrated spatial and transport development at various levels: transnational/macro-regional, national/regional, and local (Perić and Scholl, 2017b). Before we proceed with a deeper look at this topic, the basic information on two core European corridor are provided below (see also Figure 1).

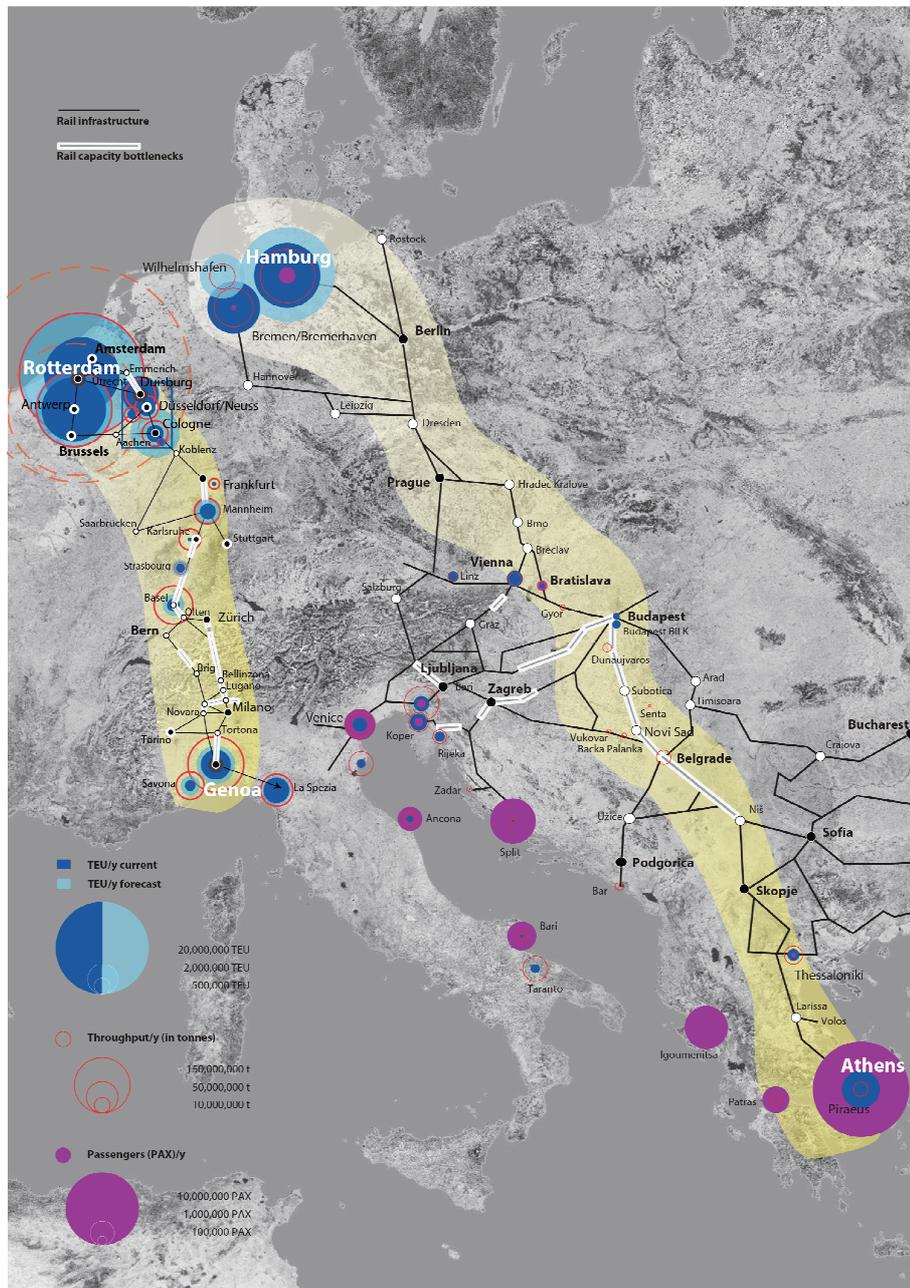


Fig. 1: Rail and port infrastructure along two European corridors. (Source: Scholl, 2016b)

## 2.1 Rhine-Alpine Corridor: Rotterdam-Genoa

The Rotterdam/Antwerp-Genoa corridor, defined also as the Corridor 24 (TEN-T policy) and as the Rhine-Alpine corridor (EU Core Network Corridors), constitutes one of the busiest freight routes of Europe, connecting the North Sea ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp to the Mediterranean basin in Genoa, via Switzerland and some of the major economic centres in the Rhein-Ruhr and the Rhein-Main-Neckar regions as well as the agglomeration of Milan in northern Italy. In its length of more than 1,200 km, this multimodal corridor includes the Rhine as inland waterway. As matter of fact inland ports are becoming increasingly important as logistic hinterland-hubs (Braun, 2015) and influential players along the corridor because their expanding function might trigger regional-economic growth (Scholl, 2016 and Braun, 2015).

The key infrastructure projects include the immense investments in container transshipments in the Port of Rotterdam, the Gotthard and Ceneri base tunnels (partly already completed) in Switzerland and the missing

links and access routes in Germany and Italy (Wojciechowski, 2016). In terms of transport, 700 million tonnes of freight are transported along this north-south link, while 70 million people, roughly nearly a fifth of the entire population of the EU, live in the catchment area of this important European north-south connection (Drewello and Scholl, 2016).

## 2.2 Orient/East-Med Corridor: Hamburg-Athens

The Hamburg-Athens corridor, defined as the Corridor 22 in the TEN-T policy and as the Orient/east-Med(iterranean) corridor within the more recent EU Core Network programme is one of the key north-south transport corridors in Europe. In its length of more than 2,500 km, it connects the ports of northern Germany with the Adriatic and the Danube ports, as well as the seaports in Thessaloniki and Athens. Hence, by strengthening its transportation features, the Hamburg-Athens corridor is considered an axis with a huge potential for triggering off spatial development, which would finally lead to territorial cohesion in Europe (Scholl et al., 2016).

However, the Hamburg-Athens corridor is currently an example of genuine shortcomings in various domains: it runs through the states with traditionally low economic performances in comparison with the developed Western European countries; there is also a significant lack of efficient infrastructural network – seen in numerous missing links and bottlenecks; the corridor nowadays coincides with the so-called migrants’ route; finally, administrative obstacles caused by mistrust among stakeholders are common practice in cross-border issues, as well as among various authorities of the nation states (Perić and Scholl, 2017a).

## 3 INTEGRATED SPATIAL AND TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT: A MULTI-LEVEL APPROACH

Integrated spatial and transport development is considered a challenging task. This is particularly true if we take into account the territorial scope associated with such a development, different contexts (political, social, economic), and finally different ways of ‘how things are done’ (Faludi, 2005), i.e. the planning cultures. Therefore, one of the most demanding issues, besides the compliance of infrastructural equipment and technical specificities, is the question of the governance of such a development (Perić, 2016). How to achieve effective cooperation among a number of nation states? How to integrate the visions of various sectorial departments at the state level? And, how to make the consensus-based decisions among the various parties involved in certain urban development? Figure 2 describes the most important levels and types of cooperation needed to be taken in due account when it comes to the integrated spatial and transport development, while the following lines elucidates how it has been emerging in the concrete strategic projects related to two mentioned corridors.<sup>1</sup>

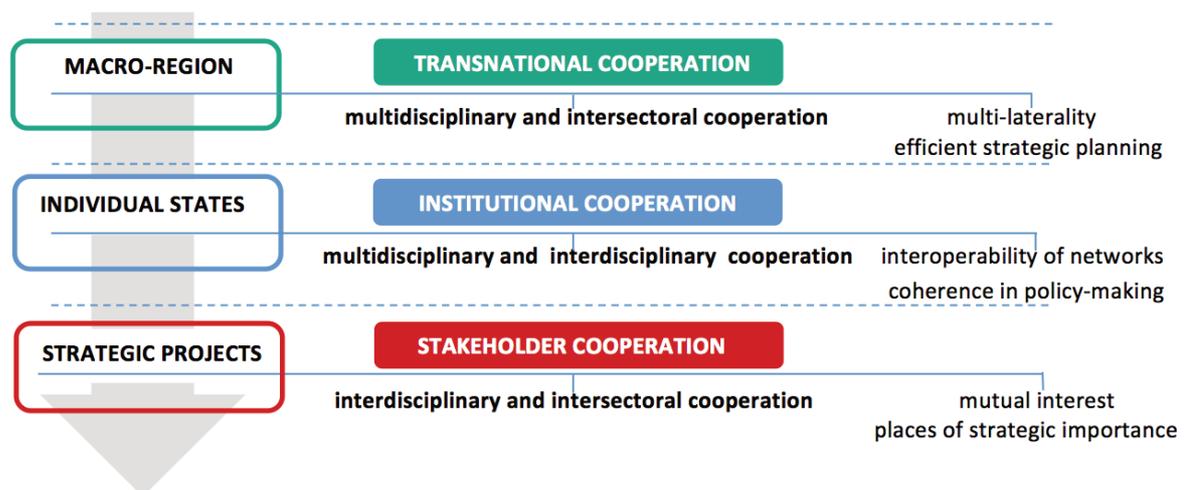


Fig. 2: A cooperative approach to integrated spatial and transport development. (Source: Perić, 2016)

<sup>1</sup> Authors of the paper actively participated in the mentioned projects. Therefore, most of the information presented in the next section stem also from the personal engagement in the project.

### 3.1 Rotterdam-Genoa Corridor: From a Strategic Initiative to an Interregional Alliance

The project entitled CODE24 (COrridor DEvelopment 24) along the Rotterdam-Genoa corridor (ex-TEN-T corridor no. 24) is in fact a bottom-up strategic initiative in the framework of the EU INTERREG IVB NWE programme. It concerns the interconnection of economic, spatial, transport and environmental aspects along the core network Rhine-Alpine corridor and contributes to address the urgent conflicts of capacity and quality of life along the corridor. The project was set off in 2009 by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich) aimed at gathering different stakeholders/partners to create a common strategy for the development of the Rhine-Alpine corridor. To tackle this task, an overview of integrated planning of landscape, settlement and transport was needed as the solid foundation for the definition of spatial development strategies in all regions. Planning was considered to be carried out collaboratively by all stakeholders involved: responsible authorities (national/regional/local), transport sector and the users. Thus, cooperation-building projects, enhancing the international and cross-bordering processing of activities and the implementation of the corresponding tasks in the spaces of European importance, demanded relevant networks for cooperation. Hence, the CODE24 project was divided in four thematic work packages, each consisting of several actions and identifying the problems in the field of: 1) spatial and infrastructural development, 2) environmental aspects and noise reduction, 3) regional economic benefits, and 4) communication, acceptance and interregional cooperation (ETH/IRL, 2013).

The overall output of the CODE24 project was the common strategy for the development of the corridor and the preparation of a legal form for cooperation after the end of the funding period of the project. In other words, the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation called “Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor EGTC”<sup>2</sup> was established to continue the strategic initiative of CODE24 for the sake of securing a long-term partnership and cooperation. This legal form provides all the opportunities for a sustainable cooperation between European partners and has been chosen as the appropriate framework for continuous cooperation (ETH/IRL, 2013). In order to facilitate transnational cooperation between the partners along the axis and to manage the complex challenges of this corridor development, the EGTC acts as multitude of common interests and interrelations between its single regional areas and speaks with one voice for its members (Scholl, 2016a).

### 3.2 Hamburg-Athens Corridor: From a Knowledge Transfer to a Common Strategy

The findings presented below stem from the ongoing three-year project titled “Spatial and Transport Development in European Corridors: Example Corridor 22, Hamburg-Athens”, being conducted currently by the German Academy for Spatial Research and Planning (ARL). Since the ARL members recognised the necessity to take also the needs and challenges of the non-EU states affected by the official corridor into consideration, and since the route from Budapest to Thessaloniki via Belgrade is the shortest (400 km) and the most logical way of connecting the north and south of Europe, the axis covered by the ARL project slightly differ from the official EU route – it runs through Serbia as a primary line, while the way through Romania and Bulgaria is of secondary importance.

The project methodology and the tasks conducted, respectively, are based on an inductive research approach. This practically means that the project participants through genuinely bottom-up initiative firstly reach the relevant stakeholders at the local level (i.e. hot-spots), across the national government and public enterprise representatives, with the final aim of presenting the draft strategy (the main project recommendations) to the EU relevant bodies, e.g. official EU Orient/east-Med corridor coordinator, DG REGIO and DG MOVE representatives, etc (Scholl et al., 2016). As the project is focused on integrated spatial and transport development, the key partners to collaborate with come from the transportation and spatial and urban planning fields. At the level of hot-spots (mainly capital cities located along the Hamburg-Athens corridor), the most valuable exchange of international experiences (brought by the project participants) and the local values, challenges and problems is conducted through organising the field trips on the sites of great urban, regional, and then, national importance. Through sharing main visions and priorities related to the hot-spot, the support from local key stakeholders – representatives of various departments within the city administration, and the experts from different domains (public enterprises, academia) is considered an important tool for triggering the challenging topics. Usually, such workshops succeed in bridging the gap

<sup>2</sup> The EGTC was appointed as a member of the EU-Corridor Forum for new core network corridor, representing the local and regional stakeholders within this corridor.

among the local participants in case there is no general strategy on integrated spatial and transport development needed to be followed. In order for the certain views discussed for the hot-spots to be easily applicable, the next step within the project cooperative approach is addressing the representatives of responsible ministries, public infrastructural enterprises, as well as the private sector (developers, logistic companies). The project participants take the advisory role in this phase trying to elucidate the methods and principles for the nation states to easily correspond to the European standards, trends and needs in the domain of spatial and infrastructural development. Mainly it is done through clarifying the technical demands (signalisation and electrification of the railway network; port facilities for handling the TEUs; cargo freight standards) as well as providing the guidelines on territorial multi-level governance. The input from the state authorities and other nationally relevant stakeholders is important for getting a clearer picture on the current status and future incentives in the states along the corridor. Such information serve as a profound base for formulating as much as precise recommendations for the relevant EU officer. This phase is still to come, but taking into account the current research findings, it is believed that, besides the official EU policy, this project will provide additional guidelines on how to deal with integrated spatial and transport development at the macro-scale of the Hamburg-Athens corridor.

#### **4 STAKEHOLDER COOPERATION IN HOT-SPOTS**

The following section describes the current activities related to the infrastructural projects with a great effect on spatial development. These are usually important not only from the city/urban perspective, but also from a regional stand. The focus is on elucidating the key actors that have been influencing the dynamics and the main vision for future development. As various sectors influence the developmental outcomes, it is interesting to elucidate the stakeholder-network building as well as the main obstacles emerging in such a complex process.

##### **4.1 Port transformation in Basel, Switzerland**

###### **4.1.1 Balance of port and urban development**

The growth ambitions of the port of Rotterdam pose many challenges for inland ports along the Rhine-Alpine corridor (Witte et al., 2016). As a response, many inland ports, e.g. the Port of Switzerland (port authority in Basel) plan their expansion projects. In the case of Basel, located at the meeting point of France, Germany and Switzerland, the role of the port is a very significant one. The Port of Switzerland not only greatly affects the economic development of the trinational region, but also represents the gateway to the world oceans. Thus, it is considered as the most important hub in Switzerland: 10-12% of all imported goods reach the country through the ports (SRH, 2016). In order to keep improving the port as a logistic hub and meet the Swiss transportation policies that foresee a shift from road to rail traffic, the development of a new trimodal transshipment terminal (Gateway Basel Nord) is planned. This undertaking offers the possibility to reorganise the existing port infrastructure and allows certain areas adjacent to the Rhine river to be transformed into potential areas for urban development.

###### **4.1.2 Strategic project: Gateway Basel Nord**

Because of its strategic location and function, the Port of Switzerland is not only of local and regional but also of national importance in Switzerland. On top it is also considered a crucial logistic hinterland-hub along the main north-south transport corridor in Europe. Due to its direct rail, road and barge connection to the North Sea, large volumes of cargo are increasingly transported in large containers on inland vessels, leading to a considerable increase in container traffic on the Rhine river (Stölze et al., 2014). Thus, the three Swiss logistics and freight companies, Contargo AG, Hupac SA and SBB Cargo AG, established a joint planning company named Gateway Basel Nord, which is pushing for a new container terminal in the Kleinhünigen Rhine port north of the city of Basel. The gateway is planned as a trimodal (road/rail/barge) terminal for the transshipment of containers and other load carriers used in intermodal transport. Being located between the railway and the motorway, the new terminal is expected to handle growing container volumes efficiently. In opposition, Swissterminal (together with the two transport operators Ultra-Bag and Danser) are planning a new container terminal in Weil am Rhein to replace the terminal on the Westquai, which will be closed to make way for urban development. New port developments enforcing the

infrastructural reorganisation of the port will allow the City of Basel to transform former port areas into new settlement areas adjacent to the Rhine river (Braun, 2015).

#### 4.1.3 Stakeholder analysis

As the city of Basel is overrun by an avalanche of trucks on a daily basis, new solutions in dealing with the increasing amount of container traffic are needed to be found. Here, the Port of Switzerland can play a crucial role in handling the country's import/export freight traffic. However, there is a strong disagreement about which infrastructural plan in favour of its development shall be followed. In fact, different stakeholders, specifically long-time based logistical operators in the port of Basel-Kleinmünchen, pursue different goals. The container terminal planned by Gateway Basel Nord AG (public limited company in partnership with the Port of Switzerland) has been considered the only and best option for many years. Yet, Swissterminal, together with two partners Ultra-Brag and Danser (also logistics operators in the area) is currently planning a new container terminal in Weil am Rhein to replace the terminal on the Westquai, which will be closed in the near future to make way for urban development (Braun, 2014). Swissterminal and its two partners are discerned about the prognosed modal split increase in barge as they want to maintain the efficacy of the current decentralised terminal infrastructure. Despite the different goals and fair competition infringements, the nature of the spatial conflict as such is cooperative. In fact, the development of a 'big picture for Basel' (Gesamtperspektive Basel) as a logistic centre without involving all currently active operators in the port to be part of the process lack thorough coordination. Nevertheless, the cantonal authorities (Basel-Stadt and Basel-Land) worked at first closely with the Port of Switzerland to plan the rearrangement of the port infrastructure in ways that would allow the urbanisation of waterfronts, before the actual plans for the development of the Gateway Basel Nord container terminal were introduced (Braun, 2014). The long-term cooperation between the city of Basel and its port reinforced the development of the logistic site and initiated the debate on the operator model of the new terminal. The stakeholder structure and their mutual relationships are briefly presented in Figure 3.

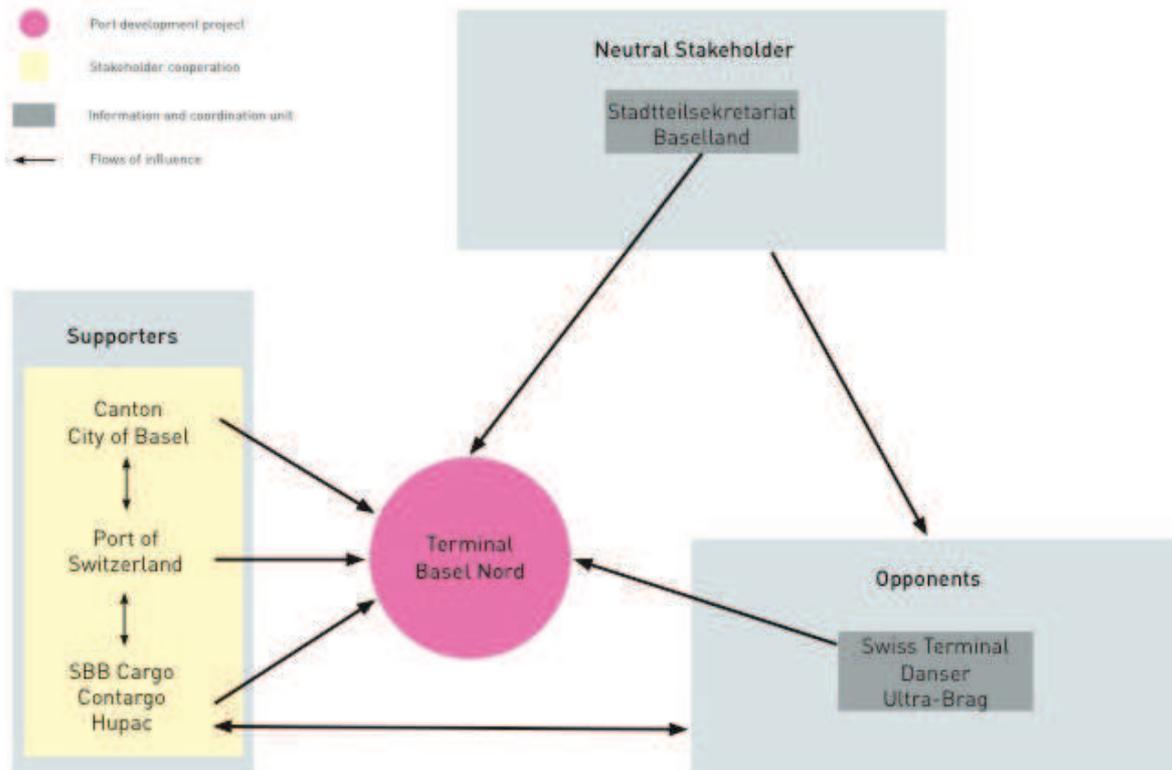


Fig. 3: Stakeholder analysis in the case of Basel inland port. (Source: Braun, 2017)

## 4.2 Transformation of the main railroad complex in Belgrade, Serbia

### 4.2.1 Railway network in Belgrade

As Belgrade was recognised as one of the most important nodes along the Pan-European Corridor X,<sup>3</sup> most studies in recent decades were devoted to strengthening the railway network in its agglomeration and consequently in the rest of Serbia. However, Serbian transportation and spatial planning experts felt the need for a reconstruction of the railways in Belgrade even earlier – the first studies appeared in the 1960s, followed by the first construction works in the 1970s. The main feature that coloured new transport scheme was influenced by the urban studies, however, different than the one experienced in most of European capitals. Namely, while Berlin, Vienna, Zurich saw the upgrade of the railway station complex as rising the urban life, too, the centrally located main railway station of Belgrade was seen as a great obstacle in connecting the urban pattern with its river. This was mainly due to the large shunting yard that was placed in close proximity of the station, thus occupying one of the most exclusive plots in Belgrade. Therefore, the construction of the new railway station was relocated out of the central zone, and the area of the main station has been a subject of planning debate and a number of open competitions for decades. In 2012, the investor for the development of the entire area was found and soon the removal of the majority of the railway tracks began. Although this station is still in operation, i.e. it is the one and only node where international train routes intersect, the previous activities designated the birth of the Belgrade Waterfront project.

### 4.2.2 Strategic project: Belgrade Waterfront

According to the discourse of current political power structures, the Belgrade Waterfront project is the ‘best practice’ example of recent urban development in Serbia. Contrary to this, the professional perspective on this topic is quite the opposite – it is a drastic case of usurpation of both the formal planning procedures and the professional expertise in the creation of planning solutions.

Three years after initiating the idea on the Belgrade Waterfront project (during the political campaign of then-largest opposition party), the cornerstone for a 90 ha land on the river bank was set in October 2015, thus marking the beginning of the 30-year long development period. Moreover, due to its position (close to the confluence of two rivers and the historical city core), this brownfield site redevelopment is not only of city, but also of regional and even national importance, thus attracting mainly foreign investors (Maruna, 2015). The current construction work is financed by the investor from the United Arab Emirates (UAE). According to the agreement between the UAE company Eagle Hills and the national government of Serbia, the state is obliged to remove the old railway tracks (currently at the site since this is the broader area of railway station still in use), invest in constructing the new railway station, provide all the infrastructural equipment to and on the site and even lease the land to the UAE investor for 99 years.

### 4.2.3 Stakeholder analysis

Besides the two dominant actors in the story on Belgrade Waterfront, the position and roles of professional community and the civil sector should be mentioned to grasp the broader picture of the development project. In contrast to the former Yugoslav planning professionals who were acting in concert with the authorities, highly appreciating multidisciplinary in the planning process and being recognised as the bearers of the public interest, Serbian planners are today completely side-lined for public interest lost its privileged position as the ‘higher’ reason that cannot be brought into the question (Vujosevic and Nedovic-Budic, 2006). Planners cannot cope effectively with the private interest requests expressed in the Belgrade Waterfront project for their expertise did not evolve through time: they do not know how to swim in the whirlpool of multiple interests, i.e. they did not adapt to the pluralistic society and still try to keep their exclusive position.

The global shift of the planning paradigm addressed the raising awareness of the stakeholders’ collaboration in creating the spatial development policies (Vujosevic et al., 2012). Nevertheless, in the case of the Belgrade Waterfront project, strategic decisions were made at the political level (with the key role of the prime minister), hence, avoiding any kind of a public debate with a range of interested parties. The professional planners’ society was completely ignored by the political power structures: on the one hand,

<sup>3</sup> The initiative on the PEC (Pan-European Corridors and Areas) was the first one, created in the 1990s. More precisely, it was developed during two Ministerial Conferences – in Crete (1994) and in Helsinki (1997), with the aim of connecting the EU-15 with the then neighbouring countries.

they were the advocates of public interest, but what is worse is that on the other hand, they never showed any understanding of a contemporary society's demands and the need of adjusting their own profile to it. The clear example of the Serbian expertise position was the complaint of the National Association of Architects when its president stressed the unfair exclusion of experts in the project: the comment was mainly on the quality and design of the project, and not on the strategic decision-making procedure that caused such a design. Persistent adherence to the outdated position made them players without power in a stakeholder arena, thus easily disregarded by the powerful political structures. The civil sector, i.e. several non-governmental organisations, also raised its voice pointing to the irregularity of the legal basis of the Belgrade Waterfront project, thus trying to address the broader public audience. They were underlining the importance of safeguarding public interest and compliance with planning and construction legislation (Maruna, 2015). However, the exclusion of both the planning profession and the public in such an important project is a clear sign of an elementary ignorance of democratic decision-making.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The social and institutional context affects to a great extent the collaboration and communication among the stakeholders participating in complex spatial issues such as integrated spatial and transport development. Creating and enabling the possibilities for implementation of the strategic projects among these stakeholders is a key to minimise the risks of spatial conflicts in hot-spots and, thus enhance integrated development in a cross-border and large-scale planning framework.

The shortage of areas available for further expansion of the traditional maritime ports asks for innovative solutions in order to connect them to other water-based terminals in their catchment areas, influencing also the internal spatial configuration of the nodes in the inland port system itself. As seen from the Basel case, the transformation process profits from a better coordinated strategy and a comprehensive survey of the available opportunities. Although such a large developmental projects always involve the opponent parties, the kind of an informal approach in coordinating all important stakeholders was proven as a successful planning tool. In the case of Belgrade, it is evident that neither formal nor informal initiatives are not strong enough with the power holders in both the public and private sector. Non-transparent procedures and dominance of the political structures deeply degrade spatial development in Serbian capital.

Having previous in mind, strategic developments in the hot-spots along international transport corridors should be orchestrated as they can have a twofold impact – on urban life in cities and on the flow of the corridor as a whole. On the one hand, foreign direct investments in strategic locations that solely aim at profit maximatio, yet ignoring infrastructural improvements and the involvement of public impede a bottom-up strategic cooperation and integration among local stakeholders. On the other hand, as can be noticed from the transnational project initiatives and their approach at the local level, an advisory expert approach can offer new opportunities for urban development in prime locations and meanwhile, improve the flow of goods and passengers in strategically important hubs/hot-spots.

However, analysts go astray as they imagine spatial planning professionals are responsible for relations of social mistrust and cynical detachment. The plans can provide important testimony to the kind of purposeful deliberation that may anticipate and avoid the social and economic damage of urban developments that wilfully ignore future consequences for others. Nevertheless, bureaucratic indifference and patronage along with political favouritism and corruption cannot be remedied by planning. Changing these conditions requires a host of social, political and economic changes that extend well beyond what planning can do.

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