

Introduction

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Bernd Scholl

INTRODUCTION

Spatial and transport development along European corridors is the subject of this publication. Using the example of the Orient/East-Med (OEM) Corridor – previously known as the TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Network) Corridor 22 (CEC 2005), leading from Hamburg to Athens, we trace the development of the corridor to its current state.

Already in 1996, the European Council and the European Parliament made the decision to elaborate TEN-T, i.e. “to establish the guidelines covering the objectives, priorities and broad lines of measures envisaged in the area of the trans-European transport network” (Decision 1692/96/EC: 3). The guidelines were intended to identify the projects of “common interest, the implementation of which should contribute to the development of the network throughout the Community”, while the trans-European network should be “established gradually by 2020” (Decision 1692/96/EC: 3-4).

Experts criticized the systematic low importance given to cross-border transport by the national railway companies and responsible ministries (Fabian 2005). On the European level, in 2003 the van Miert-Commission proposed suggestions to overcome obstacles and deficits. Some of the suggestions aimed at strengthening the European governance of transport axes, e.g. the post of European Corridor Coordinators was proposed. This was implemented a decade later – the Coordinators have been in position since 2014.

In April 2004, Community Guidelines from 1996 were amended by the new decision concerning the development of the trans-European transport (Decision 884/2004/EC). The forthcoming enlargement of the European Union (EU) called for a reexamination of the list of projects in Annex III to Decision 1692/96/EC, while the European Council held in Barcelona in 2002 underlined the objective to reduce bottlenecks through certain areas such as the Alps, the Pyrenees and the Baltic Sea and to identify missing links. In addition, priority projects to strengthen economic cohesion were called for (Decision 884/2004/EC).

The comprehensive TEN-T network was defined in 2005, comprising hundreds of projects, defined as studies or works, with the ultimate purpose of ensuring the cohesion, interconnection and interoperability of the TEN-T, as well as access to it. The TEN-T projects, which are located in every EU Member State, include all modes of transport: road, rail, maritime inland waterways, air, logistics, co-modality and innovation. Thirty priority projects (or axes) have been established to concentrate pan-European integration and development (CEC 2005).

In 2009, the European Commission (EC) launched a policy review as part of planning the EU’s financial framework for 2014–2020. Seeking a more effective governance of European Corridors, the review started with an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses experienced up till then, based on the advice of technical experts and involving

a broad range of stakeholders through formal consultations as well as regular TEN-T Days each year. The ultimate objective of TEN-T is to close gaps, remove bottlenecks and eliminate any technical barriers that exist between the transport networks of EU Member States, strengthening the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the EU and contributing to the creation of a single European transport system. This is mainly seen in the construction of new physical infrastructures; the adoption of innovative digital technologies, alternative fuels and universal standards; and the modernization and upgrading of existing infrastructures and platforms.

Following a 2013 review of TEN-T policy, nine Core Network Corridors were identified to facilitate the coordinated development of the TEN-T Core Network. These are complemented by two horizontal priorities: the ERTMS (European Rail Traffic Management System) deployment and the Motorways of the Sea. Both were established to carry forward the strategic implementation of the objectives of the Core Network, in line with the funding period 2014 to 2020 (Regulation (EU) 1315/2013).

Supervision of the corridors and the implementation of the two horizontal priorities lies with the European Coordinators, who are high-level individuals with long-standing experience in transport, finance and European politics and are nominated by the European Commission. First-generation work plans for each corridor and horizontal priority were presented in 2014, outlining exact objectives for each corridor and horizontal priority in the framework of the TEN-T Core Network. This is a continuous process that takes current developments into consideration.

In terms of funding, the EU strongly supports the innovative bottom-up approaches of each Member State and, in particular, their joint initiatives. Nevertheless, secure funding is provided. Namely, CEF (Connecting Europe Facility) serves to support implementing the projects of the EU Member States under the condition of ensuring national standards comply with the EU policies (Regulation (EU) 1316/2013). In addition, European Structural and Investment Funds and the European Fund for Strategic Investment are widely used for infrastructural improvements across the EU.

Despite all the advances towards a capable and reliable European transport system, numerous deficits and questions remain open:

- > In many cases, there is no connection to spatial development, which is responsible for the authorization of formal spatial relevant procedures and approvals according to the legislation of the members of the EU.
- > The transport plans are not embedded in a general spatial strategy.
- > No reliable timetables exist for the development of the plans.
- > Most importantly, there is a lack of dependable financing.

Nearly all these obstacles were first identified and defined by one of the scientific work groups of the ARL (Academy for Spatial Research and Planning) on large-scale transport development (ARL 2009). Among others, the current Rhine-Alpine Corridor, at

that time called the European Transport Corridor 24, serves as an example demonstrating the obstacles and paving the way for intensified collaboration among the stakeholders along the entire corridor.

The findings led to the initiation of an INTERREG IVB NWE Project “CODE 24: Corridor Development Rotterdam–Genoa” in 2009, which officially started in 2010 and ended in 2015. It aimed to achieve a joint integrated approach for the future development of the TEN-T Core Network Corridor Rhine-Alpine, focusing on the interconnection of economic development, spatial, transport and ecological planning and thus addressing urgent conflicts of capacity, sustainability and quality of life along the corridor. After five years, the CODE 24 project partners presented a joint strategy for the future development of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor as the main transport corridor of Europe.

In order to consolidate and improve cooperation across borders a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) “Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor” was initiated in 2016 by the lead partner of the aforementioned INTERREG project – the Metropolitan Region Rhein Neckar association. The EGTC continues the strategic initiative of CODE 24 for the securing of a long-term partnership and cooperation beyond the limited INTERREG project period. It consists of more than 20 stakeholders including the Ports of Rotterdam, Antwerp and Genoa.

Following the development of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor, one could see the need for intensive and reliable collaboration. One important example is the delay of all-important capacity improvements in Germany, sometimes by as much as 15 years, e.g. the section Offenburg-Basel. The interruption of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor, the main north-south arterial for freight, for more than six weeks (August 12 – October 2, 2017), due to a construction accident concerning a new railway tunnel near Rastatt, had a huge impact on freight transport. No alternative routes had been planned for such an emergency, and it became clear that inland ports, i.e. Basel, also play an important role in such cases. It is obvious that redundant means of transport should be available on the most important transport corridors in Europe.

Considering this important deficit, the idea arose to examine other examples that could play an important role in creating stronger cohesion inside Europe. The OEM Corridor, as one of the nine European Core Network Corridors, was chosen for it connects a spatially coherent axis with a multitude of different countries, interests and interrelationships, some of which are not EU members. It also leads back to the roots of European civilization in Athens, one of the most important foundations of Western civilization.

In addition to the challenges of an integrated approach to spatial and transport development, cooperation with non-EU members is very important for achieving a reliable and attractive public transport network. However, as spatial development and transport development are two sides of the same coin, both domains are strongly interdependent. Decisions in one domain influence the other and vice versa. And, as we know from history, transport development has always been strategic for spatial development and, in combination with important trading routes, has often led to the foundation of cities and the growing prosperity of surrounding regions.

The current debate on sustainable development focuses on (public) transport-oriented development (TOD). This should allow concentrated settlement development in the close proximity of railway stations in order to reduce individual motorized traffic. For freight transport, railway development is essential in order to reduce lorry traffic on overloaded highways, regions and cities. A multi-modular approach is also essential in combining the advantages of rail freight transport with maritime ports and inland navigation. In this way, the OEM Corridor can contribute to a more balanced transport system within Europe. There is potential to relieve the overloaded north-western European countries from transit freight transport by increasing the possibilities to use the maritime harbors in the south to serve the demands of the Balkan region and certain regions south of the Alps (northern Italy, southern Austria). Therefore, adequate (but still non-existent) hinterland railway connections to the seaports and the Danube river ports are most important.

The OEM Corridor is a key north-south transport corridor for Europe. Over its length of more than 2,500 km, it connects the ports of northern Germany with the Danube ports and Adriatic ports as well as the seaports in Thessaloniki and Athens. By strengthening its transport features, this axis has huge potential for triggering spatial development, which would ultimately contribute to territorial and social cohesion throughout Europe. In addition to providing better mobility conditions for business-oriented exchange between different regions, it could also stimulate rail-oriented tourism, which can be seen in various countries with high-performance railway systems, e.g. France, Spain, Germany and Switzerland. This would make connections to the main airports also very important.

However, the OEM Corridor currently has genuine shortcomings in several areas:

- > It runs through nations traditionally characterized by low economic performance in comparison with developed western European countries.
- > There are numerous missing links and bottlenecks that reduce the possibility of an efficient infrastructural network.
- > Today, the corridor coincides with the so-called migrants' route.
- > Administrative obstacles caused by mistrust among stakeholders as well as among the various authorities of the nation states are common practice in cross-border issues.

During the 4-year cooperation in the ARL international working group "Spatial and Transport Development in European Corridors: Example Corridor 22, Hamburg–Athens", a central goal was to conduct the first integrated assessment of the status of spatial and transport development for the entire corridor, as well as to be able to address questions in the project description of the survey conducted by the ARL.

- > What contribution to the European cohesion process can be made by a large-scale strategy targeting integrated spatial and transport development for a highly productive transnational rail connection between Hamburg and Athens?

- > How can the Hamburg–Vienna–Athens Corridor be evaluated with regard to energy and climate and how would the construction of this trans-European corridor contribute to balanced and sustainable transport and infrastructure development in Europe?
- > What methods, instruments and processes are appropriate for developing large-scale strategies for integrated spatial and transport development?
- > How should actor-suitable recommendations be developed at the European, national, regional and local levels, and what would an exemplary recommendation look like?

To answer these questions, it was necessary to compile an overview of all the relevant activities and actors that would contribute to the transformation of this corridor, as well as further investigating the ‘hot spots’ as urban nodes important for overall development. Therefore, in order to get a clear picture about the challenges and tasks of spatial and transport development, the ARL international working group explored several cities along the corridor and discussed their crucial issues with different key stakeholders in each city. In individual contributions, the members collated the important tasks and aspects of integrated corridor development. These contributions are assembled into four main sections, followed by a critical reflection given in the concluding chapter:

- > *PART I – Integrated Spatial and Transport Development in Europe*, with the general overview of European-wide strategic development and a particular focus on the current complex conditions along the OEM Corridor,
- > *PART II – Transnational Initiatives in Europe: Conceptual Remarks*, providing theoretical standpoints for observing the nature of problems and challenges emerging along the OEM Corridor,
- > *PART III – Transport Policies and Their Territorial Effects*, elucidating different infrastructural and operational issues associated with sectoral transport policies, and
- > *PART IV – Hot Spots along the Orient/East-Med Corridor: A Thematic Overview*, illustrating the current transport initiatives and consequent urban development in major cities along the OEM Corridor.

The logic behind such a structure follows a deductive approach, i.e. explaining specific topics from a first overview about strategic issues and initiatives, then looking more closely at sectorial policies and their spatial effects, and finally observing specific sites where action is urgently needed. In the concluding chapter, the ARL international working group formulated assessment positions, recommendations and open questions for further research. The following paragraphs briefly elucidate the content of the chapters of this edited volume.

In Chapter 1 *Bernd Scholl* presents the concept of ‘spaces and projects of European importance’, which aims at improved priority setting and identifying the hot spots of intensive cross-border collaboration. The concept is explained by using experiences from the INTERREG IVB project entitled CODE 24 on the corridor from Rotterdam to Genoa, now known as the Rhine-Alpine Corridor. Based on the scientific findings from this project, the spaces and projects of European importance are identified for the OEM Corridor, together with the organizational plans and financial resources required for integrated spatial and transport development.

In Chapter 2 *Ana Perić* and *Mathias Niedermaier* give an overview of the current challenges and potentials along the OEM Corridor. First, in order to clarify the strategic position of Europe in terms of transcontinental relations, the main trade, economic and demographic statistical indicators are presented. Second, a brief overview of transport and technical conditions relevant for the countries along the corridor is provided. Finally, the close interaction between transport and spatial development in the cities along the corridor is briefly presented.

Having contextualized the OEM Corridor in terms of various observation scales (transnational, national/regional, and local), the volume moves on to situate transnational initiatives in a broader theoretical context. In Chapter 3, *Walter Schönwandt* elucidates first the nature of the problem-oriented approach in spatial planning: in general, the focus is on the importance of both the planning process and planning context when solving complex problems; more precisely, the author illustrates the key seven components of this approach. Testing the ‘problems first’ approach on the case of the OEM Corridor results in an analysis of both the (narrow) infrastructural conditions and (broad) geo-political influences.

In Chapter 4 *Ana Perić* studies the concept of multi-level governance. After presenting the two main principles (also known as grand theories) of territorial integration in Europe – supranationalism and intergovernmentalism, as well as their limitations, the concept of multi-level governance is analyzed as a tool for addressing multidisciplinary and intersectoral cooperation along the transnational corridor. The paper highlights different ‘levels of action’, followed by the illustration of good governance examples observed along the OEM Corridor at various spatial levels: transnational, cross-border, and local level.

In Chapter 5 *Sabine Zillmer* and *Christian Lüer* complement this perspective by addressing the concept of Corridor Fora. This recently developed EU instrument is seen as the main tool for promoting and facilitating transnational cooperation along TEN-T corridors. By bringing various stakeholders together (EU bodies, nation-state representatives, regional and local authorities, as well as infrastructure providers and operators) – as envisaged by the instrument of Corridor Fora – the authors explore transnational cooperation along the OEM Corridor.

After conceptual remarks, the volume continues to present a range of aspects related to transport policy, as well as its territorial impact. In Chapter 6, *Jürgen Siegmann* gives an overview of the EU technical requirements for railway transport, such as

gauge width, axle load, train length, infrastructure, electrification and speed. By analyzing standards and achievements in different parts of Europe, a basic conclusion is applied to the OEM Corridor.

In Chapter 7 *Bardo Hörl* elucidates the nature of the current EU rail network policies, paying close attention to their effect on the OEM Corridor. As the political objectives are ambitious – shift to railway transport by 30% until 2030, and even by 50% until 2050, the author describes different initiatives to achieve this shift and to overcome existing obstacles. A particular elaboration is provided for the OEM Corridor.

In Chapter 8 *Peter Endemann* explores possible improvements in passenger transport along the OEM Corridor. European long-distance rail has developed differently and at different speeds since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the author explains this background, compares various European regions and analyzes existing travel times between major cities along the OEM Corridor. As a result, a possible decrease in travel times in long distance passenger traffic is assessed.

In Chapter 9 *Gerhard Troche* concentrates on the rail freight corridors in Europe. After identifying challenges like quality, cost, service, and political and social context, the author argues about European Freight Policy as an answer for a Single European Rail Area. This is followed by explaining the concept of the EU freight corridors, clarifying the nature of the OEM Rail Freight Corridor No. 7, finally presenting the current achievements as well as the prospects for future development.

In Chapter 10 *Hans-Peter Vetsch* presents a normative operational concept based on experiences of transalpine railway transport in Switzerland. Briefly, in order to strengthen the OEM Corridor, the following measures are necessary: defining the assumed services, determining the capacities of the sectors, and defining the required expansions.

The last section of the volume contains various case studies on specific regional or metropolitan challenges and demands that have to be mastered together with European standards, policies and concepts. As shown, much more integrated collaboration is necessary between different administrative levels, as well as among regional and metropolitan stakeholders, while citizen participation is a precondition for successful and integrated developments. In Chapter 11 *Petra Heldt* demonstrates a successful cooperation between the Free State of Saxony and the Czech Republic, which will bring the regions of Dresden and Prague closer together and will have positive effects for modal split as well as for the regional economy and the environment. Importantly, both informal and formal planning approaches contributed to the quality of the final spatial proposal.

In Chapter 12 *Andreas Voigt* analyzes the specific situation of Vienna as an intersection node between northern and southern Europe and a gateway to the Balkans. In doing so, the author overlaps the territorial scopes of two corridors, OEM and Rhine–Danube, thus making the cities of Bratislava, Vienna, Budapest and Belgrade part of the key ‘backbone’ for the integrated infrastructure and spatial development of central and south-east Europe, although with a wide variety of connections to both north and south.

In Chapter 13 *Péter Wolf* and *Bálint Kádár* present the situation in Budapest through the lens of logistic challenges and demands in the metropolitan region of Budapest. Relying on the enormous potential of brownfields, the authors argue for integrated spatial and railway development. The contribution highlights the Budapest region and its search for a competitive edge through improving railway capacities and promoting integrated urban planning.

In Chapter 14 *Iva Ćukić* and *Ana Perić* focus on the challenging situation experienced by Serbia as a non-EU Member State trying to find an appropriate response to different spatially relevant interests and conflicts. Although mainly excluded from the support offered by the EU, the geopolitical importance of the Western Balkans means the entire region has become an interesting target for investments from Russia, China, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. The authors highlight irregularities in the spatial planning procedure of grand projects financed by foreign funding, finally offering basic recommendations to strengthen public participation in urban issues.

In Chapter 15 *Irini Frezadou* explores the long-lasting unsolved spatial problems and the lack of a sustainable integrated transport system in Greece, particularly indicating the insufficiency of the formal planning procedures. The case study of Patras serves to demonstrate the necessity of informal planning as a complementary element to formal planning instruments.

Finally, in the concluding chapter *Bernd Scholl* presents assessment positions, recommendations and topics for further research born out of the 4-year research project and engagement of the members of the ARL international working group. These findings can be also considered as a summary of the Position Paper as one of the research outcomes (ARL 2019). Fig. 1 shows the contributions and their localization/relevance to the OEM Corridor.

The book addresses a highly interesting topic of transport infrastructure planning along the OEM Corridor, however placing it in quite a different framework than is usual by EU standards. First, EU policies are rather sectorial and the territorial effects of infrastructural upgrades are rarely taken into consideration. In contrast to this, the starting point of this research was the presumption that spatial and transport development are ‘two sides of the same coin’. Briefly put, any infrastructural improvement has a direct impact on its catchment area. In addition, as presented in the book, the spatial (and other effects – economic, social, environmental, etc.) are different when observed at different spatial levels – transnational, national/regional, and local, among others.

Second, the territorial scope of the book is slightly different from the one suggested by the TEN-T policy. Namely, the research goes beyond the official EU Member States to also include the countries of the Western Balkan (WB) region that are currently in the EU pre-accession phase. In doing so, a proactive approach is adopted. On the one hand, the WB region is not isolated from the EU initiatives, and the proposal for two OEM branches in the Balkans (via Romania and Bulgaria, and Serbia and the Republic of North Macedonia, respectively) seems to bring competitiveness to the region with-

out hindering the official EU route. On the other hand, taking into account the non-EU route furthers understanding of the global complexity of spatially relevant interests and geo-political conditions among the current major forces outside Europe. As a result, the volume is devoted to professionals involved in transport and spatial planning at the EU, national and regional levels, policy-makers, researchers and citizens, hoping to raise awareness on specific challenges related to the OEM Corridor.

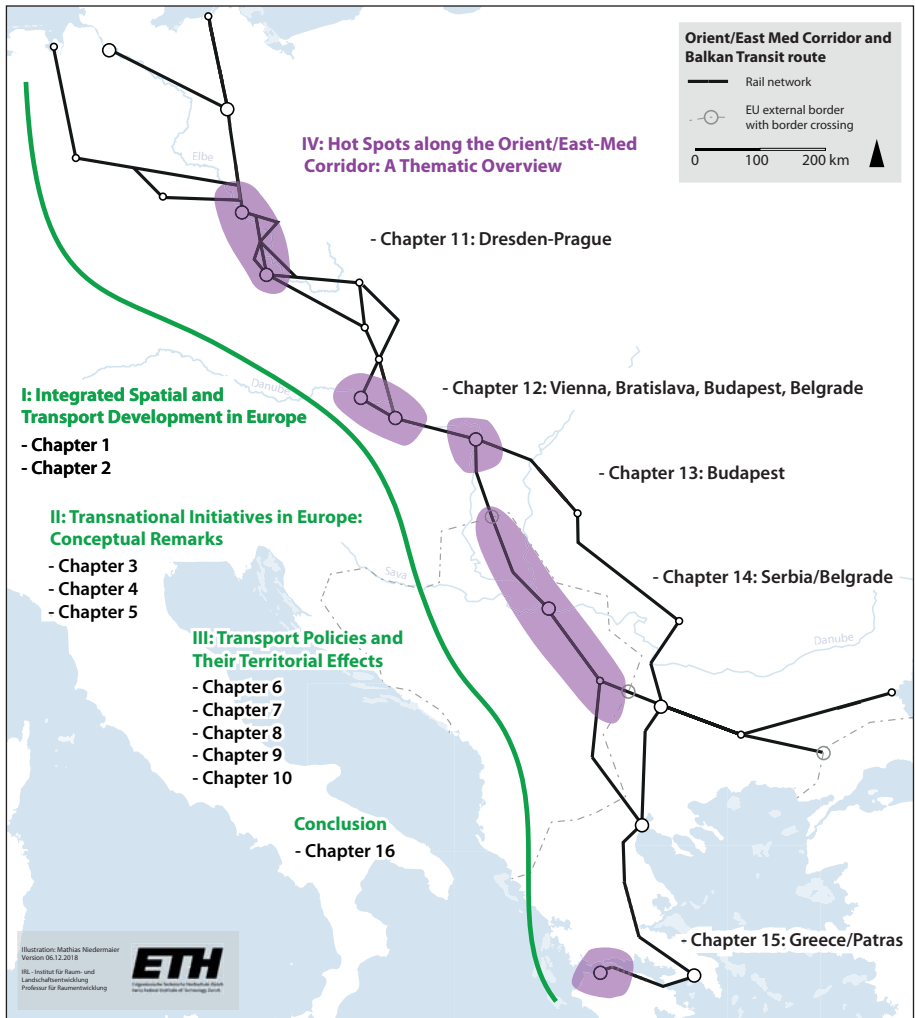


Fig. 1: The territorial scope covered by the volume chapters /Source: Mathias Niedermaier, ETH/IRL, Chair of Spatial Development