

COMPETING CORRIDORS – OR COMMON EUROPEAN TRANSPORT SYSTEM? ¹

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INTRODUCTION

The paper intends to treat interregional corridors as part of extended continental networks. First selects Pan-European transit corridors that are common between Ukraine and Hungary and focus on different discontinuities at Záhony/Chop, the single border crossing point of the common corridors. Then place Corridor No.5 into a wider context, namely as part of big Eurasian corridor proposals. Looking for the network connections, the paper states that many corridor proposals missed these network relations and by that partly lost the proper context.

In the case of the European corridors the paper underlines also context problems. While the creation of the trans-European network (TEN) solved a territorial problem in the EU 15s (12s) area (namely the internal interconnection of the networks between separate countries) the extension of this network haven't been based on the same principles, instead there was an extension of the east-west corridor elements of the TEN network. The crossing structure of these extended elements is occasional, and does not fit to the local interests of the extended EU area.

As for the further extension of the EU and the new neighbourhood area, two things are important: (a) not to repeat the mistakes committed in the Central European area and (b) count on the possible changes of the marked Central European corridors due to the necessary corrections of earlier mistaken planning. The possible frame to solve these problems must be the network context of the corridors, both in inter-regional level and within an integrated view of local, regional and inter-regional levels.

¹ The paper was prepared for the joint conference of the Institute for Economic Forecasting of NASU and the Institute for World Economics of HAS titled „Eurointegration Challenges in Hungarian-Ukrainian Economic Relations”. Budapest, 27 May 2005.

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**UKRAINE AND HUNGARY: – COMMON CORRIDORS,
WITH CHARACTERISTIC DISCONTINUITIES**

In 1997 the third Pan-European conference in Helsinki fixed ten corridors³ since called Helsinki or pan-European corridors. Both Ukraine (No.3, No.5, No.7 and No.9) and Hungary (No.4, No.5, No.7 and No.10) are crossed by four of these corridors, two of which are common in Ukraine and Hungary. Corridor No.7 is the Danube, that leaves Hungary and a separate lower section of the river arrives to Ukraine, while corridor No.5. has a direct border crossing between the two countries.⁴

Corridor No.5. crosses the Ukrainian–Hungarian border by Tisza bridges both for the rail and for the road connection. The importance of the railway crossing is given by the fact that it is this section where the change of gauges between standard gauge and broad gauge must be arranged. (*Figure 1.*) Earlier this interoperability discontinuity was solved mainly by reloading the goods into different wagons, while today there is a growing significance of different technical solutions that change or just re-adjust the axles. In the early seventies the quantity of goods reloaded here was closely equal to the traffic of the Hamburg seaport.



Source: author's own photo on 26th April 2005

Figure 1. Treating interoperability discontinuity. Exchange of axles in Záhony.

While rail gauge discontinuity can be considered as a given historical heritage, it is more astonishing, if one also meets a shocking physical discontinuity on the road pavement. As *Figure 2* presents it, crossing the road bridge one can also see on the pavement quality, where the future Schengen border is exactly situated. The photo do

³ Nine of them were already determined in Crete 1994.

⁴ For a more detailed description of the corridors, see in this volume Preiger, D. et al. (2005).

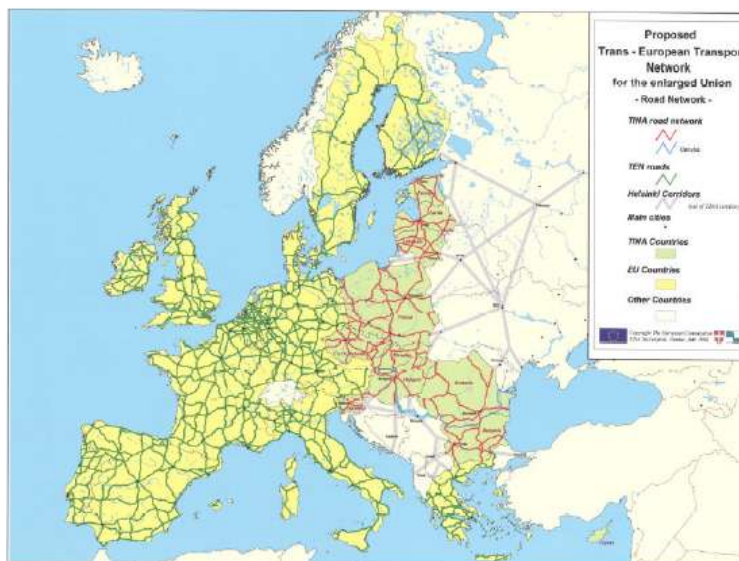
not want to distinguish or blame any specific partners, even it is not important which section belongs to which country: What demonstrated here is the *non-existence of the trans-border co-operation*, the missed opportunity in a possible collaboration of mutual interest, – in a potential common activity that was in the focus of the paper of Marian Dolishnij.⁵



Figure 2. Pavement quality discontinuity. One can physically distinguish the two sides of the future Schengen border at the middle of the bridge over the river Tisza between Záhony and Chop. (Sorry for the quality of my rainy photo)

Besides road and rail tracks there is another discontinuity that may cause problems in cooperation or future planning processes: this is the discontinuity of the used maps. *Figure 3* presents a map from an earlier EU document, (Transport and Energy Infrastructure 2001) where the EU 15s and the then enlargement area had similar basic map, also the network of the TEN and extended TEN were represented similarly (disregarding the colouring) – but in the neighbourhood area the map was different, namely the network became more schematized, expressing but straight directions approaching Kiev and Moscow.

⁵ Dolishnij, Marjan (2005) (see in this volume).



Source: Transport and Energy infrastructure in South East Europe 2001

Figure 3. Discontinuity of the map of Europe

The above discontinuities of different origin can just characterise the starting position of our days from where we may begin to build our networks of cooperation.

SILK ROUTE – LABEL ON DIFFERENT EURASIAN EAST-WEST CORRIDORS

In April, 2005, few weeks earlier to our conference there was an important meeting called “Reviving the Silk Route” held at the border crossing area Záhony-Chop. The transport ministers of Hungary, Ukraine and Russia all addressed the conference and parallel with it they met and signed an agreement on the cooperation in the corridor No.5. issue.



Figure 4. Conference “Reviving the Silk Route” – organised by KIUT civil group

The conference “Reviving the Silk Route” considered self-evident, that corridor No.5 (that joins at L'viv to corridor No.3.) with its Kiev–Moscow–Yekaterinburg extension is a part of the Silk route. (*Figure 4.*) In the same time if we look at other Silk Road initiatives, they generally focus on more southern corridors through Central Asian countries arriving rather into the Black Sea area.

Especially with the title “The New Silk Road” a Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) was proposed by a conference in May, 1993 organised by the EU shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union for Central Asian leaders in Brussels. (TED Case Studies) “The vision of a superhighway not only of asphalt, but of rails, pipelines, and fibre-optic cables stretching from Rotterdam to China’s Yellow Sea Coast seemed full of promise not only to firms who would build these systems, but also to those who sought to prosper from the region’s wealth in minerals, cotton, and its best-known commodities, oil and natural gas.”⁶ The corridor was carefully planned within the borders of eight newly independent countries, not reaching Russia on the one side, neither China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, or Turkey on the other. While Rotterdam was mentioned as a western target point, the first meeting dealt but with the Asian sections. Four years later another conference was held (April, 1997, Tbilisi) to focus „on connecting the western extensions of the New Silk Road to existing European transport routes through the Black Sea littoral countries, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine.”⁷

⁶ Source: TED Case Studies The New Silk Road: Boon or Boondoggle? <http://www.american.edu/TED/silkroad.htm#r3>

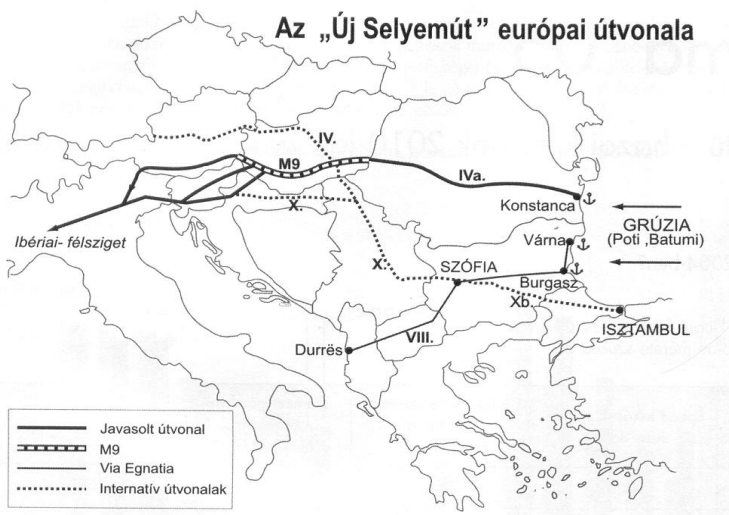
⁷ TED ib. id.



Source: Népszabadság 2005a

Figure 5. About the proposed motorway Budapest–Iasi–Chisinau–Odessa

While Ukraine was mentioned above, the Hungarian connection to such a corridor is not self evident. Still recently short news was published in a Hungarian daily newspaper⁸ about a Romanian proposal of a Budapest–(Nyíregyháza–Bania Mare–Iasi–Chisinau)–Odessa transport corridor (motorway) (Figure 5.). Another researcher in the Transdanubian Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences explains totally different the European (and Hungarian) section of the New Silk Route, when underlines the importance of leading it along the southern Hungarian area. (Figure 6.)



Source: Erdősi 2005

Figure 6. A proposed European extension of the New Silk Road in an article in Transit, April, 2005.

⁸ F. J. Gy.: Sztrádán Odesszáig. Népszabadság, February 8th, 2005.

Also in the recent days the Hungarian press reported again a different, namely a railway corridor planned as the western extension of the trans-Siberian Rail⁹. The rail would bring broad gauge until Vienna, transposing by that the interoperability change from the Ukrainian border to near to the Austrian capital. (Figure 7)



Source: Népszabadság 2005b

Figure 7. Proposed western extension of the wide gauge until Vienna

Regarding that rank growth of competing corridors one wonders if those proposed different corridors are co-ordinated at any level, or if the planners know at all about the other competing proposals. There seems to be a tendency, that speaking about a favoured corridor, the planners tend to forget about any other existing competitors.

What seems to be missing here is the *network level co-ordination* over the different corridors.

NETWORK LEVEL COORDINATION – ASIAN SIDE

As for the Asian area it is a UN-driven agreement that intends to raise thinking above the separated corridor level.

“The Intergovernmental Agreement on the *Asian Highway Network* will come into force on 4 July 2005, giving new boost to the flow of international traffic in this region. The agreement, which has so far been signed by 27 member states is stipulated to enter into force on the ninetieth day following the date on which the Governments of at least eight states have consented to be bound by the agreement. The approval of the Government of Cambodia in April satisfied this requirement. Now eight countries, namely Cambodia, China, Japan, Myanmar, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam have ratified, accepted or approved the agreement.”¹⁰

⁹ MTI Bécs felé tart a Távols-Kelet? Népszabadság, April 21st, 2005.

¹⁰ Source: Asian agreement http://www.unescap.org/ttdw/common/TIS/AH/AH_into_force.asp

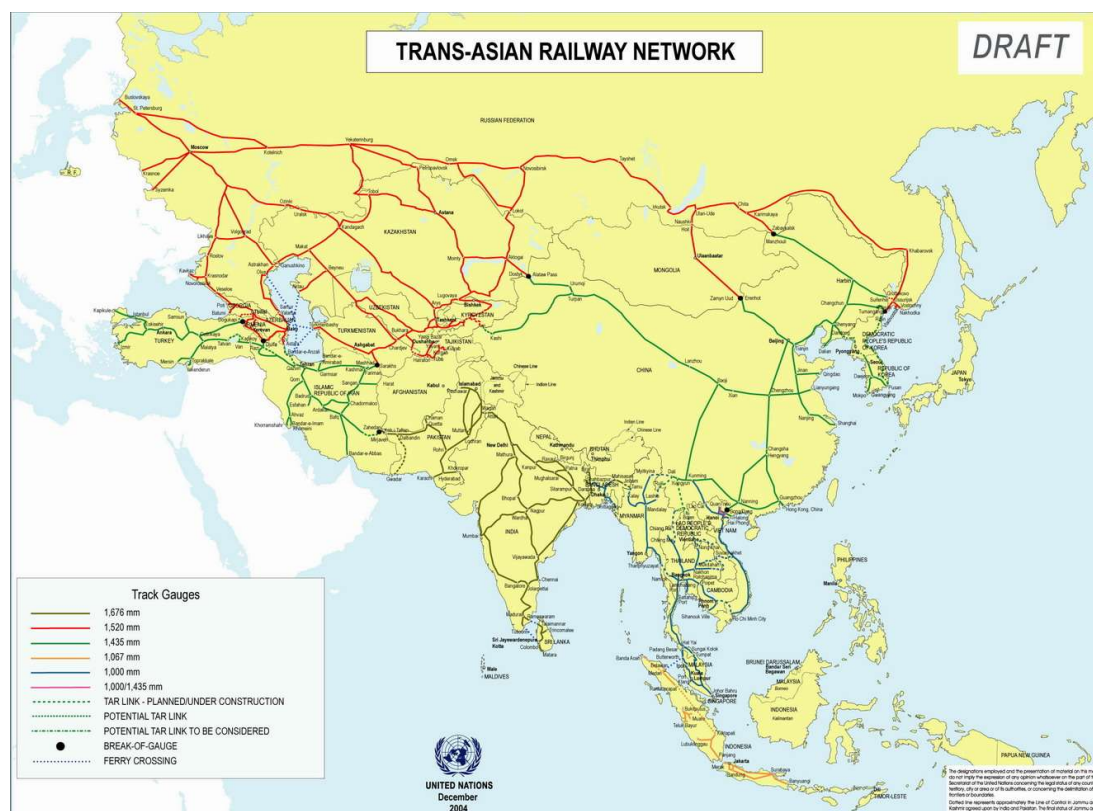


Source: Asian agreement 2005 http://www.unescap.org/ttdw/common/TIS/AH/AH_into_force.asp

Figure 8. Asian highway network proposal 2004 – UN ESCAP

Figure 8. presents us the selected road network for the whole Asian territory and Russia thus showing also the connections towards Ukraine.

A similar map was produced for the main Asian rail network, based on a regional meeting held in November, 2004 (Report 2004) (*Figure 9.*).



Source: Asian agreement http://www.unescap.org/ttdw/common/TIS/TAR/report_full_23Nov04.pdf

Figure 9. Asian railway network 2004 – UN ESCAP

The rail network is definitely separated to a northern and a southern east-west corridor. The northern one is based on the trans-Siberian railway with its uniform gauge, while on the southern corridor four different gauge types are to be distinguished.

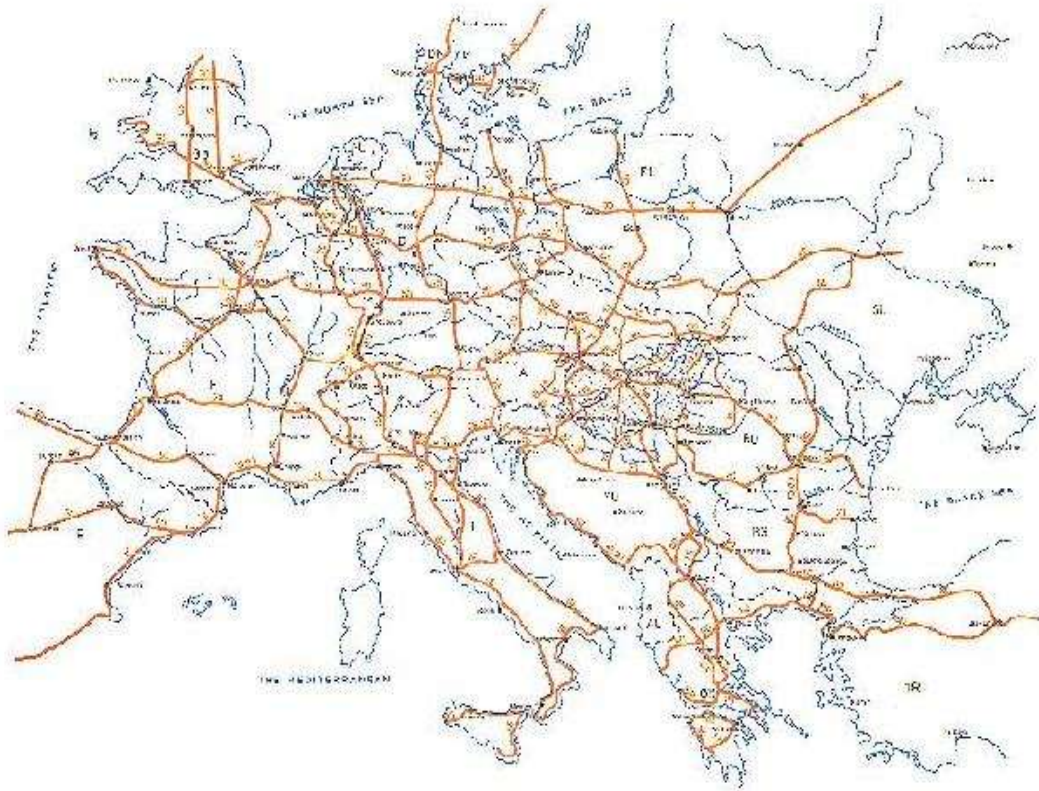
NETWORK LEVEL COORDINATION – EUROPEAN SIDE

While there is also an enforcement within the UNECE to design and declare a whole-European coordinated transport network,¹¹ instead of a well based theoretical continental level approach, the basis of the keep on extended transport network is the existing and enlarged TEN, that is the trans-European network of the EU 15s.

Figure 10 presents a 30 years old change in the numbering system of the European road network. In 1975 the International Road Federation changed the earlier London-centered road-numbering system, and introduced a grid system. The roads of European importance have got two-digit numbers, where the main east-west direc-

¹¹ see UNECE – UNESCAP (2005) Criteria for prioritisation of projects...

tion roads were ended with '0', while the main north-south direction roads were ending with '5'. (Monterie 2002) This system just renamed the existing roads, still it was of great importance, namely it can be considered as the birth of the corridor-type thinking at the modern European level transport networks.



Source: Az országos közúthálózat 1991-2000 évekre szóló-fejlesztési programja 1991, KHVM

Figure 10. The birth of corridor thinking, the renumbering of the European roads in 1975

Let's consider the grid on *Figure 11*. as a scheme of the Trans-European Network of the transport corridors (TEN-T)

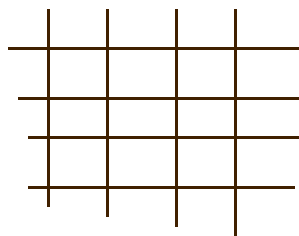


Figure 11. The grid of TEN of the Fifteens

The TEN became the main tool to fulfil the objective of the Common Transport Policy of the EU of 1992: symbolised in the slogan ‘common network to the common market’. It really intended to interconnect the separate, otherwise developed transport networks of the member countries, twelve in 1992, soon fifteen since 1995.

The conception of the TEN network was more or less ready by 1989, and it was an interesting and unexpected turn of the history, that by the time it was officially accepted in the EU, the map of Europe has been changed, the iron curtain that separated the continent into two parts has been disappeared. That is why so early, even before the official announcement of the TEN in 1991 conferences deal with the eastern extension of the network.

But what would the ‘extension of the network’ to the east mean? *Figure 12* presents an extended grid that could have represent the same objectives in a wider European area the TEN aimed at for the EU fifteens

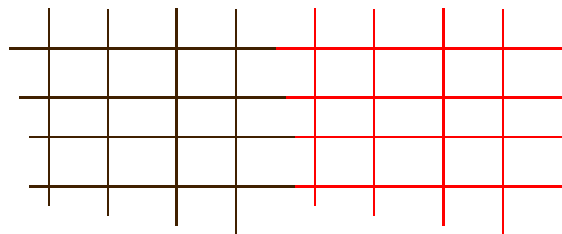


Figure 12. Extension of the grid to the enlarged European Union
(Evidently a Community interest of the enlarged European Union)

What really happened was not an extension of the grid, but rather the extension of the east–west corridors of the TEN. Both from EU side and from eastern side (politicians, business leaders and public opinion equally) thought that it was the east–west connection that needed urgent reinforcement and absolute priority. Even now-a-days some official EU documents couldn’t overstep this view and doesn’t urge more than ‘linking the new Member States with the infrastructure of the Fifteen’¹²

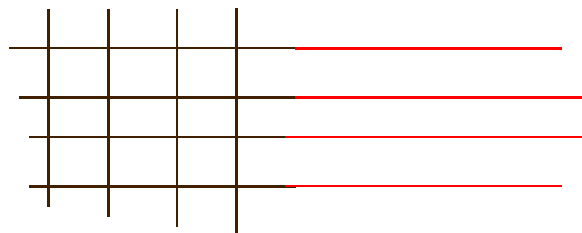


Figure 13. “Linking the new Member States with the infrastructure of the Fifteen”

¹² White Paper (2004) 3.3 „...the Commission’s policy in the area of trans-European networks is improving access to transport, energy and communications networks in the more remote area and will assist in *linking the new Member States with the infrastructure of the Fifteen...*” (Italicised by me T. F.)

The whole idea of the pan-European corridors is not more, than the scheme presented on *Figure 13*. But because of two reasons, the real map is not so clear. The first reason is, that toward the east Europe is widening, and the corridors must turn more to the north and more to the south too. The second reason, that the extended corridors starting from Germany or from Italy both want to reach the northern *and* the southern areas of the eastern territories. That is why the corridor patterns remind us rather the scheme of *Figure 14* than that of the previous one.

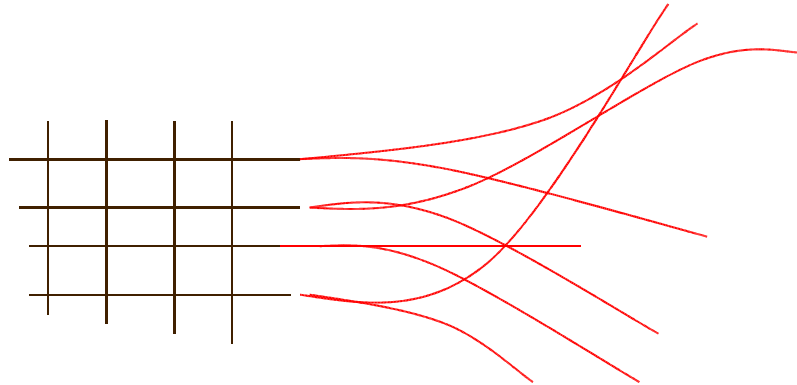
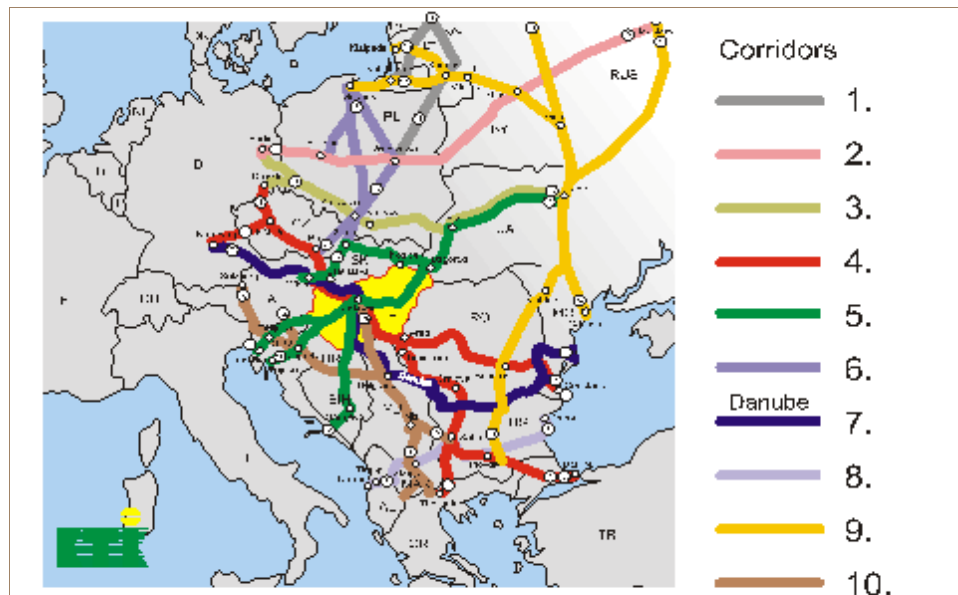


Figure 14. “Linking the new Member States with the infrastructure of the Fifteen”



Source: Páneurópai <http://www.gkm.gov.hu/data/8568/Image11.gif>

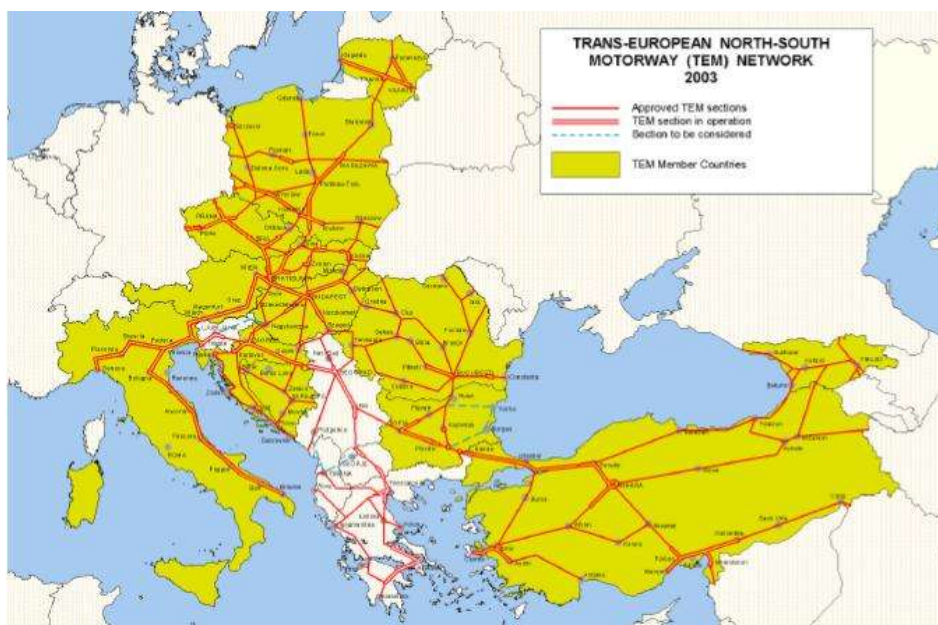
Figure 15. The Helsinki-, or pan-European road transport corridors

Regarding the map of the pan-European corridors on *Figure 15*, we can repeat that the extension of the TEN by the pan-European corridors was rather the *extension of the east-west corridors of the TEN* than the extension of the grid itself. Even the

single north-south corridor, corridor No. 9. starts and ends within the EU15s, so we can say that it was a general rule that any corridors had to join to a TEN 15 network element. It reflected the *Fifteen's interest* rather than the general interest of the enlarged European Union.

Later the same pan-European network was also chosen as the backbone network for the accession countries in the TINA process, classifying all other suggested transport infrastructure elements as of secondary priority. (TINA 1999) Another three years later in a study called TIRS and delivered for identifying the major international and regional routes for the Balkan area “[t]he basic network for Bulgaria and Romania was identified as identical to that defined by the TINA process” and extended towards five more countries. (UNECE – UNESCAP 2005 pp 4-5).

And again, during the elaboration of the TEM and TER Project Master Plan started in September 2003, covering 21 countries now already including Ukraine and the other European CIS countries, the methods are based on TINA and TIRS experiences (UNECE – UNESCAP 2005 pp 7). *Figure 16* based on the official website of UNECE Transport Division presents the TEM corridor and the countries covered slightly differently. One can ask if the original idea of creating such a corridor in the 70s and 80s hasn't been determined by a military background of assuring easy movements of troops along the frontier of the Soviet Union. – The earlier TEM seemed to be forgotten for a decade, while now elements of it are attached to the gradually enlarged TEN extension area, where the main networking principle that looks to be consequently followed that the already decided elements are considered as fixed.



Source: UNECE Transport Division (2003) <http://www.unece.org/trans/main/tem/temmap.html>

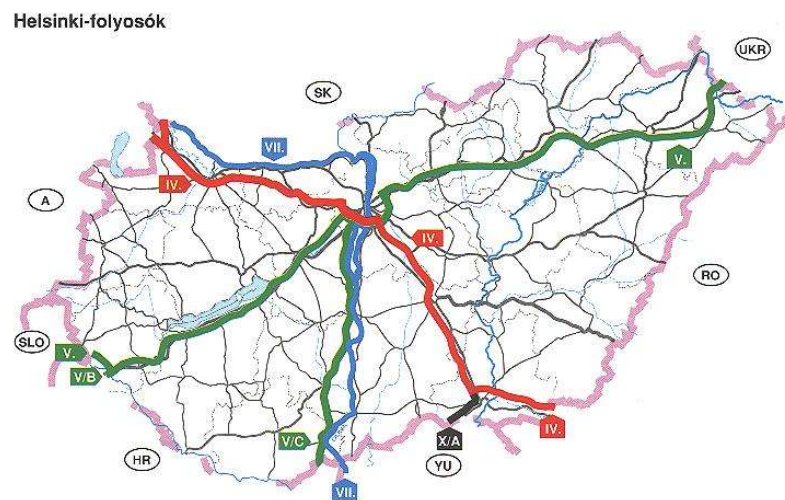
Figure 16. TEM area from the UNECE Transport Division website

The last step of the extension process is to interconnect the whole Europe wide extended TEN network with the UNESCAP Asian network. “Building on the European Experience, the secretariat is proposing a similar approach to that used for the elaboration of the TEM and TER Master Plan to be considered for project prioritization in case of Euro-Asian Transport Linkages.” (UNECE – UNESCAP 2005 pp 11). This choice means, that the emphasis is taken on the selection of viable local projects again, failing to come about the planning of the proper structure of a continent-level overlay network for transport.

Anyhow, during the latest revision of the TEN network within the EU (accepted on 29th of April, 2004 – two days before the accession of the ten new member states; – see Decision No 884/2004) the structure of the TEN network hasn’t been changed, and the basic elements of the above process wasn’t questioned.

NETWORK STRUCTURE CONSEQUENCES FOR HUNGARY

Enlarging the corridors crossing Hungary from the last maps we can find equally an overcentralised structure where there seems that the single point where it is worthy to cross the country is the capital Budapest where all the corridors are meeting. One have to question if that were the proper future transport structure of a country of territorially well balanced. (*Figure 17.*)



Source: Útgazdálkodás 1994-1998. KHVM

Figure 17. The official Hungarian interpretation of the Helsinki Corridors in the road network in 1998 (and since)

Hungary's Budapest-centred transport network goes back one and a half century. Count Istvan Széchenyi, Hungary's champion of development in the 19th century, devised the plan that very consciously placed Budapest in the centre of the road and railway networks. This was necessary in order to develop a big urban centre in the middle of Hungary comparable to Vienna, which could become a counterbalance within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. That was a successful policy, Budapest really soon became a metropolis of regional importance.

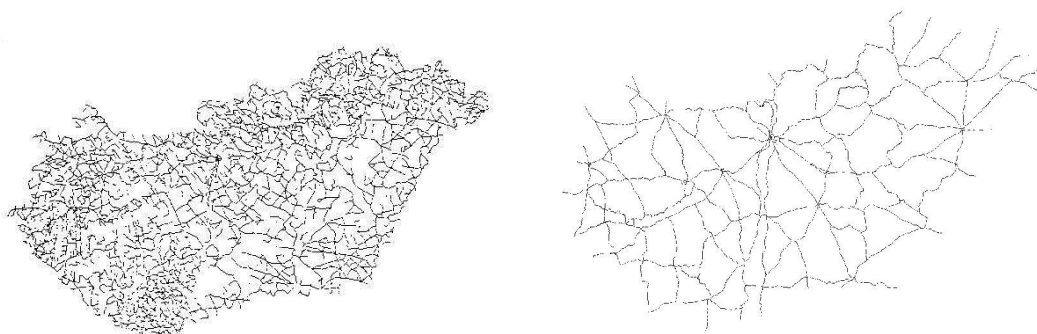


Figure 18. Comparing the structure of the Hungarian secondary road network (left) and the main road network (right). The first (former cart tracks) followed the topographic, the soil and the property constraints, the second followed planned directions.

Instead of connecting neighbouring villages, the function of the national main roads was to interconnect towns, urban poles. Since the middle of the 19th century, when the main road network was constructed to fulfil this new function, it also created a new structure compared to the former cart track networks. (Figure 18.)¹³

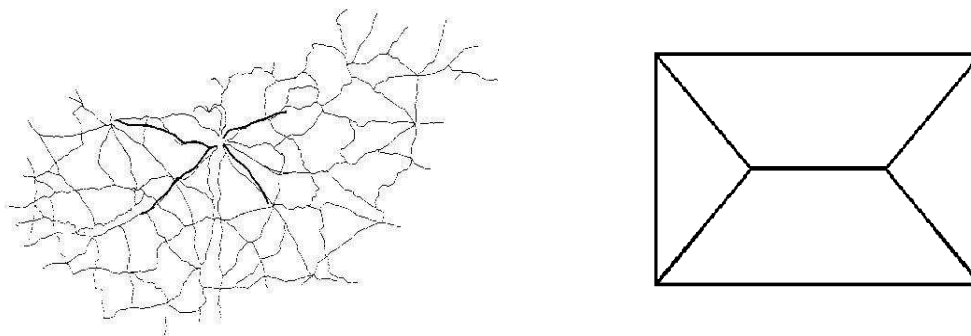


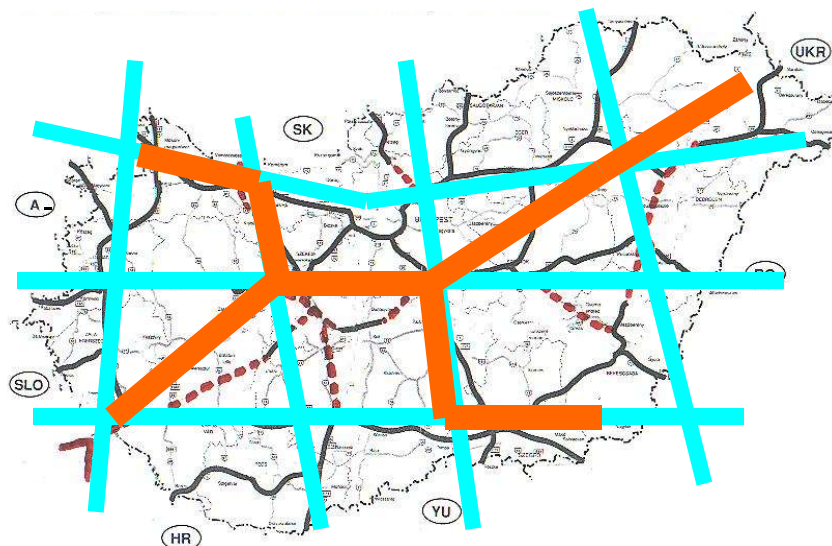
Figure 19. The construction of the first motorways in Hungary (as same as in other countries) was determined by the traffic load of the national main roads (left). There was not realised even since, that a new function of interregional connections has been born and for that a new structure of network should be created.

¹³ Both *Figure 18 and 19* and the relating ideas are explained in details in an earlier article of the author: see Fleischer (1994).

The appearance of the *interregional corridors* represents the same change of scale compared to the national main road network, as earlier the introduction of (imperial) main roads compared to the local cart tracks. In spite of this fact, the development of a structure matching the new scale has not come about. The plans for domestic corridors were and are not considered as a comprehensive network structure and the process to decide where a motorway should be built has been mainly governed by the need to expand the local capacity of the national main road network. (Figure 19)¹²

So both the improvising Hungarian transport development policy (seeking local solutions on congestion problems) and the EU/TEN enlargement targets (to reach the new capitals as soon as possible) contributed to the process, that the inter-regional corridors was identified with the most heavily loaded national main roads, reinforcing a radiant structure within the country. One look at Figure 17 shows the planned corridors will not reduce the incline between the capital and the provinces – on the contrary they will reinforce and increase the spatial imbalance between the country's regions.

To find a more balanced long-term structure for the interregional road network Figure 20 presents a grid structure model composed of mainly north-south and east-west corridor elements, and also assuring the diagonal crossing of the pan-European corridors. Behind there is a less model-like grid of roads on the map, abandoning many unnecessary element from the official long-term plans or those unfit to the grid structure (Fleischer T. et al. 2002)



Source: Fleischer T. et al. (2002)

Figure 20. Draft of an alternative proposal for the structure of a long-term high-speed road network

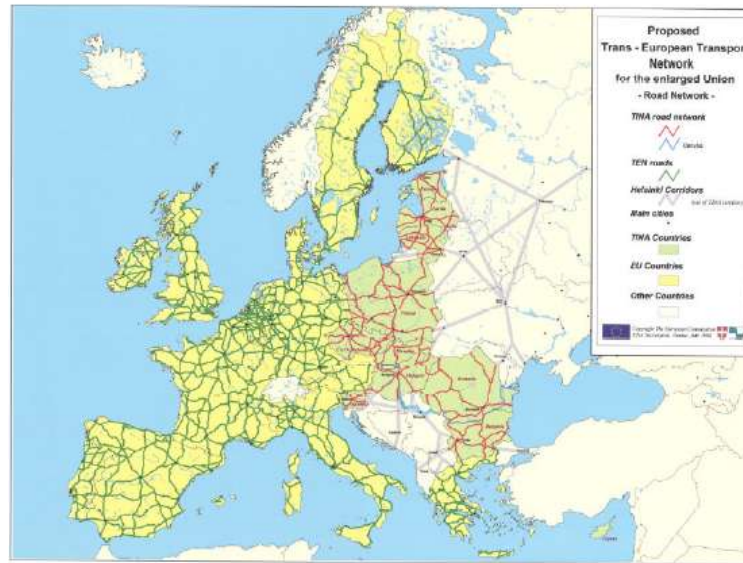
The suggestions haven't been accepted and in its practice the Hungarian government keep on works on reinforcing the one-centered transport structure despite any declaration about the contrary. (Figure 21.)



Source: Europe Plan (2002) Ministry of Economics and Transport

Figure 21. The officially planned high-speed road network by 2006

If we glance at *Figure 3* again, we can see that the only intention that can be picked out from the simplified sketch of the corridors at the area of the CIS countries is that the corridors arriving from different parts of the EU area must reach the two big capitals Kiev and Moscow. The question that has to rise is if it is really the interest of Ukraine that *its capital* be connected to the EU area at three-four different point as soon as possible, or it would be more important to use the newly building interregional corridors to form a useful grid on the eastern European area, serving together both a better and balanced internal connection of regions and the better external connections in a new structure. Naturally this paper do not able to give the answer to this question, but tried to call the attention to the importance of dealing with such questions instead of just accepting the offered options as single possibility.



Source: Transport and Energy infrastructure in South East Europe 2001

Figure 3. (repeated) Discontinuity of the map of Europe

While one can say that it was just an occasional map and mustn't draw overdimensioned conclusion from it, a similar intention can be gathered from the report of the Van Miert High-level Group on the revision of the TEN. When they categorised priority projects they explicitly underlined the importance of "the main routes which link the capitals of the enlarged Union"¹⁴ Naturally these routes are really of great importance, the danger is if their consideration tend to be being exclusive, oppressing any other links.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Just referring to the repeated *Figure 3*. it is worthy to underline, that a first (symbolic and also real) condition of the planning of a whole-European transport network, the availability of a *pan-European map* where the details are similarly indicated at each corner.

As for the Záhony/Chop border crossing zone, and generally the common frontier area, the paper underlines the importance of the promotion of co-operation and the facilitation of permeability. Important interest from both countries to avoid the building of new sharp frontier line instead of decreasing the differences between the two sides

¹⁴ UNECE – UNESCAP 2005 p 6

The main stress in the paper is given to the necessity of the network context of the different planned transport corridors. Without the network context the corridor proponents seem to struggle against any other corridors – while the real interest is rather the positive attraction of those goods and people that are able to enrich the closer area. Not the more and through traffic, but the proper and locally targeted traffic is that brings a real value for the regions.

Another important issue is the planning of the proper pattern of the network that able to cover Europe/Eurasia at continent level. The actual practice that starts from a core TEN network created originally for 12 countries and considers any enlargement from the fixed and dominated interest of that core area is not suitable to find an optimal network structure for the whole enlarged Europe. What is going on is a patching of corridors with new sections to enlarge the attraction zone of the core area. In other words, the EU applied different considerations in *expanding* the TEN than in delineating the original network. While the TEN handles the north-south and east-west corridors *homogenously* within the EU-15, this is not so in the expansion area, where *links directed at the TEN core have been given priority*.

Another problem, hardly touched in the paper, that while it was a legitimate priority target for a Common Transport Policy to create an overlay network to interconnect the single national transport networks of the different countries, it was a misunderstanding to attribute the same exaggerated priority value to inter-regional corridors within the transport policies of single nations as opposed to internal (main and secondary) links, as it happened in the case of Hungary and other acceding countries.

Interregional corridors not only have been given exaggerated priority in Hungarian development plans, but what is more, these corridors were and are planned and constructed *in a mistaken structure*. While the objectives of main regional, economic, transport and environmental documents without exception highlight the necessity of resolving the single-centred radial system, the transport network's development *projects* are stuck into the existing structure and further strengthen the centralised Hungarian pattern of the connections.

For the further extension area of the European Union called now new neighbourhood area, all these lessons coming from the earlier experiences can serve as warning to actively avoid the repetition of the mistakes, and put the fundament of the planning of new transport corridors on the basis of the network approach: on the one side considering the corridors as part of a continental level inter-regional transport network and on the other side considering the inter-regional connections as one single level of the system of a multi-level transport network together representing also the transport connections of local and national interest.

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