



# Connected Cities: the final cut

MiniMetro track in Perugia.

During 2004 and 2005 staff from TU Delft (Delft University of Technology), the University of Ghent and COB (the Netherlands Knowledge Centre for Underground Construction and the Use of Underground Space) developed an idea that finally becomes an INTERREG IIIC network called Connected Cities. Now the project comes to an end, this will be the last Nova Terra that reports on the experiences of our travelling network on sustainable mobility and urban/regional development.

## Frank van der Hoeven, Delft University of Technology

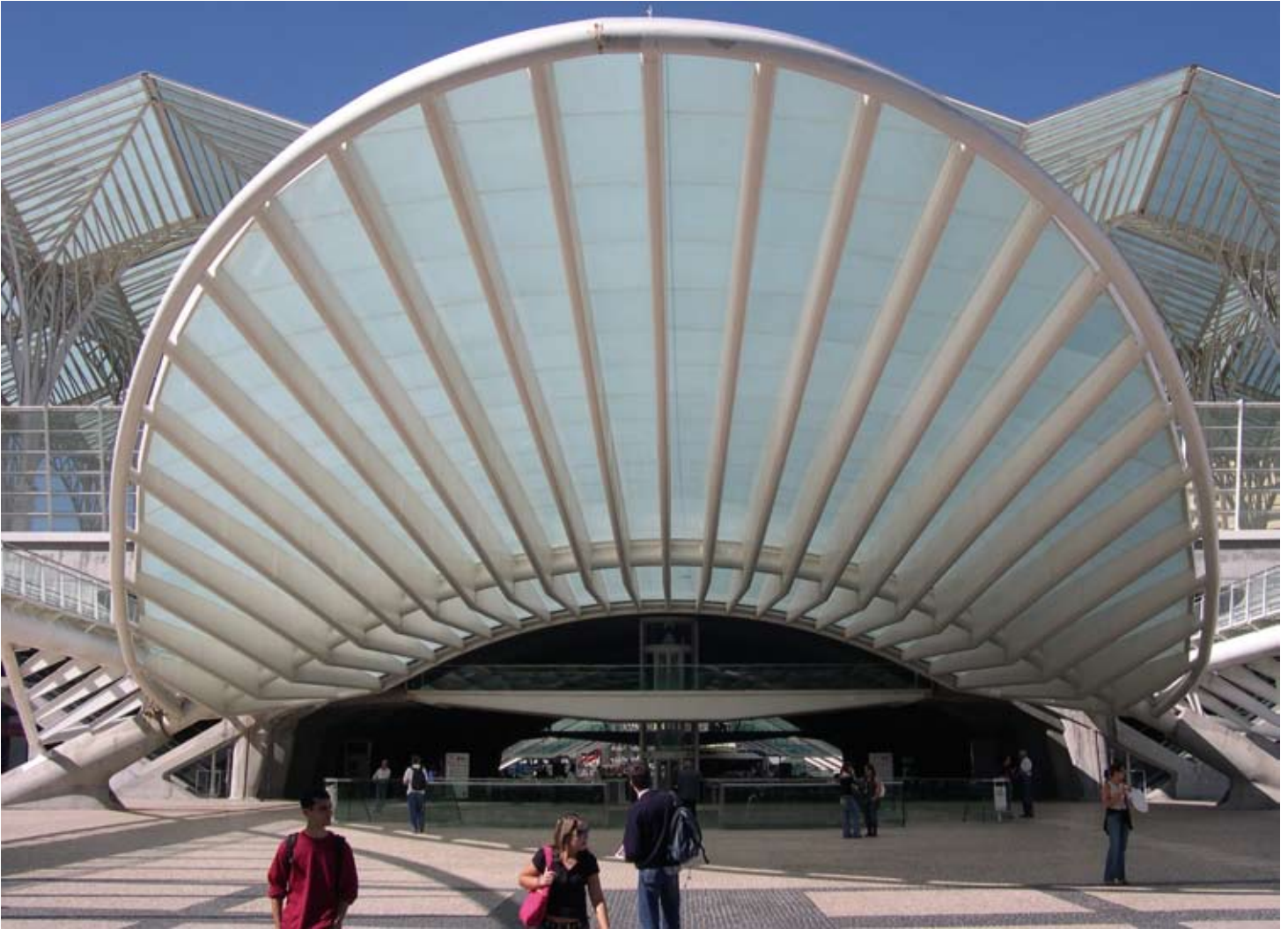
During the initial development period of Connected Cities, ideas on the impact of underground transit hubs on the urban development of their surrounding areas began to coalesce and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) in the UK emerged as a potential partner. The ideas then evolved towards Transport Development Areas (TDAs), the policy framework that was developed by RICS.

As a conceptual approach, TDAs are similar to their American equivalent: Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). Both TDAs and TOD assume that urban and regional development should reflect public (rail) transport connections – with housing, employment and services in close proximity to the stops, stations and hubs in the public transport networks – as the best way to tempt people to use public transport. TDAs and TOD are well recognised sustainable approaches to linking mobility management to urban or regional planning. These concepts have been developed in response to issues like congestion, air quality, land use and public safety.

INTERREG is an interregional programme and a requirement is that project partners come from different European regions. The C strand of the INTERREG programme even allows you to select partners from not only the EU but also neighbouring countries and candidate countries. Potential partners from Greece and Portugal responded at an early stage to our announcement on the INTERREG IIIC website. Others partners were invited directly by the evolving consortium.

In our talks with the new partners from Greece we noticed that they were concerned with issues other than those most commonly discussed in North-West Europe. Air quality and safety are not big issues in this part of Greece, but the lack of transportation in remote rural areas is. Poor accessibility results in social isolation and economic exclusion of large groups of the rural population and needs to be addressed. In response to this, the network developed an additional focus on the social dimension of sustainability.





Lisboa Oriente station seen from the city.

TU Delft, the University of Ghent and the first Greek partners developed their joint approach while conferring on the rooftop of an Athens hotel. We decided that the best way to cope with such different perspectives is by offering a formula that each region could use to address its own needs. Each semester, Connected Cities activities would move from region to region. During each semester the partners in the current region would take on the responsibility for organising showcase workshops, a conference, a steering group meeting and additional activities. All these activities would then reflect the 'local colour', addressing the projects, issues and tasks each of them face.

RICS left the partnership before the project started. According to the rules of INTERREG IIIC a partner has to be 100% public and RICS is not. TU Delft took on the lead partner role and required partners to address one or more key projects or issues that investigate how a sustainable approach towards mobility relates to urban or regional development. These were the binding principles: sustainable mobility and the interaction between land use and infrastructure. This topic proved to be challenging enough to keep us occupied for the next two and half years.

The difficult part of managing an INTERREG project is that you cannot impose sanctions. There are no sticks to be used if a partner does not show up at an event or does not respond to telephone calls or emails. Bear in mind that most partners had to travel hundreds if not thousands of kilometres to attend our activities, which took place in Belgium, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, the UK and France. The exchange should make it worth travelling those distances. The only way to make the project work is to offer a carrot, and there is just one carrot available: the project itself and the exchange of experience it provides.

The good thing about an INTERREG project is that it allows partners to explore projects, issues or developments that do not fit into the day-to-day work of a local or regional authority. It allows them to push the envelope of their own spatial agenda. An INTERREG project forces them to explain, in a structured way, their issues, ideas or policymaking processes to an audience that is new to these and their context. In itself, this interchange can help those involved to sharpen their own analyses and allow them to reformulate the challenges facing their cities or regions. Connected Cities offered local and regional authorities the opportunity to explore new developments



Lille station.

## Connected Cities offered local and regional authorities the opportunity to explore new developments the Thessaly Dipoles and the Ensino Corridor as part of a Strategic Territorial Platform

like the Eindhoven-Leuven-Aachen triangle, the Thessaly Dipoles and the Ensino Corridor as part of a Strategic Territorial Platform.

There is of course a drawback to this approach. When you decide as lead partner to celebrate diversity, sooner or later you have to face the question of how to pull the different initiatives together to form one coherent experience, a coherent set of outcomes from the network operation that began under the name 'Connected Cities'. This does require a certain amount of flexibility. You just cannot stick unconditionally to the original focus and ignore the collective learning experience the network went through. In the final events, which took place in London and Sénart/Paris, we concluded that there is one emerging European policy issue that binds all of these initiatives together: territorial cohesion. In the end, all the local and regional authorities involved use mobility or infrastructure to overcome the spatial shortcomings of their territory. Covilhã needs to overcome the steep height differences between the old and the new town. La Sagra needs to reposition itself between Madrid and Toledo. Eindhoven is searching for links with Aachen and Leuven to gain the critical mass it needs in order to compete as a technology region on a European scale. Thessaly is trying to make the best of the

dispersed distribution of towns over its territory. Our Quality Team, key members of the European Council of Spatial Planners were kind enough to introduce the topic of territorial cohesion within the parallel discussions we had with them. They motivated us to focus more and more on the regional level where these territorial issues become particularly apparent.

As such, the operation should be understood as an investigation into the question of how we can provide unrestricted but sustainable transport and mobility to cities and regions in such a way that it will strengthen their territorial cohesion and improve the quality of life of its citizens.

### THE FINAL ISSUE

This Nova Terra is the fifth and the final issue of Nova Terra that reports on the 'adventures of our travelling circus'. The first article of this issue reports on our conversation with Thomas Sieverts. In October two members working on the Connected Cities Guide to Good Practice travelled to Bonn (Germany) to interview Thomas Sieverts. Sieverts is a German scholar and urban planner who became known for his book *Zwischenstadt*. 'Zwischenstadt' is →



Connected Cities meeting Covilhã.

## London, as global metropolis, presents an extreme case in terms of mobility

his name for the regional development of new urban landscapes that are based mainly on road infrastructure. We wanted to know what the prospects are for sustainable mobility in such a development process.

During the final conference the German partners invited the Albtal-Verkehrs-Gesellschaft (Alb Valley Transport Company) to speak on the good practice with the TramTrain service that has been developed over the past few decades in the Karlsruhe region. Here in Baden-Württemberg a successful alternative has been developed for regional train services in Europe, often operated by classic (former) state-owned companies. The Karlsruhe model not only required a smart vehicle, but also some serious changes to the way networks are operated and managed.

The case of Carré Sénart illustrates what we are up against when we do not build our city centres in close proximity to existing centres or to existing transport stops. It presents a fascinating case of a Paris new town that is in the process of creating a new identity.

The fourth article was written on the request of the Atelier Zuidvleugel. The Atelier Zuidvleugel was a Dutch provincial think-tank/research team set up for a period of two years. It explored the possibilities for applying principles similar to TDAs or TOD on a regional scale in the province of Zuid-Holland: Stedenbaan. The Atelier participated and contributed in several Connected Cities events and published an article on their key findings in one of the Connected Cities Nova Terra special issues. The Atelier became quite enthusiastic about the spatial potential of the Stedenbaan project, but were less sure about the underlying transport network. On their request we explored what would happen if we apply the Karlsruhe approach to their case. London, as global metropolis, presents an extreme case in terms of

mobility. The limited options to expand the transport networks forces the city to look for other solutions. Instead of adding more road capacity, London is developing an understanding of the way people move about and how that behaviour can be influenced. The Travel Demand Management approach is promising and sustainable by default.

The article on strategic territorial platforms reports on the events that took place in Ancona (Italy) back in April 2007. The Ancona event is a classic example of a partner that used the Connected Cities network activity to adapt its regional agenda.

In November a second Connected Cities conference took place in Thessaly on the topic of Dipoles. Dipoles had already been discussed in June 2006, but this time things were finally moving. The joint bid by Volos and Larissa for hosting the Mediterranean Games in 2013 was successful. This will create momentum on delivering tangible results in creating stronger ties between the two cities.

The article on the mobility issues in La Sagra elaborate on the issues raised during the events in Toledo (Spain) in January 2007. Here the Federation of Municipalities and Provinces of Castille-La Mancha (FEMPCLM) used the Connected Cities events to highlight the issues facing the area, which borders the Madrid region. In a follow-up, representatives from La Sagra visited Eindhoven in October to review the Phileas concept as a possible component in a new mobility policy. This final article represents a third step, in which an integration of transport systems is presented as an answer to the rapid development of this strategic area in Castille-La Mancha.