

**New Policy Strategies in Context of Metropolitan Governance:  
Examples in urban Europe**

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***Abstract***

*The rescaling of economic and social parameters has dramatic impact on the spatial configuration of city regions in Europe and urges to new spatial policy strategies of balanced regional planning in the highly fragmentary context of policy making. New strategies of collective action have to be effectuated in a context of multi actor and multi level governance. Under these dynamic conditions the familiar approaches of territorially nested planning strategies no longer provide efficient solutions. The author claims that the key for successful strategies has to be found in the organization of interconnectedness. The opportunities and threats of new planning strategies in the current context of urban governance are investigated in the case of major urban projects in four European city-regions.*

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**Rescaling economic and social parameters of urban space**

Understanding the dynamics of urban space requires insight in the change of economic and social parameters of urban viability. Since the early 1980s, European cities are in stage of transformation under the conditions of globalisation and liberalisation of economic markets. Flying on the wings of telecommunication, the process of globalisation created a more advanced, post-modernist stage of internationalisation in the modern network economy. Highly specialised patterns of both production and consumption make the urban systems more dependant on external connections and are crosscutting the territorial coherence of urban economic systems. Also in social respect, trans-national processes of migration and cultural differentiation are generating more plurality and complexity in territorial urban settlements.

The spatial configuration of European city regions is changing dramatically under the dynamism of economic and social parameters (Sieverts 1997, Ascher 1995 and 2001). Considering the spatial impact in the interrelationships *between* different regions, in general the urban regions are at the winning hand. The globalising economy tends to enlarge the centrality of well connected urban regions at the cost of the rural, non-urbanised regions. However, also among the urban regions, there is a strong difference between those that are well linked with the growing economic networks and the regions that are not. Many researchers observed the emergence of new patterns of hierarchy, interdependency and interregional inequality in global economic networks. This goes in particular for financial and other advanced economic services (Sassen 2001, Brenner et al. 2003). Considering the spatial outcomes of changing economic networks *within* the expansive urban regions, there is no evidence of continuous spatial concentration. In contrary, at this level of scale there is a general tendency of spatial decentralisation of economic and urban activities. The spatial configuration of economic activities is increasingly characterized by an enlargement of scale and enlargement of scope and by increasing spatial differentiation. International trade, economic services and research and development tend to deconcentrate at sensible development axes with the best external accessibility. Productive and administrative activities, on the other hand, are less dependant on the external connections and may settle at larger distance of the most sensible spaces. The Fordist internalisation of economic activity used to enhance massive inner city concentration of administrative and productive economic functions, but made room for more flexible ways of production that externalise the economic needs (in particular via contracting out), enlarging in this way the scale and scope of economic regions.

The emerging creative economy, at the other hand, usually takes hold of the textured spaces of historic inner cities. As a result the complete spatial configuration of economic activities in urban regions is under reconstruction in less than fifteen years time. Also in social respect there is evidence of “sorting out” of specialised social activities in different social habitats. The increasing social plurality pays out in segmentation of urban space. While on the one hand the social ties in territorial settlements are loosening as a result of plurality (trans-national cultural ties) and increasing social mobility (mobility of labour, mobility of family patterns, mobility on housing markets), on the other hand and partly as reaction on this trend new intimate spaces of “belonging to” are organised as safe heavens against a strange outside world (Bourdin 2000, Bourdin 2005). See the dramatic increase of “gated communities”, “thematic spaces” and the “social differentiation” of urban habitats.

The hierarchical shape of well ordered city regions almost exploded under the dynamic economic and social conditions. City centred patterns of urbanization that were consciously preserved for centuries in most European countries, began to transform in large scaled “polycentric” regions, where different sorts of urban specialisation are decentralised and where social spaces tend to get more polarised. This Archipelago type of urban regional development is observed in many European countries. Francois Ascher analysed the emergence of *Métapolis* in France, Thomas Sieverts symbolised similar tendencies in Germany as *Zwischenstädte*, in UK the multiplication of urban space is conceptualised by Amin and Thrift, in The Netherlands the urban transition of the Amsterdam region was studied by Musterd and Salet (Ascher 1995 and 2001, Sieverts 1997, Sieverts, Koch, Stein and Steinbusch 2005, Amin 2002, Amin and Thrift 2002, Musterd and Salet 2003).

### **New planning strategies in context of multi actor and multi level governance**

The dynamic processes of urban transformation urge to settle new political priorities on the regional agendas of strategic planning. Local and regional politicians and planners face the challenge to connect the economic potential of their region with the external economic networks under conditions of severe competition between regional economic systems. At the same time they feel the need to guide the uncontrolled forces of the market in more balanced ways. They are reluctant to accept too abrupt and too one-sided economic transformation and attempt to combine the aspirations of economic competitiveness and social cohesion in a more responsive style of governance. Also in academic discourse on urban governance the ambitions of integrated and balanced growth have become so dominant that Buck, Gordon, Harding and Turok have labelled it as the “new conventional wisdom” (Buck, Gordon, Harding and Turok 2005). However, they use this label in an outspoken critical way as the new policy voluntarism of social and economic integration easily may neglect the radical autonomy of the underlying structural conditions of economic change. More authors warned against the increasing social inequalities resulting of the economic change of cities (Jouve et Lefèvre 2003, Moulaert, Swyngedouw and Rodriguez 2001 and 2003, Flyvbjerg, Bruzelius and Rothengatter 2003). Jouve and Lefèvre demonstrate the selective character of hierarchy in new urban networks creating more dependency in the lowest level of hierarchy. Swyngedouw and colleagues warn against the trends in entrepreneurial urban strategies to invest in prestigious economic projects under the misleading frames of bringing more integrated urban development and social cohesion. Flyvbjerg and colleagues warn against the exaggerated expectations of large scaled economic projects that easily might inflate public expenditure. We conclude that the ambitions of integrated and balanced growth of urban systems are widely recognised in current strategies of collective action in city regions but also that it has become far more difficult to make a success of such strategies.

The challenge of balanced regional strategies is considerably complicated by the emergence of a new context of “multi actor and multi level governance” to urban policies. The conditions for collective action in urban regions have drastically changed in the last two decades and require completely *new approaches of strategic planning*. Urban policies have become more dependent on external social and economic networks, and also within the intergovernmental relationships more tiers of government are involved in urban planning. The new role of inter-regional policy networks, the role of regional/national policy coalitions and the role of international policy coalitions (in particular

regarding the European dimension) have strongly increased the *trans scalar* character of urban policies. Advanced planning strategies no longer can rely on nested territorial bodies of regional or urban planning but have to be produced in strategies of co-production in the highly complex and dynamic context of multi-actor and multi-level governance (Salet, Thornley and Kreukels 2003). New for this context is that public and private actors at different levels of scale take their own stake in metropolitan development and display a plethora of overlapping coalitions. Against this background the familiar claims of establishing 'regional planning authorities' that were to be equipped with 'strong steering capacities' are losing ground. Under the current conditions it has become far more effective to establish trans scalar policy coalitions of co-production than to empower one particular territorial planning body in more instrumental ways.

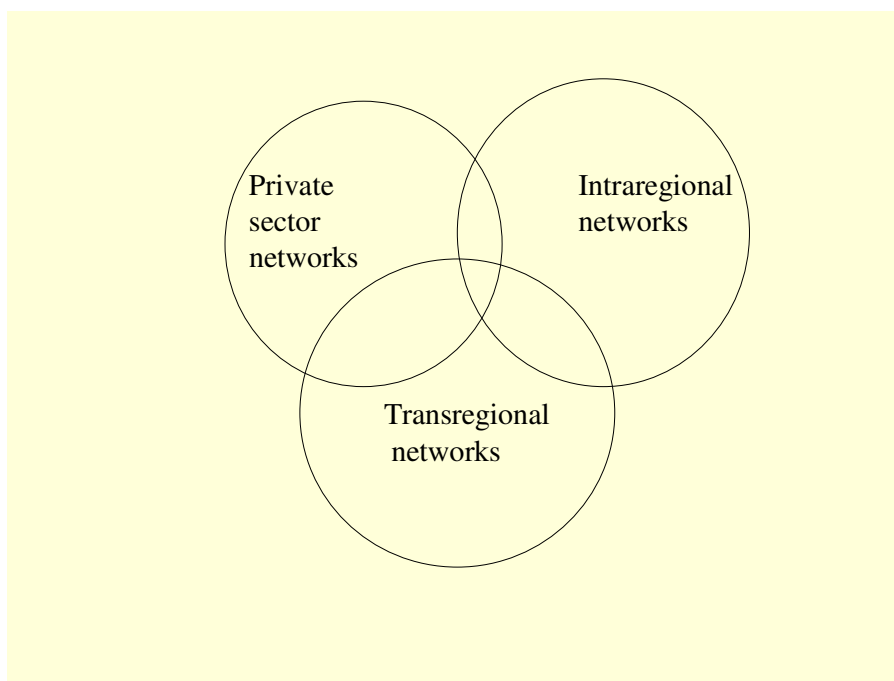


Figure 1: Three domains of metropolitan action

We hypothesize that the key for successful strategic planning is to interconnect the diverse domains of the private sector, the domains of the public sector within the metropolitan region and the domain of trans regional and trans scalar relationships (see figure 1). This is a highly complex game, it is not evident that planning strategies manage to interconnect the different domains of activity that produce the change of cities. Actually we hypothesised various barriers of interconnectivity (Salet, Thornley and Kreukels 2003). The claim of integrating different objectives of planning makes this challenge even more complicated. Furthermore we expected to find problems with the institutionalised legitimacy of planning and policy making as the strategies of co-production have to cross all existing boundaries. Where is democracy and how to deal with the institutionalised principles of state and law when the new policy coalitions of horizontal co-production are crosscutting all established boundaries of political territories and jurisdictions?

### **A selection of strategic projects in European city regions**

In the next part we will explore whether and in which ways the new approaches of strategic planning as "strategies of interconnectivity" are experienced in major strategic projects in a number of European city-regions. We will rely on the findings of the EU Fifth Framework sponsored investigation of experiences in major urban projects in city-regions in the context of the research programme COMET (Competitiveness and Sustainability in European City-regions) (Salet and

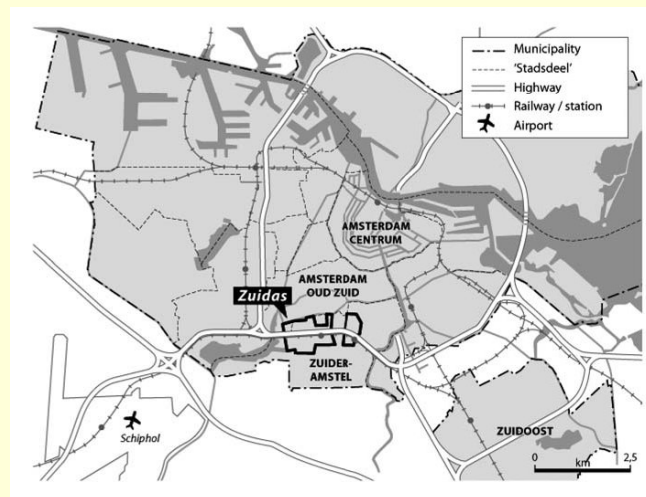
Gualini 2006). Strategic projects play an important role in the current transformation of European cities into expansive polycentric city regions. Obviously, the dynamic change of cities is not completely planned and guided by planning authorities, the autonomous market forces pave their own way through urban spaces. However, politicians and planners aim at the guidance of too abrupt and polarised changes via more integrated and balanced strategies of planning. Within this frame mega projects are considered as the strategic vehicles that might demonstrate in highly visible and symbolic ways the aimed direction of change. The major strategic projects of seven European city regions were investigated in this program, here we will discuss the findings of the next four projects:

### 1. Amsterdam South Axis

The Amsterdam South Axis project is the major urban project under construction in The Netherlands. It is situated at the southern ring road in the urban periphery of Amsterdam near to the airport Schiphol, it is well connected both with the international infrastructure (air, rail, motorways) and the fine grain of the urban and regional fabric. The city aims at the establishment of a new integral urban centre in the (previous) urban periphery. Some details may illustrate the planning horizons:

- Size plan area 70 ha
- 1,1 million m<sup>2</sup> offices (realized after 10 years almost 400.000)
- 1,1 million m<sup>2</sup> apartments (realized 10.000 m<sup>2</sup>)
- 500.000 m<sup>2</sup> facilities (realized after 10 years about 50.000)
- 51.000 jobs estimated (realized after 10 years 25.000)

The framing of the project is strongly embedded in the international networks of the economic *private sector* domain. Actually, the project started in the mid 1990s by initiatives of the major banks of the country, at that time even against the will of the local planners who aimed at inner city expansion. By the end of the 1990s, the municipal planners joined the private sector initiatives at the south axis and established a public private partnership, bringing in new objectives with respect to a more balanced and integrated development of the site. So, a *local public private partnership* emerged. Gradually, also the national government got more involved in the project. However, although overt ambitions to create new international urban space, the planning strategy did not show evidence of *inter-regional* and other *international trans scalar* coalitions of lobbying and policy making. The framing is rather a matter of local and national policy making. The aim of *integrating* mixed policy goals is not yet firmly elaborated, as large infrastructures firstly have to be brought under ground in order to enable massive housing and social programs. Finally, the democratic involvement of civic groups is not very actively experienced in this project, participation is arranged according to formal requirements.



Location of the Zuidas project in the Amsterdam agglomeration

## 2. Copenhagen Ørestaden

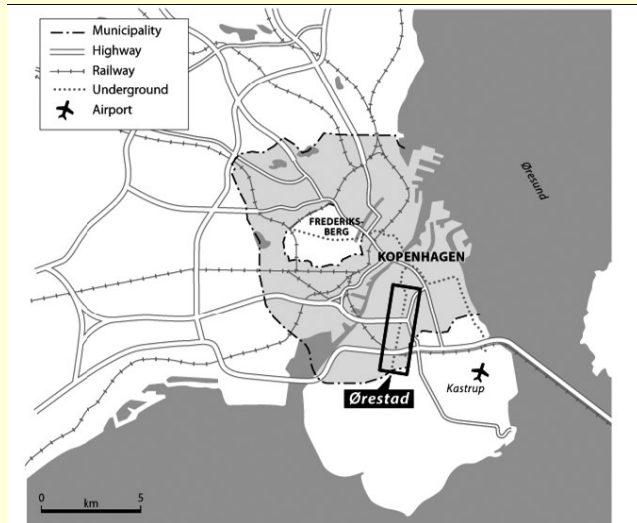
The ambitions of the Copenhagen project *Ørestaden* resemble in many respects the Amsterdam South Axis project. Also here, a strategic new urban centre is planned on a very strategically situated node in the urban periphery near to the airport. A new bridge between Sweden and Denmark connects two urban regions, furthermore a new express light rail interconnects the airport the new centre *Ørestaden* and the city of Copenhagen. The plan is made up of mixed objectives of urban development: Offices, retail, housing, green park, facilities. Some details:

- Area 3.1 square km (used 0.8)
- Planned employment 60.000, realized not yet many
- Total real estate planned 3.1 million sq m
- Realized 1.1 million sq m
- Business 1.8 million square meters planned, only 340.000 realized
- Residential 620.000 square meters planned, realised 500.000

Although the objectives of the project resemble in many respects the above mentioned project in Amsterdam, the approach of strategic planning is highly different. The *Ørestaden* project is highly promoted by economic representatives but not by the individual corporations themselves. The project is not connected to external *private sector networks*. Although superb infrastructure conditions have been realized the project does not attract economic investment. Priorities are being resettled into the construction of residential areas. The planning strategy was more successful in the next respect. It is very well connected with *interregional and international governmental programs*. The Danish/Swedish region required the status of European model region and the supra regional coalitions were very helpful in the creation of the major bridge and light rail infrastructures.

The overall *integration of objectives* failed not only because of the disappointing economic development. Also the decision to organize the new urban space in segmented zones for the separated development of respectively housing, offices, retail and green sites frustrated the full development of urban usequalities. Finally, also the active democratic involvement of *civic groups* is not experienced in this project.

Location of the Ørestad project in the Copenhagen agglomeration

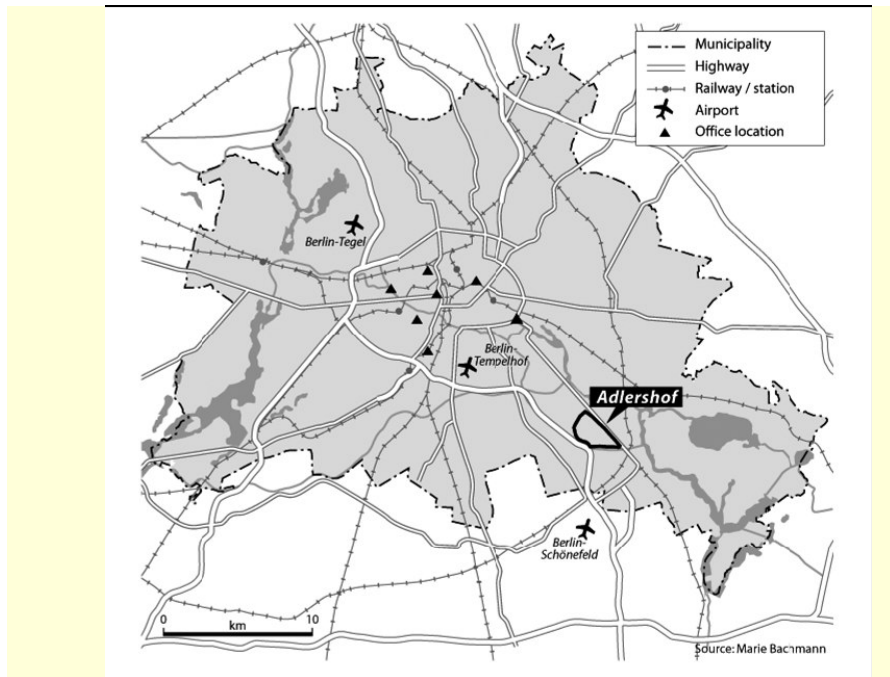


### 3. Berlin Adlershof

The third case again is an example of connecting the airport and the economic expansion in the urban periphery. Adlershof is Berlin's major urban expansion in the south eastern part of the city into the direction of the airport Schönefeld. Although less known than the famous inner city project at Potsdamer Platz, the economic ambitions of Adlershof by far outreach the inner city ambitions. Adlershof already had a high economic profile in the era of the German Republic (television studios, technology) and was planned in the early 1990s after the fall of the iron curtain as an expansive economic and urban centre. It was aimed as a new City of Science, Technology and Media and it would integrate the economic functions with social and cultural activities (university, housing, retail etc). The figures:

- 420 ha at border of city
- Offices 170 ha
- Residential 120 ha
- Mixed use and green 230 ha
- Jobs aimed 30.000 (actually 10.000)

Characteristic for the strategic planning approach is the high profile of the local government. Adlershof is a typical example of *public led* spatial and economic planning. The city state of Berlin established an independent office for the implementation of the project but decided on all major conditions. The major problem of the project was that Berlin was not very well embedded in the *external economic networks* during the 1990s. For this reason no external firms settled in this strategic area, only local and largely very small enterprises started here. The university is brought into the area. Recently, also residential neighbourhoods are being realized but the economic outcomes still are very modest. Most strikingly, the planning approach did not attempt to connect the project with *interregional, national or international policies*, the strategic planning approach can be characterized as highly introvert. Finally, no experiments of *democratic innovation* have been reported.

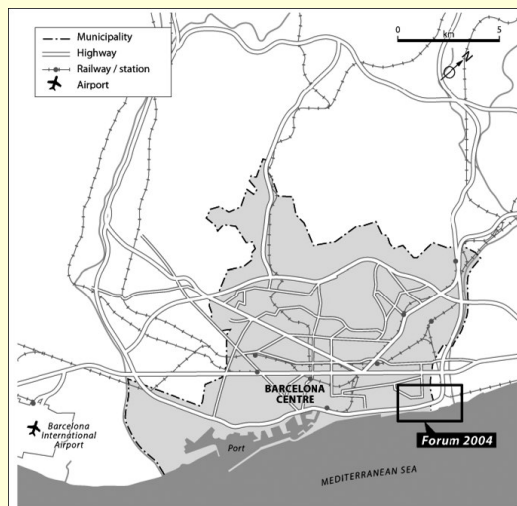


#### 4. Barcelona Forum of Cultures

In contrary to the previous cases, the Barcelona Forum of Cultures project is directly connected with the redevelopment of the inner core of the urban region. The Forum of Cultures project is not one single project but consists of five closely related urban development projects that are profiled in a very visible and symbolic way by the cultural face of the central Forum project. Barcelona has a tradition to use international mega events (such as the world exposition in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and more recently the Olympic Games in 1994) for a spatial reconstruction of the city. This time, an international cultural mega-event was invented in cooperation with UNESCO in order to connect the city with the sea over an even larger area at the northern side of the Olympic village. During three months in the summer of 2004, many international cultural debates, expositions and conferences were organized in the Forum area which provided a brand new, huge public space, new convention and exposition halls and other social and cultural amenities. The spatial and cultural programs served to pave the way for economic investment which was to carry Barcelona into a new stage of the global economy of knowledge (Barcelona @22). Some figures:

- Size 4 square km
- Offices 2,6 million m<sup>2</sup> (max), however realized probably not more than 100.000 m<sup>2</sup>)
- Residential 400.000 m<sup>2</sup>
- Green space 115.000 m<sup>2</sup>
- Equipment (new) 250.000 m<sup>2</sup>
- New jobs 130.000 (?)

The extremely high economic figures including the projected office space and the planning of 130.000 jobs reflect the expected potential by the planners but they still have to convince the investors. In reality, the investments stay far behind these figures, there is no evidence of high growth in the advanced economic sectors and Barcelona still is very dependant on tourism.



Location of the Forum 2004 project in the Barcelona agglomeration

The framing model of the Barcelona strategic planning relies heavily on public sector initiatives, the link with global economic networks in the *private sector* is still relatively weak. It is public led planning. Barcelona, however, is extremely inventive in organising *inter regional and international networks* in the public sector. The interrelationships between the metro Barcelona on the one hand and on the other hand the state of Catalonia and the national state Spain usually are very troublesome, for this reason the Metropolitan Barcelona is actively and successfully searching for its own geopolitical strategies. The cultural mega event with UNESCO was so appealing that in this case even Catalonia and the central state eventually decided to cooperate. But there are more signals of pro-active interregional operating in organizing many links of knowledge and lobbying with other regions of Europe, in promoting new links of infrastructures, and in acting as environmental model in the frame of the European Union. Via this strategy Barcelona managed to organize its *integrated* urban development although the economic investments are still laying behind. Finally the democratic aspect: The project started with active civic participation but gradually disappointment increased about the actual outcomes. The final decisions preferred the prestigious allure styled mega objects instead of integrating new urban development with grassroots interests.

### Conclusions

The case studies demonstrate the high level of variegation of strategic urban planning strategies in the current stage of urban transformation. Since the early 1990s a new entrepreneurialism has taken hold of urban development strategies, so it is not a surprise to conclude that all selected projects are aiming at an enhancement of regional competitiveness by connecting the advanced sectors of their regional economies with global economic networks. Furthermore, the projects were selected on their additional ambition to integrate the economic ambitions with social and cultural missions of urban growth. Thus, all projects symbolize the aims of a balanced and integrated development of urban spaces. However, the outcomes of the strategic projects are very different and demonstrate that – for different reasons - not even one of the four selected cases managed to realize the complete set of symbolized outcomes. Considering the frame of our analysis it is important to conclude that in every case different sorts of interconnectivity have been established and that the different trajectories of interconnectivity may explain the differences of performance.

The most surprising outcome was that in three of the four prestigious mega projects we did not find evidence of high economic investment. In urban literature, it frequently is maintained that urban mega

projects are brought forward by the interests of capital intensive multinational corporations (Graham and Marvin 2000, Swyngedouw et al. 2002). However, we did not find overt capitalism in the most prestigious projects of Copenhagen, Barcelona and Berlin. Although economic development was highly promoted in these projects, the capital stayed off-side. Only the Amsterdam case study is a typical demonstration of the power of capital. Also with respect to the integration of social, cultural and economic objectives we found outcomes that differ from the symbols of integrated urban use value. So it is useful to study carefully the frames of project organization that are summarized in the next figure.

	Amsterdam Zuidas	Barcelona Forum	Berlin Adlershof	Kopenhagen Orestad	
Internation. Private sector	++ Internat. Finance/ Legal/ trade	- Tourism + Creative economy	- Local Technol. economy	-- weak	
Supra region public domain	-+ Only local/ national	++ Interregion/ internation	-- local	++ Europ. model	
Intra region Publ+priv	+ Ppp (small) No regional	+ Large ppp Gov conflict	++ ppp Gov unity	+ Public + Private -	
Degree of integration	- Only econ. No Cult/soc	++ Strong cult + spatial	- only economic	+ spatially segregated	
Democrat. Innovation	- Only formal	+ Generating creativity	- Only formal	- Technocrat.	

Economic competitiveness is strongly enhanced in all cases by the public sector and by representative bodies of the private sector (e.g. the chambers of commerce) but the micro level decisions of individual corporations indicate highly different outcomes in almost all cases. We conclude that high economic expectations of urban mega projects tend to exaggerate the expected economic performances as long as individual corporations are not involved as economic stake holders. The existence of a pro-growth discourse does not automatically result in economic growth.

The second general conclusion regards the relatively modest results of social and economic integration. It is apparently not the *presence* of economic capitalism but the *absence* of social and cultural organizations in the framing of the strategic projects, that frustrates the aims of innovative integration. Of course the cases demonstrate different results with this respect. The Amsterdam case is organized in narrow commercial ways and did not involve social and cultural groups in the first stage of development. The Barcelona case on the other hand demonstrates more creativity with this respect. The third conclusion regards the potential of the geopolitical interconnectivity in urban planning strategies. Regional economies which are not well connected to private sector economic networks, always experience problems to optimize the economic development in their region. Economic development cannot be invented at city hall. However, if urban systems are not only disconnected in the private sector domains but also in the domain of intergovernmental policy programs, it becomes extremely difficult to promote urban growth. This happened to be the case in the Berlin Adlershof project. Although this project was framed as one of Germany's most promising economic projects, the highly introvert planning strategy did not even manage to direct national technological investments to this particular site. Most economic initiatives are start ups in the local economy. The geopolitical

dimension is highly neglected in the Berlin Adlershof project. Berlin did not play its unique trump card of profiling the city and its prestigious project as the catalyser in the economic networks of Central Europe's economic renaissance. The cases of Copenhagen and Barcelona, in contrary, demonstrate the potential of geopolitical strategies which become even more important when the crucial external connections in the private sector do not exist. Both cities managed to get superb conditions of infrastructure via their geopolitical connections. There is a chance that on the long run private sector economic investment might follow the opportunities that are offered by these conditions. Finally, the active involvement of social organizations and civic groups turned out to be the Achilles heel in all selected mega projects. Many financial and political risks are at stake in this type of strategic urban projects. The main stakeholders of the prestigious projects apparently find it risky to involve the commitment of social and cultural organizations. We conclude that the risk of getting trapped in a tunnel vision – group thinking in an inner circle framing by directly involved stakeholders and planning experts - is not imaginary in these projects.

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