

Informal aspects of cross border metropolitan governance

1 Introduction

As metropolitan areas are increasingly identified as nucleus for economical prosperity and competitiveness it may be of interest to discuss how physical and non physical borders are tackled when dealing with spatial planning.

If there are national borders involved within a metropolitan area it may be even more interesting to discuss the following theses and to question their use for spatial planning having to cope with possibly comparable borders may they be national one's or others in various other metropolitan regions.

1.1 Cross border metropolitan governance:

The term "governance" in the metropolitan context is described in the OECD Principles of Metropolitan Governance the way in which modern urban regions organise their social and economic welfare when dealing with globalisation and the fact that metropolitan areas are becoming the main world units in economic questions. [OECD]

The agglomeration of Basel forms such an economic unit and needs special effort to manage issues that are prominent with other metropolitan areas too, as for example competitive situations between central Basel and surrounding smaller cities. Another main metropolitan topic is traffic organisation in conjunction with housing conditions as in many other metropolitan areas.

Last but not least Globalisation enforces the Agglomeration of Basel to stand the challenge of competition with other metropolitan regions.

Besides that Basel has to cope with many different types of borders within the agglomeration itself – language, currency, technical standards, EU external border, national borders between Germany, France and non-EU Switzerland – resulting in different and sometimes more efforts to come to suitable solutions.

The view at metropolitan governance within this paper focuses on how strategic issues for a metropolitan region are handled to provide the framework for a competitive economy and a high living quality. Therefore the agglomeration of Basel has to be looked at as a functional entity incorporating cross border issues. Therefore the borders have to be overcome and special approaches are needed to meet the cross border challenges.

The following two theses are the basic layer on which this paper has been written on and deal with matters concerning spatial planning and regional governance in the given context.

- Informal planning processes have a long tradition in solving questions of spatial development along national borders. Hence, these regions are of high value to test and establish appropriate informal instruments and processes which later can also be useful in other metropolitan regions.
- Regarding the agglomeration of Basel and the potentials of formal and informal processes it can be stated that informal processes are capable to face the special challenges of spatial planning and metropolitan governance when dealing with cross border issues, while formal planning processes reach their limits.

2 Cross-border governance in the Basel metropolitan area

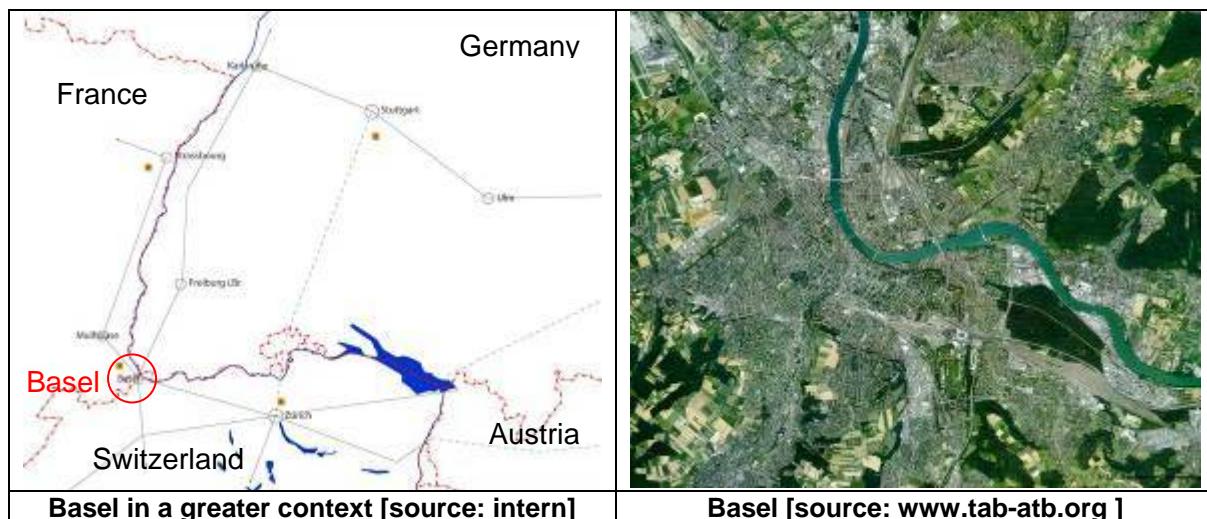
A first overview over issues of metropolitan governance in the Basel region provides information about special impacts caused by the trinational status of the agglomeration. The main question for research and analysis was:

- How can projects of metropolitan governance be handled over national borders?
- Which strategies of managing a cross-border metropolitan area are used here?

2.1 General conditions

The agglomeration of Basel with the very special situation of inheriting three nations and respectively their borders gives an interesting example for discussing the above mentioned metropolitan issues.

When looking at the agglomeration of Basel in this paper then an area is meant containing communities of the three countries Germany, France and Switzerland forming the society "Trinational agglomeration of Basel". Basel itself lies at the transition from the High Rhine to the Upper Rhine where the river Rhine coming from the Lake of Constance turns northwards on its way to the North Sea.



Geographically the situation is dominated by the Jura, Black-Forest and Vogese mountains surrounding the agglomeration which limit the development space especially for the Swiss part of the Agglomeration.

Within the agglomeration population of the communities belonging to the later to be described TAB organisation consists of about 593.000 people. Of these 593.000 people 8% live in France, 67% in Switzerland and 25% in Germany.

Besides being an area with one of the highest added value in Switzerland and a centre of global importance for the pharmaceutical and chemical Industry, it is also a centre for cultural and educational institutes thus making it a commuter pole with people commuting from the outer smaller cities to the centre of Basel. This commuting takes place over national borders and it can herewith be seen that organisation of cross border everyday life as well as traffic issues are main topics for the agglomeration.

The reason for traffic being a main topic for the agglomeration has different reasons ranging from Basel's status of commuter Pole to Basel being the main entrance to Switzerland on the North to South Transversale from the North Sea to the Mediterranean where central European railway mainlines and highway meet within the agglomeration.

As typical with many metropolitan regions the centre of Basel has to compete with the smaller towns and cities of the agglomeration. An interesting fact is that the German part has had a population growth of 10% since 1990 wheras the French side had 4% and the Swiss of 1%.

Beside national borders, the trinational status of Basel leads to several specialities such as three existing national railway stations (swiss, french and german), three national harbours in the agglomeration as well as a trinational airport being situated at Mulhouse in France ("Euro-Airport"). Another interesting fact is, that the Swiss part of Basel consists of two cantons, Basel-City which is nearly congruent with the city centre and Basel-Country.

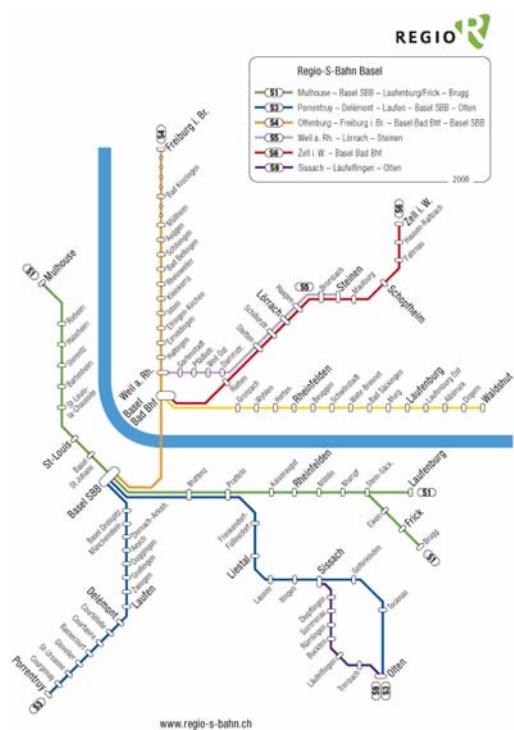
2.2 Project based cross-border coordination in the Basel area

Due to the border situation the agglomeration has a long tradition of transborder coordination. To cope with the resistances of national and cantonal borders, no formal harmonisation but a strong project based approach has been established.

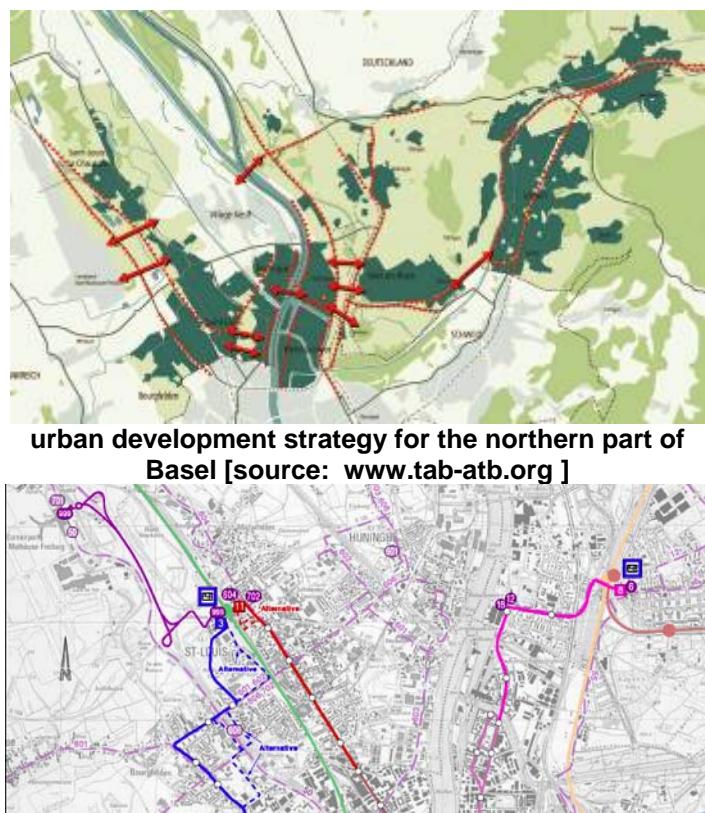
As early as 1963 the first project based coordination organisation called "Regio Basiliensis" was founded. Up until today the "Regio Basiliensis" with its 600 members (ranging from Cantons to Single members) aims to further support and start off cross border projects at the German, Swiss and French borders around Basel [Regio Basiliensis]

The fact that there is no formal process for cross-border cooperation is one of the resistances which affects deeply on metropolitan development in the agglomeration of Basel. The only form of legitimating transborder activities between two countries can only be given by a national treaty, the so called "Staatsvertrag". This would mean, every metropolitan project would need to be discussed and decided in national parliaments, which has only been done for major infrastructure projects or environmental cooperation, e.g. the flooding prevention for the River Rhine and is not implementable for projects of metropolitan governance.

The approach of the Basel Region was to coordinate single projects with the responsible authorities in the involved regions by a partnership of convenience. The aim of this procedure is to adjust a certain issue to the different planning systems so that either local or regional authorities as well as other actors can implement and realize their part within their national framework. This proceeding acts without a formal cooperation and can be used more flexible, especially on municipal or regional level. However, the risk that national deciding bodies don't follow the coordinated recommendations of planners is always given.



Network of the Regio-S-Bahn Basel
[source: www.regio-s-bahn.ch]



extension of three tramway lines over EU-external borders [source: www.tab-atb.org]

One of the major projects of metropolitan cross-border coordination is the “Regio-S-Bahn Basel” (regional rapid-transit railway), which shows the difficulties the Basel area has to face while realising projects of metropolitan development but also the success of the project based approach:

The “Regio-S-Bahn Basel” is a cross-border regional traffic system, connecting the trinational agglomeration. Since 1997 the network has been established step by step, after nearly 30 years of planning since the first ideas had been launched by the “Regio Basisliensis”. Before the launch of the first line in every country a separate authority delegation (Behörden-delegation) had to be established to coordinate the cross-border development with the formal requirements of its country. Some examples:

- the lines on the German territory needed to pass through a special cost-benefit analysis;
- the whole project had to be compatible to the requirements of three national assessments of environmental effects.
- the project also had to cope with three different technical railway systems, including the need for vehicles equipped for different power supplies and three signalisation and safety systems.

Today, all lines are run by SBB, the Swiss federal railway company. To be allowed to operate the German part of the network, SBB also had to establish a German subsidiary company.

2.3 More recent developments

In 1995, the society “trinational agglomeration of Basel” (TAB) has been founded with the aim to improve development of key-projects of spatial development and transport planning in and around Basel by pointing on the existing trinational status.

The TAB is financed by the EU, Switzerland and the local authorities and describes itself as a “governance platform” for the trinational agglomeration of Basel, to develop and communicate a common strategy for spatial development, which is supported by German, Swiss and French Partners. [TAB]

The speciality of this organisation is that it has an own technical department, being able to launch and work out their own development projects instead of only coordinating activities. These activities and projects are varying between urban development strategies and concrete projects. To realise the same projects like other agglomerations very special questions have to be answered.

E.g. for the proposed extensions of three tramway lines the question is how to realise and run a tramway over EU external borders? This unique process is accompanied by the TAB and will be one of the main challenges for city development in the Basel metropolitan area. Though the question, how to manage a border crossing in a tramway is facilitated by the Swiss entry to the Schengen-Zone in 2005, the ongoing planning and realisation process will be an interesting example for transnational planning and metropolitan governance as well. Another project the TAB works on with, the urban development project of the “Dreispitz” area, was illustrated in a case study for the 2005 ISoCaRP Congress in Bilbao [Fischer]

2.4 Conclusion

The Example of the Basel metropolitan area shows, how “normal” metropolitan projects become complicated tasks, when national borders have to be crossed. The missing of formal procedures makes it very difficult to e.g. implement required systems of public transport or to coordinate urban development.

The strong project oriented approach of cross-border coordination, informal aspects of planning and the long tradition implementing cross-border projects makes the Basel region a valuable example for comparable situations in other metropolitan areas.

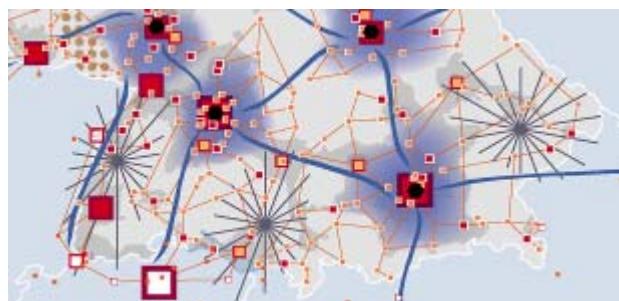
3 Strategic challenges and border resistances

Due to the role of Basel as the “gate to Switzerland”, it is not only confronted with special resistances for its metropolitan development but also with national and international issues that effect special development within the agglomeration. The concentration of major infrastructures opens up a new field of questions and actors, which might extend the range and expertise of the introduced organisations. Also other impacts of borders and the structure of the formal possibilities make it difficult to cope with these issues. This will be shown with examples from Germany and Switzerland

3.1 Aspects of Border resistances in the Basel region

One of the most important impacts of borders is the strip line between two political and administrative systems. Beside the above shown lack of formal cross-border processes also other impacts caused by administration systems language and culture make it difficult

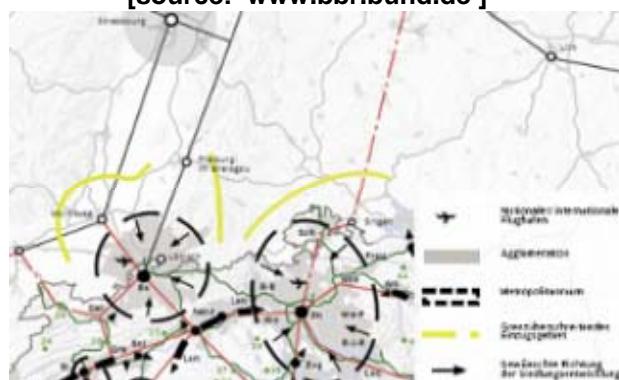
In both countries, Germany and Switzerland, the federal level of spatial planning provides the national guidelines but no precise plans. In spite of defining only principals for spatial order the overall concepts of both countries show first hints of the significance of cross-border issues.



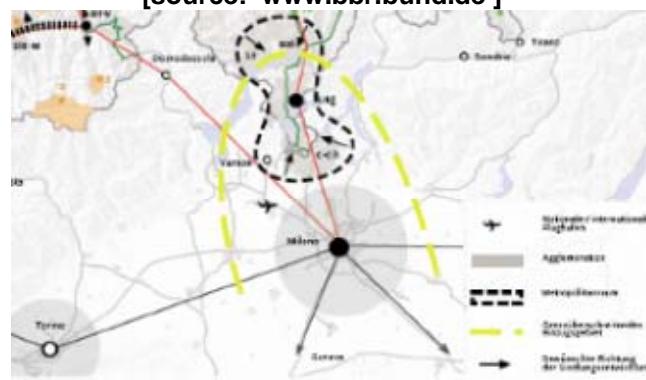
German overall concept "growth"
[source: www.bbr.bund.de]



German overall concept "landscape"
[source: www.bbr.bund.de]



Swiss overall concept, region Basel
[source: www.are.admin.ch]



Swiss overall concept, region Tessin
[source: www.are.admin.ch]

- In the German overall concept for growth Basel is recognised as a “foreign city with metropolitan functions” [BBR], even tough in the overall concept for Landscape and free space, the Swiss space is not even visible.
- The Swiss scheme for “spatial development” [ARE] defines a cross border agglomeration Basel with a catchment-area around Basel which reaches Freiburg in Germany and Mulhouse in France. That this concept of signings is not only allowed in an extritorial way, is shown by the case of the canton Tessin. There the so called “Triangolo Insubrico” is described as catchment area of Milano in Italy.

Though both plans have no direct relevance for planning in the Basel area, the question is, how federal planning levels treats issues of cross-border development. Without further

investigation it can be stated that the Swiss spatial concept integrates the functional cohesion of transborder agglomerations, while German concepts, seem to end at the borderline. A further question is, whether these plans represent also more concrete spatial development strategies which then could also be relevant for Basel. A small hint in this direction seems to give the "State Development Plan" of Baden-Württemberg. In this plan, which has relevance for planning the cities Lörrach and Weil a. Rhein are labelled as a so called "high-order-centre" [ARL], which is the highest category in the German central-place-system. Basel, the "real" high-order-centre in this region, at least functionally, is not included in this plan.



Another issue of cooperation and coordination could be called "the 10:1-Problem" What is meant gets visible by taking a look to the proportions of the comparable administration levels:

- With 82 Mio. inhabitants, Germany is 10 times bigger than Switzerland (7,9 Mio.).
- On the level of states and cantons, the German Baden-Württemberg (10.7 Mio) is again ten times more citizens than the canton with the highest population, Zurich (1,2 Mio.).

The European Nuts-levels illustrates this very well: the Swiss cantons have the same level as the German administrative districts, which are more or less two administration levels below the States, which would be the administrative equivalent to the Swiss cantons

This situation creates a kind of imbalance between administrative competences and size of planning levels in Germany and Switzerland. The local and regional authorities with the same size and function may have difficulties, to coordinate their affairs in a direct formal way, because they don't belong to the same administration level.

3.2 Strategic challenges in the greater Basel Region

One of the major strategic challenges is the integration of infrastructure- and spatial development. The burden of transit and import traffic of all modes is already very high. Especially the narrow valleys like the Ergolz valley suffer from the impacts of transnational infrastructures running through the settlement areas. Looking at the railway system, the proposed start-up of the two new trans-Alp tunnels in Switzerland until 2016 and the extension of the Upper-Rhine railway line will enforce pressure on the existing infrastructures and the need for an integrated view, horizontally among the sectoral planning of infrastructure and settlement, vertically between the different levels of planning and across the borders. This issue will be discussed more deeply in the following case study.

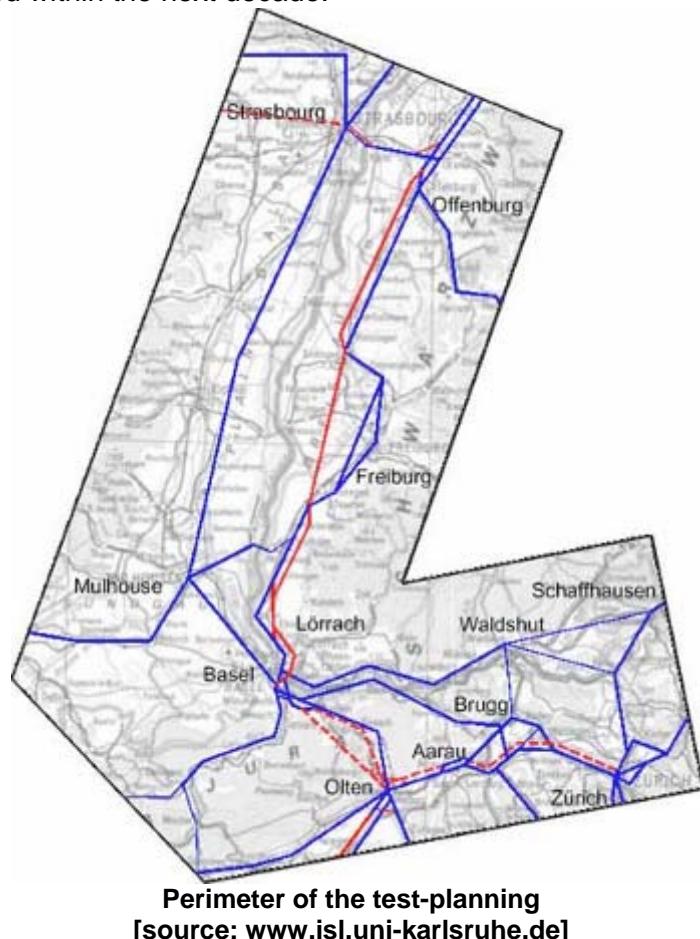
4 The case study: „Long-term perspectives for an integrated spatial- and railway development at the high- and upper Rhine region“

4.1 Background

The Case Study deals with the so called Bypass-discussion in Basel and the adjacent regions.

A significant increase in freight traffic is predicted for the coming decades. In the railway node Basel the main lines from Germany (Netherlands) and France (Belgium) meet to be directed to the different Alp-crossings and will be part of the capacity extension of one of the most important European transport corridors the “North to south transversal” from Rotterdam to Northern Italy. Due to existing bottlenecks and the proposed start-up of the two new trans-Alp tunnels in Switzerland until 2016 and the extension of the Upper-Rhine railway line, some sort of capacity extension will be needed within the next decade.

The three national railway companies founded the “Plattform Basiliensis” where they published a concept to bundle freight trains from France and Germany on the Upper-Rhine valley and bypass the critical traffic node Basel via the German High-Rhine valley. For the adjacent regions, whose economy is based mainly on tourism, the primary impacts of this bypass would be the barrier-effect and heavily increasing noise emission. Meanwhile, they could not see any positive effects. This situation has caused critical reaction to the project and even put the current plan approval procedures for the extension of Upper-Rhine main line at risk. It became obvious that those railway plannings didn't consist of integrated spatial planning aspects with the involved communities not having been involved in the “Platform Basiliensis”



But not only public opposition arose: because of the severe consequences of this project and a high number of open questions the responsible regional planning authorities of Germany, and France together with the Cantons Basel-City and Basel- Landscape voted for launching an integrated informal process, as they had to search for new ideas and arguments to become involved in the discussion in a material and qualified matter.

After a phase of survey and exploration a test planning was to be held investigating in “Long term perspectives for an integrated spatial and railway development in the upper and high Rhine” aiming to show risks and possibilities of development for the next 20 – 25 years.

After an assessment of the situation in an open minded way three different planning teams took part in the test planning trying to find answers to the given questions of spatial, traffic and railway planning.

The reason for the test planning and its operation itself is described within the following chapters.

4.2 The way to the process

What have been the reasons to use the method of a test planning and how did it become reality?

Even before the “plattform basilensis” and discussions concerning the plan approval procedures of the extension of the railway line Freiburg – Basel, informal meetings were held concerning aspects of spatial and railway development in the area bringing together scientifics, experts from governance and railways to debate and exchange their minds and knowledge.

The intention to get new views, opinions, ideas and more arguments to participate in the material debate concerning railway development in the trinational area of Basel was the reason why a test planning was chosen as the source for new planning aspects on the given topic. With the test planning and its results the local and regional planning authorities could actively become a part of the development instead of only reacting in form of protest as is supposed by the formal planning system.

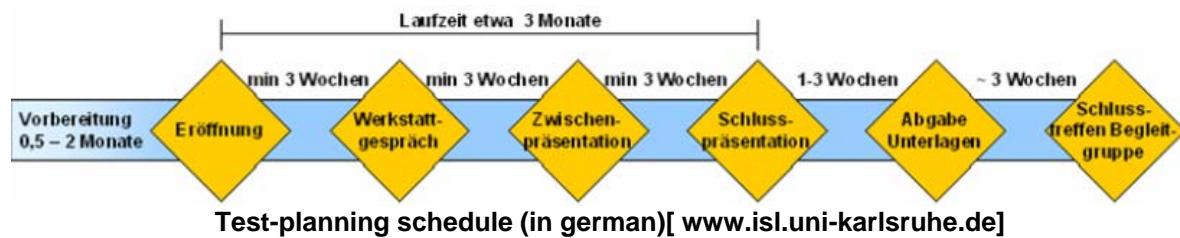
Constituents were the responsible for spatial development of the high-rhine-commision, the swiss cantons Basel-City, Basel Country and Aargau, the German regional authorities Southern Upper-Rhine and High-Rhine-Lake of Constance and the French Region Alsace.

4.3 The informal instrument „Test-planning“

How did the process work in this case and which are the specific features of a test planning? First of all, test plannings usually are used as a source for new ideas, views and problem solutions with about three planning teams working and planning in competition. This is to ensure a greater variety of possible solutions as it is not the intention of a test planning to find the final solution but to different possible views on a given situation. An accompanying team of experts usually prepares and accompanies the competing 2-4 planning teams during the test planning.

Which are the consecutive steps of a test planning?

Right from the beginning work is intended to take place on different scales being worked on simultaneously including phases of overview of the situation, concept development and concentration on a concept detail thus trying to prove the soundness of concept aspects. During the process regular meetings are held where the teams report about there work. These meetings build a rather simple framework for the process and follow the following “timetable”:



After the planning process itself the accompanying experts review the results and present a paper to the constituents containing advices showing conception details that should be further observed.

The test planning “Long term perspectives for an integrated spatial and railway development in the upper and high Rhine valley” took place in 2003/2004 and followed the described principles, which are described in a more detailed way in several publications [Scholl,1995; ISL, 2004, Karlin/Hoffmann-Bohner]

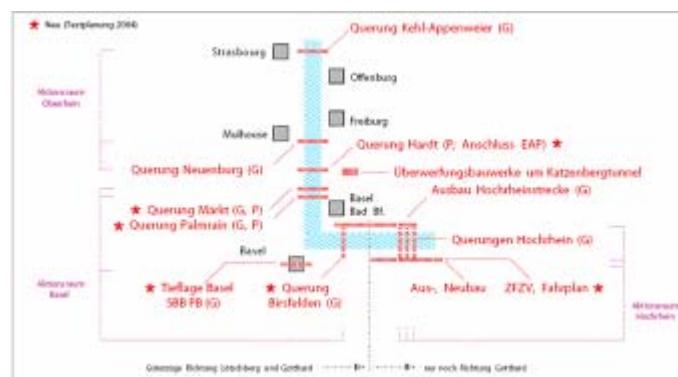
4.4 Results

As a result a map of arguments could be delivered to the representatives of the regional authorities being a source of facts, ideas and open questions that enabled the

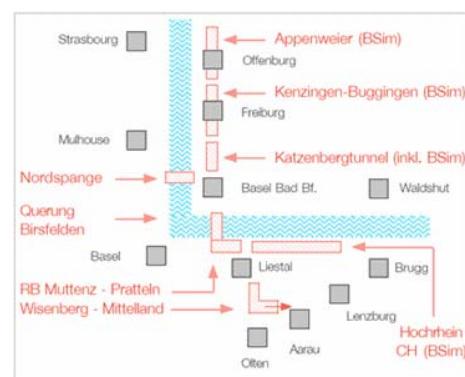
representatives to take part and to effectively participate in further discussions as well as to form an opinion within discussions with the railway companies.

With the above mentioned and shown map of arguments several areas could be identified where further assessment is needed. Yet the test-planning could deliver first solutions and find out problems that have to be explored further.

The need for a bypass along the High Rhine doesn't materialise before 2020 when both NEAT routes will have reached final extension status. Track capacity within the agglomeration of Basel will be sufficient at least until 2020 with an already planned additional bridge over the Rhine near to Basel German Station, being necessary for further S-Bahn plans and using the existing main lines.



“Map of ideas”
[source: Rolf Signer, published in www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de]



Further issues to explore
[source: Rolf Signer, published in www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de]

In addition a „short“ High-Rhine bypass within the Agglomeration of Basel would be possible. A Bypass like the one planned by the three railway companies was rejected because with this solution a flexible distribution of freight trains to the two transalpine tunnels would not be given.

To solve the challenges/tasks that have been encountered by using the method of a test planning a “trilateral steering committee” has been constituted wherein representatives of the orderers of the test planning will have to transmit the results and experiences of the test planning into the trinational process of development on the theme.

The trilateral steering committee is intended to work for consecutive three years.

5 Discussion:

5.1 “Test planning” as an instrument for cross border metropolitan governance?

The case study shows a possibility, how regional planning authorities can influence a planning process in order to represent regional and local objectives towards actors of large-scale infrastructures. Instead of reacting on the proposed projects (the role regional planning authorities have to play in the formal planning procedures), they can enter the planning process by showing constructive suggestions that consider local and super-local requirements for the planned infrastructure. This also leads to a better acceptance of projects within the public. The results, a map of ideas, or also a map of further questions allows the involved actors to integrate these results into a further planning process.

“Test-plannings” are not only an appropriate instrument to solve strategic problems of large-scale infrastructure projects like in this case. They are suitable for problems where the assessment for solutions in order to come to a feasible development is needed. Within the Interreg IIIb project “PROSIDE”, test plannings were used an examined in three European cities, dealing with issues of brownfield redevelopment [Elgendi, Seidemann, Wilske 2006].

Hence it can be stated that this instrument can be used in many cases to find robust and sustainable solutions, which are based on a consensus among most of the actors and as a result the complexity of required formal processes can be reduced and accomplished faster.

5.2 Basel – a model for metropolitan areas?

In Basel it can be observed, that not only national borders cause resistances for metropolitan governance and planning issues dealing with the functional entity of an agglomeration. It is interesting to see, that also the borders of the two Basel-cantons have some similar effects though the quality of cooperation is different in an positive way. But this fact supports the thesis, that improved methods and processes of cross national border metropolitan governance can be helpful for other metropolitan areas.

Two examples of metropolitan areas with inner-national borders can illustrate this thesis:

- The German metropolitan area of Rhine/Neckar with the Cities Mannheim, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg is situated at the borders of the federal states (Bundesländer) of Baden-Wurtemberg, Rhineland-Palatinat and Hesse. Similar to the Situation in and around Basel a cross-border regional authority was founded to improve cooperation and coordination of the transboundary functional region. The cities of Mannheim and Ludwigshafen geographically and functionally are one city situated on both banks of the river Rhine yet divided through a state border. Though they run a shared public transport system and are both members of the same metropolitan area the cooperation suffers from the restrictions and resistances of two different administrations and the resulting competition among two neighbouring municipalities.
- The Swiss metropolitan area of Zurich that has grown to a “transborder” region which until now overlaps over the borders of five cantons. Because of the strong autonomy of the cantons, big differences in tax and renting cost lead to competition for dwellers and strengthen sub urbanisation and urban sprawl. In the Limmat-valley, between Zurich and Baden, one can also find also the situation of a topographical and functional entity, which is divided by a cantonal border. Besides that issues of infrastructure and spatial development arise around Zurich, caused by the function as the superior railway node of Switzerland and the above mentioned cross-border problem of the airport.

5.3 Conclusion

Cross-border issues occur in most metropolitan areas and are getting more and more important as these areas have to face the strong competition among metropolitan areas resulting from the effects of globalisation.

Basel, the multi-cross-border region is a laboratory to examine how cross-border issues can be overcome, because they occur almost in every field of metropolitan governance while little formal instruments exist to solve the questions that arise.

Therefore informal methods, dealing with functional coherences over administrative borders have been and need to be developed and successfully implemented in the metropolitan area of Basel to solve the strategic questions and different transborder resistances.

The conclusions and experiences made in the above described tasks and processes can be a valuable contribution to enhance metropolitan governance and development in agglomerations also may they possess of national border or not. It may therefore be worthwhile to further research the impact informal planning methods can have on strategic tasks within urban and metropolitan planning.

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