Main content of Governance structure for transport corridors

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The licentiate thesis Governance structure for transport corridors (Öberg, 2014) was written and examined in 2014, half-way through the doctoral studies. The research performed until the licentiate examination served as an important basis for the continued PhD studies to a doctoral thesis. The main focus presented in the licentiate thesis was creating a framework for designing governance structures for main transport corridors in a European perspective. Such a framework was also developed and presented as the so called Multi-optional governance structure (MOGS), serving as guiding principles for governance structure design.

1. Introduction

Efforts to develop major European transport corridors were intensified when the regulation (EU Regulation No 1315/2013) of guidelines for development of the Trans-European Network for Transports (TEN-T) was launched in 2013. It set focus on European transport corridors rather than transport projects. The main corridors, the Core Network Corridors (CNCs) were of special interest since a lot of funding from EU would be allocated to develop them. A governance framework for implementation of CNCs was decided in the regulation (EU Regulation No 1315/2013). However, how the governance of CNCs would unfold in practice was still vague, and how they would affect governance in connecting transport corridors.

It is only one CNC passing through Sweden located in the southern part of the country connecting Malmö, Gothenburg, Stockholm and Örebro. Several large transnational transport corridors, mostly driven through interregional cooperation, did however not become part of the EU CNCs. Nevertheless, the participants of these on-going interregional initiatives had to consider how the governance structure would be organised for their transport corridor. The aim of such a governance structure would be to strengthen a harmonised infrastructure and well-functioning transport services along the corridor. In that process the relation to governance prepared for the CNCs according to the EU regulation No 1315/2013 was of interest. This, because a future extension of the CNCs and their infrastructure requirements to a larger network was foreseen in the regulation. The reasoning behind this was that it could ease the expansion to include such an interregional initiative if the corridor governance was aligned with the CNC governance.

One transport corridor initiative that was not included in the CNCs is the Bothnian Corridor. The Bothnian Corridor stretches around the Gulf of Bothnia through Sweden and Finland. The research project presented in the licentiate thesis was conducted integrated with the EU-financed Bothnian Green Logistic Corridor project (BGLC). The main research question for the licentiate part was: “How should governance structures for transnational and multimodal transport corridors be designed?” The sub-questions considered: which variables that are important to consider when designing governance structures of multimodal transport corridors; structure and procedural organisation; stakeholder participation; and interaction between stakeholders in diverse levels of governance.

2. Theoretical framework

The technical field of traffic planning and the social field of governance were combined in this research project. The main topic concerned development of major transport corridors; it was studied under the lens of governance and collaboration. An Action Design Research (ADR) approach (Sein et al., 2011) was applied, where gathered data and findings were contextualised in discussions at BGLC workshops and partner meetings. Input from the stakeholders at these meetings was then incorporated in the continued research process in a cyclic process. Including stakeholders from...
society in the research process and simultaneously combine different fields of research is labelled as transdisciplinary approach (Hirsch Hadorn et al., 2008), and that describes well how this research was conducted.

Governance theory was central to the investigation, and it was narrowed down to multi-level (Bach & Flinders, 2005) and collaborative governance (Emerson, 2011). Multi-level governance drawing on the context where public, private and other interest organisations from both European, national, regional and local levels are part of the interaction. Collaborative governance, enhancing the structural and procedural aspects of governance. Emerson (2012, p.2) defines collaborative governance as “the processes and structures of public policy decision-making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished”.

3. Methodology and implementation

The research was applied and performed with qualitative research methods. A qualitative approach was chosen because of the need to gain a deeper understanding of the views and concepts, related to the context. Two literature reviews were performed, one focusing on multi-level governance in transport, the other focusing on governance models. Both literature reviews started with a scientific literature database search using key words chosen by the author to find relevant articles. Additional literature was added with help from other experts in the research fields. The literature reviews included both narrative and systematic components (Jesson et al., 2011). Document studies of European transport initiatives were carried out with a focus on governance matters. The documents included the TEN-T European coordinators reports from 2010 and 2012 (European Coordinators, 2010; European Coordinators, 2012), the proposal for new guidelines for the TEN-T policy published in 2011 (European Commission, 2011) as a result of the review of the policy initiative, and the finally adopted regulation concerning development of the TEN-T (EU Regulation No 1315/2013). In addition, the initiative on a network for competitive rail freight corridors from 2010 (EU Regulation No 913/2010) was studied. Also documents describing the governance process in the regionally driven transnational transport project East West Transport Corridor was analysed (Källström, 2012; EWTC, 2012).

An interview study with key individuals working with development of European transport corridors was conducted. Four individuals were interviewed representing the European rail corridors Brenner and Rotterdam-Genoa. These corridor structures were chosen as the governance for them seemed advance according to document studies and input from BGLC project partners.

Further, as a partner in the BGLC project LTU was responsible for an international study to summarize governance experiences from other transport corridor cases. VTT in Finland was procured to gather the information. Results from the international study were presented and discussed in a workshop with participants from the BGLC and GreCor (a project concerning the transport corridor between Oslo and Rotterdam) projects. All these studies were conducted in conjunction with the EU-financed project Bothnian Green Logistic Corridor (BGLC).

The Bothnian corridor served as a case study for developing the framework. Communication with Bothnian corridor stakeholders involved in the BGLC project occurred in project meetings, workshops etc. arranged by the project. Focus group discussions were held in one of these project meetings, in the last part of the project, to discuss the proposed governance framework.
4. Results

Findings from the studies showed that design of a governance structure for a transport corridor always has to consider the context. The context includes overall trends in society such as the advancement of governance. Public, private and other stakeholders collaborate to a higher extent today than a couple of decades ago in developing transport infrastructure and services, sharing responsibilities and costs (Giuliano, 2007; Romein et al., 2003). The public responsibility in Western Europe and USA has changed over time and from taking a large welfare responsibility after the Second World War society has become more market oriented with restrained public budgets (Pierre & Peters, 2000). The context is also related to smaller scale specifics such as responsibilities of a single agency.

When designing a transport governance structure both structural and procedural aspects need to be considered. Regarding the structural or organisational part there are several options available for cooperation and collaboration. Partnerships, alliances, networks can all be formed basically directly to fulfil participants’ preferences. Another option is groupings like an EEIG (European Economic Interest Group) launched as a tool to ease transnational cooperation, where there are some requirements to be registered.

Table 1. Variables to consider, and recommended attributes, when designing a transport governance structure (Öberg, 2014).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables and recommended attributes</th>
<th>Organisational</th>
<th>Procedural</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formalised agreements</td>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broad stakeholder inclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transparency (motivation, procedures)</td>
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<td>Leadership (strong, clear)</td>
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<td>Procedural adaptability</td>
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<td>Coordinator</td>
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<td>Clear objectives</td>
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<td>Powers/resources/accountability</td>
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<td>Flexibility</td>
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<td>Top down/bottom-up</td>
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<td>Social acceptance</td>
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Findings from the performed studies support a diverse stakeholder participation and an inclusive stakeholder approach. The risk for inviting too many people to meetings and thereby lose efficiency was also recognised. However, stakeholders have different interests in and need to participate in a governance structure. One way of handling this balance between inclusion and not loose efficiency is to allow stakeholders to be involved in a way that suits their needs and interests.

A governance framework

To support the possibilities for a broad stakeholder involvement, but at the same time allow for a variation of strong and loose commitment a governance framework was developed, the multi-optional transport corridor management structure (MOGS). In line with findings from the performed studies, it give opportunities for a differentiated participation in the governance structure, allowing a broad multi-level stakeholder involvement. MOGS is constituted by stronger and loosely connected stakeholders, where the so called core stakeholders are strongest connected. Core stakeholders are
those who can drive the process forward, have a certain responsibility for progress and feel strongly for the cause. In addition, the process is supported by strategic advisors that also can be utilised as a decision-making board. For administrative purposes, a secretariat was suggested as a part of MOGS. Single stakeholders or groups of stakeholders that are already active in partnerships, networks or other alliance formations can attach to the structure in parts of the thematic work if the questions are of importance to them. Another option is a looser connection, just signing up for information about the progress. An advantage with this approach is that MOGS builds on already existing structures, which can support a cost-efficient participation.

![Diagram of MOGS structure](image.png)

Figure 1. Outline of a Multi-optional transport corridor management structure (MOGS) (Öberg, 2014)

In line with the findings of setting governance efforts in relation to the context, MOGS was discussed in focus groups with Bothnian Corridor stakeholders. As a general framework it has to be customised to the context of a specific corridor to be useful. The focus groups resulted in three identified variables for customising the proposed framework to a particular corridor. These variables are existing management structures, link to on-going initiatives and stakeholders’ intentions.

Existing management structures need to be acknowledged and their roles in relation to MOGS need to be clarified.Launching a new structure like MOGS might result in partial geographical or topical overlaps with old structures. Further, links to on-going initiatives like the TEN-T initiative is important since it sets the corridor management structure in a larger perspective, and secure necessary alignment with other initiatives. The variable stakeholders’ intentions is more complex to capture than the other two variables. With an inclusive stakeholder approach numerous and multifaceted intentions has to be managed. Then MOGS can serve as an arena for coordination between interests, and alignment to overall objectives. However, it is supportive to an introduction of MOGS if overall objectives are agreed to, and that key stakeholders are identified and positive.
5. Further research

Testing the theoretical MOGS structure in practice was proposed for further research. In a larger perspective, a future research area could be how transnational transport corridor management structures can enhance environmentally friendly and cost-effective transports.

References


