

COMPETING CORRIDORS OR COMMON EUROPEAN TRANSPORT SYSTEM?

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Introduction

This study intends to treat interregional corridors as the parts of extended continental networks. First it selects the Pan-European transit corridors that are common to Ukraine and Hungary then focuses on various discontinuities at Záhony/Csop, the single border-crossing point of the common corridors. It also places Corridor No. 5 into a wider context, *i.e.* the Eurasian corridor proposals. Examining network connections, the paper points out that many corridor proposals missed these network relations and, by that, partly lost the proper context.

In the case of European corridors the paper also underlines context problems. While the creation of the Trans-European Network (TEN) solved a territorial problem in the EU15 (EU12) area (namely the internal interconnections of networks between separate countries), the extension of this network has not been based on the same principles, and there has been an extension of the east-west corridor elements of the TEN network instead. 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 European Union and the new neighbourhood area, two things are especially important: (a) not to repeat the mistakes committed in the Central European area and (b) to count on the possible changes of the marked Central European corridors due to the necessary corrections of earlier erroneous planning. The possible frame to solve these problems must be the network context of the corridors, both in an inter-regional level and within an integrated view of local, regional and inter-regional levels.

1) Ukraine and Hungary: common corridors with characteristic discontinuities

In 1997 the Third Pan-European Conference in Helsinki fixed ten corridors¹ called Helsinki or Pan-European corridors ever since. 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 to Ukraine and Hungary. Corridor No. 7 is the river Danube that leaves Hungary and a separate lower section of the river that arrives to Ukraine, while corridor No. 5 has a direct border crossing between the two countries.²

Corridor No. 5 intersects 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 the other type of wagons, while today there is a growing significance of various technical solutions that change or just re-adjust the axles. In the early seventies the quantity of goods reloaded here was closely equal to that of the Hamburg sea-port.

Figure 1
Treating interoperability discontinuity.
Exchange of axles in Záhony



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

While rail gauge discontinuity can be considered as a given historical heritage, it is more astonishing that one also meets a shocking physical discontinuity on the roads. *Figure 2* demonstrates the incredibly poor pavement quality, typical at the future Schengen border. By this – similarly poor quality – illustration the author does not want to put the blame on any of the partners. It is not even important which section belongs to which country. What attention is called to here is the *non-existence of trans-border co-operation*, the missed oppor-

¹ About nine of them, a decision was already taken in Crete 1994.

² For a more detailed description of the corridors, see Preiger *et al.* (2005).

tunity for co-operation of mutual interest, the potential common activity which was in the focus of the paper by Maryan Dolishnij.³

Figure 2
Pavement quality discontinuity
The bridge over river Tisza between Záhony and Csop



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

Besides roads and rail tracks there is another discontinuity that may cause problems in cooperation or in the future planning processes. This is the discontinuity of maps. *Figure 3* presents a map from an earlier EU document (Transport and Energy Infrastructure 2001) where the EU15 and the accession countries were placed into an integrated system, the network of TEN and the extended TEN were represented similarly (disregarding the colouring) but concerning the neighbouring area the map was different, namely the network became more schematic, expressing nothing but straight directions toward Kiev and Moscow.

The above discontinuities of various origins can just characterise Central and Eastern European positions these days from where the region will have to start building its networks of cooperation.

³ Dolishnij (2005).

Figure 3
Discontinuity of the map of Europe



Source: Transport and Energy Infrastructure.

2) The silk route. Label on different Eurasian east-west corridors

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

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

Figure 4
Reviving the Silk Route



With the name The New Silk Road, the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) was proposed by a conference in May 1993, organised by the EU for Central Asian leaders in Brussels (TED Case Studies) shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. “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.”⁴ 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.”⁵

While Ukraine was mentioned above, the Hungarian connection to such a corridor is not self-evident. Still-recently a short news item was published in a Hungarian daily newspaper⁶ 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 in a totally different way the European (and Hungarian) section of the New Silk Route, when underlines the importance of leading it along the southern Hungarian area. (Figure 6)

⁴ Source: TED Case Studies. The New Silk Road: Boon or Boondoggle? <http://www.american.edu/TED/silkroad.htm#r3>

⁵ *Ibid.*

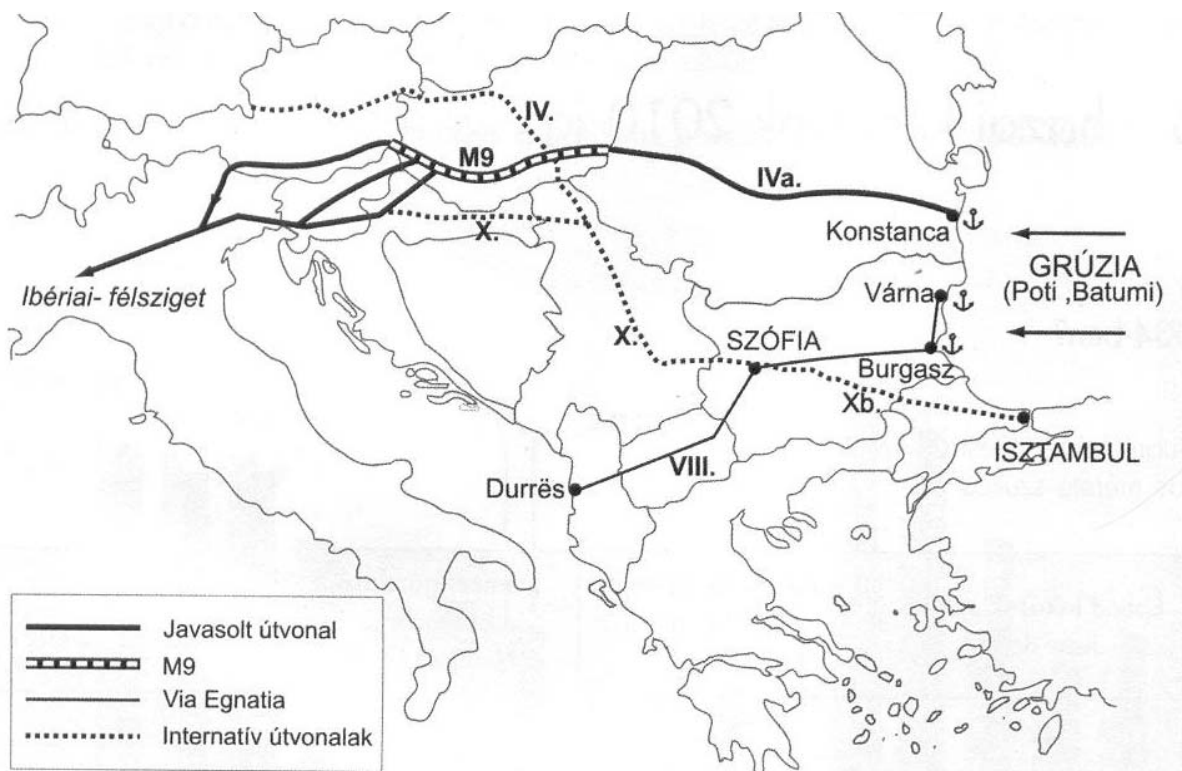
⁶ F. J. Gy.: Sztrádán Odesszáig. Népszabadság, February 8th, 2005.

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



Source: Népszabadság 2005a

Figure 6
A proposed European extension of the New Silk Road⁷



Source: Erdósi 2005

In spring the Hungarian press reported again a different railway corridor planned as the western extension of the Trans-Siberian Railway.⁸ The

⁷ Transit, April 2005

⁸ MTI Bécs felé tart a Távols-Kelet? Népszabadság, April 21st, 2005.

rail would bring broad gauge to Vienna, transposing by that the interoperability change from the Ukrainian border to near the Austrian capital. (Figure 7)

Regarding that rank growth of competing schemes one wonders if those proposed different projects are co-ordinated at any level, or if the planners know at all about the other alternative 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.

Figure 7
Proposed western extension
of the wide gauge to Vienna



Source: Népszabadság 2005b

3) Network-level coordination. The 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.”⁹

Figure 8 presents a selected road network for the whole Asian territory and Russia thus also showing the connections towards Ukraine. A similar map was produced for the main Asian rail networks, based on a regional meeting held in November 2004 (Report 2004). (Figure 9)

⁹ Source: Asian agreement
http://www.unescap.org/ttdw/common/TIS/AH/AH_into_force.asp

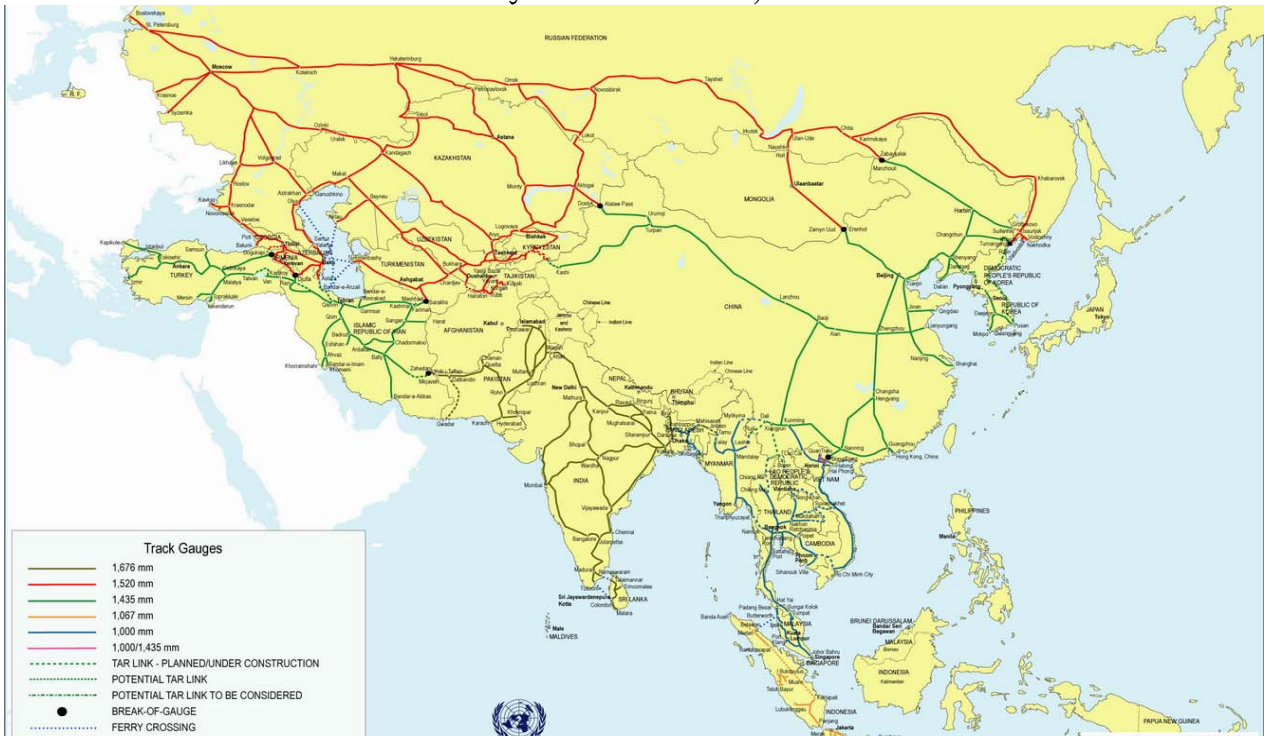
Figure 8
Asian highway network proposal 2004, UN ESCAP



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

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.

Figure 9
Asian railway network 2004, UN ESCAP



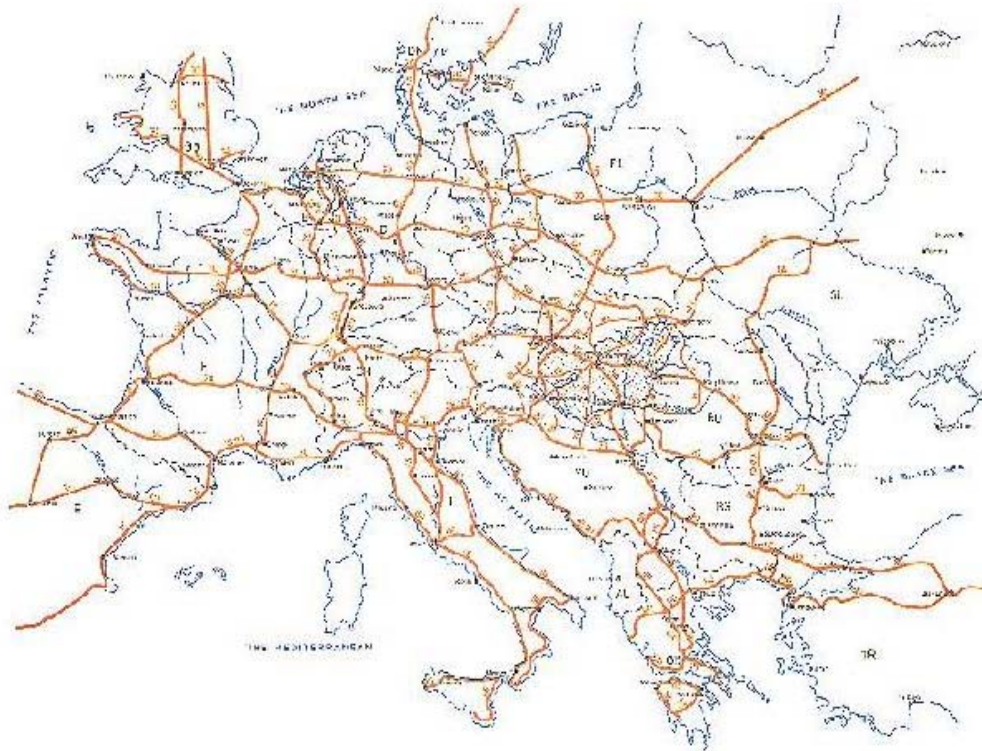
Source: Asian agreement
http://www.unescap.org/ttdw/common/TIS/TAR/report_full_23Nov04.pdf

4) Network-level coordination. The European side

While there is an enforcement clause within the UNECE to design and declare a whole-European coordinated transport network,¹⁰ 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 EU15.

Figure 10 presents a thirty-year-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 received two-digit numbers, where the main east-west roads were ending with '0', while the main north-south roads were ending with '5'. (Monterie 2002) This system just renamed the existing roads, still it was of great importance, since it can be considered as the birth of the corridor-type thinking in the modern European-level transport networks.

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



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

¹⁰ UNECE – UNESCAP (2005). Criteria for prioritisation of projects...

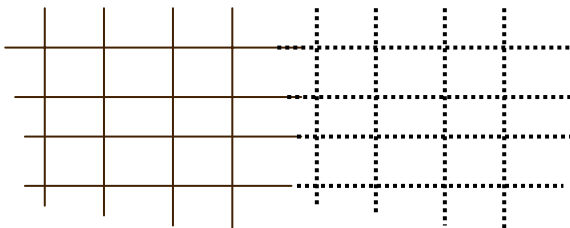
One should consider the grid in *Figure 11* as a scheme for the Trans-European Network of transport corridors (TEN-T)

TEN became the main tool to fulfil the objective of the Common Transport Policy of the EU in 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 after 1995.

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

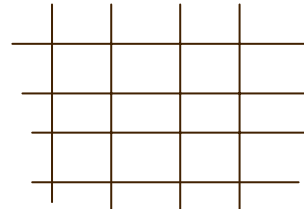
But what would the ‘extension of the network’ to the East mean? *Figure 12* presents an extended grid that could have represented the same objectives in a wider European area the TEN aimed at for the EU15.

Figure 12
Extension of the grid to the enlarged European Union



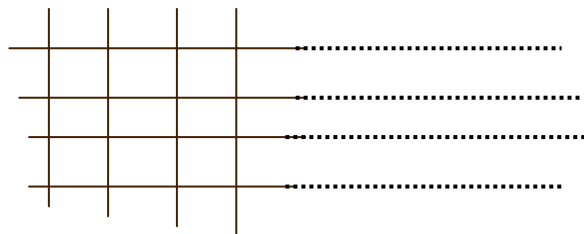
Even today official EU documents cannot overstep this view and do not urge more than ‘linking the new Member States with the infrastructure of the Fifteen’¹¹

Figure 11
The grid of TEN of the EU15



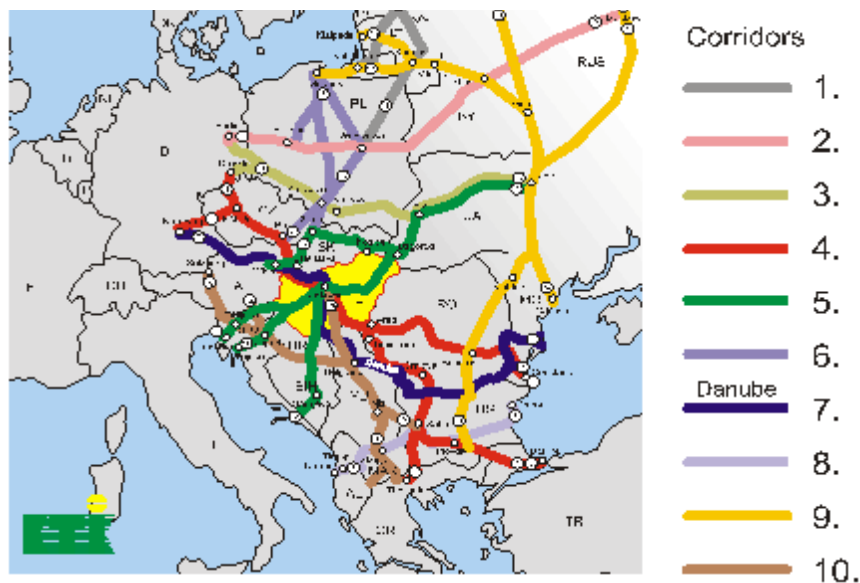
What really happened was not an extension of the grid, but rather the extension of the east–west corridors of the TEN. Both from the EU side and from the Eastern side politicians, business leaders and the public thought that it was the east–west connection that needed urgent reinforcement and absolute priority.

Figure 13
Linking the new member states with the infrastructure of the EU15



¹¹ 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...*” (Italics by the author)

Figure 15
The Helsinki- or Pan-European road transport corridors



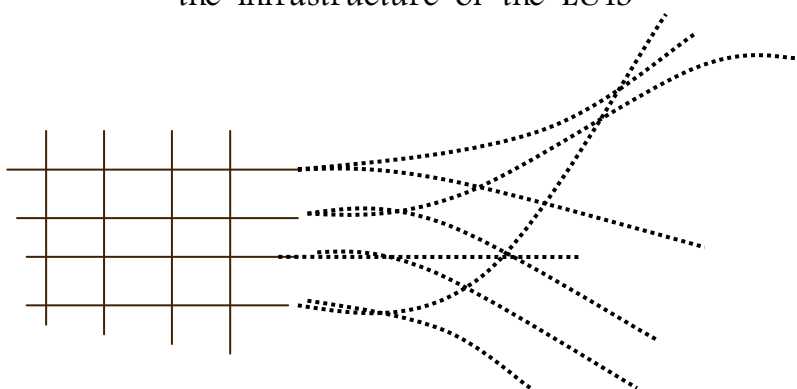
Source: Páneurópai
<http://www.gkm.gov.hu/data/8568/Image11.gif>

The whole idea of the Pan-European corridors is not more than the scheme presented in *Figure 13*. But due to a couple of reasons the real map is not so clear. The first is that toward the east Europe is ‘widening’ and the corridors must turn to the north and to the south too. The second is that the extended corridors starting from Germany or from Italy want to reach the northern *and* the southern areas of the eastern territories

both. Therefore the corridor patterns remind us about the scheme in *Figure 14* and not the previous one.

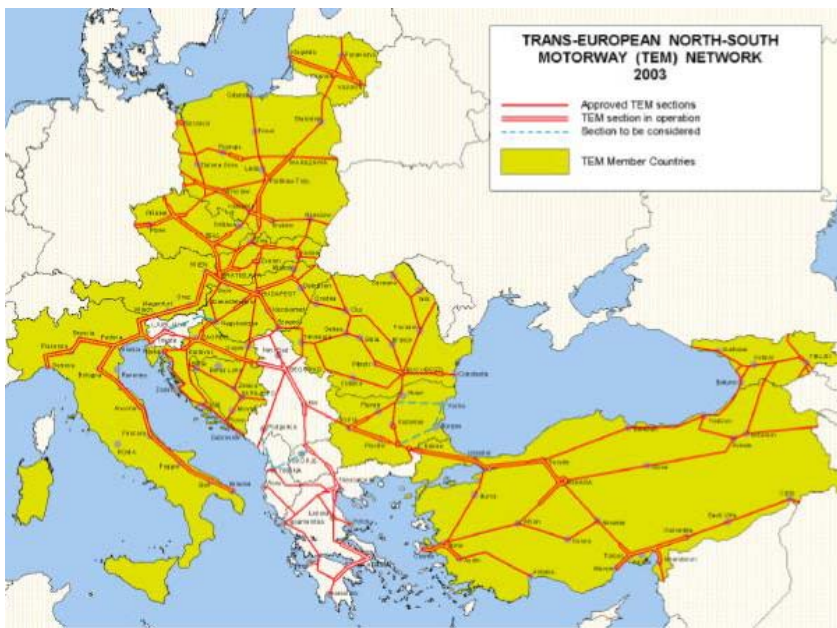
Regarding the map of the Pan-European corridors on *Figure 15* one can affirm that the extension of TEN by the Pan-European corridors has rather been the *extension of the east-west corridors of TEN* than the extension of the grid itself. Even the single north-south corridor, corridor No. 9. starts and ends within the EU15, so it has been a general rule that any corridor has to join to a TEN15 network element. It reflects the *EU15’s interest* rather than the general interest of the enlarged European Union.

Figure 14
Linking the new member states with the infrastructure of the EU15



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 “the basic network for Bulgaria and

Figure 16
TEM area from the UNECE Transport Division website



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

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 had been determined by a military background to assure easy movements for troops along the frontiers of the Soviet Union. The earlier TEM seemed to be forgotten for a decade, while its elements are being attached to the gradually enlarged TEN extension area, where the main networking principle consequently followed is that previously decided elements are fixed.

The last step of the process is to interconnect the extended Europe-wide 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). This choice means, that the emphasis was put on a selection of viable local projects again due to the failure of planning the proper structure of a continent-level overlay network for transport.

In any case, during the latest revision of the TEN network within the EU (accepted on 29 April 2004 – two days before the accession of the ten new member states – see Decision No 884/2004) the structure of the network was not changed and the basic elements of the above process remained unquestioned.

Romania was identified as identical to that defined by the TINA process” and extended towards five more countries. (UNECE – UNESCAP 2005).

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). *Fig-*

5) Network-structure consequences for Hungary

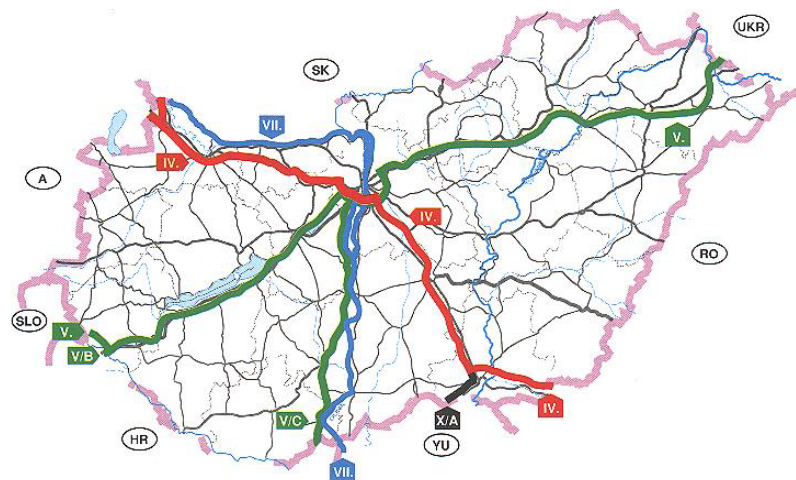
While examining the corridors intersecting Hungary we find an overcentralised structure with only one single point worthy to cross the country, at the capital city where all the corridors appear to converge. One has to raise the question whether it is the proper future transport structure for a territorially well-balanced country. (*Figure 17*.)

Hungary's Budapest-centred transport network dates from the first half of the 19th century. Count István Széchenyi, Hungary's champion of development at the time, devised a plan which very consciously placed Budapest in the centre of the road and railway networks so as to develop an urban centre comparable to Vienna that could become the metropolitan counterbalance in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The endeavour proved a success story as Budapest soon turned to be a city of regional dominance.

Secondary roads (former cart tracks) followed the topographic, the soil and the property constraints, while main roads followed planned directions. Instead of connecting neighbouring villages, the function of national main roads was to interconnect towns, urban poles. In 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 former cart-track networks. (*Figure 18*)¹²

The appearance of *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 the development of a structure matching the new scale has not occurred. The plans for domestic corridors were and are not considered as a comprehensive network structure and the process to decide where a mo-

Figure 17
The official Hungarian interpretation of the Helsinki Corridors



Source: Útgazdálkodás 1994–1998. KHVM

¹² Both *Figure 18 and 19* and the ideas related are explained in details in an earlier article by the author: Fleischer (1994).

torway should be built has been mainly governed by the need to expand the local capacity of the national main-road network. (*Figure 19*).

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 were identified with the most heavily loaded national main roads, reinforcing the radiant structure in the country. One look at *Figure 17* will show that the corridors planned are not to reduce the gap between the capital and the provinces. On the contrary, they will reinforce and increase the spatial imbalance between the country's regions.

Figure 18

Structure of Hungary's secondary-road network and the main-road network

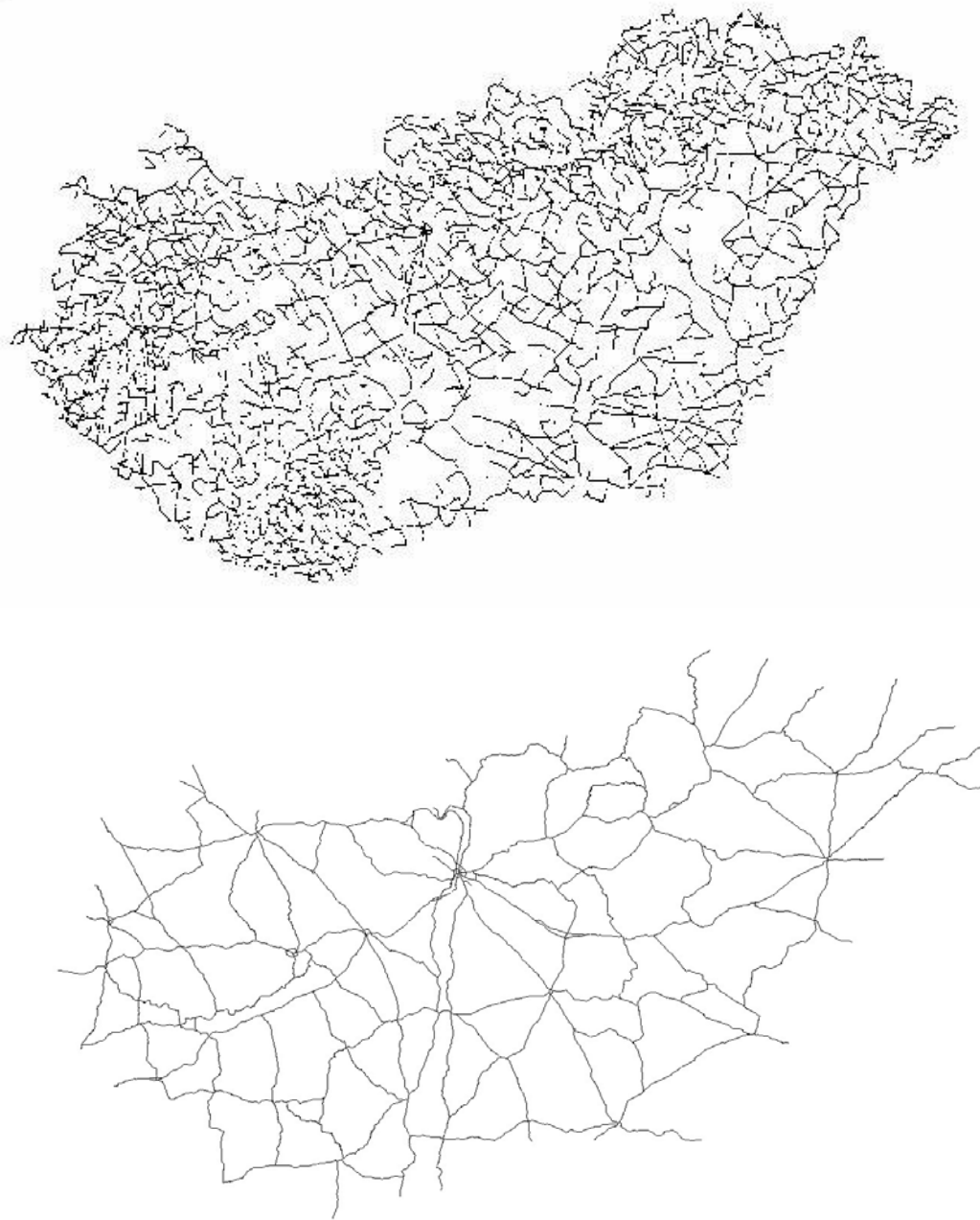
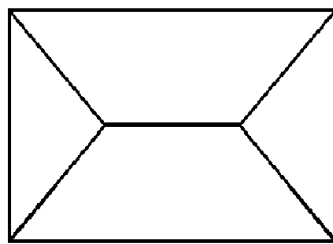
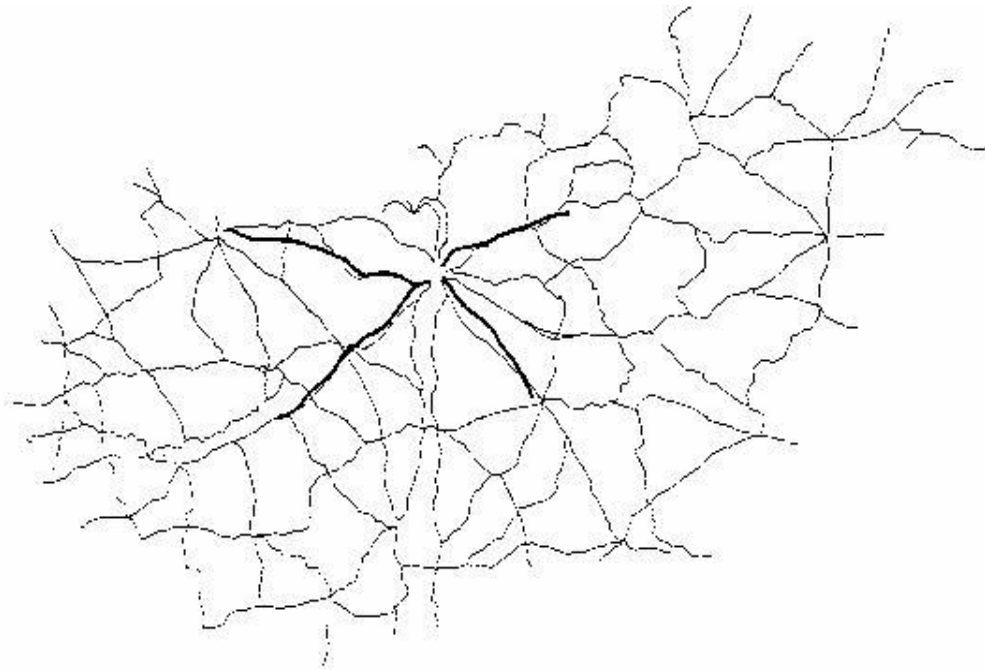


Figure 19
The first motorways in Hungary



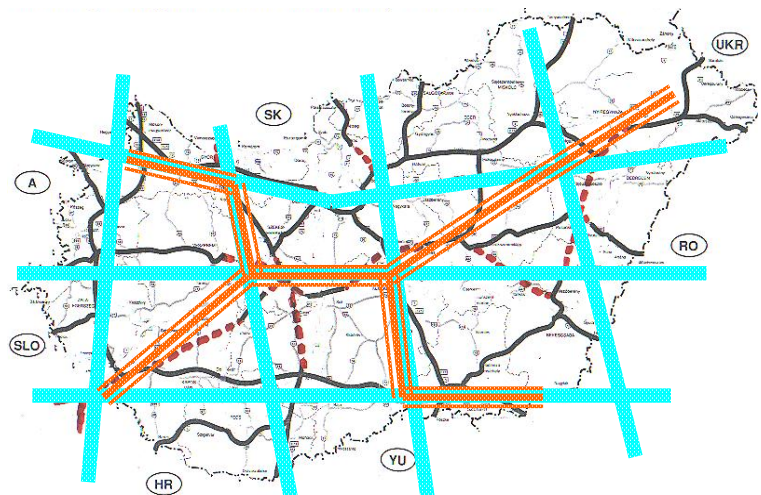
The construction of the first motorways in Hungary (similarly to other countries) was determined by the traffic load on the national main roads. It has not been realised ever since that a new function of interregional connections was born for which a new network structure should have already been created

structure for the interregional road network *Figure 20* presents a grid-structure model composed of mainly north-south and east-west corridor elements, providing the diagonal crossing of the Pan-European corridors. There is also 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.

These suggestions have not been accepted and the Hungarian government continues constructing motorways that reinforce the

To find a more balanced long-term

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



Source: Fleischer T. *et al.* (2002)

Figure 21
Planned high-speed road network by 2006



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

to the EU at three or four different points as soon as possible, or would it be more important to have the newly built interregional corridors to form a useful grid in the Eastern European area, serving better and balanced internal and external connections in a new structure. Of course, answering the question is out of the scope of this paper, but it tries to call attention to the importance of careful consideration and avoids accepting any options *a priori*.

Although one may declare that Figure 3 is merely an occasional map and no one should draw overdimensioned conclusions from it, a similar intention can be noticed in the report of the Van Miert High-level Group on the revision of the TEN. While categorising priority projects they explicitly underlined the importance of “the main routes which link the capitals of the enlarged Union”.¹³ Naturally these routes are immensely important. The danger they hide lies in the overestimation of their role that tend to be exclusive and oppressing all other links.

6) Summary and conclusion

Referring to *Figure 3* once more, it is worth underlining that the first (symbolic as well as practical) condition for the planning of a whole-European transport network is the availability of a *Pan-European map* where the details are similarly indicated in each corner.

one-centered transport structure despite any declarations of the contrary. (*Figure 21*)

Glancing at *Figure 3* again, the only intention that can be perceived from the simplified sketch of the corridors in the area of the CIS countries is that the corridors arriving from the various parts of the EU must reach the two capitals, Kiev and Moscow. However, it raises the question whether it is really in the interest of Ukraine that *its capital* becomes connected

¹³ UNECE – UNESCAP 2005, p. 6.

As for the Záhony/Csop border-crossing zone, and generally the common frontier area, the paper emphasizes the importance of promoting cooperation and facilitating permeability. Crucial issues are for both countries the avoidance of building new sharp frontiers and the reduction of differences between the two sides instead.

The main stress in this paper is given to the necessity of a network context of the various planned transport corridors. Without the network context the corridor proponents seem to struggle against any other corridors, while the real interest is the attraction of all those goods and people that are able to enrich the given area. It is not more traffic for traffic's sake, but proper and locally targeted traffic that yields real gains to a region.

Another important issue is the planning of the proper pattern of the network that can cover Europe/Eurasia at the 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 EU15, this is not so in the expansion area where *links directed to the TEN core have been given priority*.

Another problem, hardly touched in the paper, is 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 various 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 the new neighbourhood area, all these lessons originating from the earlier experiences can serve as a warning to avoid the repetition of 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 jointly representing the transport connections of local and national interests.

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