

Talks on Tracks— Debating Urban Infrastructure Projects ¹

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Abstract

This paper retraces and analyzes the debate around a major infrastructure project in central Stockholm, the construction of a third railroad track over the islet of Riddarholm. Using the analytical framework of the New Rhetoric (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958), it shows that the debate is not only a matter of diverging views about the necessity or the impact of the project but, as well, a matter of epistemology. Whereas both sides tend to refer to similar values and make use of matching rhetorical devices, they differ quite radically as to which knowledge they regard as valid and as to how they have organized their approach to the debate. Demonstration faces argumentation, the New Rhetoric suggests, as its contribution to our understanding of the genesis of urban projects.

Keywords: Urban Project, City Management, Infrastructure, Third Track, Railroads; Stockholm, Riddarholmen; Public Debate, Argumentation, New Rhetoric, Chaïm Perelman, Demonstrative Logic, Argumentative Logic; Narrative; Genius Loci.

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*The Story Could Have Been Simple,
However Intricate Urban Projects Can Be.
Ten Years of Public Debate (1989-1999)
Take Us Into The Genesis Of The Project.
The New Rhetoric,
Opposing Demonstration and Argumentation,
Help Us Understand Why It Has Not.*

The Story Could Have Been Simple

We are in Sweden, in the late 1980. There is a commitment from the Swedish parliament and the Swedish government to make trains a competitive and reliable means of transportation. Major investments in railroad infrastructure aiming at increasing train traffic have just been, or are at the point of being, decided, from new railroad lines to faster trains and more are to come. Just outside the platforms of Stockholm Central Station, however, there is a six kilometer long section of only two railroad tracks through which all local, regional and national trains bound to Southern and Western destinations have to pass. Needless to say, these tracks are densely trafficked – even though there are barely enough commuting trains to suit the taste of suburbanites – and delays are legion. Claims are made that the two existing railroad tracks that pass between Riddarholmen and the Old City constitute a bottleneck that threatens the whole railroad investment program, as this key section of the Swedish railroad network is hardly able to support any significant increase in traffic. An urgent need to raise track capacity through the center of Stockholm is pointed out, and a proposal is made to build an additional track alongside the existing two, the so-called Third Track. It would be an efficient, quite simple, and rather inexpensive solution that the Swedish government would be ready to finance.

We are still in Sweden, but ten years later. Large parts of the program mentioned above for strengthening train as a means of communication have been completed. Yet there are still only two tracks connecting Stockholm to other destinations in the West or the South of Sweden. One of the most strategic investments in modern Swedish infrastructure history has remained on paper. Even though it would answer to the largely agreed-upon need for an increase in track capacity through the heart of the Swedish capital city; even though it is technically feasible; even though it has lastingly enjoyed broad political support; and even though it has all the time been fully financed. Under such circumstances, the Third Track should *logically* have been built.

Yet, it has not. The project has been kept in gestation. Because of the way the debate has evolved; because of the dynamic of the controversies that the project has given birth to. Let me tell you how and why a debate can talk a railroad track into nothingness. Let me show you how demonstrative and argumentative logics meet. For the sake of an infrastructure project that would affect a whole country's railroad infrastructure as well as for the genius of a place genuinely unique. Because we need to know how urban projects get born. For the sake of the future of cities.

However Intricate Urban Projects Can Be

Before I take you along the Third Track and into the debate it has given birth to, I would like to invite you on a detour through projects in general and urban projects in particular.

Introducing a special issue of the Scandinavian Journal of Management on "Project Management and Temporary Organizations", Rolf Lundin observed that "projects and temporary organizations apparently permeate much of our lives as individual human beings, even though we may not realize it".

"Temporary organizations are set up for a large number of reasons (and it seems that the frequency with which those reasons arise are increasing, or possibly that setting projects is

perceived as an increasingly popular way of solving problems in business life or elsewhere) and under a multitude of circumstances." (Lundin 1995: 315).

The term *project* is indeed a successful label. Despite of that, or may be because of that, what one means by "a project" remains something unclear and subject to discussions. In everyday language, a project is a proposal, a scheme or a design (Collins English Dictionary 1991), or even a large-scale attempt to do something (BBC English Dictionary 1993). The same polysemy of the English term will be found in both French [*projet*] or Swedish [*projekt*], whereas German uses different words [*Plan, Projekt, Entwurf*].

According to two Danish students of projects, Sören Christensen and Kristian Kreiner (1991/1997), the "good tradition of management" tends to define projects in opposition to bureaucratic activities. Projects are defined as activities that lie outside normal routines, practices and competencies, that have a clear purpose even though they are of a complex character, and that for their limited duration of existence require the creation of ad-hoc organizational prototypes.

Such conceptions about projects are idealizations produced by managerial literature, Jesper Blomberg (1998) objects. And actual observations of projects support him. In her study of the construction of Stockholm's multi-purposes arena Globen, Kerstin Sahlin-Andersson (1989) stressed for example one characteristic of the project process: its lack of clarity. In contrast to a view of projects as rational processes, she emphasizes the role played by chance, contingencies, and contexts. Projects remain ambiguous, she says. They are arenas where information is unevenly shared and where rules change as the process goes on. Various groups work simultaneously on the project, but not necessarily in collaboration, she observes. Various definitions of the project coexist: sometimes in agreement and sometimes in confrontation with each other. Intentions and meanings prove to be loosely coupled and even de-coupled. Projects turn out to have more than a single purpose. One can never be sure whether they are successful or not, and it might not even be possible to say whether a project

is alive or not. One may list favorable conditions but one can never be sure *why* or *how* projects become what they become. Lack of clarity rules, she says.

No, translations rule... could reply a reader of Latour's (1992) study of the transportation project Aramis. Projects live only to the extent that spokespersons produce translations that manage to assemble socio-technical networks strongly enough to function as contexts of the project. Latour views projects as networks where humans and non-humans, individuals as well as collectives, are aligned side by side in endless processes of redefinition of how, what and who is involved. Networks result from coalitions of affects, interests, or knowledge, as well as disagreements, competition or feuds. And the composition of these networks determines the nature of the project. So, the nature of a project changes every time a new actor joins or an old one defects; it changes with every compromise or manifestation of incompatibility; it varies every time that conditions of visibility or scales change. Latour pictures projects as having a variable ontology. Doing so, he nearly endows them with a personality, and beyond this, a life of their own. Latour concludes that the Aramis transportation project aborted because its soul and its body never met. A strong enough connection between the two was never established. For Latour, links —soft, rare, fragile, subtle, moving ones — determine projects.

Popular management's rehashes notwithstanding, neither organization theory nor sociology any longer subscribes to the idealized view of projects as activities with well-delineated objectives and well-determined time schedules. The lack of precision in lexical content of the term is from this point of view not at all misleading. Neither is the use of the same term to denote a large range of widely variable situations. The contours of a given project, and by extension, the notion of project itself, are vague and fluctuating. Notably, the finality and the stakes involved by a project tend to evolve over time, as they tend to differ

depending upon who is talking. It is no wonder that urban projects can take just about any form.

A lot of different things can actually be labeled as projects. Urban projects can be about things as different as the revitalization of a neighborhood, the construction of major transport or educational infrastructures, or the organization of a major sport event (Charié 1996). Being for a year a Cultural Capital of Europe is likewise a urban project (Porsander 2000). What projects share is a will to imprint visions into the socio-physical space of the city, mostly political ones (Guichard 1996). Urban projects tend in this regard to be highly publicized interventions that aim at proving the forcefulness and intelligence of politicians desiring to prove their ability to make things happen (Chevalier-Doumenc 1996; Marieu 1996). The symbolic load of urban projects has consistently been observed to be important.

To paraphrase Jean Bouinot (1993), urban projects tend to express a will to move from a destiny one endures to a destiny one wants. This is why they are fascinating: projects deliberately exist to affect our destinies, and they do so increasingly as our destinies are increasingly formulated in project forms. The more cities (or organizations for that matter) are organized around projects, the more the notion of project affects our lives, and the more we need to know and to communicate about the notion of urban projects. This is not so simple as it sounds, though. To name but a few issues that complicate the picture, there are problems in understanding and communicating the ambiguities as well as the complexity of the notion, its origins, or its symbolic value, as well as showing how given projects are set up, how they are run, how they evolve over time, or what incertitude there may be about their result.

Understanding something like urban projects touches upon the ethical and political responsibility of organization researchers as an academic community. It is not enough to discard (with a shrug) the simplifying views that circulate about what happens in organizations, or to refer (with a sigh) to the shortcomings of popular management literature,

and thus relieve oneself of all responsibility. There is a need, Pierre Bourdieu (1998) urges, to *fire back*. Would we easily accept medical scientists who would turn their backs on simplifying concepts of diseases or idealize views of practices that endanger patient lives, or engineers who would satisfy themselves with knowing how concrete or computers really react while letting others cover the world with hazardous constructions? Management ideas affect directly our lives, they can even hurt and kill, and cities or organizations are infused with managerial ideas, among which that of project.

Urban infrastructure projects fall on a number of counts under this responsibility of organizational theory scholars. More and more interventions onto the city are labeled and defined as projects, either by city officials or authorities such as the European Community. Projects such as the construction of a school, a new suburb, a motorway, or a harbor have a decisive impact on the use and development of the city for decades or even centuries. Also, and regardless of whether they are completed or not, urban projects are interesting objects to study in that they stage complex forms of intra- and inter-organizational collaborations, including intricate private and public ventures (e.g., Engwall 1995).

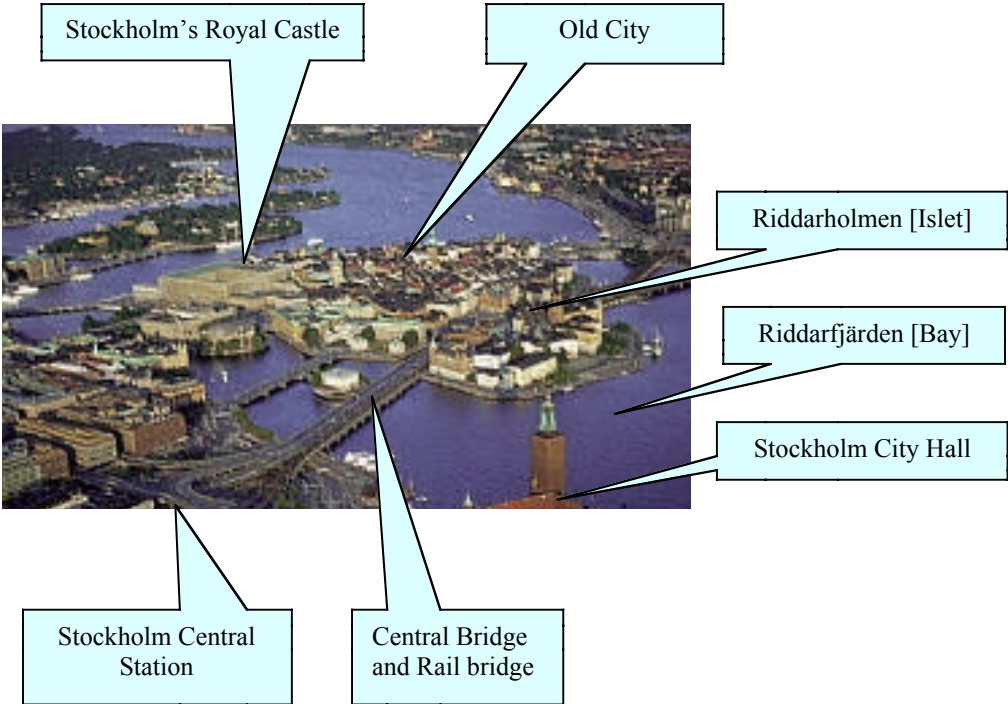
The notion of project seems to be here to stay, and, at least for a while, to have a decisive impact on the future of people, organizations and cities. To me, this means a need for the field of organization studies to continue questioning the stereotypes and other forms of idealizations that are attached to the notion. This involves developing innovative study approaches that bring to light new aspects of what urban or organizational projects are meant to be, how they are run and what they involve: an agenda that this paper intends to pursue by studying the Third Track with the help of the New Rhetoric.

Ten Years of Public Debate (1989-1999)

I will now present an account of the last ten years of the Third Track story. This account is based on a comprehensive body of official documents, press articles, and transcriptions of radio or television programs (ca 7000 pages). The material has been processed manually, in a traditional manner, with a preliminary account being sent to about twenty of the main actors (half for and half against the project) for comments. All of the thirteen who answered found this preliminary account to be a fair one; and if they have made comments, these have all been taken into consideration.

The history of the Third Track is as old as the Swedish railroads. The story begins back in 1856 with the idea of building a railroad track system running through Stockholm. The idea was realized in 1871 and trains have ever since run from North to South between the Old City and Riddarholmen.

Picture 1: Panoramic view of central Stockholm



These tracks pass literally through the historical heart of Stockholm with Riddarholmen on the one side and the Old City on the other side (see picture 1). Riddarholmen was, for example, first occupied by a Franciscan cloister back in 1270. In the 17th century, Queen Kristina made it the exclusive residence of the most noble Swedish families, hence its current name of knights' islet. The Riddarholm Church houses the graves of nearly all regents from the Vasa and Bernadotte dynasties. August Strindberg was born on the islet and Hjalmar Branting became the first Social-Democratic Member of Parliament when the Lower House was located there. Riddarholmen used to house the national archives, and it currently lodges numerous authorities, such as one of the six courts of appeal.

In addition, the railroad tracks are not the only means of communication that serve this part of Stockholm. Along the railroad runs the Central Bridge which is a heavily trafficked six-lane road, indeed one of the main north-south axes of the Swedish capital. There is also a four-track subway bridge and yet another four-lane road, but on the Old City side of the small canal that runs along Riddarholmen. The heritage of past decisions is obvious: the less than 100 meters between Riddarholmen and the Old City is one of the most heavily trafficked areas in the whole country. Yet it is precisely here the construction of a Third Track was projected.

I will take up the story of the Third Track in 1988 when SJ [Swedish Railways — Statens Järnvägar], for the nth time brings up the need to increase traffic capacity through central Stockholm. The argument is that two tracks are not sufficient to accommodate the local, regional, and national traffic needs, in the Southern and Western directions, of an agglomeration of a bit under two million inhabitants. About 60% of the national traffic depends in some way on access to Stockholm Centralen. Peak hours of traffic are particularly dense, and suburban dwellers deserve more frequent and reliable local trains. As new lines and various regional investments are to be completed, traffic needs are likely to increase. This

is why SJ regards an increase in track capacity over the center of Stockholm as urgently needed.

In practice, SJ sketches two possible alternatives. One can either build a third surface-level track alongside the two existing tracks, or build a tunnel for local and regional trains under the water. SJ expresses a strong preference for the first alternative, the so-called Third Track, which is cheaper and better for traffic capacity and flexibility (SJ Banavdelning and VBB 1988). The SJ project of a third surface-level track encounters strong opposition, though. It is heavily criticized for its proposed excavating under the grounds of several buildings located along the tracks, some of them considered parts of the national heritage. The Central Board for National Antiquities is in this regard among the staunchest critics of the project. The proposal is also criticized for encroaching on the water of Riddarfjärden, the nearby bay. More generally, the project is said to consolidate bad past decisions and further undermine the appearance of the city. Many official bodies, as well as a majority of politicians representing Stockholm, prefer a tunnel.

In 1990, two years later, SJ presents a new project (Ahlqvist & Co architects n.d.). Strongly inspired by the previous one, this new project suggests that the Third Track be sunk by a meter or so as to better integrate it into the city landscape. The new design of the track would also mean that a smaller surface of water must be covered. Noticeably, this revival of the project coincides with the appointment by the Swedish government of a commission whose purpose is to develop a transport strategy for the greater-Stockholm area. Bengt Dennis, then the director of the Swedish National Bank, is appointed chief mediator. Several official bodies find that the revised version is an obvious improvement on the previous one. Dagens Nyheter, Sweden's largest daily, finds that the new project succeeds in the delicate task of building a new track without damaging the city's environment. Yet the opposition against SJ's project is strong and remains so throughout 1990, the same arguments being used

as against the former project. Many bodies find it unacceptable to alter the old buildings along the track and to cement yet a little more of Riddarholmen.

The Dennis Commission (named after its chief mediator), however, pursues its work and reaches an interim agreement in January, 1991. The three largest political parties agree on a large transport investment program involving several projects, including an inner ring road around Central Stockholm, a fast streetcar serving the southern part of the city, and the construction of a Third Track on the surface over Riddarholmen. The Dennis agreement is celebrated by, for example, the Regional Chamber of Commerce which sees in it a possibility to increase the region's competitiveness, and by the municipalities around Stockholm which hope for a solution to Stockholm's transportation problems. Simultaneously, the Third Track is heavily criticized for representing an outdated view of traffic planning, one that privileges cars and threatens the environment.

However, the Third Track is now part of the "Dennis Package"—the Dennis agreement's nickname — which provides the almost one-hundred-year-old project with a new dynamic. It is meant to be one of the package's major investments in public transportation, and this gives the project the highest significance. The government agrees to finance it, and Banverket [the Swedish National Rail Administration]² accordingly decides to give it top priority. At this moment there is general agreement that track capacity in central Stockholm needs to be increased and that a Third Track appears to be the best way of doing it. It is technically feasible. Its financing is secured. And political parties together representing 70% of the votes support the project. Indeed, the procedure of elaborating the municipal detailed plan over the project starts in December 1991, using a slightly revised version of SJ's project (Banverket and Ahlqvist & Co 1991).

² The old Swedish Railways has now split into two different organisations, Banverket with responsibility for the rail system and SJ for the traffic.

The municipal detailed plan is greeted by positive reactions among representatives from industry and from the regions outside Stockholm. The plan also meets multiform criticisms concerning the impact of the project on the environment and the city landscape. Critics particularly emphasize that the project threatens the inestimable historical value of Riddarholmen, pointing out that the planned track would run less than 10 meters from the Riddarholm Church choir and the tombs of the Swedish monarchs. They liken the Third Track project to the destruction of the historical center of Stockholm in the late sixties, an intervention that is today almost unanimously condemned and regretted. Critics repeatedly warn that the Third Track would make Stockholm uglier. They also propose alternative routes that possible new tracks might take, and they suggest developing Stockholm into a city with more than a single center. The National Board of Trade points out that the concentration of so much traffic on only two tracks makes Stockholm, and Sweden, particularly vulnerable in the event of war or terrorist threat.

A long list of state, regional and local authorities, as well as private associations and individuals, express their opposition to the project. Cultural celebrities stage well-advertised manifestations to express their dissatisfaction with the project. True enough, not so few happen to live close to the projected track, so their reaction may remind us, in a highly mediated version, of the well-known not-in-my-backyard reaction. Such a public commitment to a single issue is rare enough in today's Sweden to be worth mentioning. Politicians on both state and local levels continue to support the project, but one begins to hear dissident voices in these circles as well. In particular, the institutional opposition to the project is resolute. Several state and municipal agencies express their concern about the project. In early 1992, the Stockholm Museum organizes an exhibition opposing the project. Most importantly, the Board of the City Planning Department puts a brake on the indispensable detailed plan elaboration procedure.

Many critics promote a tunnel as an alternative to a ground-level track. Most of them are thinking of a tunnel for local and regional trains. However, the National Board of Public Buildings demands an investigation into a tunnel for long distance trains (VBB VIAK 1992). The report is thoroughly criticized by Banverket, and the Board has to abandon the project half a year later for economic reasons. Yet, others suggest that the new track be built on parts of the Central Bridge encroaching on motor traffic-ways.

The political parties involved adopt a final version of the Dennis agreement in September, 1992. The agreement reiterates the necessity of increasing track capacity through central Stockholm. It claims to be indifferent as to which solution is adopted as long as the government finances the project, but specifies that it finds a ground-level track best for commuters and a tunnel solution best for the environment, the city landscape and the nation's cultural heritage. Such a statement, of course, places the issue of who will finance the project at the heart of the debate.

The opposition to the Dennis package in general, and to the Third Track in particular, continues to overwhelm the project with criticisms. Numerous articles in the daily press or reports on the local radio channels spread arguments against the project. The chairperson of the Board of City Planning Department keeps effectively blocking the detailed plan procedure for a ground-level solution.

Although government representatives reiterate that there is not enough money available to finance a tunnel, the tunnel alternative rallies ever-growing support. Banverket responds with a study that compares four different tunnel alternatives with the Third Track and establishes that the latter is always substantially cheaper (Banverket 1992). Supporters of a tunnel alternative nevertheless find in the study a source of new energy. The City Planning Department works out a detailed plan for a local train tunnel and remits it in due form during the summer of 1993, thus putting the tunnel on an equal footing with the ground-level project.

The public debate rages on the Dennis Package and the Third Track. Concerning the latter, some critics suggest that two tracks would be enough if signaling technology is improved, whereas others claim that even three tracks would not be enough, and that a Third Track is indeed a preparation for a fourth one. Critics keep warning about the negative impacts of the project on the environment and the profile of the city. Supporters systematically criticize the tunnel alternative as being too expensive and too inconvenient for commuters who could be forced from the surface down into a station far underground. Alternatives flourish, such as that of a 13-year old child who suggests inverting the solutions and sinking the Central Bridge instead of the Rail Bridge.

The situation seems to be deadlocked, as suggested by the endless repetition of the same pro and con arguments. The detailed plan procedure for a ground-level track has come to a stop, yet no one seems to be ready to finance the additional cost that a tunnel would involve. The financing issue is at this point clearly turning into a confrontation between the government and the city of Stockholm.

One noticeable difference is that the Central Bridge is now increasingly questioned. Challenging the axiom that rail transport cannot take space away from roads, Banverket presents, in November 1993, a newer and more compact version of its project (Banverket 1993). In this new version, three tracks are to run in a surface tunnel that is positioned a few meters eastward on the Central Bridge. A fundamental shift is that this new project requires no physical intervention whatsoever on the historical buildings on Riddarholmen and less encroachment over the water. It requires, though, that the number of car lanes on the Central Bridge be reduced by one. Even critics celebrate the new project as an improvement on the previous ones.

The debate is now structured as an opposition between a ground-level track and a local train tunnel. Subjected to strong governmental pressure, the Board of the City Planning

Department finally agrees, in December, 1993, to abandon its plans for a tunnel and to adopt the detailed plan for a Third Track on ground-level. After a few additional administrative exchanges, the Stockholm municipal council adopts a detailed plan for a Third Track on ground-level in June, 1994 (see Banverket 1994). This voting is somewhat paradoxical, as a large majority of local politicians had said they were opposed to the project.

This decision by the City Council is appealed to the County Government which overrules the appeal, in accordance with a previous statement asserting the national importance of the Third Track. This ruling is then appealed to the government. The destiny of the project is now in the hands of the ministers of environment, communication and culture.

The ministers ponder their decision during the winter of 1994-95. The Dennis package is going through major difficulties: nearly all the projects within the package face dramatic increases in costs; the opposition to the package is growing in public opinion; and the discord within and between the political parties supporting the package is now open. The debate between critics and supporters of the Third Track project is vehement. Supporters repeat their view that the Third Track is a necessity, and that the latest version of the project is rigorously respectful of the buildings on Riddarholmen. This has virtually zero effect on the opposition, which is extremely active and inventive. Critics set up petitions and speak of filing court cases with references to European Union legislation now that Sweden has joined the E.U. The opposition also now gathers a large number of authors, actors and artists who make good use of their ample access to the media to publicize their threat to boycott the forthcoming Stockholm European Cultural Capital in 1998 event. Latvian cultural workers express their concerns about the eventual construction of the Third Track, and so do a group of thirty Italian senators. For the media, the Third Track is a “hot story” and the debate clearly turns to the advantage of those opposed to the project, at least quantitatively. Although it has been officially abandoned, the tunnel alternative keeps being presented as an alternative to the

Third Track. The debate has also increasingly become a question of “restoring Stockholm”. Certainly, the pressure exerted on the ministers concerned by public opinion is intense.

In May, 1995, the government decides to declare the Stockholm City Council’s decision on building the Third Track null and void. To some, it is somewhat paradoxical that the state now overrules a decision that it has forced the municipality to take, but one should mention that it is not the same persons in charge now and then. As an echo of the growing success, during the winter 1994/95, of the idea of questioning the sanctity of the Central Bridge, the government also appoints a committee to investigate not only a Third ground-level track alongside the existing rail bridge, or a rail tunnel, but also a new rail bridge where the Central Bridge is now, the latter being replaced by a tunnel. A year later, this committee recommends the later solution as the best one possible (SOU 1996:121; see also Banverket 1996). This solution is radically different from what was discussed before: it is still a question of a tunnel, but now for cars. The committee’s proposition is widely applauded, except by those who want a quick solution to the track capacity issue and who emphasize that the proposal does not specify how the project is to be financed. A few months later, influenced by court decisions that mean major delays for several projects in the Dennis Package, the government terminates the Dennis agreement in February, 1997, and replaces it with a smaller investment program. Concerning the Third Track, the government however appoints, in June 1998, yet another committee, this time to assess, together with the City of Stockholm, the possibility of replacing the Central Bridge by a tunnel. The conclusions of this committee are released at the end of September 1999. They suggest, without touching upon the financing issue, that one either construct the Third Track on ground-level while sinking the Central Bridge, or build a two-track tunnel for local and regional trains.

Concisely, what ten years of debate have achieved is the replacement of one choice situation, between 'a Third Track on ground-level vs. a commuting train tunnel' with a 'Third

Track on ground-level and Central bridge in a tunnel vs. a commuting train tunnel' choice situation.

Take Us Into The Genesis of The Project

An obvious lesson that one can draw from the Third Track case is that the life of projects starts long before any intervention is planned, or decided, or even conceived. Whereas much inquiring interest has been paid to the conduct of projects in terms of design, sharing responsibilities or scheduling tasks, less research interest has been paid to studying how projects become projects. The conditions of their coming into being, i.e. their genesis if one uses a biological metaphor, is nevertheless essential to their becoming or even merely their existing at all. Shall the Third Track be built on ground-level or in a tunnel? Shall it be a tunnel or not? If yes, will it be a tunnel for trains or for motorcars? The genesis is the time of all openings as well as the first closures. It is a period when broad options, general guidelines, strategic choices -- call them what you will -- are imagined, formulated, confronted, transformed, relinquished or praised to the skies. It is the time when the first boundaries of the project emerge in terms of who will participate and take a stake, and who will not, or only later -- all standpoints to be confirmed, challenged, moved, or re-negotiated later. Also, the Third Track case shows that the earliest phase of a project may even involve aspects that are usually regarded (e.g., Christensen and Kreiner 1991/1997) as belonging to later phases such as planning or evaluation, the dynamic of anticipations integrating all phases of a project's life into its genesis phase.

Not that the genesis would be previous to action, as it already consists in a set of actions, but that it consists of actions that have the definition of the project as a purpose rather than the realization of this definition as a goal. The genesis occurs when the conditions of possibilities are put to the test as well as when the legal process and the process of

institutionalization get under their ways. The project is still in a conditional mode, its existence depending on various contingencies, but if it is to exist at all, the genesis is when it acquires the key substantial features that ground its further becoming. This makes understanding how projects become projects crucially necessary.

The New Rhetoric

Look at how a project becomes a project. Before it becomes, if ever, a field for concrete (and iron bars) actions, the Third Track has been a field for verbal and scriptural ones. Indeed, debated as much as it has been, the Third Track has probably already covered more paper surface than it would ever cover ground, quite a distinction for a transport infrastructure project. The point is that if we are to use the years 1989-1999 of the Third Track history as an example of a project's early genesis, we need to understand the dynamic of the debate to which the project has given rise. But for a few tens of meters of tracks built under the provisions of an earlier detailed plan, the project is so far nothing more than the various interventions, proposals and counter-proposals, decisions, or detailed plans, in short the arguments pro and con the project, produced during these years. An understanding of how and why ten years of intensive debate have resulted in neither an abandonment nor a construction start of the project requires an understanding of how the public debate has led to hardly anything more than the replacement of a track on ground-level vs. in tunnel alternative by a train vs. motorway tunnel alternative. As exemplified by the Third Track case, urban projects in their early life are debates. To me, this means that if we are to understand how projects come into being, we need to understand how debates (public ones of course, but also private deliberations) lead to some kind of agreement (even vague, temporary and contradictory) about this "what-to-do" that is labeled a project.

Public debates are at a remote distance from perfect dialogues between rational actors convincing each other on the mere virtue of their arguments. It is for example unclear who participated in the debate, as the list of debaters was fairly open, changing, and ended up being quite long. Structured sequences of proposals and direct answers, eventually followed by counter-proposals and counter-answers, have likewise been rare. Even contributions aimed at responding to a given person or meeting a given argument have been scarce. Arguments came instead from all sides at the same time, more or less focussed, more or less specific, more or less innovative. They piled up helter-skelter in newspapers' archives, official protocols, as well as the actors and the public's fainting memory.

One way to approach such a debate situation is to use the analytical framework developed by the Belgian logic philosopher Chaïm Perelman, together with (at least at the beginning) Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, back in 1958, that is known as the New Rhetoric (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958; Perelman 1970, 1977/1982; see also Maneli 1994 and Meyer 1986).

The New Rhetoric is the study of discursive techniques that aim at eliciting or increasing the adherence of an audience to ideas that are presented for its approval. The New Rhetoric systematically unfolds and analyzes the way arguments in a debate work this adherence out. It is reminiscent of classic rhetoric in that it focuses on how arguments convince, but with the difference that it extends its scope to written as well as spoken communication, that it stresses the social dimensions of the debate (e.g. how the orator defines the audience, how the orator is defined by the situation or what is the social significance of the situation), that it takes into consideration every kind of audience (including intimate deliberation, i.e., talking to oneself), and more generally that it refuses to reduce how things are formulated to some ornamental trait of the discourse – the form of the argument is as significant as the content. The New Rhetoric is also reminiscent of logic in that it aims at

establishing the rules that govern the production of meaning, but without restraining itself to the artificial situations and artificial languages that formal logic affects. The New Rhetoric fights Descartes' idea of restricting the rational to formal logic. It wishes to restore the legitimacy of argumentative logic, and it focuses accordingly not on situations pertaining to artificial and formal systems, but on situations where so-called natural languages are used such as law, ethics, politics or philosophy. To achieve its ends, the New Rhetoric starts from both the specific character of the ideas present and the characteristics of the situation at hand, and proceeds through a systematic analysis of how people manage to agree or not on common semantic grounds. It aims at understanding how people reason in science, in ordinary life, about facts, values etc. It is a theory of practical reasoning that accounts for both the social and semantic aspects of collective sense-making, among which decision making, that which makes it particularly relevant to organizational studies.

Table 1: Schematic presentation of the New Rhetoric

<p>(after the table of contents of the <i>Traité de l'argumentation</i>, Chaim Perelman et Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958)</p>
<p>The New Rhetoric is the study of discursive techniques that aim at eliciting or increasing the adherence [French: l'adhésion] of an audience to ideas that are presented for its approval [French: l'assentiment]. It can be schematically decomposed as follows:</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The frame for argumentation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) How the orator defines the audience b) The purposes of the orator
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The premises of argumentation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The audience's agreement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Premises based on reality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facts and truths Presumptions - Premises based on the preferable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Values Hierarchies Loci of the preferable: quantity, quality, order, existing, essence, person b) The choice of arguments c) The presentation of arguments
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Argumentative techniques <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Quasi-logical arguments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contradiction Definition Reciprocity and transitivity Comparison Probabilities b) Arguments based on the structure of reality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Causality Co-existence c) Arguments founding the structure of reality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples, illustration, models Reasoning by analogies: metaphors d) The dissociation of notions

One can in particular systematically process the elements of the debate on the Third Track through the analytical framework of the New Rhetoric so as to unfold the dynamic of the debate (see Table 1 for an overview of the New Rhetoric's analytical logic). The New Rhetoric's interest for situations that remain outside formal systems and involve natural

language and ordinary practices requires that one pays careful attention not only to the nature of the ideas present but also to the specific traits of the situations at hand, understanding who is involved, in what, and under which conditions. To understand the dynamic of the debate, one has for example to keep in mind that the Central Board for National Antiquities, which was among the firmest critics of Banverket's successive projects, has a legal duty to supervise public buildings (SFS 1988:1229, 5§) and to express itself when major interventions into any of these buildings are considered (SFS 1988:1229, 7§). Environmental organizations or the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce, likewise, view the Third Track through the lenses of their own reason for being. Also, the interventions of some actors condition that of others. The two highly respected dailies *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*, for example, had a prominent role in the debate. The editorials they published between 1990 and 1996 – initially negative, then positive, then negative again and then positive once again – decisively influenced public opinion, including the cultural celebrities who were to take a very visible stand against the project. By opening their columns to articles or letters on the project, moreover, these newspaper not only placed the project in the collective awareness. They also made it possible for this public awareness to express itself. A (self-) maintained media dynamic being created, the semantic impact on the formal decision process was to be decisive.

The control by some actors of some if not obligatory at least highly necessary passage points (after Callon 1985) provided their arguments and decisions with an incomparable weight. Few ballots were, for example, as important as when the Stockholm City Planning Department reverted its position from opposing the third ground-level track and defending a local and regional train tunnel solution, to approving the three tracks in a tunnel detailed plan. The City Planning Department's decision weakened the tunnel alternative more than any argument against it. Debates involve flesh and blood actors who tend to act according to the institutional logic of the organizations they belong to, and with

corresponding impact. As repeatedly emphasized by Perelman, it is misleading to disentangle the mere content of the arguments present from the social form taken by a debate if one is to understand what determines the adherence of the audience.

If one continues to use the New Rhetoric's analytical framework and focuses on how the debate unfolded, starting with how the orators have defined to whom they aim their message, it appears that in their attempt to reach the universal audience that is the ideal of a democratic debate, the two sides have approached the public both in a general manner and as the composite grouping of specific audiences each to be addressed in a specific way. How orators proceeded, however, has changed as their purposes evolved. First came a will to heighten public awareness to either the need for (pro-side) or the dangers of (anti-side) the Third Track. This involved broad arguments, for example about the necessity to build up traffic capacity or to defend the buildings on Riddarholmen, supposedly appealing to rather large and unspecified audiences. Then came the time when one wished to pass or stop the project at the various stages that compose the formal decision process. Broad arguments were then paralleled by more specific ones, such as scenarios or impact studies, aimed at more specific audiences, such as ecologists, car owners, politicians, or business people, deemed as influential. It is important to observe, though, that most specific audiences had an interest in the project only insofar as the protagonists' insistence, the media's interest in the question, or the openings for public participation provided by the legal procedure succeeded in creating it. Most audiences did not pre-exist the debate but emerged as a result of it. Creating an audience is where any debate starts, and whereas the pro-side (e.g. the Stockholm public transportation authority or the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce) was rapidly mobilized, most efforts by the anti-side involved managing the issue's visibility so as to place the Third Track on the public's agenda in order to influence the decision makers. The asymmetry of the various positions was, here as in many other aspects of the debate, patent.

Yet, as Perelman (1977/1982: 21) observes, a speaker can choose to use as her point of departure only the theses accepted by those she addresses. Yet again, there are only few true indisputable facts or truths concerning the Third Track. The historical character of the Old City and Riddarholmen, or the heavy concentration of traffic in the area, are among the few facts of the case. Facts are rare and the protagonists have to rely upon assumptions or values. The debate opposes for example the importance of catering to the future of train transportation to the importance of taking care of the historical value of the buildings on Riddarholmen. The debate was necessarily mostly a matter of opinions. All agreed, for example, that major damages have already been inflicted on Riddarholmen, but whereas the pro-side considered that the new plans would have only a minor negative impact or perhaps even a minor positive one on the islet, the anti-side claimed that the limits have been reached already and that it has come to a point when it is necessary to restore Riddarholmen rather than continue to affect it. In the great tradition of (urban) projects, the real gives way to the preferable.

To be more precise, the real gives way to value hierarchies. Protagonists, in effect, happened to agree on values. Both sides acknowledged progress as an end in itself whether it meant ameliorating the life quality of commuters (comfort, reliability, cost), defending the environment (air, water, noise, social aspects), improving the country's safety in case of war or terrorist threat, or sustaining the image of the City. Economy, too, was unanimously celebrated, for example in terms of a condemnation of waste, in particular of taxpayers' money. More generally, all invoked the value of respect, whether it applied to nature, history, morality, or legal and democratic rules. What the New Rhetoric emphasizes, instead, is that what the protagonists differed on is how they ordered their preferences.

Hierarchies more than values are what characterize an audience, or for that matter the spirit of a time period, as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca observe (1958: 109). Classicism,

they suggest, prefers durability whereas romanticism privileges precariousness. People need to create hierarchies to solve the conflicts they experience between incompatible values, and thus be able to organize their adherence to arguments. This is why future generations are opposed to past ones, broad solutions to small ones, and local interests to national ones.

Schematically, the pro-side preferred accessibility to environment, to use a dichotomy introduced by Nordqvist (1989). Defenders of the Third Track project placed their preference in economic growth rather than conservation. They gave their priority to the improvement of transportation before city embellishment, even if they readily emphasized that a new railroad bridge would reduce traffic noise and stressed the aesthetic qualities of their project. They preferred reason to feelings, and opposed the realism of their solutions to the idealism and the symbolism of the criticisms addressed at the Third Track project. They were keen on sticking to the formal procedure of decision making, preferred action to deliberation, and actualizing solutions that exist rather than waiting for potentially better ones that may appear later on.

Those opposed to the project, on the contrary, tended to adopt opposed hierarchies, with preserving (alias restoring) Stockholm's beauty, but also the need to improve public transportation, standing high. They distrusted a rapid decision and advocated instead a procedure based on broad citizen participation. They fought economic and technical realism that they accused of past mistakes, and advocated, instead, the virtue of idealism, in which they saw the potential for a renewal of urban thinking and urban practice. To a functional description of the city, they opposed an image built on everyone's experience. They respected the formal process but readily supplemented it with street and media agitation, some even going so far as envisioning the eventuality of non-legal actions to stop the project.

The arguments present were thus more dissimilar in *how* they organized the ideas they relied upon than in *which* ideas they used. Indeed, supporters did not differ much from

opponents regarding their choices of topics or *loci*. Both sides alike made an intensive use of the locus of quantity (e.g., how many people would be affected, how much the project would cost), locus of uniqueness (e.g., how special Stockholm is as a city, or how unusual the Denis Agreement is as a democratic procedure), locus of order (e.g., the superiority of principles on ends _ or the opposite), or locus of the person (e.g., emphasizing Bengt Dennis's background as C.E.O. of the National Bank or alluding to the artistic status of many key opposition figures either to credit or discredit the idea they support).

The arguments used by each party are not necessarily very different in what they refer to. The differences are instead in how each side structures its approach to the debate. Not everything can be explained in terms of how the orators define the audience or how they establish the premises of their interventions. One needs to get closer to the logic of the debate. In practice this means that it is now time to enter one of the major contribution of the New Rhetoric -- a philosophy developed on the praxis of rhetoric and a rhetoric founded in philosophy -- namely the opposition it introduces between demonstration and argumentation.

Opposing Demonstration and Argumentation

Distinguishing between demonstration and argumentation throws decisive light onto the Third Track debate. On the one side were clearly identifiable supporters such as Banverket or the Chamber of Commerce who spoke with clearly identifiable standpoints. On the other side were loose networks of actors who could forever repeat the same arguments, but in a large range of forums and in such a way that they gave the impression of a massive rather than a repetitive criticism, moving their positions in an independent manner, allegedly a major advantage.

Promoters of the project have schematically built their advocacy of the Third Track by first setting a range of conditions concerning current and future capacity, claiming that

there is a need for a new track, and thereafter showing that a ground-level track would be the optimal solution from both economical and traffic perspectives. Once their position was established, they then defended it with only few changes. The opposition to the project followed a different approach. It kept its standpoint open, and developed it in a non-constraining manner. The opposition to the project accommodated contradictions by decoupling issues rather than reconciling them. It did not try to present a block of allegedly indisputable ideas as supporters of the project did, but let its position evolve over time so as to form and fit the evolving contingencies of economy, mentalities, or necessary points of passage. The opposition took advantage of the process's timeliness, whereas time functioned for the supporters of the project as a disturbing externality.

Pro-projects and anti-projects favored radically different sorts of knowledge. Whereas the supporters of the project presented strict computations about traffic or costs, the opposition mobilized the non-quantifiable values of history or aesthetics, emphasizing that such values are non-quantifiable, precisely to place them beyond factual criticisms. Whereas supporters tried to respond to the best of their ability to what they saw as factual criticisms with factual changes in their projects, the opposition permanently invented new arguments and new forms of public interventions. Whereas supporters of the project emphasized the importance of the Third Track for traffic in the Stockholm region and the south of Sweden, opponents planted their claims in the very soil of the Riddarholmen by symbolically selling shares of the islet to finance their campaign.

The opposition between the two parties is thus not only a matter of diverging views about the track. It embodies diverging views about what is receivable knowledge and what is not. As such, the Third Track debate is an example of the opposition that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958: 17 ff.) claim exists between *demonstration* on the one side and *argumentation* on the other. Demonstration and argumentation differ radically in their

epistemology. Whereas demonstration refers to truth, argumentation refers to opinions, justifications and criticisms. Demonstration, in this respect, presents itself in an a-temporality that relies on the eternal character of reason, whereas argumentation relies on the timely contingency of individual, social and historical conditions. Demonstration is marked by its assertion of univocality and furthermore by declaring its independence from language. Argumentation, on the contrary, acknowledges its dependence upon the variety of orators, audiences, and situations of communication. Whereas demonstration presents itself as a bloc that irremediably goes from premises to conclusions, argumentation evolves over time and remains open ended. Demonstration avers its independence from a time context, whereas argumentation acknowledges its embedment in it, this difference being particularly important, stresses Perelman (1970).

Demonstration and argumentation address their audiences in radically different manners. Demonstration relies on the idea of evidence and is as such constraining, whereas argumentation is a matter of gaining adherence. Argumentation is never definitive; the adherence of the audience being reversible, argumentation lives in situations of precariousness. This means that argumentation works by progressive repetitions as well as modifications, in a way that is adapted to each and every audience, so as to maintain the adherence of its audience(s) to the ideas present. Not that argumentation is only made of mobility, incertitude, unpredictability, or arbitrary choices. Argumentation may be of a changing character; it is actually structured by a series of stability factors that rather suggest a series of knots than a running flow. These knots are, for example, decisions to be taken, concentrated reflection before a judgement, recess after the *res judicata*, or standards set by precedents. Again the role of time is central to the difference between demonstration and argumentation. The order of the various steps of a demonstration is a matter of internal logic answering to the requirements of rational consistency, which makes a demonstration

reversible. The order of argumentation, on the contrary, is a matter of availability and appropriateness of the argument at the time of the argumentation, which inscribes the argumentation in its time. (Perelman 1970)

So whereas the position of the supporters of the project has remained largely stable over the years, the opposition has not only been multidimensional but also of a changing character. The project could, for example, be simultaneously criticized for asserting the need of a Third Track when the two existing tracks would be sufficient if new signaling techniques were installed, *and* criticized for concealing that four tracks were actually what the near future would require. Likewise, whereas Banverket's original project was heavily criticized in 1990 for encroaching on the historical buildings on Riddarholmen and the adjacent bay, the later one in 1993 received only marginal approval for not doing it. The point is that the opposition to the project had, in the meanwhile, taking advantage of the key influence of some pivotal media personalities, changed its position from defending historical Stockholm to advocating a restoration of the City. Under such circumstances, no longer touching the buildings had become only marginally relevant. The Third Track project acquired a new content and a new meaning for every social turn the debate took.

As a philosopher, Perelman emphasizes that various forms of logic produce various forms of knowledge, and he invites us to reconsider our approach to argumentative logic and argumentative knowledge. As a theoretician of rhetoric, he also provides us with ways of understanding argumentation as a social and semantic practices. Just as Perelman is both a philosopher and a theoretician of rhetoric, so his New Rhetoric allows us to understand the philosophical foundations of the practice of argumentation.

The Third Track project *is* the debate that it has given rise to, and what the New Rhetoric teaches us is that this debate, and thus the Third Track project, *is* a matter of epistemology, namely an opposition between demonstration and argumentation. Now, the

Third Track is so far nothing but a paper project as argumentation (no-side) has been able to hold demonstration (pro-side) in check. There is, however, no guarantee that this will remain so; the question remains open.

Help Us Understand Why It Has Not

I promised, in the introduction, to tell why the Third Track has never succeeded in imprinting itself into the ground of the city of Stockholm. After a review of various views of projects and urban projects, and a detailed account of the Third Track debate, the importance of the genesis for the whole becoming of the project was emphasized. This was followed by a detailed study of the logic of the debate with the help of the New Rhetoric. Now the time has come to keep one's promises and provide some explanations as to the non-construction of the Third Track.

Several explanations, related to various parts of the paper, will be provided for that purpose. These explanations are partly complementary and partly contradictory. The existence of the debate is here to prove that there cannot be any simple explanations concerning the existence or nonexistence of the Third Track. There can only be intricate explanations, which is all for the best, as the purpose of the paper has been to introduce critical nuances into our understanding of how urban projects become urban projects, and, by extension, how we elaborate the future of our cities.

1. I would like to discard the easy explanation that the project did not materialize because it was bad from the start. Were this the case, there would not have been such an intense debate, as people hardly argue in good faith about what is obvious. The intensity and duration of the debate about the Third Track on ground-level indicates, on the contrary, that the project has clearly had, all the time, good and bad components, and that it has never been *obvious* to sort these out. If we are to understand how and why the Third Track project has become as controversial as it is, it is toward its early history we have to turn our attention,

namely the debate that the project has given rise to. In this regard, how the project was described at any given point of time (such as, e.g., 1989) is only a part of its becoming, hardly an expression of some essence that in itself could explain why the Third Track was built or not.

2. The functional necessity of increasing track capacity through central Stockholm is widely accepted, except for the few who believe that improved signaling technology alone can replace the construction of new track(s). The project represents no technical challenge. It does enjoy the support of many local politicians from suburban municipalities and national politicians outside the capital, as well as of representatives of industry and commerce. What is more, the project of a Third Track on ground-level is largely financed.

The crux is that during the past few years, the Third Track has lost political support in the local and national bodies that have the formal authority to decide. Politicians in a position to make a difference have deemed the Third Track too expensive in its tunnel version and want to know more about its cost in its ground-level version, with the Central Bridge becoming a tunnel. The Third Track has also during that period been associated with the highly criticized Dennis agreement, even though the idea of increasing track capacity through the center of Stockholm has a much longer history than the Dennis package.

Important too is that the length of the formal procedure (proposal, detailed plan, remitting procedure, municipal council vote, first appeal to the county government, second appeal at ministry level, with yet the possibility of a third appeal to the highest administrative court) has implied that the project could hardly pass the whole procedure within a single electoral term. As majorities changed for each election and on each elective level during the period 1989-1999, the project was handled, by turns, by politicians of very different convictions. In practice they had often to choose between either canceling or legitimating

decisions taken by their predecessors, now in the opposition, always a delicate issue in local politics.

What has happened is that the contextualisations of the project have become too weak in recent years. The connections between the project and its contexts have become looser. The Third Track has been accused of representing a non-democratic mode of intervention, even after its detailed plan was passed by a large majority of the City Council. The project is charged with being disrespectful of history and the image of the city, even though, in its latest version, it no longer touches the old buildings on Riddarholmen and encroaches only marginally over the water of Riddarfjärdern. It is denounced for belonging to a past age, while yet being featured as a condition for the future development of railroads. The Third Track is challenged for being out of place, although those who defend the project emphasize that it cannot be anywhere else as long as Stockholm Centralen is where it is. The project has in other words become unstable in its positioning into the contexts that are vital for an urban project, namely economy, politics, ideology, culture, or aesthetics (Rollan 1996), as well as time or place.

3. Uncertainty has remained too strong. The Third Track project has not succeeded in neutralizing other competing possibilities. Hesitation remained as a ground-level Third Track never managed to be formulated as a build or not-build project, but remained *one* alternative in competition, first with a train tunnel and later with a motorcar one (the Central tunnel). The opposition's strategy to systematically champion alternative solutions, even ones that had previously been discarded, was in this regard an advantageous one. Indeed, the only tangible outcome from ten years of debate is the replacement of one two-choice alternative by another two-choice alternative.

Alternatively, uncertainty has remained too weak. Once singled out in the media as being damageable to the City image and more, the project became a symbol for a negative

form of city intervention. Had the project not become that symbolic, it might have passed through the procedure. The publicity the project received in the media, and thus the adroitness of the opposition to use media logic for their own purposes, was in this regard decisive.

The project has not, in other words, succeeded in adequately aligning strong enough translations and strong enough chains of networks of actors so that it could solidify itself, whereas it aligned strong enough translation or networks of actors against it (see Latour 1992). How come? It may be because of the asymmetry that exists between necessary and sufficient conditions. It is necessary for the project to pass through *all* stages of the formal procedure, whereas it is sufficient for the opposition to stop it in *one* of them: in terms of mobilization and networking, this makes an important difference. The answer is, as well, that the project has not convinced and gained adherence for the time-place-people-organizations-systems-content combinations it needed. Regardless of how essential it is from a functional point of view, the project fell, in other words, for its inability to gain adherence for its cause.

4. The genesis of the project depended on the dynamic of the debate. Supporters of the track were transportation-related companies such as SJ [Swedish Railways] or Banverket [the Swedish National Rail Administration], commuters with their legal representatives, and the Chamber of Commerce. They favored the themes of mobility, communication infrastructure as a condition for economic growth (equated with survival of the City and the nation), technology, realism, and welfare. Critics favored the themes of (active) preservation of heritage, the environment, aesthetics, idealism, and welfare. They combined individuals and organizations of various kinds, among them the Central Board for National Antiquities, the National Board of Public Buildings, the Proud City Foundation, environmentalist organizations, and lots of cultural celebrities.

In a way, the debate has been a matter of focalization or point of view, in the sense given to that term in literary studies (e.g. Chatman 1978). One issue the debate emphasized is

through whose eyes we are to look at the city. Literally: shall one keep the tracks on ground-level to preserve an awesome view for train passengers, or can one place the train in a tunnel with the corresponding aesthetic loss for travelers but a gain for passers-by? Or: can one really delay investments in commuting trains because of heritage preservation details when the current situation of traffic means frequent delays for people waiting on open-air platforms in Northern Europe? Or again: why cannot travelers by car sacrifice one lane of the Central Bridge to improve the situation of travelers by train? The question of focalization is a question of whose interpretation of the city the project will give priority to _ commuters, car drivers, flâneurs or even tourists _ and as such a highly political matter.

In this regard, the debate has been a matter of narrative imagination. Each side has produced its own narratives about how the Third Track would affect the city. Focalization was mentioned already; framing too is important. The stories diverge for example in terms of how large an area the Third Track story, or rather stories, should encompass. Some stories end at the limits of Riddarholmen, others at those of Stockholm City. Others suggest that the Stockholm region and even the whole of Sweden is potentially affected by the traffic around Stockholm C (read disturbances). Yet other stories refer to Europe and its common railroad policy, and even to the rest of world, mobilized through the greenhouse effect. Likewise, stories differ on how far back or how far ahead one should go, or who should be considered a stakeholder. The competition is in effect keen apropos who will be the legitimate spokespersons of past as well as future generations.

All these stories are (urban-) fiction versions of the future of the City. They start with a series of “ifs”, continue with a range of promises about how things could be done or avoided, and develop corresponding scenarios about how the City will evolve. And noticeably, they have in common that they share a dramatic, even apocalyptic tone, saying that the non-track/ track implies the death of the City—indeed a tone that echoes not a few art

works, novels or books about the city. (As a narrative device, dramatization cuts across genres.)

The Third Track project turns out to be a space of narrative order where narratives of all kinds are traded and exchanged so as to form a convincing story about how an eventual Third Track would affect the face of the city and, more generally, its future. Some stories emphasized the technical aspects of the project, whereas others preferred to refer to Riddarholmen's specific character. Some of these stories are locally embedded, such as the story about how vibrations from the new track could affect the grave of Magnus Ladulås, a medieval king who is buried in the Riddarholm Church. Other stories enjoy a larger grandeur, such as the one considering Riddarholmen as part of the European cultural capital or the one exploiting the Rio Convention on Environment. On the whole, urban projects and city management appear much more as matters of narrative imagination and textual negotiations than as mere operations of technical purposefulness.

5. In another way, the New Rhetoric shows that debate proved to be a matter of epistemology. As discussed in the earlier section, the protagonists approached the debate in radically different manners. Not that the arguments presented did not often have the same grounds, did not refer to the same information, and did not make use of similar topics or loci. But the campaigns were structured according to what the New Rhetoric considers as opposed logics of knowledge production. Pro-project voices reasoned in terms of a demonstration organized around the idea that the Third Track is a feasible necessity. Anti-project voices, on the contrary, adopted an argumentative logic aimed at gaining the adherence of people to the ideas that the project was a threat to, among other things, the city image, the environment, or the future of the city. This led the protagonists to frame the information they used in opposed manners, to rely upon opposing discursive practices, and more generally to perceive different knowledge as valid.

6. So let me finally, ignorant as anyone else of the future, and in guise of personal conclusion, give my opinion about the case. To me, the Third Track project shows that one cannot demonstrate, but only argue for or against the *genius loci* or spirit of place this beautiful Roman concept for the complex totality of characters that makes a place special to be in, aptly re-actualized by Christian Norberg-Schultz (1979/1984). Our identification with our environment, i.e. our total relationship to it and to the world, is not reducible to a set of formal propositions. It is indeed even hardly reducible to what natural languages or arts can express, but perhaps poetry, some would say. The *genius loci* does not abate to formal proofs; one can at best comment, elaborate and index it. It associates the experience one can have of a place -- casual, exclusive, first-hand or mediated -- with its structure. It is a matter of character, of how place has ended up being made, of meaning. The *genius loci* is what makes a place distinctive. Details as well as panoramic views can express it. It is the identity of the place. And this identity presupposes the human identity of those who identify themselves with the place. The spirit of a place passes over through identification to the city dwellers. Urban dwellers know that. And, the third Track story shows, if they can find ways to publicly express how much a place expresses their being-in-the-world, they will.

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