

Wilfried HACKENBROICH

## Transit space: The corridor Berlin–Moscow and German– Polish border to Poznan

### 1. Transit space

The program Transit Spaces: Transitional Cities in Eastern Europe 2003/04 deals with the dynamics of urban transformation processes in Eastern Europe. It is a postgraduate, international and interdisciplinary program of the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation conceived by Regina Bittner.

The subject of investigations and scenarios of the Bauhaus Kolleg Transit Spaces was the transformation of the urban. Twenty eight participants from sixteen different countries researched seven sites and topics located along the corridor as case studies, namely: German-Polish border space, border city Brest (advised by Wilfried Hackenbroich, architect) urban public sphere in Minsk, micro-areas in Smolensk (advised by Kai Vöckler, artist), clubbing in Warsaw, kiosk trade in Smolensk and global soccer culture in Moscow (advised by Regina Bittner, cultural scientist)

In this article the focus is on infrastructure investigations concerning the spatial order of the »corridor« Berlin–Moscow and the most dynamic part of the »corridor« from the German/Polish Border to Poznan.

Transit space is a metaphor for complex social and spatial dynamics that coincide with the collapse of the Iron Curtain. The simultaneity of social transformations and global structural changes that are taking place in countries of the former Eastern Block bring about radical transformation within the urban space. The corridor between Berlin and Moscow is one example of a new spatial order within post-socialist Eastern Europe, which is held together by the flow of capital and goods, migrant streams, EU expansion, communication networks and the development of infrastructure. »Post« in the term post-socialism refers less to a past but rather refers a new spatial juxtaposition: post-industrial agglomerations of space and medieval agriculture, gated communities and derelict micro-areas or Escada stores and statues of Lenin.

### 2. Outline of the corridor

The corridor between Berlin and Moscow has for the last three hundred years been one of Europe's most sensitive geo-strategic areas. It is the symbol of numerous devastating wars conducted by several dictators. It has divided generations, but at the same time it is one of the most important cultural and trade axes. The overcoming of block divisions, borders and walls comes at a time when the space, which for centuries was regarded as insurmountable for most of the inhabitants, is seemingly open for convenient transit.

From the beginning of the 1990s, the corridor has been subject to new hierarchies and disparities of space. The hope of finding paradise at the other end of the road, with employment work, wealth, perspectives and social security for everybody, lasted only for a short time. Complex factors

like supply infrastructure, national and European work migration, the EC's tough policies and conditions for structural support, lead to new – up to now mainly indistinct – spatial boundaries. Transit economies and multilayered new allocation policies result from the EC's shifting to the East, and cause new spatial structures and differentiations. Beyond the national borders, new invisible but effective spatial barriers and frontiers have emerged.

We looked at transit spaces which are situated along the metropolitan corridor from Berlin to Moscow. This corridor not only facilitates the exchange of goods between the markets of Eastern and Western Europe with convoys of articulated lorries rolling along its transit routes, it also boasts railway links, mobile telephone networks and Internet access. The corridor consists of a chain of privileged locations superimposed on an industrial area that bears all the hallmarks of socialist modernisation and is experiencing increasing disintegration in the wake of transformation and global structural change. This transit spaces are interfaces where provincial communities encounter the world of Nike, Nokia and CNN. They are new urban locations in which the explosive potential that resides in the juxtaposition of new inequalities and the lack of simultaneity in Eastern Europe are all too apparent.

Through our investigation of the corridor we soon discovered that the corridor is a mental construction. The physical condition of this transit space is as diverse as the political, social and cultural conditions. The corridor is fragmented and differentiated throughout its 2500 kilometres. Through various maps we have unrolled the force field of the sections of this corridor. These maps include inventory mapping of services and infrastructure, data we collected during our travel from Berlin to Moscow, also maps of road network, settlements, mobile phone networks and air routes and maps of political unions such as the EU, OSCE, COMECON and Warsaw Pact based on published sources, as well as »mental« maps through an image search via Google that quantifies and qualifies, which visual presence the cities and countries have in the international web community. These different maps, accompanied by reports, interviews and videos have given us deeper insight in the mechanism and developments from Berlin to Moscow.

### 3. Conditions along the corridor

36 hours: that's the time it takes to travel by bus from Berlin to Moscow. Brief stops along the broad and differently developed roads and border controls, interrupt the passengers' doze. While they travel closer to home, the work and living experience of Western Europe offered to them vanishes to dust, becomes transfigured. They pass new premium spaces, they cross cities where time has come to a standstill. Russians working in Berlin with economic success, reach Moscow in a few hours by plane. To travel by bus is the cheap and for many the only way of going back.

Beyond the gaze of transition, the transit corridor between Berlin and Moscow has diverse physical conditions and cuts through heterogeneous political and economic conditions. The area between Berlin and the German Polish border is highly developed, new infrastructure has been built and the former political and economic system of the GDR has been transformed to the West Germany set-up. From 1991 onward an investment of about 35 billion EUR has

been spend for 17 infrastructure projects and about 550 km of high standard highways [1]. More investments have been cried out to stimulate the economic grows in the east part of Germany; in 2004 a political discussion in Germany raised about the validity of these investments. Looking at the 60 km part of the corridor, it becomes clear, that this area has the best infrastructure of the corridor, but looking at the economic condition, this part of Germany is behind – behind West Germany. Cities are shrinking in population, unemployment rate is exceptional high, average income is under the national standard. Yet compared to the east part of the corridor, the German part has the highest living standards (social security, social welfare, education) but it is far from a dynamic grows, from a positive development.

The German Polish border is in a transitory situation. During our investigation from 2003–2004 the border has been dissolving. Since May 2004 the customs control has been removed, triggered by Poland joining the EU. Still there is a immigration control which also will disappear until 2008. This border used to be open and both countries were part of the same political system (COMECON, Warsaw Pact till 1991). During the last 13 years the border was the division between two worlds, a bottle neck for migration, formal and informal trade, a security line of the EU and an 30 hour waiting area for truck drivers. From 1991 to 2000 the control points have been extended and rebuild to fit the EU standards, and in 2008 with the stop of passport control, this border will disappear almost completely.

The German Polish border has given rise to an exceptional development in the west part of the Polish corridor. Stimulated by the proximity and accessibility to the European Union, the economic development around Poznan up to Warsaw has grown rapidly. The Polish industries have taken advantage of the disparity between the EU and Poland, the lower wages and standard for production in Poland and the short ways to the consumers in the EU have increased international investments. While in Warsaw the international services increase (banking, headquarters, administrations etc.) has the area around Poznan attracted the production, based on the tradition of the trade fare and presence of production industries. This economic development has triggered a chain reaction along the corridor, more traffic is moving between Berlin and Poznan, and the small country road is activated by these global flows of goods. Consequently small, informal businesses have been established to cater the service needs of mobility, first in informal developments, recently more formalized and dominated by global service providers. Meanwhile the country road is still in use, while the new highway is slowly being built.

In the east of Poland the corridor is vanishing away, the road is small and the services are minimal. The east of Poland was traditionally the underprivileged area and also today it is dominated by agriculture, abandoned industrial buildings, little economic grows and high unemployment rate. In this area we have looked at Siemiatycze, a small village with 15.000 inhabitants.[2] One quarter of the population travel abroad to work in jobs other Europeans don't want, most of them are working in Brussels, Belgium and commutes by buses. This labour mobility is not uncommon in Poland and creates additional traffic on the corridor towards Europe.

Towards the Polish Belarus border, the activities along the corridor increase suddenly, in Terespol, Poland the border control points appear and traveller in waiting lines populate

the area. This border has undergone similar changes as the German Polish border, until 1991 it was a soft border between »brother« countries of the Soviet Union and with the implementation of the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS) in 1991 the border became a separation line between the states affiliated to Russia and the states attracted to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, Poland joined in 1999). Since 2004 when Poland joined the EU, the border is transformed into a hard border, separating Europe and the CIS. The future will bring an even harder border, with the development planned by the EU to upgrade the border with watchtowers, every 15–20 km along the 1.143 km long border, 5 units of aerial reconnaissance, 60 mobile hand held surveillance devices, 236 mobile heat sensitive cameras and more than doubling of the 5.300 border guards till 2008 [3]. At the same time various perforations of this border take place. The perforation by the EU is stimulated by INTEREG Community Initiative [4], PHARE CBC [5], Tacis CBC [6] support for infrastructure developments in the neighbouring countries.

The city of Brest is aware of the new duty to keep »the undesirable elements« out of Europe.[7], but they have developed the TRIC program (Transborder Information and Contact platform) that is part of the Tacis program of the EU and stimulates the exchange between Brest region and Biala Podlaska in Poland. The upcoming »neighbourhood program« [8] by the EU will allow a better coordination of cross border cooperation and increase prosperity and stability on both sides of the EU border, that allows the non member states to participate in the economic developments of the EU without having the political implications, a EU membership light. Beside this EU perforation of the border, Brest is perforating the border by the Free Economic Zone (FEZ), two production areas around Brest which are exterritorial. The customs of the importing countries is done directly in this free economic zone, taxes are reduced and the production standards and wages are lower than in the European Union. In addition to the perforation of the border by the EU and Brest, the local economic situation has stimulated an active informal economy. Shuttle traders cross the Poland – Belarus border, most of them former managers, teachers or engineers, which sell Belarus Vodka and Cigarettes in Poland and cheap polish products in Brest. This »ant« trade is directly effected by the changing visa regulations and informal traders are inventive to deal with the changes.

The border city Brest shows most directly the effects of large scale politics and economic development. For the transit corridor in Belarus, these effects are less visible, the corridor consist of a mostly four lane highway, interrupted by villages. Along this highway the service stations are decreasing, they are more formal and combined with gas stations. New components along the road are the police control points and the monuments, reminding of the battles being fought in various wars in the last centuries. In comparison to Poland the Belarus part of the transit corridor is more organised and controlled, but it is also less activated by local businesses, only some people next to the road sell a few fruits and vegetables.

The Belarus – Russian border is a semi soft border. Both countries are part of the same political and economical alliance (CIS) and both have shared visa and customs regulation. The control at the border is still needed, but waiting times are short and the control is less meticulous. Behind the border, on the Russian side, the number of informal

services, service agglomeration, monuments and billboards increase, while the infrastructure decreases, the road has mostly two lanes. With each kilometre closer to Moscow, the traffic increases, which is complimented by an increase of even more services, gas stations and billboards, to finally culminate at the fringes of Moscow, where the appearing high-rise apartment buildings are fenced in by billboards.

### 3.1 Outline E30 from the German border to Poznan:

In our deeper research we looked at the 200 kilometres transit corridor from the German – Polish border to Poznan. We analysed the spatial organization, architectural typologies and service provided in the network nodes. We looked at developments and regions beside the transit corridor and at the actors in this border space.

Along the two lane transit road from the German Polish border to Poznan unfolds an intense sequence of service stations, 24 hour bars, night clubs, restaurants and hotels. Complex service stations were built and placed – like pearls on a chain – along new goods traffic axes at so far undeveloped territories. They are nodes in the network of a global flow of goods, information and products of daily use. The increasing traffic generated by the exchange between Eastern Europe and the European Union has effected this transit space. A transformation of a country road into a transit road shows the spatial impact of border regulations, economic factors, different salaries and the flows of goods. The borderline between European Union and Eastern Europe has been transformed into a border space, a 200 km long tentacle reaching into Poland. An entire region has been adapted to the needs of international transition to participate in the flow of goods and capital.

The clusters or points of service are growing out of a small scale village structure and follow new rules. These service stations are an expansive regime, adding new outlines to local spaces. These new places give firstly impulses for entire regions; secondly these premium spaces are interfaces of networks. From the service stations, new networks created by global players are fed, directed and steered. They overlap existing old networks. A new geography, differentiated by the service structures, is building up. In our research we have looked at the »winners« and the »losers« of this race to participate in this capitalism of transition.

The triggers for the increased activities along the western part of the Polish transit corridor are the new factories, the increase of goods being transported to Eastern Europe<sup>[9]</sup>, an increase of labour commuters between Russia, Poland and West Europe and an increase of informal traders.

In the west part of Poland we found three main parts of production facilities<sup>[10]</sup>; the Special Economic Zones (SEZ)<sup>[11]</sup> the first established in 1996, have been marginally successful, even if they are at the 5<sup>th</sup> rank of 13 SEZ locations in Poland. The second form of production facilities are the factories developed out of business relation before 1991, Ikea is such an example with its Swedwood Group, owned by Ikea in the area of Zbaszynek founded in 1991 with new factories build in 1999.<sup>[12]</sup> The third and most successful model for production facility is the area of Tarnowo Podgorne next to Poznan, with 14.000 residents it has attracted 1.800 companies, 32 companies are located directly in the corridor Berlin–Moscow<sup>[13]</sup>. Through deregulation

and a supporting city administration this area has the fastest rate of economic growth in Poland<sup>[14]</sup>.

The triggered growth of services has been mapped along the 150 kilometres from the German–Polish border to Broje.<sup>[15]</sup> The inventory shows a population of approximately 10.000 inhabitants, 16 gas stations, 13 hotels, 12 restaurants, 12 shopping places, 11 cafés, 10 settlements, 9 truck washes, 7 brothels, 6 money exchanges, 6 auto gas stations, 5 truck stops, 4 repair garages, 2 souvenir shops, 2 radio stations and 2 toilets. If we compare these figures with Berlin in a relation per inhabitants, we get the following figures: one restaurant or café for 700 inhabitants in Berlin and for 434 inhabitants on the 150 km Polish corridor, one hotel for 4000 inhabitants in Berlin and for 770 inhabitants on the corridor, one gas station for 12600 inhabitants in Berlin and for 625 inhabitants on the corridor.<sup>[16]</sup> This comparison shows that an urban density exists along the corridor in Poland. Considering that all these restaurants, cafés, bars and hotels work 24 hours it becomes clear that we can speak of a metropolitan activation.

This service agglomeration is right now undergoing a third wave of transformation. The first wave after 1991 was the transition of a country road into a service line with informal, individual services in underdeveloped typologies. The second wave started around 2000, the transformation into formal, legal and developed service with adequate typologies. The success of these new transit service typologies triggers right now more individual investments to participate in this global flow. The third wave is the globalisation of this service market. This transformation has started already in the middle of 1990 with gas stations bought by global brands, but today we see an approach to buy into complete service agglomerations and reshape them to from an environment optimised for global consumption. The next wave of transformation will be the implementation of the highway running east west through Poland. Less than 100 kilometres of the almost 700 planned kilometres of highway has been realised so far. Even though EU funds are provided to build more kilometres of this highway, Poland is not able to afford the 50% to 70% of national financing. The realisation of the highway is thereby slowed down, but sure to come. For the west part of the Polish corridor this means an extreme transformation. Today the E30 country road is slow, running through villages and settlements and enables a direct access to the global stream of goods. The highway will increase the speed of travel, the connection between the bigger cities will be faster and the small villages are bypassed. The only chance to maintain existing services in the future is a highway off-ramp, the silent battle for this infrastructure access is long going on. The investments in the service industries have not stopped, the local investors either believe the off-ramp will be close to their business, or the use of the highway will not be toll free and therefore the existing E30 will be used in the same intensity or the realisation of the highway will take many more years. From our research we know that most of the positions of the off-ramps are decided, but we could not get a definite realisation date; the financing is too uncertain.

### 3.2 Case studies E30 from the German border to Poznan:

The case studies will introduce three typological situations; the new emerging all-in-one-service typology in the case of »Las Vegas« (by Maximiliano Piperno, Nina Gribart, Linda

Hilfling), the interweaving of global service areas and the local village structure in the case of Torzym (by Nina Gribart, Linda Hilfling), and the transformation by global brands investing in the service agglomerations in the case of Orlen (by Nina Gribart, Linda Hilfling).

The »Las Vegas« is a research by Maximiliano Piperno that investigates the new typology that has risen out of the 24 hour informal service agglomeration. The »Instant-City« Las Vegas is embedded but disconnected from the surrounding village Mostki in west Poland, Las Vegas is a singular entity providing everything the transit travellers need. The 24 hour program includes a supermarket, motel, gas station, truck washing, restaurant, bar, money exchange, telephone, truck parking, guarded car parking and prostitution. The user time for truck drivers (75%) can be up to 11 hours, for car drivers (15%) one and a half hours, the amount of trucks at one time vary from 60–70 trucks to sometimes only 20–30 trucks. The Russian truck drivers are at Las Vegas from Monday to Tuesday and the Polish truck drivers at the weekend. The place employs approximately 70 people from nearby towns.<sup>[17]</sup> This Instant-City acts like a mini city, where the truck drivers find all the services and amenities they do not have in their trucks. The drivers cabin in the trucks are well equipped and provide a mobile living unit with radio, TV, refrigerator, bed, small kitchen and family pictures that plug into the service station Las Vegas and complete the mini city.

This successful typology is not a grown agglomeration; it was built and designed to exactly serve the needs of the transit travellers. The village has only a minor role to provide infrastructure and employees, there is no urban relation to the existing fabric, the service station is landed like an UFO in this village, generating 24 hour business and almost urban life.

The research of Torzym unfolds the service developments within a small village.<sup>[18]</sup> Torzym has a population of approximately 1.000 inhabitants and the following transit programs: Motel Pedro, truck wash, Korb Shop, Volvo tire service, AS 24 tire service, Shell gas station, restaurant, Motel Alaska, Motel Pizzeria, nightclub Déjà vu, Motel Marco, Hotel Zajazd Chobry, Hotel Paradise. All this transit programs are along the E30 transit road and only a few meters away the typical small village programs of housing, churches, post office, schools and market squares appear. The entire village has adjusted to participate in the global streams of goods and people, ignoring the heavy traffic cutting through the village and working out a beneficial negotiation between the global and the local needs. Economically the traffic on the transit road is creating a boost, and consequently the village mayor is planning public amenities like a gym, pool and other sport and leisure facilities. The future of the village seems to be secure since the planners of the highway have planned an exit next to the village. In a scenario Nina Gribart and Linda Hilfling have explored the possibility to utilise the highway for the village and avoid the usual bypass the highway creates. Instead of slowing the highway down and preserving the existing situation, they developed an extended service station for the highway that includes optimised program for transit travel (similar to the Las Vegas) and integrates the future local program. A careful balance of programs would stimulate a synergy, offering additional features for truck drivers, while giving business opportunities to the village.

The research of the PKN Orlen gas company is a small scale investigation. Orlen is the biggest Polish gas company and has bought a gas station next to the German-Polish

border which is the first and last Polish gas station before the border. This gas station has risen out of the typical informal single-purpose-unit services and has developed into a 24 hour service agglomeration with gas stations, Bar Venus (restaurant / bar), money exchange and Maier's Western Grill (fast food). The Orlen company has recently used rather direct means to clean up their surroundings, so that their brand image was not affected - or rather infected - by the improvised style of the informal services next to it. Orlen erected a wall blocking access to Meier's Western Grill and the money exchange. They effectively walled the Grill in while the customers were walled out. This resulted in a decrease of customers from approximately 1.000 a day to 100 - a month! Consequently the Grill was closed down soon after. Beside the documentation of this global effects on a very local situations, Nina Gribart and Linda Hilfling have contacted Orlen and questioned the design, as well as suggested minimal interventions to alter these wall, unaffected by this communication, Meier's Western Grill was closed and Orlen still hasn't answered. This case study showed quite simply, how the third wave of development along the transit corridor is working within this grown structure and that the next development is not consequently to the benefit of local business.

#### 4. Conclusions along the corridor

Along the transit corridor between Berlin and Moscow we find very diverse conditions; in Germany has a very good infrastructure and no economic development, in Poland is a minimal infrastructure and prosperous business, in Belarus is good infrastructure and minimal business and in Russia is the basic infrastructure and some business along the corridor. These conditions are depending less on infrastructure than planners might think, most of the developments are linked to political and global economic factors. While national investments in Germany go primarily into infrastructure developments, in Poland the economy is stimulated by the proximity to the EU and deregulations. In Belarus the economic development is slow, despite the good infrastructure, due to political exclusion. Yet, the argument is not that infrastructure is irrelevant, but there is a basis condition needed for the infrastructure to have an effect. Poland is more often losing in the global competition for factories, like the Hyundai Motor Group decided in March 2004 to go to Slovakia also because of the better infrastructure. After the rapid grows in the west of Poland the country has reached a point, where further growth can only be stimulated by infrastructure developments. In Germany the investments should have stimulated and enabled local growth in combination with deregulation to reveal potentials and consequently enhance the growth with infrastructure developments.

The future perspective for the countries along the corridor might include a shift. The rising living standards in Poland and the rising production standards demanded by the EU will increase the production cost in Poland. The future highway in Poland will bring Belarus closer to the European market. It is predictable that the low labour cost and low production standards in the Free Economic Zones around Brest will attract business to Belarus, if the political situation promises a secure investment.

On a local level, the development might include the bypass of villages by the freeway. The advantageous partici-



pation in the global flows might turn into a decay of employment along the corridor, turning the villages to suburbs of Berlin, Poznan and Warsaw. The question for planners is how the global speed along the corridor can be provided, while the local businesses can participate. New service typologies need to be developed, based on the existing evolutions, but extended to integrate the global standard and needs.

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Wilfried Hackenbroich, M.Arch.(USA), Dipl. Ing. Architect, Advisor of the Bauhaus Kolleg (Event City, Serve City, Transit Space, Transnational Space) in the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation  
E-mail: info@hackenbroich.com

### Notes

- [1] Multiplicity (2003), The doubling of the highway, Interview with Hans Jörg Klofat USE, Uncertain States of Europe, Skira Editore S.p.A., Italy 2003, pp 114–117
- [2] Researched by Diane Pfeifer.
- [3] Helmut Dietrich (2003) The new border regime at Bug River FFM, Statewatch bulletin Vol 13, January–February 2003
- [4] INTEREG Community Initiative: supports cross-border and transnational cooperation among member states and neighbouring countries, funds only for EU members
- [5] PHARE CBC: support and funding for cross border cooperation of EU members and candidate states
- [6] Tacis CBC: support and funding for cross border cooperation between the western border region of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldavia and the EU member states; related links by the European Union: [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/document\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/document_en.htm)  
[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/index\\_en.html](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/index_en.html)  
[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/index.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/index.htm)
- [7] Alexander Sergej, vice mayor of Brest, in a meeting in Brest, October 2003
- [8] »Wider Europe: Commission to strengthen cross-border cooperation with new neighbours«, press release by the EU, DN:IP/03/922 Date: 01/07/2003, Brussels, July, 2003, <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/docs/news.htm>
- [9] Increasingly the transport companies choose the northern route to Moscow, via Lithuania and Latvia, due to the more demanding customs regulations in Belarus.
- [10] Researched by Martin Cagno.
- [11] Special Economic Zones locations in: Kostrzyn since 1996, 246 ha, 23 companies; Gorzow Wlkp, since 2001, 62 ha, 2 companies; Slubice since 1996, 101 ha, 23 companies, Nowa Sol since 2001, 48 ha, 1 company, source: Bartosz Begej, marketing manager SEZ, Kostrzyn – Slubice, in an interview in March 2004 with Martin Cagno and Wilfried Hackenbroich
- [12] Robert Gdula, Production Manager The Swedwood Groupe, Zbaszynek area, interviewed in March 2004 by Martin Cagno
- [13] 14 from Germany, 7 from Poland and 11 from other West European countries
- [14] Waldy Dzikowski, District Administrator, Tarnowo Podgorne, interviewed in March 2004 by Martin Cagno
- [15] Researched by Nina Gribat and Linda Hilfling.
- [16] Research of quantities and locations for Berlin: [http://www.berlin.de/branchenbuch/\\_bin/index.php](http://www.berlin.de/branchenbuch/_bin/index.php) Berlin with 3.4 million inhabitants, 270gas station, 4860restaurants and cafés, 840 hotels and accommodations.
- [17] Manager of »Las Vegas« interviewed in March 2004 by Maximiliano Piperno.
- [18] Researched by Nina Gribat and Linda Hilfling.

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