Axis contracts ("contrats d’axe") as a French way to make TOD happen?

About some French recent experiences furthering the integration of public transport supply and land development strategies

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Danish National Transport Conference | Aalborg (Denmark) | 24.08.2015
Axis contracts:
a french innovation
of public local authorities
Origins and principle of axis contracts

- First appearance in Toulouse (2002), then Grenoble
  => Foster the coherent implementation of land & transport plans
  => A response to a strong demand for new lines from peripheral communes

- Bottom-up initiatives that have spread in different regions, around diverse public transport lines (tram, metro, bus, train)

- A mutual engagement between:
  
  **The transport authority**
  Implementation of a new transport supply

  **The municipalities deserved**
  New dense and high-quality developments around stations
Overview of the axis contracts

- Île-de-France: Extension of metro line 11
- Grenoble: Tramway E line
- Genevois (Ain): Cross-border tram + bus
- Pau: Two lines
- Périgueux – vallée de l’Isle
- Toulouse: Several BRT projects
- Toulon – Nîmes: Chemins de fer de Provence (ongoing)
- Avignon – Carpentras
Three examples:

Grenoble – Avignon – Geneva (french side of outskirts)
GRENOBLE
Inter-municipal Transport Authority
(≠ Metropolitan authority)
New tramway line
Axis contract signed in 2011
The case of Grenoble

- The corridor of the new E line (tramway line)
- Main objective: enhance the link between transport and urban development (promoted in a specific charter – 2007)
- Local engagements to favor density and “intensification” around the line
- Municipalities benefit from specific subsidies of the transport authority

(c) SCOT (Regional Plan) of Grenoble area – 2012

- 11.5 km
- 18 stations
- Freq. = 6’ (p.time)
- 45,000 trav./day expected
The case of Grenoble

- June 2011: signature of the Axis contract
- The line has opened in two steps: summer 2014 and summer 2015 (full-op.)
- All peripheral local plans have yet been modified to favour intensification around the line
- Several development areas are completed or under construction (≈ 1,500 housing units)
The bodies involved in the contract of Grenoble

- **SMTC**: Transport authority (local transport network, transport planning)
  - Management of the contract

- **SCOT**: Public body in charge of metropolitan planning

- **Agence d’urbanisme**: Urban planning agency
  - Technical support

- **EPFL**: Public local land-use agency (land acquisition, purchase strategies...)

- **Communes**: Local urban planning, roads, car-parking...

- **Grenoble Alpes Métropole**: Metropolitan authority (housing policies, economic development, public facilities...)

- **Département de l’Isère**: Intercity bus transport, roads

- **Région Rhône-Alpes**: Land planning at regional scale, rail transport...

- **French State**: Roads, urban renewal programs...
AVIGNON – CARPENTRAS

Transport Authority = Région
Re-opening of a railway line
Axis contract signed in 2013
Avignon – Carpentras

- 2015: re-opening of the railway line

- Initiative and leadership: “Région Provence-Alpes-Côte-d’Azur” (PACA) (re-opening + axis contract)

- ~180,000 inhab.
- 30 km - 6 stops
- Frequency: 30’ (peak time)
- Travel time: 30’
- 4,000 trav. expected daily
Avignon – Carpentras

- 17 partners involved:
  French State, Région PACA, Département de Vaucluse, 4 intercommunal bodies, 7 municipalities, public regional land-use agency, public urban planning agency, economic development agency

- Main strategic orientations of the contract:
  - Improvement of intermodality and access to stations
  - Better connections between stations and major city places
  - New developments or urban renewal in stations surroundings

  ⇒ Funding criteria provided by the Région PACA

Contract signed in April 2013

Example of preliminary study of stations areas
An example of urban strategy at a local scale

- The case of Sorgues (18,000 inhab. – 10 km of Avignon)
- Preliminary study: enhancing the connections between the station and the main polarities
- Elaboration and implementation of an “Eco-friendly mobilities” scheme
- New urban development scheduled in the south
FRENCH OUTSKIRTS OF GENEVA

Transport Authority = Département

Two new lines:
Tram + High-Level-of-Service Bus

Axis contracts signed in 2012
The urban area of Geneva (french side)

- “Crossing the border” with two high-level-of-service systems
- Solve a real problem of traffic congestion
- Initiative and leadership: “Département de l’Ain”

Two contracts signed in August 2012

- Completion of the projects... 2018? 2020?...
- 25-35 million Euros each
- High level of Swiss funding: strength or weakness?...
- The commitment of the french communes: increase urban density along the line, high quality design of stations surroundings and public places...
Main lessons from these experiences
**A common method**

- **A preliminary diagnosis** focusing on:
  - Spatial dynamics
  - Mobility issues
  - Potentials for land development

- Production of **scenarios** (transport project & land development) & choice of the **final one**

- Design and **common validation of the “contract”** that indicates the commitments of the different partners (details of the land development projects, of the transport project, main deadlines...)

- **Implementation** phase

- **Monitoring** and **assessment** procedures

An example of method described in the **guide published** by the Urban Agency & the Transport authority of Toulouse (2007)
Different objectives for the partners involved

- For the **transport authorities**
  - A better socio-economic efficiency of the investments made
  - Better coherence between the transport offer and the territorial needs ⇒ more clients!
  - Rationalisation and improvement of intermodality
  - Avoid the competition between... public transport networks!

- For the **inter-municipal / land-planning authorities**
  - Maximize the benefits from a new transport infrastructure by a coherent territorial project ⇒ less urban sprawl!
  - Reduce the modal share of car for everyday mobility by encouraging the use of regional train or HLS transport
  - Reduce traffic congestion and air pollution

- For the **municipalities**
  - Benefit from a new transport offer that increases accessibility
  - Weigh on the definition of the transport project (e.g. location of stations)
  - Find a legitimacy and a technical support for new development projects
Common features

- **A common approach**, but true differences between the cases
  - mainly due to the differences in the “maturity” and **stability of the transport project**

- Axis contracts are all conceived as **implementation tools** of planning documents...

- ... but their own elaboration and implementation take by themselves a **lot of time** and energy!

- “**Conquering new territories**”:
  - from **large & dense urban areas** (and urban public transport)...
  - ... **to medium-size cities**, suburban / rural territories deserved by regional trains
The main added-values

- **Bottom-up initiatives** that favour dialogue between public authorities, beyond administrative boundaries
- A governance tool that helps in **creating frame conditions** for the design of a sustainable project
- Promote a coherent and shared sustainable-strategy, at the **scale of public transport corridors** (new!)
- **A way to raise awareness** on the need for changes in mobility behaviours, and about urban **density**
  
  (e.g. putting density on debate...)

“Making the city with transports”
The charter signed in Grenoble
Some limits of the process

- **Car-use** remains a strong *factor of attractiveness* in many suburban areas – will train tackle this challenge?

- **A frequently unstable governance** (15 to 30 partners...), with sectoral frontiers still remaining

- Until now, **private partners** and **citizens** are hardly ever associated

- **Without a real legal consistency** (contracts?... or *Gentlemen’s Agreements*?), the implementation relies more on long-term commitments and trust between partners
To conclude

- We still haven’t find the magic solution to link transport and land-planning policies!
- Few/recent experiences: too early to assess the concrete effects of these processes
- Nevertheless, axis contracts help to make a real step on the way to sustainable cities
- Some factors of success:
  - Need for a strong political will and leadership
  - Existence of real opportunities for land development and transport improvement
  - Preliminary studies (and their quality!) are crucial to foster the partnership
  - The competitiveness of the transport supply
Thank you for your attention! Any questions?

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