

Coping with Corridors

Agglomeration economies in European transport corridors

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The future development of transport corridors in the new core transport network of the European Union (EU) is one of the main objectives of recent EU transport policy. This corridor approach is advocated as a means to the coordinated development of infrastructure within the core network. Past experience has shown that the implementation of cross-border infrastructural projects is very difficult in a transport network of divergent systems, including a multitude of transport bottlenecks. Transport corridors, incorporating transnational transport networks of infrastructural, urban and economic activity, are therefore being viewed as 'the way forward' in EU transport planning. It is thus assumed that a well-functioning transport corridor will contribute positively to regional economic development. The (economic) importance of transport corridors is increasingly being recognised in both academic and policy discourse on concepts such as transnational governance, trying to face the increasing interdependency of regions and cities. However, the empirical validity of prospects for regional economic development potential in transport corridors is much less evident. The aim of this paper is therefore to fill this hiatus in the knowledge on corridor development, by carrying out a quantitative, empirical analysis on the factors influencing the economic development potential of regions interested by transport corridors. In this paper, regression modelling using a unique dataset of 227 European NUTS-2 regions will be supplemented by performing spatial regime analyses on at least three distinct European transport corridors. We will test for the occurrence of agglomeration externalities both inside and outside the corridors. Among the corridors identified is the important and well-known transnational transport axis 'TEN-T Corridor 24', connecting the hinterlands of the Port of Rotterdam (The Netherlands) and the Port of Genoa (Italy). This paper argues that regions within European transport corridors grow faster in employment, being embedded in a diverse economic environment, compared to other European regions. This outcome builds on the notion that the type of agglomeration economies in combination with the structure of the economy matters for the prospect of structural economic growth in regions. These findings

bear similarities to the suggestion that agglomeration economies will positively contribute to economic growth in core regions, reinforcing the uneven distribution of economic activity across EU territory. In this way, the outcomes of this paper do not only contribute to enhancing the empirical scrutiny of the corridor concept in EU transport policy, but also provide interesting new insights on how to cope with corridors in developing smart, sustainable and inclusive places.

Key-words: agglomeration economies, spatial regime analysis, transport corridors, European Union, diversification, smart specialisation

Gateway Themes (in order of importance): Infrastructure and development (N), Spatial analysis and regional economies (H), Local and regional economic development (O), EU Regional policy and practise (A)