

The Five Lives of HB Südwest: Zurich's Main Station Development from 1969 to 2019

RICHARD WOLFF

Building on top and along the edges of Zurich's main railway station has been one of the most contested issues of urban development in Switzerland's economic capital. Located in the very centre of the city and at the heart of both the regional and national public transport system, Zurich Main Station had long been a focus for more intense land use. Over several decades, many different projects with ever changing coalitions of investors were developed. For more than 30 years all plans failed. They were defeated by ecological associations, political parties, referendums, economic recessions and infighting among developers. The case of Zurich Main Station presents the whole range of stakeholders in the urban development process and how they used all the instruments available to them to promote or impede, respectively, one of the largest projects this country has seen. This is also a detailed account of the vagaries of a large-scale urban development scheme in a global city under a régime of direct democracy.

Introduction – HB-Südwest is Eurogate is Stadtraum HB is Europaallee

First plans to develop the railway land above and around Zurich's main station date back to the late 1950s. Over time, they have changed names four times: HB Südwest, Eurogate, Stadtraum HB, Europaallee but they all have the same aim, to redevelop the railway land in the very heart of the city. For the past 50 years, the development of the main station area has been a dominating topic of Zurich's politics and is emblematic of the city's ambition to become a truly international metropolis.

The main promoters of the station area development – albeit in varying alliances over time – are Swiss Federal Railways (SBB – Schweizerische Bundesbahnen)¹ the City of Zurich (the municipality), the Canton of Zurich (the province) and a plethora of

investors, amongst them the 'cartel of banks' (Cattacin, 1994, p. 134), most prominently UBS and Credit Suisse, as well as the *crème de la crème* of corporate Switzerland, and large housing cooperatives, hotels and schools. Opposing them are varying constellations of adversaries. Most prominently, Switzerland's green alternative Association for Transport and Environment, VCS (short for Verkehrsclub der Schweiz), activists and inhabitants of the adjacent neighbourhoods, District 4 and District 5, as well as politicians from different parties. Caught in the middle from the beginning, and playing a crucial role, stands architect Ralph Baenziger, for decades the main planner of the megaproject. Three citywide referenda, endless court hearings and several street demonstrations provide the backdrop for urban development under the régime of Swiss direct democracy in times of global city competition.

This article will put the development around Zurich's main station into a broader context of urban politics. I will analyse the various phases of planning with a special emphasis on the current planning and construction process. I will look at the decision-taking procedures and the regulatory framework in politics and planning, with special regard to the dialectics of node and place (Bertolini, 1996). I will analyse the relations and the tensions between the various stakeholders/agents, participants, the media, and public opinion. What were their respective expectations? What was the 'ability of different actors to shape or affect the overall project setup and outcomes' (Peters, 2009, p. 178)? And I will draw some general conclusions about urban development and global city competition. Who wins and who loses with this project? What does this core project mean for Zurich's further development? What role does this project play in the face of the 'new metropolitan mainstream' (Schmid and Weiss, 2004) pervading the contemporary urban process?

1. The Railway Station as New City Centre in the Nineteenth Century

Zurich's first railway station was built in revolutionary times, in 1847–1848.² The station stands as a symbol for the victorious progressive forces. It soon became the new hub of social, economic and urban development. The city centre shifted from the medieval core to the largely undeveloped land around the railway station. In 1868, a new and much larger station replaced the original building, and a new business district was built around it, including Bahnhofstrasse and the Bahnhofplatz Square (Bärtschi, 1983, pp. 141f), today's CBD.

Throughout much of the twentieth century there were plans to enlarge and 'modernize' the City of Zurich. One of the most spectacular plans, by Karl Moser, in 1933, proposed the total demolition of the historic city centre (Kurz, 2008, pp. 294f; Schilling, 1982, p.

13). Another plan to create more space in the inner city proposed an artificial island with skyscrapers and motorways in Lake Zurich³ (in Schilling, 1982, p. 19). Compared to these rather futuristic and utopian visions, the plans to make use of the 'idle space' above Zurich's main railway station that came up in the 1960s appeared rather sober and realistic.

2. Setting the Scene: The 1960s and the Dreams of Unlimited Growth⁴

The 1960s were a time of unprecedented economic prosperity for Switzerland and Zurich in particular. After the Second World War, a largely intact industrial base, an efficient service sector, and a stable political system gave Switzerland a substantial economic lead over most competitors (Hitz *et al.*, 1995, pp. 208f). While Zurich became one of the world's leading financial centres, the city's growth coalition (Molotch, 1976; Blanc and Ganz, 1986) harboured higher ambitions for their 'little big city'.⁵ A series of urban large-scale projects were designed to raise the city's international status (Peters, 2009). I like to call this thrust the 'grand scheme' of Zurich's post-industrial neoliberal development project.

This 'grand scheme' was boosted by decisions taken at a national level. Thus, in 1945, Zurich was designated as the site for Switzerland's main international airport (see Scholl, 2010, pp. 127f) and, in 1960, national government decided that Zurich should also be the nodal point of the national motorway system, which, at the same time, would provide the city with a dense network of inner-city motorways. Motorway exits and large car parks were laid out to bring customers into the heart of the city (Blanc, 1993).⁶ Both infrastructural prerequisites for metropolitan growth were heavily subsidized by federal tax money. At the regional and local level, the 'grand scheme' was complemented by plans for a metropolitan underground railway, designed to connect the airport with the city centre and future central business

district extensions in the north and the west of the city. Just like the railway and the motorway systems, this new transport infrastructure was also centred on the main station. Looking for yet another catalyst for the rapid transformation of the city, Zurich made a bid for the 1976 Winter Olympics. This mega-event was meant to form the icing on the cake, celebrating Zurich's coming of age as a world city.

To translate this massive infrastructural boost into economic growth, office space had to be increased drastically. The expansion of the central business district was crucial, but blocked by an already tightly built-up city centre as well as strict building regulations protecting the historic heritage. Long before de-industrialization opened up new brown-field areas at the edge of the inner city, i.e. in

Zurich North and Zurich West, today's main development areas, viable construction sites in the city were practically non-existent. The only available space was above rivers and railway land. Therefore, it was proposed to cover the railway tracks and the Sihl River with a combined motorway and linear-city office development (Scenter for Applied Urbanism, 1986, pp. 100ff). The centrepiece of this masterplan was the redevelopment of the main railway station, later labelled 'HB-Südwest' (Main Station Southwest). This idea, first promoted in 1965, was to (a) provide Zurich with a new and modern railway station; (b) solve the problem of connecting the inner-city motorways; and (c) produce an ample supply of additional office space. HB-Südwest was intended to become the flagship project of metropolitan Zurich.

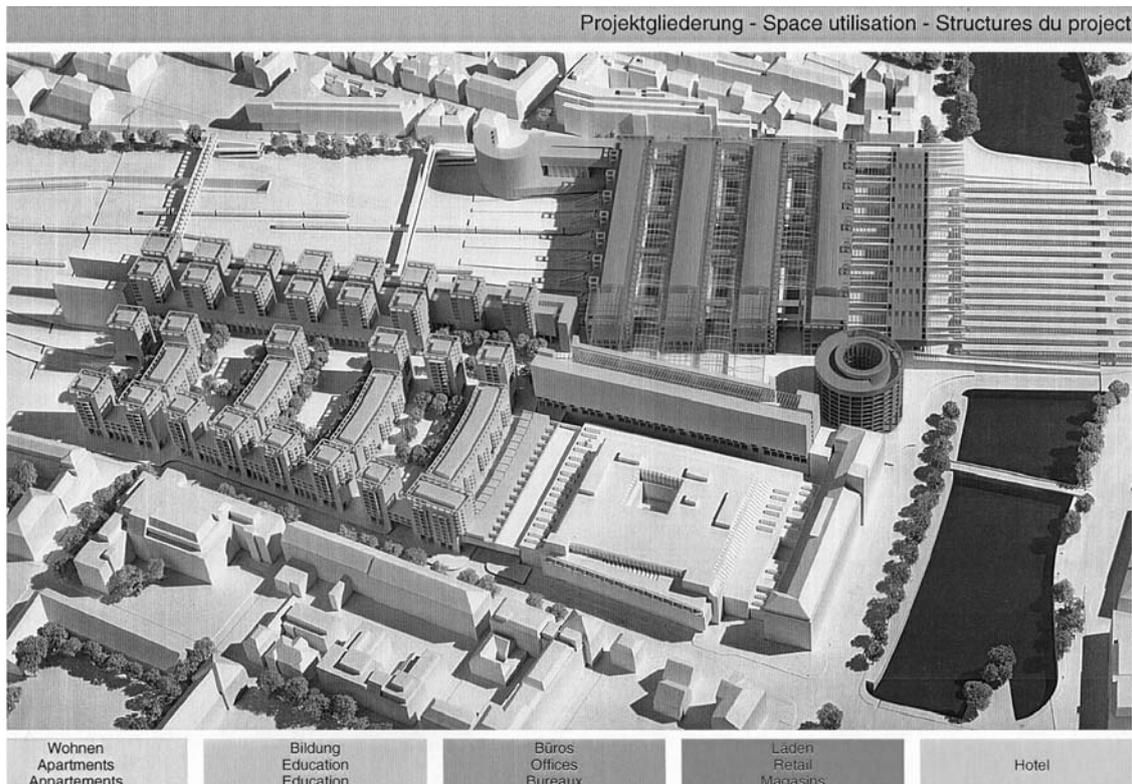


Figure 1. One of the many proposals for Zurich's main station development. Eurogate in 1995 by architect R. Baenziger. (Source: © RBAG)

3. The First Attempt 1969–1973: Project HB Südwest, Phase I: Stopped by Political Opposition, Recession and Monument Protection

In 1969, an alliance of public and semi-public agencies (consisting of Swiss Federal Railways, the Canton of Zurich, the City of Zurich, and the Federal Post) organized a competition for a multi-purpose main station development. The original aim was to enlarge the station at the expense of private investors who, in turn, would be given the air development rights above the railway tracks. In addition to a new station, Swiss Railways was expecting rent incomes of several million francs a year.

The winning project (by architect Max Ziegler) proposed a new station building plus 400,000 m² of commercial floor space, a forty-three storey hotel skyscraper, forty flats and 4,000 parking lots. The 1.5 billion Swiss francs project did not encounter much enthusiasm from the public and politicians. People feared the impacts of a 25-year construction site, rising taxes because of cost overruns, as well as increased traffic and pollution. In the most affected Districts 4 and 5, opponents expected that HB-Südwest would extend the central business district of Bahnhofstrasse into their traditional working-class neighbourhoods with ensuing negative impacts such as rising rents, forced evictions and gentrification.

Starting in the 1960s large sections of the public became increasingly wary of large-scale projects and the proposed 'modernization' of their city. In the Swiss system of direct democracy it was possible for them to express their discontent in referenda. Thus, in 1962, a first proposal for underground tramways was rejected by 61 per cent of voters. In 1969, the bid for the 1976 Winter Olympics was rejected by 78 per cent of voters, and, in 1973, the proposal for a combined underground and metropolitan railway system was turned down by over 70 per cent of voters (Kammerer, 1986; Trammuseum Zürich, nd). Several referenda against inner-

city motorways were yet another expression of the anti-growth attitude of the early 1970s (Schweingruber, 1986; Blanc, 1993).

On top of this growth-critical '*zeitgeist*', the global economic recession, which hit Switzerland in 1973, and the fact that the historic main railway station building was listed for preservation, in 1972, stopped further planning for HB-Südwest.

4. Second Attempt 1978–1992: Project HB Südwest, Phase II: Stopped by Political Opposition, Recession and Internal Quarrels/Factionalism

In 1978, the second architectural competition was launched with guidelines reflecting both the changed political-economic situation and preserving the now listed station building. The new project, by architects Baenziger-Bersin-Schilling, was considerably smaller than the earlier one. Total floor space was reduced to 120,000 m², with seventy flats, and 1,350 parking lots. The project did, however, include options for extensions such as a new commuter station, a pedestrian passage with a shopping mall across the sixteen railway tracks, a hall for public events, a hotel, a town square and another 310 flats. Many of these proposed extras seemed attractive and profitable. Therefore, much time was spent to find an optimized solution.

While the project was being revised time and again, the unexpected outburst of the 'Movement of 1980' (Nigg, 2001; Schmid, 1998) disturbed the *courant normal* of city politics by bringing massive street riots to Zurich with some of the most violent confrontations the city had ever seen. Predominantly young protesters demanded 'the right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1968) and the 'fulfilment of the urban promise' (Lüscher, 1984), i.e. more freedom and spaces of expression, affordable housing (Brutschin, 2010) and, most explicitly, a fairer share of the municipality's cultural subsidies. The city as the 'space of the everyday' (Lefebvre, 1991) became a focus of this cultural and political

urban revolt, thus adding new strength to the critique against growth-oriented urban development in Zurich (Nigg, 2001).

Developers⁷ were therefore exposed to heavy headwinds right from the beginning. In 1983, a citizens association collected 4,000 signatures for their popular initiative⁸ 'HB-Südwest – So Nicht!' (Main Station Southwest – Not like this!). They demanded that the floorspace be cut by half, which, in fact, would have rendered the project unprofitable. Some of these demands were actually met and the project's dimensions were somewhat reduced. In September 1985, the initiative was resoundingly rejected by 70 per cent of voters.

HB-Südwest promoters tried to capitalize on the favourable outcome of the referendum by again inflating the project (by about 50 per cent), much of it to meet Swiss Railways' demands for more space. This was a strategic mistake because the substantially altered project required a new planning permit which gave the opportunity for another referendum. In a fierce battle over the 'real estate development of the century' promoters invested more than a million Swiss francs in their PR campaign. In stark contrast, the opposition forces had only very limited resources to fight the 'folly above the rails' (Snozzi, 1987), but they lost by only a whisker. In September 1988, a mere 50.7 per cent of Zurich's voters said yes to the promoter's area development plan.

In response to the only narrow victory and fearing more opposition, the project was once again revised including lower buildings and a reduced floor space. This 'improved' project received a reasonably favourable reception from the media, public opinion and the city administration. But instead of asking for planning permission, the promoters began some serious infighting, which ended with the dismissal of the leading architect Ralph Baenziger (details see in Wolff, 2004). The 1991 collapse of the real-estate market and the following economic recession dealt the finishing blow to HB-Südwest. At the time

there were about one million square metres vacant office space in the Zurich region. In 1992, HB City Immobilien AG folded and HB-Südwest was officially buried.

5. Third Attempt 1996–1999: Project Eurogate, Phase I: Arising from the Ashes, Stopped by the Stock Market

Ralph Baenziger refused to accept the end of his lifetime project and continued to scheme behind the scenes. The architect-cum-promoter finally succeeded in convincing a newly set-up group of investors to revive the developers' consortium 'HB-Südwest' under the fashionable new label 'Eurogate'.⁹ The signs of the time seemed favourable. The long recession was coming to an end and the main objector in local government, Ursula Koch, had lost much of her support in the elections of 1994. Therefore, a 'revised' project was presented in 1996.

In May 1997, conditional planning approval was granted albeit with a list of more than 200 conditions. Some of them, such as the requirement to reduce floor space by 13 per cent and to reduce the number of parking lots from 1,250 to 643 had the potential of lethally undermining the project's profitability. Promoters appealed immediately and, in April 1998, their appeal was approved. As a reaction, both the City of Zurich and the Association for Transport and Environment (VCS – Verkehrs-Club der Schweiz) demanded a legal re-evaluation, arguing that more parking would cause more traffic in an already highly polluted area. It turned out that what looked like a side issue suddenly became the crucial argument in the whole development.

Despite these legal quarrels, general prospects for Eurogate became brighter still when, in the elections of 1998, an exhausted Ursula Koch was replaced by Elmar Ledergerber as head of the building department. After the first move towards more market-friendly politics in 1994, the 1998 elections meant a reinforcement of the neoliberal wing of Zurich's

Social Democratic Party. Although a social democrat like Koch, and despite the fact that his then company had earlier written the rather critical environmental impact assessment for the station redevelopment, Ledergerber was an open supporter of Eurogate.

Again, just like their predecessors, the new group of promoters failed to take advantage of this favourable situation. Instead of steaming ahead and trying to find compromises on contested issues, they became entangled in a series of lawsuits. In the meantime, alternative investments in the booming stock markets were promising easy money. Thus, in 1999, the investors announced their withdrawal and dealt another 'final blow' for Eurogate.

6. Fourth Attempt 1999–30 April 2001: Project Eurogate II: Stopped by the Ecologists and Rational Logic

Opponents had rejoiced too early, though. In November 1999, out of the blue three of Switzerland's biggest contractors (Karl Steiner Immobilien AG, Göhner Merkur AG, and Bührlle Immobilien AG) along with the world's then third largest bank, UBS, as lead investor, formed a new consortium. This was the most powerful alliance ever to tackle the mega-project. Everything pointed to the fourth attempt finally being the successful one, especially as the political and economic conditions seemed so favourable: the prospering economy had led to a severe shortage of office space; political support for the development of the railway land was now wider than ever; opposing voices had all but disappeared.

In July 2000, the City of Zurich granted planning permission for a 1.5 billion franc project with 250,000 m² floor space for 5,000 jobs and 500 flats. Despite the still pending lawsuit on the number of parking lots, local administration conceded 891 parking lots in contrast to the officially still valid number of 643. As could be expected, VCS immediately filed a complaint.

National railway politics played a decisive role in this phase. Independent of and parallel to the Eurogate project, Swiss Federal Railways had been developing plans for a new subterranean railway station, Bahnhof Löwenstrasse, with four tracks to overcome the notorious bottleneck of Zurich's main station. The two projects were on a collision course. Before starting the excavations for the new railway subterranean station, it had to be clear where the pillars for the platform over the rails would be placed. Therefore, SBB demanded that decisions for Eurogate be taken by 30 April 2001.

On 6 April 2001, the cantonal administrative court confirmed the validity of the 643 parking lots. Twenty-four days remained to find a solution. But promoters were unprepared and/or unwilling to compromise and no contract was signed.¹⁰ What followed was a bizarre soap opera of mutual recrimination. UBS first blamed VCS for the failure and then accused SBB for lacking flexibility, before denouncing SBB's greediness. SBB in turn explained its rigidity in terms of technical requirements and organizational deadlines.

What SBB did not say was that they were worried about the project's profitability. Over the years, SBB had seen their share of the profits melt away with every new project the developers proposed. No profits on the one hand, unforeseeable technical problems with coordinating Eurogate construction and the realignment of the tracks on the other hand were increasingly causing them nightmares. One may, therefore, assume that Swiss Railways executives were quite happy to have found an excuse not to sign the deal. And even UBS eventually admitted that they, too, had become sceptical about Eurogate's profitability. All in all, it looks as though VCS's obstruction came in handy for both UBS and Swiss Railways. One might even assume that UBS purposefully provoked VCS in order to find an 'elegant' way out of an impossible situation.

HB-Südwest/Eurogate had died another death; many thought the last one. After 32

years of unsuccessful planning, this type of mega-development over the rails had run out of time. Eurogate had become a dinosaur in a world that had changed. Swiss Railways proceeded with re-aligning the tracks in the station area and started construction of the underground terminal, thus making it impossible to build above the railway land for at least another 10 years.

In the meantime, industrial decline had opened up new development opportunities in Zurich. Huge brownfield sites had become available on the fringes of the inner city, where it was easier and cheaper to build than on top of a busy main station. Areas like Zurich West or Zurich North drew attention and investments away from the inner city. It is also in these areas that a new and more flexible 'cooperative planning' paradigm was successfully developed (Hofer, 2004).

7. Fifth and Final Attempt 2003 Ongoing – Stadtraum HB/Europaallee: Total Relaunch – Same Old Arguments

Even after four unsuccessful attempts, the huge potential of the site continued to stimulate developers' fantasies. Only 2 years after the collapse of Eurogate, in 2003, the fifth – and as we can now say successful – attempt was undertaken. The lessons learned in three decades of wasted effort and political shambles guided a new generation of politicians, planners and architects along a more prudent path. They considered experiences – mainly about incremental development – from abroad and chose a different planning approach.

An experienced, powerful, but small team made up of only three stakeholders: the City of Zurich, Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) and the Federal Post closed ranks, with SBB in the driver's seat. The relaunch took place in a much changed political-economic environment. In the City of Zurich, former head of the building department, Elmar Ledergerber, had been elected Mayor of Zurich, in 2002. The pragmatic, growth-

friendly, neoliberal wing of the social democratic party (SP) had been further reinforced with newly-elected city councillors (executive).¹¹ Railway politics had also changed fundamentally. And, in 1999, SBB was changed from a state agency into a shareholder company (albeit with 100 per cent of shares held by the state). In 2003, its real-estate division was formed into an independent company to make it a cash cow for SBB. This company was obliged by the federal government to help cover the deficit of railway operational services and it should also help finance SBB's pension fund (Wolff, 2010; Marti and Bösch, 2010). With Europaallee, SBB was clearly 'expecting a higher rate of profit than with Eurogate', as Urs Schlegel, head of SBB Real Estate, noted (NZZ, 2004, p. 51).

What further helped the project was that after many years of major uncertainty, Switzerland's economic and political future again looked more predictable, stable, and safe. Relations with the European Union, as well as the future of the banking secret started to become clearer.¹² And, as often before, even in stormy waters Switzerland's economy fared well. Zurich as the uncontested economic centre of the country was once again an attractive destination for businesses, not only banks, but software research and development companies.¹³

A New Planning Process

To emphasize that the new project would begin with a clean slate the project was re-branded *Stadtraum HB* (literally 'City Space Main Station'). Two important decisions were taken. Both project area and planning process were redefined. Only the land on both sides of the track field was incorporated in the project perimeter (see figure 2). The idea to build over the railway tracks was abandoned. Instead, parts of the Post Office plot¹⁴ were included and the building area along the tracks was extended further north. This permitted a development comparable in size to

the one formerly intended above the tracks.

In a first phase, only the larger 78,000 m² area on the south side of the station has been developed and labelled Europaallee (see www.europaallee.ch). After a 'test planning process' (Hochparterre, 2005, p. 7), started in September 2003, architect Kees Christiaanse¹⁵ was commissioned to draw an outline development plan, which would then be proposed to local parliament in December 2004. Christiaanse was mindful of previous objections and paid special attention to urban design, continuing the existing streetscape, enhancing public squares with public art, and dedicating ground floors to public and semi-public uses. All these measures not only soothed many critics, but were widely acclaimed by the public. Christiaanse proposed 320,000 m² floor space, divided into eight separate plots (see figure 3) with mixed uses for shopping, housing, public spaces, a school and a hotel. Whereas the specific mix

may not seem new (all of Baenziger's projects had suggested pretty much the same use mix), there was an unquestionable advantage: this project did not have to be built in one go. In 2009, it was decided first to develop the much larger area on the west side of the tracks. This area was re-labelled Europaallee (see www.europaallee.ch). It comprises 78,000 m² of building area.

The Third Referendum and Fading Resistance

Despite concessions and improvements, critical voices persisted: the density of the project (with a Floor Area Ratio or FAR of more than 5:1) caused much concern; the use mix with mostly office space, luxury housing and hotel rooms¹⁶ was still heavily criticized; ground floor usage was deemed user-unfriendly, alien to the neighbourhood, and unsafe; the lack of affordable housing and public infrastructure, the lack of and the

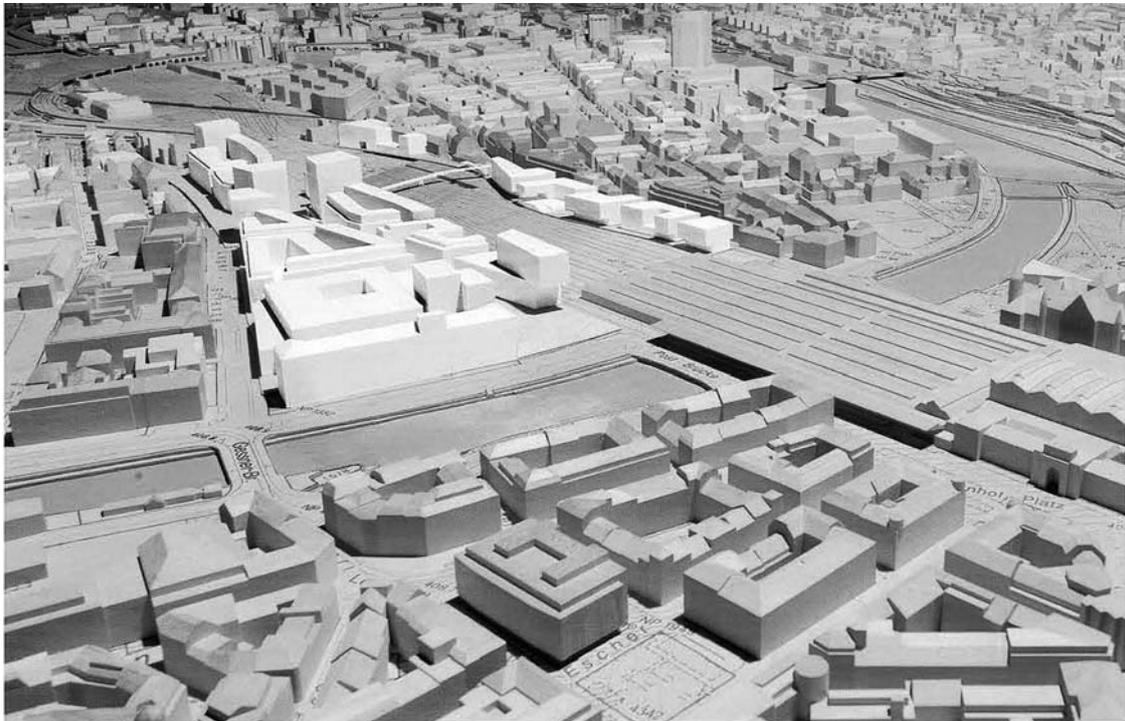


Figure 2. Stadtraum HB (white inserts) with Europaallee on the south (left) side and a smaller future extension 'Zollstrasse' on the north side of tracks. (Source: © SBB)

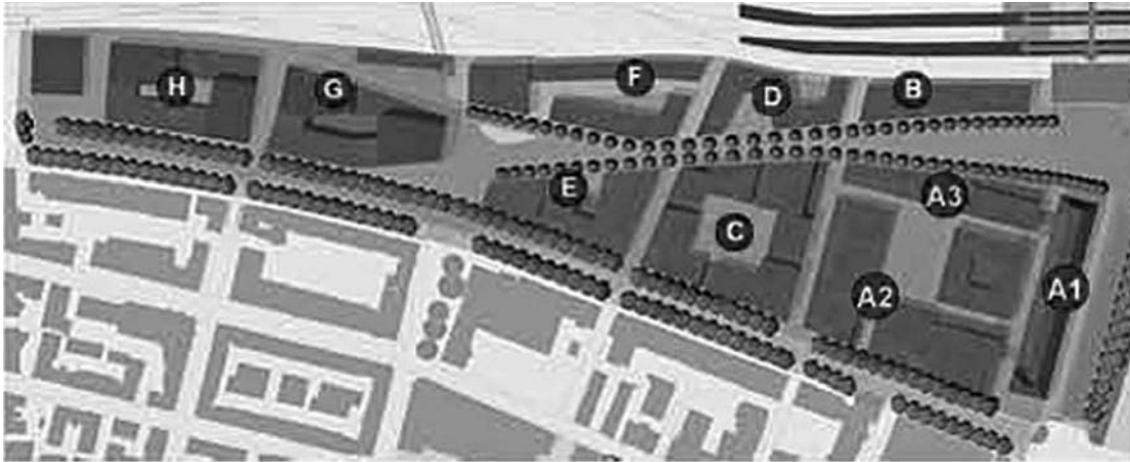


Figure 3. Europaallee site and use plan, 2010. (Source: © SBB)

Key to buildings and uses (in order of construction)

A1: Sihlpost (built): Retail/Restaurant: ~1,000 m²; Offices: ~10,000 m²

A2: Shopping centre / PHZH [Teacher Training University] (under construction); Retail/Restaurant: ~6,000 m²; Remaining space let to Pädagogische Hochschule Zürich

A3: Private bank Clariden Leu (under construction); Retail/Restaurant: 1,200 m²; Remaining space let to Clariden Leu

C: UBS (under construction); Retail/Restaurant: ~1,100 m²; Remaining space let to UBS

To be built between approximately 2011 and 2016

E (to be finished 2014): Retail/Restaurant: ~1,400 m²; Offices: to let, ~1,300 m²; Apartments to let: ~6,800 m²; ~64 apartments; The remaining space let to Swisscanto bank

G (2015): Retail/Restaurant: ~1,200 m²; Offices: ~7,400 m²; Condominium apartments: ~7,700 m²; ~42 apartments; Homes for the elderly: 7,400 m²; ~70 apartments

H (2016): Retail/Restaurant: ~1,400 m²; Offices: ~14,000 m²; Rental apartments: ~5,000 m²; Hotel: ~6,000 m², 130 rooms

To be built after 2015

B: Retail/Restaurant: ~1,000 m²; Offices: approx. 8,000 m²

D: Retail/Restaurant: ~1,800 m²; Offices: approx. 10,000 m²

F: Retail/Restaurant: ~1,800 m²; Offices: ~12,000 m²; Rental apartments: ~10,000 m²

bad design of public space, and the lack of any planning gains for the public were other arguments against the project.¹⁷ Opponents also denounced the blatant lack of public participation in the planning process. The so-called 'cooperative planning process' chosen to achieve the outline development plan is basically planning behind closed doors by the administration and the developers – excluding the public. One open public meeting of two hours was all that had been conceded.

The strongest objections were those against intensified gentrification of the neighbourhood, still dominated by working class, immigrants, artsy *avant-garde* and political activists.

Stadtraum HB is seen as an extension of Zurich's business centre posing a threat to low rents, neighbourhood shops, small-scale industry, low-end shops and bars. The 'natives' feared the 'intrusion' of bankers, brokers, white-collar employees into their refuge. Therefore, the opposing camp collected almost 6,000 signatures¹⁸ demanding a city-wide referendum on the outline development plan. Ironically, the leading architect of all previous station projects, Ralph Baenziger, stood at the forefront of the protesters. He joined forces with the left and the radical green parties, spending his private money and time to combat his successors' project.

On 24 September 2006, Stadtraum HB was

approved by 65 per cent of Zurich's voting public.¹⁹ Not even the most affected Districts 4 and 5 had voted against the project. Resistance had become much weaker over recent years. Not only because the project, without the decking of the tracks, seemed less menacing, but also because there had been a shift in the neighbourhood's demography. Over the course of the last two decades many long-term inhabitants had left, most of them in the 1990s because of the rampant drug scene ('needle park') (Heller *et al.*, 1995; Bänziger and Vogler, 1990). Others were forced out, when gentrification of the area began after the drug scene had been dispersed (Stadtrat von Zürich, 2004) and programmes against the red light district, 'Langstrasse Plus', started to be effective (Schmid and Weiss' 2004).

8. Europaallee and Outlook Beyond

Construction commenced in 2009. Two-thirds of the area already has designated uses. All in all, 6,000 jobs and about 400 apartments will be located in Europaallee. The first building to be completed is Zurich's Teacher Training College (Pädagogische Hochschule Zürich, PHZ) for 1,800 students. The next projects are those for the headquarters for global bank UBS (for about 1,800 employees and despite the company's massive losses in the financial crisis), the private bank Clariden Leu, Swisscanto (umbrella of Switzerland's cantonal banks, as such the third largest Swiss bank), 400 mostly expensive apartments (both for sale and rent), senior citizen apartments, and a hotel. Much of the ground floor space has been allocated to shops, restaurants, and leisure facilities.

Plots B, D, and F are currently used for a temporary station. They will only be developed after construction of the subterranean station is complete. The other side of the tracks, 'Zollstrasse', will only be developed after 2015. All in all, Europaallee will not be finished until about 2019, 50 years after the first competition for HB Südwest.

There are plans to continue the development of railway lands on both side of the tracks further outwards. The total prospective building area is around 500'000 m² (Amt für Städtebau, 2004, p. 12). As yet, it is not clear what will happen there (NZZ, 2008).

9. Conclusions. Considering the Multiple Errors, Traps and Shortcomings of 32 years of Planning

As a conclusion, I would like to address the following questions: Why was this project so contested and what were the decisive arguments? Why did it take so long to come up with a feasible project? Who are the winners and who the losers? Where does this development take Zurich as a whole?

Why was this Project so Contested and What were the Decisive Arguments?

Firstly, the project's scale and location were unique. Never before in Zurich had there been a comparable project for inner-city development.²⁰ And never since the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the city was dramatically transformed by industrialization and railways (Bärtschi, 1983), had Zurich seen such a thorough intervention in its city centre.

Secondly, there is a particular regulatory framework which offers a wide array of instruments for contesting the urban development process. Neighbourhood initiatives, critical planners and architects, leftist and green parties, and the ecological transport association, VCS, took turns in orchestrating popular resistance. Considering their limited financial and personal resources, their impact was enormous. One explanation for this lies in the elaborate participatory rights in the Swiss planning process. Three referenda, even though two of them lost, slowed down the planning process and caused decisive delays. In addition, relatively strong environmental legislation, with the federal Clean Air Act (Eidgenössische Luftreinhalteverordnung

LRV), gave VCS the opportunity to challenge the number of parking lots, which – as it turned out – became the decisive issue in the legal fight. This shows that under direct democracy, where almost every major issue has to pass a referendum, public opinion can become a powerful regulator of ‘exaggerated ambitions’.

The arguments for and against Eurogate were equally convincing. Supporters praised its positive impact on the economy, the supply of much needed office space in a prime location in the city centre, ten minutes from an international airport, its excellent accessibility by public transport and hence its ecological quality, and its role as a flagship in global city competition. Opponents denounced the damage that building across the rails would do to the fragile urban landscape, its adverse ecological impact because of increased commuter traffic, and its devastating effect on adjacent working-class areas. For both political camps HB-Südwest/Eurogate became a symbolic issue of urban development, where proxy wars were fought out. Two contrary visions of urban development clashed. The growth coalition’s global city Zurich versus the slow growth city with more public and green space, low rents, less density.

Why Did It Take so Long to Come Up with a Feasible Project?

A mega-project in the heart of the city will always (and everywhere) be confronted with any number of obstacles.²¹ Different stakeholders have diverging and changing interests and over the course of time economic and political conditions will alter as well. In the Zurich case the main stakeholders were the City of Zurich, SBB, various developer consortiums and the oscillating alliance of opposition. The city changed its stance several times. Until about 1973 an overt supporter, the city was first stopped by the voting public and then, after a political shift, its attitude became growth critical. For

many years, it was the head of the building department, Ursula Koch, who represented these critical-green values, supported by an important section of the public; together they slowed the planning process. Only after the neoliberal shift of 1994 did the City of Zurich again change its position, ultimately becoming a fervent supporter.

SBB as landowner played a part in prolonging the planning process. It clearly lacked the expertise and determination to define a convincing project. Its internal policies were opaque and often contradictory. Its goals were manifold and prone to sudden re-definition.

Developers did not show much perseverance in their commitment, and were unable to sustain stable coalitions. Diverging interests and expectations made them just as volatile as the other stakeholders. Up until Europaallee, none of the various developers’ groups was able to convince a solid majority of the public about the quality and the benefits of their project. HB-Südwest/Eurogate always retained the image of a purely technocratic and profit-led project. The deplorable part played by UBS in the dramatic showdown of 2001 is a perfect illustration of this dilemma.

However, there were several windows of opportunity, when HB-Südwest/Eurogate could have been realized. Two factors can explain why it did not happen: the ever-changing multi-faceted opposition and the economy. Every time there was a chance to proceed – in 1973, 1992 and 2001 – the economy was fragile, the global situation was uncertain, the banks as main investors were in troublesome times. Again, the size of the project and the required investments were too large for a light-hearted decision. One of the project’s main flaws was that it could not be phased. For operational reasons, the decking of the tracks had to be done all at once and did not allow for piecemeal development. And, the sheer size was critical. ‘HB-Südwest is too large for a city like Zurich. The market can’t take it’ (Stuart Lipton, 1998).²² Eurogate was economically too ambitious, technically

too difficult, and emotionally too detached from what Zurich voters found acceptable for their city.

Who Won and Who Lost?

Looking at the final outcome of the mixed-use development currently being built, some of the results can be seen as a compromise after a 50 year-long struggle. Having wasted an incredible 80 million Swiss francs in planning before Stadtraum HB, the outcome is a much improved project despite all the remaining – and justified – critique. More public space and semi-public ground-floor uses, perhaps even the teachers college in this location, can be listed on the positive side of the balance sheet. Some expensive apartments, housing for senior citizens and a hotel and a lot of office space in a central location can be seen as positive or negative, depending on the standpoint. The struggle for a more modest, eco-friendly, neighbourhood-protecting development has largely been lost. Whether and how much the adjacent neighbourhood will be gentrified and to what extent this is an effect of Europaallee will probably remain disputed.

Where Does this Development Take Zurich as a Whole?

The history of HB-Südwest and its result in the form of Stadtraum HB have taught the City of Zurich, its planners, politicians, developers and corporate elite a number of important lessons. First, Stadtraum HB has proved that it is still possible to realize large-scale projects in Zurich. After a number of failed or still challenged projects (Kongresshaus, Kleeblatt Hochhaus, Hardturm Football Stadium, Zurich's Convention Centre) this is politically important. With Stadtraum HB a new gateway into Zurich and an attractive business city extension has been constructed.

Secondly, Stadtraum HB/Europaallee has also shown that an appropriate planning process is crucial for this type of (mega-)

project. In stark contrast to its predecessors which depended on a costly pre-investment for deck across the tracks, Europaallee allowed for a piecemeal approach in step with economic up and down turns. Giving up the decking and realigning the project's parameter was also instrumental in cracking the opposition lines.

Thirdly, Europaallee and its precursors have shown clearly the limits of private-public partnerships, which in the Zurich case come in the guise of cooperative planning process. Politically, the attempts to sideline democracy with the much-lauded but undemocratic 'cooperative planning process' have failed. From a planning perspective, the limits to outline development plans have become obvious. Public participation remains the key factor in successful planning. The political and legal struggles made it clear that without a very broad consensus, projects of this size and scope cannot be realized in a sensible time span. Planning experience from brownfield developments in Zürich Nord and Zürich West, gathered while HB-Südwest tumbled from one crisis to the next, helped develop more intelligent cooperation processes. Europaallee is thus also a new approach to urban development. The specific style of planning and development represents a much more sensitive (and inclusionary) approach to urban development. Taking into consideration many of the opponents' arguments and combining and aligning them with developers' goals in a both economically and a politically viable way was the key to success.

In a more comprehensive view of urban development, some critical remarks must be added. Stadtraum HB is part of the adaptation process aligning Zurich and Switzerland with the ongoing globalization of urban development and transnational competition between cities (Hochparterre 2005, p. 3). 'There is a strong tendency to sell our cities to those who are able and willing to pay the most. Thus, cities are becoming exclusive places for international investments

and privileged people, leading towards an increasing economization of urban life' (INURA Zurich, 2009, p. 2).

The details of the development Stadtraum HB are now largely decided but further struggles are in sight. The future of the extensive land area owned by Swiss Federal Railways on both sides of the railway tracks is currently being heavily disputed. Demands are wide and varied, often contrary to SBB's aspirations to maximize profits. Affordable housing, workshops and storage room for small industry, spaces for creative enterprises (Klaus, 2009) and cultural venues are only the most prominent demands. Whether or not they can prevail over demands for highest profits, more office space, representative buildings is the contested issue of politics.

NOTES

1. In this text I use the German acronyms of national institutions. This is by no means to ignore reality of the four Swiss national languages each with its own acronym for national institutions and organizations: e.g. Swiss Federal Railways in German: *SBB*, Schweizerische Bundesbahnen; French: *CFE*, Chemins de fer fédéraux suisses; Italian: *FFS*, Ferrovie Federali Svizzere. Formerly a government institution, since 1999 SBB has been a special stock corporation with all shares held by the Swiss Confederation.
2. In 1847, the Sonderbund War (German: *Sonderbundskrieg*) was fought between the industrialized, urban, Protestant cantons and the rural, Catholic cantons. This civil war was the last armed conflict on Swiss territory and ended with the foundation of the modern federal nation state in 1848. According to Friedrich Engels, the Sonderbund war was about whether the Swiss nation would develop into a modern capitalist nation with banking and trade or remain pre-dominantly a loose confederation of cantons, each based on subsistence agriculture. See Marx and Engels (1976) (wikipedia, accessed 30 October 2010).
3. *City im See* by A.S. Bosshard.
4. Sections 2 to 5 are a much shortened and revised version of (Wolff, 2004).
5. Official promotional slogan of Zurich's Tourist Board.
6. There were even plans to use the roof of the railway station for a motorway exchange.
7. The consortium of developers HB City Immobilien AG that was established in 1981 consisted of the then four largest Swiss banks (Swiss Bank Corporation, Union Bank of Switzerland, Credit Suisse, Cantonal Bank of Zurich, two of Switzerland's largest insurers (Zurich and Pax), various large electro-technical and construction companies) (POCH, 1987).
8. Citizens in Switzerland can demand a referendum if they collect a certain number of signatures within a set time. This can be done on the municipal, the cantonal and the national level, depending on the issue at stake. Depending on the size of the political entity the number of required signatures varies. In Zurich this used to be 4000, since 2006 only 2000. After the handing in and the validation of the signatures, the referendum must then be held within two years.
9. Eurogate was obviously alluding to Zurich's gate towards Europe and not to the Watergate fiasco.
10. For a detailed account of this thriller, see Wolff 2004 and Wolff 2001.
11. City council elections of 2002: Elmar Ledergerber, social democrat, becomes mayor, plus three members are replaced by: Martin Waser, social democrat; Andres Türlér, liberal democrat; and Martin Vollenwyder, liberal democrat.
12. With all the bi-lateral agreements adding up to *de facto* EU-membership minus voting rights.
13. Google and Microsoft have joined long-term residents IBM to reinforce Zurich as one of Europe's leading IT (research) centres.
14. In fact, a post office building, constructed only 29 years before when HB-Südwest was being planned, was demolished to make way for Euroallee.
15. Christiaanse is also responsible for the masterplans of Hafencity in Hamburg, the London Olympics, and Science City in Zurich.
16. It was also suggested that hotel space qualifies as housing, thus reducing the true minimum housing ratio.
17. For a detailed catalogue of criticism see <http://www.stadtlabor.ch/uber-5976-unterschriften-fur-referendum-stadtraum-hb/#more-1167>. Accessed 25 October 2010.
18. www.stadtlabor.ch. Accessed 25 October 2010. See also note 8.

19. See http://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/content/dam/stzh/portal/Deutsch/Abstimmungen%20%26%20Wahlen/060924/Resultate_Vorlage%202.pdf.
20. Only transport infrastructure schemes like the motorway-Y and the underground railway had caused similar commotions (Schweingruber, 1986; Lindenmeyer, 1986; Ssenter for Applied Urbanism, 1986; Kammerer, 1986).
21. See also Wolff (1999) for the King's Cross Railway Lands and other European inner city large-scale developments.
22. Stuart Lipton of Rosehaugh & Stanhope, one of London's major developers with projects like Broadgate/Liverpool Street Station, in a personal communication.

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