CAN EUROPEAN MODELS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT GOVERNANCE HELP TO SAVE AUSTRALIAN CITIES?

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INTRODUCTION

In Australia, transit users commonly ask why we cannot have public transport of the quality seen in many cities of German-speaking Europe. Sadly, it seems that researchers less often attempt to answer this question.

Detailed analysis shows that current high levels of car-use are not an inevitable consequence of the physical, cultural or social structure of Australasian cities (Mees 2010b). It should be possible to provide high-quality public transport, with correspondingly high ridership and improved economic efficiency. Since at least the early 1980s, various social movements have articulated the limits to auto-dependence, but Australian urban governments have not been able to achieve public transport outcomes comparable to those of European exemplars, nor even those of Canadian cities like Toronto and Vancouver. Research suggests that the fundamental problem lies in the way Australian cities have chosen to organise, plan and deliver their public transport services (Mees 2010b; Stone 2009). In most cities, there is a clear need for better mechanisms for planning and funding both operational expansion and infrastructure construction. This has been recognised in various policy investigations (IA 2009; Productivity Commission 2010; Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee 2009), and was reflected, in the policies at least, of the major opposition parties at recent state elections in Victoria and NSW.

Much of the relative success in public transport in German-speaking Europe has been ascribed to the model for 'organising cooperation' adopted in almost all Swiss, Austrian and German urban regions (Pucher and Kurth 1996). Fragmented responsibilities and differences in motivation between governments, public transport operators and passengers have long been recognised as a major problem in public transport governance. In response, small coordinating authorities, called *Verkehrsverbünde* (or 'transport alliances'), have been established to resolve the many competing priorities.

The paper compares public transport performance in Melbourne and Sydney with that in four cities from German-speaking Europe. This is followed by a discussion of the political and institutional factors that have contributed to this variation. In the European examples, these factors range from broad-scale issues like the re-structuring of large state monopolies such as German National Railways (*Deutsche Bahn*) to local processes for timetable planning employed by individual *Verkehrsverbünde*.

This analysis forms part of a three-year ARC Discovery project: *New paradigms for urban public transport planning in Australia: assessing the capacity of institutions and infrastructure*.

The paper concludes with directions for later stages of this project.

COMPARING PUBLIC TRANSPORT PERFORMANCE: AUSTRALIA & GERMAN-SPEAKING EUROPE

US researchers report a bright picture of the performance of public transport in Germany in the last two decades (Buehler and Pucher 2011). They have collated data from the German Association of Public Transport Companies (VDV) to show significant improvements in ridership and financial returns:

> … public transport boardings per capita increased by 22% between 1992 and 2007… the share of operating expenses covered by passenger fares increased from 59% in 1991 to 77% in 2007, and inflation-adjusted subsidies per passenger declined by almost 40% (pp. 126-127).

This analysis covers all forms of public transport in Germany, from buses in small towns to the high-speed inter-city trains for business travellers. It shows the effectiveness of a range of broadly consistent policies at

national and local level over many years. However, to make useful comparisons with the performance of public transport in Melbourne and Sydney, it is better to use data from large, essentially monocentric urban regions, for which public transport services are provided by a combination of rail, tram and bus. In this paper, comparisons are made with the urban regions of Berlin, Munich, Vienna and Zurich. Of these, Zurich is relatively small, but it is included because its transport system, on many measures, is the most sustainable in Europe.

Each of the European urban regions has a historic, densely-settled, central core, but their public transport systems are also relatively successful across large areas of urban development that are as new as the suburbs of Melbourne and Sydney (Buehler, Pucher and Kunert 2009). In Germany and Austria, the central areas of almost all major cities lay in ruins after World War II, and, outside the inner core, residential densities are not significantly higher than in the Australian cities. Moreover, the automobile industry is very strong – estimated at 20% of GDP in Germany (Buehler et al. 2009, p. 6) – adding a further potential disincentive for public transport expansion.

Table 1 shows the performance of public transport in Melbourne and Sydney compared with that in the chosen European urban regions. For all cities except Sydney, data on regional populations, per capita tripmaking, per capita service-km and cost recovery has been compiled from published Annual Reports and from government budget papers. (In Sydney, such data is not published in this way: it was obtained with the assistance of the NSW Bureau of Transport Statistics.) These parameters give a measure of the attractiveness of the public transport service and of its economic efficiency. As well as current performance, Table 1 also shows trends over the past 10 or 20 years – the base year varies with the availability of data, some of which comes from Kenworthy and Laube (1999).

The first observation from Table 1 is the much lower level of per capita tripmaking in the Australian cities. This is not surprising. However, the interesting point is that, in order to deliver ridership at levels more than three times those seen in Melbourne or Sydney, it was not necessary to increase the supply of public transport service in the same proportion. In fact, in the two German cities, solid growth in per capita public transport use was achieved while net service supply fell.

The reason for this remarkable difference in efficiency is found in the different principles underlying the design of public transport services in Europe and Australia. These difference reflect diametrically opposite responses to the challenge of providing public transport in modern urban regions.

The essence of public transport, reflected in its name, is carrying people with different trip origins and destinations in the same vehicle. These travellers can then be transported with lower economic and environmental costs than if they travelled separately. This is public transport's strength, but also its weakness, because people don't all have the same trip origins or destinations. As homes and workplaces continue to disperse, public transport faces increasing challenges.

One approach to diverse, 'anywhere to anywhere' travel patterns – typical in Australian cities – is to provide 'tailor-made' services for different travel markets: express buses and trains for peak commuters; regular buses for local trips along busy corridors; and car-like paratransit for low-demand corridors and times. The problem with this approach is that the more public transport becomes tailor-made, the more it surrenders its environmental and economic advantages. A public transport system offering a direct service between every origin and destination would have low frequencies, low occupancies, high costs and high greenhouse emissions per passenger.

The alternative is networks. Instead of tailor-made public transport, transfers can enable provision of a 'ready-made' service. This approach enables 'anywhere-to-anywhere' travel while keeping occupancy rates high, by carrying different kinds of travellers on the same services. Visitors to Paris soon learn that this is how the city's Metro works: nearly every trip requires a transfer, but transfers are free and high frequencies ensure minimal waiting. Even in the dense urban setting of the City of Paris, it is not economically feasible to provide high quality, transfer-free services; in dispersed environments, the difficulties are much greater. The idea behind the 'ready-made' model is to provide a stable network of routes that operates consistently and at high standards throughout the day and week, catering for as many different trip types as possible with as few different services as possible. (More detail on this, and its application to Australasian cities, can be found in Mees 2010b; Mees et al. 2010; and Nielsen and Lange 2005.)

Creation of the 'network effect' is central to the higher efficiency in the use of available public transport service supply in the European cities. Very different internal arrangements and political circumstances lie

behind the performance data for Melbourne, Sydney and the cities in German-speaking Europe. In the remainder of the paper, these factors are described and the prospects for future growth are assessed.

Table 1: Efficiency of public transport services in Melbourne and Sydney compared with selected cities in German-speaking Europe: 2009/10

	Population (millions in region served by transit authority)	Land Area (region covered by transit authority - km^2)	Tripmaking (unlinked, per capita)	Service-km (bus + tram + train-km, per capita)	Trips/ service-km	Trend in per capita tripmaking	Trend in per capita service-km	JTW by PT (% of motorised travel)
Melbourne	4.05	2,200	116	35.4 (includes school buses)	3.3	+35% (1990-2010)	+5% (1991-2010)	15%
Sydney	4.3	2,600	119	37.4 (without school buses)	3.2	-25% (1991-2010)	-19% (1991-2010)	22%
Berlin-Brandenburg (VBB)	5.95	30,370	212	63.8	3.3	+20% (2000-2009)	-9% (2000-2009)	n/a
- **State of Berlin (core of VBB)**	3.43	891	394	77.7	5.1	+20% (1999-2009)	-11% (2000-2009)	n/a
Munich (MVV)	2.5	5,470	241	34.8 (including S-Bahn but not regional trains)	6 (approx.)	+9% (1990-2009)	-3% (2000-2009)	34%
Vienna (VOR)	2.5	8,440 (includes a peripheral 2,000 km^2 for which the VOR coordinates a regional train network centred on Vienna. All other public transport is co-ordinated by a separate alliance.)	353	Unit for reporting is seat-km so not comparable		+17% (1992-2009)	+18% (1992-2009)	n/a
Zurich (ZVV)	1.45	1,840	399	53.8	7.4	Extensive growth of ZVV coverage since 1990 makes trends difficult to define. In 1990, trips/service-km = 2.9 in ~1,000km^2 around central Zurich.		46%

INSTITUTIONAL FAILURE IN THE AUSTRALIAN CITIES:

Melbourne

Fig. 1 shows the long-term trend in per capita tripmaking in Melbourne. Annual per capita public transport boardings in Melbourne fell to an all-time low in 1990 following the failure of public transport reform during the Cain years, culminating in a dramatic strike and 'tram blockade' by tram workers (Stone 2009). Patronage recovered by 1992 and remained virtually constant through the service cuts of the early Kennett years and, then, through the first years of privatisation. Despite a government commitment to increase public transport mode share to '20% by 2020' (DoI 2002), departmental planners and private executives had no expectation that this target would be met, and the growth in patronage that commenced in 2005 took them by surprise. Evidence for this and the material below comes from 'exit interviews' with senior managers from the departing franchisees following the re-tendering of tram and train contracts in 2009 (Stone 2010).

There has been relatively little investigation of possible causes for the recent growth. Government analysts point to rising petrol prices, increased environmental awareness, and substantial rises in the share of workers employed in the CBD – the 'niche' market which public transport is set up to serve (Gaymer and Kinnear 2009). Analysis of ABS journey-to-work data suggests that the latter theory may not hold up. From 2001 to 2006, there was no increase in the concentration jobs in the inner-city, and there was a slight dispersal of the destinations for public-transport work-trips (Stone and Mees 2011).
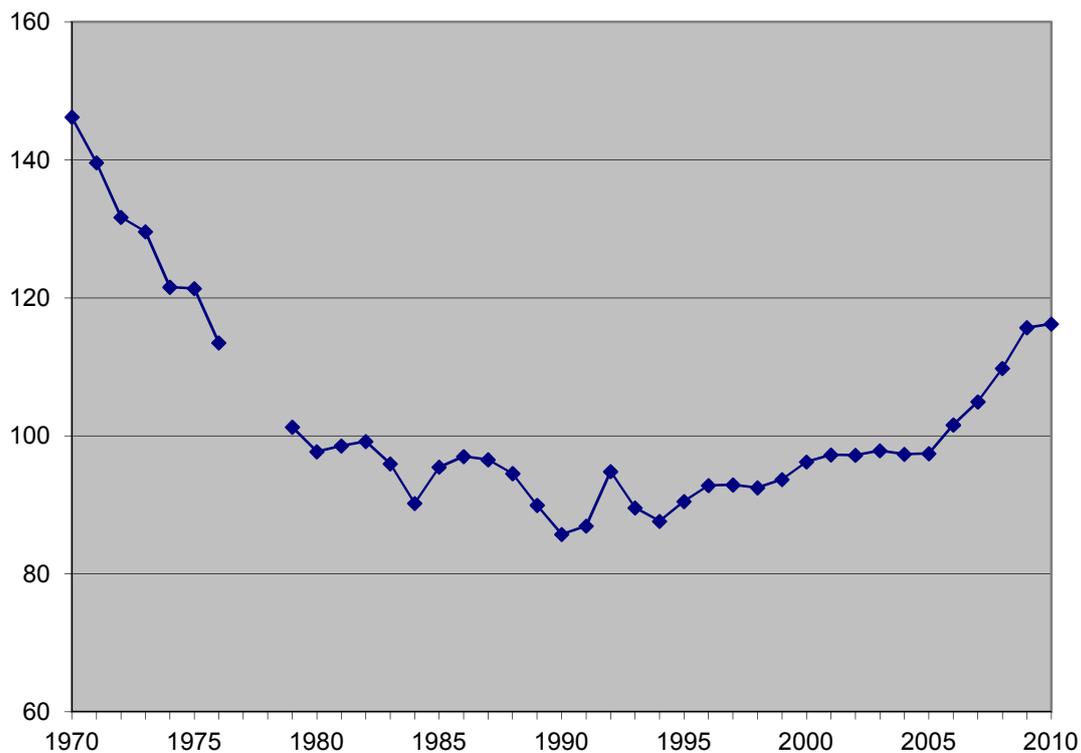
Figure 1: Per capita annual public transport tripmaking in Melbourne (data from operating authorities)

The first response of the operators and government transport planners in 2005 was to assume that the growing patronage was "a blip" (Stone 2010). For more than a year, a range of exogenous explanations were put forward, including petrol price rises and a 'boost' from the Commonwealth Games held in March 2006. It was generally assumed that patronage growth would quite soon fall back to the old pattern of parity with population growth.

The 2003 franchise contracts, re-written after the collapse of the original contracts when wildly optimistic growth targets failed to eventuate (Mees 2005), assumed that the pattern of slow patronage growth would continue unchanged. No formal mechanism existed to deal with the reality that the operators faced after 2006.

The ALP proposed a series of plans – each little more than "a grab bag" (Stone 2010) of capital projects with little or no scoping or planning behind them (Mees 2010a). Some projects were quietly abandoned from

one plan to the next. And, the rationale for a large inner-urban Metro tunnel and an expensive separation of suburban and regional services has been hotly debated, largely around the question of a supposed 'capacity crisis' in the inner city rail network (Dotson 2009; Eddington 2008; Mees 2010a). In this, the government and its agencies have exhibited a strong strand of defensiveness that extends to employing consultants to debunk their critics (Lucas 2010b) rather engaging in constructive debate. This defensiveness and the focus on infrastructure spending over changes to operational arrangements can partly be explained by the absence of the operational perspective inside the state transit agency whose role, following privatisation, had shifted from transport planning to contract management, exacerbating the loss of experienced staff that had begun many years earlier.

Melbourne's perennial problem of fragmented service planning (Mees 2000) remains unresolved. When asked, in 2009, who was responsible for intermodal coordination – a prerequisite for achieving the efficiencies embodied in the 'network effect' – senior staff from the relevant agencies all replied that it was someone else's responsibility (Lazanas and Stone 2010). Despite Government rhetoric, timetables across the different modes are not coordinated. The administrative complexity of the franchise agreements is compounded by unrealistic expectations that financial incentives will drive improvements in intermodal planning and by a lack of professional skills and knowledge in modern transport planning theories and practices. Perhaps in response to publicity over the parlous state of planning for intermodal coordination generated by this research (Lucas 2010a), an internal restructure the Department of Transport has now created a 'Multi Modal Planning and Coordination Unit', but any application of new skills is not yet apparent.

Elected in November 2010, the new government, despite promises to establish a new Public Transport Development Authority to "ensure services are integrated" (Baillieu 2010), is yet to reveal how this promise will be implemented, and it has shown little evidence of a desire to reform the basic structures of public transport management in Melbourne. This includes a continued reluctance to engage in consultation and debate and an apparent willingness to accept uncritically advice from incumbent bureaucrats.

While planning for growth continues to lack focus and credibility, there has been a significant increase in operating costs under the franchise model. Cost increases were first raised publicly in 2006 (Mees et al. 2006) and were vigorously denied by the DoT and the government (Allsop 2007). However, the heat came out of the debate in 2009 with the surprisingly frank admission by the then Minister that: "it's no cheaper…we have had to put a lot more money into the system" (Lucas 2009). The government and the operators appear broadly to accept the evidence that public subsidies for public transport operations are have grown much faster than any corresponding output in service quantity or quality (Stone 2010). The continued support for the franchise model by the ALP before its defeat in 2010 can only be explained as an example of 'regulatory capture' refs and an unsuccessful attempt to deflect responsibility through what the political theorists call 'depoliticisation' (Buller and Flinders 2005).

In short, the prospects for delivery of new public transport services that can maintain the growth in patronage in an affordable and efficient fashion seem uncertain at best. On the one hand, there is the long absence of a mechanism for effective and democratic regional planning for land-use and transport. And, on the other, poor public transport governance, which can be characterised as aggressive neo-liberalism overlaid on an older public structure in which the "self-defence of incompetence" works against "synergistic effort aimed at … attracting new passengers while ensuring … economic efficiency" (Vuchic 2005, p. 317).

This has led to an inability to:

- build professional or community consensus around a clear program of strategic infrastructure and operational investments;

- create the institutional and technical capability to facilitate cost-effective coordination of public transport services through exploitation of the 'network effect'.

Sydney

Sydney displays similar rates of overall public transport trip-making as Melbourne (as shown in Table 1), but its rail system performs more strongly, largely due to its high mode share in key employment markets. (Overall, Sydney public transport carries a greater proportion of work journeys than Melbourne – 21.2 % vs. 13.9 % for all work trips, and 72.5% vs. 61.7% for work trips with a destination in the CBD (Mees, O'Connell and Stone 2008; Stone and Mees 2011)). However, this historical strength appears to be waning. Despite facing the same pressures of rising petrol prices, Sydney appears to have experienced little of the 'spontaneous' return to public transport seen in Melbourne since 2005.

There is almost no integration of service design or delivery: users must deal with a bewildering array of ticket types and, in an extreme example, 44 separate bus routes operate on one section of road on the North Shore (Mees and Dodson 2011). A large project, 'Clearways', is being implemented to simplify patterns of rail operation and to improve reliability, but plans for expansion of the rail system are in disarray. In recent years, a multitude of plans for 'metros' and other heavy rail extensions on various alignments in west and north have been announced with increasing desperation by NSW Labor and by the Commonwealth, but no serious steps towards implementation were taken.

Public confidence with the current system and with the established processes for planning public transport investment is at such a low ebb that, in 2009, the *Sydney Morning Herald* took the extraordinary step of setting up its own public inquiry. This body criticised the "inconsistent, fragmented and politicised nature of Sydney's public transport governance" (Christie 2010, p. 84) and recommended the establishment of a regional public transport agency modelled on those operating in Brisbane/SEQ, Perth and a sample of European and Asian cities.

The new Liberal government, elected in April 2011, is started to reform the institutions that manage public transport and roads in Sydney with the intention of 'separating strategy and planning from operations'. Named 'Transport for NSW' – with, perhaps, an unconscious nod to 'Red Ken' Livingstone – the new organisation's public transport mission is looking somewhat shaky with the appointment of a senior manager from Auckland "to deliver a seamless transport system" (Gladys Berejiklian, Minister for Transport, Media Release, 10 August 2011).

Understanding of the detail of the institutional and political aspects of past failures and the prospects for the success of current reforms awaits further research – some of which will be undertaken later in this ARC project.

LONG-TERM GROWTH IN EUROPE: INSTITUTIONS THAT CREATE NETWORKS

Past Performance

Some European urban regions have achieved enviable records in both patronage growth and economic efficiency in public transport service delivery. The first moves in this direction required active citizen engagement in political contention over directions for urban development and the establishment of new policy networks within the relevant institutions: processes that typically began in the late 1970s (Bratzel 1999). Coordinated local policies of auto-restraint and support for alternatives were essential. These were later reinforced at a national level in Germany through the electoral success of the Greens: as part of a federal coalition, they were able to implement policies such as an annual incremental increase in fuel taxes from 1998 to 2003 that helped to maintain a price advantage for public transport (Buehler and Pucher 2011).

Alongside support at a political level, new institutions for the governance and management of public transport have been central to the implementation of these coordinated policy packages. In the 1980s, researchers noted the importance of the service coordination delivered by organisations such as the *Hamburg Verkehrsverbund* (Dunn 1980; Topp 1989). In the mid-1990s, the continued success of this coordination was recognised (Baron 1995; Köhler 1995) and John Pucher identified the vital institutional role of *Verkehrsverbünde* (or 'transport alliances') in establishing cooperation between the large numbers of operators to achieve "more extensive, higher-quality, and better integrated services (that) have significantly increased ridership" (1996, p. 290). This point was strongly reinforced by Mees (2010b). However, beyond the recognition of their importance and description of their purpose, little has been written in English about the internal structures and processes of these institutions.

The first transport alliance began operation in Hamburg in 1967 (Krause 2009), and another ten were setup in West Germany by the end of 1989. In the years following reunification, new transport alliances emerged to

cover most of the urbanised population. These alliances enabled formal agreements between operators to set fares, distribute revenues and establish coordinated timetables. The first Austrian transport alliance (for Vienna and its hinterland) began in 1984, and this model is now in place across the country. In Switzerland, the first 'fare alliance' was set up around Basel in 1987. This allowed use of a single ticket across multiple carriers, but did not formalise the delivery of coordinated timetables. Now, competitively priced multi-operators season tickets for local and regional trips are the norm across the country, and are used by over half the adult population. Only in the Canton of Zurich, where a relatively large population comes under a single political authority, are operators coordinated through a transport alliance (Vollmer and Schiesser 2009). The high level of coordination of local and inter-city timetables across Switzerland is achieved through design of the national 'service offer' and recognition by local communities of the benefits. It is encouraged by the Swiss National Railways, which, for example, sets standards for the physical layout of interchanges in smaller towns that must be met before service upgrades are implemented.

While lauding past successes, Pucher's 1996 review of five well-established transport alliances concluded on a fearful note: all were facing financial problems and the expectation of reductions in public subsidies. The prospects for continuing patronage growth seemed poor (p.289). In the event, as Table 1 showed, these fears were unfounded. Transport alliances, and their constituent operators, found ways to reduce costs and increase revenues. In Germany, there were significant cuts in wages and conditions for public transport employees, and public transport fares increased well ahead of inflation, although petrol prices rose slightly faster with the help of the Greens' fuel taxes. Targeted state and national funding, partly provided by fuel taxes, has driven continued improvements in coordination and route design to achieve both higher patronage and more efficient vehicle loadings (Buehler and Pucher 2011).

Future Prospects

A number of changes to the institutional environment for public transport operators and the regional transport alliances have taken place since Pucher's 1996 review.

First, the European Union has set a timetable for financial regulations that will eventually subject transport authorities providing subsidised public transport services to competitive processes (Regulation [EC] no. 1370/2007). The interpretation of these new regulations is working through the courts in Germany and Austria. Managers are anticipating these deliberations and are already testing new competitive processes. Most appear to recognise that these regulations will change the way they operate, but they are aware of the "dangerous" assumptions made in Britain (and Australia) that "successful integrated services will automatically result from combining the individual interested of private and public companies" (Freitag 2009, p. 225).

Second, following German reunification, the two state monopolies that ran the national railways were re-organised into a single public company, Deutsche Bahn AG, under a federal regulatory agency, with third party access-rights to the rail network (Brenck and Peter 2007). The most significant aspect of these reforms was the decision to make the German states responsible for local and regional train services. States were provided with federal funds to allow them to 'order' services from train operating companies. Almost all these companies are public entities: besides the national rail company, local rail services are typically operated by public companies owned by municipal governments.

The combination of 'regionalisation', the new competition rules, and an expectation of shrinking municipal revenues from other sources has driven the search for reduced costs and operational efficiencies noted earlier. This has its ugly side. Staff cuts and systematic avoidance of contracted maintenance were used to drive a sixfold increase in profits on the Berlin S-Bahn – a subsidiary of DB (VBB 2010, p. 44). This led to a fiasco where up to three-quarters of the S-Bahn rolling stock was removed from service in July 2009 after derailments and brake failures – significant service cuts were in place for more than a year (p. 45). And across Germany, working conditions in public transport companies are now below previous awards. New contracts appear to guarantee no further erosion of conditions, but there are increasing numbers of strikes and other 'push-back' from previously acquiescent unions (Buehler et al. 2009).

The many problems faced by state and municipal transport authorities in negotiating issues such as rail-access pricing and infrastructure renewal with the reformed Deutsche Bahn led to the creation of a lobby group (the BAG-SPNV) to maintain the focus of new initiatives on the quality of local services (VBB, p. 67). While not necessarily pleasing the neo-liberal economists, the new arrangements for negotiating prices and standards for supply of public transport services capital works are being developed within a tight framework that reinforces the need to preserve the primacy of coordinated network planning that has underpinned past success (Brenck and Peter, pp. 156 & 160). As an illustration of this, the Berlin-Brandenburg Transport

Alliance (VBB), controlled by local and regional governments, has developed a "long-term services and scheduling concept" (VBB, p. 65) to drive future infrastructure spending by DB companies and the federal government. However, as the VBB itself notes, its own planning horizons lag behind the Swiss who are currently working towards the infrastructure requirements for the intercity and suburban rail schedules they wish to run in 2035 (p. 66).

Structures and Processes in the 'Transport Alliances'

From this overview of public transport management in German-speaking Europe, we now turn to the structures and processes of the 'transport alliances': the agencies that have ensured that generating patronage growth remains the focus of public transport planning.

Creation of the 'network effect' is central to European public transport success. The focus of on the passenger is apparent in the common usage by planners of the term 'service offer' (*Verkehrsangebot* in German). The 'transport alliances' in Germany, Switzerland and Austria share a common motto: One Ticket – One Network – One Timetable. Their task is design and coordination of the overall 'service offer'. This does not require a big workforce: in Zurich, for example, the ZVV names all its 33 staff on its website (www.zvv.ch). Nevertheless, their form varies according to the nature of regional political institutions and past operating arrangements.

The structures through which different regional alliances operate vary greatly, although almost all are set up as independent legal entities. The principal shareholders are, in various permutations, the transport operating companies and/or the responsible regional or local authorities. Some are 'company alliances' – the shareholders are the (public) operating companies alone – this model is typical of the early alliances established in the 1970s and 80s. Others, typically those established after the German 'regionalisation' in the 1990s, are 'authority alliances'. Many are mixed, and, in some places, the form of the alliance has changed to deal with the requirements of establishing coordinated services and common fares across larger areas and across wider political and administrative boundaries (Knieps 2009). A typical modern structure is shown in Fig. 2: this example is from Hamburg where a major re-organisation of the structure and membership of the alliance took place in the mid-1990s.

The 'classic' alliance functions are:

- establishing and adjusting the common fare;

- distributing fare revenue;

- coordinating the 'service offer' and providing information to the public;

- creating a framework for marketing the 'offer' and the network (Knieps, pp. 25 & 27).

It is clear that the decades of experience have led to the design of effective internal and inter-agency bureaucratic mechanisms to carry out these functions. There is now a large cohort of planners who learned their trade inside the 'transport alliances' and who now work for the alliances, for operators and regional authorities, and in an active 'consulting industry'. The detail of these mechanisms and the perspectives of the practitioners responsible for their development and dissemination will be investigated in future research.
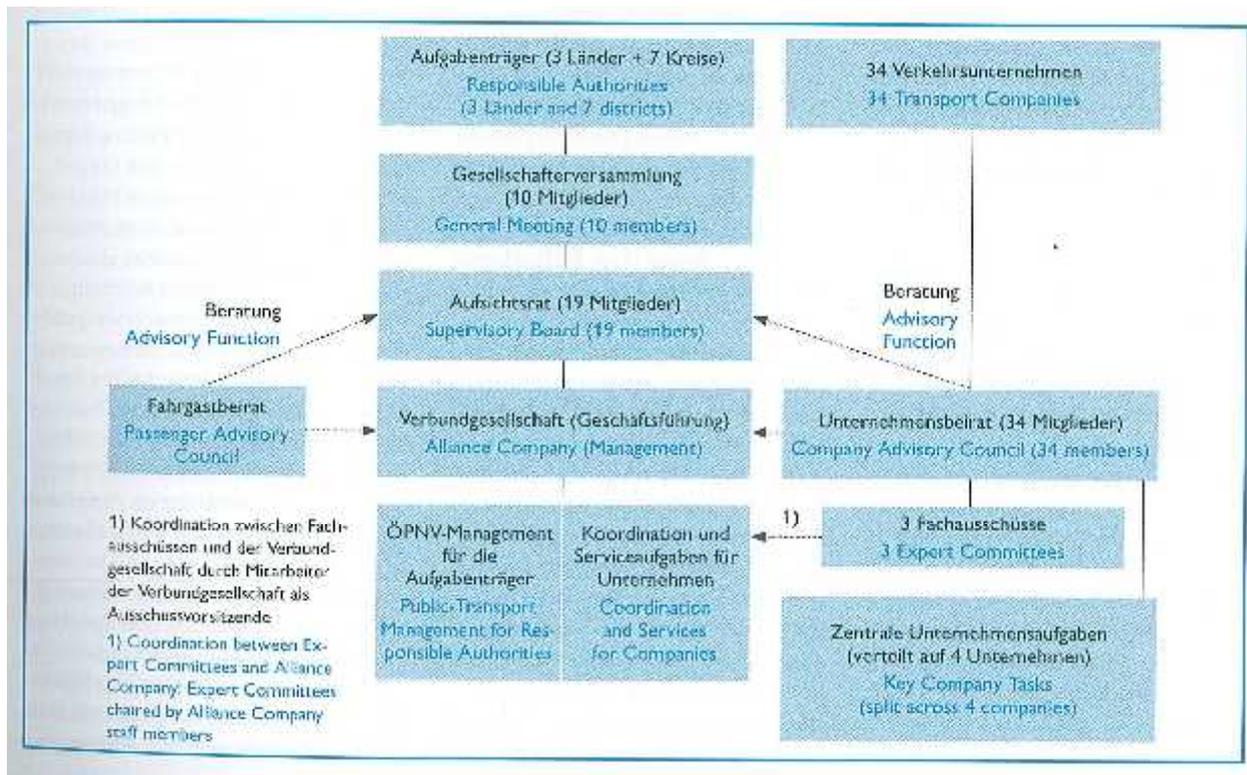
Figure 2: Organisation of Hamburg's regional 'transport alliance' after 1996 (from Krause 2009, p. 37)

LEARNING FROM EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

Following Kennedy et al. (2005), four key 'policy and process' elements of public transport success can be identified. These are:

1. effective and democratic regional planning for land-use and transport, leading to a consistent set of policies that favour walking, cycling and public transport over private vehicles;

2. sufficient, stable funding for public transport operations and system expansion, and appropriate relativities to the budget for road expansion;

3. identification of strategic infrastructure and operational investments required to deliver the desired public transport 'service offer';

4. expertise to deliver this 'service offer' reliably and efficiently.

The evidence from German-speaking Europe suggests that initiatives at local, regional and national level have allowed these elements to be put in place to a greater extent than has been possible in Australia. Many factors have contributed to this success. However, the particular problems of public transport management in Melbourne and Sydney, as described earlier, make the possibility of transfer of the 'transport alliance' model to Australia an important question.

Of course, one can find any number of cautionary tales of inappropriate or poorly understood policy transfer leading to poor outcomes, so care is needed in making any conclusion about what lessons might be transferable (Marsden and Stead 2011). Investigation of the transferability of 'transport alliance' concepts from Germany to Eastern Europe (Stead, de Jong and Reinholde 2010) suggests that rapid or large-scale institutional reform is not likely to achieve system performance, while shorter-term, more visible activities can help pave the way for larger change. It is also helpful if 'recipients' are able set the agenda for the transfer process.

The preliminary work described in this paper raises a number of questions for future research:

- What is the relative importance of political opportunity, institutional structure and process, and technical skill in the achievements of 'transport alliances'?

- From a greater understanding of the reasons for the success of 'transport alliances', what aspects of the European model could be transferred to Australian cities?

- What is required to create a receptive culture for policy transfer within transport agencies in Melbourne and Sydney?

- What support, including direct exchanges with leading European practitioners and the design of appropriate in-service and pre-professional training, will be required to significantly improve planning and management of public transport in Melbourne and Sydney?

These questions will guide the design of research in this project over the next two years.

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