Commentary of *Transport Accessibility at Regional/Local Scale and Patterns in Europe* (TRACC) Inception Report

The research will model regional accessibility by different modes across Europe. It will include a suite of regional case studies (though none of them from the UK). It will locate Europe within patterns of global accessibility, while also addressing issues of inter-regional accessibility. It will look at the relations between accessibility and regional development: just how important is accessibility to regional growth prospects? In addition it will include some long-term scenarios of European transport policy in terms of transport infrastructure investments and other transport policies, such as taxation and road pricing, and assumptions about future developments in vehicle technology and alternative fuels and fuel price increases.

Transport infrastructure and regional development
The Inception Report notes several trends that combine to diminish the impacts of transport infrastructure on regional development. For example, for modern industries the *quality* of trans-port services has replaced transport *cost* as the most important factor. Transport infrastructure improvements which reduce the variability of travel times, increase travel speeds or allow flexibility in scheduling are becoming more important for improving the competitiveness of service and manufacturing industries and are therefore valued more highly in locational decisions than changes resulting only in cost reductions.

In addition, telecommunications have reduced the need for some freight transport and person trips, though by increasing access to new markets these new media also increase the demand for transport. Nevertheless, the shift from heavy-industry manufacturing to high-tech industries and services means that other less tangible location factors have come to the fore and have at least partly displaced traditional ones. These new location factors include leisure, culture, image and environment as well as factors related to access to information and specialised high-level services and the institutional and political environment.

Despite these dynamics, there are also tendencies that increase the importance of transport infrastructure. One example is the way that high-speed rail systems redistribute locational advantages and disadvantages amongst regions. In addition there is the general increase in the volume of goods movements and leisure travel.

Policy questions
The project will address the following policy question from a European point of view:

- What are the differences between accessibility at three different levels (regional, European and global) considering the four modes road, rail, water and air?

- What is the link between accessibility at the different levels and for different modes of European regions and their economic development? How has this link changed over time? Does the strength of this link differ across the EU?

- What could be the territorial impact of rising energy prices on the future developments of road, rail, water and air transport?

- What could be the impact of various transport scenarios on climate change, access patterns and economic development?

Regional concerns
TRACC will also look into the regional dimension of accessibility. It will ask:

- What does regional accessibility/connectivity look like at the regional level? For example, how many jobs/people can be reached in 45 minutes travel time (by road or by train), how many city centres can be reached by flying out in the morning and returning in the evening?

- In which type of regions is the level of European accessibility very different from their regional accessibility?

Scenarios
A business-as-usual scenario will assume the implementation of the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) priority projects. Alternative policy scenarios will assume faster or delayed implementation of the TEN-T projects in combination with different taxation and road pricing policies and different assumptions about vehicle technology, alternative fuels and fuel prices. The spatial impacts of the scenarios will be assessed.

Review of the literature in accessibility analysis
Although this is only the Inception Report, it includes a quite extensive review of existing literature and methodologies for analysing accessibility. There is also an explanation of the SASI forecasting model that the team will use.

Lead partner: Spiekermann & Wegener, Urban and Regional Research, Dortmund, Germany

Other partners: Charles University of Prague, Faculty of Science, Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Prague, Czech Republic; RRG Spatial Planning and Geoinformation, Oldenburg i.H., Germany; MCRIT, Barcelona, Spain; University of Oulu, Department of Geography, Finland; TRT

Trasporti e Territorio, Milan, Italy; S. Leszczycki Institute of Geography and Spatial Organisation, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland.

Future Reports: Interim Report (January 2011); Draft Final Report (January 2012); Final report (June 2012).

Related ESPON projects: ESPON 2006 projects 1.2.1, 1.1.1, 2.1.1 and 1.1.3.

Contact: ks@spiekermann-wegener.de