

REUNIFICATION THROUGH TRANSPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

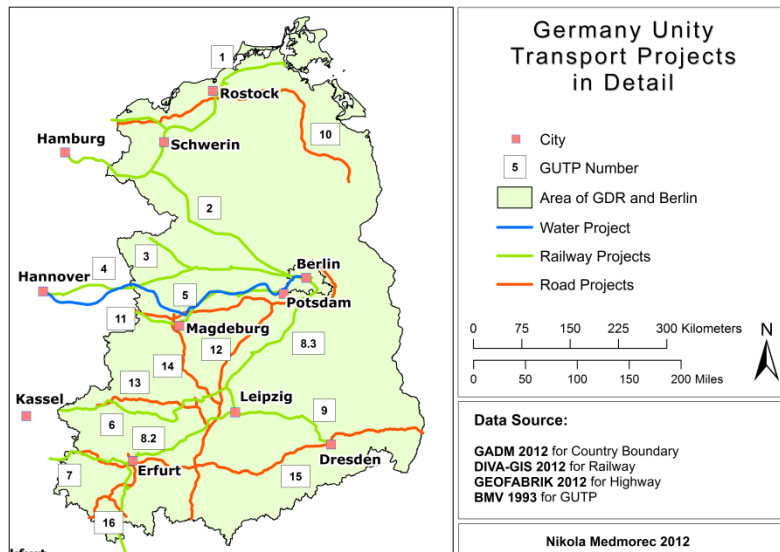
Throughout history several nations were divided and people with the same culture were separated from each other. After overcoming the division they suffered enormous problems in various areas. This research takes a closer look at the situation of transportation infrastructure with the two cases of Germany and Korea. Germany has overcome the division and therefore the research takes a retrospective look on what happened. Considering the situation in Korea, a prospective look into the future is the goal of the thesis.

2 CONCEPTION

The motivation of this thesis grounds on the author's interest in transportation of Korea, Germany's experience of division and reunification and the pursuit of the basic human right of free movement. The scientific method of the research is a study about two single-cases and a macro-comparative analysis between Korea and Germany. Among several indicators are accessibility, traffic volume and topographic barriers the most important one. Transport geography is a sub-discipline of geography, which focuses on movements of freight, people and information. In addition to that, other concepts are introduced as well. So the conception of this work is to do primarily a secondary analysis of existing data and to compare the most valuable statistics between the two nations. The understanding of the research is about the fact that it is very important for Korea's case to make preparations. Various maps are an important component to analyze and present the results on the Korean peninsula. The huge lack of up-to-date information about the conditions of infrastructure in North Korea results in a self-designed questionnaire. Travelers to North Korea were asked specific question to get a unique insight to the hermit kingdom. The main hypothesis of the research is: If a Korean reunification occurs in a similar way like it happened in Germany, then the German experience about large-scale transport projects is useful for restoring connections between the two Koreas.

3 GERMANY'S CASE

During the division the transport system in West and East Germany developed differently from each other. The number of border crossings decreased over times and only handful crossings have been left. Transport infrastructure of the West was qualitatively better. Certain events led to reunification of the East and the West and the demand of East Germans for free travel played a significant role to initiate that process. But moreover, the existing connections have been challenged in the reunited Germany and it could not satisfy its demand. Hence the government designed special projects with the name “Germany Unity Transport Projects” (GUTP). Their main goal was evidently the reconnection of East-West routes. Their goals were to increase Germany's transport capability, increase accessibility of East Germany, minimize traffic accidents in East Germany and improve economic competitiveness of the eastern regions.



The GUTP are a complex bundle of projects, measures and laws. Each component contributed to the successful execution. There were nine rail projects, seven road projects and a waterway project with an investment volume of 38.7 billion Euros. Each project is going to be introduced briefly. A special legal framework allowed to manage planning

and construction in an incomparable speed. The organization of the projects was also quite unique. Private planning societies had almost full responsibility over the projects.

Some projects have been criticized and factors like demographic change have been not considered well enough. However, overall an analysis shows that the GUTP can be evaluated positively and they helped to heal the biggest scars in the network. East Germans adapted quickly to West German standards. Rail projects shorten the travel duration greater than road projects. The GUTP helped to stimulate economic competitiveness in the eastern regions. Several opinions about the GUTP confirm that they have been successful and the current Federal Minister of Transport Ramsauer said that he will push ahead the completion of the last projects until 2017.

4 THE KOREAN PENINSULA

North and South Korea are still divided and at first, a look at the transport infrastructure shows that they also developed very differently. ROK has a highly developed transport system with its own high-speed train KTX and a toll-gate based expressway network. Since 2004, the HSR connects the most important cities of the southern peninsula and further improvements as well as extensions of the HSR network are under way. Roads are covering all regions of South Korea. By 2020, access to an expressway should be able from anywhere in ROK within 30 min and any region should be reached within a half day from departure. On the other hand, DPRK suffers from bad conditions in the transportation infrastructure. Since 1980s the situation got worse in North Korea and there are only a few constructions in the transport sector. Even the maintenance of the current transport capacity seems to be very hard for the regime. The proportion of highways is very small compared to the whole road network. But only highways and roads level 1 are paved in North Korea.

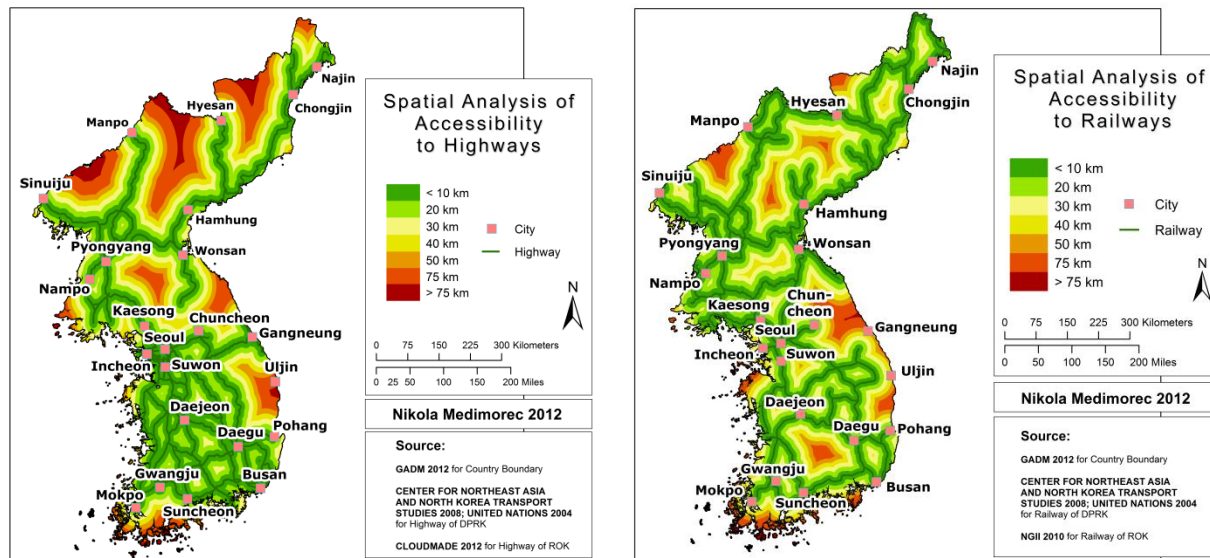
A survey among travelers confirms that the situation is severe. Although railway transport is the main transport method, train wagons are very old, operating speed is low and due to a shortage of electricity, trains run on diesel. It is still better than the lack of fuel which results that trucks run on wood. However, the roads are not able to deal with a lot of traffic. Throughout the eyes of the visitors, it seems that the situation of rail transport got also worse.

There are a number of cross-border projects with South Korea, China and Russia, which are trying to revive transport routes in some parts of the DPRK. The projects on the Inner-Korean border could be interpreted as preparations for reunifications, whereas Russia and especially China have economic motivations. Russia is very interested in using the ports of Najin, because that is the most northern ice-free port on the eastern coast of the Eurasian continent. China is the economic lifeline of DPRK and most of the interest go into the development of mineral resources and then into the construction of infrastructure.



5 ACTION PLAN

It is essential to learn lessons from Germany's case to avoid doing the same mistakes and at the same time, preparations should stay on a conceptual level. Out of the lessons, Korea should learn that time is a valuable resource and costs are not an obstacle for reunification. Migration is the most unpredictable factor. In Germany there have been two waves of migration from East to West, whereas the second wave came from a growing frustration of the economic situation. A look at each main corridors of Asia, East-Asia and the Korean peninsula explains that North Korea lies quite good and especially the western route from Seoul over Pyongyang to Beijing has a lot of potential. The following two maps analyze the accessibility of each transport method.



What kind of strategy could be recommended for a Korean reunification is the question of the last part. First of all, goals have to be set up and a reliable master plan for development has to be designed. These decisions may influence the whole process. Predictions about the traffic demand have to be made and the successful tools (special legal framework, private planning cooperation) of GUTP could be used in a similar way. A reunified Korea has to choose some routes, where planning and construction is going to have the highest priority.

6 CONCLUSION

Reunification is going to be the biggest challenge for the Korean peninsula in the 21st century but if it is faced as early as possible and prepared well, the outcome will be greatly positive.