

SEA for »3rd development axis« in Slovenia – lessons learned

In the last decades development in Slovenia concentrated along two most important transport corridors. Following the local initiatives regional development planners proposed the »3rd development axis« which was planned through poorly accessible and underdeveloped Slovene regions. In addition, this would be an additional international through corridor from Austria to Croatia, although currently there are no such transport trends in this area. A study on integrated regional development of the »3rd development axis« was prepared and spatial planners prepared possible routes. The »3rd development axis« was in this stage divided into three segments, so three separate state spatial plans and three SEAs were prepared. This has watered down the original intent to plan regional development jointly with transport corridors in a more sustainable way. Despite the efforts, each SEA got limited to spatial planning approach and failed to integrate regional development issues.

The concept and planning of the »3rd development axis« in Slovenia showed very well how regional development and transport infrastructure planning can depart when planning takes place at different scales. SEA was a useful tool to point out the differences and consequences of lowering the strategic decisions to local level.

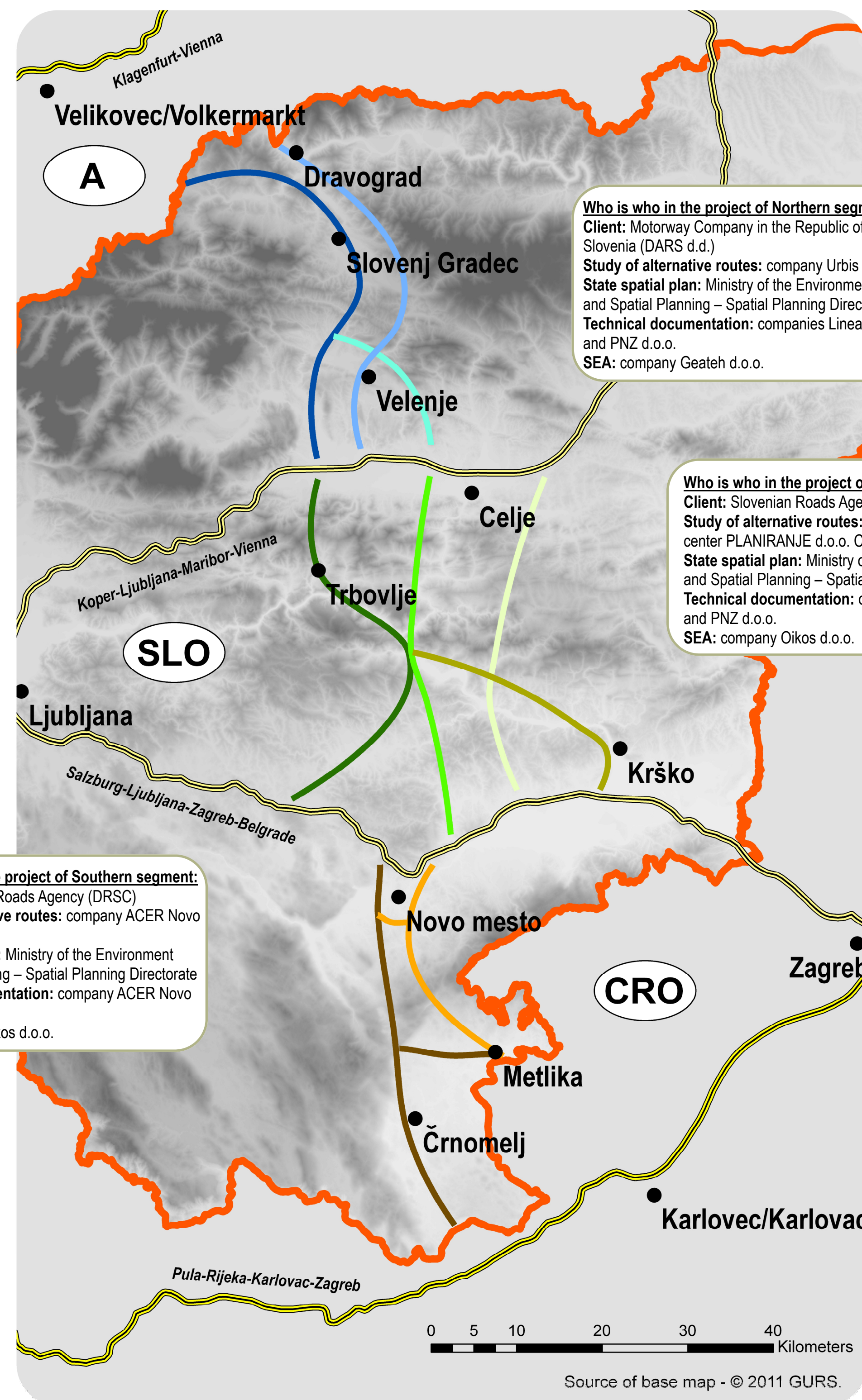
3rd Development axis (2005-2006)

Plan downsizing and fragmentation

3rd Transport corridor (2007)

3 regional roads (4 lanes) -
3 spatial plans - 3 SEAs
(2007-2009)

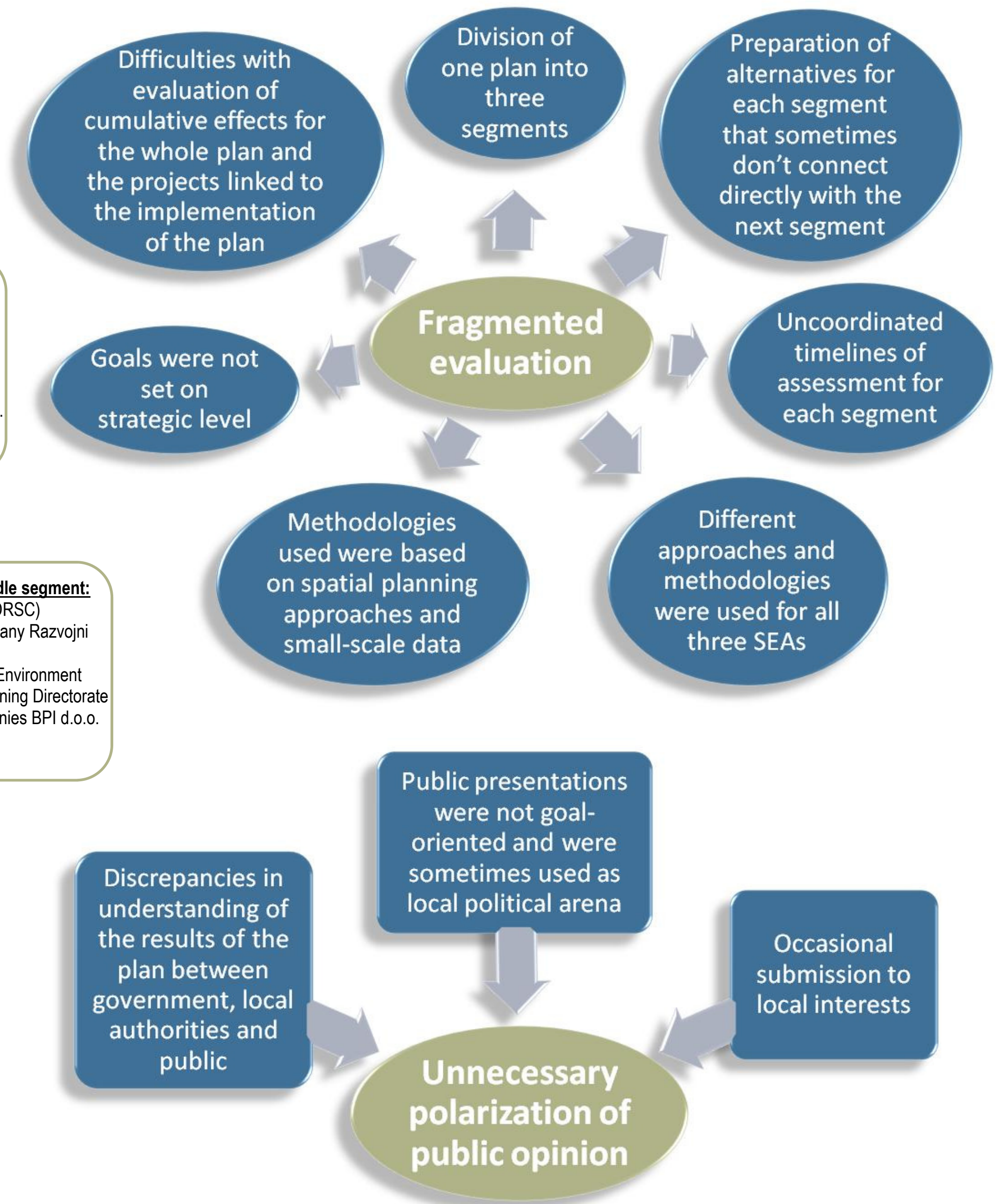
3 regional roads (2 lanes) -
? spatial plans - ? SEAs
(2009 - ongoing)



Legend:

- Major cities
 - Existing highways
 - Border of Republic of Slovenia
- | North | Middle | South |
|-------|--------|-------|
| — | — | — |
| — | — | — |
| — | — | — |
- Generalized alternatives of all three segments of "3rd development axis"

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Lessons learned:

1. At downsizing of a project you have to question the relevance of the project.
2. If the project is still relevant you have to rethink the approach to SEA and methodologies used for assessment.
3. In case of fragmentation, SEA for all segments must be coordinated and synchronized.
4. Fragmentation of plan lead into fragmentation of SEA which lost a big part of its strategic value. Some of the effects of the plan as a whole become cumulative effects of the fragmented plans.
5. Result of plan downsizing and segmentation was also an occasional submission to local interests that did not contribute to overall plan goals.
6. Unclear messages about the goals of the plan lead to misinterpretation of the plan in public and different expectations.
7. Public presentations have to be goal oriented.

In the end "3rd development axis" became a "plan without a plan". Most of the institutions behind the plan – from the investors to Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning got lost in the fragmented legal and administrative processes for several State Spatial Plans and SEAs, while the public and local authorities got polarized from extreme opposition (those directly affected) to strong support (communities that need better transport connectivity).

Approach to evaluation and methodology was agreed on, but...
↓
...when downsizing and fragmentation of the plan happened...
↓
...client was reluctant to adapt to a new situation

Inability of client and responsible ministries to supply data necessary for SEAs

Changes of legislation while SEAs were carried out (EU post-accession period!)

Pressure from client for positive evaluation of all alternatives

(Un)coordination of 3 spatial plans and 3 SEAs

