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Analysing state and urban restructuring through public landownership

The case of the urban projects of railway sites in France and Italy

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Analyser les relations entre les restructurations de l'État et des espaces urbains à travers le foncier public

Le cas des projets d'aménagement urbain de sites ferroviaires en France et en Italie

Résumé

Casernes, ports, hôpitaux, prisons, ou encore sites ferroviaires font l'objet de nombreux projets de reconversion dans les villes européennes. Une part substantielle du renouvellement urbain s'effectue ainsi sur des 'terrains de l'État' – ces emprises qui permettent aux administrations et opérateurs publics de déployer leurs activités dans le territoire national. Résumant ma thèse de doctorat, ce document de travail interprète ces reconversions comme la réorganisation du pouvoir logistique de l'État dans les villes, c'est-à-dire sa capacité à organiser les flux de choses, d'informations et de personnes. Il interroge les raisons et les modalités de la réorganisation de ce pouvoir en analysant les sites d'un type d'opérateur, les entreprises ferroviaires. L'enquête comparative menée sur deux pays (Italie et France) et quatre villes (Milan, Bolzano, Paris et Nantes) identifie deux principaux facteurs explicatifs. D'une part, les gouvernements urbains mettent en cause les modes d'occupation du réseau ferroviaire depuis les années 1970, dans le contexte de leurs ressources et de leur pouvoir croissants dans l'aménagement. D'autre part, des logiques et des compétences immobilières se développent au sein des firmes publiques de flux depuis le début des années 1990, dans le contexte de leur autonomisation comptable et de pressions financières accrues. Les projets d'aménagement constituent alors un espace d'ajustement des trois 'conceptions' dominantes de la reconversion des sites ferroviaires : immobilière, urbanistique et industrielle. Les institutions foncières nationales expliquent les différences entre les ajustements locaux dans les deux pays.

Mots clés : État, réseau ferroviaire, pouvoir logistique, projet urbain, France, Italie

Analysing state and urban restructuring through public landownership

The case of the urban projects of railway sites in France and Italy

Abstract

Barracks, ports, hospitals, prisons, railway yards are earmarked for many redevelopment projects in European cities. A substantial part of urban regeneration therefore occurs on state places from which state organisations conduct their activities across the country. Summarizing my PhD thesis, this working paper interprets these redevelopment projects as the reorganisation of the logistical power of the state, i.e. its capacity to order the flows of things, information, and people. It questions the reasons and the modalities of this reorganisation through the analysis of the terrains of a specific sector, railway firms. The comparative enquiry carried out on two countries (Italy and France) and four cities (Milan, Bolzano Paris and Nantes) distinguishes two main factors. On the one hand, urban governments question the way the railway network has occupied urban areas since the 1970s, in relation to their increasing resources and power in urban development. On the other hand, real estate logics and skills have expanded within these publicly owned firms since the beginning of the 1990s, due to their greater accounting autonomy and their need to face a rising financial pressure. Urban redevelopment projects are then a space of adjustment of three main 'conceptions' regarding the motives for the redevelopment of urban railway sites: real estate business, urban planning, and functional improvement of the railway network. The distinct sets of public land institutions explain the different local adjustment paths in Italy and France.

Keywords : state, railway network, logistical power, urban development project, France, Italy

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Note

This paper is a substantive summary of my PhD thesis¹. It begins by introducing the subject, the theoretical position, the problem and related hypotheses, as well as the methodological framework of the thesis. Three sections then goes on the main findings. Finally, it covers the general conclusions. It includes the main charts and analytical tables for the different chapters. Since this paper is a summary, please, bear in mind that not all the statements and results are sustained by an empirical demonstration.

¹ The following link gives access to the PhD manuscript (in French): <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01285072>. John Crisp translated the French version of this summary. The paper benefited from Mustafa Dikeç careful review and comments.

Introduction

The state possesses infrastructures through which it conducts its activities across its administrative territory. Transport networks and energy grids, together with educational, health and penal institutions or defence facilities, occupy significant amounts of space in urban areas. In the last 30 years, however, this presence has come to be disputed. Postal sorting offices, train stations, gasometers, barracks, universities, hospitals, courts and prisons are a target of innumerable redevelopment plans in Europe's cities. The material base of the state is thus changing. The purpose of this paper is to explain that change. Let me start by observing this process in a handful of French and Italian cities.

In Paris, for example, the Assistance Publique - Hôpitaux de Paris is selling a whole dispensary to the municipality for conversion to housing (APHP and Mairie de Paris 2015). At the same time, a star chef is seeking to set up a commercial project in the Navy headquarters (Facon 2015). For its part, RATP (Paris transport authority) is demolishing a bus depot and moving it underground, in order to exercise its right to construct a five-storey building over (Jacqué 2015). A railway site belonging to SNCF (national railway company) and RFF (former French the railway network manager)² is slated for conversion to thousands of housing units, hundreds of thousands of square metres of office space, a public park, and the new Paris High Court. And these processes of redevelopment on state land are not only to be found in the country's capital.

In Nantes, the military police station ('gendarmerie'), the court, and the prison used to face each other around a square in the heart of the city. The words 'Gendarmerie Nationale' still adorn the front of the barracks, but the developer Kaufman and Broad has hung a board below it announcing a program for housing and shops 'around designer furniture, contemporary art and organic products, and a wellness centre' (Defawe 2011). For its part, the courthouse has been bought by Axa Insurance's investment fund and converted into a four-star hotel, part of the Radisson chain (Gambert 2011). The prison has been moved to the outskirts, but until now the old building has failed to find buyers. Elsewhere in the city, the army has undertaken to free up a site in 2016 for the Department of Housing 'Public land use programme'. A thousand dwellings, including 300 social housing units, will replace the barracks. Finally, the huge Nantes État railway site has been incorporated into the large-scale Ile de Nantes urban development project. The rails are gradually being replaced by hundreds of dwellings, cultural and educational facilities and, eventually, by a 14 hectare park. These plans for the conversion of public land properties are not only to be found in France.

In Milan, the head of the Italian postal service's regional real estate department is delighted about the sale of the fine central post office building.³ On the other hand, there is no rush by investors for the gigantic Piazzale Lugano postal sorting office, abandoned 15 years ago. The nearby Bassi Hospital, unoccupied since the 1970s, is the target of rival projects. The regional agency wants to set up its headquarters there, while a neighbourhood committee would prefer a health museum (Regina 2002; Bonezzi 2014). The future of the city's military land seems clearer, now that the municipality and the army have come to an agreement. As part of a programme that also applies to Turin and Rome, the army has agreed to transfer three unoccupied barracks to the Agenzia del Demanio, where the municipality plans to install services and social housing (Corriere della Sera 2014). On the other hand, the municipal executive has not succeeded in persuading the national railway company, Ferrovie dello Stato (FS), that such an agreement could be reached for the 300 ha that the firm wants to sell on the outskirts of the city. Similar changes can be seen everywhere within the confines of the peninsula.

2 After being separated in 1997 in accordance with the European directive 91/440, SNCF and RFF have eventually been merged in 2015, after this research was conducted.

3 Interview with the head of real estate services for the Lombardia Poste Italiane region, Monday, 21 January 2013, Milan.

At the foot of the Dolomites, in Bolzano, the Autonomous Province of South Tyrol (or Alto Adige) had been trying to get its hands on unused military land since the 1980s (Benedikter 1981). This question was finally settled by a province wide agreement in 2007, providing for 12 sites to be gradually transferred to the regional authority for €420 million. Since the interwar period, the Bolzano municipality has been talking to FS about their 'Areale Ferroviario' site, which covers almost 50 ha near the town centre. Having been doubled in size during the fascist 'ventennio' as part of the city's industrialisation and Italianisation policy, this land is now largely abandoned. The rail operator, the municipality, the Province, local newspapers and the region's entrepreneurs and investors agree on the need to redevelop the site, but not on the aims of that redevelopment.

Each of these changes is a reflection of the strategies of multiple stakeholders and different interinstitutional arrangements. Yet they are all part of the same sociospatial process: the reshaping of the presence of public operators in cities. In fact, a substantial proportion of urban renewal in European cities arises on state places. For now, this concept can be roughly defined as the set of sites from which the state conducts its activities across the country. In other words, state places form the material base of the 'logistical power' of the state, defined by Chandra Mukerji (2010a: 402) as the capacity to mobilise and organise social and natural resources 'for political effect', in the territory it controls. The redevelopment of state places does not equally affect all cities, but it is taking place in cities as different as Paris, Nantes, Milan and Bolzano. It is a critical political issue both for the state and for contemporary urban societies. That is why this paper seeks to investigate the reasons and processes for the redevelopment of the sites. It does that by focusing on one public operator, namely the railway companies, in French and Italian cities.

The remaking of state places: a Cinderella issue

Why are state places undergoing a process of urban restructuring? The answer to this empirical question cannot be entirely found in the theories of urban redevelopment. A literature review shows that this process has not been tackled as such by the three main groups of literature interested in urban redevelopment projects. Indeed, they rely on theories on urban restructuring that do not explain specifically why state places are targeted by these projects. The first research stream to look into urban development projects follows the neo-Weberian narrative of the 'return of European cities' (Le Galès 2002). It explains these projects in terms of changes in the modes of coordinating public action: 'government by project' has become a primary method of intervention in urban space (Dente et al. 1990) and 'city projects and urban projects are one of the ways for municipalities to respond to a new structure of opportunity' (Pinson 2009: 61, my translation). This structure is shaped simultaneously by (i) the change in systems of production; (ii) the reorganisation of scales of government, in the direction of both supranational and infranational levels, leading to the loss of state centrality in political regulation; and (iii) the expansion in the number of stakeholders and institutions from outside municipal governments involved in urban governance. In its approach, this stream focuses on the contexts and procedures of the exercise and redistribution of urban powers, rather than on what is governed. State restructuring is therefore treated as a contextual element. The reasons why the public land and real estate properties are the target of development projects are not a part of this explanatory framework.

For its part, the structuralist approach seeks to explain why urban restructuring takes place in particular sites. The power of the thesis of the 'post-Fordist city' at the heart of this approach is that it explains both what is disappearing (industrial activities) and what is emerging (centres of consumption, leisure and tertiary activities). In this view, big development projects are the outcome of economic restructuring caused by a change in the mode of capital accumulation:

these projects tend to be in locations which, as a consequence of urban restructuring, have lost their previous uses but have potential to be once again profitable within the post-Fordist urban economy [...]. They are [...] frequently mixed-use, and cater to the needs of office-based businesses and tourism and leisure services. (Orueta and Fainstein 2008: 760)

It is therefore tempting to see the process under scrutiny in this paper as part of this transition, all the more so as the neo-Marxist version or the analyses of neoliberalisation of the structuralist approach take into account the role of the state and its restructuring in urban change. Swyngedouw, Moulaert, and Rodriguez (2003) for example make clear that the state is pervasive in the large-scale urban development projects and that its restructuring (rescaling, neoliberal rationales, public-private partnerships, etc.) is both an input and an outcomes of this processes of urban change. But, the new rationales or rules followed and settled by state organizations are considered for all kind of urban redevelopment projects and those targeting public land properties are not differentiated in this group of literature. Moreover, the thesis of the post-Fordist city cannot be extended to all urban areas, in particular state places. The fact is that

the idea of the Fordist city, beyond the strong image, is a misleading oversimplification of the history of most cities [...] and the notion of 'flexible specialization' can even less be applied to the complex set of economic activities of any large city without further examination of the specific characteristics of its work processes. (Préteceille 1990: 32)

So the thesis of a post-Fordist transition perhaps applies to sites where mass consumption goods are produced, but not so easily to those in other sectors like public infrastructures. Moreover, the absence of analytical distinction between land and real estate properties held by central government departments and operators and that held by industrial firms is problematic, because it constitutes not a finding, but a factor that has been left out of the equation.

The third literature stream is not united by theory, but by its perspective within the structure of building provision (Ball 1986). It explains the emergence and diffusion of large-scale urban projects by institutional (Salet et Gualini 2007), professional (Fainstein 2001: 120; Healey 1992), industrial (Lorrain 1992), and financial (Guironnet et Halbert 2014) changes in the planning and development sectors over the last thirty years. It provides valuable insights, especially into the strategies and professional skills developed by big industrial firms in possession of huge land and real estate assets in order to redevelop their sites (e.g. Dente et al. 1990; Kaika et Ruggiero 2016). These offer interesting avenues for tackling the management of assets held by public operators.

Shedding light, for example, on the role of state rescaling, the obsolescence of Fordist sites, or the rising real estate concern of large landowners in urban development projects, the main theories of urban redevelopment bring substantial inputs for an inquiry about the remaking of state places. However in search of 'one size fits all' explanations they do not address specifically the process of interest in this paper. Either they take no account of the (public or private) landownership in their analysis, or they merge state places with sites held by Fordist companies or into broader categories. In the latter case, the sites of urban development project sites are described in terms of obsolescence. This description, for which each country has its own term (*'friches urbaines'*, *'vuoti urbani'*, 'brownfield sites'), produces a potentially damaging lack of precision. For example, in one of the rare attempts to reach a general theory of urban development in France, Alain Bourdin (2001) includes amongst the four main types of urbanisation, 'big urban development projects in areas abandoned by highly space-intensive activities' (p.148). For the author, this encompasses brownfield sites in ports, railway yards and on military land, but also car production sites and wine warehouses. This type of classification makes no distinction between activity types, ownership, land status, etc. Does a stock market listed multinational company treat its land and real estate holdings in the same way as a publicly-owned national company?

At present, there are only few researches addressing specifically the question of the disposal of public land and real estate properties, most of them incidentally. Like Anne Haila (2008) who noticed that the new management of these properties makes the Finish state 'just one real estate agent among others' (p.807) in urban affairs, most of the publications on this topic insists on the rising rent maximizing behaviour of state organisations. The conducts and strategies of the state as a landowner would thus contribute to the tendency pointed out by Swyngedouw et al. (2002: 556) according to which 'most of the projects are decidedly rent extraction-based'.

The findings of the scholars who have been confronted to the strategies of the type of operator that will be the focus of this paper come to the same conclusions. Linking this conduct to Thatcherite reforms, Susan Fainstein regrets that ‘although BR [British Rail] had the capacity to act as a strategic planning body for London through its control of so much centrally located land, its public ownership did not inhibit it from behaving exactly like a speculative private landowner’ (2001: 120). Novy and Peters (2012: 131) show that, in Germany, Deutsche Bahn ‘considered the upgrading [through a large-scale redevelopment and infrastructure project] of its larger, centrally located railway stations and their environs a key activity to generate revenue and profit.’ In Italy, Michelangelo Savino (2003: 112, my translation) concludes that after the 1990s, when the interplay between the Ferrovie dello Stato and municipal authorities was relatively open with regard to objectives, the group later focused ‘exclusively on the acquisition of land rent’. Such analyses tend to treat railway companies as single, consistent actors focused solely on the maximisation of profit. Jean-David Gerber (2008) offers a more qualified account of the landownership strategies of Swiss Railways (CFF). On the one hand, he establishes a link between the shift from a cumulative tendency (‘patrimonial system’) to ‘capitalist management’, based on the profitability of transactions, and the transfer of real estate stock from the state (‘the confederation’) to the (partially) privatised firm. On the other hand, he distinguishes between the interests of the real estate and infrastructure branches within the companies, and concludes that even the real estate branch incorporates a long-term perspective and social sustainability into its management. For the railway properties as for the other kinds of public land and real estate, there has been little research, however, sensitive to the territorial differentiation of the redevelopment of public properties and to the outcomes of the interplay between these strategies and those of the other organisations involved in these processes of redevelopment.

Among the few exceptions, Elena Besussi (2013) observed that the fiscal pressures and new public management doctrines pushing British and Italian local governments to rent or sell their assets result in different practices, rationales, and outcomes, depending on inherited local factors. Likewise, Francesca Artioli (2016a; 2016b) insisted on the role of new public management doctrines in the redevelopment of military sites in French and Italian urban areas since the early 1990s. But while fiscal pressures are a main motive of this process, she deciphers an other logic of action, that of the ‘local development’. She also explains how these redevelopment projects became a central object of collaboration, bargaining, and conflict between the central state, the armies, and local government. These researches bring refined understanding of the disposal of public land and real estate properties and thus valuable insights for my attempt to unravel the reasons that prompt different actors to view state places as obsolete, and to negotiate what should replace them.

State places: the basis of the state’s logistical power

To tackle this question I suggest taking into account the material dimension of the state. Elaborating on writings in the field of historical sociology of the state, I therefore put forward a proposition to consider the redevelopment of the public properties as a process of reorganisation of the logistical power of the state. The central idea of this literature stream on which I draw to explore the material dimension of the state is that ‘the state is both materially produced and represented through the built environment’ (Molnar 2013: 9). Therefore, ‘since modern states must be materially engineered [...] across land’, they are not simply imagined or organised (Carroll 2002: 78-80). This material approach represents a shift in the view of the state compared with the Weberian and Marxist currents. It is not to say that the territorial dimension of the modern state has been ignored in Weberian and Marxist approaches (e.g. Mann 1993; Poulantzas 1978).⁴ However, as Chandra Mukerji (2010b) has pointed out, these

⁴ The concept of infrastructural power advanced by Michael Mann (1984) refers to ‘the institutional capacity of a central state, despotic or not, to penetrate its territories and logistically implement decisions’ (Mann 1993: 59). This power thus includes a material dimension. However, although he cites a few examples (1984: 192), Mann does not study the formation of this logistical infrastructure. For Poulantzas (1978: 115), the capitalist state ‘tends to monopolise the processes of spatial organisation. The modern state gives material form in its apparatus (army, school, centralised bureaucracy, prisons) to this spatial matrix.’ However, he is more interested in the effects of that matrix – i.e. the formation of a nation through the homogenisation of

theories generally envisage land only as a pool of available resources and an asset to be taxed. The focus on the military and fiscal aspects overlooks a major dimension in the development of the power of modern Western states. In fact, this power

has involved more: the construction of a built environment [...] in order to implement political objectives. [...] These places produced by engineering – ranging from cities to reservoirs and military installations – are places where power is exercised and where the technical capacity to use it is visibly demonstrated. They are therefore places where power and its legitimacy can be challenged. (Mukerji 2009: 223).

The formation of this infrastructure and the social and spatial engineering that underpin it are the central objects of inquiry of this stream of research. It is interested by the changes made to the land (registry, mapping, consolidation, forestation, etc.), to the population (censuses, confinement, social engineering, etc.) and to the built environment (construction of monuments, infrastructure and networks, urban planning and regulations, etc.).⁵ These material policies of the state are what constitute its 'logistical power' defined narrowly from now on as the capacity to organise the flows of things, information, and people in a given territory.

Patrick Carroll has developed the most advanced concept of the state in that vein. First, he shares the previously cited idea that it is through material factors that modern states 'are artfully, ingeniously, and often quite forcefully contrived, designed, and materially constructed' (Carroll 2006: 168). Next, he offers an original way to think relationally about the state as an idea, in the Hobbesian tradition, the state as organisation, from the sociological perspective, and the materiality of the state. In this way, he comes to define the state 'simultaneously as an idea, a system, and a country as a complex of meanings, practices, and materialities' (2009: 592). The state as idea refers to cognitive structures, institutions and discursive forms. The state as organisation (and set of activities) includes labour, interests and beliefs. The state as a materiality refers to the built environment, to technologies and to populations (see figure 1). The advantage of this approach is that it provides a picture of the state that is neither unified nor fragmented, but aggregative. Thus, at the end of this integrative rather than divisive conceptual effort,

the state idea has become a powerful discursive formation, a cognitive structure, an assemblage of institutions; the state system has become a vast organizational apparatus that is practiced with varying degrees of coherence (and indeed incoherence) from the heads of executive agencies to the most mundane aspects of everyday life [...]; and the state country is constituted through the materialities of land, built environment, and bodies/people. (Carroll 2009: 592)

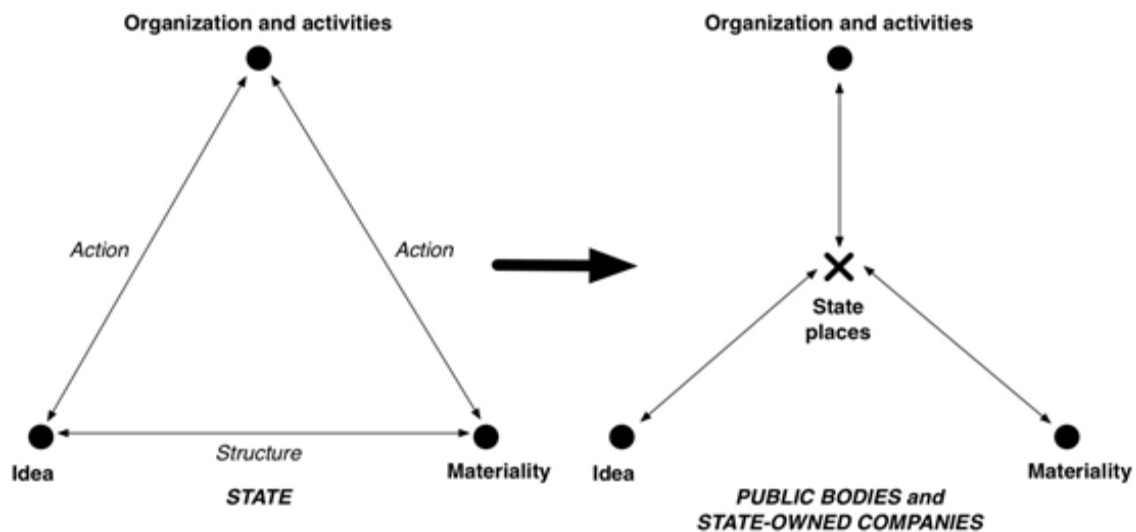
Finally, having defined these three analytical categories, Carroll explores their relations. For example, material designs stand at the intersection between the organisational and material dimensions of the state. They are therefore the preferred objects of analysis in seeking to understand the rationales and meanings that underpin the processes of state formation and, I would add, of state transformation. Indeed, most of these works of historical sociology are concerned with the *formation* of the material base of modern states. They describe the processes whereby the state's logistical power spreads across its administrative territory. However, my interest is in the ongoing *transformation* of that base. What is currently occurring are changes in the material presence of public operators in cities, within the context of their restructuring. In other words, the subject of my study is not the way in which state organisations act upon a territory through infrastructures. Instead, it is how this basis is *acted upon* by organisations internal and external to the state. I should also point that these works tend not to take into account the conflicts, negotiations and arrangements that shape the state's material designs. The cultural shift on which these authors embarked focuses attention on the production of shared meaning and the dissemination of worldviews. In so doing, they are diverted from the issues, resources, and power relations that shape the material designs of the state in cities and territories.

the population – than in the way this 'material apparatus' is constituted.

5 It should be noted that a historical current headed by Bernard Lepetit (1984) and Antoine Picon (Desportes and Picon 1997) developed in France in the 1980s and 1990s on the question of France's infrastructure in the pre-revolutionary period. However, they are less explicit in linking their work with the question of the formation and the theory of the state than is the historical sociology on which I draw.

That said, the present paper builds upon the shift of focus brought about by this stream of literature. The theoretical advances in this work on the material designs and logistical power of the state allow to establish a conceptual link between different states places within cities – barracks, hospitals, postal centres, universities and schools, large technical networks, etc. State places can thus be defined as the material base *through* which states are constructed and maintained and *from* which they exercise their power over a territory. They underpin the symbols, the functions and activities of the state. They therefore constitute nodes on the state’s organisational network in its territory, from which its logistical power is exercised. Following Patrick Carroll (2009), state places would seem to be the points at which the ideational, organisational and material dimensions of the state come together (see figure 1). However, it should immediately be added that courts, hospitals, schools, and *a fortiori* factories, reservoirs, canals, slaughterhouses, gasometers and railway networks are not intrinsically state places. These *states of affairs* must not be taken for granted. We need to be careful not to reify the state by making the production and use of its material base the sole factor in the construction and appropriation of a territory (Raffestin 1980). These places are the outcome of assemblages of land, capital, materials as well as technologies, regulations, knowledge, know-how and labour. Whether they have been built, converted or taken over, it is following processes that bring them under processes of *state incorporation* (‘étatisation’, Offerlé 1997) that these facilities and networks become attached to the state complex. In return, idea, organisation and materiality, are embodied, transformed and deployed through and from these places. One can therefore argue that, if the logistical power of the state is constituted through these places, then it is restructured through their changes.

Figure 1: The transformation of state places, a research topic at the intersection of the three dimensions of the state defined by Patrick Carroll.



Source: Patrick Carroll (2009), adapted by the author.

The transformation of state logistical power in urban areas

On the basis of this conceptualisation of state places, it is possible to drive into the issue of the redevelopment of railway sites currently underway in European cities. The enigma I seek to solve is this: if state places underpin the existence of the state symbolically, functionally, and materially in its territory, how do the fact that they are the target of redevelopment projects can be explained? For what reason(s) is the logistical power of the state operators being challenged and restructured in European cities? This question addresses processes spatially and temporally situated. It implies that the why (explanatory) cannot be dissociated in their interpretation from the who, the what and the how (descriptive). The actors position themselves and interact *in relation* to a space (railway sites) and an objective (deciding on their rede-

velopment). In other words, it is impossible to *explain* what the actors do without speaking of *the subject* of their action and *how* they go about it.

Three hypotheses can be formulated on the basis of this research question. The first hypothesis links the process of state place remaking with the larger process of state restructuring. The second seeks to contribute to an explanation of the changes to central and pericentral urban areas in European cities. Given that I am analysing an urban process relating to land held by a public operator in European cities, the third hypothesis regards the role of national and local variables in differentiating these processes. Based on the literature relating to the research topic, each hypothesis is formulated in terms of findings and problems or gaps (see table 1).

Table 1: Formulation of the research hypotheses

	Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3
Finding from the literature	State restructuring rescales and transforms its spatial planning activity	Restructuring of urban spaces takes the form of urban development projects that involve multiple actors and resources	Weakening of the national level in favour of the infra-or supra-national levels of government and regulation in urban transformation processes
Problem/ research gap	How are sectoral reforms changing the ways public operators intervene on their sites?	Why do a large proportion of urban development projects relate to state places?	How does the involvement of public operators and places reintroduce the national level into the regulation of urban transformation processes?
Hypothesis	The redevelopment of state places in cities is a result of the adoption of real estate objectives, strategies and tools by their operators	Urban development projects targeting state places release a capacity for collective action on the state's material base	The national dimension of the operators reinforces differences between countries and homogeneity within countries

The first hypothesis draws on two observations in the literature. On the one hand, state restructuring leads to a rescaling and change in its spatial planning activity. On the other hand, this reorganisation reinforces managerial and entrepreneurial approaches on the part of public operators, relating within projects that are financially too large for them to tackle alone. The aim of this hypothesis, therefore, is to shift the focus away from examining the vertical redistribution of power. It directs attention not to the relations between centre and periphery, but to the change in the relations between public operators and municipal authorities. I argue that sectoral reforms have effects on the ways in which public operators intervene on their sites. More specifically, that they adopt real estate perspectives, strategies and tools that alter the way they manage their presence in urban space. However, the embeddedness of these sites both in larger functional ensembles – for example the railway network or the regional hospital system – and in territories implies that this real estate perspective is open to dispute. A further factor is the public ownership of the sites concerned, a feature that can be conducive of criticism and generate inertia (regulation, administrative procedures, valuation, etc.). I therefore argue that the departure of public operators from urban space is caused by the *controversial* treatment of state places as real estate assets.

The second hypothesis is based on the idea that these sites are subject to pressures that emanate equally from central and local governments departments, public operators, and real estate companies and urban social groups and institutions. Here, I draw on findings from

research on urban governance showing that the state has become one player amongst others and that there has been a broadening of the stakeholder base in collective urban action (Le Galès 2002). I assume that the public operators are not sovereign in reorganising their presence in cities. Their sites are redeveloped through material designs. Urban development projects constitute both the space of interaction and the mode of action on these sites (Pinson 2005). They are used to mobilise actors, to assemble resources, to negotiate arrangements and to generate the revenue necessary to convert these complex structures. The hypothesis is therefore that urban development projects that target state places are able to release a capacity for collective action, a power to act – understood in the productive and relational sense (Stone 1989) – on the foundation of the state’s logistical power.

The third hypothesis runs counter to previous comparative findings in the field of urban studies, which argue that national factors are becoming less influential in the differentiation of urban processes and sub-national territories. Some explain it by the diminishing capacity of the central state to steer and control its territories (Dupuy et Pollard 2014). Others emphasise infra-national differences linked with the increasing power of municipalities in the regulatory process, and suggest intra-European parallels rather than national differences (Jouve and Lefèvre 1999; Pinson 2002). Still others highlight the direct relationships between local and global actors which bypass national regulation, whether in the transfer of urban policies (McCann and Ward 2011) or in urban development projects (Moulaert, Rodriguez and Swyngedouw 2003). Needless to say, many urban scholars recognise that national factors remain decisive (Brenner 2004; Béal, Epstein, et Pinson 2015). Yet, since at the same time it is argued that other scales of government and regulation of urban dynamics are reinforcing, the multilevel models deployed are not always clear about which scales of regulation or level of government are reinforcing or weakening. From this point of view, the concept of ‘uneven development’ in the writings on neoliberalisation is no exception (see e.g. the contributions to the book edited by Brenner and Theodore 2002). My proposition is tentatively more assertive as regards to the remaking of state places. The analysis of these processes implies to potentially deal with centralised actors and with national modes of regulation and scales of reference. My comparative hypothesis is therefore that this type of site reinforces both the differences from one country to another and the homogeneity within a single country, in terms of processes and outcomes, compared with urban redevelopment projects on land held by Fordist industrial firms.

In putting forward this triadic set of hypotheses, I am pursuing two objectives in this paper. The first is to provide an explanation specific to a substantial proportion of changes to central and pericentral areas in European cities. I wish to explain why, how and with what effects land held by public operators is the target of urban development projects. The second is to contribute to decipher the material dimension of state restructuring through the investigation of the redevelopment of its sites. I therefore identify the mutual influences between state restructuring and urban restructuring.

The research will show that two primary factors are responsible for the reorganisation of railway company land: (i) the development of real estate activities by railway companies, against a background of the reforms in the sector that goes back to the early 1990s; (ii) the formulation of material designs by municipal authorities to reorganise the presence of public operators whose large land holdings are increasingly constructed and targeted as problematic, in circumstances where those authorities hold increasing power in the steering of urban affairs since the 1970s. However, these reasons for intervention do not supplant the railway companies’ industrial objectives to modernise and rationalise their operations. Consequently, the redevelopment of state places occurs through local adjustments between these competing motives for intervention on the operator’s material base: real estate business, urban planning, and functional improvements of the railway network. In these arrangements, the national variable is decisive. More specifically, the differences between the two countries in terms of the institutional context of the operator, the financial resources of municipal authorities and central government intervention explain the disparities observed. In France, they result in procedural regularity and homogeneity of outcomes at the national level, whereas in Italy

they lead to *ad hoc* inter-institutional arrangements and heterogeneity at the local level.

Methodology

Many state organisations are concerned with the disposal and redevelopment of their properties. Three reasons led me to choose land held by rail operators as the subject of investigation: (i) the state ownership and national scale of the rail network; (ii) the profound restructuring in this sector since the 1980s; and (iii) the large footprint of the railway network in urban areas. These factors make the urban transformation of railway land a fruitful case against which to assess the general hypotheses of this paper about the links between state and urban restructuring.

The method used in this enquiry is the comparison of case studies. It compares processes situated in four cities (Paris, Nantes, Milan, and Bolzano) and two countries (France and Italy) (see map 1). This system forms a comparative matrix in which each case is compared with two other cases (see table 2). The first is situated in the same country in a very different urban context, the second in another country, in a similar city.

Table 2: The comparative matrix of the case studies and their related regimes of urban production

	France	Italy
World-ranking city, national railway node of the country	Paris (planned)	Milan (laissez-faire)
Mid-sized city, end of the national network	Nantes (negotiated)	Bolzano (planned)

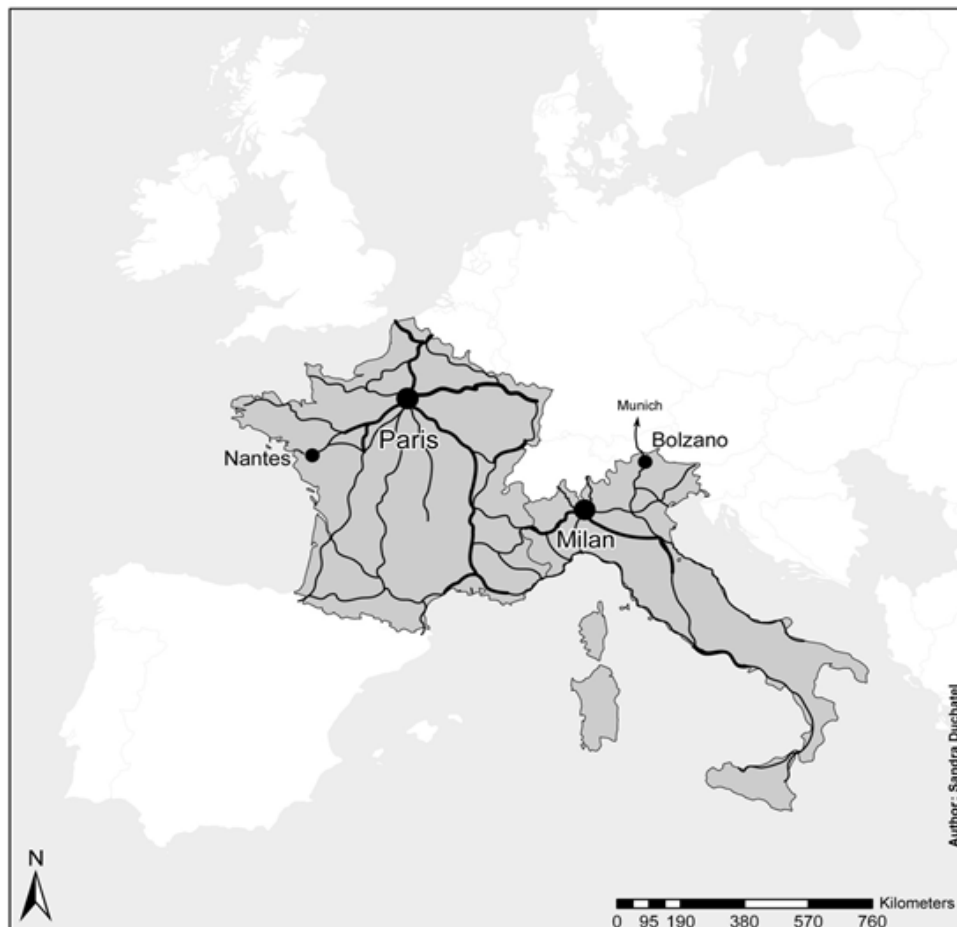
On the basis of this comparative matrix, the case studies selected have to meet three requirements. The first is to fit into the matrix. The cities of Paris and Nantes on one side, and the cities of Milan and Bolzano on the other, are characterised by distinct regimes of urban production defined as routinized patterns of coordination between local governments, landowners and the real estate industry at a municipal or metropolitan scale. Paris is a world-ranking city, operating under a ‘planning’ regime, i.e. enjoying a very favourable position in international markets, strong municipal control of development and support from the state (Kantor, Savitch, and Vicari Haddock 1997; Pradella 2011). In comparison, Nantes is a mid-ranking urban area (Halbert, Cicille, and Rozenblat 2012) where the ‘urban planning system introduced since the end of the 1970s can be described as negotiated and evolving’ (Dormois 2006: 844). The municipal authority shares control of development to a greater degree, both in decision-making and implementation. It draws on both the metropolitan institutions and regional players in the real estate sector (Pinson 2002; Dormois 2004). Milan is a world-ranking metropolis which, like Paris, is present in several international markets. It was characterised by an interventionist and partisan system of urban production until the 1990s (Vicari and Molotch 1990; Kantor, Savitch, and Vicari Haddock 1997). Between 1997 et 2011, successive municipal authorities pursued urban development policies guided by the ideology of urban growth (Bolocan Goldstein and Bonfantini 2007; Anselmi 2013), until the election of a left-wing municipality challenged this approach. Laissez-faire and Milan municipality’s low level of involvement in urban changes are in sharp contrast with the control and stability of the structures of the urban and building provision exercised by the municipality and Autonomous Province of Bolzano. Here, therefore, the urban production regime can be described as planning-based. This is all the more accurate to the extent it is part of a ‘model’ of territorial administration characterised by strict limitations on urban sprawl, policies to protect the environment and the landscape, and significant financial, technical and operational resources, especially in the sphere of urban services (Pasquali et al. 2002; Diamantini

1998; Zanon 2013).

The choice of railway *sites* is the second selection criterion. These are as similar as possible so as to facilitate understanding of how municipal and railway stakeholders tackle the redevelopment of similar sites in different urban and national contexts. In terms of rail system management, this means that the sites have an equivalent role within the network. They are railway yards located at the node of rail network, which provide a series of ancillary passenger station functions (parking, marshalling, washing and maintenance of trains, base for preparation of track engineering works, freight activities and rail/road interchange platforms). From an urban perspective, these yards are large sites covering several dozen hectares situated in central or pericentral areas, within a dense urban fabric formed in the 19th and 20th centuries. Furthermore, I have been careful to select sites within the administrative perimeter of the urban area's central municipality, so as to make the institutional context of the different operations both comparable and simple.

The third requirement related to the redevelopment projects on the yards. On the one hand, I wanted cases that would be as empirically rich as possible, so that they could fulfil their heuristic function (see table 3). On the other hand, I chose parallel timeframes, again with the aim of providing the most unified possible comparative framework in order to highlight the spatial variable (national and local contexts).

Map 1: Location of Paris, Nantes, Milan and Bolzano in the railway network



Key
 Main network High-speed network

Table 3: Features of the four urban development projects

	Batignolles (Paris)	Nantes Etat (Nantes)	Scalo Farini (Milan)	Areale (Bolzano)
Surface area (% of municipal area)	52 hectares (0.5%)	27 hectares (0.4%)	54.4 hectares (0.3%)	47.5 hectares (0.9%)
Type of interinsti- tutional agree- ment	Purchase of land and replacement facilities financed by the municipa- lity	Purchase of land and replacement facilities financed by the Metro autho- rity District (with departmental, regio- nal and national as- sistance)	Replacement facili- ties financed by the railway company, land bought by pri- vate investors, rein- vestment of land re- venues in the Milan rail hub	Purchase of land and replacement facili- ties financed by the developer(s) (private or public-private).
Type of rail conversion	Reestablishment and modernisa- tion of railway yard functions on the site	Transfer of marshal- ling yard functions to the Grand Blotte- reau site	Demolition and transfer of mainte- nance workshops to Rho	Reestablishment and modernisation on the station site (tracks and func- tions)
Programmes				
<i>Type</i>	Mixed (housing dominant)	Mixed (undecided)	Mixed (undecided, housing dominant)	Mixed and flexible
<i>Housing</i>	50% social	Around 30% social	65% subsidised	34 % subsidised
<i>Offices</i>	140,000 m2	Undecided	Undecided	Between 118,000 and 237,000 m2, hotels
<i>Amenities</i>	Park (10 ha), new high court (100,000 m2), multiplex cinema	Park (14 ha), hos- pital (270,000 m2, abandoned), educa- tion, culture	Park (35 ha), unde- cided	Park (6 ha), multi- modal hub
Progress (2015)				
<i>Start of discussions</i>	2001	1999	2003	2000
<i>Interinstitutional agreements</i>	2007 (global agreement)	2005 (agreement in principle)	2005, 2007 (agree- ments in principle)	2006, 2014 (agree- ments in principle)
<i>Land transfers</i>	In final stages	Completed, negotia- tions underway	No	No
<i>Rail facility replace- ment</i>	In final stages	Negotiations unde- rway	Completed, negotia- tions underway	Planned
<i>Urban programmes</i>	In progress	Completed, unde- rway, planned	Negotiations unde- rway	Planned

Figure 2: Aerial view of the Batignolles rail site in Paris



Source: Philippe Guignard (Clichy Batignolles, « Brève histoire du site » [en ligne], <http://www.clichy-batignolles.fr/breve-histoire-du-site>)

Figure 3: Aerial view of the Ile de Nantes and the railway site of Nantes Etat



Source: SAMOA (2009)

Figure 4: Aerial view of the railway site of Farini in Milan



Source: Stefano Topuntoli (Protasoni 2009)

Figure 5: Aerial view of the railway site of the Areale in Bolzano



Source: Areale Bolzano ABZ S.p.A. (2011)

1. How local governments and urban planners framed the problem of the urban footprint of the railway network

The first section can be interpreted as a rerun of the narrative of *the return of the European cities*, proposed by the urban governance research stream (Bagnasco and Le Galès 2000). Firstly, the research question deserves to be put into context through the history of the railway sites' formation in Paris, Nantes, Milan and Bolzano. Indeed, French and Italian railway sites *became* state places, between the mid-19th century and the early 20th century. The arrival of railways in cities was the outcome of territorialisation that encompassed the local, regional, national, and international scales. The position of the network was negotiated between municipal governments, local institutions, central administrations and the railway companies. A wide *range of short, medium and long-range resources* (land, legal, financial, technical, etc.) were *assembled to form the railway sites*. However, between the creation of railway land as a legal category (1845 in France and 1865 in Italy) and the nationalisation of the railway companies (1905 in Italy and 1937 in France), these resources were *gradually absorbed by the state* and allocated to a public operator. This process supported a 'state's spatial project' which was to structure (in Italy) or reinforce (in France) the nation-state through the spread of the networked infrastructure (Dobbin 1994; Berstein et Milza 1995: 85). The state therefore used the railway network to integrate the cities into a single national space.

This picture can be interpreted as the *appropriation of urban spaces by French and Italian modern states* in that they gradually concentrated the political decisions, technical skills, and financial resources related to the functioning and development of the railway sites. Initially comprising multiple organisations and scales that produced distinctive assemblages, they gradually 'crystallised' into a single national territorial network. This network was operated by a state-owned company and incorporated into the material base of the state. In other words, railway sites were the objects of a process of 'state incorporation'. They *became* state places, through which the public operator could deploy its logistical power over the cities. This process implied a twofold 'isolation' of railway sites. First, they were excluded from the commercial sphere, through their classification as public domain. Second, they were cut off from the urban contexts in which they were embedded. This isolation is driven by what I will call from now on the *functional conception* of these sites: in parallel to their incorporation into the material base of the state, these sites have been conceived almost exclusively as functional to the workings of the national railway network.

This *historical* process of 'state incorporation' leads to interpret the current urban redevelopment of these state places as a reorganisation of the logistical power of the state. One of the sources of this process is the emergence of *an 'urban problem' posed by the extent of the presence of railway land* in urban areas. It comes to be formulated by local authorities within the context of the growing power they acquired in urban planning between the 1970s and 1990s. One professional group, town planners, had a particularly important role in framing the problem and the *urban planning* solutions to this large-scale presence. Within municipal administrations (in France) as well as outside them (in Italy), they were the instigators of the questioning of this presence and applied their professional skills to the issue. However, without political and institutional encouragement and support, that opposition would not have emerged. It therefore needs to be seen in the wider context of the development of the agency for local public action in the planning sphere., That is how, what I will call the *urban planning conception* of the conversion of railway land became progressively institutionalised. Nonetheless, while the arguments are similar, the way this problem has been institutionalised differs from one city to another (see table 4). It depends on the capacity for action of municipal authorities. And these latter faced difficulties in enlisting the rail operators into their urban projects. In fact, during this period, there was a significant gap between the methods whereby railway land was actually managed and developed, and the approaches recommended by town planners.

In writings on urban governance, the 'loosening' of central state constraints have been advanced as an explanation of the growing power of cities and metropolitan regions (Le Galès 2002). However, when it comes to land held by public operators, it has to be acknowledged

that they did not give up, despite pressures from municipal authorities. The railway companies did not join urban coalitions and adopt project dynamics in Nantes, Milan, and Bolzano. Paris stands as an exception, since various railway sites have been redeveloped between the 1960s and 1990s. The SNCF initially (1960s) became involved in urban affairs in order to test its own landholding policy, and then (1980s) because it was forced to by central government and an interventionist municipality. My findings therefore do not match the account given in the urban governance approach since it is the more dirigist and central state-supported urban regime that produced substantial changes in the railway land. One would expect to see coalitions emerging between operators and territorial institutions around projects that produced a shared vision. In fact, however, my findings show *resistance and discretionary power on the part of the rail operators with regard to changing their modes of urban occupancy*. In Italy, this behaviour was followed by the sudden proposals by the FS in the early 1990s to redevelop their sites in ways very different from locally expressed demand.

Table 4: Comparison of the reasons for and characteristics of the challenge to railway presence in the cities of Paris, Nantes, Milan and Bolzano

	Paris	Nantes	Milan	Bolzano
Initial challenge	1975	1991	1975	1920; end 1970
Problems of the railway presence	Renewal of brownfield zones Urban barriers Use of state land Land opportunity Housing construction	Bad location for the technical system Heart of the metropolitan urban plan Brownfield redevelopment Land opportunity Heritage issue (station)	Brownfield redevelopment Bad location for the technical system Urban barriers Use of public land Land opportunity Establishment of parks C o o r d i n a t i o n between urbanism and transport	Bad location for the technical system Urban barriers Use of state land Land opportunity Preventing urban sprawl C o o r d i n a t i o n between urbanism and transport
Mode of urban development governance	Planned	Negotiated	Interventionist →(*) managerial	Dual and interventionist (municipality vs province)
Actors and institutions involved	Municipality (Urban planning agency and department), SNCF, central government	Local government and metropolitan partnership bodies	Municipality, town planners, state (Ministry, Council of state) 1990: FS infrastructure branch, FS real estate subsidiary	Local governments, economic interests, town planners association (INU), FS real estate subsidiary
Resources and instruments	Strategic, regulatory and operational documents, interinstitutional partnerships	Strategic documents	Strategic and regulatory documents, legal procedures, events	Real estate, planning and railway studies, Strategic and regulatory documents, events
Substantial effects	Urban redevelopment of municipal controlled railway yards, with central government support	No change in public land areas, no interaction with the operator.	No change in public land areas, competing projects by the municipality and the operator	No change in public land areas, bilateral relations province-FS, municipality-FS

(*) The symbol ‘→’ indicates a change over the period

Here the *limits of a strictly urban-centred approach* to the redevelopment of rail company land are reached. The promptings of municipal authorities were not enough to change how these firms used their land. There is a need to understand what has changed, to explain why – from the 1990s onwards – the rail companies began to get involved in redevelopment projects on their land. For this, it is necessary not only to understand the new forms of intervention by these firms on their sites, but also what structured those interventions. This means that an analysis of the changes in the political economy of the rail sector is necessary. The aim of this shift of focus is to shed light on the effects of national and European neoliberal sectoral reforms on the status, ownership and management of the huge public assets built up by modern European states. What resources and what strategies does a public network company develop in order to manage these assets and respond to approaches from municipal authorities? What control do central government departments have on their operators' assets *after* the reforms (and first, do they want to have any?)? The answer is to be found in the second section, which 'deterritorialises' the analysis. In fact, not *everything*, including material and spatial issues, is governed and regulated territorially. All the more so as a restructuring of the state can even marginalise the territorial dimension in the framing and solving of policy problems, by privileging, for example, financial and accounting concerns (Le Galès 2013).

2. The emergence of the real estate issue in public railway companies

The difficulties experienced by municipal governments in enlisting the rail companies into redevelopment projects of their sites suggest to abandon a territorial perspective and to look instead at the restructuring of those companies from the 1980s onwards. The hypothesis of this second section is that in order to understand the reshaping of the logistical power of the public operators in French and Italian cities, one must analyse not only the actions of the actors directly involved in urban governance systems, but also the effects of restructuring in the rail sector on the ownership and management of the assets of these operators. I therefore change the scale of the analysis to study the relationships between the restructurings in the rail sector, on the one hand, and transformations in the status, ownership and management of railway land, on the other.

Railway assets have been used to provide a formal guarantee of the financial autonomy of France's and Italy's rail companies. This process was conducted in both countries thanks to the transfer these state assets to the operators. The multifarious technical components of the railway networks were disaggregated, in order to allocate net book values to each one, and then re-aggregated in order to constitute tangible assets within the balance sheets of the companies. In this way, they could be set off against the liabilities of the companies in cost accounting systems. The transfer has been carried out through a *twofold process of quantification of the network formed by successive and increasingly accurate inventories and valuations.* This 'assetization' of the railway infrastructure's constitutive entities brought state railway land located in urban areas within real estate markets, since their values have been determined according to real estate criterion and geographies. The conversion of public estates into assets can thus be interpreted as a monetization of part of the material base of the state.

This analysis must be completed by looking at how railway assets are actually managed. How national rail companies – in parallel with and following the reforms – took control of the transferred assets? Indeed, SNCF, RFF and Ferrovie dello Stato did not only 'inherit' railway assets from the central states. They actively contributed to the creation of their real estate status. Furthermore, their real estate departments revealed that railway lands and buildings were both a problem for the firm (through the quantification of its 'cost' in the balance sheets) *and* a potential financial resource to tap into in order to improve their balance sheets. This is how public firms were able to legitimise real estate activities. Each of these companies has developed, organisational, professional, and informational resources to manage a new sphere of activity, real estate and land development. This professionalisation entailed importing real

estate standards, instruments, knowledge and practices from other big private and public companies. The aim has been to acquire the capacity to maximise the profits obtained from selling railway land that had become obsolete. However, this did not take place independently of the firm's environment. Firstly, the pressures from municipal governments analysed in the previous section encouraged these firms to organise their land and real estate activities. Secondly, in order to develop these activities, railway firms had to establish relations with actors from different sectors of real estate production and management to which the railway assets were sold. In other words, it is argued that, in the context of the rising importance of entrepreneurial and financial perspectives in this transport sector, *public railway land was taken over by real estate management methods designed to exploit its new 'being' as an asset.*

Nonetheless, this structuring of real estate activities was not linear and unambiguous. The close examination of the activities of the real estate branches of the railway companies reveals a realignment in the strategies of the SNCF (from urban planning to real estate management) and FS (from urban development activities to narrow asset allocation practices) between the 1990s and 2000s, and the distinctive 'territorial planning' approach taken by the RFF on this issue (see table 5). Following on from the earlier definition of the 'urban planning conception', it is argued that the reforms and activities of the railway companies imply the institutionalisation of what I call *the real estate conception* of the urban redevelopment of railway land (I should write *financial conception of the real estate*).

Table 5: Comparison of the features of the real estate activities of SNCF, RFF and FS

	SNCF	RFF	FS
Organisation	Local →(*) Centralised, 'branched'	Centralised → Centralised strategy and decentralised operations, externalised management	Decentralised → Centralised strategy and decentralised operations, 'subsidiarised'
Professional skills	Urban planners and railway engineers → Property managers	Urban planners	Property managers → Railway engineers
Informational resources	CAD → Real estate management programs(**)	GIS + Real estate management programs	Real estate management programs
Objectives	Land rent capture, good management → Liquidity, good management and outsourcing (for debt paydown)	Debt paydown → Liquidity (for network maintenance) and spatial development	Growth in assets and asset value creation → Right sizing and liquidity (for debt paydown)

(*) The symbol '→' indicates a change over the period

(**) The real estate programs are linked to the companies' cost accounting system.

Insofar as the railway companies acquired skills and developed strategies to manage the redevelopment of railway land, the question that arises is how much control their supervising central government departments have (or would like to have) over these processes? Does the state have a plan for the use of its operator's sites? This question is particularly salient in that research has indicated renewed state involvement in territorial management. The suggestion is that the neomanagerial reforms of the 2000s restored control in urban affairs to the central administrations of public works and housing departments, to the detriment of the decentralised state and municipal authorities (Epstein 2013). The programmes and results of some local government actions would be now subject to monitoring at central level. Renaud Epstein (2006) coined the expression of 'government by steering at a distance' ('gouverner à distance') to characterise this relationship between the central and local levels of government.

However, my findings do not reflect this view. First, I explained that municipal governments have developed their own town planning approach to the presence of the railways in the areas they administer. Next, I have showed how the rail companies acquired autonomy and resources in the management of railway land. In addition to this, there is a structural opposition, this time internal to the state, already pointed out by studies on housing policies (Bourdieu and Christin 1990; Zittoun 2001). This *tension is between the 'planning departments' of central government* (Housing and Facilities in France, Infrastructures in Italy) and the 'financial departments', which formulate competing policies on the reuse of state land (see table 6).

Table 6: Comparison of the action of finance and planning departments on railway land

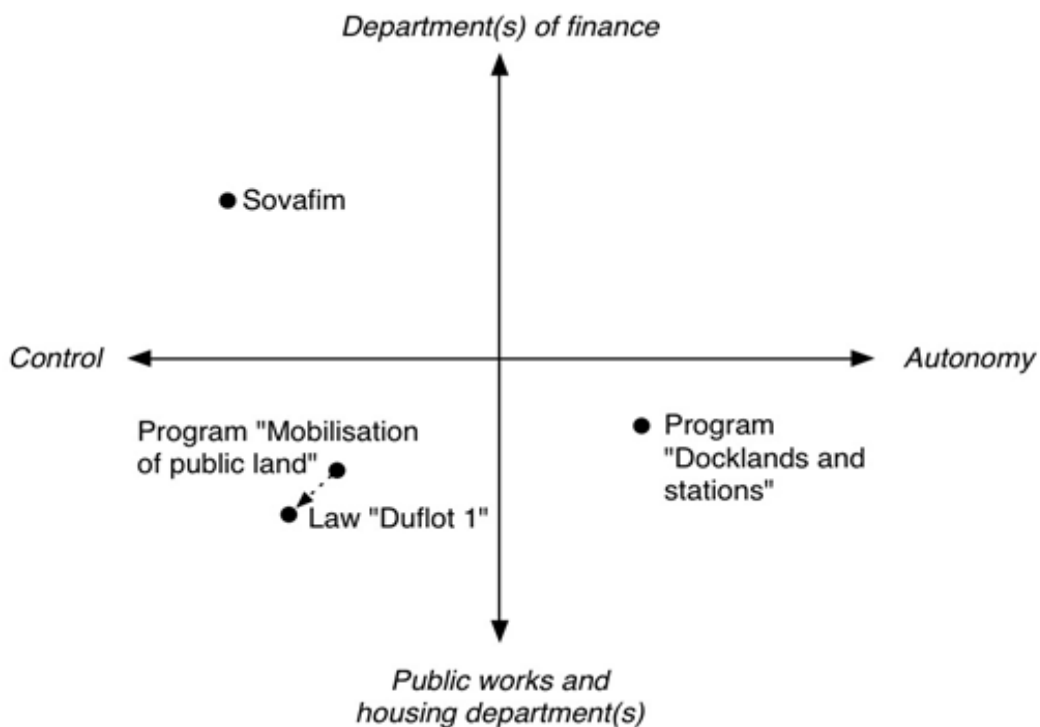
	Use of assets	Action	Land targeted	Relation to the real estate market
Development departments	As a land resource	Territorialised	Obsolete	Correct
Finance departments	For their high commercial value	Centralised	All	Imitate

The vertical relations between centre and periphery are therefore not sufficient to fully explain the material policies that affect land held by a public operator. Actually, there is a dual tension between, on the one hand, the autonomy of rail companies and local governments and their oversight by central government departments and, on the other hand, between the public works/housing and financial departments at central government level. This can be demonstrated by the comparison of the three main policies conducted in the 2000s by the French and Italian states to govern the redevelopment of railway sites: the creation of the public company SOVAFIM to transfer the assets of RFF, the *Programme de mobilisation du foncier public* (public land use programme) in France and the *Programma Porti e Stazioni* (docklands and stations programme) in Italy (see table 7). Figure 6 outlines a positional space, which situates these policies in terms of the opposed pairings of autonomy/control and financial departments/planning departments.

Table 7: Comparison of the three policies on railway real estate assets.

	SOVAFIM	Mobilisation du foncier public	Porti e Stazioni
Central government departments	Financial	Planning and housing controlled by the financial departments	Planning and infrastructure
Main objective	To release revenues for the central state budget	To meet housing shortages in areas where the market is stretched	To coordinate the strategies of the FS and local authorities
Selection of assets	High-value assets that can be sold quickly	Land that can be developed within 5 years	Infrastructures, buildings or sites for restructuring
Spatial selectivity	Areas where the real estate market is dynamic	Areas where the housing market is 'stretched'	Difficult socio-spatial situations in coastal cities
State funding	∅	∅	€37.2 million
Revenues to the state	€220 million	∅	∅

Figure 6: Central government policies on railway sites



The analysis of these policies suggests that the thesis of a ‘government by steering at a distance’ implying a return of the central state in urban affairs does not apply to the redevelopment of state places. It is true that typical New Public Management rationales, instruments, and practices underpinned the formulation and the conduct of these policies. However, central government departments have limited capacity to decide how this land is developed. More specifically, Italy’s central government departments maintain a principle of autonomy with regard to the railway company’s real estate activities. In France, the position is more ambivalent: the public works and housing departments and the finance departments each put forward different policies setting legitimate aims for the development of these spaces, but have failed to fairly impose them. *So it is the operator, not the line ministries, which, in terms of real estate, has established the capacity to act on its land assets.*

It is on the basis of this threefold conclusion – (i) that the railway companies have become stakeholders in real estate and urban development; (ii) that there is tension between real estate, urban planning and functional conceptions of the future of railway land within the rail companies and central government departments; and (iii) that national government does not play a central role in deciding the future of railway land – that the third section of this paper can start. Bearing in mind these results, I thus return to the primary level at which the development of state land is regulated: the urban level. The third section therefore explores the processes and effects of the redevelopment of railway land in French and Italian cities since the beginning of the 2000s. The aim then is to understand how this activity, weighted with financial and accounting requirements, is reflected in the *actual* management of the urban redevelopment of railway land.

3. Relocating the railway network in European cities

Part of the inertia of the structures of social space results from the fact that they are embedded in physical space and that they could only be altered by means of a process of transplantation, by a displacement of things.

(Bourdieu 1993: 161, my translation)

The previous sections of this paper has led to the following result: municipal governments, rail companies and their line ministries departments agree on the opportunity of redeveloping some railway sites, but diverge on the purposes of that redevelopment. In other words, a window of opportunities exists but it is entrenched with different conceptions of how this land should be regenerated. Under these circumstances, how – in practical terms – do railway sites get redeveloped? To find out, the third section provides a comparative analysis of actual railway yard redevelopment projects in Paris, Nantes, Milan and Bolzano.

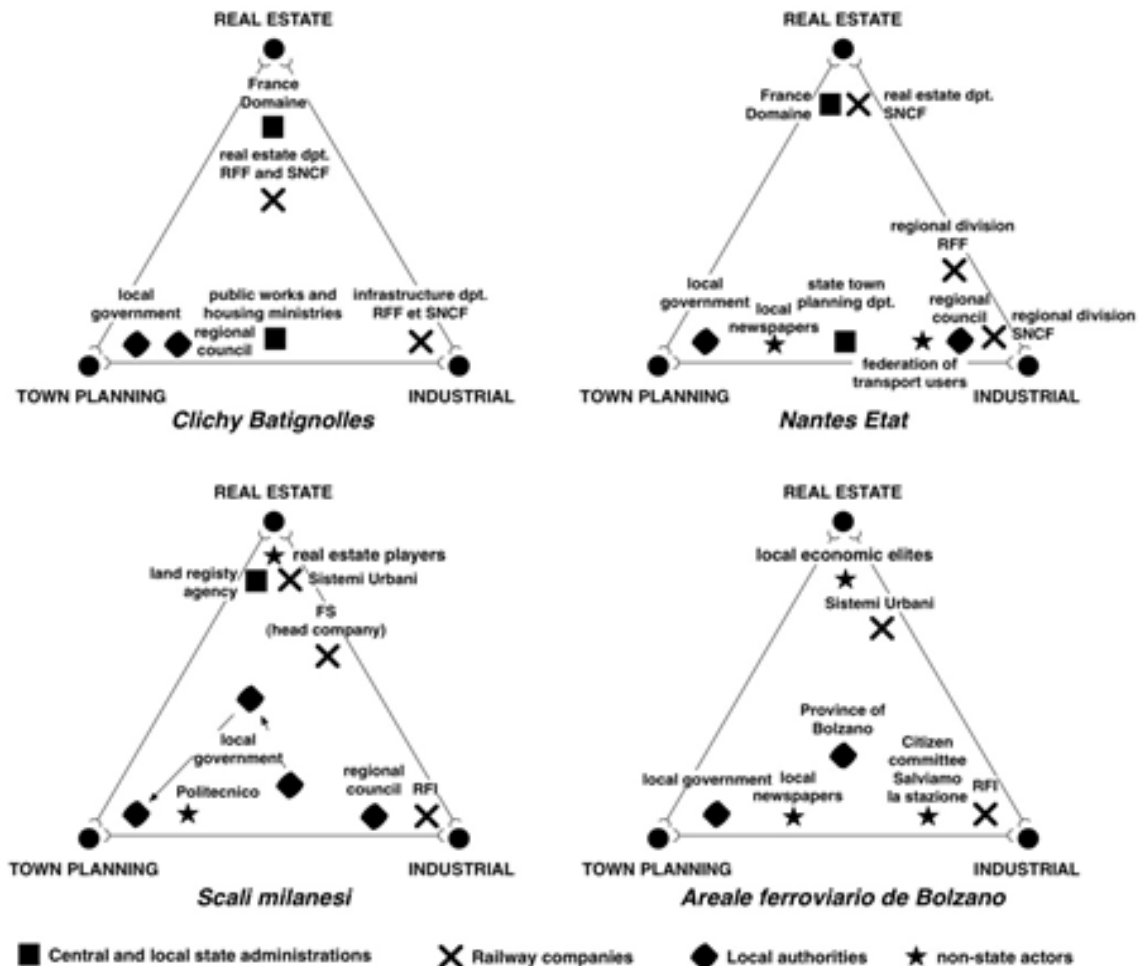
The investigation into these projects is covered by deciphering the dense web of technical, political, and financial relationships that has developed around the remaking of these sites since the early 2000s. These relationships take the form of bargaining processes run within scenes of negotiation to which access is selective. Contrary to my initial hypothesis inspired by the findings of the literature on urban governance, *the redevelopment of state places is first of all a problem internal to the state*, that involve the operator and different levels of government, but not (or secondarily) urban social groups or institutions. Mapping the roles and positions of the stakeholders in the different contexts studied (see figure 7), it appears that there is a problem of coordination between the different segments of the state responsible for these material projects (regional authorities, rail companies, central and decentralised government departments). On the one hand, the stakeholders find themselves in situations of mutual dependence, since they hold resources that are scarce, even monopolised (land, legal, technical, financial, political resources). On the other hand, divergent motives drive their respective intervention on railway land (for example, the rail companies are simultaneously motivated by real estate and industrial objectives). In order to resolve this problem, the segments of the state do not get involved in deliberative procedures or in the construction of a shared vision of the future of railway yards. Instead, they act in mutual recognition of each of the parties’ interests and objectives.

Just as there is no pre-eminent protagonist, there is no single motive for the redevelopment of railway sites. Several organisational and material objectives jostle in these processes. However, they are not unlimited. These interests and objectives can be assimilated to three *dominant conceptions* of the redevelopment of railway land uncovered in the previous sections: *functional, real estate, and urban planning* (see table 8). Their stylisation shows that they establish a connection between a categorisation and a related space for the railway sites. For example, in the urban planning conception, the railway sites are categorised as brownfields and are related to their urban context, while following the real estate conception they are classified as assets belonging to portfolios and balance sheets. The conceptions also determine a causal explanation for the reasons and purposes of the redevelopment of the railway sites. For example the functional conception explains their obsolescence by technological and commercial changes and their remaking as an opportunity to improve the performance of the rail system, while the real estate conception compares the use and the exchange value of the land in order to justify its sale and seek to maximize urban land rent thanks to this sale. In addition, the conceptions are ‘ballasted’: they are not just ideas or representations, insofar as they are embedded in highly material administrative, financial or technical systems. The process of urban restructuring can thus be explained as the outcome of localised adjustments between the three dominant conceptions of the redevelopment of railway land.

Table 8: The three dominant conceptions of railway land development

	Functional conception	Real estate conception	Urban planning conception
Categorisation of the land	Railway yard	Real estate asset(s)	Brownfield
Related space	Large technical system	Real estate asset portfolio, balance sheet	Neighbourhood, city
Justification for re-development	Technical and commercial changes	Use value < exchange value	Urban problem/opportunity
Purpose of the transformation	Rationalizing and modernizing for improving the efficiency	To extract land rent, obtain cash flows	To implement urban development policies
Objectifications	Industrial plan, functional dependencies	Real estate databases, balance sheets, business plans	Town planning regulations, urban projects and strategies
Associated resources	Legal, political, professional	Legal, accounting, professional	Legal, political, financial, professional

Figure 7: Positioning of the stakeholders in terms of their conceptions of rail yard redevelopment



The redeployment of the public operator in French and Italian cities is initially driven by the encounter between urban development policies and real estate perspectives. However, some actors then seize the urban redevelopment projects as an opportunity to modernise and rationalise the railway system. In addition, the operators obtain an ‘urban land levy’ (the share of the capital gain taken by the landowner, see Lipietz 1985) on the land released by this rationalisation, which they use to reduce the debt, but also to invest in the upgrading of the rail network at metropolitan, regional or national scale. Thus, coming back to the research question, it can be asserted that *the railway operators do not withdraw, but instead remodels the basis of their logistical power over the territory*. Better still, through these material designs, they expect to adapt their facilities to changes in the rail service, reduce their operating costs, and increase the productivity of their installations. In short, industrial interests seep through in railway land redevelopment projects.

However, the operators do not play alone in this reorganisation. Their role is contested and they need to negotiate their repositioning. Indeed, municipal authorities are the steering actors in the reorganisation of the presence of the state network in urban space. They do not simply challenge the forms in which the operator occupies urban space: they commit considerable resources to govern and, in France, to take charge of the relocation of the facilities and the redevelopment of the sites. In addition, the rail companies and municipal authorities are asked to involve in their discussions the regions and, in France, the territorial representatives of

the central government departments. These latter are directly involved in the different phases, whether in establishing frameworks, in negotiations, or in the implementation of the process. Finally, both the companies and local authorities are dependent on the financial resources of property investors to conduct this relocation, especially in Italy. There is therefore *no dominant protagonist in the redefinition of the position of the railway network* and in the reallocation of its facilities. They are managed at multiple levels. The interdependence between the stakeholders demands reciprocal adjustments.

The adjustment between the motives of intervention of the organisations involved in these processes mainly takes place through the construction of the exchange value of the land. This value is not the simple outcome of negotiations: it is *through* the negotiation of the value – i.e. through *property relations* – that a compromise about the features of the redevelopment project between the stakeholders is reached. In order to find this point, ‘skilled social actors’ (Fligstein 2001) engage in *a process of quantification whose purpose is to reach a minimum agreement on the monetary value of the railway sites*. They develop value formulae that reflect the three dominant conceptions of the futures of state places, set against a monetary standard. However, this correspondence is not neutral. The formulae employed and their strategic handling by the stakeholders influence the conditions of the transformation of state places, especially when those formulae commit them to a principle of capitalisation. This is especially the case of the ‘discounted cash flow’ method used in Milan and Bolzano, which is a key instrument of the financialisation of urban development (Crosby et Henneberry 2016; Guironnet et Halbert 2014). In other words, this *form of coordination that can be called a ‘government by value’* (Piganiol 2014), influences the futures of state places. In fact, the systems for justifying land prices shape what can and cannot be done, what needs to be paid to whom, how the ‘urban land levy’ is distributed.

Table 9: Comparison of the strata of reorganised landscapes on railway land in France and Italy

Thematisation Objects of analysis	France: management by municipal authorities with state support	Italy: municipal autho- rities seeking financial investors
Priorities in the construction of railway land value	Setting a sale price between the operators and municipal authorities, approved by France Domaine	Milan: distributing the capital gains Bolzano: demonstrating the feasibility of the operation, attracting financial investors
Principles for reconstituting the rail system	Rationalisation, modernisation, and reconstitutions on the principle of functional equivalence, financing out of local public expenditure Nantes: Relocation to the outskirts	Rationalisation, modernisation Milan: Relocation to the outskirts and funding by a levy on revenues Bolzano: Regionalisation, financing by investors
Stages of ownership restructuring	(i) Separation between operators; (ii) Intermediation by municipal authorities; (iii) Insertion into urban production systems	Milan: (i) Separation between operators and removal from state ownership; (ii) Subsidiarisation and allocation of assets; (iii) Sale to investment funds Bolzano: (i) removal from state ownership; (ii) Subsidiarisation; (iii) Sale to Tyrolian investors
Characteristics of urban planning	Upgrading state facilities, metropolitan facilities (including park), social housing, attracting institutional investors and multinational companies (Paris) and the 'creative class' (Nantes).	Milan: Parks, social housing, attracting institutional investors Bolzano: Provincial-scale facilities, internationalisation and territorial economic development

Having explored the reasons for intervention, the types of coordination and the formulae of the valuation of public land, it is possible to go until the substantive content of the redevelopment projects. This content can be analysed around three strata of the emerging landscape of the rail yards: the rail infrastructure, ownership, and the programmes introduced to replace the network (see table 9). These strata reveal that the negotiations on the relocation of the network are embedded in their local and national institutional contexts. More specifically, two findings must be explained in detail:

(i) The intermediary role played by the municipal governments in the reconversion of state places into real estate products that can be assimilated into structures of building provision;

(ii) The significance of the national level and the ‘second rank institutions’ associated with it (instruments, legal rules, technical standards, see Lorrain 2008) as a key explanatory variable of the differentiation of the outcomes of the urban redevelopment in each context.

Firstly, the way that the redevelopment of state land is managed is directly linked to the regime of urban production in the city where it is located. Furthermore, municipal authorities shape redevelopment projects for state places in such a way that they can be absorbed into the different ‘structures of building provision’ (Ball 1986) present in the territory. The urban production regimes in Paris, Nantes, Milan and Bolzano shape the way the redevelopment of state places is tackled. However, the complexity of these redevelopments, because of the inertia of the technical system, the financial costs and the coordination problems, challenges the existing regimes in all the cities studied. The municipal authorities have been forced to change their routine procedures in order to find the resources, in particular the financial resources, needed to relocate the railway network. Furthermore, the state-ownership of the sites framed the arrangements reached on the value of the sites, the distribution of the capital gains or the rail and urban programmes. Together, these findings confirm the specificity of the redevelopment of state places and the added value of distinguishing them analytically from other types of land, notably land occupied by Fordist industries.

Secondly, the role national scale in distinguishing the urban redevelopment processes deserves to be highlighted. In the introduction, the second hypothesis aimed to discuss some works emphasizing the homogenising impact of globalisation on urban policies, town planning models, and stakeholders, and of financing systems on the processes of urban redevelopment (Moulaert, Rodriguez, and Swyngedouw 2003). Others, in contrast, have stressed the diversification of processes and results, arising out of increasing autonomy from the state and the proliferation of territorial stakeholders (Pinson 2009). In this view, the national dimension does not really matter in terms of the difference between urban processes. The double-paired comparative matrix I have followed leads to a more refined result on this question. Indeed, the redevelopment of the state’s railway land follows procedures and leads to outcomes that are homogeneous in France whereas heterogeneous in Italy.

The homogeneity of the French cases is explained by the regulatory role played by second-rank institutions linked to central government and to public land. They set the rules for assessing value, for railway reorganisation, for allocating capital gains, for the priority of municipal authorities in acquiring sites. They enable municipal governments to assume these processes. This position of authority itself generates homogeneity in procedures and outcomes. Although by different means, the City of Paris and Nantes Métropole develop similar programmes and planning configurations. Through development companies under their control, they play the same intermediary role between the railway land and its integration into real estate production systems.

The national institutional framework also explained the heterogeneity of the Italian cases, but in this instance because of its flexibility. In fact, it leaves local authorities and rail operators more latitude in the agreements they reach. Because the municipal authorities use this room for manoeuvre to provide distinctive responses that reflect the issues they face, the procedures and outcomes vary from one place to another more than in France. So the methods of financing railway reorganisation, the scales to which capital gains are reallocated, and

indeed the role of the municipal authority, are not the same in Milan and in Bolzano. Ultimately, the reorganisation of the logistical power of the public operator is a process that is more controlled by public rules and organisations in France than in Italy, where real estate actors and market rules govern the conditions of redevelopment of this land.

Conclusion

Over the last twenty-five years, different organisations of the state have been involved in the redevelopment of land occupied by public operators. With all its inertia, this process is tangible and significant. It involves regional and local authorities, public enterprises, state agencies and central and decentralised government departments, not to mention numerous engineering, consultancy, design and construction firms. In this way, state places are being adapted to new functions that government departments and operators are required to fulfil. The redevelopment of state places is an important socio-spatial process, since it affects the day-to-day functioning of European states and urban societies. It undoubtedly constitutes a political issue in that it frames the production of the built environment which shapes who inhabits, works, owns and has the use of urban spaces. The future of European cities therefore partly depends on what is built in lieu of public land properties. Astonishingly, this process has not been specifically dealt with in urban studies. Hence this research which, given the scale of the process, focused here on the rail sector and a detailed analysis of four urban redevelopment projects on railway sites. The conclusions are organised around the two objectives of this paper. The first was to explain the urban restructuring process under study in terms of state restructuring. The second was to show that this urban restructuring contributes to the material reorganisation of European states.

An urban process linked to state restructuring

Two primary factors are behind the urban process studied in this paper. The first is the challenges by municipal authorities – at a time when they hold increasing power in the steering of urban development – to the large-scale occupation of urban land by public operators. The second factor is the real estate stance and skills acquired by the rail operators in order to manage the assets they inherited following reforms in the railway sector. These two processes can be linked with state restructuring.

Redevelopment of state places led by urban governments

The capacity for action acquired by municipal governments in developing state land is connected with the transfer of skills, the professionalisation of elected representatives and local administrations and to new selective and ‘project-based’ forms of intervention on urban space (Pinson 2009). This capacity is built upon the ‘loosening’ of central government control and, in Italy, of control by the party system, over cities (Le Galès 2002). It is therefore related to the process of state rescaling. These conditions favoured the construction of a public problem by municipal authorities relating to the occupation of central and pericentral urban space by public operators. For these authorities, the problem is essentially formulated in town planning terms. They see these places as a problem *per se*, because of the urban barriers and divisions they create, but also as a source of development land. As a result, these sites are both a target and a medium of urban development policies. While this formulation of the problem is similar in the case of industrial brownfield sites, it is nevertheless more restrictive. The sites I studied do not, for example, raise issues of noise and atmospheric pollution or the need to maintain employment. Moreover, while the removal of a railway line, like the closing of a barracks or a maternity hospital, is perceived as the withdrawal of the state from an area, this is not the case for the shutting down of a railway yard in a large or medium-sized city in France or Italy. That being said, overall state rescaling has encouraged municipal governments to challenge the ways in which public operators occupy areas of cities, in other words have encouraged the reorganisation of the state’s material base.

Urban restructuring led by public operators

The second factor for the redevelopment of railway sites lies in the new ways in which railway assets are handled by actors, systems and tools drawn from the real estate sector. That can be linked to state restructuring, too. The change of legal status, ownership and accounting rules for railway assets made possible the private-like forms and managing of the railway companies in France and Italy, in line with the requirements of the European Commission. Indeed, the acquisition of these assets has brought the historical operators financial autonomy. But the SNCF, RFF, and the FS have not been passive players in this transfer. They have carefully inventoried and valued these assets according to real estate criterion. Following administrative and commercial inventories and valuations, they have *redefined the nature of the state networked infrastructure as a set of real estate assets*. These firms have made the management, exploitation, and sale of real estate a new component of their activity, by acquiring and structuring organisational, professional and informational resources. Real estate professionals have thus penetrated the world of the railway. They have developed and obtained responsibility for the real estate issue posed by the railway network and its operation, thereby giving the rail companies a capacity to participate in the reshaping of the urban fabric.

Paradoxically, this new activity entails the public operator disposing of part of its own infrastructure, i.e. its logistical power. This new approach to infrastructure management is explained by the emergence of entrepreneurial and financial rationales within the rail operators, which legitimise real estate activity as providing liquidity to heavily indebted companies. Moreover, they neither run counter to, nor take precedence over industrial priorities. Reducing the scale of maintenance requirements can cut operating costs. Productivity gains can be achieved by modernising and rationalising facilities. A further advantage is that rail functions can be adapted to the new services and methods of maintaining the infrastructure and the trains, and the location of facilities can be optimised. Yet, *the new status of railway sites as real estate assets reduces the time horizon of industrial thinking*. The functional (use) value is now compared to the real estate (exchange) value established by the real estate departments and subsidiaries. Their staffs look for components of railway assets that can be extracted from the rail system, valued, and sold. This said, the purposes and management practices of the huge state railway assets inherited by these companies could be envisaged differently. In fact, the case of RFF affords a glimpse of a less sectoral and managerial approach, more oriented towards local authorities and associated with spatial planning objectives, than those employed by SNCF and the FS.

New relationships between operators and municipal authorities with regard to state land in cities.

Railway sites have thus elicited new relationships between municipal authorities and railway companies. The essence of these relationships consists in establishing the reasons and purposes for the redevelopment of these places. Three dominant conceptions of the future of this land are present in these relations. First, in *the urban planning conception*, these places are viewed as isolated brownfield sites where redevelopment is both an objective in itself and a means to implement urban development policies in the interests of the city (or more precisely, the interests of the city as perceived by certain players). Secondly, according to *the real estate conception*, these areas are defined as assets on the company balance sheets. Their development and sale is a means to obtain capital gains. Finally, in *the functional conception*, these sites are seen as component of railway nodes whose operation can be improved through reorganisation. This latter conception is also taken up by regional authorities which, owing to the reforms of the sector, have acquired prerogatives for the organisation of regional transport. For the stakeholders, the aim is not to circumvent these conceptions at the conclusion of deliberative procedures or processes of shared meaning construction, but to proceed to mutual adjustments within a development project.

These adjustments take place in scenes that are selective as to the organisations that participate. Besides, the rail companies, the public institutions and their satellites, such as development companies which possess resources of this kind are represented. Within the framework of multilevel territorial governance, the adjustments take the form of negotiations which seek to find a degree of consensus between the stakeholders, mainly by constructing the value

of the land. This value reflects and balances the dominant conceptions, according to a monetary standard. The urban process that has been analysed in this paper is therefore the result of localised compromise between these conceptions. These adjustments take different forms in the two countries. In France, the national institutions that oversee and approve redevelopment operations on railway land generate homogeneity between local processes, a homogeneity reinforced by the similar role played by municipal authorities that set a framework and validate the negotiations. In Italy, the arrangements are much more localised. This is explained by an institutional framework that reflects processes of commercial regulation and the formation of local solutions between the municipal authority and the operator.

The material dimension of state restructuring

In the introduction to this paper, railway sites were conceptualised as state places, in other words as components of the material base *through* which states function and endure, and *from* which they exercise their power over a territory. In order to approach my research topic in these terms, I have drawn on a research stream in the historical sociology of the state which emphasises the material dimension of the state. I therefore explored the reorganisation of this logistical power in cities by studying material designs that seek to redevelop state places. These material designs connect the activities and organisational dimension of the state with its material base. By contrast with the approach of historical sociology, however, I have not focused on the territorial deployment of infrastructure by the state, but rather on the transformation of that infrastructure. It has become a target of public policies. In other words a state problem, or rather problems for different political centres within the state (government departments, public operators, territorial authorities).

This entails that *state places needed to be redefined*. They are no longer just places from which the logistical power of public operators was exercised, but also *places from which the operators could extract financial resources and, for municipal authorities, targets of financial, political and technical investment*. In order to coordinate these strategies, the different segments of the state involved have tended to develop purely property relations between them, which notably entails constructing the value of the land. Increasingly in France and invariably in Italy, this valuation is done by methods that treat these sites as financial assets.

The settled future of state places

These newly dominant financial methods have had the effect of locking the development possibilities of the sites by valuing them in terms of their ability to generate profits according to the criterion and requirements of institutional investors. The same holds true for the distribution and allocation of the capital gains generated by redevelopment. In France, the use of the profits allocated to the owners of the land cannot be subject to negotiation, since the legislative framework guarantees to the railway firms a total autonomy in how such gains are allocated. The case of Milan shows the possibilities that emerge when there is discussion on the reallocation of these capital gains, in this case to the improvement of the metropolitan railway service.

The range of possibilities is not only circumscribed by issues of value. It is also reduced by restrictions on the scenes of negotiation. This is particularly salient in that the technical community which plans the development of these sites, composed of rail, town planning and real estate experts is, it must be said, fairly unrepresentative of the urban societies concerned. Here, my research echoes the conclusions of Susan Fainstein (2001), who shows that civil society is largely excluded from decisions relating to the ownership and distribution of socially created value. This observation takes on particular salience in the case of land which is (or was in the Italian case) 'public'. If state places have become an issue of public policies for different segments of the state, this paper – and even more the PhD thesis it summarizes – hopes to contribute, in a modest way, to make it a political issue in *its own right*.

Discussion

Eventually, these results lead to reconsider the findings in two currents of research on the relations between state and urban restructuring. They suggest two shifts away from these prevailing explanatory models: the theories of *state rescaling and the return of European cities*.

A process distinct from post-Fordist transition, but with similar effects?

The first model explains urban restructuring in terms of the rescaling of state places for the purpose of adjusting national territories to the post-Fordist system of flexible accumulation (Brenner 2004). Three reasons suggest to rule out this thesis when seeking to explain the process of the redevelopment of state places in cities. First, while the process that I have identified can, in respect both to municipal authorities and to the railway operators, be linked with state restructuring, it is less straightforward to link it with a change in the method of capital accumulation. The reasons for the redevelopment of state places, whether those reasons relate to town planning objectives, to rent maximizing strategies, and, *a fortiori*, to industrial priorities, are not functionally linked to a flexible mode accumulation – indeed they are largely independent of the changes in capitalism that underpin the thesis of the post-Fordist city.

Next, the material changes I have described are the result of power relations internal to the state. The cooperation and conflicts between levels of government, on the one hand and, between those levels and the operator on the other hand, are not taken for granted. In fact, there needs to be coordination within each of these levels and within the companies, where the different conceptions of the future of railway sites are all present. In short, I described contested processes, which arise from the actions of stakeholders and organisations with divergent aims. Neil Brenner explains the changes in the forms of state intervention as the result of a ‘spatial project’ to integrate state institutions – situated in different places and at different scales – into a consistent geography. The paper has shown that the redevelopment of railway land cannot be reduced to *one* single state spatial project. It is a result of the adjustment of organisational, political and material plans sponsored simultaneously by different segments of the state. Even less does this redevelopment correspond to one single ‘spatial strategy’ to adjust the nation states to the new geography of post-Fordist accumulation.

Finally, it is not possible to link the process under scrutiny with a process of ‘creative destruction’, a dynamic of capitalism identified by Joseph Schumpeter and adopted by advocates of the thesis of the post-Fordist city (Zukin 1991). It is true that it can describe the metamorphosis of the material base of the Fordist economy – in particular industrial brownfield sites – into new urban environments dedicated to consumption, to management functions, to culture and creativity (Harvey 1989). However, regarding the redevelopment of state places, such an interpretation raises two problems. Firstly, in the thesis of the post-Fordist city, this transition is very rapid (Le Galès et Harding 1996). However, the changes that I have analysed are the culmination of long and disputed processes. Turning railway land into capital assets required a process of quantification that took several years and, in the French case, was highly conflictual. The redevelopment of the railway sites has entailed negotiations, administrative procedures, infrastructural work, which in the cases I studied have been going on for ten years, if not more. The problems of knowledge, coordination, functional relations and financing generate considerable inertia in the reorganisation of railway sites. Moreover, and this is the key point of my argument, *the railway operator does not withdraw from the cities, but redeploys its logistical power*. By contrast with Fordist industries, railway activities cannot be relocated around the world to take advantage of labour costs and other opportunities offered by the globalization. In short, the transformation of the logistical power of the state is a social, technical, and political process that cannot be interpreted as the process of creative destruction.

I am, however, less categorical regarding the shape of the landscape brought about by the redevelopment of state places. Urban development projects introduce programmes (services, leisure, consumption, etc.) settling the emergence of new socio-economic arrangements consonant with the landscape of the post-Fordist city. These programmes are the outcomes

of political strategies that seek to attract different types of capital, activities and populations. However, under closer scrutiny, the capital, activities and populations targeted differ substantially from one city to another. Policies intended to enhance urban attractiveness are juxtaposed with other urban policies (social, environmental, economic, transport) on these sites, and these policies are constrained by the economics of urban development. Moreover, attention has been paid to the fact that railway networks are not removed from French and Italian cities but redeployed in urban areas. Overall, the landscapes emerging from the redevelopment of these state places are difficult to rely to a single urban transition determined by a shift from Fordist to post-Fordist cities.

Neither return of the cities nor return of the state: the operators' empowerment

My enquiry also suggests a shift of focus away from neo-Weberian studies about horizontal and vertical state restructuring dynamics. Regarding the urban governance thesis (Le Galès 2002), three remarks can be made. First, the scenes in which the future of state places is decided are selective and restricted to representatives of public institutions at different levels of government, flanked by their experts. It is difficult to see in it a broadening of participation by urban stakeholders and institutions in the decision-making process on urban restructuring. When, in the case of Bolzano, 'urban society' took part in the process, it was outside the scene of negotiation and in opposition to the decisions that proceeded from it. Second, if municipal governments have become partially free of central government constraint, they are not able to impose their choices on public operators. Finally, urban projects are not the locus where a shared meaning on the future of state places is constructed. They are not deliberative spaces. Those pillars of urban governance – horizontal expansion, project-based government and deliberative public action – do not correspond to the processes that has been analysed in this paper.

Conversely, these processes do not signal a return of the central state into urban affairs, either despite the opportunities provided by the land held by public operators. The analysis of public policies on railway land initiated by central government departments, both on the development and financial sides, revealed some attributes of neomanagerial government 'by steering at a distance' (Epstein 2013). But the influence of these policies on the negotiations between operators and municipal governments is weak. Moreover, the central government public works and housing departments have not stopped producing 'instituting policies' (Duran et Thoenig 1996) aiming at fuelling the relationships between public operators and urban governments in France and Italy. In other words, these processes do not point to a new episode in the relations between centre and periphery. Instead, they reflect a *lateral movement at the national level, whereby public operators are building influence in urban affairs*.

The fact that urban infrastructure and service firms are becoming more powerful in the cities has already been clearly demonstrated. However, existing studies have generally focused on private firms and their spheres of influence (Campagnac 1992; Lorrain 2002). I have been concerned with *public* operators which step outside their sphere of activity. This process has important consequences for cities, but it nevertheless requires qualification, for two reasons. First, this new activity is restricted to land occupied by public operators. The rail companies are keen to exploit and sell their assets in order to generate revenue streams, and some of their real estate activities involve partnerships with big development firms, as in Paris and Milan. However, they do not act outside the perimeters they inherited following the reforms. Second, while municipal authorities cannot impose their choices, the companies similarly lack sovereignty of action within the urban space. This is not only true for their land sales, but also with regard to the nature and location of their replacement facilities.

Relative to studies on urban governance and on central government housing and public works departments, attention therefore needs to be shifted to the orientations and sectoral priorities of the operators. With regard to orientations, even on a subject as cross cutting as land assets, the timeframes of rail company involvement in the issue differ from those of the municipal authorities and central government departments. This issue is not unrelated to the pressure exercised by municipal governments in the 1970s and 1980s. However, it really came to the

fore in the 1990s, at the time of the reforms in the sector, within the wider context where corporate real estate became a hot topic for large firms. And this come early by comparison with central governments in France and Italy, for which real estate only began to become relevant in the early 2000s. As for sectoral priorities, the requirements and choices of the rail companies are strongly influenced by their industrial activity and the functional relations between railway sites and the network. All in all, the redevelopment of state places reflects neither a growth in local power nor a revival of central executive power in urban affairs. Rather than the 'return' of the cities or of the state, what I deciphered is a reinforcement of the urban role of public operators, which are investing in new activities because of the financial pressures they are subject to.

Avenues for research: horizontal reorganisation at the centre and state materiality

Neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian studies highlight the role of state restructuring in explaining the changes in European cities. My results align with these approaches, while putting forward two shifts in the analysis of the relationships between state and cities. The first is a switch of focus to the operators. To concentrate on the oscillations between state levels is to ignore the urban consequences of the restructuring of public operators. Yet a significant part of the changes in the role of the state in cities can be explained only by studying the relationships between these operators and local governments.

The second shift involves taking into account the material dimension of the state. The state is not only an urban stakeholder, an ensemble of organisations that participate in urban affairs, or of institutions that regulate them. State restructuring is not simply a context, or an explanatory variable. The state's material base is transformed in cities. The state, in its material dimension, changes through an urban process. The outcome of this process partly determines its activities (their location, their form, their technology) in the cities and, reciprocally, the functioning of urban societies.

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