Towards a 'Europe of Flows'?

Discourse, Power and Space in the Development of a Transnational High-Speed Rail Line in the European Union

Thesis submitted by

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Declaration

I, Diego García Mejuto, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

London, 24 May 2015

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the understanding of European integration through a focus on the politics surrounding transnational high-speed rail infrastructure. Although it has been argued that a discourse on the creation of a 'Europe of Flows' has become dominant in policy development, the spatial conflicts that this type of infrastructure involves and the wide array of political actors concerned cast doubts on the smooth development of such a space. The thesis aim is pursued through a critical approach that considers policy problems as socially constructed, seeks to reveal the power struggles in policy-making, and places space at the centre of the study of politics. Thus, an analytical framework that combines discourse analysis, social and political theories of power and a spatially-nuanced approach informed by human geography debates on scale and relationality was adopted and applied to the case of a cross-border and EU-relevant high-speed rail line in the Spanish Basque Country.

The case study first demonstrates the existence of a hegemonic discourse on transport infrastructure development, which accommodated a variety of concerns according to different scalar frames and was produced and reproduced in state, private sector and mainstream media discursive arenas. Proponents of an alternative construction based on the notion of proximity unsuccessfully struggled to challenge the former from other, minor arenas. Although those actors practicing the hegemonic discourse supported the high-speed rail line, the continuing prevalence of nation-state actors and power arenas largely prevented the timely development of a truly trans-European link, in spite of the efforts of both EU institutions and several transnational networks of association. Overall, the thesis illustrates how transnational high-speed rail infrastructure policy-making shapes, rather than a frictionless 'Europe of Flows', a hybrid European space that results from complex struggles for discursive hegemony and effective influence in the policy process.

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selected the case to focus on I had the intuition the Spanish Basque region would provide me with rich insights into the issue under study, but its impact went beyond the academic level. The endurance, confidence, entrepreneurship and commitment of the Basque society was coupled by an extremely welcoming attitude that made me feel at home in such a distinct place. On a personal level I learnt how attachment is not necessarily reactionary, how identity may be constituted relationally, and how pride in one's culture can be coupled with respect for and appreciation of the different one. A popular Basque song composed by Mikel Laboa often accompanied my research work, which, apart from its universal appeal, relates on several levels to the struggles of the Basque society:

Txoria, Txori	A Bird Which Is a Bird[1]
Hegoak ebaki banizkio	If I had clipped its wings
nerea izango zen,	it would have been mine,
ez zuen alde egingo.	it would not have escaped.
Baina, honela	But then
ez zen gehiago txoria izango	it would have stopped being a bird
eta nik	and I
txoria nuen maite.	loved that it was a bird.

[1] Lyrics and translation based on Martínez and Fouce (2013, p. 29)

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List of acronyms, abbreviations and terms

A. Olabe Ambiental

Environmental consultancy firm.

ADIF. *Administrador de Infraestructuras Ferroviarias*

Main Spanish infrastructure manager. Created in 2005.

AHT Gelditu! Elkarlana

'Stop HST! Collaboration'. Main contestation organization to the Vitoria-Irun HSR line.

Aralar

Basque pro-independence left-wing political party.

Asamblea contra el TAV

'Assembly against the HST'. The first organization contesting the Vitoria-Irun HSR line.

BAC. Basque Autonomous Community

Officially Euskadi or País Vasco ('Basque Country'), these terms have been avoided in the thesis since they have also been used historically to refer to a different territory (Euskal Herria, see below).

BB&J Consult

Transport consultancy firm.

CCA. *Conferencia de Cámaras del Atlántico*

CEC. Commission of the European Communities, European Commission

CEFAT. *Conferencia Internacional de Cámaras de Comercio del Eje Ferroviario Transeuropeo Atlántico*

CER. Community of European Railways

CPMR. Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe

CiU. *Convergència i Unió*

'Convergence and Union'. Catalan nationalist federation of two constituent parties.

CCOO. *Comisiones Obreras*

'Workers' Commissions'. One of the largest trade unions in Spain.

Confebask. *Confederación Empresarial Vasca*

Basque Business Confederation.

Coordinadora Estatal en Defensa del Ferrocarril Público

'National Coordinator in Defence of the Public Railways'.

EA. *Eusko Alkartasuna*

'Basque Solidarity'. Centre-left-wing Basque nationalist party.

EAJ-PNV. *Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea-Partido Nacionalista Vasco*

'Basque Nationalist Party'. Conservative Basque nationalist party.

Ecologistas en Acción

'Ecologists in Action'. Confederation of over 300 Spanish environmentalist groups.

EE. *Euskadiko Ezkerra*

'Euskadi's Left'. Former Basque left-wing nationalist party. In 1993 it joined the PSE-PSOE to become the PSE-EE.

EEC. European Economic Community

EEIG. European Economic Interest Grouping

EGTC. European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

Eguzki

Basque environmental organization.

EIB. European Investment Bank

El Correo

Bilbao-based newspaper, previously called *El Correo Español-El Pueblo Vasco*. For the sake of clarity *El Correo* has been used throughout the thesis.

El País

Highest-circulation daily newspaper in Spain.

ELA. *Eusko Langileen Alkartasuna*

'Basque Workers' Solidarity'. Main trade union in the Basque Autonomous Community.

EH. *Euskal Herritarrok*

'Basque People'. Former Basque pro-independence left-wing coalition.

EHNE. *Euskal Herriko Nekazarien Elkartasuna*

Basque agricultural trade union.

Ekologistak Martxan

Basque federation of *Ecologistas en Acción*.

EP. European Parliament

ESPON. European Spatial Planning Observation Network

ERDF. European Regional Development Fund

ERT. European Round Table of Industrialists

EU. European Union

Eurobask. *Consejo Vasco del Movimiento Europeo*

'Basque Council of the European Movement'. Pro-Europe Basque organization.

Euskal Herria

A region composed of the Basque Autonomous Community, the Foral Community of Navarre and three French former provinces. It is the main space of reference for Basque nationalism.

Ezker Batua-Berdeak

Former Basque left-wing political party affiliated to *Izquierda Unida*. Before 2004 it was named *Izquierda Unida-Ezker Batua*.

Fundación Metrópoli

Spatial planning think tank.

GIF. *Gestor de Infraestructuras Ferroviarias*

Former Spanish rail infrastructure manager between 1998 and 2004.

Herri Batasuna

'People's Unity'. Former Basque pro-independence and left-wing political coalition.

HIRU. *Garraiolarien Euskal Herriko Sindikatua*

'Basque Drivers' Trade Union'.

HSR. High-speed rail

INECO. *Ingeniería y Economía del Transporte S.A.*

Transport engineering consultancy firm, under the authority of the Ministry of Development. Its shareholders belong to the main transport infrastructure managers in Spain.

Izquierda Unida

'United Left'. Spanish left-wing political coalition.

LAB. *Langile Abertzaleen Batzordeak*

'Nationalist Workers' Commissions'. Basque nationalist and left-wing trade union.

OTP. *Observatorio hispano-francés de Tráfico en los Pirineos*

PCTV-EHAK. *Partido Comunista de las Tierras Vascas-Euskal Herrialdeetako Alderdi Komunista*

'Communist Party of the Basque Homelands'. Former Basque pro-independence left-wing political party.

PDI. *Plan Director de Infraestructuras 1993-2007*

PLAE. *Plataforma Logística Aquitania-Euskadi*

PP. *Partido Popular*

'People's Party'. Spanish main conservative political party.

PP-PV. *Partido Popular del País Vasco*

Regional affiliate of PP in the Basque Autonomous Community.

PSE. *Partido Socialista de Euskadi*

Regional affiliate of PSOE in the Basque Autonomous Community. Initially PSE-PSOE, it became the PSE-EE in 1993 after the merger with EE. When referring to both PSE-PSOE and PSE-EE, the term PSE has been used.

PSOE. *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*

'Spanish Socialist Workers' Party'. Spanish main centre-left-wing political party.

PTF. *Plan de Transporte Ferroviario*

RENFE. *Red Nacional de los Ferrocarriles Españoles*

Former state-owned Spanish infrastructure manager and operator.

RFF. *Réseau Ferré de France*

France's rail infrastructure manager, created in 1997.

SEOPAN. *Sociedad de Empresas de Obras Públicas de Ámbito Nacional*

Association of nationwide construction companies of Spain.

SNCF. *Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français*

France's state-owned rail service operator.

Taller de Ideas

Spatial planning consultancy firm.

TEN-T. Trans-European Transport Network

Note on the use of Spanish and Basque terms and quotations

For the sake of clarity, terms and quotations in Spanish and Basque have generally been translated by the author. However, when the meaning of terms could not be accurately conveyed in English (e.g. *vertebración* or *gaztetxe*) the original form has been kept in italics and, when necessary, an explanation of its meaning has been provided. This is also the case of the names of organizations (e.g. *Asamblea contra el TAV*) and of key policy documents (e.g. *Estudio Informativo*). References in languages other than English have not been translated.

In terms of place names, the English term was only used when referring to regions or nation-states (e.g. Spain and Catalonia); in the other cases, the official name was employed. When both the Spanish and the Basque terms were official, the one deemed most common or easiest to identify was preferred (e.g. San Sebastián instead of Donostia). Place names in Spanish or Basque have not been italicized.

1 Introduction

> 'We shorten distances; we bring people closer together.'

When I entered the main train station of the northern Spanish city of San Sebastián, 20 km from the French border, the information stand set up by the Spanish infrastructure manager ADIF on a new high-speed rail line was still closed and these last words of its promotional video[1] had not yet been played that morning. A few months earlier I had decided to focus my research on this precise line, which links the cities of Vitoria, Bilbao and San Sebastián in the Basque Country region and belongs to one of the Trans-European Transport Network corridors promoted by the European Union. That weekday of September 2011 was the last of my four days of initial fieldwork, and I had planned to depart early and briefly visit the Goierri on my way to Vitoria, where I would spend the day checking documents at the Basque Government offices. A mountainous and industrial subregion with a strong nationalist tradition, the Goierri had witnessed significant contestation to the project.

> 'According to what is expected, the journey between Vitoria and Bilbao will take around 28 minutes, between Vitoria and San Sebastián 34 minutes, and between Bilbao and San Sebastián 38 minutes.'

After around 45 minutes, I got off the train in Ordizia, a town of 10,000 inhabitants where the construction of one of the branches of the studied line had started in 2008. The town was barely awaking and the morning mist prevented discerning the valley and locating the Txindoki, the emblematic mountain that overlooks the town from over 1,300 metres high. The market square, characteristically covered by a concrete structure, was empty and, passing by a banner on 'amnesty and freedom' for the imprisoned members of the Basque terrorist group ETA, I walked out of the small historical centre towards the site of the works. On the right bank of the river Oria, which links the string of towns of the lower Goierri, sat the main factory of CAF, a railway equipment manufacturer that has produced rolling stock for networks across the globe, from California to New Zealand (CAF, 2013).

> 'The important orographic difficulties of the land have resulted in almost two thirds of the route being installed on special structures, such as tunnels or viaducts.'

On the other side of the river, where the high-speed rail line would be built, a steep slope climbed behind the residential buildings along the road. In the surroundings of Ordizia, the line would in fact only emerge overground for less than 200 m in one of the narrow valleys perpendicular to the Oria. According to promotional materials produced by the government,

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[1] Available at ADIF (2010).

in the Goierri 90% of the line would run through tunnels. I left the main road and walked some 200 m into the valley until the entrance of the construction site. Still, the works on the tunnels were nowhere in sight.

> 'The implementation of this infrastructure will favour both the internal connections in the Basque Country and the relations with other regions, France and the rest of Europe.'

There, looking at the succession of hills that faded into the distance and among which a small viaduct was apparently being built, it was not difficult to think of high-speed rail as comparable in this case to air travel: a fast, long-distance transport mode so foreign to the spaces it bypasses that its only presence is a distant, passing noise. The main difference, obviously, is that the former is evidently grounded – it does not run *above* the land, but *across* it. It therefore involves a politics over space between actors with different stakes in it. The apparent absence of the high-speed rail line in the Goierri, rather than being simply explained by its disconnectedness from the subregion's dynamics, could in fact be the outcome of a very material conflict between local and distant interests over space.

Some authors have argued that there is a hegemonic project to create a single, uniform European space, a 'monotopia' underpinned by a vision of frictionless mobility through inter-city networks (Jensen and Richardson, 2004). As a result of this, a remote border valley that could be framed as an important ecological habitat or the site of a traditional farming community may become constructed as a barrier to cross-border network integration (Jensen and Richardson, 2004, p. 75). The tensions between a networked space of flows and the local spaces traversed by it has in fact been conceptualized through the contrast between flows and places (Hajer, 2000; Albrechts and Coppens, 2003), based on Castells' (2010) duality of the 'space of flows' and the 'space of places'. The Spanish Basque Country, a border region with important topographical difficulties, could well be considered one of these places that pose friction to the seamless circulation of persons and goods that an integrated European space requires. However, a superficial examination of the problem points at a more nuanced situation.

There was certainly a significant conflict concerning the impacts of the infrastructure on the area. Contestation had emerged locally and to a large extent, too, in those spaces not served and immediately impacted by the line. However, the problem seemed to have more facets than the duality of flows and places suggests. By linking the main Basque cities in less than 40 minutes, the line would provide a fast and comfortable means of transport between them, potentially contributing to modal shift from road to rail and thus reducing congestion on the regions' roads. In fact, the Spanish infrastructure manager was emphasizing the intra-regional, rather than trans-border, character of the line ('Vitoria-Bilbao-San Sebastián high-

speed rail line') in its information stands at these cities' train stations. In addition, actors from the by-passed localities may not necessarily have opposed such a project: industries in the Goierri might have seen in the rail line an opportunity to reduce their transport costs if it could carry freight traffic, as the government claimed, and if they had access to the network.

Although at the bottom of a narrow valley in Ordizia the local and the trans-local could hardly seem more disconnected, European integration appeared to be just one of the several dimensions involved in the conflict over space that the high-speed rail line involved. The project would help to eliminate the friction posed to trans-European relations by a border, mountainous space, but it might also be seen as an opportunity to re-shape inter-urban relations in the region. The line's disconnection with and impact on the locality may have contributed to its placement into the surrounding hills, yet local actors might also welcome the potential access to new markets that it could provide. The question, then, does not seem to be reducible to a duality based on scales (the European vs. the local). A wide variety of actors, with their different interests, views on the policy issue, and conceptualizations of space converge around a particular land use issue and, according to their ability to influence the policy process, lead to a single policy outcome. A trans-European high-speed rail line was certainly being implemented, but to what extent did it also present nation-state or regionally-specific features? Is it simply a European, frictionless space that is emerging, or does it present hybrid characteristics according to the diversity of interests involved? Are the varied perspectives held by different actors on the project compatible and, if not, what are the insurmountable differences between opposing actors? Have EU actors driven the policy process, or have other state and non-state actors been influential in shaping its outcome? In other words, how is European integration taking place *on the ground*?

1.1 Framing the problem

The development of transport infrastructure, through the re-shaping of spatial relations that it involves, has played a key role in the economic and political integration of territories. In Europe, the Roman road network, essential in maintaining political control and facilitating trade across the Empire, is a classic case in this respect, but examples abound throughout history (see Johnson and Turner, 1997, pp. 1–6). For instance, the improvement of the inland transport system in 18th-century England contributed to the industrial development of the country by, among other implications, widening the market for goods through the reduction of transport costs (Szostak, 1991). Additionally, the development of the German rail system in the 19th century promoted economic integration across the German states and, together with the *Zollverein* (a customs union established in 1834) laid the foundations of the political

unification of 1871 (Henderson, 1975, p. 52). European economic integration, according to its advocates, equally involves the development of a single space through the implementation of infrastructure that transcends nation-state borders.[2] High-speed rail, because of the reduction of travel times between distant points that it entails (among other factors), is indeed central to this endeavour. This development, in turn, requires the establishment of policy-making spaces beyond those that have traditionally regulated rail infrastructure development in Europe.

1.1.1 European integration and transnational high-speed rail: towards a 'splintered' European space

The importance of infrastructure in shaping a European space that transcends the borders of nation-states is not circumscribed to the last three decades. Recent historical research has investigated the contribution of infrastructure to the spatial and political integration of Europe since the 19th century (Anastasiadou, 2011; Badenoch and Fickers, 2010; van der Vleuten and Kaijser, 2006). More specifically, the post-war European integration process has involved from its outset a formal attempt to create a single European space through transport initiatives that would facilitate the effective establishment of a common market. The development of such a market was already central to the 1957 Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community (EEC), which also included a first outline of a common transport policy.[3] However, for the following decades European transport policy developments were scarce (Stevens, 2004, pp. 47–56) and in fact by the mid-20th century rail systems in Europe had been placed under the control of nation-state governments and their rail companies (Ross, 1998, p. 67). The European dimension in transport policy, including infrastructure, has only gained significance recently, against the background of the impetus given in the 1980s to the creation of the EU Single Market. Its establishment entailed, as indicated by the 1986 Single European Act, the promotion of the free movement of goods,

[2] The term 'nation-state' is used throughout the thesis to refer to the modern, conventional notion of the sovereign state that is being challenged by socio-economic, cultural and political developments (see also footnote 7). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the contentious nature of the term 'nation' and its derivatives, including the concept of nation-state, in particular in the light of the growth of transnationalism or increased interconnectivity across nation-state borders (e.g. Kearney, 1995; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998) and the emergence of stateless nationalisms (Keating, 2004). In this respect, in this thesis no assumption is made regarding the actual existence of nations and their association with specific territories. Additionally, the term 'central state' has been occasionally employed to emphasize the contrast with other state formations within the nation-state.

[3] Stevens (2004, p. 171) has noted that negotiations leading to this Treaty had considered the development of a European transport infrastructure network, yet reference to it was finally omitted from the final text of the Treaty.

persons, services and capital, for which smooth transport across nation-state borders was fundamental.

This period was accompanied by significant transport infrastructure policy developments at the EU level, in an intensification of what Nugent (2010) has termed the 'deepening' of the European integration process. As Stevens (2004, pp. 173–177) has pointed out, these responded not only to the establishment of the Single Market initiative but also to other political (e.g. compensation to the less developed regions), practical (e.g. increase in intra-European trade) and institutional (e.g. the activity of the European Commission) developments. The most important initiative with regard to transport infrastructure was the Trans-European Networks (TENs) for transport, telecommunications and energy. The inclusion of a Title on TENs in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, which created the European Union, provided the legal basis for the development of guidelines in the field of TENs, the implementation of measures to ensure the interoperability of the networks, and the provision of financial support for projects of European interest. Among the TENs, the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) focused on transport infrastructure and included roads, rail (including high-speed rail), inland waterways and ports, seaports, airports and a combined transport network. European-level work on high-speed rail infrastructure occurred in parallel to the development of TEN-T policy and even provided, according to a working group set up by the Commission (High-Level Group "The European High-Speed Train Network," 1995, p. 16), significant impetus to it.

Within EU transport infrastructure policy, high-speed rail (HSR) is in fact a particular case.[4] First, it was regarded as especially relevant to the European project. Ross (1998, p. 71) has argued that high-speed rail had been considered a triple catalyst in economic terms: as a way of helping the rail industry to recover from its decline, as a means of providing new impetus to the common transport policy, and as a promoter of growth and development through the creation of demand, new markets and employment. In an earlier paper, Ross (1994) had indeed examined the high expectations placed on this mode of transport as a vehicle to foster European integration, which he understood as the reduction of inter-regional differences, the facilitation of the aforementioned 'four freedoms' of the Single Market, and the harmonization of the nation-state rail systems. The importance of high-speed rail within EU transport infrastructure policy has also been emphasized and critically examined by Vickerman (1997) and others (Spiekermann and Wegener, 1996; Vickerman et al., 1999).

[4] Since the emphasis here is on high-speed rail of European relevance, the definition of a high-speed rail line adopted in this thesis is that of the EU Directive 96/48/EC on the interoperability of the trans-European HSR system (Council of the EU, 1996): a especially built line designed for speeds of at least 250 km/h, or a especially upgraded line equipped for speeds of 200 km/h or lower in the case of topographical, relief or town planning constraints.

Secondly, since it links a reduced number of distant nodes – in particular in its trans-European dimension – it is arguably the land transport mode that involves, in the words of Graham and Marvin (2001), a greater 'splintering' of space. This phenomenon not only has negative environmental impacts on the areas it bypasses (e.g. through noise or land fragmentation), but may also reduce their overall accessibility as their access to the new network is limited ('corridor effects') and traffic is drawn from the conventional rail network ('shadow effects') (Vickerman, 1994, p. 17, 1997, p. 35). The accessibility changes that trans-European HSR development entail are in fact uneven within regions; the highest absolute increases in accessibility are in the nodes of the network, in particular in the central regions of Europe (Vickerman et al., 1999). Instead of a 'shrinking continent' (Spiekermann and Wegener, 1994), the European space shaped by high-speed rail resembles more the crumpled handkerchief famously described by Serres:

> 'If you take a handkerchief and spread it out in order to iron it, you can see in it certain fixed distances and proximities. If you sketch a circle in one area, you can mark out nearby points and measure far-off distances. Then take the same handkerchief and crumple it, by putting it in your pocket. Two distant points suddenly are close, even superimposed. If, further, you tear it in certain places, two points that were close can become very distant' (Serres and Latour, 1995, p. 60).[5]

The development of EU policy on a trans-European HSR network is thus closely related to both the European project and to the production of a differentiated space that privileges the linkage of distant points at the expense of short-distance relations. The radical difference between the spatiality of this type of infrastructure and the bounded territoriality of the nation-state that has traditionally dominated rail planning and development points at the relevance of studying the politics leading to the implementation of a transnational HSR line.[6]

1.1.2 The democratic nature of transnational infrastructure politics in the context of European integration: relevance and normative implications of the research study

Transnational high-speed rail development cuts to the heart of debates on European integration. The deepening of the European integration process involves an erosion of the

[5] This topological notion, as the conversation between Serres and Latour shows, applies to not only space but also time.

[6] The term 'transnational' is employed for the type of infrastructure studied in this research in order to emphasize its relevance beyond nation-state borders (see also footnote 3) while avoiding its exclusive identification with the European dimension and TEN-T policy, which is referred to with the term 'trans-European'.

sovereignty or capacity to exercise authority without external restraints of the nation-state (Nugent, 2010, p. 428). The notion of the nation-state is based on the conceptual template of the modern inter-state system that emerged from the Peace of Westphalia, which is composed of sovereign states with a monopoly of legitimate violence within their boundaries (Caporaso, 1996, p. 34). It consolidated when the development of nationalism since the end of the 18th century (Anderson, 2006) led to the establishment of an essential link between the state and the nation that the people had become, which provided the source of legitimation to the nation-state (Habermas, 1996; Taylor, 2003). Fundamentally, the relationship between sovereignty, state, and nation was premised on territoriality: sovereignty entailed the monopoly of authority over separated, mutually exclusive and fixed territories (Ruggie, 1993), which in turn constituted the 'containers' of nations (Taylor, 2003). As Taylor noted, 'the domination of political practice in the world by territoriality is a consequence of this territorial link between sovereign territory and national homeland' (2003, p. 101).[7]

The question of transcending the nation-state without losing its conventionally assigned legitimacy is therefore central to European integration, as the tensions between intergovernmental and supranational approaches to this process indicate (Nugent, 2010, pp. 428–429), in particular with regard to the development of transport policy (Ross, 1998, p. xii; Stevens, 2004, pp. 221–241). This is especially the case of rail infrastructure policy, due to the centrality of the nation-state in regulating rail systems in Europe. In areas of shared competences, this dilemma has been addressed since the Treaty of Maastricht by basing the distribution of authority between EU institutions and nation-states on the federal principle of subsidiarity (Føllesdal, 1998; Scott et al., 1994; van Kersbergen and Verbeek, 1994). According to it, decisions are to be taken as close as possible to the citizen and EU action must be limited to those instances where the objectives cannot be effectively achieved at lower levels of government.[8] The principle of subsidiarity is central to transnational high-speed rail as it is the basis on which the realization of TEN-T rests (Stephenson, 2010a, p. 715). Indeed, academic attention has focused on the appropriate balance of power between the different policy-making levels in order to deliver a transnational transport network (Sichelschmidt, 1999; Turró, 1999; Vickerman, 1995). The bias towards lower levels of government that the principle of subsidiarity presents reflects a concern for enhancing the

[7] The notion of the nation-state is pervasive and has in fact been traditionally considered the natural site for modern politics by the social sciences (Agnew, 1994; Taylor, 1996). However, over the last three decades it has been challenged by a diverse body of work on the spatiality of the state (Brenner et al., 2003).

[8] In fact, as Scott et al. (1994) noted, subsidiarity as formulated in the Treaty is not only a *procedural device* that determines the division of responsibilities between the EU and nation-states, but also a *substantive principle* referring to broad notions of democratic control, thus potentially enabling a greater role for lower levels of government.

EU's legitimacy and mitigate its so-called 'democratic deficit' (Scott et al., 1994):[9] whereas higher levels of government are expected to increase the efficiency of policy, lower levels are considered to enhance its legitimacy.

According to this perspective, an increasing role of EU institutions and other non-nation-state actors in the development of transnational rail links would raise questions about the democratic nature of policy-making. Authors from a variety of disciplines have in fact pointed out the challenges that globalization poses to the understanding of democracy as framed by territorial units (e.g. Anderson, 2002a; Low, 1997; Shapiro and Hacker-Cordón, 1999). However, as these works suggest, globalization does not necessarily mean a decline of democracy, although there is certainly a concern about the limited nature of nation-state democracy in this context. A democratic politics more in line with current conditions may be achieved by embracing non-territoriality or transnationality: Anderson (2002b, p. 6), for instance, has claimed that 'border-crossing transnationalism' may provide settings for more participatory forms of democracy and increase the currently limited democratic quality of politics. Indeed, Agnew's (2005, 2009) argument that sovereignty is not inherently territorial suggests that politics and democracy in particular do not necessarily require to be organized territorially, that is through separate and geographically bounded state spaces. Several authors have in fact claimed for alternative democratic politics that are less territorially-based (Anderson, 2002b; Low, 1997).

Nevertheless, considering the tensions between European integration and the traditional dominance of the nation-state in rail infrastructure planning and development, it is important to clarify which type of politics is accompanying the implementation of such a trans-border and spatially networked transport infrastructure as is transnational high-speed rail: the extent to which this politics is based on the traditional, bounded spaces of liberal representative democracy or on alternative, possibly networked or defined by different boundaries, political spaces; and the degree of influence of elected politicians, officials, experts, and private sector and civil society organizations. The study of European integration through the politics involved in a very spatial issue would not only help identify the difficulties and challenges this process entails, but also point at its possible democratic limitations.[10]

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[9] The EU has been traditionally seen as having a 'democratic deficit' due to the lack of legitimacy and accountability of its institutions (see Weiler et al., 1995, for what they term a "standard version" of this deficit). However, the existence of this deficit is not universally accepted and the concept has in fact led to significant academic debate involving prominent figures in the study of the EU (e.g. Føllesdal and Hix, 2006; Majone, 1998; Moravcsik, 2002).

[10] This broader question will be returned to in the concluding chapter of the thesis (Section 9.3.2).

1.2 Framing the research

Transnational high-speed rail infrastructure development has been approached from a wide variety of disciplines and perspectives. Significant contributions have naturally come from the European studies field (e.g. Ross, 1998; Stevens, 2004), but also from public policy (e.g. Hajer, 2000; Lemberg, 1995). The challenges of transcending conventional political borders have been addressed from transport studies and spatial planning perspectives (e.g. Nijkamp and Vleugel, 1995; Priemus and Zonneveld, 2003), whilst contributions from spatial analysis and applied economics have evaluated the desirability of this type of infrastructure (e.g. de Rus and Nombela, 2007; Spiekermann and Wegener, 2006). This section introduces this heterogeneous body of work and defines the particular approach adopted in this research.

1.2.1 Existing scholarship: an emphasis on EU policy and technical assessments

Although academic work on transnational HSR infrastructure has indeed been enormously varied, it has generally presented either one or both of these characteristics: an emphasis on EU policy and a largely technical assessment of the problems related to its implementation or of its justification.

Concerning the first characteristic, academic work on transnational transport infrastructure, including high-speed rail, has largely – and understandably – focused on the development of EU policy, in particular the Trans-European Transport Network initiative. A number of studies have applied theories of European integration to understand the emergence and development of EU policy on transport and trans-European transport infrastructure networks (Dyrhauge, 2013; Stephenson, 2003, 2010b; Stevens, 2004). A second and partially overlapping body of work has addressed the EU transport infrastructure policy process. Thus, Peters (2005) has examined the development of policy on a European HSR network in a broad sense, even including 'history-making' decisions related to the deepening of the integration process, while Stephenson (2009, 2010a, 2012) has focused on different stages of the TEN-T policy process. Thirdly, more critical work has addressed the rationales underlying TEN-T policy, analyzing the existence and main characteristics of a hegemonic policy discourse (Hajer, 2000; Jensen and Richardson, 2004), its internal contradictions (Peters, 2003a), the production of knowledge that legitimizes it (Richardson, 2006) and the limitations for environmental policy integration (Richardson, 1997).

There is, however, a limited number of works that have addressed transnational HSR infrastructure policy-making beyond an exclusive focus on EU policy. These have examined

specific cases, notably the Channel Tunnel (Holliday et al., 1991; Ross, 1995) and the Øresund link and other cross-border links involving Denmark (Lemberg, 1995; Linnros and Hallin, 2001; Ross, 1995),[11] but also others such as a new line in the Randstad-Flemish Diamond corridor (Romein et al., 2003). These case studies consider EU policy-making as one of several factors affecting transnational HSR development and thus they direct attention to other issues, such as the nation-state dimension of cross-border projects (Ross, 1995), multi-scalar infrastructure planning (Romein et al., 2003), public-private sector relations (Holliday et al., 1991), and the influence of actors in the policy process (Lemberg, 1995).

With regard to the second characteristic, contributions from a variety of disciplines have studied the development of trans-border infrastructure starting from the premise that the development of transnational infrastructure networks is required to respond to the needs of an integrating Europe. A first group of academics from political economy (Johnson and Turner, 1997, 2007) and transport planning (Banister et al., 1995; Nijkamp and Vleugel, 1995; Turró, 1999) have considered the barriers to such an enterprise and generally provided recommendations to overcome them. A similar yet less transport-based approach came from the spatial planning field, which has investigated the adoption of governance arrangements appropriate for the integrated development of trans-border corridors (Priemus and Zonneveld, 2003; Witte et al., 2013; Zanon, 2011). Although varied in their perspectives, the common concern of these works is the need to overcome the enduring importance of nation-state borders and the need to develop a coordinated transnational approach.

More critical work has of course been produced that evaluated the desirability of transnational transport infrastructure and HSR networks, yet, apart from the aforementioned contributions on the rationales underlying TEN-T policy, it has consisted of technical analyses on the spatial and economic implications of this type of infrastructure. A number of authors have sought to ascertain the potential contribution to balanced development – in accessibility and regional development terms – of the trans-European rail network (Spiekermann and Wegener, 2006; Wegener et al., 2005) and, more generally, the Trans-European Transport Network (Gutiérrez, 2001; Gutiérrez et al., 1996; Vickerman et al., 1999). These studies reveal a complex pattern whereby these networks in fact tend to widen the spatial disparities throughout the European space.[12] Although not explicitly considering the trans-European dimension, some academics have focused more narrowly on evaluating

[11] The Channel Tunnel, the Øresund link and the Great Belt link connecting East Denmark with continental Europe constituted in fact the three case studies used by Flyvbjerg et al. (2003) to illustrate their analysis of risk and accountability in megaprojects.

[12] A much wider stream of work has assessed the various impacts, including the environmental ones, of high-speed rail as a transport mode – see the reviews by Givoni (2006), Campos and de Rus (2009) and Albalate and Bel (2012) for useful summaries.

the economic profitability, which excludes indirect effects such as the environmental and regional development impacts, of new high-speed rail lines (de Rus and Nombela, 2007). Their analyses of specific lines belonging to the TEN-T network (Sevilla-Madrid and Madrid-Barcelona) suggest that their development was not economically justified (de Rus and Inglada, 1997; de Rus and Román, 2006).

1.2.2 A critical perspective: research aim and questions

The literature reviewed above has firstly devoted limited attention to the policy process surrounding the development of transnational HSR infrastructure, where the EU level of policy-making is only one of the several levels involved. Secondly, apart from a few significant exceptions, existing scholarship has tended to explain and evaluate the development of this type of infrastructure without essentially questioning its very rationale. Much of this work has sought to develop an understanding of policy processes (Holliday et al., 1991; Stephenson, 2003; Stevens, 2004) and the difficulties which the development of this type of infrastructure faces (Johnson and Turner, 1997; Nijkamp and Vleugel, 1995; Ross, 1995). Although some of these authors have been cautious about the capacity of TEN-T networks to fulfil the expectations placed on them by their promoters (Spiekermann and Wegener, 2006; Stevens, 2004, p. 191; Ross, 1994; Vickerman, 1997), they have not challenged the need to respond to the requirements of an economically integrating Europe.

In this respect, these works do not generally present the characteristics of what has been termed critical social theory (Agger, 2006) and critical geography (Hubbard et al., 2002, pp. 62–73; Blomley, 2006). Critical enquiry, in this conception, is not limited to the inquisitive approach inherent to any academic undertaking, but involves a more fundamental concern with patterns of oppression and injustice in society and a belief in progressive social change. This approach involves the exposure of processes that produce and reproduce inequalities between actors and an emphasis on representation as a site both of domination through discursive/ideological hegemony and of resistance.[13]

Nevertheless, some of the authors and approaches reviewed above do present critical features. This is particularly the case with the body of work on the rationales that underlie TEN-T policy. Through the unpacking of the discursive constructions that structure the dominant way of seeing transport infrastructure and its relationship with economic, social

[13] These are two of the five common themes that Blomley (2006) has identified in critical geographical work. The other three are a commitment to theory and a rejection of empiricism, a confidence in the power of scholarship to undo domination through the provision of transformative insights, and a determination to engage in progressive praxis.

and environmental development, Hajer (2000), Jensen and Richardson (2004) and others have endeavoured to unveil their assumptions and weaknesses, the knowledge that legitimizes them – and that in turn discredits other forms of knowledge – and the practices through which they are produced and reproduced. Both Hajer (2000) and Jensen and Richardson (2004, pp. 237–256) have tentatively explored the possibilities of developing alternatives to the hegemonic discourse, thus revealing how the discursive field not only enables domination but also provides opportunities for resistance.[14] Apart from discourse, other authors have sought to expose power inequalities in the development of transnational HSR infrastructure. Lemberg's (1995) contribution constitutes perhaps the clearest analysis of the influence of actors in this process, although other scholars have also provided a detailed account of this issue concerning a high-speed rail station in Brussels (Albrechts and Coppens, 2003). Both studies, apart from noting the importance of economic elites in the policy process, in fact highlight the need to consider decision-making as political rather than technical, involving conflicting interests that result in winners and losers.

By building on studies of transnational transport infrastructure that go beyond an exclusive EU focus and those which adopt a critical approach, *the aim of this research is to contribute to the understanding of European integration through a focus on the politics surrounding high-speed rail infrastructure of European relevance*. Thus, it addresses three distinct aspects. First, it seeks to uncover the rationales underpinning the behaviour of actors and how these strive to gain support for their own views. In particular, it intends to clarify Hajer's (2000) notion of a 'Europe of Flows' discourse supposedly shared by actors at different levels of government, but also the alternative constructions of the transport problem that challenge it. Secondly, the research seeks to reveal the power struggles that take place in transnational HSR politics, identifying who prevails in this process and at the expense of whom. This is important given the increasing relevance of the EU in transnational transport infrastructure development, but also to clarify democratically relevant aspects such as the role of private sector actors, central in Lemberg's (1995) case, and of elected and non-elected state institutions at various levels.

The study of both discourse and the exercise of power in transnational HSR policy-making suggests the centrality of a third issue: space. Representations of space (e.g. the consideration of Europe as a frictionless space or as a patchwork of places) may be constitutive of the content of discourse and thus determine the practices – including policy development – that reproduce it. In addition, space may have an importance in discourse production. The construction of the transport problem is arguably likely to vary with the

[14] See also Linnros and Hallin (2001) on the discursive struggle around the Øresund link.

spaces that frame the everyday personal and professional lives of actors (e.g. a peripheral rural area or the EU district in Brussels). Yet the explicit consideration of space is not only likely to shed light on the content and production of discourse; it also seems to be important in explaining the influence of actors in the development of transnational HSR infrastructure. The clearest case is the spatial remit of actors; in other words, the spatial frames (e.g. the nation-state territory or a municipality) that mediate their capacity to act. This is further complicated by the differences in spatial terms between a networked, spatially differentiated mode of transport and the traditionally territorially bounded form of planning and developing transport infrastructure. Are new political spaces emerging that better respond to the spatiality of transnational high-speed rail?

According to these three foci, the research aim is pursued through the following research questions:

1. What are the *rationales* mobilized around transnational high-speed rail policy-making, to what extent are they compatible or mutually exclusive, and how are they produced, reproduced and transformed?
2. What is the *influence* of actors in the development of transnational high-speed rail infrastructure, how do they exert it, and at the expense of whom?
3. How is *space* present in transnational high-speed rail policy-making and how does it determine the production of the aforementioned rationales and the influence of actors in the policy process?

1.3 Overall approach

Answering the research questions introduced earlier involved taking two further steps prior to the empirical work. The first one was the development of an appropriate analytical framework that provided a sound and precise theoretical and analytical basis for this task. This is particularly relevant due to the varied research approaches of the existing literature. The second step was the adoption of a research strategy and methods that permitted applying the analytical framework to empirical data. Although detailed information on them is provided in Chapters 3 and 4, this section provides the necessary introduction for an adequate understanding of the research project. The completion of these two steps permitted to operationalize the research questions through the definition of a series of secondary research questions, which are presented at the end of the section.

1.3.1 An analytical framework based on discourse, power and space

A framework for analysis was built according to three dimensions that responded to each of the research questions: discourse, power and space. Drawing from distinct but complementary theoretical approaches, it seeks to provide a sound basis for the analysis of transnational transport infrastructure policy-making from a social constructionist, critical and spatially-nuanced approach. The hybrid nature of the framework is meant to address in a coherent and integrated way the three aspects that were deemed central to the policy process.

On the one hand, the development of transnational HSR infrastructure is obviously determined by the influence that actors have in the policy process. The work of social and political theorists of power such as Lukes (2005), Allen (2003) and, in particular, Clegg (1989) was employed to propose a conceptualization of power as exercised through different modes and dependent on the mean and resources available to actors. However, their behaviour, as discourse theory and analysis has argued (e.g. Howarth, 2000; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002), is influenced by their construction of the social and material world through language and social practices. The adoption of Hajer's (1995) discourse analytical approach, which complements Foucault's theory of discourse with insights from social psychology, would allow, first, to map the existing discourses, with the simple narratives or story-lines through which they are articulated and the coalitions formed around these, and, second, to explain the dynamics and struggles through which these discursive constructions are produced, reproduced and contested. Finally, contributions from human geography on scale and relationality (e.g. Amin, 2002; Cox, 1998) were drawn upon to develop a conceptualization of space in policy-making that was subsequently applied to the other two dimensions. Both discourse production, reproduction and transformation and the exercise of power were assumed to be mediated by space, taking place across it (Allen, 2003) and through particular discursive (Linnros and Hallin, 2001) and power arenas.

The framework was developed to frame the empirical analysis of this research, but it is also meant to have a wider applicability in a research field characterized by either partial or weak theorization. Discursive analysis of TEN-T policy is probably the field where the use of theory has been most advanced, although approaches have varied slightly. Hajer (2000), Linnros and Hallin (2001) and Peters (2003a) have applied the same analytical framework as the one selected for this research (Hajer, 1995), although Peters' use of the concept of story-line seems to slightly differ from Hajer's.[15] A more eclectic framework was developed by Jensen and Richardson (2004, pp. 41–66), who drew from Hajer and Foucault but also from

[15] See Section 2.1.2.

other authors (e.g. Flyvbjerg, 1998). Research on the influence of actors in the policy process, however, has been fundamentally empirical and insufficiently theorized. To the author's knowledge, Lemberg's (1995) study is the one that most explicitly has addressed this issue, although his conceptualization of power is not elaborated and in any case is largely taken into account in quantitative, rather than qualitative, terms. Finally, the explicit consideration of space in transnational infrastructure policy-making has been uneven and mainly from the spatial planning field. As noted above, a number of authors have been concerned with the mismatch between the spatiality of transport corridors and the existing governance arrangements (e.g. Priemus and Zonneveld, 2003), yet the most significant attempt to integrate space in a theoretical and (discourse) analytical framework was carried out by Jensen and Richardson (2004). In any case, no integrated framework has been developed for the analysis of transnational infrastructure policy-making.

1.3.2 A single case study of an unusual case of transnational high-speed rail infrastructure

Providing a precise answer to each of the three research questions within a topic that involves both a wide number of actors, due to its spatial scope, and a lengthy process, due to the nature of major transport infrastructure development, prompted the adoption of single-case study research as the research strategy. Case study research is particularly suitable when responding to explanatory research questions, such as those proposed in this research, on a contemporary issue over which the researcher has little control (Yin, 2009, p. 13). The focus on a single case allows to concentrate resources in obtaining an in-depth understanding of a complex and context-specific phenomenon. Case study research has been criticized for providing a poor basis for generalization, since a case may not be representative of the wider set of possible cases. Nevertheless, case study research is not intended for this type of generalization – as Yin (2009, p. 38) notes, a case is not a 'sampling unit'. Rather, by providing insights that other methods cannot, this research strategy may still contribute to scientific and theoretical development (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2009, pp. 38–39).

Indeed, the selection of a representative case, as Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 229) has claimed, is not necessarily the most appropriate strategy to obtain the greatest amount of information on a particular topic. The selection of an unusual case to illustrate the wider issue under study may in fact maximize the potential learning from it. Thus, in the study of the tensions and challenges in the development of transnational HSR infrastructure, cases that involve a particularly EU-relevant section, mobilize a higher number of actors at different levels, and present particular challenges due to local resistances or high investment costs seem likely to

provide an information-rich understanding of the issue. The case selected was, accordingly, the policy process on the section of a cross-border link of the TEN-T network (the Vitoria-Irun HSR line) located within the Spanish Basque Country,[16] a region with a high degree of autonomy within an already significantly devolved nation-state, active regional actors, both for and against the line, and important topographical difficulties.

The in-depth nature of case study research and the need to triangulate data to provide solid evidence prompted the selection of a wide range of sources of evidence, which were differently employed according to each research question and its corresponding section of the analytical framework. The sources consisted of fundamentally three types of documents (documents produced by state and non-state actors, newspaper articles and parliamentary proceedings) and 36 focused, semi-structured interviews with actors who either had been involved in the case or, in a limited number of cases, could provide a useful overview on it. Depending on their relevance to each research question, these data sources were classified as primary or secondary. Thus, the primary sources were official documents and newspaper articles for constructing a basic narrative of the case study; parliamentary proceedings and interviews for carrying out the discourse analysis; and interviews for ascertaining causal relationships in the exercise of power. The presence and influence of the spatial dimension in the policy process was determined from the sources used for the discourse and power analyses.[17]

To summarize, the answer to the three research questions was addressed through the development of a hybrid, three-dimensional analytical framework and the selection of a single-case study research strategy. These two steps made possible the definition, on the basis of the three broad research questions, of a set of secondary research questions to guide this research's empirical analysis:

1. What discourses and story-lines have been mobilized in the development of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line? To what extent have they blurred discrepancies between actors? How have they been produced, reproduced and contested?
2. What has been the degree of power exercised by actors in the development of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line? Through which modes of power, means and resources have they been able to do so? Which actors have not exerted such an influence and why?

[16] See Figure 2 in Section 4.1.2.
[17] More details of the research methods adopted are provided in Section 4.2 and Appendices A, B and C.

3. What has been the importance of space in determining the production of discourse and the exercise of power in the Vitoria-Irun HSR line policy process? What has been the role of the discursive and power arenas through which both processes take place? To what extent has policy-making on this high-speed rail line been characterized by relations or by scale?

1.4 Outline of the thesis

This chapter has introduced how, in order to address the wider issue of European integration through a focus on transnational high-speed rail policy-making, this research has adopted a perspective that seeks to provide critical and spatial insights into this process, has developed an analytical framework to address the issue in a theoretically sound and rigorous manner, and has applied this framework through the use of a single-case study research strategy. These steps are elaborated in detail in the first part of the thesis (Chapters 2 to 4), which contextualizes and frames the second, empirical part (Chapters 5 to 8), followed in turn by a concluding chapter.[18]

Thus, the existing literature on this topic is reviewed in the following chapter, which is structured according to the three main issues that the research approach identified as key to the topic: the rationales articulated around the development of this type of infrastructure, the influence of actors in the policy process, and the relevance of space in policy-making. Chapter 3 subsequently presents the three-dimensional analytical framework proposed for the study of this issue, whereby transnational HSR policy-making is understood as consisting of discursive and power struggles and as being mediated by space. The last chapter of this first part of the thesis details the case study research strategy adopted and the research methods used.

The following four chapters comprise the empirical results of the thesis. Chapter 5 provides a description of the studied case, a chronological narrative of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line policy process from 1986 to 2006 based fundamentally on documentary evidence that provides the context for the three following chapters of the thesis. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 present the analysis of the case on the basis of the three-dimensional analytical framework. Each of them addresses one of the research questions and is structured according to the

[18] This 'linear-analytical structure' (Yin, 2009, p. 176) has indeed been the standard approach present, with some variation mainly in the degree of theoretical elaboration, in existing case study research on transnational HSR development.

concepts and categories defined in the analytical framework. Thus, they show the results of applying different analytical lenses to the same phenomenon described in Chapter 5, that is the policy process of a transnational HSR line.

The findings of these three chapters are subsequently synthesized in the final chapter, which provides an answer to each of the three research questions and highlights the contribution of the thesis to the existing scholarship on the issue. In addition, it provides a postscript on the recent time period not covered in the case study (from 2006 to 2014), highlighting its possible implications for the research findings. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the value of the adopted analytical approach and on possible further directions of research.

2 Transnational high-speed rail infrastructure development in the European Union

Analytically, the development of transnational high-speed rail infrastructure can be approached from two perspectives. The first one is concerned with exploring the rationales mobilized around this development, both those supporting it and contesting it.[19] On the one hand, high-speed rail can be seen as central to the creation of a single European space, as it facilitates the transportation of persons and goods across borders. On the other hand, the contentious nature of infrastructure development, coupled with the trans-border character and concentrated accessibility of transnational high-speed rail, suggests that other rationales may oppose this idea. The second perspective focuses on the actual process leading to the construction of such an infrastructure, in particular on the roles of the different actors involved in it. During most of the second half of the 20th century, the nation-state played the main role concerning the ownership, planning, and management of the railway systems in its territory. But recent developments such as the liberalization of the transport sector and the increasing importance of EU institutions hint at a more fragmented policy environment where different state and non-state actors interact to shape transport infrastructure development.

Both perspectives are of central relevance to the process of European integration as the tensions inherent in achieving convergence in both rationales and decision-making reveal the challenges that the European project faces. Whilst pro-EU actors, among others, may promote the development of a transnational HSR line, others, including the governments of areas not served by the network, community groups, and environmental organizations, may resist it and even openly contest it. Even when there is a broad agreement about the direction of policy, difficulties may in any case arise due to lack of coordination, different priorities, disagreement over financial contributions, etc. Therefore, a key challenge of the European project is bridging the distance between the integration it requires and the fragmentation of rationales and actors in the policy process.

These two fields of enquiry are related to another, perhaps less evident but equally relevant to European integration. As explained in the introductory chapter, the spatial dimension of transnational HSR development is particularly significant. The differentiated European space it contributes to shape by increasing the connectivity between distant points at the expense of proximate ones suggests, first, that a variety of rationales with different

[19] Rationale is conceptualized in this thesis as the argumentation that actors mobilize publicly to justify and legitimize their stance on a policy issue.

spatial features may be mobilized around the project. Certain actors may consider the promotion of trans-European relations as fundamental to economic development, whereas others may argue for the prioritization of short-distance transport to improve local, everyday accessibility. Moreover, the spatiality of transnational HSR infrastructure also points at the conflict between the trans-border spatial relations that it facilitates and the bounded political spaces that have conventionally framed the development of rail transport infrastructure. In fact, as Section 1.1.2 has argued, particular attention to the spatiality of policy-making in the EU may usefully inform debates on the democratic nature of this process.

This chapter therefore focuses on these three fields by reviewing the relevant existing literature and recent research, which largely addresses transport infrastructure policy-making and EU transport policy but also includes contributions from spatial planning and political geography. The chapter first examines the rationales around the development of transnational HSR infrastructure, focusing on the possibilities for convergence between disparate ideas and interests. Subsequently, it addresses the role of the different actors involved in the policy process, in particular within the context of a changing policy-making environment in Europe where non-nation-state actors gain relevance. Finally, the chapter examines the literature on the spatiality of the policy process, focusing on the changing spatiality of the state and on the conflicts that the spatial implications of transnational HSR development may prompt. It concludes, on the basis of the previous discussion, by identifying the knowledge gaps in the literature and the resulting three research questions that have guided this research endeavour.

2.1 Rationales around transnational high-speed rail infrastructure

In light of the different rationales that may be mobilized around the idea of the development of transnational high-speed rail infrastructure, the challenge for the supporters of further European integration is to achieve a shared rationale that would facilitate this development. However, two caveats must be mentioned at this stage. Firstly, it is important to highlight that these rationales are not static; they evolve and their prevalence may change over time. This point is particularly pertinent since EU developments in transport infrastructure policy span for over two decades. Also, considering rationales in themselves, detached from the policy process, is problematic, as they are mobilized by a diverse range of actors in specific policy contexts. Nevertheless, this section does not focus on these temporal and policy-making dynamics; its aim is to provide an overview of the existing rationales around transnational HSR development and evaluate the extent to which they are likely to converge. Thus, the section first reviews the rationales linked with the European project, it then

addresses the possible existence of a dominant policy discourse on transnational transport infrastructure, and finally it evaluates, on the basis of existing literature, the potential for rationale convergence across the European territory.

2.1.1 The influential yet contested EU rationale

The rationales for developing a high-speed rail project of European relevance can be diverse and do not necessarily need to be related to a 'European-wide interest'[20]. However, due to the trans-European dimension of the transport infrastructure considered in this research, it is appropriate to address the specifically European justifications for it. Even if in this case a variety of EU goals can be sought (Ross, 1998, p. 182), a common, overarching argument is that the development of efficient transport networks is essential to enable and maximize the benefits of the EU Single Market, which was notably stated in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty (Article 170 in the current Treaty on the functioning of the European Union) and developed in the Commission's White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment* (CEC, 1993). Moreover, this argument assumes the possibility of successfully integrating economic growth with environmental protection. This assumption became explicit in the early 2000s with the Gothenburg Sustainable Development Strategy (European Council, 2001) and the White Paper on a *European Transport Policy for 2010* (CEC, 2001). This White Paper, while maintaining the aforementioned argument, placed emphasis both on promoting modal shift, in order to respond to road transport growth and contribute to a more sustainable transport system, and on eliminating bottlenecks, to reduce the congestion that increases pollution and compromises the economic competitiveness of Europe. In this respect, the assumption resonates with the policy discourse of ecological modernization (Hajer, 1995), which, in spite of recognizing the structural nature of the ecological crisis, nonetheless assumes that it can be overcome within the existing institutions of society. This general argument on transnational transport infrastructure development is frequently articulated under a transport rationale and a political economy rationale.

The transport rationale refers to the potential role of high-speed rail in responding to the transport repercussions of an integrating European economy and society. The integration process and in particular the development of an internal market entail, in the first place, a foreseeable increase in transport demand due to the facilitation of movement across nation-

[20] Indeed, the extraordinary development of high-speed rail in Europe cannot simply be attributed to 'EU reasons'. High-speed rail experiences at nation-state level, the association of this mode with technological innovation, and emblematic projects such as the Channel Tunnel have contributed to some degree to this development (Ross, 1994).

state borders[21]. Indeed, due to this but also to social, economic and technological developments, there has been a dramatic increase in mobility in Europe since the 1970s (Banister et al., 2000). Over the 1995-2006 period transport performance[22] grew at average yearly rates of 2.8% for goods and 1.7% for passengers, reinforcing the use of those transport modes with a seemingly higher environmental impact (i.e. road and air transport) (Eurostat, 2009). These developments have led not only to negative environmental impacts, but also to a reduced efficiency of the network due to congestion. In this respect, high-speed rail has the potential both to cater for the increase of transport demand across borders and to contribute to modal shift from road and air transport. Firstly, high-speed rail increases capacity directly due to the high frequency and size of its trains, and indirectly as they free capacity on the conventional network for both freight and regional passenger services (Givoni, 2006). But also, high-speed rail is likely to contribute to modal shift due to this increased capacity and the possibility to compete with road and air transport in travel distances that, based on time thresholds of around one to three hours of travel, range roughly between 200 and 800 km (Albalate and Bel, 2012; Vickerman, 1997).

This transport rationale has been usually addressed through a wider political economy rationale, that is through the relationship between transport and the economic development of the EU. The construction of trans-border infrastructures has been seen as key in maximizing the potential of the EU Single Market whilst contributing to a balanced development within it. The Single Market requires the removal of internal barriers in order to function efficiently, achieve economies of scale, and enhance the competitiveness of European businesses in the global arena. Integrated transnational transport networks seem therefore key in facilitating its smooth functioning, an argument shared and mobilized not only by EU state actors (CEC, 1993) but also by European business interests (ERT, 1984). Significantly, this rationale is usually accompanied by the assumption that investment in transport infrastructure is also essential to reduce development disparities within the EU by increasing general levels of accessibility across its territory (Jensen and Richardson, 2004, pp. 76–81; Vickerman et al., 1999). Both dimensions have been central in the EU policy discourse since the inclusion of a specific Title on Trans-European Networks in the Maastricht Treaty. The relevance of high-speed rail with respect to them is likely to be higher concerning passenger transport, as it is particularly suited for this type of traffic.

[21] The EU Single Market requires the establishment of 'an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured' (Article 26 of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union).

[22] Transport performance is measured in tonne-kilometres in the case of goods transport and in passenger-kilometres in the case of passenger transport.

However, as cross-border freight transport is also important for an integrated European economy, high-speed rail development can also potentially contribute to its growth in two respects: indirectly, by freeing capacity on conventional rail lines to be used by freight services; and directly, by carrying both passenger and freight traffic on its lines in case they are designed with the appropriate specifications. However, as Germany's HSR mixed-traffic system shows, the resulting increased industrial connectivity entails higher construction and operation costs (Albalate and Bel, 2012).

Apart from this main political economic rationale, an important although arguably less explicit one responds to a Keynesian approach to public policy, whereby the periodic crises of capitalism would be overcome through state intervention. Under this conception, particularly marked in the European Commission transport initiatives of the early 1990s (Ross, 1998, p. 192; Sichelschmidt, 1999, p. 172), apart from contributing to the competitiveness of the European economy in the long term, major public infrastructure works would encourage economic growth and create employment in the short and medium term.

However, the rationales for the development of transnational HSR infrastructure have been critically examined by a diverse body of research which formulates important doubts about them. Existing work can be divided between, first, evaluations of the policy objectives in themselves and, second, assessments of the extent to which they are accomplishable. Firstly, several scholars have pointed out the contradictions between policy objectives in EU transport policy, in particular between the economic competitiveness, balanced development, and environmental objectives (ESPON, 2004; Jensen and Richardson, 2004; Peters, 2003a). In general terms, it has been widely argued that the economic growth and competitiveness dimension of TEN-T policy has been prevalent over the balanced development and environmental ones (Jensen and Richardson, 2004; Peters, 2003a; Spiekermann and Wegener, 1996; Vickerman et al., 1999). The second body of work suggests that the potential of high-speed rail to contribute to these objectives is in any case unclear at best. Firstly, although there may be an increase in the competitiveness of the EU as a whole, the reduction of regional inequalities through transnational transport infrastructure is questionable on two grounds: the non-homogeneous increase in accessibility that the development of a trans-European HSR network entails (Spiekermann and Wegener, 2006, 1996); and the contested assumption that higher accessibility and transport infrastructure investment promotes economic convergence between regions in Europe (Puga, 2002;

Spiekermann and Wegener, 2006; Tomaney and Marques, 2013).[23] Secondly, the environmental benefits of high-speed rail are not clear either. Despite certain environmental advantages with respect in particular to air transport operations (Janic, 2003)[24], high-speed rail has a significant impact on local air pollution, noise pollution, and land consumption, and in any case its advantages are dependent on whether high-speed rail development generates new transport demand or not (Givoni, 2006).

These questions are particularly significant due to the high costs involved in the construction, maintenance and operation of this type of infrastructure. If those wider positive impacts of high-speed rail cannot be demonstrated, a high-speed rail line needs a significant level of demand to be economically profitable and compensate these high costs (de Rus and Nash, 2007; Givoni, 2006). This poses questions on the justification of high-speed rail development in relatively low-density European areas (de Rus and Nash, 2007), as cost-benefit analyses of two high-speed rail lines in Spain have shown (de Rus and Inglada, 1997; de Rus and Román, 2006). In spite of these qualifications, the political momentum in the development of HSR networks has been remarkable. This has been noted, in some cases with frustration, by a number of the previously cited authors (de Rus and Nash, 2007; Tomaney and Marques, 2013; Vickerman, 1997). In fact, several scholars have pointed out the potential of the Trans-European Transport Network rationale to conceal these contradictions and uncertainties and to be shared among across the EU multi-level policy-making environment.

2.1.2 The role of ideas in gathering support for policy: a 'Europe of Flows' discourse

In fact, certain contributions to the EU transport policy literature suggest that the development of transnational transport networks cannot be explained simply by reference to material interests, but also to the influence of the idea in itself. This influence seems to stem

[23] Criticisms of this assumption point out, first, that the influence of EU transport infrastructure investment and other transport policies in promoting regional development is significantly lower than that of socio-economic and technical macro-trends (Spiekermann and Wegener, 2006) and, second, that inter-regional transport investments are likely to reinforce the economic development of core regions and main nodes in the network (Puga, 2002; Vickerman et al., 1999). A contrasting view highlights the potential contribution of public investment in infrastructure in boosting productivity and economic growth (Aschauer, 1989; Munnell, 1992).

[24] High-speed rail's environmental advantages in terms of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions are less clear with respect to road transport (van Essen et al., 2003) and conventional rail (van Wee et al., 2003). Additionally, the construction of a new high-speed rail line entails significant carbon dioxide emissions (Westin and Kågeson, 2012).

firstly from the close relationship between TENs and the EU project. Johnson and Turner (1997, p. 16) have argued that Trans-European Networks represented the (back then) latest 'big European idea', able to keep or even revive the momentum for European integration. Focusing on the Commission's rationale for promoting the TEN-T programme, Stephenson notes that '[t]he Commission thus promoted TENs as highly visible, symbolic, guarantors of economic growth, arguing they underpinned the basic functioning of the market' (2010b, p. 1048). Most perceptively, Stevens (2004) has pointed out that despite the uncertainties surrounding the TENs programme, it has worked as a material and appealing initiative, seen as central to the EU's economic goals whilst allegedly contributing to the balanced development of its territory:

> 'It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the TENs programme was more political than economic in its motivation, a set of *grands projets* to fire the imagination. [...] Ignoring any inconvenient doubts about their economic rationale, trans-European networks had the benefit of being tangible and attractive wherever the dream of fast, convenient and comfortable travel could be held out, and they could be presented as integral to the realization of the Community's new economic goals' (2004, p. 191, original emphasis).

Yet the suggestive influence of the idea of transnational transport infrastructure need not only be related to the European dimension; the particular characteristics of transport infrastructure seem relevant too. Lemberg (1995) for instance, in his case study on the Øresund, Great Belt and Fehmarn Belt bridges, argues that large infrastructure projects may be considered as national prestige projects and desired by politicians regardless of their economic viability. More significantly, transport infrastructure policy-making has often been based on the assumption of linear causal relationships between transport infrastructure and development – a myth of 'structuring effects', according to Offner (1993). In both its European and inherent dimensions, the materiality of transport infrastructure seems to play a role in its constitution as a symbol of a policy objective (such as economic integration or economic development), which helps to conceal the complexities of achieving such an objective.

Some contributions from the policy analysis and spatial policy fields have explored the role of ideas on transnational transport infrastructure policy-making through a discourse analytical approach. Jensen and Richardson have developed extensive work on the policy discourses articulated in the development of a European spatial planning agenda and on the relationship between power and knowledge (e.g. Jensen and Richardson, 2004; Richardson, 1999; Richardson and Jensen, 2000, 2003). They have argued that a policy discourse has emerged that seeks to produce a certain European space associated with a certain rationality (Jensen and Richardson, 2004). They named this space 'monotopia': 'an organised, ordered and totalised space of zero-friction and seamless logistic flows' (Jensen and Richardson,

2004, p. 3). This discourse has the concept of 'frictionless mobility' at its centre, yet it also encompasses other aspects of spatial development: the polycentric development of its urban nodes; the subsidiary role of the environment; and the re-thinking of territorial identity issues that a monotopic Europe involves. In spite of the appeal of their argument, it is doubtful whether the European space is being shaped in such a coherent and pervasive manner. Although the reasons for this are developed in the next subsection, at this point it is sufficient to note that the authors' spatial planning approach may not sufficiently consider the differences between – and importance of – EU sectoral policies, which cast doubt on the feasibility of developing a coherent spatial project for the EU.

A more transport-focused account has been given by Hajer (2000). In a brief paper he has proposed the existence of a transnational policy discourse (which he calls 'Europe of Flows'), shared by policy-makers at different levels of government, that influences spatial development policy in Europe. The features of this discourse largely coincide with the rationale explained earlier in the chapter: among others, it is committed to market integration and considers global competition as a strategic challenge for Europe; it conceives the objectives of the EU as both enhancing competitiveness whilst promoting cohesion; it perceives infrastructure as key to achieve these goals; it is committed to ecological modernization; and it foresees increasing international demand despite the current marginal portion of international traffic. According to Hajer, the Trans-European Networks, and therefore the trans-European HSR network, should be understood as 'a set of particular discursive practices within which a particular policy discourse is reproduced and transformed' (2000, p. 138).

The emphasis in Hajer's approach lies on the power of such a policy discourse and on the fact that its influence is not limited to EU-level actors. In order to explain the production and reproduction – and therefore the influence – of the discourse, he employs the middle-ground concepts of discourse coalitions and story-lines (see Hajer, 1995).[25] In this respect, he proposes the story-line 'from patchwork to network', where 'network' can be interpreted as a metaphor of European integration (Hajer, 2000). As he correctly notes, the network metaphor masks the discrepancies between elements included in it, for instance the tensions between the objectives of cohesion and market integration. Despite the potential of this approach for understanding discourse production in transnational infrastructure policy-making, the scope of Hajer's paper is limited. Its focus is restricted to the content of discourse and does not include the institutional practices through which the discourse is created, reproduced, and transformed; it does not address the temporal dimension; and,

[25] Both concepts will be further discussed in Section 3.1.3.

fundamentally, the analysis is tentative and open to be refined by further research. Peters (2003a) has applied Hajer's discourse analytical framework to the analysis of EU transport infrastructure policy; however, the contribution to this discussion is of little significance since her use of the concept of story-lines emphasizes the conflicts between them and not their capacity to blur such tensions in order to achieve political leverage.[26] Furthermore, as this literature addresses transport infrastructure generally, it remains unclear whether the 'Europe of Flows' discourse would show variations in the case of high-speed rail.

2.1.3 Alternative and dominant rationales: towards rationale convergence?

Both Hajer (2000) and Jensen and Richardson (2004) claimed that such a dominant discourse across different policy-making levels in Europe excludes alternative rationales and discourses. The extent to which the limit between dominant and alternative rationales may be negotiated and permeated has scarcely been empirically investigated in this field, yet Linnros and Hallin (2001) provide an insightful first analysis. They carried out a discourse analysis of the environmental conflict concerning the Øresund link between Denmark and Sweden, focusing on three of the several alternative discourses to the hegemonic one. In this case, these counter-discourses, which fundamentally emphasized the environmental impacts of the link, were not able to challenge the dominance of a hegemonic discourse advocating the integration of the cross-border region through transport infrastructure. Importantly, although the contestation movement managed to introduce environmental issues in the public debate, these were incorporated into the hegemonic discourse and excluded from the political arena through their framing as scientific-expert matters. Ultimately, antagonism between both set of discourses prevailed: 'An inner logic of the project was formed that made new or old critical views impossible to include if they did not adhere to the project's main logic' (Linnros and Hallin, 2001, p. 401).

Nevertheless, beyond discursive antagonism, divisions may appear within the dominant discourse that can potentially undermine its political leverage. Despite the necessary flexibility of a policy discourse in order to integrate the interests and ideas of a broad range of actors across several policy-making levels, it is presumable that even those who are likely to support a transnational HSR line may frame the issue differently and even have divergent interests. It therefore seems necessary to delve deeper into the rationales that the supporters

[26] Peters' (2003a) use of the concept of story-line seems indeed different from Hajer's. Whereas she considered 'cohesion' and 'missing-links' as contrasting story-lines, Hajer argued that it was the aforementioned 'network' metaphor what blurred the discrepancies between the objectives of cohesion and market integration.

of the 'Europe of Flows' discourse rely upon. Setting aside the differences that may be found at any policy-making level (e.g. between market-led or state-led approaches), I focus below on the specificities of the other two main relevant levels apart from the European: the national and the subnational.

Firstly, the national scale is especially significant due to the nation-state roots of rail development in Europe and in particular the prominent role of this state in every aspect of the railways systems since the end of World War II (Ross, 1998). Indeed, Stevens (2004) and Ross (1994, 1998) have argued that the protection of state-owned national rail systems has been a major factor in preventing a European approach to rail development. Generally, it would be expected that the nation-state political arena would show its own dynamics, which do not necessarily match European ones. Stevens (2004, pp. 32–34), for instance, provides a brief review of the geographical, historical, and cultural factors that have contributed to shape nation-state transport policies across Europe. In terms of transport infrastructure networks, the differences between European and national approaches first refer to material interests, such as the extent to which a certain line contributes to European and national priorities. Transnational infrastructure is more likely to be supported by nation-states when it benefits directly their territory (e.g. by linking major urban areas in one nation-state) or supposedly provide development opportunities (e.g. by improving access to other markets). Cross-border links are prone to pose particular challenges, not only because of the presumably low priority of nationally peripheral lines, but also due to possible divergent attitudes of the nation-states involved (e.g. Ross, 1995). Nevertheless, another factor that may indicate different attitudes to HSR infrastructure development refers to the implicit spatial ideas that policy-makers have of their nation-state territory (Marshall, 2013).

Secondly, it is also likely that subnational actors will articulate different positions with regard to developing transnational HSR infrastructure. In particular, as the impacts of high-speed rail are especially marked in urban areas, where the stops are usually located, regional and local actors may see it as an opportunity to enhance the competitive advantage of cities within supranational scales of capital circulation, as part of what Brenner (2004) has termed 'urban locational policies'. This is in line with the entrepreneurial turn to urban governance that has taken place in advanced capitalist countries since the 1970s, whereby localities seek to improve their competitive position within the spatial divisions of labour, of consumption, and of key command and control functions, and in securing government's resources (Harvey, 1989). The arrival of high-speed rail also provides opportunities for local urban regeneration or development, as the oft-cited case of Lille shows (Newman and Thornley, 1995). Although in principle this stance seems to conform with the characteristics of the 'Europe of Flows' discourse, the mere sum of subnational interests could result in an increased frequency of high-speed rail stops which, although exploiting new markets, would

undermine the speed on the line and its long-distance functionality (Vickerman, 1997, pp. 33–34). Conversely, there is potential for subnational resistance to high-speed rail development if it is considered not beneficial to the region, in particular if it is not served by the line once this has been defined.

Ultimately, this diversity of rationales suggests that *even if an overarching discourse on transnational infrastructure planning exists, policy outcomes may still vary according to the particular perspectives of the actors involved in the process*. For instance, Lemberg's (1995) paper on the policy process on several transport links between the Scandinavian peninsula and continental Europe shows how the transport mode and the type of these links were in the end determined by the power struggles that took place between actors apparently sharing the same discourse. According to him, business lobbyists managed to persuade a political majority in favour of bored rail tunnels to support combined motorway/rail bridges.

This discussion casts doubts on the extent to which an effective convergence of rationales can be expected in the development of transnational HSR infrastructure. Although a policy discourse on a 'Europe of Flows' may be able to conceal the diverse inconsistencies and uncertainties of its rationales and at the same time gather support from a wide range of actors, the variety of rationales across the policy-making environment suggests that transport infrastructure policy in Europe might not necessarily result in such a European space. If there is a shared discourse on the development of transnational infrastructure, as Hajer (2000) suggests, it remains to be seen the extent to which different interests and ideas are accommodated within such a discourse and are able to steer transport infrastructure policy in a certain direction. It is necessary to complement and shed light on this discussion with a review of the processes that lead to the development of high-speed rail infrastructure in Europe. Thus, the following section addresses the role of actors in the policy process, with a particular focus on EU and non-state actors.

2.2 The role of actors in the policy process

The study of policy-making concerning transnational high-speed rail infrastructure has often focused on EU policy, drawing from either European integration theory (Stephenson, 2003, 2010b, 2012; Stevens, 2004) or social and political sciences (Jensen and Richardson, 2004; Peters, 2003a). This EU focus is probably the reason that transnational transport projects have often been seen from a TEN-T implementation perspective (e.g. Stephenson, 2010a), whereas this programme may be better considered as yet another policy that influences high-speed rail infrastructure development. Comparatively less academic attention has been paid

to the policy process surrounding specific projects of European relevance (although see, for instance, Holliday et al., 1991; Lemberg, 1995; Ross, 1995), an approach that considers the EU as one of the levels of a complex policy-making environment. Building on both bodies of work and on general literature on the topic (Johnson and Turner, 1997; Ross, 1994, 1998), this section seeks to develop an understanding of the policy process leading to a transnational HSR line. It first reviews the key aspects surrounding transnational HSR development to then focus on the role of state and non-state actors in this process.

2.2.1 Transnational high-speed rail development: key features

Infrastructure development costs, cross-border differences, or the links between rail systems and the European nation-state are certainly key factors in determining the policy process leading to the development of a transnational HSR line. Therefore, before addressing the role of actors in this process, these characteristics are reviewed in more detail.

In terms of high-speed rail infrastructure in itself, the main aspect to be highlighted is the very high cost it involves, with a significant proportion of sunk costs.[27] This cost refers to the building of the infrastructure and, to a lesser extent, to the maintenance and operation of the infrastructure and rolling stock (Campos and de Rus, 2009; Ross, 1994, p. 201). In fact, commentators usually point out that financing is the single most important challenge for high-speed rail development (Johnson and Turner, 1997; Ross, 1994). As a result of this, as it is mentioned earlier, high-speed rail requires a high level of demand in order to be profitable in purely economic terms (de Rus and Nash, 2007; Givoni, 2006). A second aspect is the long-term nature of its investment, the implications of which are several: certainly the build-up of revenue over an extended period of time (Johnson and Turner, 1997, p. 152), but also the uncertainties related to possible variations that the project may suffer over time, the unreliability of traffic forecasts and therefore the imprecision of economic valuations (Ross, 1998, p. 196). Indeed, Flyvbjerg et al. (2003) have shown that large infrastructure projects such as high-speed rail links very frequently overestimate demand and suffer cost overruns. Both the high cost and the length of the development period suggest that a key stage of the policy process is implementation.

In addition to this, the development of transnational HSR infrastructure poses significant challenges by the very fact of traversing nation-state borders. First of all, administrative and political differences between nation-states mean that cooperation between

[27] Sunk costs are defined as those production costs that do not vary with output, even if this is zero (Clark and Wrigley, 1995, p. 207).

national actors is central in ensuring a smooth implementation. Ross (1995) has provided a detailed account of the dynamics of this cooperation – or lack thereof – in a comparison of the Channel Tunnel and the Øresund link policy processes. But also, different nation-state rail systems present disparities in technical aspects such as track and loading gauges, power supplies, signalling systems and safety control (Ross, 1994, pp. 204–205). Although this lack of harmonization cannot be tackled on a project basis, it nevertheless remains an additional difficulty to transnational HSR development. As the Christophersen group, responsible for identifying a limited number of priority projects for the TENs, noted, the lack of administrative, regulatory and technical harmonization poses a significant threat to project development (Ross, 1998, p. 194). All in all, these financial, long-term, and transnational factors involve a high level of risk, an issue that, as it is noted below, is particularly relevant in terms of private financing.

A final consideration, which introduces the remainder of this section, refers to the traditionally dominant role of the nation-state in high-speed rail policy-making. Although the development of railways in Europe was mainly driven by private actors, by the mid-20th century rail systems in Europe had become owned, managed and operated by the state (Ross, 1998, pp. 64–68). Consequently, the planning and development of infrastructure has largely been carried out following a nation-state perspective, which indeed still constitutes the scale of reference in current academic studies on infrastructure planning (e.g. Marshall, 2013). However, European integration and a variety of phenomena including the liberalization of the transport sector, public sector budget constraints, and demands for more democratic procedures have begun to challenge this status. Infrastructure planning may be becoming more a 'multi-scalar' and 'multi-actor' process (Romein et al., 2003), with a diminishing role of the nation-state and a tendency towards governance instead of government.

2.2.2 The increasing relevance of non-nation-state actors

The first group of state actors that needs to be addressed is obviously the EU. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the 'deepening' of the European integration process has involved the increasing capacity of the EU in determining the development of transnational HSR infrastructure. The pivotal EU policy initiative in this regard has undoubtedly been the Trans-European Networks (TENs) in the areas of transport, telecommunications, and energy infrastructures. First included in the Maastricht Treaty, which came into force in 1993, it seeks to promote their development by (a) developing a series of guidelines covering the objectives, priorities and broad lines of action, (b) implementing measures to ensure the interoperability of the networks, and (c) supporting 'projects of common interest' promoted

as well by the member states. The TEN-T guidelines provide the criteria for the identification of the projects of common interest. Among these projects, they identify a number of key priority projects to be completed within a specific timetable, on which EU financial and coordination support would be concentrated. However, it is important to note that the guidelines entail no obligation on member states to complete the projects, and in fact EU action on TEN-T is conditional on the support of member states.

But the role of EU institutions is not circumscribed only to the development of policy; they also contribute to the financing of TEN-T infrastructure by mainly providing grants, loans and guarantees. The TEN-T budget line offers a variety of financial instruments irrespective of the projects' geographical location, including grants for studies or works, loan guarantees, and interest rate rebates on loans. As the TEN-T programme progressed, financial support has tended to concentrate more on those sections of higher European added value. The cross-border sections of priority projects are particularly favoured as they may be awarded TEN-T financial aid for works of a maximum of 30 per cent of the eligible cost (EP and Council, 2007). Apart from the TEN-T budget line, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund provide significant grants for projects in relatively underdeveloped areas of the EU. In addition to these direct funding mechanisms, the European Investment Bank (EIB) offers loans and guarantees to facilitate investment in TEN-T. The total EU contribution for TEN-T has grown steadily since 1996 (48 per cent from the 2000-2006 period to the 2007-2013), representing in this last period 27 per cent of the overall investment in the network (CEC, 2012a). In this period, this contribution has been of over 52 billion Euros in grants (8.0 from the TEN-T budget line and 44.2 from the Cohesion Fund and ERDF) and 53 billion Euros in EIB loans and guarantees (CEC, 2012a).

In addition to this financial support, the European Commission also undertakes coordination initiatives to facilitate the implementation of the TEN-T. In 2006 the Commission created the Trans-European Transport Network Executive Agency, an independent body yet closely linked with the Directorate-General Mobility and Transport, which is responsible to ensure the technical and financial implementation and management of the TEN-T programme (CEC, 2013a). Additionally, in 2005 the Commission appointed European Coordinators to aid the implementation of those priority projects that present significant difficulties and are considerably delayed (CEC, 2013b). All of these projects involve several member states and most of them are rail projects. The European Coordinators – currently nine for 11 projects – are tasked with evaluating the projects, making recommendations on their effective implementation, and contributing to their development.

Academic attention has mostly focused on the influence of the EU on infrastructure development; however, in a context of growing relevance of subnational state actors

(Brenner, 2004; Keating, 2000a), it is necessary to consider whether their role is becoming more important in this policy field. Literature on the EU policy-making level from a multi-level governance perspective argues that subnational actors operate not only in nation-state arenas but also in the European one (Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Marks et al., 1996), yet this is not necessarily translated into actual influence (Jordan, 2001, p. 201). With respect to HSR and transport infrastructure planning, empirical evidence on the role of subnational actors is scarce. Particular cases of transnational links (Lemberg, 1995; Romein et al., 2003; Ross, 1995) point at the dominant role of the nation-state political arena, although some of these studies note that in such complex and long-term projects subnational concerns can hinder the policy process if not taken into account at an early stage (Ross, 1995). There is nevertheless some evidence that shows the potential of subnational state actors to substantially influence high-speed rail development, especially in those nation-states with a federal, devolved, or decentralized structure. For instance, Ross (1995) pointed out the integration of regional and local authorities in France in the Channel Tunnel policy process – in contrast to the British case – and Marshall (2013, p. 152) notes that the Catalan government negotiated with the Spanish one changes in the route of the high-speed rail line through the region, eventually managing to increase the number of stops on it.

In general, authors tend to agree that the nation-state still plays a predominant role in HSR infrastructure planning and implementation. The TEN-T programme has a non-binding nature and the distribution of responsibility to implement it is not fixed (Ross, 1998, p. 202). EU financial support is meant to act as a catalyst as the majority of the funding must generally come from member states and, as Stephenson (2010a) notes, the Commission's role is restricted to promoter, coordinator, and monitoring and evaluation body. Moreover, the influence of the nation-state is not limited to infrastructure planning as such but, at least at the beginning of the TEN-T programme, also extends to the very development of EU policy. Stevens (2004, pp. 180–181) points out that nation-state ministers were able to build their concerns into the text of the Treaty of Maastricht, which leave them significant control over the TEN-T programme. In terms of the TENs guidelines, as a result of negotiations between member states and EU institutions, the first ones were comprehensive enough to allow any significant item of infrastructure to be eligible for financial support (Stevens, 2004, p. 188). But also, the prioritization of projects responded to a nation-state rather than a European perspective (Stevens, 2004, p. 183). This continuing influence of the nation-state may be a key hindrance in promoting a supranational approach to rail transport, in particular since member states seem to retain a nation-state perspective on that topic (Johnson and Turner, 1997, p. 173; Romein et al., 2003). In turn, subnational actors do not seem to have a significant influence in transnational HSR policy-making, but their role seems to be under-researched.

2.2.3 Non-state actors: the role of the private sector and civil society

Throughout much of the second half of the 20th century, the role of the private sector in rail development has been limited. However, its increasing relevance as a result of the move towards the liberalization of railways in Europe, which includes the decoupling of structures and operations, indicates that this situation may be changing. The influence of the industry lobby, in particular the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT), on the development of EU transport infrastructure policy has been documented by a number of scholars (Peters, 2003a; te Brömmelstroet and Nowak, 2008; van Apeldoorn, 2003). Industry lobbying was also present with regard to high-speed rail, with the Community of European Railways (CER) standing out as an early advocate of a trans-European network, whose plan for such a network was included by the Commission in its proposals (Ross, 1998, p. 74; Stevens, 2004, p. 176). The influence of these lobbies is felt not only on transport policies such as the TENs initiative, but also on of specific projects. Lemberg (1995) has shown that the lobbying of certain groups, in particular business organizations (which included the ERT, Scandinavian Link – a private consortium with close links to the latter – , and the Danish motor lobby) and trade unions, has effectively influenced the choice of the mode of transport and type of construction of several transnational links. This impact is significant since, as he noted, it modified the solutions originally proposed by a majority of political representatives.

Although the influence of private actors in agenda-setting and policy formulation has been addressed occasionally in critical approaches to transport policy, generally attention has focused on the role the private sector can play in transport infrastructure policy implementation. The high level of investment that high-speed rail infrastructure requires and the reduced capacity of the public sector to assume it has prompted the state to seek the involvement of private capital. In particular, public-private partnerships appear to be crucial for the successful implementation of transnational infrastructure (Johnson and Turner, 1997, p. 157; Ross, 1994, p. 202, 1998, p. 194). Within these partnerships, the public sector would contribute to risk-sharing and to monitor that development conforms with public service considerations (Johnson and Turner, 1997, p. 157). However, experiences on enticing private capital in Europe have been scarce and problematic, as the cases of Italy (Albalate and Bel, 2012, pp. 342–343) and the Netherlands (Koppenjan, 2005) show. The ground-breaking example of the Channel Tunnel, entirely financed by the private sector, suffered serious financial problems and uneasy relations between the Eurotunnel group and the French and British governments, their railway companies, and the lending institutions (Ross, 1998, pp. 203–205). Indeed, the specific characteristics of this type of investment referred to above, in particular the high level of financial and public-policy related risk it involves (Ross, 1998, pp. 195–198), hinders private participation.

Although it has a less direct role in high-speed rail policy-making, it is necessary to address too the influence that civil society may have, in the form of a diverse range of organizations. These include notably environmental organizations but also locally-based groups, political parties, and trade unions, among others. Overall, except in those limited instances when they are explicitly included in the policy process (see the *débat public* experience in France, in Marshall, 2013, pp. 135–138), their influence is usually felt when hindering and potentially delaying the policy process. Flyvbjerg et al. (2003, p. 5) have argued that civil society is kept at a distance of large infrastructure projects' decision-making due to either ignorance of practices of good governance, transparency and participation or a political interest in avoiding problems to their development. In any case this may result in major political issues at a late stage of the policy process (Romein et al., 2003; Ross, 1995). A notorious example is that of the Val di Susa, on the route of the planned Turin-Lyon HSR line and site of an active and long-lasting contestation movement composed by a wide variety of actors, including environmental groups, local mayors and citizen's committees (della Porta and Piazza, 2008). After an intensification of the mobilization in 2005 that included clashes with the police, works were temporary suspended and a new phase of technical studies and negotiations commenced.

In short, this section has shown that *transnational HSR policy-making seems to be still dominated by the nation-state, despite the increasing power of EU institutions*, in particular by providing financial and political support, as a result of European integration. Private involvement, although frequently addressed in terms of implementation, may potentially be influential in earlier stages of the policy process, as the development of TEN-T policy suggests. However, gaps remain in the literature that, if filled, may inform and qualify these appreciations. Firstly, it must be noted that insufficient research has been done on the last decade, when there are signs of a stronger role of EU institutions. But also, in terms of the actual research focus, this has tended to lie on EU policy while attention to specific projects, which would incorporate both EU and other policies, has been scarce. The little academic attention devoted to the role of subnational actors, in particular in those nation-states with a devolved or federal structure, is particularly striking. Moreover, research on transnational transport infrastructure policy-making tends to be significantly under-theorized, in stark contrast with the theoretical attention received by TEN-T policy-making. All in all, the complexity of the policy-making environment shown in this and the previous section is further enhanced by the relevance of space in both shaping the rationales mobilized and determining the influence of actors in the policy process. The following section explores in detail the treatment of this issue in the literature.

2.3 Space in transnational high-speed rail policy-making

The particular spatiality of transnational high-speed rail suggests that attention to the complexities of transnational high-speed rail politics is not complete if the spatial dimension is not addressed. On the one hand, the flows that high-speed rail infrastructure supports and facilitates transcend traditional political boundaries or, in other words, traverse spaces territorialized by a variety of state space arrangements that do not necessarily match them. On the other, these flows, which link distant large urban agglomerations whilst by-passing vast areas in between, contribute to produce a significantly differentiated or 'splintered' (Graham and Marvin, 2001) space. These two phenomena draw attention to, first, the spatiality that state and non-state power adopts in order to support or contest such transnational flows and, second, the role that the particular spatiality of this type of infrastructure may play in shaping the attitudes of political actors concerning its development. Accordingly, this third section addresses the spatiality of transnational HSR policy-making by focusing on these two issues.

2.3.1 Regulating transnational flows: territoriality vs. relationality

Transnational HSR development involves the facilitation of goods and mainly passenger transport across nation-state borders, thus contributing to the economic integration of the EU. On the other hand, as the previous section shows, the nation-state seems to retain the main role in determining this development. This highlights a fundamental issue with regard to transnational HSR politics: the tension between the functional relations that transcend political borders and the spatiality of the state responsible for regulating them.

Indeed, scholars have long noted the role of the state in regulating social and economic relations in forms that include transport infrastructure development (Lefebvre, 2003; Mann, 2003). Lefebvre claimed that 'only the state is capable of taking charge of the management of space "on a grand scale" – highways, air traffic routes – because only the state has at its disposal the appropriate resources, techniques, and "conceptual" capacity' (2003, p. 90). Although the railways' historical development shows that the private sector is also able to undertake significant infrastructure development, the importance of the state not only in providing resources, especially in those cases that may not be profitable from an economic perspective, but also in regulating the sector seems undeniable. He further argued that

> 'the state engenders social relations in space; it reaches still further as it unfurls; it produces a support, its own space, which is itself complex. This space regulates and organizes a disintegrating national space at the heart of a consolidating global space (*l'espace mondial*). The space produced by the state must be termed

> *political* due to its specific features and goals. The state provides the *relations* (that is, the social relations of production) with a calibrated spatial *support*; [...]. The state tends to control flows and stocks by ensuring their coordination' (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 85, original emphasis).

Therefore, the state regulates social and economic relations and, fundamentally, it does so by means of space. The state, by adopting certain scalar configurations, contributes to the territorialization of capital and to the achievement of a 'scalar fix' for socioeconomic relations (Brenner, 1998; Smith, 2003). Yet these configurations of state space are not pre-given; they are constructed through sociopolitical processes (Delaney and Leitner, 1997; Marston, 2000) and, as such, they are historically specific and always subject to evolution. Although he recognizes the variety of factors that influence state space formation, Brenner (1998) emphasizes the importance of the phases of capital accumulation in determining the scalar structure of the state. Thus, during the Fordist-Keynesian phase between approximately the 1950s and the early 1970s, the national space was the primary scale in the territorialization of capital and the mediation of its uneven geographical development (Brenner, 1998). This is consistent with the prominent role that the nation-state had with respect to railways during much of the second half of the 20th century, when it largely monopolized the development, management and operation of the rail systems in its territory.

From the 1970s onwards, the state restructuring that the current, post-Fordist accumulation regime involves has destabilized inherited nation-state geographies and prompted the emergence of new and more complex scalar configurations (Jessop, 2002). A first one is naturally the European Union and the intensified 'deepening' of European integration since the late 1980s, which led to increased EU powers concerning transnational infrastructure development, among other relevant policy issues such as the promotion of balanced development throughout the EU. Yet a second scalar geography is arguably the subnational one. HSR transport's impact on space is not homogenous; its influence is spatially highly differentiated and the increase in accessibility that it involves is felt particularly on large urban areas. Its spatiality may have a European reach, but it is heterogeneously articulated through nodes and the links between them. In this sense it contributes to the constitution of an 'archipelago economy' (Veltz, 2005), where production and consumption is concentrated within the main metropolitan nodes of a transnational inter-urban network. If, as Brenner has noted with regard to state intervention within transnational circuits of capital, 'it is no longer capital that is to be molded into the (territorially integrated) geography of state space, but state space that is to be molded into the (territorially differentiated) geography of capital' (2004, p. 16, emphasis removed), a higher role for the subnational state might be expected with regard to high-speed rail.

Yet state re-scaling under current conditions of capital accumulation does not involve only the increasing importance of supranational (de Melo and Panagariya, 1996; Fawcett and

Hurrell, 1995) and subnational (Brenner, 2004; Keating, 1997) state spaces, but also the configuration of trans-border cooperation spaces that seek to respond more appropriately to functional relations across nation-state borders. These include notably cross-border regions (Blatter, 2004; García-Álvarez and Trillo-Santamaría, 2013; Perkmann, 2003) but also a variety of 'non-standard' geographies of cooperation (Deas and Lord, 2006), both often financially supported by the EU through the ERDF. The creation of the European legal instrument of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation in 2006 further provided a structure and legal certainty for this type of cooperation. In terms of transport infrastructure and high-speed rail, bilateral institutional arrangements are usually established to aid the implementation of cross-border sections. European Economic Interest Groups, typically constituted by the relevant nation-state infrastructure managers, have been set up to develop studies for cross-border sections, thus complementing technically the Intergovernmental Commissions (CEC, 2012b). More significantly for the purposes of this research, a number of EU-funded projects have adopted the spatial frame of a transnational transport or development corridor in order to address in a coordinated manner the challenges that these spaces present, mostly through a transport sectoral approach (e.g. Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin-Brandenburg, 2012; Region Blekinge, 2013) yet in some instances in a spatially integrated manner (City of Mannheim, 2010). The partners in these projects are normally nation-state, regional and local public authorities and agencies, business organizations, and research and development institutions.

There are obviously considerable differences in the configuration of these state spaces, with variations in aspects such as their functional scope, motivation, institutional structure, and stability. A useful approach to understand the complex spatiality of the state when it seeks to address socioeconomic relations has been provided by Blatter (2004), who distinguishes between territorial governance and functional governance. Territorial governance is characterized by the bundling of a high number of tasks within a limited number of jurisdictions, a clear definition of its boundaries, and stability with respect to time and space. In contrast, functional governance, in seeking to respond to functional relations, shows a narrower functional scope than territorial governance, a variable geometry of scale (multiple/fuzzy scales) and a flexible institutional stability with respect to time and space, among other factors.

In spite of these recent developments, the empirical research reviewed in the previous section suggests that, in the case of high-speed rail policy-making, the nation-state seems to prevail over other state spaces, be it orthodox EU and subnational institutions or more complex arrangements. Spatially, this is most clearly manifested by academics from the spatial planning field on the mismatch between the transnational spatial relations facilitated and required by European integration and the existing, nation-state-based governance

arrangements that regulate them (Romein et al., 2003; Zanon, 2011). These authors argue that adaptation to these relations should not simply involve the establishment of scalar governance arrangements that match their spatiality, but the adoption of complex multi-level and multi-actor systems of governance.

2.3.2 Attitudes to transnational high-speed rail development: a spatial understanding

The particular spatiality of transnational high-speed rail not only involves a tension between territoriality – understood as the organisation and exercise of power over bounded blocs of space – and the flows of persons and goods across the borders of these blocs. Due to the highly spatially selective nature of this type of infrastructure, it may prompt among political actors strong and distinct reactions, including naturally contestation to its development.

Although the conflicts that may accompany transnational HSR infrastructure do not necessarily present a local vs. trans-local dimension,[28] place is frequently a significant factor in the contestation to it. Indeed, transport infrastructure projects have the potential for conflicts between local and trans-local interests, in particular when they involve high-speed rail lines due to their high spatial selectivity. The recent debate on a high-speed rail line linking London with the Midlands and the north of England illustrates this (e.g. BBC, 2013). The situation is intensified when the line transcends nation-state borders. Classic examples are cross-border mountainous areas: environmentally sensitive and once nationally peripheral, they may become repositioned within a wider European space and framed as 'missing links' of a trans-European transport network (Jensen and Richardson, 2004, p. 75). The conventional view of infrastructure development as involving a conflict between the local and the trans-local – or between the regional and the trans-regional, and so on and so forth – implies the existence of a wider interest, against which the particular interests concerned may be fulfilled only when they do not contravene the former. This is the perspective adopted by those scholars who assume the necessity of developing transnational infrastructure to meet the needs of an integrating Europe and thus examine the challenges to its implementation, including the lack of a trans-European perspective (Johnson and Turner, 1997; Nijkamp and Vleugel, 1995; Turró, 1999). Hence the common consideration of local contestation as NIMBY ('not in my back yard') protests, discredited as conservative and resistant to social change (see della Porta and Piazza, 2007). The framing of infrastructure

[28] See for instance della Porta and Piazza's (2007) research on the global framing of local protests to large-scale infrastructure projects.

conflicts as local vs. trans-local therefore assumes a multi-scalar hierarchy whereby long-distance spatial relations are given priority over shorter ones.

A more critical view of the conflict that transnational HSR development involves has been articulated spatially through the use of the suggestive metaphor of the space of flows vs. the space of places. This dialectical opposition was initially proposed by Castells' (2010) to refer to the contradiction between the dominant spatial logic of the network society and the superseded spatial organization of the majority of the people's lives. However, it captured the imagination of scholars of transnational transport infrastructure, who employed it to refer to the conflicts created by its development. As previously mentioned, Hajer (2000) has argued that a policy discourse on a 'Europe of Flows' dominates spatial development policy in Europe, and has in addition suggested that alternative discourses might be built on the basis of the particular qualities of places, as opposed to the horizontal uniformity of a 'Europe of flows'. Jensen and Richardson (2004) have framed this issue in similar terms and pointed out the need of alternatives more sensitive to place in order to counter the single hegemonic space of 'monotopia'. Furthermore, Albrechts and Coppens (2003) have applied this distinction to the study of transnational infrastructure corridor planning. Their analysis of the planning process of the Brussels high speed train station highlights the tensions between the space of flows (produced by a financial and managerial elite) and the space of places (practiced by the local population). Underlying these contributions is the conflict between two types of spaces: those constituted by the relations between distant points; and those formed by spatial contiguity and self-containment.

However, these approaches arguably overemphasize the disconnection between the two and understate the relevance of place in "anchoring" flows.[29] Certain place-based actors may see new opportunities in a space reshaped by transnational HSR development. Without referring in particular to this type of infrastructure, this is clearly expressed in strategic spatial planning exercises that show how urban regions are positioned within wider networks (Healey, 1998, 2004), but trans-border relations may also provide opportunities for larger regions. In this respect, Prytherch (2010) provides an insightful investigation on the complex spatial imaginary through which Catalan regionalist actors have promoted the development of a 'Mediterranean Arc', a macroregion constituted through not only boundaries but also a dense network of spatial relations. These contributions suggest that understanding the response of political actors to the differentiated space produced by transnational HSR development requires the adoption of a spatially sophisticated approach which transcends a

[29] Castells (2010, p. 443) has indeed noted that one of the three layers that constitute the space of flows is composed by its nodes and hubs.

conceptualization based on scales or on flows vs. places. A conceptualization of space that problematizes scale and the bounded nature of place and considers instead the relations that take place across it may provide a more useful avenue for understanding the behaviour of actors in transnational HSR politics.

In short, the development of transnational HSR infrastructure produces a splintering of space that involves both a mismatch with traditional political spaces and a tension between actors associated to different spatialities. The importance of addressing these two phenomena here, however, does not lie in the existence of clear evidence on them. Since the traditional scalar frame of the nation-state seems to prevail in determining policy outcomes, attention to the relevance of space in the actors' stance on this type of infrastructure has sought to understand it rather than to find further empirical evidence of it. What the discussion in this section intends to show is *a general lack of a sophisticated and consistent understanding of the spatiality of transnational HSR policy-making*. The spatiality of the state is primarily approached through a scalar lens, although some contributions present a more complex perspective (Blatter, 2004; Romein et al., 2003). In turn, a hierarchical view of scale or the use of the duality 'flows vs. places' seems inadequate to sufficiently understand actors' attitudes on the development of transnational high-speed rail. A nuanced spatialized analysis of the policy process would uncover the assumptions of these imaginaries and provide a detailed explanation of the relationships between actors and space. This perspective is largely absent in the literature on transnational transport infrastructure and HSR policy-making and, due to the highly differentiated spatiality of this mode of transport, it is particularly relevant.

2.4 Conclusion and research questions

This chapter has examined the literature on the dynamics of transnational HSR policy-making in Europe with a focus on the diversity of mobilized rationales, the roles of the variety of actors potentially involved, and the spatiality of this process. Overall, it sought to clarify the tensions that the development of this type of infrastructure entails. However, the existing literature is not conclusive on any of these dimensions.

Firstly, the argument that a hegemonic discourse shared across different policy-making levels is driving transport infrastructure policy in the EU, although theoretically suggestive, is not sufficiently demonstrated by empirical research. Although there may be an overarching consensus among political and economic elites on the need to develop transnational HSR infrastructure, it is likely that differences in interests and ideas will allow

for a certain degree of flexibility within that discourse. Instead of a 'monotopia', different 'Europes of Flows' may therefore be imagined, promoted, and developed. The actual 'Europe' to emerge through transport infrastructure development depends in turn on the second issue examined, namely the role of the different actors in the policy process. Academic work clearly points at the dominance of the nation-state, yet on the one hand this work has largely focused on EU policy rather than on EU-relevant transport infrastructure policy-making and, on the other, it has arguably paid insufficient attention to the roles of EU actors over the last decade and of subnational actors. Finally, scholarly work on transnational HSR policy-making has generally rested on a simplified spatial imaginary that is unsuited to correctly address its complex spatiality. Although existing research suggests that the spatiality of statehood remains territorially bounded through the dominant role of the nation-state, it generally lacks an understanding of space that transcends a simple scalar imaginary. Moreover, the importance of space in shaping the rationales of political actors has been commonly framed through a vocabulary of scales or flows vs. places, which obscures its comprehension.

Thus, firstly, this research is expected to ascertain whether rationale convergence in high-speed rail policy-making is occurring, illuminating at the same time the related tensions within it. Secondly, the thesis intends to provide a detailed account of the power struggles in the policy process and the respective role of actors within them. Finally, it seeks to develop a sophisticated understanding of the spatiality of transnational HSR politics by focusing on the role of space in determining the rationales mobilized by actors and their influence in the policy process. These three tasks have been pursued through the articulation of the following research questions:

1. What are the rationales mobilized around transnational high-speed rail policy-making, to what extent are they compatible or mutually exclusive, and how are they produced, reproduced and transformed?
2. What is the influence of actors in the development of transnational high-speed rail infrastructure, how do they exert it, and at the expense of whom?
3. How is space present in transnational high-speed rail policy-making and how does it determine the production of the aforementioned rationales and the influence of actors in the policy process?

In the first place, the clarification of these questions is important for a better understanding of transnational HSR policy-making in Europe. It can thus contribute to empirical research on EU transport policy (e.g. Johnson and Turner, 1997; Ross, 1998; Stevens, 2004) and transnational transport infrastructure development (e.g. Lemberg, 1995; Romein et al., 2003;

Ross, 1995). Moreover, the response to these questions also seeks to promote a critical approach in this field, in the line of previous work on discourse analysis (Hajer, 2000; Jensen and Richardson, 2004) and on power struggles (Lemberg, 1995). Finally, it intends to place space at the centre of the study of transport infrastructure politics, in line with the 'spatial turn' that has taken place in the social sciences for over the last two decades (Warf and Arias, 2009). Ultimately, the aim is to contribute to the critical examination of European integration through a focus on a very spatial issue, i.e. transnational HSR infrastructure politics. Notwithstanding the EU's unique achievements in regional economic, social, and political integration, it is essential to critically examine this process in order to contribute to its progressive development. Therefore, rather than an empirical analysis of the difficulties in developing a European orientation in policy-making – the dominant approach in research on transnational HSR policy – this thesis seeks to carry out a theoretically informed critique of policy-making in the EU that questions assumptions, unmasks power relationships, and identifies the winners and losers of this process. The following chapter develops the theoretical and analytical framework in order to carry out this endeavour**.**

3 Understanding transnational infrastructure policy-making: an analytical framework

As the previous chapter has shown, the examination of transnational high-speed rail policy-making has been framed according to three themes or fields of enquiry that are considered central to this process and, more generally, to European integration. These are the tensions between the wide variety of rationales potentially mobilized regarding high-speed rail development, the capacity of the diverse actors involved to drive and steer the process in a certain direction, and the spatiality of transnational HSR policy-making. In order to develop an analytical framework to answer the three research questions derived from these themes, they will be addressed separately by focusing on three dimensions: discourse, power, and space.

The first research question relates to the dynamics of convergence and divergence of rationales in the development of transnational HSR infrastructure. In principle, a convergence of rationales is doubtful given the diversity of interests that seem to be involved in the process. However, a number of authors have made a preliminary exploration of the capacity of discourse to accommodate seemingly different interests and ideas and achieve dominance in the policy process (Hajer, 2000; Linnros and Hallin, 2001; Peters, 2003a). This research seeks to build on these contributions and adopt a discursive approach to the analysis of the processes through which certain representations of reality become hegemonic and others marginalized. In this view, the behaviour of actors does not simply respond rationally to their own interests since these are themselves constituted through discourse and social interaction. Analysis therefore does not focus on ascertaining the extent to which differences in attitudes prevent the development of a truly trans-European infrastructure, but on how these attitudes are in fact shaped in the struggles to achieve dominance in the discursive field.

The next research question refers to *who* is driving the development of transnational HSR infrastructure and *how*. Empirical attention to this process has been infrequent but, in particular, it has rarely been sufficiently informed by theory. An exception is Lemberg's (1995) study of the decision-making process concerning three transnational transport infrastructure links. Drawing on the results of his research, he developed a 'power structure' diagram that shows relations of different intensity between eight hierarchically arranged layers of power and a representation of the law-making process that illustrates the role of the different actors in it. However, the concept of power is not defined and the relations between actors, represented by arrows, are only characterized by the intensity and direction of influence. In this regard, this research seeks to provide a more solid theoretical foundation by

focusing on power, a central concept in the social sciences (Haugaard and Clegg, 2009) which has been explicitly addressed in political science (see for instance the 'community power debate', introduced below). This focus needs to detail not only the definition of power, but also what is understood as agency ('who') and the ways it is exercised ('how').

Finally, the third question that this research seeks to answer concerns the spatiality of policy-making. As explained in the previous chapter, literature on transnational transport planning has been sensitive both to the mismatch between the nation-state and the regulation of trans-border functional flows and to the conflicts prompted by the particular spatiality of transnational HSR infrastructure. However, it generally retains a simple spatial imagination that obscures a satisfactory understanding of the policy process. This thesis aims to complement this literature by explicitly addressing space and placing it as one of the cornerstones of the analytical framework. In this respect, it seeks to problematize the spatiality of policy-making by drawing on recent human geography debates on scale and relationality. This problematization will be subsequently used to spatialize the previous discourse and power analytical approaches. Since both state and non-state actors are considered in the analysis of policy-making, this approach is concerned not only with the spatiality of the state (Brenner et al., 2003) but also with that of non-state actors (Harrison, 2013); in short, with the spatiality of discourse and power.

Combining these three approaches in a single analytical framework poses significant challenges due to their different disciplinary backgrounds and the fact that they do not necessarily share the same ontological and epistemological positioning. Discourse analysis considers reality as socially constructed and is associated with an interpretative epistemological approach, whereby the researcher, focusing on the meaning that actors give to their actions, seeks to develop an understanding of social phenomena that is of limited generalizability (Marsh and Furlong, 2002). The approach to power, in turn, is fundamentally concerned with ascertaining the causal relationships that led to a certain outcome and developing an explanation – rather than an understanding in the interpretative sense – of phenomena. The differences, nevertheless, are arguably a matter of emphasis since both approaches seek to produce an explanation of events, although a discourse approach does so according to the interpretation of the meanings that actors attach to the world.[1] In any case, the discourse, power, and spatial approaches are addressed independently in separate sections, although the last of these carefully draws the links with

[1] Understanding how actors interpret social and physical phenomena may in fact be necessary for developing adequate explanatory accounts. In fact, Sum and Jessop (2013) have recently proposed what they term a 'cultural political economy', which combines an attention to meaning-making with political economic approaches.

the first two. At the end of the chapter they are brought together in a single diagram that illustrates the analytical framework employed in this research. It is then suggested that the combined consideration of the spatialized discourse and power analytical approaches permits the development of a social constructionist, theoretically informed, and spatially nuanced understanding of transnational infrastructure policy-making.

3.1 Policy-making as discursive struggle

The previous chapter used the term 'rationale' to loosely conceptualize the justification publicly espoused by actors of their stance towards a particular policy issue. This included interests in the first place, such as the expected benefits for a state actor's territory or a business organization's members. Secondly, the term 'rationale' also encompassed ideas such as symbolic associations and assumptions about causality. In fact, a number of authors from the transport policy field have suggested that ideas play an important role in transnational transport infrastructure policy-making, an aspect that Hajer (2000), Peters (2003a), and Linnros and Hallin (2001) have addressed in more detail through a discourse analytical approach. Building on their work, this section defines a framework for the analysis of these rationales' dynamics by adopting a discursive approach to policy studies. It firstly discusses the role of discourse in policy-making, then introduces discourse analysis and its different approaches, and finally explains the framework adopted in this research.

3.1.1 Discourse in policy studies

For the majority of the second half of the 20th century, social sciences have been dominated by a positivist and empiricist understanding of political behaviour (Fischer, 2003, pp. 21–22).[2] Actors, according to this view, behave rationally in order to achieve their self-interested objectives (e.g. Laver, 1997; Riker and Ordeshook, 1973). As Fischer (2003, p. 22) has noted, even those neopositivist perspectives that have sought to integrate ideas in their approaches, considering them as guides for behaviour, have retained the basic assumption of self-interested, rational behaviour. This understanding has been challenged since the 1980s by 'cognitive' approaches that emphasize the role of ideas in the policy process, in particular in the definition of political problems (Fischer, 2003, p. 23; Surel, 2000). According to

[2] Positivism and empiricism here broadly refer to approaches that seek to produce 'objective' and empirically rigorous causal explanations of political action (Fischer, 2003, pp. 21–22, see also pp. 118–119).

Fischer (2003, p. 22), ideas are not only able to shape the actors' interests but also to entirely change the ways they see the social and material world. The difficulty lies in assessing the respective importance of ideas and interests, not least because of the diversity of cognitive processes classified under the term (John, 1998, p. 144; cited in Fischer, 2003, p. 24).

In parallel to this increased attention to ideas, there has been a reassessment of the role of language in policy-making. In line with the 'linguistic turn' in twentieth-century philosophy (e.g. Rorty, 1992), language is seen as not simply reflecting social and physical reality, but as constituting it (Fischer and Forester, 1993, p. 1; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, pp. 8–9). Language, in other words, inescapably shapes our view of the world.[3] Important in this notion is that language is not reducible to the individual; rather, it must be understood within the practices it is employed (Fischer, 2003, p. 41; Hajer, 2006, p. 70). The implications of this view of language for policy-making are profound. If the representations of reality through language are necessarily selective, they are linked with issues such as agenda-setting and relations of power (Fischer and Forester, 1993, p. 1) and their definition is therefore politically significant. Moreover, since language must be understood as embedded in social practices, attention to policy processes is important in understanding continuity and change in these representations. This relevance of language has led to an significant body of work that emphasizes the role of argumentation in policy analysis and planning (Fischer and Forester, 1993; Fischer and Gottweis, 2012) and calls for an interpretative and deliberative policy analysis approach more attuned to contemporary democratic conditions (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003).

Both ideas and language are at the centre of discursive approaches to politics. These are concerned with how relatively stable representations of reality structure behaviour and become embedded in social and political practices. In spite of the variety of conceptualizations of the term, discourse commonly refers to a specific set of ideas and concepts that give meaning to social and physical phenomena and are produced and reproduced through social practices (Fischer, 2003, p. 90; Hajer, 1995, p. 44; Howarth, 2000, p. 9). Following the conception of language explained above, discourse must not be understood as just speech or argumentation, but as constituting reality and being embedded in the context it is practiced (Fischer, 2003, p. 41; Hajer, 1995, p. 44). Ideas are then understood as integrated in discourse, rather than simply as one of the many variables

[3] This does not necessarily mean there is no reality beyond language, but that access to it is always through the latter. As Laclau and Mouffe have famously argued: 'The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. [...] What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence' (1985, p. 108, original emphasis).

influencing policy-making (Fischer, 2003, p. 41). As Fischer has explained, 'the discourse approach sees the medium of language as constituting the very meaning upon which ideas are constructed' (2003, p. 41). Interests, in this perspective, are shaped intersubjectively by discourse (Fischer, 2003, p. 46; Hajer, 1995, p. 59).

By selectively conceptualizing the social and physical world, discourses delimit the range of issues to be considered in policy-making and specify the forms of knowledge that are acceptable as legitimate (Fischer, 2003, p. 73).[4] Therefore, the achievement of dominance in the discursive field is a key dimension of political processes. As Fairclough has noted, 'the articulation and rearticulating of orders of discourse is correspondingly one stake in hegemonic struggle' (1992, p. 93; cited in Fischer, 2003, p. 79). Drawing from Gramsci's (1971) writings, hegemony has in fact been addressed by discourse theory by understanding it as the contingent achievement of consent by the population to social projects of the dominant groups of society. In particular, hegemony occupies a central place in Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) theory of discourse (see below). According to it, the hegemonic discourse formation is inherently linked to the construction of *social antagonism*: the exclusion of a radical otherness that, on the one hand, stabilizes this formation while, on the other, prevents its full closure (Torfing, 1999, p. 124). This antagonistic conflict between the hegemonic discourse and its 'outside' in fact characterizes the reproduction and potential for transformation of the former. Drawing from what he calls 'social-interactive' discourse theory, Hajer (1995, pp. 56–57) has pointed out that the fact that the arbitrary nature of structured ways of seeing often remains hidden involves the difficulty of challenging an hegemonic discourse if it is not using its own categories (see also Fischer, 2003, p. 88). In this respect, he noted that the environmental movement has the dilemma of arguing either in the terms set by the government, thus losing expressive freedom, or in their own terms, thus risking the loss of direct influence (Hajer, 1995, p. 57).[5]

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[4] Hajer (1995, p. 42) has argued that in fact social constructionism has provided the means for the refinement of Schattschneider's theory of organization as mobilization of bias, which stated that '[a]ll forms of political organization have a bias in favor of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others because *organization is the mobilization of bias*. Some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out' (1960, p. 71, original emphasis).

[5] The concern with the difficulties in articulating political alternatives to the dominant order is shared with recent scholarship, which draws on political philosophy, on a post-political condition in environmental politics (Swyngedouw, 2010, 2007a), urban and spatial politics (Raco and Lin, 2012; Swyngedouw, 2011, 2009), and spatial planning (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012). Although there is some overlap with discourse theory, this literature focuses on the technologies of government – based on consensus, partnership, coordination, management, etc. – that foreclose the political by avoiding its inherent antagonist dimension.

3.1.2 Discourse analysis as an approach in policy studies

In light of the above discussion, the analysis of discourse seeks to understand how conceptions of reality are constructed, transformed, and reproduced, and what are their implications for political activity. In particular, discourse analysis has an important role to play in examining how a certain understanding of reality gains dominance and authority whereas other understandings are discredited (Hajer, 1995, p. 44). In other words, it analyzes 'the way hegemonic conceptions of reality are upheld and reproduced by key political groups, while oppositional groups seek argumentative strategies to challenge these dominant social constructs' (Fischer, 2003, pp. 90–91). The relevance of this approach to the first research question of this thesis is clear: *discourse analysis can be a useful tool to ascertain whether and through which means a dominant rationale around transnational high-speed rail emerges and, if so, which other rationales become marginalized in the process*. Discourse analysis also implies that this process should not be understood simply through the degree to which pre-given interests can be accommodated in a certain policy. Rather, by considering interests as constituted discursively through social practices, rationale convergence or divergence should be seen through the dynamic production, reproduction, and transformation of shared understandings of phenomena.

Discourse analysis in policy studies has been extensively applied in environmental politics (e.g. Dryzek, 2013; Hajer, 1995; Litfin, 1994; Rydin, 2003), due to the close relationship of the environmental field to social constructionist perspectives (Feindt and Oels, 2005, p. 162; Fischer, 2003, p. 91). However, as Fischer (2003, p. 91) has noted, due to the importance of experts – key actors in the production and legitimization of knowledge – in contemporary society, the value of discourse analysis is not limited to this field. In fact, over the last two decades discourse analysis has also been used in a number of spatially-related domains: urban policy (Hastings, 1999; Jacobs, 2006; Lees, 2004); housing policy (Hastings, 2000; Jacobs et al., 2003); and spatial policy and planning (Richardson and Jensen, 2003; Rydin, 2005; Sharp and Richardson, 2001). Research on transport infrastructure policy and planning has arguably been resistant to the adoption of social constructionist perspectives, probably due to the positivist, apparently value-free orientation of much of transport geography work (Hanson, 2000).[6] Nevertheless, as it is shown in the previous chapter, some authors have addressed transnational transport infrastructure policy from a discourse analytical approach (notably Hajer, 2000; Jensen and Richardson, 2004).

[6] Although see Shaw et al. (2008) and Goetz et al. (2009) for a more nuanced view.

This thesis seeks to contribute to this body of work but, due to the variety of existing approaches to discourse analysis, it is necessary first to determine which one is more adequate to respond to the research question. There are different classifications of these discourse analytical approaches or traditions (e.g. Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002; Torfing, 2005; Wetherell et al., 2001), but common categories are the following: those approaches with a narrower linguistic focus, such as content analysis (Holsti, 1969) and conversation analysis (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984); discursive psychology (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter and Wetherell, 1987); critical discourse analysis (Fairclough et al., 2011; Wodak and Meyer, 2009); Foucauldian approaches (Foucault, 1991, 1998); and other post-structuralist and post-marxist approaches, mainly based on Laclau and Mouffe (Howarth, 1998; Howarth et al., 2000; Torfing, 1999). A suitable approach for the aims of this research needs, on the one hand, to address the socio-cultural level of discourse (Fischer, 2003, p. 74). At this level discourse structures interpretation of phenomena and, consequently, behaviour. On the other hand, it also needs to focus on the everyday level of discourse (Fischer, 2003, p. 74) at which communicative interaction occurs. Attention to this level is required in order to account for the dynamics of policy-making and the role of actors in discourse formation. In this respect, language-centred approaches seem inadequate to address the political and power implications of discourse (Torfing, 2005, p. 6). On the contrary, approaches based on Foucault and Laclau and Mouffe are concerned with overarching discursive patterns but are unable to adequately explain agency in discourse production (Hajer, 1995, p. 53; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 20). The approach adopted in this thesis, developed by Hajer (1995) in an influential study of environmental policy-making, effectively combines the attention to both levels by drawing on discursive psychology and Foucault's notion of discourse.

3.1.3 Hajer's discourse analytical approach

Hajer's approach to discourse analysis was presented in his seminal work *The Politics of Environmental Discourse*, an in-depth study of the acid rain controversies in Great Britain and the Netherlands.[7] His analytical framework was devised to analyze the discursive dynamics that take place in environmental politics, in particular the processes by which a certain understanding of the environmental problem gains dominance while other

[7] Apart from its influence in establishing discourse analysis in the study of environmental politics (Feindt and Oels, 2005, p. 166), Hajer's approach has been variously used in the spatial planning and policy field, either directly applying it (Hajer, 2003, 2000; Peters, 2003a) or drawing on it in different degrees (e.g. Hajer, 2005; Jensen and Richardson, 2004; Linnros and Hallin, 2001; Low, 2005; Sharp and Richardson, 2001).

representations become marginalized. In the development of his framework, he sought to introduce in Foucault's abstract approach the role of agency or individual strategic action in discourse formation by drawing on social psychology, in particular the works of Davies and Harré (1990) and Billig (1987). Hajer argued that Foucault's theory of discourse as expressed in his later works (1991, 1998) provided useful insights into the interaction and fusion of discourses and the discursive practices through which agency is exercised; however, it did not properly explain the role of individual action in discourse reproduction and transformation (Hajer, 1995, pp. 47–52). He then sought to operationalize Foucault's approach by considering the level of interpersonal interaction, on which discursive psychology focuses (Hajer, 1995, pp. 52–53). His definition of discourse introduces this role of social interaction in discourse formation:

> 'Discourse is here defined as a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities' (1995, p.44).

In Hajer's approach, then, the practices through which discourse is performed are central to discourse production, reproduction, and transformation.[8] Thus the focus of analysis should not only be on the content of discourse (the 'ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations') but also on the context where the 'particular set of practices' are carried out. Discursive constructs therefore need to be understood according to the specific institutional contexts and practices in which utterances are meaningfully stated (Fischer, 2003, p. 90). Furthermore, this 'social-interactive' discourse theory places particular emphasis on argumentative interaction as a key moment in discourse formation. While constrained by routinized discursive understandings, actors are able to behave strategically in order to make others adopt their understanding of a problem and position other actors in particular ways (Hajer, 1995, pp. 52–58). In Billig's words, actors are seen as 'active, selecting and adapting thoughts, mutating and creating them, in the continued struggle for argumentative victory against rival thinkers' (1987, p. 82; cited in Hajer, 1995, p. 54). In order to operationalize the analysis of this dynamics and explain discourse production, reproduction, and transformation, Hajer proposed the use of two key middle-range concepts: 'story-lines' and 'discourse coalitions'.

A *story-line* is the 'basic linguistic mechanism' (Fischer, 2003, p. 86) for creating and maintaining discursive order. Introduced by Davies and Harré (1990), Hajer interpreted the concept as 'a generative sort of narrative that allows actors to draw upon various discursive

[8] Hajer adopts Davies and Harré's definition of discursive practices: 'all the ways in which people actively produce social and psychological realities' (Davies and Harré, 1990, p. 45).

categories to give meaning to specific physical or social phenomena' (1995, p. 56). The assumption behind this conception is that actors do not resort to comprehensive discursive systems when interpreting phenomena, but to simpler narrative constructions. In this respect, story-lines are important insofar they reduce the complexity of a problem by suggesting unity in its diverse and separate discursive component parts (Hajer, 1995, p. 56).[9] By suggesting – but not presuming – a common understanding, they allow the overcoming of fragmentation and the achievement of discursive closure (Hajer, 1995, p. 62). The power of a story-line lies in that 'it sounds right', a characteristic based on the plausibility of the argument, the trust in the actor who utters it, and the acceptability of the story-line (Hajer, 1995, p. 63). Finally, the relevance of story-lines for the policy process lies in their importance for strategic action, since they structure understanding and play a key role in the positioning of actors and structures. As Hajer stated, '[f]inding the appropriate story-line becomes an important form of agency' (1995, p. 56).

Story-lines are in turn an important cohesive element in the other middle-range concept of Hajer's approach: *discourse coalitions*. As actors struggle to achieve discursive hegemony, Hajer has argued that they form coalitions or 'policy subsystems' (Howlett et al., 2009) around a set of storylines they adhere to. He defined discourse coalitions as 'the ensemble of (1) a set of story-lines; (2) the actors who utter these story-lines; and (3) the practices in which this discursive activity is based' (Hajer, 1995, p. 65). Story-lines, thus, serve as the 'discursive cement' that holds the coalition together. Discourse coalitions are distinct to other types of coalitions in two aspects (Hajer, 1995, p. 66). Firstly, they are based on meanings rather than on interests. By considering interests as constituted through discourse, story-lines may in fact change the actors' understandings of their own interests. Secondly, discourse coalitions broaden the scope concerning potential participant actors. In this respect, the analyst should search for those actors that produce story-lines, such as experts, activists and media actors, and the practices through which they do so.

In Hajer's approach, politics is thus understood as 'a struggle for discursive hegemony in which actors try to secure support for their definition of reality' (Hajer, 1995, p. 59). Although actors' behaviour is naturally limited by the 'webs of meaning' in which they are entangled, these can still exercise a certain degree of choice (Hajer, 1995, p. 56). According

[9] The notion of story-line is particularly relevant to policy discourses, which, as opposed to more formal discourses such as law, are complex and not necessarily coherent (Hajer, 1995, p. 45). Environmental discourse is a case in point since, as he noted, it commonly draws on a number of different disciplines that do not only include the natural sciences but also economics, engineering, and others. Although transport policy may be approached through a narrow transport lens, transport policy discourse is likely to involve discursive elements from other disciplines (economics, environmental science, engineering, etc.).

to Hajer, hegemony in a given domain is achieved when two conditions are satisfied: 'discourse structuration' and 'discourse institutionalization' (1995, pp. 60–61). The first one occurs when actors need to draw on the terms of a given discourse in order to be credible. Discourse institutionalization, in turn, happens when a given discourse is translated into specific policies (such as shift of investment in a certain type of transport infrastructure) and institutional arrangements (e.g. the establishment of a particular type of cost-benefit analysis or the restructuring of government departments).

All in all, the adoption of Hajer's discourse analytical framework has clear implications for empirical analysis. Following the above definition of discourse coalitions, this should focus on three elements: the terms of discourse, i.e. the story-lines through which understanding is structured; the formation of coalitions around such story-lines; and the understanding of both story-lines and discourse coalitions through the practices in which discourse is produced, reproduced, and transformed. As mentioned earlier, Hajer's approach suggests special attention to those actors that are relevant in the production of story-lines. Experts seem to be particularly important due to their role in the production, control and legitimization of knowledge (Fischer, 2003, p. 45).[10] The analysis of these three elements involves the following data (Hajer, 2006, pp. 73–74): documents and news articles, for a first definition of discursive terms and a basic notion of processes and sites of discursive production; interviews with key players, to obtain information about causal relationships and the meaning of particular events for them; and evidence to account for the argumentative exchange (e.g. parliamentary debates and minutes of inquiries).

To summarize, in order to ascertain whether there is rationale convergence in transnational HSR planning and the means through which this happens, this research has adopted a discourse analytical approach. This approach assumes that actors' behaviour is not simply self-interested and rational, but is influenced by ideas and discourse. Particularly, the adopted framework (Hajer, 1995) bridges the gap between Foucault's abstract theory of discourse and the analysis of political processes by drawing on discursive psychology and its emphasis on social interaction. In particular, Hajer proposed the use of the middle-range concepts of story-line and discourse coalition in order to operationalize such an approach. Accordingly, the analysis of discourse through this framework involves focusing on three fundamental elements: the story-lines that provide the basis for creating and maintaining

[10] Notwithstanding Hajer's attempt to integrate both agency and structure in discourse analysis, it is important to note that his approach has been criticized for not sufficiently defining the role of agency within discourse coalitions and, in particular, in the formation of story-lines, which may occur deliberately or 'by chance' (Peters, 2003b, p. 233). In any case, empirical analysis will shed light on the capacity of this approach to adequately explain such a role (see Section 9.3.1).

discursive order; the discourse coalitions that form around such story-lines; and the discursive practices through which discourse is produced, reproduced, and transformed. Discourse, in this view, must not be understood only in terms of its content but within the context it is practiced. Hajer's analytical framework conceptualizes politics as a struggle for discursive hegemony, and as such it allows to analyze how actors seek to secure support for their understanding of phenomena whilst other views become discredited. Although this dimension of the policy process is key for understanding transnational HSR policy-making, it is also necessary to address how, beyond discursive struggles, actors try to ensure that the development of policy – in this case a high-speed rail line – happens according to their views. The next section develops a framework for analyzing this process through a focus on the concept of power.

3.2 Policy-making as power struggle

In order to understand how transnational high-speed rail is being developed in Europe, it is necessary to develop a conceptualization of power that allows us to ascertain the role of actors in that process. In spite of the centrality of the concept in the social sciences (Haugaard and Clegg, 2009), its meaning is far from settled. Power has been frequently considered an 'essentially contested concept' (Connolly, 1993; Lukes, 2005), as any conceptualization of it involves adopting a certain moral and political perspective. Haugaard (2010), drawing on Wittgenstein (1967), has further argued that power is a 'family resemblance concept', the meaning of which varies according to the 'language game' or theoretical perspective it is employed in. This entails that there is no single definition of power that encompasses all usages. This section selectively draws on literature on power to develop a conceptualization of the term suitable to address transport infrastructure policy-making.[11] The objective is to propose not *the* correct view on power, but *a* conceptualization that is appropriate for the objectives of this research and applicable to other similar undertakings. As Haugaard and Clegg argue, 'it is still better to think of power as plural, as shaped by local context, as a tool which enables us to make sense of the social world rather than embodying a singular essence' (2009, p. 5). Thus, the section first introduces the major debates on power in politics in order to specify the scope of the conception of power to be

[11] The development of a specific conceptualization of the term by drawing on different theoretical perspectives faces the difficulty of utilizing concepts that have different meanings according to the 'language game' they are employed in (Haugaard, 2002, p. 3). For that reason, an effort has been made to understand these within their own contexts and explicitly state the meanings of the terms used.

utilized. Second, it addresses the problem of agency, that is of *who* exercises power. Finally, it develops an operationalization of the term that allows the analysis of *how* it is exercised.

3.2.1 A focus on behaviour: the 'community power debate'

The study of power has been conducted from several, more or less distinct theoretical perspectives with their own 'language games'. For instance, Haugaard (2002) has distinguished between conceptual analytical political theory, non-analytical political theory, and modern and postmodern social theory. Considering this thesis' focus on policy-making, a useful entry point to the conceptualization of power is the so-called 'community power debate' that took place among mostly United States political scientists from the 1950s up to the 1970s (Clegg, 1989, p. 40). This debate originated in the critique of Mills (2000) and Hunter's (1953) work on the distribution of power in US society. These authors argued that US politics was dominated by a ruling elite at the expense of the powerless majority of the population. Following Haugaard's (2002) classification, the scholars who engaged in the community power debate are broadly associated with conceptual analytical political theory and modern social theory. Generally speaking, they can be grouped in three main approaches to power.

The first approach is the so-called 'pluralist' and was adopted by those that first engaged in a critique of the elitist approach (Dahl, 2005; Polsby, 1963).[12] The pluralists – Dahl in particular – sought to counter the elitists' methodological lack of precision with the development of a rigorous methodology for the study of power (Clegg, 1989, p. 8; Lukes, 2005, p. 5). The concern was with the precise measurement of power, and this was to be done by studying its exercise. Thus, this approach involves a focus on behaviour in decision-making on issues that entail an observable conflict (Lukes, 2005, p. 19). As Polbsy noted, in a pluralist approach 'an attempt is made to study specific outcomes in order to determine who actually prevails in community decision-making' (1963, p. 113; cited in Lukes, 2005, p. 17). The emphasis on who prevails in decision-making is certainly appropriate for the objectives of this research; however, this view of power has been challenged by the second approach to power, developed by Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963, 1970). They argued that power is not only manifested in observable decision-making on certain issues, but also in limiting the scope of decision-making to such issues. As they stated, 'to the extent that a

[12] The term 'pluralist' refers to the conclusions on the distribution of power that these authors drew in their studies. Nevertheless, the focus here, as in Lukes (2005), is on the features of the approach rather than on the conclusions reached through it.

person or group – consciously or unconsciously – creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p. 949). Although an important qualification of the pluralist approach, Bachrach and Baratz's conception of power retained a focus on decision-making – considering non-decision-making a form of it – and the existence of an actual conflict of interests (Lukes, 2005, p. 25).

In this respect, these two views of power were further criticized by Lukes (2005), who famously proposed a 'three-dimensional' view of power to overcome the limitations of what he termed one-dimensional (pluralist) and two-dimensional (Bachrach and Baratz's) views of power. On the one hand, he criticized the behavioural focus of both approaches as they did not sufficiently consider the influence of structural elements on individual action; on the other, he expanded on Bachrach and Baratz's second face of power by considering not only decision-making, observable conflict, and subjective interests, but also control over the political agenda, latent conflict, and real interests (Lukes, 2005, p. 28). In this respect, Lukes argued that power is at work also when securing consent and thus preventing conflict from arising (2005, p. 7). Indeed, this third dimension of power is related with the later literature on hegemony and discourse reviewed in the previous section.[13] The problem, however, lies in Lukes' conception of interests. According to him, power's third dimension serves to conceal people's real interests and consequently lead to their consent to being dominated (Lukes, 2005, p. 13), a notion which has been linked to the Marxist concept of 'false consciousness' (Clegg, 1989, pp. 127–128; Haugaard, 2002, p. 38). This conception clearly conflicts with the social constructionist view adopted in the previous section, which sees interests not as pre-given but as constituted through discourse. According to this view, power may involve, rather than the concealment of people's real interests, the gain of support for one's representation of reality. The dimension of power that refers to the shaping of consensus is therefore encompassed in the discourse analytical approach used to answer the first research question.

In turn, the conception of power adopted in this section is limited to actual behaviour in decision-making, a perspective to which the behavioural aspects of the pluralist and Barach and Baratz's approaches are still relevant. The question of 'who prevails' is comparable to that of 'who drives' proposed in this thesis' second research question – the difference between them being on the degree of conflict they assume, an issue that will be discussed later. In this perspective, power is seen as exercised, over both actual and potential policy issues, and as involving conflicts over interests understood as preferences or grievances. The

[13] Lukes (2005, p. 9) in fact emphasizes the prominence of Gramsci's notion of hegemony in the historical context in which *Power: A Radical View* was written.

focus therefore is on the exercise of power in specific instances of policy-making. The struggles within this level of decision-making are comparable to those that Haugaard, drawing on Foucault, has termed 'shallow' conflicts, i.e. ''local' struggles which take place within a regime of power and truth production' (Haugaard, 2002, p. 186). Deeper struggles about this regime are addressed in the discursive dimension of the analytical framework. In fact, although this 'shallow' level of power has been the object of study of much of the modernist tradition on power stretching from Hobbes to Lukes (Clegg, 1989), attention to it does not necessarily conflict with the adoption of alternative conceptions of power that incorporate for instance discourse theory. As Clegg, who developed a theoretical framework that sought to combine both approaches, has stated, '[r]estricted to its appropriate context of analysis and reformulated accordingly, there is much to recommend the careful analysis of causal power, in agency terms, of particular episodes' (1989, p. 187). The consideration of agency in the exercise of power, however, points at a key dimension in debates on power: the relationship between structure and agency.

3.2.2 The role of agency and structure in the exercise of power

A discussion on the relationship between structure and agency can in fact help to identify who or what is understood to exercise power in this approach. As the concept of power, the long-standing debate on structure and agency is central to the social sciences and refers to the degree to which human behaviour is determined by individual action or social structure. Both of them are generally deemed relevant, although different approaches dissent on the point at which structural determinism gives way to agency.[14] Simply put it, social structures on the one hand frame social relations in a manner that determine behaviour and partly shape outcomes whilst, on the other, actors are able to exercise agency to a certain extent. For instance, the configuration of the state at the same time constraints and enables the exercise of power by social actors. Government departments are assigned a number of competences that enable them to mobilize resources to carry out policy in certain domains, while other actors are prevented from doing so. However, this capacity does not fully determine action. Decisions need to be made in order to initiate the development of policy, proceed in a certain

[14] Among the classic works relevant to the power debate that lean toward structural determinism are Parsons (1967) and Poulantzas (1973, 2000), whereas causal notions of power such as Dahls' (2005) and Bachrach and Baratz's (1970) tend to give primacy to agency. Theories that adopt a middle ground have been developed by Clegg (1989) and Haugaard (1997). Giddens' (1984) structuration theory sought to overcome the dualism of agency and structure although, according to Clegg (1989, p. 140), the agency perspective remains dominant in it.

direction, prioritize investments, etc. Moreover, the existence of negotiations and agreements in political processes also indicate that agency is important in producing policy.

The difficulty lies in assigning power to structure and agency. Should power refer to the constraining and enabling characteristics of structure? Should its conception rather be limited to agency? The answer to this problem obviously varies according to the adopted approach; since the focus here is on particular episodes of policy-making, a starting point is to consider the exercise of power as an indication of agency: agency is present when a change is caused in the course of events. Lukes (2005), nevertheless, pointed out the difficulties in determining the limit between structural determination and the exercise of power, but he also advanced a useful criterion to overcome them: 'My claim [...] is that to identify a given process as an 'exercise of power', rather than as a case of structural determination, is to assume that it is *in the exerciser's or exercisers' power* to act differently' (2005, p. 57, original emphasis). According to this view, then, the possibility of having acted differently indicates the exercise of power and hence of agency. For instance, the allocation of a certain amount of investment to a project by a government department, the production of a technical report by an expert or group of experts, or the brokering of an agreement between government officials, are all evidence of agency as the actors did not need to behave in such a way. This implies that, as Clegg (1989, p. 188) has argued, agency is not limited to individuals but may assume a collective form. The conceptualization of actors in this thesis hence involves both individuals and organizations.

Nevertheless, the focus on agency should not entail dismissing the role of structure in the exercise of power. Naturally, this exercise will be constrained and enabled by certain structural relations. While the assignment of competences, for instance, facilitates government action in certain domains, this cannot – as long as rules are abided by – exceed the scope of these competences.[15] This introduces the distinction between power as exercised and power as a capacity, one of the central themes in conceptualizations on power. The former, as argued above, is linked to agency, while the latter refers to an existing condition that bears a certain relation to structure. Wrong (1995, p. 6) in fact distinguished between 'episodic power', which refers to specific behavioural events, and 'dispositional power', which refers to the latent capacity to exercise the former. This distinction was further adopted by Clegg (1989) to develop his theoretical framework on power, which clarified the

[15] This view of structure slightly differs with Giddens's (1984), which stated that structure exists when reproduced by agency. The notion adopted in this thesis is closer to Clegg's: 'The criterion of structure is not that there are individuals constituting it through their instantiations but that relations between individuals and other forms of collective agency are constituted in relatively enduring ways which routinely constrain and enable differential opportunities for action and inaction on the part of those agencies' (Clegg, 1989, p. 145).

relationship between agency, structure, and the exercise and disposition of power. This framework consists of three different 'circuits of power' (at the levels of agency, social interaction, and system integration) that correspond, respectively, with episodic power, dispositional power, and facilitative power. To the pluralists' view of power as exercised (episodic power) and Wrong's (1995) conception of power as a capacity (dispositional power), he added Parson's (1967) notion of power as facilitating the production of the norms at the roots of social order and the achievement of collective goals (facilitative power). In this perspective, facilitative power confers certain dispositional powers to agents, who in turn may episodically exercise this capacity. Thus, the exercise of power does not occur in a vacuum and hence it is necessary to consider the structural dimension in order to understand it.

However, the emphasis in this dimension of the analytical framework is on episodic power or, in Clegg's (1989) terms, 'episodic agency power'. It seeks to aid the understanding of the *actual* influence of *actors* on the development of transnational transport infrastructure. Therefore, it does not attempt to analyze the influence of structural conditions on the exercise of power or vice versa. Similarly, it is not concerned with the power struggles that take place at Clegg's (1989) levels of social and system integration. The conflicts inherent in the power structure of society such as the distribution of competences favouring certain actors at the expense of others, while undoubtedly important, are therefore not addressed – or, more precisely, they are addressed to the extent they are expressed through specific practices. In fact, a focus on the exercise of power, rather than on power as a capacity, in transnational transport infrastructure policy-making is arguably a more adequate approach due to the complexity of the policy-making environment in the EU, which makes an abstract understanding of power a very complex task. In short, although structural elements must be considered in the analysis, this is in order to understand its actual focus, i.e. the exercise of power.

3.2.3 Episodic agency power: an operationalization

Once defined the scope of power and its relationship with agency, the last step is to operationalize the term in order to analyze how it is exercised. It is firstly necessary to propose a definition of power. The diverse ways in which power has been defined do in fact reflect different views on the concept and in turn determine different implications for the analysis. Let's consider, for instance, Dahl's classic definition of power: '*A* has power over *B*

to the extent that he can get *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do' (Dahl, 1957, pp. 202–203, original emphasis). Power is here understood as a capacity ('he *can* get'),[16] and, importantly, as involving a relationship of domination ('power *over*'). The distinction between 'power over' and 'power to', sometimes conceptualized as between conflictual power and consensual power, is in fact key in the literature on power (see Clegg et al., 2006, Chapter 7; Göhler, 2009). In terms of this research, it has been noted that power is considered as exercised, rather than as a capacity, and as related to agency when events could have occurred otherwise. Accordingly, *power is defined here as the exerting of non-predetermined influence on the development of policy by an individual or collective agency*. The emphasis is therefore on 'power to' influence policy, although it may involve 'power over' other actors – the extent to which it does so depends not only on the existence of a conflict of preferences, but also on the degree the exercise of power is considered legitimate.[17]

Power as conceived here can in turn be exercised in a variety of forms. Based on a first distinction developed by Bachrach and Baratz (1963), a number of authors have worked with different typologies of power (notably, Allen, 2003; Lukes, 2005; Wrong, 1995). These classifications have typically included the modes of coercion, authority, force, manipulation, and persuasion, but also others such as domination and seduction (see Allen, 2003). Although many of these distinctions have not been retained in contemporary debates (Haugaard, 2002, p. 27), attention to the modes through which power is exercised is relevant for a more nuanced understanding of this process and its democratic nature. In this respect, for the objectives of this research a categorization of a limited number of modes of power was developed based on the works cited above. They involve: *authority* and *domination*, which work through recognition and submission, respectively;[18] *coercion*, which works through the threat of force or of sanction; *manipulation*, which works through concealment of intent or of information; and *persuasion*, which involves a certain degree of reciprocity

[16] However, later in the same article Dahl emphasized the exercise of power in describing his view of the concept: 'it seemed to involve a successful attempt by *A* to get *a* to do something he would not otherwise do' (Dahl, 1957, p. 204, original emphasis). As Lukes (2005, p. 17) notes, this view is more consistent with the pluralists' focus on power as exercised.

[17] The notion of 'power to' or consensual power, primarily associated with Parsons (1967), is in fact likely to be relevant when analyzing policy-making as state action presupposes a certain level of legitimacy in order to effectively achieve particular goals in complex social systems.

[18] The difference between authority and domination is that, as opposed to the latter, the former is commonly regarded as legitimate. Although Clegg (1989, pp. 213–215) preferred to use the term domination since he was concerned with the processes whereby authority may be granted, in this research this distinction is kept since recognition or not of authority may be an important factor in determining policy development.

and includes inducement and negotiation.[19] Thus, the fact that a state actor resorts to the use of persuasion instead of authority in the achievement of a certain policy outcome may indicate that its capacity to ensure this outcome may be insufficient. Nevertheless, modes of power are normally found in temporary combinations (Wrong, 1995) and in any case there is not a conclusive, agreed categorization of them; hence, it is adequate to use this classification as a reference to be validated and possibly modified through empirical analysis.

Finally, the operationalization of an episodic conception of 'power' would not be complete without a clarification of how structural conditions should be considered in the analysis. Within the circuit of episodic power, Clegg (1989) drew on Harré and Madden (1975) and Benton (1981) to argue that agencies' power is realized through the organization of 'standing conditions', which involve means and resources: 'Agencies possess varying control of resources which they have varying means of effectively utilizing in order to produce consequential outcomes for their own and others' agency' (Clegg, 1989, p. 215). The concept of standing conditions thus provides the link with – but does not exhaust – the notion of structure.[20] Means here are broadly understood as rules that allow the mobilization of different types of resources, such as financial, human, and knowledge resources. For instance, then, the exercise of power that a certain investment in infrastructure entails is grounded on the deployment of financial resources acquired and mobilized through rules on taxation and the allocation of competences. Means thus permit the differential control of resources, so that specific actors are better positioned to achieve certain outcomes than others. Attention to the means and resources through which power is exercised is therefore essential in order to appropriately understand episodic power.

Analysis must therefore concentrate on finding evidence of different modes of episodic agency power, as defined above, in the policy process, and the means and resources through which it is realized. It thus involves the searching for causal relationships between the behaviour of actors and changes in the policy process. Indeed, the notion of causality has been central to the main tradition in the study of power originating in Hobbes (Clegg, 1989). As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the aim is to provide an explanation of the events that led to a certain policy outcome. Evidence to demonstrate causal relationships requires

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[19] Allen's (2003) notion of seduction has been highlighted by Haugaard (2013) as a prescient contribution and a more adequate conceptual tool than 'false consciousness' to address Lukes' (2005) third dimension of power. However, it is considered that the discursive approach provides a more sound and detailed theoretical basis to examine this type of power and hence seduction is not addressed here.

[20] The power relations fixing and governing these standing conditions correspond in turn to other circuits of power (Clegg, 1989, p. 125).

the use of diverse sources: interviews with key actors in the policy process may be a key source of evidence due to their insights into this process; however, as it will explained in the next chapter, they need to be complemented by other sources such as newspaper articles and official documents.

In short, this section has developed a conceptualization of power that permits the analysis of the role of actors in the development of transport infrastructure policy. It first limited the scope of the term as understood through behaviour, that is, through its exercise in specific instances. Secondly, it clarified the importance of structure and agency by determining that this exercise of power is manifested through the non-predetermined action of individual or collective agency. Structure is important as it provides the conditions for the exercise of power, but in this approach it is relevant to the extent that it is reproduced in practice. This results in an understanding of power comparable to Clegg's (1989) episodic agency power, which operates in a reasonably bounded level but is linked to other levels (of social and system integration) through complex circuits of power. Finally, this term was operationalized by, first, developing a definition of the term based on the previous two points, second, by proposing a typology of modes through which power is exercised, and, third, by specifying the manner structural conditions are to be included in the analysis. The task is then to search for an explanation of the policy process that clarifies which actors have been more influential in the development of policy and the means through which they did so. This template, together with the discursive approach proposed in the previous section, constitute the framework to analyze transnational HSR policy-making. The next section seeks to spatialize this framework by drawing on human geography debates on the nature of space and its relationship with the concepts of discourse and power.

3.3 The spatiality of policy-making

Chapter 2 introduced how the particular spatiality of transnational HSR infrastructure involved, first, a tension between the spatial relations it facilitates and the conventional political spaces that are meant to regulate them and, second, a variety of reactions from political actors. In order to better understand these implications and overcome simplistic notions of space, it was argued that a spatialized account of transnational infrastructure policy-making was required. This approach is in line with the 'spatial turn' in the social sciences, which has emphasized the centrality of space in the understanding of social relations (Warf and Arias, 2009) and, in particular, has generated a variety of perspectives in the study of the geography of state power (Brenner et al., 2003; Lefebvre, 2003). In terms of

the latter, the focus on space required problematizing the territoriality of the modern state and overcoming what Agnew (1994), referring to international relations theory, has appropriately termed the 'territorial trap' and which is defined by three geographical assumptions: the reification of territorial states as fixed units of sovereign space; the use of the domestic/foreign polarity; and the consideration of territorial states as 'containers' of society. The questioning of these three assumptions requires as a first step the clarification of the nature of the 'space' that is being analyzed. In this respect, this section firstly engages with debates on scalar and relational approaches to space in order to provide a conceptual basis to approach the spatiality of policy-making. Subsequently, the section applies this conceptualization to the two dimensions of discourse and power, each of them object of important academic attention from geographical perspectives. This application results in complementing the framework proposed in the previous two sections for the analysis of discourse and power.

3.3.1 A conceptualization: between relationality and scale

Placing space at the centre of scholarly inquiry does not necessarily mean the dismissal of territorial or scalar forms of state and non-state power, but their problematization. The nation-state may still play a key role in developing transnational transport infrastructure, but a spatially sensitive approach requires recognizing its contingency and ascertaining the importance of other spaces, including those that transect its borders. In this regard, the conceptualization of the spatiality of social processes has commonly revolved around two broad perspectives. One of them approaches the understanding of social life through a scalar lens; the other one addresses it in terms of the relations that constitute it.

The first approach encompasses contributions from what has been termed 'new political economy of scale' (Jessop, 2002, p. 179; Keil and Mahon, 2009), which is concerned with the changing scalar organization of political and economic life. In this perspective, scale is considered as socially constructed through socio-political struggles and in turn contributing to constitute social, economic, and political relations (Delaney and Leitner, 1997; Marston, 2000). This view on scale places emphasis on the process through which scale is constructed and the conflicts involved in it. As actors engage in struggles to reshape the scalar configuration of social interaction to achieve specific goals, they are involved in a 'politics of scale' that may lead to the establishment of new temporary 'scalar fixes' (Brenner, 1998; Smith, 2003). 'Scale', as Swyngedouw has claimed, 'is hereby fundamental as it embodies a temporal compromise, solidifies existing power relationships, regulates forms of cooperation, and defines competitive and other power strategies' (1997, p. 147). However,

scale does not necessarily involve spatial continuity and boundedness. This notion is partly clarified by Cox's (1998, p. 2) distinction between 'spaces of dependence' ('defined by those more-or-less localized social relations upon which we depend for the realization of essential interests and for which there are no substitutes elsewhere') and 'spaces of engagement' (the spaces 'in which securing a space of dependence unfolds'). Cox (1998) argued that, since spaces of engagement are defined by networks of association, the scales of political activity are better conceptualized as networked rather than in areal terms.

The emphasis of networks is further developed by the second approach, which seeks to transcend scalar understandings of space through an emphasis on the interrelations that traverse it. This more recent approach, commonly called 'relational' or 'topological',[21] understands space as constituted through the processes and practices that take place across it (key contributions are Allen et al., 1998; Amin, 2002, 2004; Massey, 2005; Murdoch, 2006). As Massey (2005, p. 9) concisely put it, space is considered in this approach as the product of interrelations, as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity, and as an open system, always under construction. Specific spaces or places, such as regions or cities, are then provisional stabilizations – 'permanences', in Harvey's (1996, p. 261) terms – of these relations: 'Places now can be seen as the embodiment of virtual or immanent forces, and as the temporary spatiotemporalisation of associational networks of different length and duration' (Amin, 2002, p. 391). Fundamentally, the consideration of networked relations challenges the integrity of scalar and territorial forms of social organization (Amin, 2002, p. 395), which does not just involve that relations cross-cut scalar borders so that, for instance, the global penetrates the local, but that both the global and the local are mutually constituted (Massey, 2005, p. 184). This has clear implications for the understanding of politics, as it questions the adequacy of concepts based on a scalar and hierarchical logic such as multi-level governance and subsidiarity (Allen and Cochrane, 2007, pp. 1166–1167; Faludi, 2013). A relational approach sees instead politics as articulated through policy networks of different spatialities (e.g. Allen and Cochrane, 2007, 2010). Place, instead of being associated to local politics, is understood as a site where politics of different reach (local, national, global, etc.) are juxtaposed (Amin, 2002, p. 397, 2004).

[21] The terms 'relational' and 'topological' have been used in human geography to overcome a territorial and scalar understanding of space. While both are concerned with interconnections between points across space, topology emphasizes spatial properties and relationships regardless of spatial shape and is usually contrasted with topography, which studies the features of surfaces, such as shape and distances (see for instance the November 2011 issue of *Dialogues in Human Geography* and Martin and Secor, 2013). Since, as it will be argued below, the maintenance of a certain notion of distance is relevant for the understanding of the spatiality of policy-making, the use of the term 'relational' is preferred here. Nevertheless, in the subsection on power and space the term 'topological' will be used as, following Allen's (2011, 2003) lead, it conveys more accurately the workings of power through space.

There has been significant debate about the spatiality of social relations and whether space should be viewed in scalar or relational terms.[22] However, a review of this diverse body of contributions indicates that in fact both approaches need not be incompatible. Some of the key authors on a relational approach have recognized the importance of scale in determining spatial limits of authority or control and its use for political mobilization; their aim was not to question scalar politics but to overcome the limits of scalar thinking (Allen and Cochrane, 2007, p. 1167; Amin, 2002, p. 396). Other authors, discussing the conceptualization of the region, espouse a 'moderate relationalism' (Jones, 2009) that advocates overcoming the understanding of scale and relationality in binary terms (Jones and Macleod, 2004; MacLeod and Jones, 2007). From an international political economy perspective, Sum (2003) has analyzed the proliferation of networked, trans-border political spaces across East Asia, but in relation to existing scales of regulation and indeed involving central-local, trans-national, and trans-local tensions related to a politics of scale. This relationship between scales and networks has in fact been theoretically addressed by Jessop et al. (2008) and Leitner et al. (2008), who have developed frameworks for the understanding of socio-spatial relations that recognize their polymorphism, i.e. their organization in multiple forms and dimensions, including scales and networks. Ultimately, as Varró and Lagendijk (2012) argue, a key source of disagreement in the scale/relations debate has been the different understandings of relationality: relational approaches interpret it as ontological, that is as constitutive of space, whereas scalar or territorial perspectives see relationality in terms of the empirical existence of relations.

In line with this, *this research adopts an approach that understands space as constituted relationally but which, depending on the characteristics of the actual, existing relations, can be assigned scalar features*. This approach permits seeing some of the studies reviewed in Section 2.3.2 in a slightly different light. Prytherch's (2010) study on Catalan regionalism shows how networked spatial relations and geographical scale are compatible and indeed may be co-implicated in the social construction of regions. Yet the clearest illustration of the potential of adopting such a spatially-nuanced approach may be drawn from Albrechts and Coppens' (2003) study on the development of Brussels' high-speed rail station. Although retaining a multi-level vocabulary, they identified conflicting networks of actors discursively and materially related to different types of space (the 'space of flows' and

[22] This debate consists of a number of related debates, which mainly involve the conceptualization of the region (Allen et al., 1998; MacLeod and Jones, 2007; Varró and Lagendijk, 2012), the ontology of space (Jones, 2009; Marston et al., 2005), the spatiality of sociospatial relations (Jessop et al., 2008; Leitner et al., 2008), and the spatiality of Europe (Axford, 2006; Paasi, 2001). The objective here is to selectively draw on these debates to obtain a valid conceptualization of the spatiality of politics that responds to the aims of this research.

the ‘space of places’). From a scale-sensitive relational approach this study points at the conflict not between levels (European and local) but between actors (those related to the ‘space of flows’ and those to the ‘space of places’) on space, in this instance the urban environment.[23] The spatiality of politics is therefore understood as resulting from the struggles between actors that through their material or discursive practices are related to certain, more or less contiguous and bounded, spaces. Scale, defined as a geographical frame of reference for political action, is thus constituted through relations – and vice versa, when it in turn facilitates or constrains these. As Murdoch has claimed with regard to a relational approach, ‘scale becomes distance, or, more accurately, the ‘length of relation’. Places are bound to one another relationally: the significance and composition of the relations defines the significance of scale’ (2006, p. 21).

The task is then to identify the spatiality of the relations through which transnational infrastructure policy-making is carried out and the extent to which scalar frames play a role in them. If an understanding of politics involving discrete territorial units of sovereign power can be assimilated to the frictions between tectonic plates, an adequate representation that does not fall either into a ‘multi-level trap’ but is in accordance with the above conceptualization of the spatiality of politics could be that of turbulences in fluids. Tensions here are still horizontal, but between different groups of actors that penetrate each other in complex patterns and to different degrees, conforming political spaces that are not territorial but porous, discontinuous and heterogeneous. Notwithstanding this complexity, it is still possible to identify certain areas or scales where a specific set of actors predominates and has not been significantly influenced by others. Forcing the metaphor, the outcomes of the struggles over space can be seeing as adopting two forms: the co-option of fluid particles in order to gain (discursive) dominance and the displacement of ‘other’ particles in order to secure actual influence (episodic power) over space. The remainder of this section applies this understanding of the spatiality of politics to the previously developed analytical framework on discourse and power.

3.3.2 A spatialization of Hajer’s discourse analytical approach

Although the previous chapter noted that several authors had applied a discursive approach to the analysis of spatial planning or policy, their problematization of space has generally

[23] This questions the dominant view of transnational infrastructure development as involving a tension between the effective development of a *trans-European* network and the legitimacy of *subnational and national* interests.

been insufficient. Both Hajer (2000) and Peters (2003a), although focusing on transnational infrastructure planning as the object of analysis and using the same discourse analytical framework as this research, did not adequately addressed the spatiality of this process. Peters (2003a) focused on TEN-T policy and thus her analysis was limited to the EU level of policy-making, while Hajer (2000), although addressing a wider political environment, retained an imaginary of multiple levels of government. A significant exception is Jensen and Richardson, who have sought to integrate discourse and socio-spatial relations in what they termed a cultural sociology of space (Jensen, 1997; Jensen and Richardson, 2004; Richardson and Jensen, 2003). However, these relations are conceptualized as unfolding at discrete spatial scales, an approach that as previously discussed may miss more complex spatialities. In this regard, this subsection seeks to spatialize Hajer's (1995) discourse analytical approach by addressing each of its three foci of analysis (story-lines, discourse coalitions, and discursive practices) through the conceptualization of the spatiality of policy-making developed above.

In terms of the first focus of analysis, representations of space and their relationship with political processes have been variously addressed in the literature,[24] but the concern at this point is not with the presence of space in discourse (i.e. the representations and imaginaries of particular spaces such as Europe, a city, or a nation-state), which should be addressed through the discourse analytical approach. Space is relevant here in terms of the spatiality of discourse; in other words, the qualities of the spaces present in the terms of the discourse. Therefore, the spatialization of a story-line involves considering the spaces it explicitly or implicitly refers to and their relational characteristics. In this respect, a first type of space to be considered is what I propose to call a *space of concern*, formed by the geographical basis of an actor's discursively constituted interests. The realization of such interests may in turn depend upon the establishment of a certain set of relations, which define what I term a *space of reliance*.[25] Thus, for instance, the discourse practiced by a nation-state minister responsible for railway development is likely to have as a space of concern the nation-state territory and as a space of reliance that one defined by transnational

[24] These representations have been termed, according to different perspectives, imaginative geographies (Gregory, 1995; Said, 2003), geographical imaginaries (Watts, 1999), geographical or geopolitical imaginations (Agnew, 2003; Gregory, 1994; Mansvelt Beck, 2006); and spatial policy discourses (Richardson and Jensen, 2003).

[25] The definition of both spaces was inspired by Cox's (1998) 'spaces of dependence' and 'spaces of engagement', but there are important differences between both conceptualizations. Cox's definition of spaces of dependence is similar to that of spaces of reliance, although the latter need not be place-specific; in fact, they often stretch beyond the spaces of concern. Furthermore, Cox's spaces of engagement refer to the spatiality of politics (to 'networks of association') and hence they are not relevant in terms of the content of discourse. The essential difference between both sets of spaces lies indeed in the discursive basis of the spaces of concern and of reliance.

HSR links if they are expected to derive benefits for the national economy. Similarly, a business organization represents the interests of specific businesses usually identified according to a spatial – normally scalar – criterion, which defines its space of concern, while its space of reliance may also be of a trans-border reach (for instance a European or global economy). The scalar or relational nature of these spaces is not predetermined, although arguably spaces of concern may typically appear as defined in scalar terms (e.g. the nation-state space) and spaces of reliance in relational terms (e.g. functional flows).

In turn, discourse coalitions can also be understood spatially. In the same manner as Cox's (1998) spaces of engagement, as networks of actors their spatiality is better conceptualized as networked. This certainly conflicts with Hajer's view of a transnational policy discourse being 'shared by policy-makers at different levels of government' (2000, p. 135). Indeed, this research's approach requires seeing actors, instead of as being allocated to vertical levels of government or governance, as forming horizontal networks of different spatial reach. A necessary step is to assign a spatiality to the members of the coalition, which can encompass from European Commission officials to localized business associations. A possibility is to do so by determining what could be termed the spatial pre-conditions of these members (i.e. where they are based and/or space of jurisdiction, if any). This obviously entails certain difficulties since within the varied membership of discourse coalitions not all the actors can be associated to space unambiguously (e.g. technical experts or environmental groups). Therefore, and in line with the discourse approach adopted in this thesis, the ascertainment of the spatiality of coalitions will be done according to the content of discourse as this is practiced i.e. in terms of the spaces of concern and reliance identified by the researcher in actors' utterances.

A final but key element of the discourse analytical approach are the practices through which discourse is produced, reproduced, and transformed. A starting point to the spatialization of these practices is Linnros and Hallin's (2001) term *discursive arenas*, proposed in their analysis of the environmental conflict surrounding the Øresund link to refer to the spaces where discourse is practiced. Discursive arenas may encompass a wide variety of spaces, from formal state institutions to informal networks, including as well public spaces and the media. Differential access to these arenas influences discourse production as some of them are likely to be more influential in this process (e.g. state institutions and the media). Linnros and Hallin's (2001) sought to emphasize the fact that discursive practices always take place in space, but a further important issue is the degree to which they influence the production of discourse by framing it spatially. For instance, a regional parliament, a government ministry, or a media outlet addressing a certain space will likely frame discursive practices according to a certain scale of reference. In short, discursive arenas are

important in terms of both mediating access to discourse production and influencing the spatiality of discourse.

The discourse analytical approach proposed in a previous section can thus be spatialized by focusing on the content of the discourse, the coalitions that sustain it, and the practices through which it is produced. Thus, analysis must identify the spatiality of the terms of discourse in terms of the underlying spaces of concern and of reliance, assign discourse coalitions a certain spatiality according to that of the story-lines they adhere to, and identify how the arenas where discourse is practiced influence its production, reproduction, and transformation by limiting the access to and framing the spatiality of this process. Nevertheless, it is likely that the utterances of actors within a same discourse coalition will present some divergences in their spatiality. For instance, actors with in principle different spaces of concern such as a subnational or national government and a European institution may still converge around a single discourse. The degree to which these differences matter in terms of holding the coalition together is therefore important, and hence it is necessary to ascertain in which manner the spatiality of discourse is relevant to the formation of discourse coalitions on spatial policy issues.

3.3.3 A topological understanding of the exercise of power

The section on power operationalized this term as the episodic influence exercised by an agency in specific forms and through the organization of means and resources. A useful starting point to spatialize this notion of power is the standing conditions that constrain and facilitate the exercise of power, since one of the ways they are unevenly distributed is spatially. For instance, state actors will have certain means to develop policy within a certain space defined in scalar terms. According to the literature reviewed in the previous chapter, it is likely that nation-states will have a dominant capacity to control and mobilize resources in order to produce certain policy outcomes within the nation-state territory. Actors worse positioned in this regard may seek to reorganize themselves at a different scale in order to achieve more influence, a process that scalar approaches have conceptualized as ‘jumping scales’ (Smith, 1992, 2003) or the construction of ‘spaces of engagement’ (Cox, 1998). However, a relational approach to the spatiality of policy-making seems to require a conceptualization that is less concerned with scalar frames of political activity than with the actual workings of power on space.

In this respect, Allen’s work on the relationship between power and space is particularly valuable (Allen, 2003, but also 2004, 2009a, 2009b, 2011). He shares with this research’s approach the concern with power as exercised and with the various modes (authority,

coercion, etc.) through which this happens, but he adds a fundamental two-fold claim: that power and space are inherently linked and that different modalities of power work through distinct spatial relations (Allen, 2003, pp. 2–3). He conceptualizes power as 'a relational effect of social interaction' (Allen, 2003, p. 2), which involves that rather than being an attribute that can be possessed it is always constituted in space and time (Allen, 2003, p. 8). This constitution in turn depends on the mode of power that is being exercised; for instance, Allen (2003, pp. 149–150) argues that coercion tends to be more effective in proximity, whereas manipulation works better at a distance. The resulting spatiality of power consists of 'the different ways in which relations of proximity and presence play across the gap between here and there to bring the far-off within reach, yet for others make the nearby seem closed off and distant' (Allen, 2003, p. 12). Thus, this *conceptualization of power as taking place through relations of proximity and reach* configures a topological landscape that challenges topographical understandings of power based on fixed distances and well-defined proximities (Allen, 2009a, 2011; Allen and Cochrane, 2010). Such a landscape is configured, instead of by the distances between points, by the relations between them, so that distant points may become close and, conversely, proximate points may become remote.

The application of this perspective to transnational infrastructure planning results in a view of the spatiality of power radically different from one resulting from a scalar approach. Instead of being formed by nested or even overlapping scales of extensive power, the resulting landscape is composed of diverse power relations of different reach and intensity, forming complex spatial patterns that resemble the aforementioned turbulence metaphor. Thus, institutions commonly considered legitimate such as the nation-state executive may exert its power in distant places through its authority,[26] whereas other actors more proximate to the site of the infrastructure (e.g. a community organization or a subnational government) may be unable to exercise such a direct influence over it and might therefore resort to other modes of power (e.g. persuasion). Importantly, these geographies of power involve that actors might need to reach to distant others in order to influence the course of events, seeking influence through practices of proximity and reach rather than through changing the scale of action. Furthermore, these actors do not necessarily act individually; in fact, the attempt to reach other actors and achieve leverage may involve the creation of networks of actors. This notion is similar to Cox's (1998) 'spaces of engagement', although the emphasis here is on the relations not so much between scales but across space. According to the previously discussed notion of agency, as long as their behaviour is not pre-determined these networks also constitute a form of agency.

[26] Note however Allen's (2003, p.148) suggestion that authority becomes less effective with distance.

This discussion suggests that although power may be seen relationally, it is also linked to certain spatial fixities. In this regard, and in a similar way to discursive arenas, I propose the use of the term *power arena* to refer to those spaces through which power is exercised and where power struggles take place. These too include state institutions, the media, public spaces, and informal networks, and in this respect they may overlap with discursive arenas. A state legislature, for instance, is an arena where legislation is enacted and different types of initiatives are taken, but it is also a site of argumentation that may certainly influence discourse production and transformation. The importance of this notion of power arena is illustrated by the popular conflation of the city of Brussels and the European Union. Lobbying in Brussels by national and subnational actors does not simply entail 'jumping scales' to the EU, but reaching to that site involved in the exercise of power (on this notion, see also Allen and Cochrane, 2010). In any case, these arenas need not be place-specific but can also adopt a networked form, such as the media or informal networks. The existence of these spaces attests to the existence of certain means and resources that pre-condition the exercise of power. However, rather than seeing them as spaces where power – as a capacity – is held, the conceptualization of power developed previously suggests that it is more appropriate to consider them as sites where the use of these means and resources is temporarily fixed.[27] The effective exercise of power thus depends on the means and resources available to agencies and, importantly, on their access to these arenas.

In short, a spatialization of power relations that is in line with a relational approach to space has been proposed by adopting a topological view of power that is concerned with the actual exercise of power across space. According to this perspective, power is a relational practice that is inherently spatial and works differently according to the mode it adopts when exercised. By linking distant points and separating proximate ones, it distorts topographical understandings of space and constitutes a 'turbulent' spatiality where power relations of diverse reach and intensity intermingle in complex patterns. In particular, the term 'power arena' has been proposed to refer to those spaces through which power is exercised. Agency, either in the form of individuals, organizations, or networks of actors, seeks to achieve influence in the policy process through access to these arenas. Thus, *rather than a 'politics of scale', a notion more attuned to a topological understanding of power would be that of a 'politics of reach'*. Such a politics would not involve 'jumping scales' but, following Allen and Cochrane (2010, p. 1075), *reaching into* the politics of certain spaces, *drawing within close reach* influential actors, and *reaching out* beyond a space to shape events within it.

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[27] This notion is informed by Allen (2003, pp. 113–116), who argued that, rather than considering power as centralized in specific sites, it is resources that should be seen as territorially embedded – and subsequently mobilized through networked relationships.

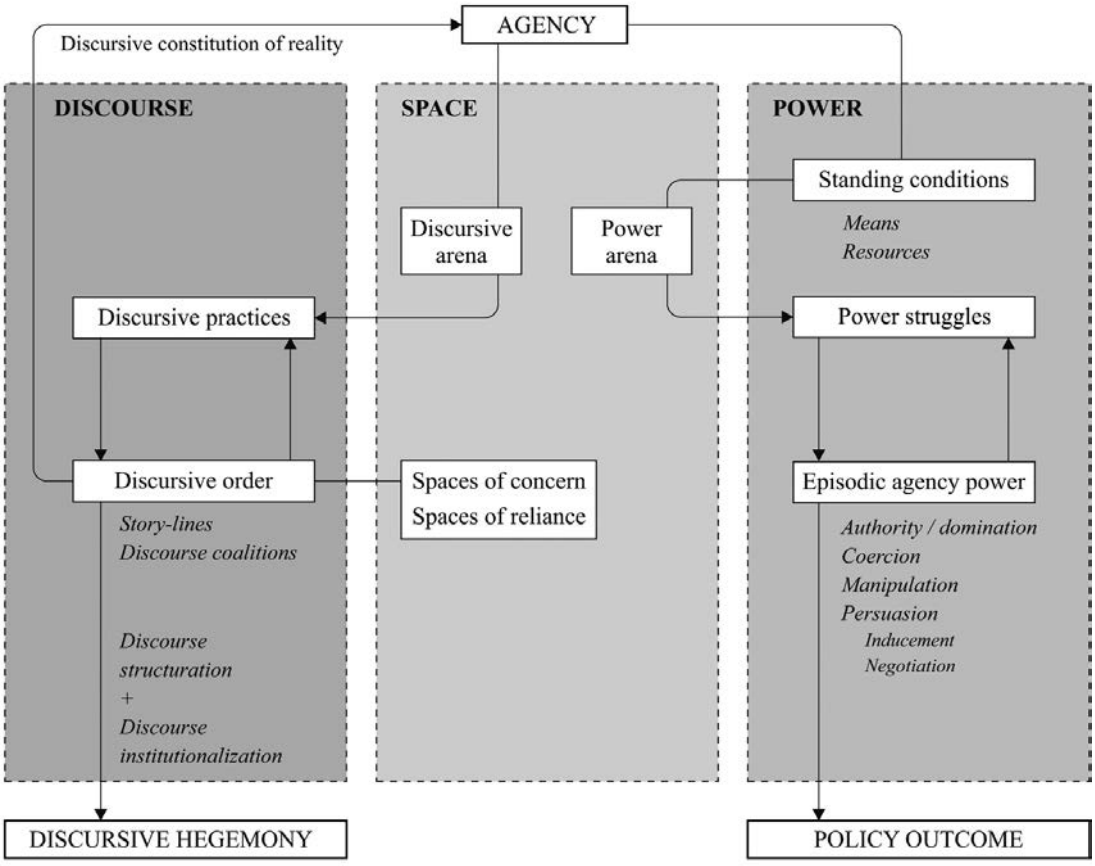
To summarize, the spatialization of the discourse and power analytical approaches has involved three fundamental steps. The first one has been to develop a conceptualization of the spatiality of policy-making that would inform the following two steps. Space was defined as constituted relationally and as differently related to scale depending on the spatiality of actual relations. Policy-making was thus seen as involving tensions between forces on space that compete for prevalence and in some cases define more or less porous scalar frames. According to this conception, the section secondly proposed a spatialization of the three foci of analysis of the discourse analytical approach. Story-lines – or, more generally, the content of discourse – may explicitly or implicitly refer to what was termed 'spaces of concern' and 'spaces of reliance', which in turn define the spatiality of discourse coalitions. Linnros and Hallin's (2001) concept of 'discursive arena' was included to refer to those spaces where discourse is practiced. Finally, the third step proposed the adoption of a topological understanding of power, drawing on Allen's (2003) novel work on the spatiality of power. Mirroring discursive arenas, the term 'power arena' was also proposed to define the spaces that indicate a concentration in the use of means and resources. All in all, the section sought to develop a framework to address the third research question of this research, yet the intention is also to provide a spatially-sensitive approach to the understanding of policy-making by supplementing discourse and power analytical approaches. The next section will draw together the three dimensions of discourse, power, and space in order to succinctly present the adopted analytical framework.

3.4 Conclusion: a three-dimensional analytical framework

This chapter sought to develop an analytical framework to systematically and rigorously address the research questions mentioned in Chapter 2 and, more generally, the examination of transnational transport infrastructure policy-making. This framework is synthesized in Figure 1. It is based first on Hajer's (1995) discourse analytical approach proposed for the study of environmental politics, which seeks to ascertain how a particular understanding of reality gains dominance at the expense of others, which become marginalized. In order to do so, empirical analysis must focus on the content of discourse, including the story-lines mobilized by actors, the discourse coalitions formed around such story-lines, and the practices through which discourse is produced, reproduced, and transformed. The second cornerstone of the analytical framework focuses on the notion of power, which, drawing mainly on Clegg (1989) but also on other key contributors such as Lukes (2005) and Bachrach and Baratz (1963), is conceptualized as being exercised in specific instances by an

individual or collective agency. The analysis thus needs to gather evidence of the actual exercise of power, taking into consideration both the modes through which this happens and the means and resources available to actors. Finally, the analytical framework addresses the spatial dimension of policy-making. It first proposes a relational ontology of space that is sensitive to scalar configurations in order to subsequently spatialize the discourse and power analytical approaches. On the one hand, it proposes the identification of 'spaces of concern' and 'spaces of reliance' in the content of the discourses practised by actors and the examination of their role in the formation of story-lines and their related discourse coalitions; on the other hand, it adopts a topological approach to power developed by Allen (2003) to conceptualize the relationship between power and space. In both cases, the concept of – discursive and power – arenas is proposed to refer to those spaces where discourse is practiced and from where power is exercised.

Figure 1. Analytical framework



The spatialization of the discourse and power analytical approaches points at the relationships between the three dimensions of the framework through the activity of agencies, be they individuals, organizations or networks of association. By engaging in discursive practices, actors shape their understanding of the transport problem and their own

interests in the issue. This discursive constitution in turn influences their behaviour when engaging in power struggles to produce a policy outcome that fulfils these interests. Fundamentally, the main assumption is that both the production of discourse and the exercise of power occur through space, in particular through the mediation of discursive and power arenas. By accessing them, actors endeavour to gain prevalence in both shaping and reproducing the discursive order and the actual exercise of power. The combined influence at these two levels provides an account of the struggles that take place in the development of transnational transport infrastructure and who are the winners and losers of such a process. In this respect, the spatialization of policy-making proposed in this research seeks to unpack the actual spatial workings of discourse and power without assuming certain scalar configurations as determining the spatiality of politics. This does not dismiss, however, the importance of scale in these politics, yet this importance is to be determined through empirical analysis.

Overall, the framework aims to provide a solid theoretical basis for empirical analysis by focusing on a limited number of dimensions: discourse, power, and space. In order to do so, it draws from three distinct theoretical and analytical approaches: discourse analysis; social and political theories of power; and human geography debates on scale and relationality. Due to their different foundations, the two first approaches have been treated independently; however, the third one has sought to spatialize them and identify the possible overlaps between both. Specifically, the choice of these dimensions seeks to contribute to the study of transnational transport infrastructure policy-making in three ways. The focus on discourse involves adopting a perspective that sees policy problems as socially constructed and considers rationale convergence and conflicts as involving discursively-constituted – rather than objective – interests. The attention to power seeks to propose a more solid an explicit theoretical basis to the study of transport infrastructure planning, frequently under-theorized and excessively empirical (see previous chapter). Finally, the spatial approach attempts to question conventional assumptions about the spatiality of policy-making.

In addition to these three types of contributions, the fundamental value of such a hybrid analytical framework is intended to lie in the combination of the theoretical and analytical rigour of each approach with the establishment of relationships between them, in order to provide a thorough – yet naturally partial – understanding of a complex phenomenon. In addition, by keeping each perspective separate and by defining the particular links between them, research results may contribute independently to each perspective – hence the division of Figure 1 in three distinct fields, linked with each other in a limited number of instances. This is particularly the case of discourse analysis, since the same approach, although with some variations, has been empirically applied to the study of the development of transnational transport infrastructure (Hajer, 2000; Linnros and Hallin, 2001; Peters, 2003a).

In this respect, this perspective differs from the more eclectic approach developed by Jensen and Richardson (2004, pp. 41-66) to study spatial policy discourses. Although they consider not only discourse (through its domains of 'language', 'practice' and 'power-rationality') but also the framing of space in policy-making, they integrate a wider range of perspectives (including, for instance, Flyvbjerg, 1998; Harvey, 1996; and Urry, 2000), and their conceptualization of space is not developed in sufficient detail. For the reasons stated above, it was decided to adopt a more focused approach that also integrated the exercise of power.

However, two remarks on the weaknesses of the framework must be made. The first is that its capacity to contribute to theoretical development may be compromised by dividing attention into three distinct perspectives. Naturally, the focus on a single theoretical approach would have facilitated a more complete exploration of its different features. Secondly, the focus on the actual policy-making process may not sufficiently consider the relevance of structure in framing it. This is not as important in terms of the constraints of structural conditions on the capacity of agencies to act, integrated in the framework with the term 'standing conditions', as with regard to the role that actors have had in shaping them. The definition of the means and resources available to actors, in particular when defined through legislation or policy, also results from power struggles through which a number of agencies seek to advance their own interests. Therefore, for instance, the possible influence of the European Commission through the provision of financial incentives to transnational infrastructure development is the outcome of power struggles concerning the definition of the rules for the granting of this financial aid.

4 Methodology

The previous chapter proposed an analytical framework to address the three research questions formulated in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, the application of this framework to empirical data requires two further important steps. Firstly, a research strategy must be adopted in order to translate the theoretical framework into specific methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009, p. 11; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 14). Different strategies provide certain directions for inquiry and have distinct implications for the definition of these methods. The second step involves detailing these forms of data collection and analysis or research methods, which in turn translate the strategy into practice (Creswell, 2009, p. 15; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 14). In qualitative research, data collection can adopt a wide variety of forms and the process of data analysis is complex and not predefined (Creswell, 2007, p. 150). It is therefore important to explain and justify the specific research methods utilized.

These two aspects are addressed in this methodology chapter. It firstly introduces and develops the adopted research strategy: single-case study research. By focusing on one case of transnational high-speed rail policy-making, the thesis seeks to provide an in-depth picture of this process that reflects the tensions involved in it. The second part of the chapter develops the research methods used to build the necessary evidence to answer the research questions. It not only details the particular forms of data collection, analysis, and validation, but also specifies the relationship between them and the analytical framework and the implications of the choices made concerning research methods.

4.1 Research strategy

Some prominent research methodologists argue that a strategy of inquiry is needed to link the philosophical worldviews or paradigms of the researcher with the specific methods of collecting and analyzing empirical data (Creswell, 2009, p. 5; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). An strategy of inquiry refers to ‘a bundle of skills, assumptions, and practices that researchers employ as they move from their paradigm to the empirical world’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 14). Part of this strategy has been advanced in the previous chapter through the particular approach that the proposed analytical framework entails; however, it did not specify how this framework would be applied to empirical data. This section therefore

addresses the selection and justification of a strategy of inquiry, namely case study research, and introduces the chosen unit of analysis.[1]

4.1.1 Single-case study research

Commonly considered an in-depth study of a complex phenomenon within a specific context (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009), the significance of case study research is not limited to the case itself; a single, *instrumental case study* (Stake, 1995, p. 3) can also serve as an illustration of a wider issue or concern. An in-depth study of a case of transnational HSR policy-making would therefore provide an insightful picture of the questions addressed in this research. Moreover, Yin (2009, pp. 8–14) further argues that case study research presents a distinct advantage with respect to other methods when responding to three conditions: the proposal of explanatory ('how' and 'why') research questions; the little control over behavioural events; and a focus on contemporary events. These three conditions are present in this research as, firstly, the three research questions are explanatory, secondly, the addressed policy process is beyond the control of the researcher and, finally, the phenomenon is largely contemporary, although it encompasses several decades. Due to the potential to provide in-depth descriptions and analyses of social phenomena, case study research has been widely applied in the fields of urban planning and politics (e.g. Dahl, 2005; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Stone, 1989) and, more generally, in political science, where it continues to be a significant contributor to the discipline (Gerring, 2004).

Nevertheless, such a research strategy has been commonly subject to criticism by researchers (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gerring, 2004; Yin, 2009, pp. 14–16), in particular concerning its validity and reliability and its capacity to provide generalizable evidence. The first aspect is relevant to the next section on research methods, but it is pertinent to discuss at this point the second one. Generalization is not the aim of qualitative research since its focus lies on particularity (Creswell, 2009, pp. 192–193), and indeed case study research is primarily concerned with particularization (Stake, 1995, p. 8). However, this does not mean there is no scope for generalization and theory-building. Yin (2009, pp. 38–39, 43), whose conception of case study is not limited to qualitative evidence, notes that critics to the basis for generalization in case studies implicitly consider cases as samples and therefore intended to

[1] The meaning of strategy adopted in this research is closer to Yin's (2009) conception of method which, as opposed to Creswell (2009) and Denzin and Lincoln's (2011) notion of strategy of inquiry, does not presuppose a relation with certain theoretical or disciplinary orientations. However, the term strategy is preferred here since, following Creswell (2009) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011), methods are considered the forms of data collection and analysis (see next section).

statistical generalization (to populations or universes). Instead, he argues that case studies rely on analytical generalization, whereby the empirical results of the study are generalized to a previously developed theory. In a similar manner, Flyvbjerg (2006) has argued that case study research provides concrete, context-dependent knowledge that can also contribute to generalization as a supplement or alternative to other methods. Other scholars have also acknowledged a role for case studies in theory generation and testing (Bryman, 2008, p. 57; Gerring, 2004; Stake, 1995, pp. 7–8).

A case study is not necessarily restricted to a single case but may encompass several cases and thus constitute a multiple-case study (Yin, 2009) or a collective case study (Stake, 1995). In fact, Yin (2009, pp. 60–62) has suggested that a multiple-case study reduces the risk of relying on just one case, demonstrates the ability to do empirical work beyond that case, and leads to stronger results and conclusions. However, in this research the examination of transnational HSR policy-making has been done by focusing on a single case. Due to the significant resources that multi-case study research may require (Yin, 2009, p. 53), it was decided to favour the in-depth nature of the study rather than its generalizability. Nevertheless, it is expected that this case study will inform valuably the literature on transnational HSR and infrastructure policy-making, currently scarce of case studies as understood here, and also shed light on the adequacy and potential of the developed analytical framework.

4.1.2 Selection of the case

The selection of a case or unit of analysis requires, first, to define what a case is and, second, to specify the criteria to select it and bound it in time and space. A case can be a wide variety of entities, from individuals or organizations to less concrete phenomena such as programs or projects; however, it must be specific (non-abstract) and sufficiently bounded (Stake, 1995, pp. 1–2; Yin, 2009, p. 32). Secondly, the selection of the case must seek to maximize the potential learning from it, in particular in relation to the research questions, within the researcher's resources and access to data (Stake, 1995, p. 4; Yin, 2009, p. 26). Case selection or sampling with the intention of obtaining information-rich cases that can usefully inform the understanding of the research problem is indeed a typical procedure in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Among the number of strategies or rationales proposed to carry out this selection (e.g. Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 28; Yin, 2009, pp. 47–50), qualitative researchers tend to prefer the selection of unusual cases in case study research, as the objective is not statistical generalization and they are likely to provide richer information (Creswell, 2007, p. 129; Flyvbjerg, 2006). As Flyvbjerg has noted,

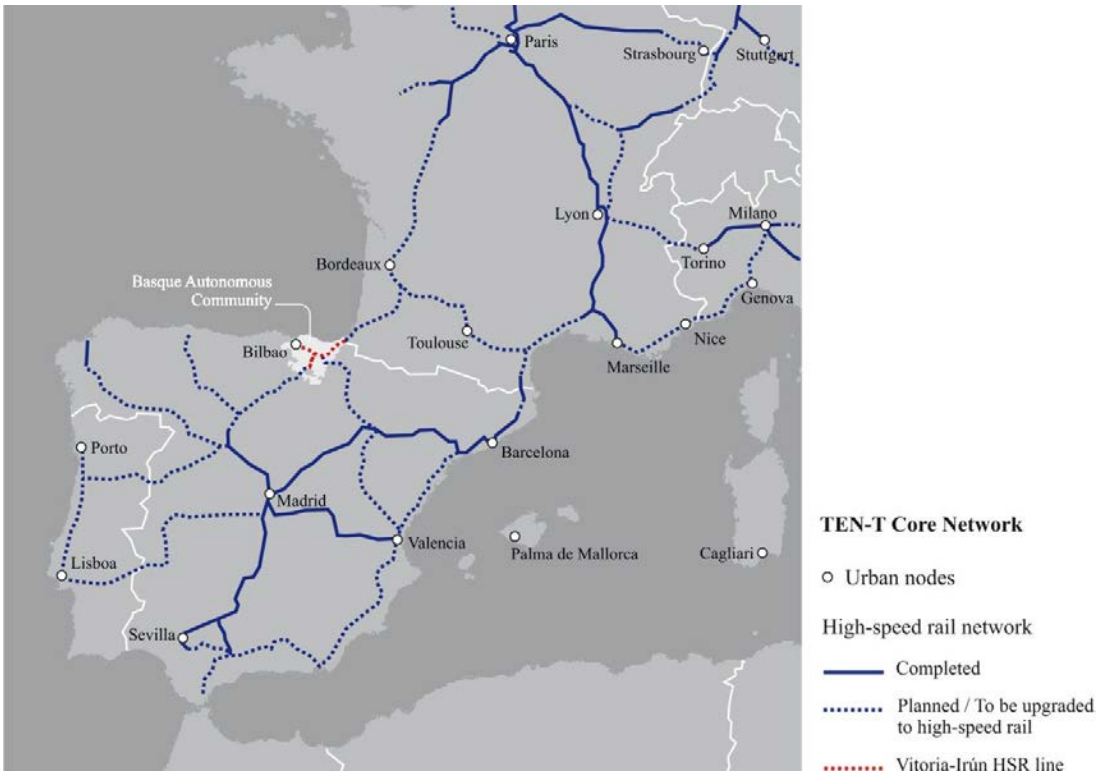
> '[w]hen the objective is to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given problem or phenomenon, a representative case or a random sample may not be the most appropriate strategy. This is because the typical or average case is often not the richest in information. Atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied' (2006, p. 229).

The selection of the case for this study therefore responded to the intention of finding *an unusual case of transnational HSR infrastructure policy-making that was likely to illustrate the tensions and challenges involved* in the development of this type of infrastructure and, more widely, in European integration. Accordingly, the case, framed as the policy process surrounding a specific line, was sought to present a number of specific features that determined its unusual nature. The first one was the cross-border nature of the line. Border areas are particularly relevant for the European project as they illustrate the conflict between the territorial container of the nation-state and the cross-border relations that European integration requires. The second feature was that the infrastructure line was to be developed in a relatively devolved nation-state. The case would then ascertain the – unclear according to the existing literature – role that subnational units of government may achieve in the policy process. Thirdly, it was sought that the case gave rise to difficulties in its development due to coordination problems, diverging interests, and/or significant contestation. According to this criteria, on the one hand the case can be considered *extreme* as it permits '[l]earning from highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon of interest' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 28); on the other, it is also *critical* as the findings may have an impact on theory by contributing to generalization by deductions of the type '[i]f this is (not) valid for this case, then it applies to all (no) cases' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230).

Based on these criteria, the case selected is the policy process around the Vitoria-Irun (French border) section of the high-speed rail axis linking France with the Iberian peninsula on the Atlantic coast (see Figure 2). This section, currently under construction, is of clear EU interest – it has been a TEN-T project since the first proposals for a trans-European HSR network – yet it is also of national and particularly subnational relevance, as it reduces the travel times between a number of Spanish and Basque cities. The time boundaries of the case were set at 1986, when the first proposals for the line were made, and 2006, when the construction works of the line started. Although the case is circumscribed to the policy process around that specific section, consideration must be made too of the policy context in which the case is set, in particular as the boundary between phenomenon and context is not likely to be clear in case study research (Yin, 2009, p. 18). With regard to the aforementioned three criteria for case selection, in the first place the line is part of the Vitoria-Dax cross-border section, one of the two key rail links between the Iberian peninsula and the European core. Secondly, the line's route is included in the Basque Autonomous

Community, which is not only part of an increasingly federalizing Spanish state but also holds greater powers – including tax collection – than the majority of the other Autonomous Communities (Agranoff, 1996; Moreno, 2002).[2] Finally, the development of the HSR line has faced important challenges due to, first, the complexity arising from the topographically difficult, environmentally sensitive and densely populated area and the high number of actors involved (Davignon, 2009; Secchi, 2011) and, second, the very active contestation movement to the planning and development of the line (Audikana, 2012). Access to data was facilitated by the fact that Spanish, my native language, and English were the main languages involved.

Figure 2. The Vitoria-Irun high-speed rail line within the planned TEN-T core network



Source: adapted from EP and Council (2013a).

[2] See Sections 5.1 and 7.1.1 for a more detailed explanation of the territorial organization of the Spanish nation-state and the role of its different institutions in rail infrastructure planning and development.

4.2 Research methods

Once the strategy of inquiry is decided, the final major step of a research design is the determination of the research methods, that is the forms of collection and analysis of data (Creswell, 2009, p. 15; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This definition must be made according not only to the characteristics of case study research but also to the previously developed theoretical framework. Yin, who argues that theory development is essential in case study research (2009, p. 35), states indeed that the preferred strategy for data analysis is the one that follows the theoretical propositions that have led to the case study (2009, pp. 130–131).[3] Accordingly, in addition to the research questions, the analytical framework developed in the previous chapter has been used to determine the relevance of data and inform data collection and analysis. Thus, this section first develops the links between the analytical framework and the research methods adopted, to then detail the forms of collection, analysis, and validation of data.

4.2.1 The analytical framework and sources of evidence

Since it seeks to provide a rich and in-depth picture of the unit of analysis, case study research is characterized by the use of multiple sources of evidence (Creswell, 2007, p. 132; Yin, 2009, p. 115). Nevertheless, the fundamental reason for this use is to build more robust evidence on the same phenomenon through data triangulation and to address potential problems of construct validity (Yin, 2009, p. 116). This research has therefore sought to use a significant number of sources of evidence, which can be grouped in two main bodies: documents and interviews. Although these are just two of the six sources that Yin (2009) identifies as frequently used in case study research, documents utilized are of three types: official documents; newspaper articles; and parliamentary proceedings.

Mainly useful to verify and expand evidence from other sources, documents provide exact information about names, references and events and have a broad coverage in terms of time, events, and settings (Yin, 2009, pp. 102, 103). The first type of documents employed were official – i.e. non-personal – state and non-state documents (based on Scott, 1990; cited in Bryman, 2008, p. 516). This type of documents is particularly useful to develop a first

[3] Theory in case study research does not need to be formal and fully developed, although it may present different degrees of development (Creswell, 2009, pp. 61–64; Yin, 2009, pp. 36–37). Since its goal, according to Yin (2009, p. 36), is to provide sufficient guidance for data collection and analysis, this research uses an analytical lens through which to interpret phenomena. In this respect, it approximates Yin's (2009, pp. 36–37) notion of descriptive theory and Creswell's (2009, p. 62) conception of a theoretical lens or perspective.

description of the policy process and a preliminary identification of structuring discourses (Hajer, 2006, p. 73). Official state documents included policy outputs (e.g. infrastructure plans and regulations), policy-making documents (e.g. technical reports and draft plans), and communication documents (destined to influence or inform public opinion or other actors). In turn, documents produced by non-state actors involved policy-making documents (mainly technical reports) and communication documents. Newspaper articles, in addition to sharing official documents' functions, are valuable to access context-embedded information such as actors' utterances at particular moments of the policy process. In this respect, the documents accessed were news articles, opinion pieces and interviews from the Spanish newspaper *El País* and the Basque *El Correo*. Finally, parliamentary proceedings, which were obtained from the Spanish and Basque legislatures,[4] allow not only the reconstruction of the arguments used but also the explanation of the argumentative exchange (Hajer, 2006, p. 73). A final, important point with regard to all documents is that they should not be treated as simply reflecting reality, but rather as texts produced in a specific context for an implied audience (Bryman, 2008, pp. 526–527; Yin, 2009, p. 105). Considering both context and audience is therefore essential when analyzing documents.

In-depth interviews with political actors constitute the second body of sources of evidence used in this research. Firstly, interviews are useful to produce information on causal relationships, which documents alone may be insufficient to provide, but they are also particularly adequate to understand the meanings of certain events for the interviewees and, consequently, their behaviour (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Seidman, 2006). This is obviously relevant to the discourse analytical approach adopted in this thesis, as that understanding aids the reconstruction of the discourses from which actors approached such events (Hajer, 2006, p. 73). The targeted interviewees were individuals involved in the policy process understood in a broad sense in order not only to account for the context (Yin, 2009, p. 46) but also to include those actors that occupy a marginal position in the process. Thus, interviewees were sampled purposefully from state institutions, the private sector, non-state political actors (political parties, trade unions, and political activists), and relevant experts. The interviews were *semi-structured* (Bryman, 2008) and *focused* (Merton et al., 1990; cited in Yin, 2009, p. 109), with the objective of allowing the interviewees to develop their views whilst following a consistent line of inquiry. Similarly to documents, interviews must be addressed with caution. As verbal reports, the interviewees' responses are subject to problems of bias, recall, and articulation (Yin, 2009, pp. 108–109). Moreover, in interviews

[4] The use of European Parliament proceedings was dismissed since the Spanish and Basque legislatures provided sufficient and focused data on argumentative interaction on the case.

knowledge is not merely provided by the interviewee but produced through social interaction, which in turn is characterized by an asymmetrical power relationship between interviewer and interviewee (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Based on the particular features of each of these sources of evidence, Table 1 details their relation to the analytical framework proposed in the previous chapter and to the description of the case. As mentioned above, due to the distinctive features of each source, their combined use helped to corroborate evidence on the same phenomenon. The table distinguishes between primary and secondary sources depending on their suitability to provide evidence for each dimension (not to be confused with the conventional distinction between primary and secondary data). The following subsection details the processes of collection, analysis, and validation of the data obtained from these sources.

Table 1. Sources of evidence

	Categories	**Categories (spatiality)**	**Sources of evidence**	
			Primary	**Secondary**
Description of the case	N/A	N/A	Official documents and newspaper articles • Chronology and first reading of events	Interviews • Interpretation of policy process
Discourse	Story-lines Discourse coalitions Discursive practices	Spaces of concern; spaces of reliance Discursive arenas	Parliamentary proceedings • Reconstruction of arguments • Argumentative exchange Interviews • Meaning of events	Official documents and newspaper articles • Preliminary identification of discourses
Power	Episodic agency power Modes of power Standing conditions	Topology of power Power arenas	Interviews • Causal relationships	Official documents and newspaper articles

4.2.2 Collection, analysis and validation of data

In terms of data collection, prior to fieldwork a systematic search online for relevant documents was carried out (see Yin, 2009, p. 103). These included a significant amount of official documents and newspaper articles and the totality of parliamentary proceedings. In order to collect those documents not available online and, importantly, conduct the planned interviews, three periods of fieldwork were carried out. The first one (11-15 September 2011), in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC), was meant to confirm the relevance of the case for my research and to evaluate the access to the necessary data, in order to

ensure an adequate selection of the case (Yin, 2009, pp. 49–50). The other two fieldwork periods, when the majority of non-online data was collected, took place in December 2011-January 2012 and in May 2012. In both cases the time was divided evenly between the BAC and Madrid. A further period of fieldwork in Brussels was at first considered in order to collect data related to the EU but, due to the online accessibility of most of the documents, the coverage of EU developments in several interviews, and financial limitations, it was eventually discarded. Documents accessed during fieldwork were available at different documentation centres and libraries, and when possible they were digitalized fully or in their most relevant parts to facilitate their storage and computerized analysis. With regard to interviews, a total of 36 were conducted, 20 with mainly state actors, two with private sector actors, eight with non-state political actors, five with experts and one with a journalist.[5] The majority of them were one-on-one and face-to-face and, unless the interviewee preferred not to, they were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. In addition, a number of informal conversations were held with relevant individuals that provided direction and information on the case and, in some instances, further contacts. All data, including not only documents and interview transcriptions but also the researcher's notes, were systematically compiled in a case study database (Stake, 1995, p. 55; Yin, 2009, pp. 118–122).[6]

The data were subsequently analyzed in order to draw empirically-based responses to the research questions. In the absence of well-defined rules for data analysis in case study research (Yin, 2009, p. 127), this research has adopted a strategy that relies on theoretical propositions (Yin, 2009, pp. 130–131), using the analytical framework to organize the analysis and focus attention on the relevant data. Qualitative data analysis further encompasses a number of phases, which in a concise form can be reduced to three: preparation and organization of data; reduction of data into themes through coding and condensing the codes; and representation of data through visual and textual means (Creswell, 2007, p. 148). Due to the importance and complexity of the second phase, it is worthwhile to provide more details of the coding process. A first list of codes was produced by reading through the data, based on the empirical materials but relevant to the three analytical foci (discourse, power, and space) or related to the description of the case (e.g. events and actors).[7] After coding the data, the codes were used to generate a smaller number of themes

[5] See Appendix B for a detailed list of the interviews.

[6] Appendix A provides a more detailed account of the collection of data, with sections on official documents, newspaper articles, parliamentary proceedings and interviews.

[7] Important in data coding was distinguishing between case-related and context-related data. Both types of data are important since case study research involves negotiating the in-depth study of the case and the understanding of its contextual conditions (Stake, 1995, p. xi; Yin, 2009, p. 46). Although the boundaries between case and context are likely to be unclear (Yin, 2009, p. 18), this

that related explicitly to the concepts and categories developed in the analytical framework. Data were generally coded in medium to large portions in order to minimize its fragmentation and the loss of context that coding entails (Bryman, 2008, p. 553). The process of coding and retrieving was done through a qualitative data analysis computer software package (NVivo). This allowed to deal with a large database and to make the code-and-retrieve process faster and more efficient (Bryman, 2008, p. 567; Creswell, 2007, p. 165).[8]

Both data collection and analysis are key phases in determining the internal validity of a study, which usually refers to the accuracy of the research findings (Creswell, 2007, p. 206).[9] The most common strategies to ensure the internal validation of findings are triangulation and member checking (Creswell, 2007, p. 209; Stake, 1995, pp. 107–116). As mentioned above, in terms of data triangulation the combined use of policy documents, parliamentary proceedings, newspaper articles, and semi-structured interviews sought to corroborate evidence on the different research questions. The roles and complementarities of these sources are noted in Table 1. Member checking in turn involves having the draft report reviewed by participants in order to corroborate the accuracy of the study and obtain alternative interpretations (Yin, 2009, pp. 182–184). However, due to time constraints, the limited availability of interviewees, and the fact that the thesis is written in English, member checking was not carried out.

4.2.3 Reflexive remarks on the methods used

The decisions on research methods have sought to adequately link the research questions stated in Chapter 2 with the drawing of findings and conclusions. However, these choices also involve noteworthy implications and limitations.

Two significant implications are related to the spatial dimension. The first one concerns the difficulties in adopting an approach that does not ascribe data to a scalar spatiality. Although an effort was made to identify data according to the case and not to an a priori

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distinction is useful in order to prioritize data analysis, in particular in the light of the significant quantities of data that qualitative research involves (Stake, 1995, p. 84).

[8] More details on the analysis of data, including examples of codes used, are provided in Appendix C.

[9] In qualitative research, internal validity is one of the key features generally used to assess the quality of research. The other ones are external validity, which involves the generalizability of findings, and reliability, which refers to the consistence of the researcher's approach (Bryman, 2008, p. 376; Creswell, 2009, pp. 190–193). Yin (2009, p. 40), drawing on Kidder and Judd (1986, pp. 26–29), further distinguishes between construct and internal validity, concerned respectively with using correct operational measures for the studied concepts and with establishing causal relationships. Other authors, with the intention to convey the peculiarities of qualitative inquiry, have proposed the use of credibility instead of internal validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

spatiality, this approach needed a certain degree of simplification in order to be practicable. Firstly, both documents and interviewees usually relate in different forms to scalar or territorial spaces. Documents frequently address a certain, bounded space (e.g. the EU TEN-T guidelines) and/or are produced by an actor associated with such a space (e.g. a subnational newspaper). Similarly, although interviewees may operate in different arenas, they are commonly related to a certain scale of reference (e.g. nation-state officials to the Spanish territory). Secondly, fieldwork required to focus on a series of physical locations, due not only to resource limitations but also to the concentration of data in them. These two aspects entailed that data collection was approached by focusing on different policy-making scales, namely the national and the subnational (the Basque Autonomous Community). This simplified approach involved that the analysis may have missed or underestimated other scalar or relational policy-making spatialities.

The second implication with a spatial aspect involves the link between high-speed rail and space. Again, two aspects can be distinguished. The first one is the fact that political mobilization both in support of and against the high-speed rail line is likely to be more intense in the areas directly impacted by it. The second, related aspect is that data on the case is more easily accessible the smaller the approached scale is. Document data on the high-speed rail line were easier to find in the subnational scale, where that line was a prominent policy issue, than in national or supranational scales. More importantly, this resulted in the difficulty to identify interviewees related to national or supranational scales which had had a specific involvement with the case. An important consequence was that no interview was managed to be conducted with a representative of ADIF, the nation-state infrastructure manager. These two aspects arguably resulted in a certain bias towards the subnational scale, which did not necessarily match the relevance of subnational actors in the policy process. A sign of this is the number of interviews with actors with some – non-exclusive – relationship to the subnational scale: 18 (64% per cent of the total).

Apart from these implications, other remarks must be made concerning data collection. In the first place, although access to data was relatively easy when considering the strong contestation that the high-speed rail line had been subject to, the long time span of the case posed some challenges in collecting data from the initial period of the policy process – the first 5-10 years of the case are especially significant as the main characteristics of the project were defined in this period. These challenges involved access to some documents and in particular to interview data, due either to difficulties in arranging interviews with actors involved in the policy process at that time or to recall errors by the interviewee. A second remark must also be made about interviewing. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) note, interviewing in qualitative research is a craft with complex skills to be learned through practice. As such, the conduction of 36 interviews involved a learning process and hence it is

likely that the knowledge produced in the last interviews is more complete than in the first ones.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has defined the methodology adopted in order to translate the 'theoretical propositions' (Yin, 2009, p. 36) or analytical framework developed in Chapter 2 into specific research methods that allow the drawing of findings and conclusions. It first defined single-case study as a research strategy suitable to gain an in-depth understanding of transnational HSR policy-making. The selection of the unit of analysis responded to the intention of maximizing the learning in relation to the research problem addressed in the thesis, and hence it followed a critical and extreme case selection strategy. The selected case is the policy process surrounding a contested cross-border HSR line in a significantly devolved nation-state, which is expected to illustrate the tensions inherent in transnational HSR development and, more generally, European integration.

Secondly, the chapter determined the research methods used to apply the analytical framework to empirical materials within a case study research strategy. It first defined links between the multiple sources of evidence required in case study research and the analytical framework developed in the previous chapter, in line with Yin's (2009) advocacy of theoretically informed case study research. Specifically, it established the relationships between official documents, newspaper articles, parliamentary proceedings, and interviews with the different analytical foci of the research and the description of the case. It then detailed the adopted research methods: data were collected through three periods of fieldwork preceded by an exhaustive online document search; they were subsequently analyzed with the guidance of the analytical framework and the assistance for coding and retrieving of a computer software package; and they were finally validated through triangulation. The chapter concluded by highlighting the most significant implications of the choices made regarding the research methods, which suggest among other aspects the impossibility to avoid certain scalar assumptions in data collection

Before presenting the empirical findings of the thesis, it is necessary to offer a description of the case. Accordingly, the next chapter presents 'a body of relatively uncontestable data' (Stake, 1995, p. 123) that elaborates a chronological account of the case and provides a context for its subsequent analysis. The following three chapters develop the analysis with the aim to answer each of the three research questions. The first two chapters, on discourse and power, address directly the empirical materials generated by the fieldwork, whilst the third one applies the conceptual framework on space to 'spatialize' the analysis.

5 Development of a transnational high-speed rail line (1986-2006)

Between the first proposals to improve the rail network in the Basque Autonomous Community and the beginning of the construction of a EU-relevant high-speed rail line, two event-filled decades passed. During this lengthy process, Spain joined the European Economic Community that would later establish the Single Market and actively promote the planning and implementation of Trans-European Transport Networks. In addition, high-speed rail planning in Spain moved from the proposal, in 1987, of two new lines to improve the functioning of the network to the design, in 2005, of a 10,000-km HSR network to be developed by 2020. This chapter provides a narrative of the policy process on the Vitoria-Irun HSR line and its complex context.

The use in this narrative of 'relatively uncontestable data' (Stake, 1995, p. 123), however, does not exhaust the issue of their selection and subsequent presentation. A first decision was to adopt a chronological structure that wove specific project-related events and wider relevant developments and helped to provide a basic understanding of the case. In this chronological approach, the 'stages heuristics' framework for understanding the policy process (Anderson, 2010; Jones, 1984) has not been adopted; however, the terms 'policy formulation' and 'policy implementation' have been used since in this case they provide a useful distinction between two stages with clearly different dynamics.[1] Secondly, data were selected according fundamentally to the collected newspaper articles and official documents. The semi-structured interviews also contributed to build the narrative, since they helped to identify significant events, but generally they were not considered as evidence on their own. Their use, however, was limited to the description of events rather than their explanation – this task pertained to the analysis.

The chapter is therefore structured chronologically; however, an adequate understanding of the case requires a previous description of the policy context. The chapter thus starts with an introduction to rail infrastructure planning and development in Spain, both before and during the current democratic period. Several of the facts addressed here are elaborated in more detail in later chapters, yet their introduction at this point is necessary to facilitate the comprehension of the subsequent narrative. The following sections present the chronology of the case based on four identifiable stages. Firstly, the origins of the Vitoria-

[1] The 'stages heuristics' framework, which divides the policy process into a number of distinct stages, has been severely criticized on several grounds (see Sabatier, 2007, pp. 6–7), for instance its incapacity to accurately describe that process (Nakamura, 1987). Such a simplified approach does not seem suitable to provide an account of the prolonged and complex process studied in this research.

Irun HSR line are traced, with an emphasis on a dramatically changing Spanish rail planning context. The following section addresses a stage when the project's development suffered a deceleration due to its lack of priority, yet important policy developments took place at the Spanish and EU levels. There followed an extended period of policy formulation that led to the start of the implementation phase but also entailed an increase in contestation to the project. Finally, the last descriptive section describes the troubled years that led to the start of the construction works in September 2006.

5.1 Rail infrastructure planning and development in the Spanish nation-state

Although at its beginning rail development in Spain was primarily promoted by private actors, from the mid-19th century the Spanish Government assumed a central role by subsidizing the development of a number of priority routes (Artola, 1978). This function was undertaken through centralized administration, specialized departments in the relevant ministries and, notably, technically competent staff attached to them (del Moral Ruiz et al., 2007, pp. 281–282). Central to the governmental project was the desire to link Madrid, the political capital, with the periphery of the Spanish territory by developing a radial network with its centre at the former (Comín Comín et al., 1998a, p. 40). Indeed, some authors have argued that the development of such a network was largely driven not by an economic logic, as the first private initiatives, but by a political logic of nation building whereby the nation-state's capital became a central transport node (Bel, 2012, 2011; del Moral Ruiz et al., 2007, pp. 295–296). Importantly, this network was to be developed with a 1.668-metre track gauge as opposed to the 1.435 m that would be used in most of continental Europe, including France (Comín Comín et al., 1998a, p. 38).[2] As a result of state and private action, by the end of the 19th century 87% of the track length of the largely radial conventional rail network existing in the mid-1980s had already been laid (Gómez Mendoza and San Román, 2005, pp. 532–534). In 1941, at the beginning of Franco's dictatorship, the state's role in rail planning and development significantly increased when all Iberian gauge lines were nationalized and placed under the control of the newly created state-owned company RENFE (Comín Comín et al., 1998b, pp. 11–46).

[2] Hereafter, these will be referred to with the commonly used terms of Iberian gauge – Portugal adopted it after Spain did – and UIC gauge (for *Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer*).

The consolidation of democracy in the late 1970s-early 1980s added a more complex political environment to the continuing centrality of the nation-state in rail development and planning. The establishment of a decentralized nation-state involved the creation of 17 *Comunidades Autónomas* or Autonomous Communities, which were superimposed on the existing provinces and municipalities. This has resulted in a complex political system frequently termed *Estado de las Autonomías* or State of Autonomies, in which each Autonomous Community has its own institutions, including government and parliament, and a certain degree of autonomy and powers according to its specific Statute of Autonomy. The Basque Autonomous Community (BAC), whose limits encompass the project studied in this research, was constituted in 1979 from the provinces of Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa and Álava, which are in turn governed by their executive (*Diputaciones Forales*) and legislative (*Juntas Generales*) bodies. The cases of the BAC and its neighbouring Foral Community of Navarre are singular since they have been granted significant taxation autonomy in recognition of their historic traditions (Ruiz Almendral, 2003). Figure 3 shows the physical configuration of the BAC. Bordering with France on the Atlantic coast and with a difficult topography, its largest urban areas (Bilbao, San Sebastián and Vitoria-Gasteiz) correspond, respectively, with the capitals of the three aforementioned provinces. Their total population amounted in 1986 to 68.0 % of the slightly over 2.1 million inhabitants of the region (Eustat, 2015).[3]

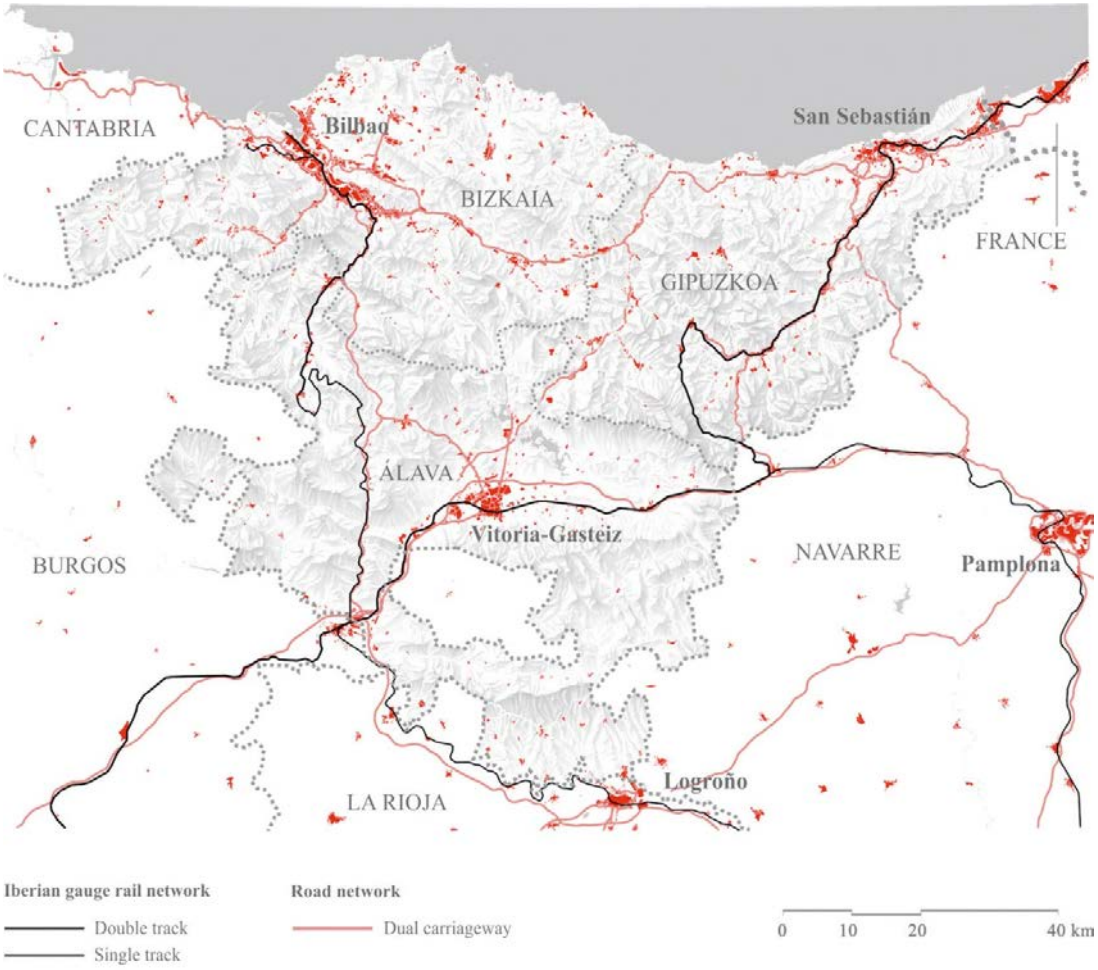
Although large-scale rail projects remain formally the competence of the central state, the State of Autonomies seems to provide opportunities for Autonomous Communities and other subnational actors to influence their planning and development. To the author's knowledge, there is no specific empirical research on this influence,[4] yet in a variety of works scholars have suggested that regional demands have in fact contributed to shape – and promote (Albalate and Bel, 2011, p. 172) – the extraordinary development of the high-speed rail network in Spain over the last two decades. The influence has resulted in two types of changes: the establishment of intermediate stops to facilitate regional transport and increase access to the network (Bellet et al., 2010, p. 152; Gutiérrez, 2004, p. 202; Marshall, 2013, p. 152) and the prioritization of lines (Albalate and Bel, 2011, p. 172; Marshall, 2013, pp. 155–156); in other words, changes in the characteristics of the lines and in the time-scale of their development. The nature of this influence, however, is less clear. Marshall (2013, pp. 155–156) notes how generating support to the central government's regional affiliate and the place of origin of the relevant minister have been key in determining the implementation of

[3] Their share had slightly decreased by 2011 (66.6%). This population is that of the *comarcas* or sub-regions of Gran Bilbao, Donostialdea and Llanada Alavesa, which encompass the urban areas of each city. Only the latter is significantly larger than the urban area, although arguably it is still a valid unit since its population is less than 10% higher than the one of the Vitoria municipality.

[4] Section 7.2 examines this issue with reference to the case studied in this research.

the Spanish HSR plans (see also Albalate and Bel, 2011, p. 172). In addition, modifications of the HSR line route in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia resulted from a negotiation between the central and the regional government in which the parties agreed to share the financial burden of the investment (Marshall, 2013, p. 152).

Figure 3. The Basque Autonomous Community in 2010.



Source: prepared by the author, based on data from Gobierno Vasco (2011).

5.2 Origins within a changing Spanish context (1986-1989)

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, at the beginning of the current democratic period in Spain, the situation of rail transport in the nation-state was precarious. With most of its network designed in the 19th century and sub-standard rail services, it was dramatically losing demand while its costs were increasing (Comín Comín et al., 1998b, p. 197). In addition, the fact that it had a different track gauge from the French network posed an additional

hindrance to interoperability across the border. This situation was reflected in a poor rail access from the Spanish plateau to the Atlantic coast through the BAC, which had to bridge a height difference of around 600 m through topographically difficult terrain (see Figure 4). The two existing links were between Alsasua and the French border through San Sebastián and Irun and, especially, between Miranda de Ebro and Bilbao through the Orduña pass, a partly single-track line with important geometrical limitations and expensive maintenance (RENFE and Europroject, 1984).[5] In this context, the Spanish Government faced the dilemma of containing the deficit of RENFE, then owner and operator of the network, as it indeed did in 1985 by closing over 900 km of rail lines (El País, 1984), whilst investing to improve the competitiveness of the services provided. Among the latter efforts, a series of studies were carried out by state actors in order to propose alternatives to the two aforementioned links.

Figure 4. Rail line altitude map. National Network of Spanish Railways (1945-51). 65 times vertical exaggeration.

Source: Madrid Railway Museum (author's photograph).

[5] It is necessary to note the existence of a minor network, with a track gauge of 1.00 m, along the Cantabrian coast of Spain until the French border. Since 1982, the lines between Bilbao and Irun have been managed by the Basque Administration (Comín Comín et al., 1998b, p. 300), fundamentally providing suburban services.

5.2.1 A new plan for the Spanish railway network and the Basque response

In the mid-1980s, the Spanish Government and RENFE started to study the improvement of the rail connections between the Atlantic coast and the Spanish plateau through the BAC. In order to overcome the geometric problems and high maintenance cost of the Bilbao-Miranda line, the study proposed to build a new double-track line between Bilbao and Vitoria, which by allowing speeds of 200 km/h would situate both cities 20-25 minutes away from each other (RENFE and Europroject, 1984). The new line would, in addition, be compatible with passenger and freight transport. A line with similar design parameters (up to 200 km/h yet with a slightly higher maximum gradient) was studied to improve the link between the Spanish plateau and the French border in Irun, through the town of Irurtzun in Navarre (RENFE et al., 1985).

The Spanish Government started soon after to prepare the most important planning exercise until then since the establishment of democracy in the nation-state: the *Plan de Transporte Ferroviario* (PTF) or Rail Transport Plan. The PTF sought to strengthen rail transport and increase its role in the intermodal transport system by selectively and efficiently using the available resources in the modernization of the network and the provision of rail transport services (Ministerio de Transportes, Turismo y Comunicaciones, 1987, p. 17). It set as a priority to remove all the existing bottlenecks (*estrangulamientos*) in order to homogenize the operation characteristics of the network (Ministerio de Transportes, Turismo y Comunicaciones, 1987, p. 17). Nevertheless, the plan reduced the level of ambition of the previous studies on the BAC: first, it did propose a new Bilbao-Vitoria line in order to remove the Orduña bottleneck, yet designed for speeds of 160 km/h, rather than the 200 km/h for new lines determined by the plan, due to the topographical difficulties of the area; and, second, it did not address the improvement of the link with the French border through Irun (see Figure 5). By the time the PTF was approved in April 1987, Basque and Catalan actors had started to make moves in reaction to the lack of action by the central state with regard to cross-border connections.

The Catalan Government took the lead by carrying out on its own a feasibility study on a UIC-gauge link between Barcelona and the French border, which was approved in December 1986, the same month the Draft PTF was presented (El País, 1986a, 1987a). Basque actors, in particular the Basque Government and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Shipping of Bilbao followed in advocating the development of a similar type of link with the Atlantic French border. The Chamber, in particular through the drive of its president Antón de Madariaga, was already in the first half of 1986 asserting the necessity of an improved rail line in UIC track gauge between the port of Bilbao and the European network in the context of an economically integrating Europe (Información, 1986a, 1986b).

However, the first steps were seemingly taken cautiously. According to a former CEC officer who was then working at the French rail infrastructure manager SNCF, in a conference organized in the Chamber of Commerce of Madrid around that time and in which the publicly-owned Catalan rail company *Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya* participated, he was approached by the Director of Studies of the Chamber of Bilbao, who invited him to Bilbao to talk to the president and director of the Chamber about their proposed Atlantic cross-border link (Interview 5). He notes that in the Chamber they were reluctant to make their interest public, due to the then negative attitude of the Spanish Government towards the adoption of the UIC track gauge, but that they nevertheless wanted to study it.

Figure 5. New lines: double lines and bypasses; international link. *Plan de Transporte Ferroviario*.

[Figure removed as third party copyright material]

Source: Ministerio de Transportes, Turismo y Comunicaciones (1987).

The Chamber of Bilbao's interest was shared by the Basque Government, who sought to develop an alternative to the Bilbao-Vitoria line proposed by the central government ministry that improved the cross-border link and better integrated Bilbao in the network. In fact, the PTF did not address not only the Alsasua-Irun line but also the poor existing link between Bilbao and the border through San Sebastián. In this respect, the government

produced a *Plan Ferroviario de Euskadi* or Basque Rail Plan presented in two stages, in October 1986 and January 1987 (Departamento de Política Territorial y Transportes and SENER, 1987). The plan studied three different alternatives, which were evaluated according to a spatial economics model developed by the Basque Government, and concluded that the one that offered higher rates of return was that of the Santa Águeda corridor, a new Y-shaped line designed for maximum speeds of 200 km/h that used a new Bilbao-Vitoria connection to improve the link between these two cities – and hence the rest of the Spanish network – and the French border (see Figure 6). Additionally, this proposal would enhance the integration of Basque cities in the European network at the expense of Navarre. While the Bilbao-Vitoria line planned in the PTF had an estimated investment cost of 50,000 million pesetas (Ministerio de Transportes, Turismo y Comunicaciones, 1986), the Santa Águeda corridor's was 125,000 million pesetas (Departamento de Vivienda, Obras Públicas y Transportes, 2012, p. 28).

Figure 6. Santa Águeda corridor. *Plan Ferroviario de Euskadi*.

[Figure removed as third party copyright material]

Source: Departamento de Política Territorial y Transportes & SENER (1987).

Although contacts between the Basque Government and Spanish state actors to explore this option had started soon after this proposal was approved by the former in February 1987, the final PTF, approved in April, maintained the Bilbao-Vitoria line and did not include the

Santa Águeda corridor. It was not until the first half of 1988 that contacts intensified and an agreement was reached. In July of that year, the president of RENFE and the Basque Minister for Transport and Public Works signed an agreement in order to study the definition of a new rail solution to the links between Bilbao and the Spanish plateau and between the Spanish network and the French border, thus adopting the Basque Government's criteria for producing the Basque Rail Plan (Departamento de Política Territorial y Transportes and INECO, 1989a, p. 11). The contract for the study was awarded to the publicly-owned consultancy firm INECO, although the Basque Government provided technical support and developed the cost-benefit analysis of the different corridors proposed. The elaboration of the study, however, was to be significantly affected by political developments at the highest level in Spain that would result in a decision that would fundamentally change rail infrastructure planning in Spain.

5.2.2 The introduction of the UIC gauge and the extension of high speed

Although the Ministry had been reluctant to consider the adoption of the UIC track gauge and the development of a high-speed rail network in Spain, a number of episodes since the production of the PTF denoted a change in this attitude. Firstly, despite the measured nature of the PTF, it did introduce high speed in two of its new lines: it proposed maximum speeds of 250 km/h in the new links with Andalucía, which solved the most important bottleneck of the Spanish network and would eventually become the Madrid-Sevilla HSR line, and with the north-northwest of Spain (Ministerio de Transportes, Turismo y Comunicaciones, 1987). Secondly, the Spanish and French governments started to advance the development of a new Mediterranean cross-border link in UIC track gauge. In November 1987, members of the Spanish Ministry, RENFE and the Catalan Government met for the first time to analyze the aforementioned Catalan study on the Barcelona-French border link (El País, 1987b). In October 1988, the Director General of SNCF expressed the French Government's full support to the extension of the TGV network to Perpignan and further to the Spanish border (El País, 1988a). Thirdly, on 21 October of that year, the Council of Ministers unexpectedly decided to consider the adoption of the UIC gauge in the Spanish network by commissioning a report from RENFE on the matter and postponing the award of the contract for the provision of the high-speed rolling stock, which was expected for that same day (El País, 1988b). These developments resulted in a landmark decision by the Council of Ministers, on 9 December, to build new high-speed rail lines in UIC track gauge and prioritize this development in the Madrid-Sevilla and Madrid-Barcelona-French border corridors (Ministerio de Transportes, Turismo y Comunicaciones, 1988).

This decision did not imply by itself a modification of the Santa Águeda line's characteristics since the latter was not planned as high speed nor did it belong to any of these corridors.[6] However, it had immediate implications on the development of the study carried out by INECO with the collaboration of the Basque Government. After the 9 December decision, it took on board the design criteria for high-speed lines and mixed traffic (with maximum speeds of 250 km/h) and included the adoption of the UIC gauge as a new parameter (Departamento de Política Territorial y Transportes and INECO, 1989a, pp. 14–15). The reason for this may have laid in, first, the low relative increase in investment cost that a high-speed rail line entailed[7] and, second, the favourable stance to adopting the UIC track gauge of politicians at the highest level.[8] Five alternatives were shortlisted and compared according to technical and economic and cost-benefit analyses, among which an improved Santa Águeda corridor was eventually selected. This alternative, which had now an estimated investment cost of 157,000 million pesetas, not only adopted the aforementioned design criteria but also included an entirely new section between Beasain and Irun through San Sebastián and the possibility of developing a new high-speed rail link with Navarre and the Mediterranean via Irurzun (see Figure 7).

The study, the *Estudio de Alternativas Ferroviarias en el País Vasco*, was presented on 22 February 1989, but contacts on the financing of the line started before then (El Correo, 1988c). In particular, the Basque Government expressed its willingness to contribute to the financing of the line since the Spanish Ministry's resources were allocated to the Sevilla-Madrid-Barcelona-French border corridor and the link between Madrid and north/north-western Spain (El Correo, 1988d). This contribution ranged from full financing (El País, 1989c) to advancing funding and later recovering it through deduction from the BAC's contribution to defray the cost of central state functions and services provided in the Autonomous Community (El Correo, 1989a).[9] On 27 February, less than a week after the study was presented publicly, representatives of the Basque Government and of its political

[6] In fact, at the time the study on the new line in the BAC was being produced the Spanish Government was still considering the extension of the track gauge change to the rest of the network. RENFE submitted a second report on the issue in the summer of 1989 and, after discrepancies between the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, in November the Government relinquished adopting the UIC track gauge on the entire Spanish network due to the high cost it involved (El País, 1989a).

[7] In March 1989, the Basque Minister for Transport pointed out that they studied the possibility of developing a 160 km/h line (as the Bilbao-Vitoria line in the PTF), yet concluded that a 300 km/h line would merely involve around a 6% increase in the total investment cost (El País, 1989b).

[8] Prime Minister Felipe González had expressed in November 1988 his preference to adopt the UIC track gauge in all the Spanish rail network (El Correo, 1988a), and the Minister for Transport asserted in the Congress of Deputies, at the end of December, that the link Madrid-Irun would be the next priority with respect to changing the track gauge (El Correo, 1988b).

[9] See Section 7.1.1 for more details on this financing mode and, more generally, the BAC's financial and taxation regime.

parties (nationalist EAJ-PNV and PSOE's Basque affiliate PSE-PSOE)[10] met the two ministers responsible for transport and public works to negotiate the financing of a number of infrastructure investments in the BAC. This meeting resulted in an agreement whereby the Ministry of Transport accepted the Y-shaped route and incorporated it in its planning, and the Basque Government would contribute to the production of the technical project and to the direct funding of the line (El Correo, 1989b).[11] The financing details were nevertheless to be defined by a committee formed by the Spanish and Basque governments.

Figure 7. The rail network in the Basque Autonomous Community within the general basic network. *Estudio de Alternativas Ferroviarias en el País Vasco.*

[Figure removed as third party copyright material]

Source: Departamento de Política Territorial y Transportes & INECO (1989a).

Thus, *the first years of the policy process on a new rail line in the Basque Autonomous Community sufficed to define its basic characteristics and set the basis for its further refining and implementation*. The Government of Spain and RENFE first took the initiative to solve the deficient link between Bilbao and the Spanish network, yet the activity of the Basque Government in response to what they regarded as a lack of consideration of the

[10] The PSOE was the ruling party in Spain at that time.
[11] The agreement, which involved a total investment of over 200,000 million pesetas, also included the extension of the port of Bilbao and the remodelling of the three airports in the BAC (El Correo, 1989c).

cross-border link contributed to shape a more ambitious rail solution in the BAC. The adoption of the UIC track gauge and of high-speed rail design criteria as a result of a key Spanish Government's decision provided the last component in completing the basic definition of a new high-speed rail line linking Vitoria, Bilbao, San Sebastián and the French border in Irun, hereafter the Vitoria-Irun HSR line.

5.3 A standstill: planning European and nation-state high-speed rail networks (1989-1994)

As the 1990s approached, high-speed rail as a policy issue gained prominence in both Spain and the European Economic Community. Firstly, the importance of cross-border connections in an economically integrating Europe – the Single Market envisaged by the Single European Act of 1986 would have to be established by the end of 1992 – highlighted by Basque and Catalan actors was followed by significant policy developments at the European level. The Vitoria-Irun line, due to its border and strategic location, was to figure prominently in a proposed trans-European HSR network. In addition, the Spanish Council of Ministers' decision to develop certain UIC-gauge HSR corridors created a new rail infrastructure planning scenario in which demands for new lines had to be balanced with the limited resources available. In this context, the recognition of the Vitoria-Irun line's European relevance did not immediately translate into notable progress in the policy process.

5.3.1 Vitoria-Dax as a 'key link' of a new European high-speed rail network

Promoted by European state and business actors, momentum towards trans-European HSR development built up during the second half of the 1980s (Ross, 1998, pp. 71–75), yet it was in the early 1990s when specific policies were formulated. Following a December 1989 communication by the Commission advocating the development of such a network (CEC, 1990), the Council adopted the same month a resolution on the development, before 31 December 1990, of a master plan for the network and the measures required to guarantee the technical compatibility of its infrastructure. To this end, the Commission set up in January 1990 a High Level Group on a trans-European HSR network, which was composed of representatives of the European Commission, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the member states and business organizations (including the Community of European Railways and the Round Table of Industrialists). By the end of 1990, the Group had produced a first proposal for establishing a European HSR network by 2010 (CEC, 1991). The network – see

Figure 8 – would comprise new high-speed lines, existing lines upgraded to handle speeds of around 200 km/h, and a series of link lines to ensure the interconnection of the network. In the Spanish territory, the high-speed rail network was largely consistent with the lines being planned at the nation-state level at the time: it included the Sevilla-Madrid-Barcelona-French border corridor, the access to the north-northwest of Spain, and the Vitoria-Irun line.

Figure 8. Outline plan of a European high-speed rail network. Proposal by the High-Level Group.

[Figure removed as third party copyright material]

Source: CEC (1991).

An important aspect of the High Level Group's proposal was the identification of fifteen 'key links' necessary for the satisfactory operation of the network. Generally located in border regions and inadequately addressed by nation-states, they were to be given priority in implementation. In the Atlantic Spanish-French border, a 'key link' was defined between Vitoria and Dax, in the French region of Aquitaine, which was mirrored on the Mediterranean side of the Pyrenees by the Barcelona-Perpignan 'key link'.

The inclusion of the Vitoria-Irun line in a trans-European HSR network was formalized in the following years. Firstly, the proposal of the High-Level Group was welcomed by the Council in December 1990 and the Group was tasked with carrying out further studies on it. Secondly and in parallel, the wider Trans-European Networks (TENs) initiative in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy was gradually taking shape. Their inclusion in

the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 provided the legal basis to the development of policy guidelines and measures and to the provision of financial support for them. In its December 1993 meeting, the European Council invited the Commission, which presented then its White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment* (CEC, 1993), to stimulate the implementation of TENs, with the assistance of a working group entrusted with, among other tasks, identifying projects of key interest to the EU. Chaired by then Vice-President of the Commission Henning Christophersen and formed by representatives of the Heads of State and Government and the President of the EIB, the group included the Vitoria-Dax link as part of one of the 14 proposed priority projects (CEC, 1995), which were subsequently accepted by the Essen European Council in December 1994. By that time, the High-Level Group on the high-speed rail network had updated its outline plan,[12] which was included in the Commission's 1994 proposal concerning the guidelines for the development of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) (CEC, 1994). The TEN-T guidelines, finally approved in 1996, incorporated both the Essen list of priority projects and, as part of the TEN-T rail network, the updated HSR network outline plan[13] (EP and Council, 1996). The inclusion of the Vitoria-Irun line in these guidelines qualified it for EU support.[14]

5.3.2 Lack of priority within a consolidating Spanish high-speed rail network

In Spain, the December 1988 Council of Ministers' decision did start a new era in rail infrastructure planning in Spain, yet its effects in promoting the Vitoria-Irun HSR line were not immediate. Although negotiations over the launch and financing of the project started a week after the date of the February 1989 agreement (El País, 1989d), central state actors did not take long to lower the expectations concerning the line. In March, RENFE's Director for the north of Spain noted that the implementation of the line was not among their immediate projects (El Correo, 1989d) and, in May, the advisor on rail issues to the Spanish Minister emphasized that the commitments made on the line were not as advanced as they might seem due to the extra cost of the Y-shaped solution and the necessity to consider the nation-state as a whole (Fernández Lafuente, 1989). In fact, towards the end of 1989 the Basque Minister for Transport and Public Works publicly expressed doubts that the Spanish Government would ratify these commitments in writing (El Diario Vasco, 1989).

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[12] With regard to the case studied, the Vitoria-Irun line adopted its "Y" shape and its link with the rest of the Spanish network was defined. In addition, the Dax-Bordeaux link changed from being an upgraded line to a new one.

[13] The final version of the network incorporated the provisions set in the 1994 Spanish infrastructure plan (see next subsection).

[14] See Section 7.1.2.

The line was on the one hand seen with reluctance by RENFE and the Spanish Government on technical grounds. In 1991, members from both institutions noted its high investment cost – now calculated in 260,000 million pesetas – and the topographical difficulties of the area (El País, 1991a, 1991b). In fact, a cost-benefit analysis of the project produced in 1992 by INECO estimated a negative financial profitability and a social and economic profitability positive yet lower than the recommended by the Ministry (Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Transportes and INECO, 1992). On the other hand, apart from the concentration of resources on the Madrid-Sevilla line under construction, the link between Madrid, Barcelona and the French border was the second priority of the Spanish Government concerning HSR line development. This priority over the Madrid-Vitoria-French border link was restated on subsequent occasions by RENFE (El País, 1991c) and the Spanish Government (El País, 1989a, 1992).

The priority of the Mediterranean cross-border link was in fact in line with developments on the other side of the border. Once the Spanish Council of Ministers' decision had been taken, the French Minister for Transport expressed his preference for connecting to the Spanish HSR network through Catalonia, referring to the development of the Madrid-Barcelona HSR line and to the interest shown by the Catalan Government (El País, 1990a). The 1991 French 20-year plan for the high-speed rail network formalized this preference for the Mediterranean link, which, as opposed to the Atlantic one, was estimated to yield the minimum return required by SNCF to assume the lines ordered by the Government (El País, 1991d). Developments in both nation-states converged in the Spanish-French summit held in the French town of Albi in November 1992, when both governments signed a memorandum of understanding on support of a high-speed rail link between Perpignan and Barcelona by 2002 and on the establishment of a cooperation framework for its development (La Vanguardia, 1992).

During these years, then, progress on the Vitoria-Irun HSR line was slow and limited to the development of technical studies, fundamentally under the initiative of the Basque Government. Between 1989 and 1991, it produced, under the supervision of the Spanish relevant ministry and RENFE, a draft project of the line in two further phases, through which the alternative selected in the 1989 *Estudio de Alternativas* was progressively refined (Departamento de Política Territorial y Transportes and INECO, 1989b, 1991). In addition, the Basque Government and the Regional Council of Aquitaine carried out a feasibility study on the Vitoria-Dax link, proposed as a 'key link' of the trans-European HSR network in 1990 (Gobierno Vasco et al., 1992).

In 1991, the existing Spanish Ministries of Transport, Tourism and Communications and the Ministry of Public Works and Urbanism were merged into the Ministry of Public Works and Transport. Under the leadership of Minister Josep Borrell, it undertook the

planning of infrastructures in Spain in an integrated manner, resulting in the *Plan Director de Infraestructuras 1993-2007* or PDI (Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Transportes y Medio Ambiente, 1994), formally approved in March 1994. With respect to rail, the PDI proposed a high-speed rail network that incorporated the recent developments and clearly considered the cross-border connections (resembling to a certain extent the first outline plan produced by the High Level Group – see Figure 8), while planning for the modernization of the conventional, Iberian-gauge network (see Figure 9).[15] The Vitoria-Irun line constituted one of the two connections to the French network and was linked with the rest of the Spanish HSR network through the Navarrese corridor and Zaragoza. The Bilbao-Vitoria section of the line was one of the three 'strategic actions' to be funded by the *Presupuestos Generales del Estado* or General State Budget, designed to be initially operated in Iberian track gauge to solve existing operation problems and achieve immediate service improvements but planned to be integrated in the high-speed rail network in the future (Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Transportes y Medio Ambiente, 1994, pp. 148–149).[16] The proposal thus combined the PTF's priority of selectively improving an Iberian-gauge rail network and the necessity to rationalize the planning of a developing and expanding Spanish HSR network.

[15] The complementarity between both networks was sought through the use of rolling stock with a variable gauge system and the strategic location of gauge switches in the network (Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Transportes y Medio Ambiente, 1994, p. 148)

[16] This adaptation would be enabled by the use of polyvalent sleepers in their construction.

Figure 9. High-speed rail network and main long-term structuring actions. *Plan Director de Infraestructuras 1993-2007*.

[Figure removed as third party copyright material]

Source: Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Transportes y Medio Ambiente (1994).

Thus, the Vitoria-Irun line was now an integral part of a network plan that recognized the importance of cross-border links and combined the ad hoc decisions on high-speed rail development made in the previous years with the existing conventional network. Nevertheless, *in spite of EU developments that emphasized its importance as a 'key link' of a European network of European interest, the lack of priority in Spanish planning resulted in limited progress in the 1989-1994 period*. Only through the Basque Government's initiative the Y-shaped route became progressively refined. The completion of the Madrid-Sevilla HSR line, whose operation started in April 1992, and particularly the approval of the PDI in 1994 would, however, provide a better context for its development.

5.4 Completing policy formulation and mobilization of political actors (1994-2001)

Despite the fact that the Vitoria-Irun HSR line was not a priority for the Spanish Government, after the approval of the Spanish *Plan Director de Infraestructuras* in 1994 it

soon started the procedures to finish the definition of the project. In December 1994, an Act accompanying the 1995 General State Budget[17] introduced as a requirement in the development of new lines of nation-state interest the production of an *estudio informativo* or study defining the general characteristics of the line. Although the production of this document did not involve significant changes in the project, it prompted the participation and mobilization of Basque political actors, both for and against it.

5.4.1 Re-launch of the project: the *Estudio Informativo* and the *Plan Territorial Sectorial*

Although it was not a requirement, the *Estudio Informativo* was produced in coordination with the Basque *Plan Territorial Sectorial* of the rail network in the BAC, a sectoral instrument aimed at planning rail infrastructure in the BAC in an integrated and coordinated manner. According to the *Estudio*, this coordination not only facilitated the integration of the Vitoria-Irun line in regional and local spatial planning but also helped to optimized the routes studied (Ministerio de Fomento and INECO, 2000). In general terms, the procedure for the production of each document consisted of the preparation of a first plan, followed by a public consultation on it and the final approval of the plan amended according to such consultation. In the case of the *Estudio*, this process was complicated by environmental impact assessment regulations. Firstly, the ministry responsible of the project must send a Summary Report (*Memoria Resumen*) with its significant characteristics to the relevant environmental body, which may conduct a consultation on its environmental impact. Following this and taking into account the outcomes of this consultation, the ministry must produce an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on the project, which shall be submitted to public consultation together with the *Estudio*. Finally, and before the final approval of the latter, the aforementioned environmental body shall formulate an Environmental Impact Statement which, on the basis of the *Estudio*, the EIA and the results of the public consultation process, assesses the desirability of the project and, in case of a positive resolution, lays down the conditions for its development.

The process thus started with the submission of the Summary Report by the Directorate General of Rail Transport Infrastructures to the Directorate General of Environmental Policy, both within the same ministry, in August 1994 – five months after the PDI was approved. After the results of the consultation conducted by the latter body were sent to the Directorate General of Rail Transport Infrastructures, the Basque Ministry of Transport and

[17] *Ley 42/1994, de 30 de diciembre, de Medidas Fiscales, Administrativas y de Orden Social*.

Public Works launched the development of the *Plan Territorial Sectorial* by holding a preliminary consultation with the Basque ministry responsible for spatial planning. The Draft *Plan Territorial Sectorial* was presented in March 1997, when the *Estudio* and the EIA were still under development by the central government's ministry. From March to September of this year, the Basque ministry conducted more extensive consultations with the concerned territorial public administrations, including the Ministry of Development.[18] This period, previous to the public consultation process, was important since significant progress was made in the definition of the route. In July, Spanish and Basque government representatives agreed on a single alternative for each corridor to be further refined in the next phase[19] (see Figure 10 for the alternatives studied in this one). In the west section of the high-speed rail line, due to the unanimity among local authorities and the support of the Basque Government, the Spanish Government decided to accept the alternative to the south of the Ibaizabal river, which, although environmentally better integrated, involved a higher cost, less flexibility and adaptability to the functional requirements of the line, and did not follow a consolidated transport corridor (Ministerio de Fomento and INECO, 2000). In addition, in the east section, where there was no consensus among local authorities, the alternative to the west of the Oria river was selected due to its numerous advantages over the east one.

The process reached a milestone in 1998, when both the *Estudio Informativo* with its EIA and the *Plan Territorial Sectorial* were subjected to public consultation. The Basque Government had taken the lead by initially approving the *Plan Territorial Sectorial* and initiating the public consultation process in March. In fact, the Basque Minister for Transport and Public Works accused on several occasions the Spanish Ministry of Development of delaying the technical approval of the the *Estudio* and the EIA and their subsequent submission to public consultation (El Mundo, 1998; El País, 1998a). The process was unblocked in June after a meeting between the Basque and Spanish ministers (El País, 1998b), and the public consultation period for the *Estudio* and the EIA started in July. Although the consultation period was initially of one month for the *Estudio* and EIA and two months for the *Plan Territorial Sectorial*, in both cases it was extended until the end of October, according to the *Estudio* due to the technical complexity of the project and the great interest aroused (Ministerio de Fomento and INECO, 2000). In fact, the public consultation process led to the mobilization of political actors and to a significant debate in the BAC on the project.

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[18] Translated from the original *Ministerio de Fomento*, responsible for public works and transport. In 1996, the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and the Environment became the Ministry of Development and a new Ministry of the Environment was created.

[19] The exception was the access to Vitoria, for which the two proposed alternatives were kept (Ministerio de Fomento and INECO, 2000).

Figure 10. Alternatives studied in phase II of the *Estudio Informativo*.

[Figure removed as third party copyright material]

Source: Ministerio de Fomento & INECO (2000).

5.4.2 Opening up the regional transport problem: political mobilization and potential for reshaping?

The mobilization of political actors mainly involved the development of an active contestation movement to the Vitoria-Irun HSR line. This movement, however, did not emerge at this time; its origins date back to 1993. In January of that year, a strong opposition had emerged in Aquitaine to the Dax-Hendaye line after its route was disclosed by a French Journal (Rui, 2004)[20] and the Basque and Spanish governments had announced their decision to immediately award the contract for the construction project of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line (El Correo, 1993).[21] In July, groups that had participated in the contestation movement against a motorway across the border between the Autonomous Communities of the Basque

[20] The route corresponded to the abovementioned 1992 feasibility study on the Vitoria-Dax link. After a first mobilization on 9 January 1993 in the French town of Arcangues, the president of Aquitaine announced the shelving of the project (Rui, 2004).
[21] This announcement, which to the author's knowledge was not followed up, may have responded to the willingness of the Basque Government to advance the definition of the project.

Country and Navarre[22] formed the *Asamblea contra el TAV*, an autonomous, assembly-led organization with a strong anti-developmental stance that constituted the first body aimed specifically at contesting high-speed rail development in the Basque Country. Although the *Asamblea* played the leading role in the contestation movement until at least 1998, critical voices were also expressed by the various Basque environmental organizations (Sanjose, 1995), the Basque agrarian trade union EHNE (Groome, 1995) and the pro-independence left (Erkizia, 1995; Herri Batasuna, 1995).

In 1998, the movement gained momentum with the increased activity of these actors, especially EHNE (El País, 1998c) and the *Asamblea* (El País, 1998d), and the mobilization of new political actors, in particular other Basque trade unions (LAB, ELA and HIRU). A three-day conference on the Basque rail system, organized by the Basque Government in December 1998, allowed the meeting, in many cases for the first time, of actors from across the contestation movement (Larrinaga, 2009, pp. 145–146). Almost a year later, in November 1999, the trade unions EHNE, LAB, ELA and HIRU organized a two-day conference in Bilbao entitled 'Which rail for Euskal Herria?',[23] in which they articulated an argumentation against the high-speed rail project and agreed on the basic principles for developing an alternative (Gara, 1999a). Although the *Asamblea*, which attended the conference, was very critical of proposing any alternative to the high-speed rail line, the event resulted in the first clear positioning against the project by ELA, the main trade union in the BAC.

Nevertheless, political activity regarding the Vitoria-Irun line was not circumscribed to opposing actors. After the initial promotion by the Chamber of Commerce of Bilbao of a new rail line in the second half of the 1980s, the business sector regained a certain prominence. In early November of 1998, right after the public consultation period ended, the three Basque Chambers of Commerce – one for each province – presented a report in which they proposed a radically new, L-shaped HSR line that linked consecutively, at a maximum speed of 350/400 km/h, the cities of Vitoria, Bilbao, and San Sebastián (Cámaras de Comercio e Industria de Araba, Bizkaia y Gipuzkoa et al., 1998). Although possibly more costly than the Y-shaped line due to its lower adaptability to the terrain, according to the report the new line would be roughly 40 km shorter, would better integrate Bilbao in the

[22] The construction of this motorway across the Leitzaran valley, considered of exceptional ecological value, originated an environmental conflict that, after the intervention of the terrorist group ETA, resulted in a 1991 agreement between the government of the Basque province of Gipuzkoa and the majority of the contestation movement (El País, 2008a).

[23] Euskal Herria is a space encompassing the Spanish Autonomous Communities of the Basque Country and Navarre and three French former provinces. It is central to the spatial imagination of Basque nationalism (see Mansvelt Beck, 2006).

network, would reduce both the material and operation costs, and would decrease travel times in all cases. In spite of the incipient stage of the proposal, it received significant media coverage (El Correo, 1998a; El País, 1998e, 1998f) and was openly supported by the mayors of Bilbao and Vitoria (El Correo, 1998b).

The Basque Government appeared open to discuss the project and achieve a consensus among the interested parties. In December 1998, it organized the aforementioned three-day conference on the Basque rail system, in which a wide range of speakers, both for and against the high-speed rail line, participated. In his opening speech, the Basque Minister for Transport and Public Works stated that the conference 'is meant to encourage the free and peaceful participation of all those present, whether speakers or guests. Contributions, in any case, will enrich the debate and help making decisions' (Departamento de Transportes y Obras Públicas, 1999, p. 39). In this respect, it is important to note the particular political climate of the time, characterized by the improvement of relations between conservative (EAJ-PNV) and left-wing nationalist parties.[24] In June 1998, the PSE-EE, the regional affiliate of the PSOE, had decided to leave the Basque Government due to the rapprochement between EAJ-PNV and left-wing nationalist party *Herri Batasuna* (El País, 1998g). The portfolio of the Basque Ministry of Transport and Public Works, previously held by PSE-EE, was assumed by EAJ-PNV when a new government was formed in July by this party and centre-left nationalist *Eusko Alkartasuna* (EA). In addition, in May 1999 the EAJ-PNV/EA Government signed a parliamentary agreement with the pro-independence left-wing political coalition *Euskal Herritarrok* (EH) due to its minority position resulting from the October 1998 Basque elections (El País, 2005a).[25]

5.4.3 Finalizing policy formulation: accommodation of demands and reorganization of the contestation movement

The public consultation process for the *Estudio Informativo* and the *Plan Territorial Sectorial* concluded with the submission of 693 and 1,667 claims, respectively. Although the period for the production of the amended documents was meant to be short – the Basque

[24] This relationship – and the increased tensions between conservative nationalist parties and the more centralist, Spanish-minded parties (PP-PV and PSE-EE) – must be understood in relation to the truce declared by the terrorist group ETA in September 1998 and the signature on the same month of the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement by Basque – largely nationalist – political groups and organizations in order to seek a political solution to the so-called Basque conflict. The breakdown of the truce by ETA in December 1999 (El País, 1999a) marked the beginning of the end of this period.

[25] The Basque Government formally broke this parliamentary agreement in February 2000, due to the ambiguous stance of EH towards three assassinations by ETA following the breakdown of the truce (El País, 2000).

Minister for Transport and Public Works said in December 1998 that the project could be approved in the first quarter of 1999 (El Correo, 1998c) –, the process took longer than stated. In February of this year, he in fact highlighted the difficulties to arrive at a consensual decision due to the high number of submitted claims (Gara, 1999b).

The consideration of the claims resulted in a limited number of moderate modifications to the route of the high-speed rail line, which consisted of three by-passes in the Gipuzkoa province and the decision to study a fourth one in Vitoria (Secretaría General de Medio Ambiente, 2000). The bypass of Lezetxiki avoided affecting two prehistoric sites and a quarry; the one of Aduna-Zizurkil-Andoain distanced the line from the town of Aduna and diminished the visual impact in the town of Andoain; and the bypass of Ventas in Irun avoided the impact of the line on a residential area. These three modifications resulted from the claims, respectively, of the concerned local authority and an academic from the University of the Basque Country, of the three affected local authorities, and of two individuals and the local authority concerned. In addition, the Spanish Government decided, following a proposal by the government of Vitoria, to study the feasibility of a new underground line through the city that would improve its integration in the network. In terms of the Basque Chambers of Commerce's L-shaped proposal, although the Basque Government initially expressed its willingness to study it (El Correo, 1998d), eventually it did not influence the characteristics of the project. Notwithstanding the delay that the adoption of such a proposal would have entailed, a study commissioned by the Spanish Ministry of Development and finished in April 1999 advised against it due to a variety of technical reasons, including its higher cost, its bigger environmental impact and its uncertain advantages (Ministerio de Fomento and INECO, 1999).

The dossier on the *Estudio Informativo* was submitted in November 1999 to the relevant body in the Ministry of the Environment for the production of the Environmental Impact Statement, which was issued on 22 October 2000. The *Estudio* was approved a month later, on 24 November, and the *Plan Territorial Sectorial* on 27 February 2001. Nevertheless, this was also the time when the contestation movement reorganized to form what would become the main organization against the Vitoria-Irun HSR line: *AHT Gelditu! Elkarlana*.

In view of the limited changes to the project in spite of the significant public response and the advance stage of the policy process, this coalition of opposing actors was formed after two meetings on 19 December 2000 and 27 January 2001. *Elkarlana*'s membership was considerably wide: it consisted of the *Asamblea contra el TAV*, trade unions,[26] left-wing

[26] These included EHNE, LAB and HIRU. However, ELA, in spite of its opposition to the project, did not join *Elkarlana*.

political parties (including *Herri Batasuna* and *Ezker Batua-Berdeak*, which would soon gain relevance), local authorities, Basque environmental groups (in particular *Ekologistak Martxan* and *Eguzki*) and other social organizations. This diversity indeed involved that agreement between the members was based on a bare minimum of premises. In its founding manifesto, the principles on which *Elkarlana*'s activity would be based were three: the outright rejection of the high-speed rail line; a firm complaint about the lack of transparency of and participation in the policy process; and the need to question the model of transport and society that was being promoted (AHT Gelditu! Elkarlana, 2001a).

The long process of policy formulation thus basically concluded with the approval of both the Estudio Informativo and the Plan Territorial Sectorial. The following steps would involve the development of the construction projects and the start of the corresponding works. *Yet this advance also implied that contestation to the project became wider and stronger in the Basque Autonomous Community*; in fact, the end of the policy formulation process was simultaneous to the creation of a wide coalition of opposing actors. These two aspects (i.e. the beginning of the implementation phase and, to a lesser extent, mobilization against the project fundamentally in the BAC) would mark the last stage of the policy process addressed in this research.

5.5 Policy implementation: towards a Spanish-Basque agreement (2001-2006)

The approval of the *Estudio Informativo* and the *Plan Territorial Sectorial* marked the beginning of an intense period due to, first, the tensions between the Spanish and the Basque governments over the implementation of the project and, second, the consolidation of the contestation movement. The Basque Government would have to deal both with a Spanish Government that had a different planned timeline for the project and with a growing contestation to it, demonstrated by the creation of a wide coalition of opposing actors and by the conflicts within the Basque Government as a result of the entrance of the left-wing party *Ezker Batua-Berdeak*. This situation would appease to a certain extent after the PSOE replaced the PP in the Spanish Government in 2004 and the foundations of an implementation agreement were laid.

5.5.1 National-regional conflict over competences

Already before the *Estudio Informativo* and the *Plan Territorial Sectorial* were approved, the Basque Government suspected the line would not be a priority for the Spanish Government. After the latter announced that the Cohesion Funds for TEN-T projects until 2006 were fully committed for the Madrid-Barcelona and Madrid-Valladolid HSR lines (El País, 1999b), the Basque relevant minister Álvaro Amann expressed its readiness to assume part of the cost of the construction works (El País, 1999c). Nevertheless, the open conflict between both administrations started once the *Estudio Informativo* was finally approved in February 2001.

In September of this year, Basque Minister Amann asserted that the drafting of the construction projects was already delayed (Amann, 2001). While in mid-2001 Spanish Ministry sources stated that construction works could start that same year (El Correo, 2001a), a year later Spanish Minister Álvarez Cascos affirmed that they would begin in 2004 due to the magnitude of the construction project (El Correo, 2002a). In the face of this delay, Amann announced in December 2002 the tendering of the construction projects for most of the high-speed rail line in the province of Gipuzkoa (El País, 2002a).[27] Although the Ministry of Development threatened with bringing this process to court due to infringement of competences (El País, 2003a), in July 2003 the Basque Government awarded the contracts for four of the six tendered sections. In that same month the Spanish Government launched the tender process for the basic projects[28] of five sections in Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, two of which encompassed those tendered by the Basque Government. The award of the corresponding contracts in October confirmed the overlap of activities by both administrations and materialized the conflict over competences.[29] During these months the tension between members of both governments was evident. Whereas the Basque Government justified its right to develop the high-speed rail line on the basis of the Spanish Government's inaction and expressed its willingness to cooperate in its implementation (Amann, 2003a; El País, 2003b), the Spanish Government emphasized the former's lack of competences and their need to accept this fact in order to reach any sort of agreement (Álvarez-Cascos, 2003; El País, 2003c).

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[27] At that time only the construction projects of two short sections, in the vicinity of Bilbao and San Sebastián, had been tendered by the Spanish Government (this process was launched in November 2002).

[28] The 'basic project' or *proyecto básico* is the part of the construction project that details its geometric features and defines the property and rights affected (*LSF 39/2003*, 2004).

[29] Between January and May of this year, the Spanish Government had carried out the tendering for the basic projects of most of the other sections of the line, yet these did not overlap with the sections being promoted by the Basque Government.

A further difficulty to the improvement of relations between both governments and to the realization of the Basque Government's aspirations came from a European Commission 'quick start programme' – part of a wider 'European Initiative for Growth' presented in November 2003 – that sought to trigger the launch of key priority projects of European interest. The absence of the Vitoria-Dax link of the initial list of projects, which did include the Figueras-Perpignan link, prompted a strong reaction by members of the Basque Government, who suggested that the Spanish Government and the then Spanish – and member of the ruling party PP – Commissioner for Energy and Transport remained passive toward the link or even hindered its inclusion in the list (El País, 2003d). This Commissioner, in turn, reasserted the European priority of the link but argued that its absence from the list responded to the delay of its French section (El País, 2003e).[30] The reaction of the Basque Government was accompanied by other Basque state and non-state actors claiming for the inclusion of the link in the list, which included a motion approved by the plenary of the Basque Parliament (Parlamento Vasco, 2003) and a public statement signed by the heads of the three Basque Chambers of Commerce, the Basque business associations, the three Basque universities and a Basque scientific-cultural institution (El País, 2003f). Nevertheless, the Vitoria-Dax link was not included in the Commission's final report on the 'European Initiative for Growth' (CEC, 2003), which would be subsequently endorsed by the December 2003 European Council. The link remained, however, part of a priority project in the revised TEN-T Guidelines approved in April 2004 (EP and Council, 2004a).

5.5.2 The problem within: growing contestation in the Basque Autonomous Community

The Basque Government faced the challenge of promoting the line not only at the nation-state and EU levels but also within the BAC. As explained above, *Elkarlana* had been created at the beginning of 2001, shortly after the *Estudio Informativo* was finally approved. Part of its activity was carried out through the courts (Deia, 2001); however, its effort largely focused on undertaking different types of protest actions and information activities in the affected areas. In June of that same year, *Elkarlana* held in San Sebastián its first demonstration (El Correo, 2001b), which was attended, according to its organizers, by 4,000-

[30] Indeed, in December France presented an infrastructure plan according to which the extension of the Paris-Bourdeaux HSR line towards Spain would only be submitted to debate in 2006 (El País, 2004a). In contrast, the more advanced stage of the Figueres-Perpignan link is shown by the start of its construction in November 2004 (El País, 2004b).

5,000 participants (AHT Gelditu! Elkarlana, 2001b). Within the coalition, the *Asamblea contra el TAV* continued its dynamic activity and played in fact, according to a member of EHNE, a leading role due to its work and mobilization capacities (Larrinaga, 2009, pp. 149–150). In fact, the *Asamblea*'s rejection of considering any alternative to the project prevented this possibility within *Elkarlana* and led to other actors undertaking further initiatives beyond it.

In July 2001, only a month after *Elkarlana* held its first demonstration, its member *Ezker Batua-Berdeak,* hereafter *Ezker Batua*, entered the Basque Government and become responsible of its Ministry of Housing and Social Affairs.[31] *Ezker Batua*'s discrepancy with the project was declared from the outset and the ensuing conflict within the government was settled by stating, in the document of adhesion to the Basque Government, that its design would be undertaken from a sound environmental-legal basis and that its promotion would be addressed by broadening consensus to all government parties (Gobierno Vasco, 2001). Nevertheless, this arrangement did not prevent the tensions between *Ezker Batua* and the other members of the government.[32] While *Ezker Batua*'s Minister demanded the production of a new EIA, Basque Minister Amann emphasized that particular attention would be paid to environmental standards yet no modification of the project's time-scale would be made (Amann, 2001; El Correo, 2001c). In November 2002, *Ezker Batua* went one step further: they proposed a U-shaped alternative to the Vitoria-Irun HSR line that used part of the existing network and, according to its promoters, would be more suited to freight transport and would have a lower cost and environmental impact (El País, 2002b). Again, the Basque Government, through its spokesperson, reaffirmed its commitment to the Y-shaped HSR project and noted that only specific contributions to reduce its environmental impact would be accepted (El País, 2002c).

Ezker Batua's participation in the Basque Government and their proposal of an alternative project placed them in a difficult position within *Elkarlana*, since as mentioned earlier the consideration of alternatives was entirely rejected by the *Asamblea*. Yet *Ezker Batua* was not alone in seeing the need to provide an alternative to the contested project. In July 2003, the trade unions LAB, EHNE, HIRU and ELA, which was not part of *Elkarlana*, presented a report on *Criteria for a Socially Useful Basque Rail Network* (ELA et al., 2003) to the Basque Government, with the aim of encouraging social debate on the rail network that was necessary for Euskal Herria. By 'socially useful' the trade unions understood a

[31] *Ezker Batua* would remain in the Basque Government until 2009.

[32] The other government party, EA, in charge of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, was at first sceptical of the infrastructure due to its environmental impact (Intxaurraga, 2003), but it finally accepted it on the basis of its alleged capacity to support freight transport (El País, 2004c).

network ‘whose social benefits widely exceed any cost (socio-economic, agrarian, environmental...) and that satisfies the maximum number of users according to the frequency and geographical reach of its service’ (ELA et al., 2003, p. 3).

In May 2004, these trade unions, *Ezker Batua* and other organizations converged in a new contestation organization, the *Red por un Tren Social* or Network for a Social Train. As in *Elkarlana*, the *Red*’s membership included the trade unions LAB, EHNE and HIRU, environmental organizations and left-wing political parties, but significantly ELA was now part of it, as opposed to the *Asamblea*. Importantly, the *Red*’s argumentation was informed by the work of a team of academics at the University of the Basque Country, in particular Roberto Bermejo, an expert in sustainable economics who developed a cost-benefit analysis on the Vitoria-Irun HSR line that questioned its social and economic profitability (Bermejo, 2004). Along the lines of the trade union’s 2003 report, the *Red* produced a more detailed study on an adequate rail network for Euskal Herria, which in fact drew directly on Bermejo’s paper in its diagnosis of the current situation and especially the proposal of an alternative rail strategy (Red por un Tren Social, 2006). Despite of its arguably sounder technical basis and ELA’s participation, the *Red* lacked *Elkarlana*’s mobilization capacity – its first demonstration was attended, according to ELA, by around 2,000 participants (ELA, 2005) – and its propositions were dismissed by members of the Basque Government (El País, 2004d; López de Guereñu, 2006a).

The emergence of the *Red por un Tren Social* occurred in fact at a time when the project gained new momentum. In February 2004, shortly after the European Commission’s ‘quick-start programme’ was endorsed and one month before the 2004 Spanish general election, the Spanish Council of Ministers launched the tender process for the project and construction of eight – out of the 15 – sections of the line, for a total sum of 807.4 million Euros (El País, 2004e). Although, as it is explained below, the arrival in power of PSOE involved a temporary setback, the better relations between both governments would provide the final impetus to the start of the constructions works.

5.5.3 A new Spanish central government and negotiations towards an agreement

Three days after a series of terrorist attacks that killed over 190 people in Madrid on 11 March 2004, the PSOE won the general elections and subsequently formed a new Spanish Government. This change initially seemed to entail a new delay. In May, the Ministry of Development suspended the unfinished tender processes started by the previous government that they suspected may had incurred on irregularities, including those related to the

aforementioned eight sections of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line (El País, 2004f). In addition, in June the new Minister announced that they would revise the 'disorganized' Spanish HSR network planned by the previous government (El País, 2004g).[33]

Nevertheless, soon both governments manifested their willingness to cooperate on the project's implementation and established the basis for a future agreement. After a meeting in June with representatives of PSE-EE (PSOE's Basque affiliate), the Spanish Minister announced that the entire Vitoria-Bilbao section would be in tender stage by the end of 2004 and voiced her expectation that the Basque Government got involved in the rest of the line, the Bergara-Irun section in the province of Gipuzkoa (El País, 2004h). According to Basque Minister Amann, in July he sent a collaboration proposal to the Ministry of Development, whereby the latter would undertake the construction of the Vitoria-Bilbao section and the Basque Department of Transport and Public Works would be in charge of developing the Bergara-Irun one (El País, 2004i). In September, he ensured, the Spanish Ministry replied favourably and expressed its readiness to open negotiations on the basis of such a proposal (El País, 2004j).

Thereafter, events unfolded relatively smoothly in the Vitoria-Bilbao section: between September 2004 and January 2005, the Ministry of Development launched the tendering of the construction projects for the whole section, which were all awarded by May 2005. On the other hand, the Bergara-Irun section, on which a formal agreement had yet to be reached, proceeded with more difficulty. In December, in view of the lack of progress towards the agreement, Amann stated that there was a political will to delay the works (El País, 2004k), and in March the following year the Basque Government launched the tender process for the construction works in two sections in Gipuzkoa. However, the Spanish Government appealed this decision and in July the Spanish Constitutional Court suspended the process.[34]

The situation was tempered towards the end of the year, when the debate on the General State Budget for 2006 in the Spanish Congress of Deputies and the Senate (the *Cortes Generales*) provided an opportunity to negotiate an agreement on the Vitoria-Irun line's implementation. By negotiating their support to the PSOE's budget, the Basque party EAJ-PNV sought to secure specific investments in the BAC: particularly the construction of the high-speed rail line, but also the regeneration of the port of Pasaia, near San Sebastián, and the construction of a high-technology research centre (El Correo, 2005a). On 20 October, a preliminary agreement between both parties established that the Basque Government would

[33] Indeed, the new government would immediately embark on the production of the first infrastructure plan for Spain since the 1994 PDI. The draft *Plan Estratégico de Infraestructuras y Transporte* would be presented in December 2004 (Ministerio de Fomento, 2004) and the final plan in July 2005 (Ministerio de Fomento, 2005).

[34] This suspension was ratified by the same court in November 2005.

construct and advance the funding, to be recovered in the future, for the Gipuzkoan section of the line, although the planned investment included in the General State Budget (150 million Euros) would remain the same (El Correo, 2005b). The agreement was concluded at the very last minute in mid-December, right before the debate at the Senate on veto initiatives to the budget (El Correo, 2005c). Although, according to the Basque Government's spokesperson, the final agreement was identical in content to the preliminary one (El País, 2005b), it appears that the novel mode of financing the Gipuzkoan section, based on the particular BAC's financial and taxation regime,[35] represented a stumbling block in the conversations, in particular with the Spanish Ministry of the Economy and Finance (El Correo, 2005c, 2005d).

Although the Spanish Secretary of State for Planning and Infrastructure's noted that the formalization of the agreement required the completion of certain technical and legal procedures (El País, 2006a), the implementation process did not come to a halt. The Spanish Council of Ministers that followed the conclusion of the agreement authorized the tendering for the start of construction works in a 5.2-kilometre section in the Álava province (El País, 2005c), with the corresponding contract being awarded in April 2006. The agreement was finally signed that month, on the 24th, by the Spanish Government, the Basque Government and the Spanish infrastructure manager ADIF, and it in fact consisted of two separate agreements: one established the bases for cooperation between the three actors to implement the Vitoria-Irun HSR line (Gobierno de España et al., 2006), and another detailed the tasks entrusted to the Basque Government in this implementation (Ministerio de Fomento et al., 2006). The foreseen total construction cost was 4,221 million Euros, of which 1,642 would be advanced by the Basque Government. In addition, the signature of the agreement involved the withdrawal of the Spanish Ministry's appeal to the Constitutional Court (El País, 2006b).

With local protests taking place over and after the summer (El Correo, 2006a, 2006b), no ceremony was held to mark the start of construction of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line in Luko, in the outskirts of Vitoria (El Correo, 2008a). In November 2006, ADIF sources confirmed that the successful tenderers had begun the works in September (El Correo, 2006c).[36]

In short, *the process between the approval of the Estudio Informativo and the Plan Territorial Sectorial and the start of construction was not devoid of difficulties for the promoters of the project*. Contestation in the Basque Autonomous Community and particularly the difficult relations between the Spanish and Basque governments hindered its

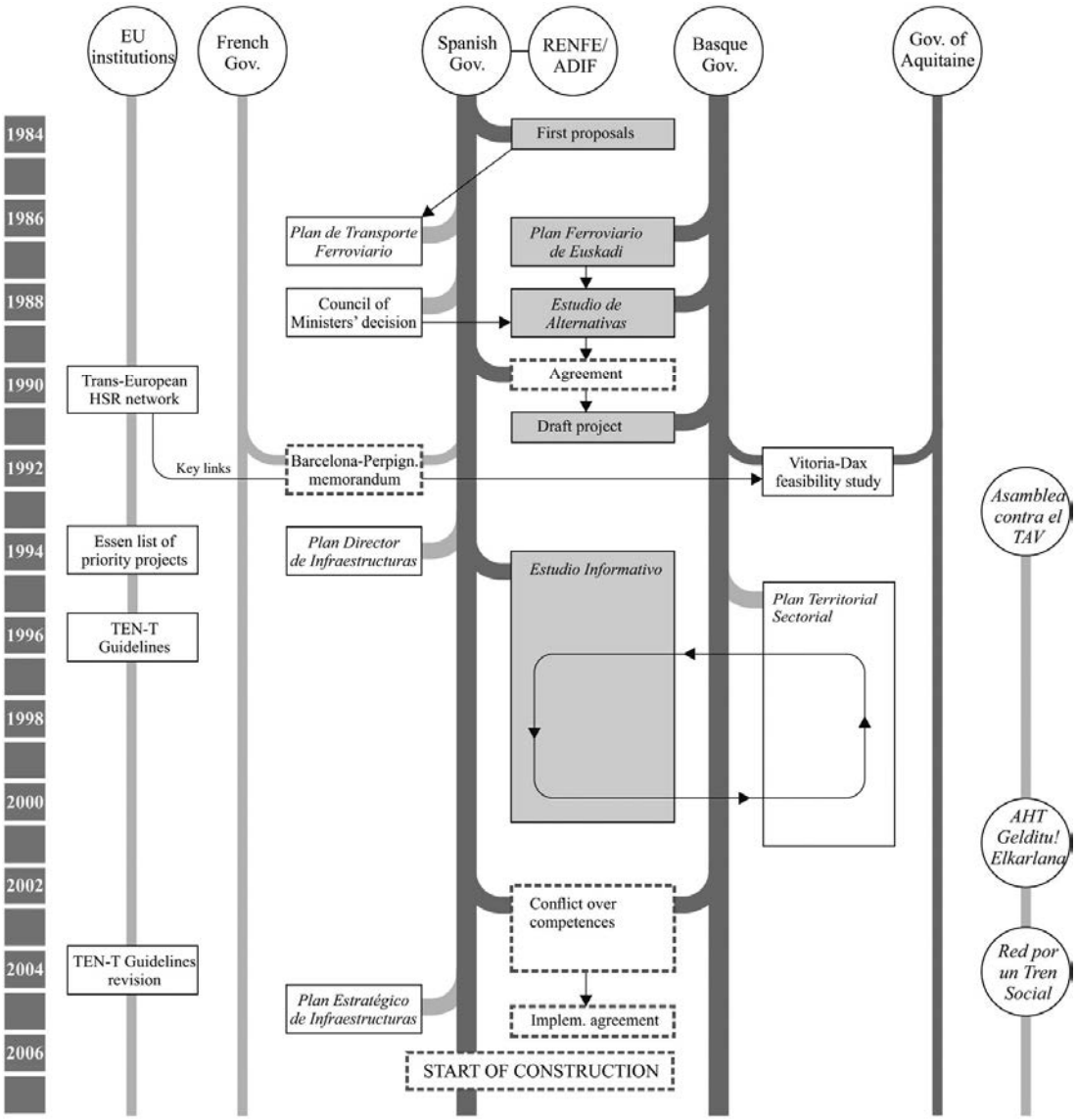
[35] See Section 7.1.1.
[36] In the section under the responsibility of the Basque Government, construction works would start in April 2008 (El Correo, 2008b).

smooth implementation. With the change of government in Spain, these relations were eased and cooperation between both governments resulted in a formal implementation agreement. The start of construction in the Vitoria-Bilbao section, however, was not followed by an uneventful period of smooth project implementation. Rather, it opened a new, extensive phase that witnessed an intensification of contestation, ultimately involving attacks by the Basque terrorist group ETA, increased EU action on Trans-European Networks, and financing uncertainties as a result of the economic downturn started at the end of the past decade. This ongoing period, not covered in the case study, is addressed until 2014 in the concluding chapter, which also draws the possible implications for this research's results.

5.6 Conclusion

The policy process of the Vitoria-Irun high-speed rail line thus lasted over two decades since the formulation of the first studies in the mid-1980s until the start of construction in the mid-2000s (see Figure 11). The basic characteristics of the line were defined in a relatively short period after Basque actors sought to improve the Spanish Government's proposals for the Iberian track gauge network in the Basque Autonomous Community. The Spanish Government's acceptance of a Y-shaped route – now in UIC gauge and with high-speed design parameters – was not immediately accompanied by a determined promotion of the line. Nevertheless, this early 1990s period consolidated the importance of the line in Spanish infrastructure planning and in the developing EU trans-European transport infrastructure policy. An extended period followed in which the definition of the project was finalized through greater interaction between the Spanish Government and Basque state and non-state actors. The conclusion of this phase in fact led to increased Basque actors' activity concerning the high-speed rail line, which translated into a conflict with the Spanish Government over the competences to develop it and intensified contestation. A new Spanish Government finally provided the opportunity to overcome the tensions between governments, reach an agreement on the implementation of the line and start its construction.

Figure 11. Chronology of the Vitoria-Irun high-speed rail line policy process.



In general terms, the process was characterized by an ongoing interaction between the central and the regional government. This relationship was uneven over time and not without tensions: it resulted in, consecutively, a productive stage in the late 1980s, unequal activity based on different priorities, frequent cooperation over several years to finalize policy formulation, an outright conflict over its implementation, and eventual cooperation and agreement on the division of responsibilities. Arguably, as the policy process advanced the context lost importance and the policy dynamics focused on the project itself. The selection of the Vitoria-Dax link as a key section of the planned trans-European HSR network largely defined its eligibility to EU support, with the exception of the 2003 Commission's 'quick start programme' and occasional references to EU funds, which nevertheless were scarcely used up to 2006 (see Section 7.3.1). Similarly, the inclusion of the Vitoria-Irun line in the

1994 *Plan Director de Infraestructuras* completed its integration in Spanish infrastructure planning. In addition, both the involvement of the Basque Government through the production of the *Plan Territorial Sectorial* and subsequent conflict over competences and the increasing contestation to the project contributed to the dominance of the central-regional dynamics since the late 1990s.

The description of the policy process permits, furthermore, to identify the three themes on which this research focuses on. The anti-major infrastructure approach of the contestation to the project contrasted with the overwhelming support of state actors at the Basque, Spanish and European levels, which saw the new high-speed rail line between Vitoria and Irun as a key opportunity to foster development and growth. Moreover, the continuous activity of the Basque Government and the policy initiatives at EU level reveal attempts to achieve influence in a context where the Spanish Government seems to have a privileged position to determine the development of such a line. Thirdly, both discourse production and the exercise of power cannot be fully understood without consideration of space. Basque actors regarded the Vitoria-Irun link as key to positioning the BAC within an integrating Europe; the Spanish Government seemed more concerned with modernizing the network within the Spanish territory; and EU actors, in particular the Commission, sought to develop a key link of a network that, by shaping a unified European space, would provide the required physical support to the Single Market. In addition, the frequent reference to levels of government and the relations between them also reveal a spatial differentiation in the policy process. The following three chapters apply the analytical framework presented in Chapter 3 to the policy process on the Vitoria-Irun HSR line, in order to investigate the production, reproduction and transformation of discourse, the exercise of episodic agency power, and the spatiality of policy-making in the case studied.

6 Hegemony and antagonism in rail infrastructure policy: discourse, story-lines, and possibilities for convergence

The case described in the previous chapter denotes the existence of a number of different attitudes towards the development of a high-speed rail line between Vitoria and Irun. Throughout the policy process, the main political and economic actors involved have supported the development of the high-speed rail line, although there were certainly tensions and disagreements between them. Moreover, a strong opposition emerged early in the process and especially developed in the years preceding the start of the works. A discourse analytical approach involves uncovering the construction of the transport problem that underpins the behaviour of these actors and explaining how this construction is created, reproduced, and modified within a social interactive context. The first research question of this thesis seeks to clarify the extent to which those different attitudes may be accommodated under a single, hegemonic discourse or whether some of them are pushed towards an antagonistic 'outside'.

Consequently, this chapter presents an analysis of the discursive dynamics related to the policy process of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line, since the first studies until the 2006 implementation agreement between the Government of Spain, the Basque Government and infrastructure manager ADIF. According to the analytical framework previously developed, the policy process around this line should be understood as involving a series of discursive practices through which a discursive order is created, reproduced, and transformed. As such, this order is not internal or exclusive to the case: although it may be modified through the latter, it is entangled in wider discursive dynamics (e.g. concerning the development of a European transport infrastructure policy or subnational responses to the challenges of European integration). Analysis must therefore move carefully between these wider dynamics and those specifically related to the case studied. However, although the wider dynamics are addressed in order to permit the understanding of the case, they are validated insofar as they are in concordance with the data obtained to conduct the case study. In other words, they are consistent with this case study, yet further analyses of other cases may qualify them.

The chapter is structured in four main sections, focusing first on a description of the discursive order and ending with an analysis of argumentative practices through which it may have been transformed. The first two sections describe the two discourses – and its related story-lines, coalitions, and practices – that have been hegemonic during the development of the high-speed rail line, the first based on a technocratic conception of rail infrastructure planning and the second one underpinned by a developmental notion of

transport infrastructure provision. The latter was in turn articulated through a series of story-lines that – it is argued – reflect the existing differences within such a discourse. The third section focuses on the discourse that framed the contestation to the project and introduces the antagonism with the hegemonic discourse, in terms of both content and practices, which prevailed in its first stages. Finally, the chapter focuses on a particular episode of the discursive dynamics around the project, which involved an attempt by the contestation movement to bridge this antagonism and effectively influence the policy process. The examination of this episode is sought to clarify not just the extent to which the hegemonic discourse may be challenged, but also the possibility of shifting the border between the hegemonic discourse and its 'other'.

6.1 The technocratic rail transport policy discourse

In the mid-1980s, at the time the first proposals to develop a new rail line in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) were carried out, a discourse based on technocratic and transport principles dominated transport infrastructure policy in the Spanish nation-state. Such a discourse placed experts (fundamentally engineers) at the centre of developing transport infrastructure policy and saw infrastructure development largely from a transport perspective, rather than economic, social, or environmental. Based on the discourse analysis, this technocratic discourse may be ascribed the following characteristics:

a. *Centrality of infrastructure to transport.* Although there is a recognition of the importance of transport to economic development, infrastructure planning is seen fundamentally as responding to transport problems.
a. *The state is conceived as having a prominent role* in transport infrastructure development.
b. *Efficient use of resources*. In view of limited resources, these should be used efficiently. This involves a preference for investing on existing infrastructure over new infrastructure and a cautious stance concerning resource-intensive high-speed rail.
c. *Rail as a specialized mode of transport*. In contrast to roads, which provide a generalized accessibility, rail transport should be limited to those cases where it can be competitive, i.e. to those corridors with the high level of demand that its high capacity requires. In order to increase its competitiveness, the reduction of travel times plays an important role.

d. Due to the technical and resource-conscious approach, this perspective is particularly sensitive to *the differences between high-speed rail and conventional rail*.
e. As the focus is on transport, infrastructure planning is driven by *demand management* rather than provision of offer.
f. The use of *cost-benefit analysis* as an essential policy tool, usually excluding regional development and environmental impacts.
g. The concept of '*bottleneck*' is central in the policy vocabulary, referring to those sections with capacity problems that need to be removed in order to homogenise the operational features of the network.

This technocratic discourse based on the work of technical experts was fully institutionalized in the Spanish nation-state in the mid-1980s, as it was translated to specific institutional arrangements and policies. Rail infrastructure planning was the responsibility of the Ministry of Transport, Tourism and Communications,[1] and it was largely developed by teams in this Ministry and INECO, a publicly owned engineering consultancy firm. In fact, Emilio Pérez Touriño, former Head of the Minister's Cabinet (1985-1986) and Under-Secretary (1986-1991) of that ministry, pointed out that in those years there was an important participation of INECO in infrastructure planning and a significant interchange of staff between the firm and the ministry (Interview 6). Yet the institutionalization of the discourse was best illustrated by the *Plan de Transporte Ferroviario* (PTF) or Rail Transport Plan (Ministerio de Transportes, Turismo y Comunicaciones, 1987). Effectively a rail infrastructure plan, it proposed an efficient use of the available resources and the modernization of rail transport by maximizing the performance of its favourable characteristics. More significantly for the purpose of this chapter, it mobilized the story-line that would initiate rail infrastructure policy in the second half of the 1980s.

6.1.1 The 'selective modernization of rail' story-line

The emergence of a story-line on the modernization of the Spanish rail system has its origins in the uncertain situation of the Spanish rail system in the mid-1980s. The interviewees involved in Spanish rail infrastructure planning at the time mentioned the backwardness and obsolescence of the rail network (Interviews 6 and 11), coupled with the exponential

[1] A separate department, the Ministry of Public Works and Urbanism, was responsible for road infrastructure planning. In 1991, both ministries were merged into the Ministry of Public Works and Transport.

increase of RENFE's deficit, the then owner and operator or the Spanish rail network (Interview 10). Government's efforts at the time were aimed at the contraction of the network: the Contract-Program 1984-1986, agreed between RENFE and the Government of Spain, had involved the closure of over 900 km rail lines in Spain (El País, 1984) in order to contain the deficit of the company.

From a concern with the reduction of services, a new narrative emerged that envisaged the solution to the rail problem in Spain through the modernization of the network in those sections where it is competitive. This modernization involved speeds sufficiently high to compete with other modes (around 160-200 km/h) but, as two of the key players in this process recognize, at that time there was no intention to, following the French TGV experience, develop lines with speeds of over 250 km/h (Interviews 6 and 10).[2] Interestingly, the increase of cross-border transport as a result of European economic integration – Spain would formally join the European Economic Community in 1986 – does not seem either to have been a significant concern in the story-line. The PTF did not propose any measure in this respect apart from the extension and improvement of border stations, and Antonio Monfort, Executive Advisor of the Minister between 1985 and 1988 and considered the father of the PTF by two of the interviewees (Interviews 5 and 6), notes that during the preparation of the PTF there was not a special approach to this issue and does not remember there was a prediction of traffic growth across the French border (Interview 10). The following statement in a specialized journal by Abel Caballero, the relevant minister between 1985 and 1988, provides a good synthesis of this story-line:

> 'It was about elucidating whether rail had a future or not in our country, whether it was going to continue stagnating or, even, whether it was going to disappear. It is clear that a rail system like the current one, with intermediate speeds, would not have a great future nor would be able to compete with fast transport modes, such as road or air transport. Therefore, it is about placing rail in the context where it belongs, as a specialized transport mode, with high-speed passenger transport in intermediate distances, which entails going back to the old concept of rail, placing it at the end of the 20th century, beginning of the 21st, making this decision of speed, of quality, of comfort and of specialization, and plan it. This is, in short, what has been done with the PTF' (Caballero, 1987).

The discourse coalition that formed around this story-line was composed notably by officials from the Ministry of Transport, Tourism and Communications, but also by other – largely Spain-wide – state and non-state actors. According to two of these officials, the Ministry of the Economy and Finance shared this perspective of selectively modernizing the rail network

[2] Nevertheless, the PTF did consider maximum speeds of 250 km/h in two cases: the new access to Andalucía, which would later become the Madrid-Sevilla HSR line, and the new access to the north-northwest of Spain.

(Interviews 6 and 10). Monfort notes that there was an implicit agreement between both Ministries that consisted in making selective investments in rail as long as the deficit was controlled (Interview 6). Although initially slightly sceptical about this approach (El País, 1986b), the Spanish newspaper *El País* published, after the award of the contract for the construction of the new line that would eliminate the Despeñaperros bottleneck – the most important bottleneck of the network according to the PTF –, an editorial that clearly reproduced this story-line (El País, 1987c).

This story-line has a direct relevance to the case studied since it gave impetus to the project that would be the origin of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line. The priority of the PTF in terms of infrastructure was to solve all the existing bottlenecks (*estrangulamientos*), defined as those sections 'that show utilization ratios higher than 100%' (Ministerio de Transportes, Turismo y Comunicaciones, 1987, p. 17). The Plan identified a bottleneck in the line that linked Bilbao with the rest of the network, specifically at the Orduña pass, where this line had a single track and important difficulties on its route. It thus proposed a new line between Bilbao and Vitoria designed for speeds of 160 km/h, instead of the preferred 200 km/h for new lines in the PTF, due to the topographical difficulties of the area. Monfort mentioned that this proposal was indeed motivated, first, by the capacity and operation problems of the existing line through Orduña and, second, by the fact that it was politically welcomed in the region (Interview 10).[3]

A discourse that placed experts at the centre of rail infrastructure planning thus created the conditions for the first proposal of a new rail line in the Basque territory, which would eventually become the transnational rail link studied in this thesis. The difficult situation of the Spanish rail system led to the emergence of a story-line based on the selective modernization of this system that provided the stimulus for undertaking the project. Significantly, European integration – in particular the entry of Spain in the European Economic Community in 1986 and the upcoming establishment of the Single Market in 1993 – did not have a discernible presence in this story-line. However, whilst the PTF was being prepared a number of story-lines based on a fundamentally different discourse were emerging that did integrate concerns on European integration and would radically reshape the project.

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[3] The Bilbao-Vitoria link had already been object of a 1984 study (RENFE and Europroject, 1984), which explicitly recognized the Orduña bottleneck and considered design criteria that would allow speeds of 200 km/h. This early concern suggests that, although the technocratic discourse dominated certain technical circles, at that time it may have lacked a wider discourse coalition that triggered the project.

6.2 The developmental transport infrastructure policy discourse

In the second half of the 1980s a number of developments of subnational, national, and European relevance started to shape a new discourse on transport infrastructure planning that substantially differed from the technocratic discourse addressed in the previous section. Rather than seeing rail infrastructure from a technical and transport-centred point of view, it considered its provision as essential to economic development within an economically integrating Europe. The emergence of this discourse can be better explained through the different story-lines through which it was articulated; nevertheless, before addressing them it is necessary to detail its defining characteristics. In fact, this developmental discourse shares many of them with Hajer's (2000) 'Europe of Flows' policy discourse, notably its belief in infrastructure as a key policy tool for economic development and its commitments to market integration and ecological modernization:

a. It sees *infrastructure as central to economic development*, in particular by promoting the conditions for economic development and productivity through investment and the reduction of transport costs.
b. *The state is conceived as a catalyst* for economic and transport infrastructure development. Although its role is not necessarily reduced, the involvement of the private sector is sought.
c. The *differences between high-speed rail and conventional rail are less emphasized* than in the technocratic discourse; the former mode is indeed often seen as a modernized rail.
d. As the focus is on infrastructure as a tool for economic development, planning is driven by *infrastructure provision*, rather than by demand management.
e. Infrastructure provision is in turn seen as contributing to *enhance both the economic competitiveness and the balanced development* of a certain space.
f. It is committed to *ecological modernization*. As such, it considers transport infrastructure development as potentially contributing to economic growth and environmental protection at the same time.
g. The policy vocabulary is varied, from *network-related concepts* such as 'missing links' or 'key links' to *spatial development concepts* such as 'development corridor' or 'cohesion'.

As it is explained in more detail throughout this chapter, the institutionalization of this discourse determined the change from the initial Bilbao-Vitoria proposal to the Vitoria-Irun HSR line. Generally speaking, the developmental discourse has dominated policy-making,

although its relationship with the technocratic discourse, in particular in the Spanish arena, has been complex. Since 1991, Spanish transport infrastructure planning, including rail, has been the responsibility of a single ministry. Its first infrastructure plan, the *Plan Director de Infraestructuras 1993-2007* or PDI (Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Transportes y Medio Ambiente, 1994), sought to integrate the new high-speed rail developments and the increasing investment in infrastructure in a coherent and multimodal approach through an important planning effort (Interviews 10 and 11) led by the aforementioned 'father' of the PTF (Interview 6). Concerning the high-speed rail line between Vitoria and Irun, due to its high cost and technical difficulties the proposal was seen with reluctance by the planning team of the ministry (Interview 6) and RENFE (El País, 1991b). In 1992, INECO produced a cost-benefit analysis of the project which estimated a negative financial profitability and a social and economic profitability that, although positive, was lower than the 6% recommended by the Ministry (Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Transportes and INECO, 1992). However, the influence of cost-benefit analyses seems to have been limited since, as Pérez Touriño notes, they were produced as part of the project documentation, never a priori (Interview 6).

The developmental discourse, nevertheless, was not uniform. Different discourse coalitions can be identified that mobilized a number of story-lines and, while sharing a similar understanding of the transport infrastructure problem, steered the project in different directions. The differences between story-lines influenced, on the one hand, the formulation of policy (e.g. the features of the line such as its maximum speed or track gauge) and, on the other hand, its implementation due to differences in priorities. The remainder of this section elaborates on these story-lines.

6.2.1 Avoiding marginalization in an integrating Europe: a subnational story-line

In parallel to the story-line that advocated a selective modernization of the Spanish rail network, another one – more conscious of European integration – emerged among subnational actors. In the light of the upcoming establishment of the Single Market in 1993 and the concentration of important investments in the south (the Sevilla Expo '92 and the Madrid-Sevilla HSR line) and east (the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona) of the nation-state, Basque actors, especially from the moderate nationalist political parties and the business sector, expressed a clear concern of becoming economically marginalized from Europe's development axes and thus miss the potential benefits of European integration. This concern had clear roots in the traditionally productive and dynamic economy of the region (Interview

15; Atienza, 1989), but also in the pro-European stance that Basque moderate nationalism adopted since the first half of the 20th century, which saw Europe as a source of economic opportunities and of support for their self-government aspirations and their cultural and linguistic promotion (Keating, 2000b).[4] The possibility of such a productive and entrepreneurial society becoming isolated from European economic integration constituted a 'dystopian myth'[5] that was at some point characterized as leading to a 'dark future' (Amann, 2003b; El Correo, 2003).

Accordingly, this new story-line emphasized the necessity of developing a rail network, fundamentally for freight transport, that integrated the region and the port of Bilbao in the European economy and prevented its marginalization. Significantly, not only the connection with the European network was important but also the promotion of an Atlantic development axis with its core in the BAC-Aquitaine cross-border region (Ardanza, 1989). In fact, 'development corridor' or 'development axis' are key concepts in the vocabulary of this story-line. In a 1989 interview, the president of the Chamber of Commerce of Bilbao expressed that they had been thinking about this issue for several years when a DATAR report that demonstrated the existence of an axis of economic dynamism in Europe prompted them to make this concern public (Información, 1989).[6] The editors of the Bilbao-based newspaper *El Correo* expressed well the characteristics of this story-line in an editorial titled 'Not missing the train':

> 'Not only the Basque Country – natural link with much of continental Europe and Great Britain – but also all the Cantabrian coast, seem condemned to wait much more. There is a risk of becoming disconnected from that development axis already evident in the Cataluña-Madrid-Sevilla triangle, because communications remain the basis of any development and the Basque Country, in particular, is another natural bridge towards the countries of the European Economic Community. There are here, besides, additional factors the strengthening of which will be possible if a good rail network is in place: in particular, the Port of Bilbao, poorly linked, by land, with the rest of Spain and Portugal and, by rail, badly linked too with Europe' (El Correo, 1988e).

As it was mentioned before, Basque moderate nationalism and the business sector were key actors in the articulation and promotion of this story-line, in particular, the Basque

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[4] Apart from new political opportunities, European integration has indeed provided a new 'symbolic realm' through which nationalist claims can be advanced (Keating, 2000b, pp. 30–31). As Bray and Keating argue, it has created 'a new discursive space in which ideas of identity can be linked to a transnational order, allowing Basques and other nationalists to portray themselves as one of the "peoples" of Europe alongside the state-nations' (2013, p. 141).

[5] A narrative that 'makes people cohere to avoid a catastrophe' (Hajer, 2003, p. 105).

[6] This report is very likely Brunet's (1989), which proposed a core-periphery conceptualization of the European space that introduced the influential spatial metaphor of the 'Blue Banana' but also represented most of the Atlantic regions as '*finisterres*'.

Nationalist Party (EAJ-PNV) (Amann, 2005; Bergara, 1989) and the Chamber of Commerce of Bilbao (El Correo, 1988f; Información, 1989). Yet apart from these two actors the discourse coalition had a wide membership, mainly related to the BAC: centre/left-wing political parties PSE-PSOE (El Correo, 1989e) and EE (El Correo, 1989d), later merged into the PSE-EE; business associations (El Correo, 1988g, 1988h); trade unions (Muñoz, 1989); media outlets (El Correo, 2006d, 1988e); and academics (del Castillo, 1989). Importantly, actors beyond the borders of the BAC have also shared and practiced this story-line. These largely included both business organizations (El Correo, 1989f; El País, 2004l) and regional governments (El País, 2002d, 1988c) from French and Spanish Atlantic regions. Although, as it will be explained below, new story-lines emerged throughout the lifetime of the rail project, the marginalization story-line continued to be articulated by members of this coalition.

The emergence of this story-line led to a series of practices that sought to influence the development of a new rail network in the BAC. An early reproduction of it was the Basque government's proposal of a "Y" route that would improve the link between Bilbao and both Vitoria – and consequently the Spanish network – and the French border (Departamento de Política Territorial y Transportes and SENER, 1987). As shown in Chapter 5, the solution proposed by the Spanish government to the integration of Bilbao in the Spanish railway network – and included in the PTF – did not suffice to improve the connection with the European network. [7] The further study of the Basque Government's proposal was agreed with RENFE in July 1988, but this did not alter another important issue: the different track gauge on both sides of the border. Actors who practiced this story-line frequently maintained that the adoption of the UIC gauge in the Spanish network would facilitate cross-border transport and effectively integrate it in the European network. At that time, however, and in consistency with the technocratic discourse, the Spanish Ministry of Transport was reluctant to carry out this change due to its cost and technical difficulties.

This attitude was soon to change when in December 1988 the Government of Spain made the landmark decision to introduce the UIC track gauge in new high-speed rail lines and prioritize the development of these lines in the Madrid-Sevilla and Madrid-Barcelona-French border corridors (Ministerio de Transportes, Turismo y Comunicaciones, 1988). This

[7] Apart from developments directly related to the cross-border rail link, this story-line led to a series of other relevant discursive practices. The *Plan Europa 93*, presented by the Basque Government in September 1988, proposed a number of extraordinary investments in infrastructure, including the "Y" line, in order to promote the development of the BAC within an economically integrated Europe (Gobierno Vasco, 1989). Moreover, actors from the discourse coalition engaged in a series of networks in order to lobby for an Atlantic transport corridor (Interviews 15 and 25; see also above on actors from Atlantic regions).

decision, which would significantly influence the Basque Government's proposal of the "Y" line, is indeed the materialization of a new story-line that emerged largely among central state actors and that would signify an important change in Spanish rail infrastructure policy.

6.2.2 High-speed rail as key to modernization and catching up with Europe: a nation-state story-line

In the Spanish nation-state, the modernization of the rail system had already been proposed under the technocratic discourse explained previously. However, towards the end of the 1980s a remarkable cognitive shift occurred that linked this modernization with the overall development of a nation-state that had just joined the European Economic Community in 1986. The poor state of the rail – and, more broadly, transport – system started to be seen not just in transport terms (e.g. as inefficient or non-competitive) but as a hindrance to economic growth in an integrated Europe (Interviews 6 and 11). Spurred by the availability of European funds through the Structural Funds and, especially, the Cohesion Fund (Interviews 10 and 11), a story-line emerged that claimed the necessity to modernize the outdated Spanish infrastructures in order to catch up with the other EEC economies. Furthermore, high-speed rail and the introduction of the UIC gauge were central to this effort.

The emphasis in this story-line, in contrast to the previous one, was not so much on promoting economic integration through the establishment of transport infrastructure links, but on providing transport infrastructure that, on the one hand, fostered economic competitiveness and, on the other, contributed to balanced development throughout the Spanish territory. This second aspect became first evident with the Madrid-Sevilla HSR line, which, although it had its origins in a technical solution to the most important capacity problem of the Spanish network (Ministerio de Transportes, Turismo y Comunicaciones, 1987; also Interviews 6 and 10), became not only a sign of modernization but also an instrument to promote the development of southern Spanish region Andalucía (Borrell, 1993; also Interview 6). This story-line, with its underlying assumption of higher accessibility leading to economic development, masks the related uncertainties introduced in Section 2.1.1, apart from underestimating the high cost of achieving such accessibility. Both the dimensions of economic competitiveness and balanced development became part of the same narrative about the modernization of the nation-state, as the following statement by Magdalena Álvarez, Minister of Development between 2004 and 2009, in the Congress of Deputies shows:

> 'As I have expressed on other occasions, infrastructures are for this government an instrument to enhance the competitiveness of our economy, of our productive system and also an instrument of spatial structuring

> [*vertebración del territorio*], with the clear objective of promoting our internal cohesion and contributing to the development of the less favoured area. In short, it is an instrument at the service of the modernization of the country and the quality of life of its citizens' (Congreso de los Diputados, 2004).

As noted in Section 5.1, according to certain authors rail infrastructure planning in Spain had been driven by a political logic that promoted the development of a radial network (Bel, 2011, 2012; del Moral Ruiz et al., 2007). The evidence collected for this particular case suggests that, at least since the early 2000s, the 'balanced development' or 'structuring' (*vertebración*) – a term also used by proponents of this story-line – rationale has been more prevalent than the radial one. The provision of an infrastructure network that stretches across the Spanish territory might be the outcome of the regional demands that accompany the State of Autonomies (see Section 5.1), but it might also stem from a long-standing issue in Spanish politics: the difficulty to constitute an integrated nation-state territory (see Linz, 1973).[8] The issue was probably most firmly tackled during Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975) – Erik Swyngedouw (2007b), for instance, has explained how Franco's hydraulic politics were predicated upon national territorial integration – yet it remains important in the face of the current territorial tensions in Spain, in particular concerning Catalonia.[9]

A broad and long-standing discourse coalition formed around this story-line, fundamentally of a Spanish scope. Although this approach was not understood by the technical 'core' of the technocratic discourse (Interviews 6 and 10), it was shared and reproduced by notably the nation-state's political majority (Álvarez, 2006; Borrell, 1993), main media outlets (El País, 1988d, 2005d), major construction companies (Interview 24), and academics (Izquierdo, 2003). Significantly, it was initially questioned by left-wing political actors such as *Izquierda Unida* (El Correo, 1989g) and trade union CCOO (Santiso and Núñez, 1989, 1990), who mainly criticized the marginalization of the conventional network and therefore of large areas of the country. However, after the success of the Madrid-Sevilla HSR line, CCOO saw the extension of the high-speed rail network – fundamentally towards the north-west of Spain – as an opportunity to foster balanced development (Interview 27). In line with this, numerous Spanish regional actors demanded their territories to be included in the network (see El País, 1990b, for an early instance);[10]

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[8] In fact, the relevance of the term *vertebración* for territorial integration is also shown by its use by Catalanists (*vertebració*) to construct their Catalan and Mediterranean regional spaces (Prytherch, 2010).

[9] In May 2008, three months after the Madrid-Barcelona HSR line become fully operational, the then Minister for Development stated, with regard to high-speed rail, that 'we are sewing Spain with steel wires. That is the real way to build a country (*hacer país*), to defend the unity of Spain: to sew it with steel wires' (Álvarez, 2008).

[10] According to two former senior officials of the Ministry, these demands, in a federalizing state such as Spain, have favoured the creation of such an extensive high-speed rail network (Interviews 6, 11).

however, these requests may respond to other story-lines within this developmental discourse, such as the marginalization one in the case of the BAC, rather than to a Spain-wide modernization through high-speed rail.

This story-line was reproduced through a series of discursive practices that were to gradually promote the development of a high-speed rail network in UIC track gauge, which in 2005 was planned to reach around 10,000 km by 2020 (El País, 2005e). These policy decisions, in particular the aforementioned 1988 Government of Spain's decision, were to significantly change the "Y" line proposed by the Basque Government. The basic "Y" route was kept, but it was now designed for high speed (250 km/h for mixed traffic) and in UIC track gauge (Departamento de Política Territorial y Transportes and INECO, 1989a). Also, the new design parameters involved the proposal of a new section between Beasain and Irun, instead of adapting the existing one. This reshaped proposal did not conflict in principle with the marginalization story-line, as it improved the connection with the French border and allowed goods traffic. The new "Y" line was subsequently included in the PDI, which integrated it in the high-speed rail network through the Navarrese corridor towards the south-east and the cross-border connection.

Nevertheless, in spite of the emphasis of this story-line on catching-up with Europe, the network connection with Europe does not seem to have been a priority, at least in its early stages. The emphasis, as Pérez Touriño notes, laid on the domestic network rather than on its borders:

> 'I think I am not wrong if I tell you that at the beginning it is a decision [that of developing high-speed rail lines in UIC track gauge] that has a component of necessity to modernize our infrastructures to be in Europe and not to miss the train with Europe, but as an internal matter, as a matter of modernizing our network' (Interview 6).

However, at this time a third story-line which more explicitly addressed the trans-European dimension was also gathering support and leading to some relevant European policy developments.

6.2.3 Towards a friction-less European space: a European story-line

During the intense European integration developments that took place in the second half of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, a new story-line emerged that claimed the necessity of

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This possible influence, however, corresponds to what in this thesis has been termed 'episodic agency power' and hence will be studied, for the case of the BAC, in the next chapter.

facilitating the free movement of persons and goods in order to complete the Single Market and maximize its benefits. This involves the development of the appropriate transport infrastructure in order to reduce transport costs and travel times across the European space. The specific advantages of high-speed rail are a significant reduction of travel times, its high capacity, and the provision of a high-quality service (CEC, 1991, p. 9). This story-line clearly reflects the 'EU rationale' addressed in Section 2.1.1 and is the one that most closely resembles Hajer's (2000) policy discourse on a 'Europe of Flows'. The important difference is that here this European discourse is conceptualized as one of the several story-lines through which a wider developmental discourse is articulated.

This story-line therefore places emphasis on trans-European relations, yet it is important to highlight a further difference with the other story-lines: the centrality of the concepts of 'network' and 'key link'. The network constitutes the physical support of the free movement of passengers and goods and therefore of the Single Market. As the 1993 White Paper put it, '[n]etworks are the arteries of the single market. They are the lifeblood of competitiveness, and their malfunction is reflected in lost opportunities to create new markets and hence in a level of job creation that falls short of our potential' (CEC, 1993, p. 75). In order for the network to be operational, the completion of certain key links was deemed necessary (CEC, 1991, p. 12). Alfonso González Finat, former Head of Unit (1991-1995) of the 'network' sub-group of the High Level Group on a trans-European HSR network (see Section 5.3.1), notes that in particular those key links that are cross-border pose a special difficulty because of nation-state planning differences, relatively limited national attention, and interoperability problems (Interview 4). The progressive development of the network, including its key links would generate a 'network effect' that would translate to increases in international traffic flows (High-Level Group "The European High-Speed Train Network," 1995). The relevance of both concepts is expressed by the description of the High Level Group's work by a former European Commission official involved in it:

> 'After that year of work, [...] I think that – how to put it – the important idea was to present a map of Europe. And then, when we started to talk about the fact that it was evident that, especially bearing in mind the budget of the European Community at that time, there was no money for it, and at some point the idea came up that maybe the financial – but also the technical – contribution should focus on what was called 'key links'' (Interview 5).

The cross-border link between Spain and France on the Atlantic side had been considered one of these 'key links' (Vitoria-Dax) already in the first master plan for the network proposed by the High Level Group (CEC, 1991). From a European perspective, González Finat sees the function of the Vitoria-Dax as more appropriate for freight transport, since the high distances between large urban areas in its corridor (e.g. Madrid-Paris) makes high-

speed passenger transport uncompetitive (Interview 4). This is in principle compatible with a mixed-traffic Vitoria-Irun "Y" link, although he notes that the European Comission maintained that high-speed rail was meant for long-distance relations rather than those between Bilbao, San Sebastián and Vitoria (Interview 4). Particularly important in this key link was the track gauge difference between the Spanish and French networks. Etienne Davignon, the European Coordinator for TEN-T Priority Project 3 appointed by the European Commission in 2005, stated in his first progress report on the project that the Vitoria-Dax link 'is unquestionably the section of the Atlantic corridor that shows the greatest European added value, since it will allow breaking the "bolt" imposed by the gauge between the two networks' (Davignon, 2006, p. 6).[11]

This story-line was mobilized primarily by European actors such as the European Commission (CEC, 1991) or Europe-wide business networks (CER, 1989; ERT, 1984), although references to the necessity to overcome the cross-border transport difficulties between Spain and France in order to achieve a fully integrated Single Market have been occasionally made by other actors such as the Basque newspaper *El Correo* (1988i), the pro-European Basque organization Eurobask (González Zorrilla, 2003), and a Madrid-based academic (Izquierdo, 2003). In any case, as the development of the project moved forward a new one story-line emerged which, underpinned by the principles of ecological modernization, integrated the varied set of relations that the previous story-lines advocated separately.

6.2.4 Bringing the story-lines together: towards sustainable spatial structuring

Towards the end of the 1990s and beginning of 2000s, as the Vitoria-Irun HSR line gradually moved from policy formulation to implementation, the actors involved in the diverse discourse coalitions explained above practiced a story-line that, if it did not bring them together, approximated them. On the one hand, the high-speed rail line started to be seen as supporting a number of spatial relations of different reach at the same time. It would, first, help constitute the trans-European HSR network, second, facilitate the relations between the Iberian peninsula and the rest of Europe and, third, provide a fast means of communication between the main cities of the BAC. This physical support was commonly named by Spanish speaking actors *vertebración del territorio* or spatial structuring, a concept that links the provision of a physical (infra)structure with the achievement of a

[11] In fact, the track gauge difference is central to this story-line, as the aforementioned former European Commission official emphasized (Interview 5).

balanced regional development. On the other hand, the environmental dimension of the discourse gained prominence as the high-speed rail line became regarded as fostering economic development whilst contributing to sustainable transport, in particular by promoting modal shift from air and road transport to rail. In this respect, the story-line reflected the more general developments exemplified by the 2001 Gothenburg sustainable development strategy (European Council, 2001) and the subsequent White Paper on a sustainable transport system (CEC, 2001). In short, according to this story-line, which may be termed that of 'sustainable spatial structuring', the new Vitoria-Irun HSR line would promote balanced and sustainable development on a series of different spatial scales.

The manner this story-line was articulated varied according to the wide membership of the corresponding discourse coalition. In terms of spatial structuring, it was mobilized mainly by nation-state and subnational actors since EU-related actors tended to emphasize trans-European relations more than other types of relations (see González Finat's abovementioned remark on the use of the line for intra-regional relations). For instance, the following statement by a Member of the Basque Parliament of the Basque Nationalists Parliamentary Group refers to the benefits of the Vitoria-Irun line at both the European and the BAC level, plus its contribution to sustainable transport:

> 'We [the Basque Government] maintain that it is an infrastructure that is part of a trans-European network of general interest and is key to guarantee competitiveness and employment at European level. [...] It also involves making progress in the structuring of the region [*vertebración del país*], in its internal cohesion. Emphasis should also be made on the importance of this infrastructure in terms of supporting both passenger and freight transport, which on the one hand facilitates the free movement of people by public transport, and on the other entails substantial progress in our transport network, since there will be an important transfer of goods from roads to rail' (Parlamento Vasco, 2005a).

In terms of the environmental benefits of the high-speed rail line, all actors of this coalition shared the consideration of high-speed rail as a sustainable mode of transport, but the potential of the line to reduce cross-border road traffic, in particular concerning freight transport, was particularly prominent. The Basque Government's recognition of cross-border goods traffic as a key problem can be traced back to the early 2000s (Amann, 2004; El Correo, 2000). Apart from advocating the development of the cross-border rail link, this government has also sought to address this issue and, more generally, the sustainability of transport by promoting initiatives such as *ferroutage*[12] or short sea shipping through the PLAE or 'Aquitaine-Euskadi Logistic Platform' (El Diario Vasco, 2004; Interview 19), and the work in the Atlantic Arc Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions

[12] A form of combined transport that consists in transporting road trucks by rail.

(Interview 18). The problem of freight transport by road also entered the agenda of the Spanish Government, who designed for mixed traffic the high-speed rail network of its 2005 infrastructure plan (Ministerio de Fomento, 2005)[13] and more recently issued a strategic plan for the promotion of rail freight transport (Ministerio de Fomento, 2010). With regard to the Atlantic cross-border rail link, the Spanish Secretary of State for Planning and Infrastructures between 2004 and 2011 points out how the studies of the Franco-Spanish trans-Pyrenean traffic observatory (OTP) clearly indicated the necessity of improving it in order to shift passenger and freight traffic to rail (Interview 8). Finally, the importance of this cross-border HSR link in shifting traffic, especially goods, from road and air to rail, has also been emphasized by the European Commission (CEC, 2008; Davignon, 2006).

In spite of the wide membership of the discourse coalition, this story-line is the one that most clearly masks its own contradictions and uncertainties. Although all spatial scales are said to benefit due to increased spatial integration through transport infrastructure development, as explained in Chapter 2 economic development impacts are likely to be unevenly distributed. The environmental benefits of the line are likewise uncertain due to, first, the actual impacts of high-speed rail noted in the aforementioned chapter and, second – and assuming that the compatibility between passenger and goods traffic is possible –, the shift of traffic from road and air to rail frees capacity on the former modes and may indeed generate new demand on the latter.

Nevertheless, by masking these contradictions and uncertainties the story-line may have helped to develop an all-encompassing discourse coalition that could conceal disagreements and help to counter contestation. This is more evident concerning its environmental dimension which, as it will be seen later on in the chapter, has helped to counteract arguments from the contestation movement, yet it seems it has also been effective in narrowing differences within the discourse coalition. According to an environmental consultant who worked for the Basque departments of Transport and Public Works and of the Environment, in the first half of the 2000s the relationship between these departments, governed respectively by EAJ-PNV and EA, was tense (Interview 34). The then Basque Minister for the Environment had indeed been very critical of other large infrastructure projects being planned at that time (El País, 2004m, 2004n) and had expressed doubts about the Vitoria-Irun HSR link (Intxaurraga, 2003). However, this consultant suggests that the support from him and other environmental experts who had had a critical stance towards infrastructure development in the BAC (Olabe, 2004a, 2004b; Olabe and Ansuategi, 2004)

[13] Antonio Monfort, at that time Secretary General for Infrastructures of the Ministry of Development (2004-2005), notes however that this decision was based on the uncertain demand that part of such an extensive passenger-only HSR network would have (Interview 10).

brought credibility to the story-line and helped the Department of the Environment – and probably other actors – to adopt a favourable position towards the project.[14] The aforementioned Minister eventually made his support to the line conditional on its capacity to carry goods (El País, 2004c).

In short, *a discourse became prevalent in the early 1990s that emphasized the economic development dimension of transport infrastructure and the role of high-speed rail in this development*. This was articulated through a series of story-lines, broadly related to different spaces (European, national, etc.). In this respect, Hajer's (2000) discourse on a 'Europe of Flows' is here conceptualized as a specific story-line within this wider developmental discourse. Each story-line had different implications for the Vitoria-Irun HSR line, which was gradually shaped by them. In the 2000s, these story-lines tended to converge in a conception of the high-speed rail line as promoting sustainable transport and balanced development on several spatial scales. This convergence seems to have helped to increase the discourse coalition, but a further question refers to the extent it could be mobilized to also co-opt the actors of the significant opposition to the project. The next two sections will introduce the antagonistic discourse that underpinned this contestation and explore the argumentative dynamics between this and the previously analyzed hegemonic discourse.

6.3 Alter-globalization and environmentalism: the antagonistic discourse

Apart from the discourses that dominated the policy process around a new rail line between Vitoria and the French border, an alternative discourse was practiced by opposing actors. This discourse is characterized not only by the strong environmentalist dimension common in the contestation to large infrastructure projects (e.g. Linnros and Hallin, 2001) but also by a critique of the current model of development based on capitalist globalization. This alter-globalization stance (Pleyers, 2010; see also della Porta and Piazza, 2007) plus the localized impacts of the high-speed rail line have contributed to the centrality of the local in this discourse, which in addition is reinforced by traditionally important – though decreasing – links between environmental contestation movements in the Basque Country and Basque

[14] This causal link could not be checked with other related actors and therefore is of limited validity; nevertheless, this point was also suggested by a long-standing member of the contestation movement (Interview 2).

nationalism (Barcena et al., 2003). The characteristics of the discourse may be summarized as follows:

a. Transport infrastructure is seen as inherently linked to the *model of development* of society. High-speed rail is in this respect considered a symbol of a capitalist globalization model that, apart from its environmental impacts, fosters for instance the relocation of production and the depopulation of rural areas.
b. The state is conceived as the *single provider of transport infrastructure*, according to the needs of the majority of the population.
c. High-speed rail is regarded as clearly *different from conventional rail*, as it is more selective socially and spatially, is inadequate for freight transport, involves a high concentration of resources, and has a high environmental impact.
d. Conventional rail is seen as a *generalized, public mode of transport* that serves the needs of the majority of society causing less environmental damage than road transport.
e. Infrastructure planning should be driven by *demand management or, rather, restriction*. The focus is on modal shift towards rail and non-motorized transport modes and the limitation of road and air transport.
f. It adopts an *environmental perspective* that takes into account not only the localized impacts of high-speed rail (e.g. on land and habitats), but also – and fundamentally – those related to the current model of development.
g. A concern with *taking decisions as close to the citizen as possible*, reflected in a preference for local democracy and public participation.
h. Whereas the developmental discourse favoured the notion of network, this one favours the *notion of topography*, which sees space as a surface where proximity and distance are important. Rather than the reduction of travel times between distant points, the priority is to homogeneously serve a continuous geographical area.

Importantly, this discourse is antagonistic with respect to the previously explained ones, in particular the developmental discourse, since it conflicts with most of its characteristics. As explained in Chapter 3, the achievement of hegemony in the discursive field involves the exclusion of a radical other that, due to the differences between each other's categories, has difficulties in achieving any influence. This antagonism was also reinforced by the dominance of the *Asamblea contra el TAV* in the contestation movement since its creation

until the late 1990s.[15] This organization was adamant about rejecting any discussion on the project and the proposal of alternatives to it. As a former, long-standing member of the *Asamblea* explained (Interview 2), the reason for this emerged from the result of a previous environmental conflict in the region: a motorway across the Leitzaran valley, whose final outcome route (a variation of its route that avoided the valley, agreed with the majority of the contestation movement) was perceived with regret by its most radical sector. Nevertheless, towards the end of the decade, when the design phase of the line was in its last stages and became more public, a story-line developed that could form a broader discourse coalition.

6.3.1 Envisaging a different future from the local: the antagonistic story-line

In 1998, both the Spanish Government's *Estudio Informativo* (Ministerio de Fomento and INECO, 2000) and the Basque Government's *Plan Territorial Sectorial* (Departamento de Obras Públicas y Transportes, 2001) on the new rail network in the BAC were subjected to public consultation. The engagement in this procedure and the realization that the project was in an advanced stage led to the mobilization of new actors and to the emergence of a discourse coalition that considered the Vitoria-Irun HSR line as causing, as an expression of capitalist globalization, a negative impact on locality – broadly understood as the proximate environment[16] – in environmental, economic and social terms. This impact affects not only the local environment in term of noise, pollution, land movements, habitat fragmentation, etc., but also local communities by harming the rural economy and by not serving the spaces between the nodes of the network. This story-line thus incorporated the main features of the antagonistic discourse but articulated them through a narrative that placed at its centre the local. In the words of Iñaki Antigüedad, a key member of the contestation movement:

> 'And then I think that the fact that the struggle against the Basque "Y" was very strong for years made that many bodies, mainly trade unions and political organizations, assimilated that environmental, territorial, creation of proximity issues are an integral part of a serious project for the left – so to speak – and for a country [*de país*]' (Interview 23).

This story-line is usually represented with the image of a high-speed train cutting across the Basque rural space (e.g. AHT Gelditu! Elkarlana, 2001c; Asamblea contra el TAV, 1998), which points at the links between anti-capitalist globalization, environmentalism, and territorial identity. European integration was seen as integral to this type of globalization,

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[15] See Section 5.4.2.
[16] As explained in Section 8.1.2, the spaces of concern of the antagonistic discourse's story-lines are defined by physical proximity.

and the spatial frame of reference was rather Euskal Herria, a 'geopolitical imagination' of Basque nationalism that encompasses two Spanish Autonomous Communities and three French former provinces (see Mansvelt Beck, 2006).

The emergence of this story-line had in EHNE, a Basque agricultural trade union, an instrumental actor. Its importance in shaping a common view towards the project was pointed out not only by a former EHNE member (Interview 29) but also by other individuals centrally involved in the contestation movement (Interviews 2 and 23). Apart from its initiative in facilitating discussion and cooperation, the relevance of EHNE lies in having previously developed a clear narrative that permitted to link the high-speed rail project with a model of development seen as harmful to the non-metropolitan locality, as Josu Larrinaga, former EHNE member, explains:

> 'Well, it is true that EHNE is there from the beginning, that it has a very elaborate discourse on small-scale agriculture, family farming, on how to protect it, on how... and on the potential of that agricultural model for an alternative management of land. It is the alter-globalization discourse especially in its aspect of defending the local against the global. Agricultural issues are very likely where the ways in which those two models conflict can be best seen. You know, meat production that ends up in the mad cow disease, or local meat production or... And how the annihilation of all those peasant cultures also causes that the land is abandoned or is at the mercy – let's say – of those major global processes, here, in Brazil, or wherever' (Interview 29).

Nevertheless, the influence of this story-line was also fostered by other factors. Larrinaga suggests that the assimilation of this discourse in nationalist sensitivities was facilitated by the centrality that the rural world has had in the symbolic imaginary of Basque nationalism since its founding (see also Elorza, 1977, 1978). Furthermore, it seems EHNE functioned as a link between the diverse groups of this coalition and contributed to ease the existing tensions among some of them (Interview 2). For instance, its role in mobilizing trade unions ELA and LAB, also emphasized by Antigüedad (Interview 23), is expressed by Larrinaga in these terms:

> 'In EHNE, somehow the political sensitivities that in ELA and LAB were separated met in the agricultural world. So EHNE was like a kind of cushion or bridge to move from one sensitivity to the other. But also somehow ELA and LAB looked at EHNE with respect and I don't know if even with admiration, because they suddenly discovered that a small agricultural organization was capable of moving around in that globalized scenario[17] and had a presence and had a discourse, when they were positioning themselves in that reality. So there is a lot of interest in working on common issues, etc. and then EHNE took this

[17] For instance, EHNE is an active and founding member of *La Vía Campesina*, an international coalition of peasant organizations (EHNE and La Vía Campesina, 2009).

> opportunity to try for reflections to begin to emerge in the workers' world on the issue of high-speed rail and that high-speed rail project, which was there, making progress little by little' (Interview 29).

The discourse coalition was thus formed by a diverse membership that shared a concern with the localized, spatial impacts of the line. It included notably the Basque trade unions ELA, LAB, EHNE, and HIRU, the Basque environmentalist organization *Ekologistak Martxan*, left-wing political groups (*Ezker Batua*, EH) and the *Asamblea*, but also other social organizations and various local authorities. This discourse coalition eventually led to the creation in 2001 of *AHT Gelditu! Elkarlana*, which through its communication documents clearly articulated this story-line, highlighting the impacts on the physical environment but also on the development of non-metropolitan areas (AHT Gelditu! Elkarlana, 2001a, 2001c).[18] As noted in the previous chapter, *Elkarlana* was able to achieve significant mobilization; however, the impact of the contestation movement in challenging the hegemonic discourse seems to have been very limited. The following subsection examines this through the analysis of the argumentative practices that took place within this antagonism.

6.3.2 Antagonism in argumentative practices

At the time the antagonistic story-line was being articulated, a number of arenas became available to enter into argumentative action with proponents of the hegemonic discourse. The Basque Government organized in December 1998 a three-day conference on the Basque rail system, with a wide range of speakers and frequent opportunities for discussion (Departamento de Transportes y Obras Públicas, 1999). Moreover, the new nationalist EAJ-PNV/EA Basque government formed following the 1998 Basque elections signed a parliamentary agreement with *Euskal Herritarrok* (EH), the at the time political coalition of the left-wing Basque nationalism. Iñaki Antigüedad, then Member of the Basque Parliament of EH, notes that he had several meetings with Amann in order to seek common ground regarding the high-speed rail line (Interview 23). Other members of *Elkarlana* claim they also participated in meetings with the government at that time (Interviews 2 and 29). The interpretation of these conversations as involving 'a dialogue of the deaf' (Interview 2), 'both sides trying to gain time' (Interview 29), or 'a lack of possibilities to try to seek points

[18] Nevertheless, ELA did not join *Elkarlana* and *Ezker Batua* participated in it only intermittently (Interview 22).

of agreement' (Interview 23) suggests that antagonism may have characterized them.[19] An analysis of actual transcripts of argumentative activity may help to clarify this.

In this respect, between 1998 and 2006 the Basque Parliament held a number of plenary debates on the Vitoria-Irun HSR line as a result of initiatives to either support or oppose the project.[20] Their analysis shows that contestation groups who uttered the antagonistic story-line (*Ezker Batua* and the left nationalists EH and PCTV-EHAK) often argued that there was no consensus in society about the project, and that therefore there was a need to suspend it and deepen the debate on it (see, in particular, Parlamento Vasco, 1999, 2004b, 2005b). These groups, particularly the left nationalists, had a conception of democracy that transcended representative democracy and claimed for an engagement with social organizations beyond the Parliament. The main response to these groups by the hegemonic block (EAJ-PNV, PSE-EE, PP, and EA) was based on the one hand on the necessity to move forward with the project. They argued there had been a previous long formulation process, which included opportunities for participation (e.g. during public consultations), that it was necessary to avoid obstructing the development of the project in order to facilitate Spanish government action and the securing of EU funds (expressed in particular by PP when it was the ruling party in Spain), and that there was an urgency to develop it. On the other hand, this response was also based on the support of the majority of the population through its representative institutions and the legitimacy of the Basque Parliament and Government to take decisions in representation of the Basque society. In other words, debate was prevented on the grounds that the project had all the democratic guarantees and must not be delayed any longer. Additionally, there was an occasional positioning of opposition actors as related to ETA (Parlamento Vasco, 2005b) or, more frequently, against progress or modernity (Parlamento Vasco, 1998, 1999, 2005b). This statement by the spokesperson of conservative *Partido Popular* to left nationalist PCTV-EHAK expresses well this positioning:

> 'Well, the conclusion is that we are confronted with two models. [...] On the one hand we have the option, the model of society of those of us who propose a modern society, competitive, an agile society, a society that offers opportunities to citizens, that does not make us endure the torture of moving on obsolete infrastructure. And on the other hand we have the absolutely legitimate model of society of those who, from their communist worldview of reality, advocate what for me is an out-of-date society, a grey society, boring, self-centred, a rural society, a society that does not move forward, a society that does not relate to others and a society that does not look outwards' (Parlamento Vasco, 2005b).

[19] Unfortunately, the views of actors from the Basque Government on these meetings could not be obtained.
[20] A total of 10 debates were found and analyzed.

This positioning was accompanied by a rejection by both sides to find shared terms that could help to reduce this antagonism. In short, both the rejection to enter into an in-depth debate – although there were frequent statements regarding the reasons why one group or another supported or contested the project – and the antagonism in both the occasional positioning of actors (as 'for vs. against progress' or as 'democratic vs. undemocratic') and the terms of the discourse contributed to the reproduction of discursive antagonism.

During the first years of contestation to the Vitoria-Irun HSR link, this antagonism dominated the discursive order. Among the actors that mobilized the antagonistic story-line, however, there were different sensitivities and, beyond the common recognition of the high-speed rail line as a problem, some of them sought to influence its development by engaging in argumentation with the proponents of the hegemonic discourse and articulating a new story-line that could reduce that antagonism. These developments occurred fundamentally in the Basque political arena, which a priori has limited power to have an impact on the line's formulation and implementation; nevertheless, their importance lies in the fact that it was the most significant attempt to bridge antagonism and influence the dominant discourse. Theoretically is also relevant as it permits to examine the limit between the hegemonic discourse and its 'other'; in other words, to explore the extent to which this boundary may be permeated. Consequently, the following section will focus on the emergence of this new story-line and the discursive struggles that took place between it and the hegemonic discourse.

6.4 Bridging the antagonistic gap? Discursive attempts to influence the hegemonic discourse

As the policy process progressed and the contestation movement consolidated through *Elkarlana*, a significant number of actors from this movement felt that they needed to move beyond the uncompromising negative to the high-speed rail line if they were to influence its development. Although *Elkarlana*, and in particular the *Asamblea*, had an important mobilization capacity, the antagonism it maintained with the proponents of the project did not allow to exert such an influence. This shift consisted not only of proposing alternatives to the project but also of widening the scope of the contestation movement, as the following reference to discussions with a member of the *Asamblea* by Antigüedad, one of the individuals who contributed to it, shows:

> 'The HST is not going to be stopped by the *gaztetxes*,[21] the path towards sustainability is not going to be done by *gaztetxes*, nor by the communes that live together in I don't know which *baserri*.[22] Those are references that are essential, as it is the historic *auzolan*[23] that has been here, the traditional, but you need broad social movements to face the situations, with all the contradictions it involves' (Interview 23).

Indeed, the path towards achieving a broader social base in the contestation movement implied a discursive shift that, ultimately, consolidated in the emergence of a new story-line that had conventional rail transport at its centre.

6.4.1 Towards an alternative: the 'social train' story-line

The discursive shift that the attempt to achieve a bigger influence in the policy process involved entailed a certain change in the terms of the discourse and, as part of it, the use of new vocabulary. The anti-capitalist globalization stance of the previous story-line had to be articulated through terms closer to the hegemonic ones if it was to achieve a broader coalition. In particular, the rejection of words such as 'infrastructure' or 'development' by especially the more radical sector of the contestation movement had to be overcome, for instance by recognizing the necessity of a certain degree of infrastructure provision or advocating development but of another type. As Antigüedad argues:

> 'These [the members of *Asamblea*], since their sphere of activity and discourse is the sphere of the *gaztetxe*, all assume that there are a number of words that are toxic, that are taboo. OK, but when you are in the sphere of the radio, of the television, of ordinary people, to whom you want to somehow explain the negligence of major projects [...], you can't go with a notion of that so that instead of promoting people's reflection, self-criticism, so that they mature mentally, they leave at the end saying 'where can I sign for the high-speed train? These want to take us back to Atapuerca!'[24] (Interview 23).

This discursive shift was fundamentally articulated by advocating what was called a 'socially useful' rail network, a term first introduced by the Basque trade unions ELA, LAB, EHNE and HIRU (2003) in a report presented to the Basque Government (see Section 5.5.2). According to the new story-line, the Vitoria-Irun HSR line was not socially useful since it did not serve – socially and spatially – the majority of Euskal Herria and hence did not respond to its transport needs (also Red por un Tren Social, 2006). There was the perception that it would be mainly used by economic elites from the main urban nodes, leaving aside a

[21] Self-managed youth social centre, usually linked to radical left and nationalist positions (Elzo and Arrieta, 2005).
[22] The traditional Basque family farmhouse; *caserío* in Spanish.
[23] A traditional form of community work in the Basque Country (Caro Baroja, 2000, p. 225).
[24] Area located in the northern Spanish province of Burgos that houses 'the earliest and most abundant evidence of humankind in Europe' (UNESCO, 2000).

dispersed settlement structure that in addition was poorly served by rail. Furthermore, its proponents argued that high-speed rail was unsuitable for freight transport and therefore did not facilitate its shift from road to rail.[25] In order to achieve a 'social train', they advocated the development of a rail network that, based on the existing one, provided a general increase in accessibility across the region, contributed to modal shift to rail by supporting freight transport, and minimized the environmental impacts of transport. This story-line retains many of the characteristics of the antagonistic one, in particular the notion proximity, and in fact the image of the high-speed train across the rural environment was still appropriate.

The discourse coalition was in fact basically formed by those actors that had mobilized the antagonistic story-line except the *Asamblea*, and it notably included the aforementioned trade unions (ELA et al., 2003), *Ekologistak Martxan*, and various left-wing political groups (mainly *Ezker Batua* and *Aralar*). In 2004, it crystallized in the *Red por un Tren Social* or Network for a Social Train, which, as opposed to *Elkarlana*, now included ELA. Significantly, the story-line was also supported by several academics who, due to their credibility and expertise, contributed to make the story-line 'sound right' (Hajer, 1995, p. 63). In particular, Roberto Bermejo, an economist at the University of the Basque Country, was seen by some actors of the contestation movement as a key figure that provided a technical basis to the proponents of this story-line (Interviews 2 and 22). Bermejo firstly produced an expert report on the high-speed rail line commissioned, following a lawsuit by *Elkarlana*, by the National High Court of Spain[26] (El País, 2003g), and in 2004 he published a cost-benefit analysis that sought to promote debate in the new stage began by the entry of PSOE into the Spanish Government (Bermejo, 2004).[27] Furthermore, according to a former member of *Ezker Batua* and Bermejo himself, he was one of the persons who developed the party's alternative to the project. This former member explains the influence of these experts as follows:

> 'And from then on, I think that *Ezker Batua*'s – and I understand that many other organizations' – stance, is very much influenced by the reasoned and – from my point of view – reasonable position of a university group led by Roberto Bermejo, who is the one that somehow supports with a serious analysis the contestation to the route. I mean, I think it is the first time that someone explains with a rigorous study why

[25] The transport of freight on the high-speed rail line has in fact been a contentious issue throughout its development. Although it has been designed to support mixed traffic since its inception, with a maximum speed of 250 km/h, a senior official at the Directorate-General for Railway Infrastructures of the Spanish Ministry of Development notes that, in his opinion, until recently there has been scepticism about the possibility of this due to the lack of experiences in the country.

[26] *Audiencia Nacional de España*.

[27] According to Bermejo, this report was in fact produced with other two persons whose names were omitted due to possible reprisals (Interview 35).

the high-speed train as it is designed is not necessary, from an unequivocal commitment to public transport and to public transport improvement' (Interview 22).

The development of a story-line on a 'social train' therefore responded to the intention to reduce the antagonism present in the contestation to the project and thus seek to influence its development. The main actors in this attempt were *Ezker Batua* through its participation in the Basque Government and the *Red por un Tren Social*. Their possible direct influence – or 'episodic agency power' – will be explored in the next chapter, but it is relevant at this point to discern whether the new story-line as mobilized by them had any impact on the hegemonic discourse.

6.4.2 The social train vs. sustainable spatial structuring: a continuing antagonism?

Apart from parliamentary activity, the opportunities for argumentation between the social train story-line advocates and those practicing the hegemonic discourse were, first, a series of negotiations within the Government between EAJ-PNV, responsible for transport and public works, and *Ezker Batua* (Interviews 22 and 35)[28] and, second, a number of meetings between the *Red por un Tren Social* or any of its members and the Basque Government (Interview 28). During the first term in which *Ezker Batua* was in the Government (2001-2005), Bermejo affirms there were meetings between this party and EAJ-PNV, in which he participated, and in fact claims that at some point there were possibilities of achieving a common position (Interview 35). In the second term of office (2005-2009), during which the construction of the line started, the meetings with *Ezker Batua* continued and were also held with other members of the *Red*. According to representatives of both *Ezker Batua* and ELA, at this time the Government claimed the project was in an advanced stage and hence tried to engage them in order to, through their closeness to the contestation movement, improve the project in its implementation[29] and thus reduce this contestation, an instrumentalization that both say to have rejected (Interviews 22 and 28).

As in the case of the territorial story-line, an examination of parliamentary minutes can help to shed light on this interaction. The initiatives analyzed are the same as in the case of the antagonistic story-line, as from 2002 the use of both story-lines overlapped in

[28] To the author's knowledge, the Basque Government did not publicly recognize these negotiations. Its spokesperson did only acknowledge that 'contacts and conversations have taken place' (El País, 2002c).

[29] For instance by looking after the interests of expropriated land owners (Interview 22) and contributing to decide the location of the dumpsites for the soil excavated from tunnels (Interview 28).

parliamentary debates. In general, there was a reluctance by the political majority (EAJ-PNV, PSE-EE, PP, and EA) to enter into in-depth debate due to largely the same reasons identified earlier (see, in particular, Parlamento Vasco, 2002, 2004a, 2006a): the past long formulation process and debate; the risk of delaying the project and thus losing funding; and the representativeness and legitimacy of Basque institutions. As the spokesperson of PP stated, '[t]he rest of us have already got past the debate on the route, we are in the debate on the works' (Parlamento Vasco, 2002).[30] The discussion was also hindered by some insistence by these groups in placing the problem in antagonistic terms (Parlamento Vasco, 2005a, 2005b), a positioning that the political groups that practiced the social train story-line (*Ezker Batua* and *Aralar*) complained about and directly sought to avoid, as the spokesperson of *Ezker Batua* stated explicitly at some point:

> 'Because it is not an anti-developmental opposition the one we maintain concerning the "Y", we have already let the [Basque Government] Minister know and we think he knows it. [...] Rather, we believe – and we take notice of the words of the very Transport Plan debated here[31] – that what is important is to seek in transport 'the joint planning of the different transport modes to avoid duplicating investments, to structure [*vertebrar*] the territory from a social point of view, to limit mobility growth and to shift traffic from road to rail'. Following that, taking that, we understand it is difficult, due to the rail route of the "Y", that that is possible' (Parlamento Vasco, 2004b).

When there was argumentative interaction, *Ezker Batua* and *Aralar* largely focused on the project's lack of sustainability due mainly to its alleged inadequacy to support freight transport and to its lack of service to non-metropolitan areas (Parlamento Vasco, 2002, 2003, 2004a, 2005a, 2006a). With regard to the first criticism, the parties that supported the project replied that it was designed for mixed traffic; concerning the second one, these actors argued that the project, which was part of a wider, trans-European network, was complementary with the conventional rail network that would serve smaller towns, which, since the high-speed rail line was to be financed by Spanish and European funds, could be itself financed by the Basque Government. Overall, these responses reproduced the sustainable spatial structuring story-line, which neutralized the social train story-line by emphasizing the complementarity of networks of different reach and the environmental benefits of shifting traffic to rail. Although *Ezker Batua* mentioned several times the negative conclusions of the

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[30] The lack of opportunities for argumentation is also shown by the only appearance of *Red por un Tren Social* members before the Basque Parliament, in October 2006 and once construction works had started (Parlamento Vasco, 2006b). Of the majority parties, only the PSE-EE was open to debate specific aspects of the project, but to improve it rather than re-plan it. The representatives of the *Red* were at pains to request a more stable space for discussion on the project.

[31] The Basque Government's *Plan Director del Transporte Sostenible* (Departamento de Transportes y Obras Públicas, 2002).

previously mentioned Government of Spain's (Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Transportes and INECO, 1992) and Bermejo's (2004) cost-benefit analyses, these references received little feedback or, in the case of Bermejo, whose expert report the National High Court had dismissed, were delegitimized (Parlamento Vasco, 2003, 2004a, 2004b).

Notwithstanding these limited instances of argumentation, their purpose was at best restricted to improve, rather than reconsider, the project. Former Basque Minister Álvaro Amann claims that they listened but there were no serious alternatives to the project, and that it was not about starting to study it from scratch (Interview 15). Moreover, in line with the interpretation of the meetings with the Government by the representatives of *Ezker Batua* and ELA, the actual debate seems to have been directed towards minimizing or co-opting contestation, as Amann implies:

> 'We had many debates with all the institutions and initiatives around that infrastructure – logically, because that widespread social acceptance of these infrastructures must also be achieved. And, well, there was debate because it was the time of the debate. Why was it the time of the debate? Because it was when the project was finally approved: the construction project of the line, the environmental impact assessment... That is to say, it is the time, on the one hand, of the formalization of the project and, on the other hand, it is also the time of starting the works, and therefore the bigger tensions, logically, happen at that moment, because it is the time of the real debate' (Interview 15).

In short, although the social train story-line effectively helped to form a broad discourse coalition that encompassed the majority of the contestation movement, it was counteracted by the sustainable spatial structuring story-line in a context of limited possibilities for meaningful argumentation. This context makes it difficult to assess whether antagonism could have been overcome if these possibilities had existed; nevertheless, it seems that *the change in the terms of the discourse that the articulation of the social train story-line entailed was not sufficient to bridge the gap between the two discourses*. Although both story-lines claimed for the development of a modern rail network, the meaning of 'modern' was clearly different in each of them: whereas the sustainable spatial structuring story-line, underpinned by a conception of transport infrastructure provision as key to economic development and compatible with environmental preservation, advocated the need to develop complementary networks of different reach, the social train story-line, based on a conception of rail as a generalized public transport mode where the mobilization of limited resources should respond to existing transport needs, argued that only one network to serve short-and medium-distance passenger transport and long-distance freight transport was

necessary.[32] Ultimately, the antagonism denoted by the previously mentioned quote by a PP spokesperson on a 'modern society' vs. an 'out-of-date society' (Parlamento Vasco, 2005b) seems to have remained also in the case of the social train story-line, as the following statement by Amann suggests:

> 'Then I don't know what the social train was about [laughter]. I mean, conceptually, what do you call a social train? One that goes slower, that doesn't arrive, that uses the existing infrastructure, and that then no one gets on it?' (Interview 15).

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an analysis of the discourses present in the policy process around the Vitoria-Irun HSR line and the dynamics between them. A technocratic discourse was hegemonic at the start of this process but was gradually replaced by a wider, developmental discourse that was articulated by four story-lines that reflected the different stances on the project among its proponents. This hegemonic discourse was confronted by an antagonistic discourse based on an alter-globalization and environmentalist perspective, which in turn led to a discourse coalition formed around the negative environmental, economic and social impacts of the high-speed rail line on the locality. In order to avoid the antagonism that prevented influencing the development of the project, a second story-line was developed that sought to argue in similar terms as the hegemonic discourse. However, and facilitated by the lack of opportunities for in-depth argumentative interaction, antagonism remained.

Chapter 2 introduced the problem of encompassing within a single discourse a wide range of actors that do not necessarily share the same interests. The analysis carried out in this chapter suggests that in fact a single discourse does not need to be monolithic; it may be articulated by a number of story-lines associated with partially overlapping discourse coalitions that do not necessarily share the same understanding of the problem. In this respect, instead of conceiving a single discourse that promotes the seamless transport of goods and persons across the European space (Hajer, 2000) and that is articulated through a series of conflicting story-lines (Peters, 2003a), *I propose to conceptualize a wider, developmental discourse which is articulated in certain cases by a story-line that advocates such friction-less trans-European relations*. This story-line, alongside others within the same discourse, such as one arguing for the integration in Europe's development axes or another

[32] Note that the term 'modern' as used by actors is related to progress: they advocated the development of a new rail network adapted to current needs, in contrast to the existing dated network.

one conceiving high-speed rail as central to the development of a relatively backward nation-state, have contributed to shape the project in a certain manner.

The other relevant issue was the potential for challenging the hegemonic discourse and overcoming the border or bridging the gap with its 'outside'. The efforts of the proponents of the social train story-line were certainly unsuccessful in achieving this, partly due to the late stage of the policy process in which they acted and the political majority in Basque institutions. Yet the limited instances of argumentation suggest that antagonism would have likely remained in any case; in other words, that actors on each side of the border shared fundamentally different conceptions of the transport problem which prevented exerting any significant influence on the hegemonic discourse, in spite of efforts to adopt similar terms of discourse such as sustainable development or spatial structuring. Interestingly, this story-line presented some of the characteristics of the technocratic discourse that had once been hegemonic, in particular the emphasis on transport rather than economic development, the efficient use of limited resources, the adoption of demand management as guiding infrastructure provision, and the use of cost-benefit analyses. Bermejo, for instance, notes that the proposal for a new rail network he defended with *Ezker Batua* in the 2000s basically corresponded with the two new lines proposed by RENFE in the mid-1980s (Interview 35). 15 years on, with a growing and modern high-speed rail network in Spain and Europe and a quickly developing nation-state within an integrated EU, those moderate proposals had limited possibilities to strike a chord with the social and political majority. This suggests that in fact the hegemony of the developmental discourse may have pushed positions close to the technocratic discourse to the 'otherness' of the antagonistic discourse.

In short, the discourse analysis of the case addressed in this thesis suggests the conception of broad discourses on transport infrastructure planning, each of them potentially articulated through different story-lines that formed different yet partly overlapping discourse coalitions. This discursive order appears to confirm the existence of antagonism, whereby an hegemonic discourse excludes a radical otherness that struggles to challenge the former (Hajer, 1995, pp. 56–57; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). Once this chapter has clarified how actors' construction of reality – and thus the discursive constitution of their interests – has occurred, the following chapter will focus on the actual power that they exerted in the development of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line.

7 Episodic agency power in rail infrastructure policy: nation-state politics, European integration, and subnational resistances

According to the analytical framework developed in Chapter 3, discourse is integral to the constitution of actors' interests, who then engage in episodic power struggles in order to satisfy such interests. The previous chapter showed how variations in the development of the project responded to differences in the discourses articulated by actors; this chapter further seeks to explain in detail and with accuracy how these variations occurred and thus answer this thesis' second research question, namely which actor or actors have driven the policy process. The task is to find causal relationships between the actors' behaviour and these changes. The key concept to explain the influence of actors in the policy process, drawn from Clegg (1989), has been episodic agency power, here defined as 'the exerting of non-predetermined influence on the development of policy by an individual or collective agency.' This definition places emphasis on the actual exercise of power rather than on the capacity to do so, which, in the complex transnational high-speed rail policy-making environment, is argued to be insufficient to clarify such an influence. Likewise, the focus is on agency; structure is relevant insofar it is actualized through the exercise of power.

The exercise of power, as it was explained, does not occur in a vacuum. In Clegg's (1989) terms, apart from the circuit of episodic agency power there are two other circuits of power (dispositional power and facilitative power) relevant to the development of a high-speed rail line, which in turn condition such an exercise. Power may be exerted, even by the same agencies that exercise episodic agency power, to define the standing conditions that provide the possibility for that first type of power. For example, a nation-state government may strive to include its own planned lines in EU schemes that would later determine opportunities for obtaining EU funds for such lines. Similarly, the creation of institutions such as the European Coordinator and the TEN-T Agency or the production of the TEN-T regulations and guidelines, which could potentially impact on the development of a transnational transport infrastructure line, involves power struggles among actors, including the European Commission and the member states, in order to advance their own interests. As the focus is on episodic agency power around a specific high-speed rail line, these struggles are not directly addressed in this research.

The non-predetermined influence which signals the presence of episodic agency power refers to both changes in the content of the project (i.e. its characteristics) and changes in the

course of events, by promoting or hindering its development (e.g. by committing an investment or by delaying a procedure).[1] The analysis first identified those key 'episodes' of the policy process when a change of any of these types – or the attempt to prompt it – occurred, between 1986 and the 2006 implementation agreement.[2] These episodes were subsequently subjected to an in-depth analysis that sought to establish causal relationships between the behaviour of actors and changes in the policy process, primarily through interviews but also through the analysis of official documents and newspaper articles. Since interviewees did not always provide consistent and detailed evidence of these relationships, their establishment required in some cases interpretation on the basis of an in-depth understanding of the case study.

The chapter is structured in two main parts. The first one introduces the standing conditions that form the frame within which episodic agency power is exercised. It particularly focuses on the relationship between the nation-state and the Spanish Autonomous Communities and on the potential influence of EU institutions, although other actors related to European integration are also considered. The rest of the chapter presents the analysis of the aforementioned episodes structured according to the influence of three types of actors: the central (Spanish) and subnational (Basque) state; actors related to European integration, which transcend nation-state politics; and Basque, largely non-state, actors, which include those belonging to the contestation movement. This analysis evaluates the degree and form of actual power exercised by these actors in order to ascertain their relative importance in the policy process.

7.1 Standing conditions: means and resources in a complex Spanish and European context

As explained in Chapter 3, the exercise of power must be understood within a set of 'standing conditions' that agencies organize to realize it. These standing conditions involve resources of different types (e.g. financial or knowledge resources) and the means that allow their mobilization, which include the existing regulations. The differential control of resources and the various means of utilizing them means that some actors are better

[1] The identification of the latter type of changes often required a degree of interpretation by the researcher due to the difficulties to determine what the normal course of events was or would have been.

[2] It is important to note that the notion of 'episode' is not limited to a moment or specific event (e.g. a policy decision or a particular instance of influence) since the exercise of power may happen over longer time periods.

positioned to achieve influence in the policy process, yet their power is considered to the extent that it is actually exercised. Therefore, although the analytical approach adopted in this research places the focus on the actual exercise of power in specific episodes and by certain agencies, it is necessary to introduce the standing conditions that provide the capacity for such an exercise in order to understand the latter. Since rules on infrastructure planning and development largely refer to the role of the state, this section mainly focuses on the standing conditions pertaining to state actors, although occasional reference is made to non-state actors when relevant. The subsequent analysis does include both state and non-state actors, providing they participate in the episodic agency power struggles of the policy process.

7.1.1 The Spanish competence and the role of Autonomous Communities

The establishment of democracy in the late 1970s in Spain involved the constitution of a decentralized nation-state composed by 17 Autonomous Communities. Each of them have institutions of their own, including government and parliament, and certain competences, both specified by their respective *Estatutos de Autonomía* or Statutes of Autonomy after a complex mechanism of negotiation with central state institutions (Smith and Heywood, 2000, p. 25). In addition, there are 50 provinces, which in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) have a significant degree of self-government through their *Diputaciones Forales* and *Juntas Generales* (their executive and legislative bodies, respectively). In the Spanish context, the cases of the BAC and Navarre are special due to their high degree of taxation autonomy (see Ruiz Almendral, 2003). The Basque Economic Agreement (*Concierto Económico*), the legal instrument that regulates the financial and taxation relations between the Spanish central state and the BAC, provides the latter with a capacity to regulate and administer taxation with just a few limitations. This role is fundamentally played by the *Diputaciones Forales*, which in turn provide the so-called *Cupo*, the contribution that the BAC makes to the central state to defray the cost of those functions and services provided by the latter in the Autonomous Community.[3] On the whole, the complex territorial organization of Spain constitutes a singular political system, commonly called *Estado de las Autonomías*, where the asymmetric relationship between the central state and the Autonomous Communities has been of central importance (Moreno, 2001; Watts, 2008,

[3] The calculation of the *Cupo* is determined by a method regulated by the Economic Agreement Act and the quinquennial *Cupo* Acts (Ruiz Almendral, 2003, p. 59).

pp. 41–42).[4] Importantly, it is not a static system; rather, it is in continuous evolution towards increasing federal arrangements (Agranoff, 1996; Moreno, 2002).

Notwithstanding this complexity, it is clear that, in terms of major rail infrastructure policy, the nation-state is meant to play a primary role. The 1978 Spanish Constitution assigned exclusive competence to the central state over 'railways and land transport crossing through the territory of more than one Autonomous Community', as well as the general system of communications and those public works considered of general interest or the execution of which affects more than one Community (Art. 149). On the basis of this, Spanish legislation has allocated to the central state the competence to plan, develop, and manage a rail network of general interest,[5] composed by those lines that are essential to ensure a common rail transport system throughout the Spanish territory or that require to be managed jointly with the former for the proper functioning of such system. These include those related to international transport routes, those linking different Autonomous Communities and those providing access to either major population or transport centres or essential economic or defence facilities for the nation-state (*LSF 39/2003*, 2004, Art. 4). The network is to be defined by the Spanish Government, following a report produced expressly by the affected Autonomous Communities and, in case the infrastructure to be incorporated to the network is entirely included in the territory of one of them, the consent of it.[6]

The Spanish state also occupies a central position in the development of a new line of this nation-state-relevant network. The decision to carry out a new development is to be taken by the ministry responsible for public works, which must approve a draft project or *estudio informativo* on the new line. On the basis of this study, the relevant body in the Spanish Government then formulates an environmental impact statement which determines, for environmental purposes, whether the project should be developed or not and, if so, the conditions for it (Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Urbanismo, 1986, 1988). Once the *estudio informativo* is formally approved, an action that determines the inclusion of the line in the general interest network, implementation occurs through the development of the corresponding basic and construction projects and the subsequent construction works, a stage

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[4] Authors have been reluctant to identify Spain's political system with a federation; instead, they have characterized it in a variety of ways, for instance as an 'incomplete federation' (Agranoff, 1996), an instance of 'devolutionary federalism' (Moreno, 2002), 'a unitary state engaged in devolutionary federalization' (Watts, 2008, p. 42), or a system of 'asymmetrical devolution' (Smith and Heywood, 2000, p. 25).

[5] Firstly termed Rail Transport Integrated National Network (*LOTT 16/1987*, 1987) and later General Interest Rail Network (*LSF 39/2003*, 2004).

[6] The legislation on this matter is extensive and under continuous development; nevertheless, the two key relevant acts, both substantially modified throughout time, are the *Ley 16/1987, de 30 de julio, de Ordenación de los Transportes Terrestres* and the *Ley 39/2003, de 17 de noviembre, del Sector Ferroviario*, on the regulation, respectively, of land transport and the rail sector.

at which other actors may enter the policy process. The construction and management of the new lines may be carried out by the ministry, but it may also be entrusted to the state-owned rail company attached to this ministry (in different periods, RENFE, GIF, and ADIF). Moreover, implementation may be financed through the General State Budget, but also through the resources of those state-owned companies, other state actors and the private sector.

Autonomous Communities may in fact contribute to the financing of the implementation of the project, which gives a role not only to the regional executive but also to the legislative as the latter is responsible for approving the regional annual budget, but they also have more formal and informal opportunities for influencing the policy process.[7] Concerning the development of a new line, first, the production of preliminary studies is not completely predetermined by legislation and thus there is certain room for taking the initiative and, second, the preparation of the *estudio informativo* involves consultation with the affected Autonomous Communities over the route of the line. More generally, regionally-based parties also have the possibility of participating in nation-state politics through their presence in the *Cortes Generales* (Senate and, especially, Congress of Deputies) and may in fact be influential when the ruling party requires their support. Marshall (2013, p. 142) also notes that the regional affiliates of Spain-wide political parties have partly become regional baronies to be satisfied by the central government. These two cases are relevant to the BAC, where a Basque nationalist party (EAJ-PNV) has been regularly present in the Spanish state institutions and the Basque regional affiliate of the Spanish PSOE (PSE) has been an important political actor in the region and, as it will become clearer in this chapter, has also been influential in the case studied. Finally, the BAC may also participate in the financing of major investments in its territory by advancing funds to be deducted from the aforementioned *Cupo*, thus reducing the burden on the BAC funds.[8]

7.1.2 The potential influence of EU institutions

Apart from Spanish and regional standing conditions, European integration has provided some capacities to influence the development of transnational HSR lines. Although Chapter 2 has outlined the main ways in which European institutions may be relevant to this

[7] See also Section 5.1.
[8] As established in Additional Provision Four, still in force, of the *Ley 12/1981, de 13 de mayo, por la que se aprueba el Concierto Económico con la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco*, or Economic Agreement Act.

development, this section refines the argument towards the characteristics of the case studied.

The capacity of European actors to influence HSR infrastructure development is primarily related to their financial contribution. In fact, as a cross-border section of a TEN-T priority project in what was, prior to the 2004 enlargement, still a comparatively underdeveloped EU country, the Vitoria-Irun line was in principle in a good position to receive EU financial support, in particular from the Cohesion Fund. In the 1994-1999 and 2000-2006 programming periods, the Cohesion Fund was set to provide financial contributions of 80% to 85% of public or equivalent expenditure to Trans-European Networks projects in those member states with a per capita gross national product (GNP) of less than 90% of the Community average, among which Spain was included (Council of the EU, 1994, 2000). Additionally, TEN-T funds were also available, albeit in a much more limited amount. Until 2004, although this financial aid could generally cover 50% of the cost of studies related to the project, the total TEN-T contribution could not exceed 10% of the total investment cost. Since the 2004 revised regulation on the granting of Community financial aid for TENs (EP and Council, 2004b), the potential EU participation in cross-border sections of priority projects could reach 20% of that cost.[9] Finally, in the aforementioned programming periods, although the ERDF could participate in the financing of Trans-European Networks, the BAC was not among the eligible Objective 1 regions (Council of the European Communities, 1993; EP and Council, 1999a).

In addition, the granting of EU financial aid through both the Cohesion Fund (Council of the EU, 1994, 2000) and the TEN-T funds (Council of the EU, 1995; EP and Council, 1999b, 2004b) in the period covered in the case study was dependent on a series of conditions that may have influenced the characteristics and time-scale of a transport infrastructure project. Firstly, the Commission's decision to grant this aid depended on the compliance of the project with EU policies and on the fulfilment of certain criteria such as its expected socio-economic benefits. In addition, this decision not only determined the amount of the financial support but also laid down provisions and conditions necessary for the implementation of the project. If these conditions were not met, the aid may have been reduced, suspended, cancelled or even recovered. In particular, since 1999 this aid would generally be cancelled if the project for which it was granted did not start within two years after the date of its expected start (EP and Council, 1999b).[10]

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[9] This rate reached 30% of the eligible cost in 2007 (EP and Council, 2007).

[10] The inclusion of projects in EU strategies so that they become eligible for EU financial aid entails as well a series of struggles among a large number of actors that include not only EU institutions but also member state representatives or ministers. However, as noted earlier this research considers this

Chapter 2 also pointed out that the European Commission had some capacity to promote, coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the network. Nevertheless, the two key institutions aimed at facilitating this task (the European Coordinators and the TENT-T Executive Agency) were set up during the last period of this case study, so it is likely that their influence has been limited for this research's purposes. The European Commission appointed Etienne Davignon as European Coordinator of Priority Project no. 3, to which the Vitoria-Irun line belongs, in July 2005,[11] with his first annual report on the project being issued in July 2006 (Davignon, 2006). Similarly, the TEN-T Executive Agency was established in 2006, the last year addressed in this case study.

7.1.3 The trans-border dimension

Apart from the means and resources available to European institutions, the relevance of European integration to the Vitoria-Irun HSR line is also reflected in the capacities of other actors that transcend the Spanish nation-state borders. Due to the transnational character of this line, developments in other nation-states and cross-border arrangements are likely to play a role on its development. For instance, delays on implementing a section of a transnational HSR corridor might prompt further delays on sections in an adjacent nation-state, since the persistence of conventional speeds in part of this corridor would compromise its long-distance functionality. Similarly, cross-border governance arrangements may help to overcome coordination problems and technical differences in the planning and implementation of such a corridor, in particular in its cross-border sections.

Of particular interest for the Vitoria-Irun HSR line is the role of the French nation-state. Like Spain, the central state, fundamentally the government and infrastructure manager SNCF,[12] still plays the main role in HSR infrastructure planning and implementation. SNCF has been a primary actor in planning the development of the high-speed rail network, with a particular focus on the financial profitability of new lines, with the central state contributing according to their social rate of return (Vickerman, 1997, pp. 22–27). As Marshall (2013, pp. 112–114) explains, this model of centralized state-centred infrastructure planning is

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process as the shaping of the standing conditions that would frame the subsequent exercise of power (i.e. the effective granting of financial aid) and therefore does not address it in detail.

[11] He was succeeded by Carlo Secchi from 2009 until 2013. In March 2014, Secchi was appointed European Coordinator for the newly planned TEN-T Atlantic Corridor, to which the Vitoria-Irun line still belongs.

[12] In 1997, as part of the liberalization of the rail system imposed by EU competition policy regulations, the separation of infrastructure and train operations led to the creation of *Réseau Ferré de France* (RFF), responsible for the rail French infrastructure network. SNCF retained the management of the operation of the national rail services.

gradually changing in several ways, including the increasing importance of subnational actors due to decentralization and the promotion of public participation. In this respect, it is worthy to highlight the French procedure of the *débat public*, a type of public debate on important projects introduced in 1995 and framed by an independent body set up by the state (Marshall, 2013, pp. 135–138). Its function is to provide a public space for the discussion on the need, characteristics and desirability of a project and, although it has no binding outcomes for its development, according to Marshall (2013, p. 136) it led to the withdrawal or significant modification of one third of over 50 projects that had been subject to such debates.

Finally, it is worth noting the existence of a series of relevant structures that facilitate the establishment of cross-border or transnational spaces for cooperation and lobbying in the EU. This is the case of the Atlantic Arc Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe, a think tank and lobby for over 150 regions from the EU (CPMR, 2015). Moreover, the EU supports territorial cooperation across borders through its Cohesion Policy. Particularly relevant for this case study are the transnational cooperation areas of the Atlantic Area and South-West Europe (INTERREG B), and the Spain-France-Andorra cross-border cooperation area (INTERREG A).[13] Finally, the EU also encourages cross-border cooperation through the creation of new legal entities such as European Economic Interest Groupings (EEIG) and, since 2006, European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). With regard to the Atlantic Spanish-French border, two EEIGs have been established: the PLAE ('Aquitaine-Euskadi Logistic Platform'), established in 2001 by the Governments of the BAC and Aquitaine but constituted as an EEIG in 2004 in order to promote the Atlantic transport corridor and encourage modal shift from road to rail and shipping (El Diario Vasco, 2004); and the Vitoria-Dax EEIG, set up in 2005 by the Spanish and French infrastructure managers to produce the necessary studies and projects to implement and operate the international section of the Vitoria-Dax HSR link (RFF and ADIF, 2007).[14]

The primary role that the Spanish constitution grants to the nation-state is therefore potentially mitigated by the capacity of subnational actors, European institutions, and other trans-border actors to influence the policy process. This capacity depends fundamentally on the existing competences and institutions, the opportunities for participating in the process,

[13] The cooperation programmes for these areas in the 2007-2013 programming period can be found, respectively, in North Regional Coordination and Development Commission (2015), Comunidad Autónoma de Cantabria (2015) and Comunidad de Trabajo de los Pirineos (2015).
[14] Beyond the time period covered in the case study, the Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion was created in 2011 as an EGTC (Gobierno Vasco and Région Aquitaine, 2012).

the available financial resources, and also the potential to influence related developments such as other sections of the transnational corridor. The means and resources available to actors thus provide a frame for the exercise of power yet, as it is argued in this thesis, they do not completely determine it. The remainder of the chapter examines the actual power – the episodic agency power – exercised by the Spanish and Basque governments, actors related to European integration and Basque, largely non-state, actors.

7.2 Spanish-Basque governmental relations

The description of the case presented in Chapter 5 suggests that the Spanish nation-state has had the primary role in the development of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line. In fact, a first analysis of episodic agency power confirms this primacy: the Spanish nation-state, through the exercise of its authority, has been able to largely control the characteristics of the project and the time-scale of its development. However, in parallel to this dominance of the nation-state, Basque state institutions consistently took the initiative to promote a project that fell outside its competences. This section delves into the intricate power struggles between both set of actors in order to ascertain the nature and extent of the Basque Government's influence in the process. This is all the more relevant due to not only the under-researched role of regional actors in transnational transport infrastructure policy-making, but also the complexities associated with the Spanish State of Autonomies. In this respect, two main phases can be distinguished concerning this influence: a first one based on persuasion in various forms; and a second one when the Basque Government challenged the authority of Spanish institutions and started a dispute that would eventually lead to a Spanish-Basque agreement on the implementation of the line.

7.2.1 Prevalence of central state authority and occasional exercise of persuasion (1986-2001)

As explained in Chapter 5, the Basque Government took the initiative to propose an alternative to the Bilbao-Vitoria line that the Ministry of Transport, Tourism and Communications had included in its *Plan de Transporte Ferroviario* (Ministerio de Transportes, Turismo y Comunicaciones, 1987). Although, according to an advisor to the Minister, the participation of the Autonomous Communities in the production of the plan was set aside to a certain extent due to the negotiations between this Ministry and the Ministry of the Economy and Finance on the plan's budget development (Fernández

Lafuente, 1989), after the plan was approved the Spanish Government was open to dialogue with them. The rail infrastructure company RENFE, which at the time was responsible for producing a report prior to the decision on the construction of a new line of the network of general interest, endorsed the basic criterion of the Basque Government's proposal, namely the improvement of the north-south connection with the French border through Irun, and signed an agreement with the Basque Government in order to cooperate on the preliminary study of such a link (Departamento de Política Territorial y Transportes and INECO, 1989a, p. 11). The outcome of this study, carried out by the Spanish publicly-owned consultancy firm INECO with the support of the Basque Government, was a similar route to the one proposed by the latter, but included an entirely new section between Beasain and Irun, the possibility of connecting with the Autonomous Community of Navarre in the future, and the new high-speed and UIC track gauge technical standards determined by the ministry (Departamento de Política Territorial y Transportes and INECO, 1989a). This outcome was the result on the one hand of what may be termed *reasoning* by the Basque Government, since, as a former senior official at the central government ministry notes, the proposal used part of the foreseen investment to improve the cross-border connection (Interview 10), and, on the other, of the *authority* of the Spanish Government, in particular through the Prime Minister, in determining such standards. After negotiations with the Basque Government, the Ministry endorsed the new route and both institutions agreed to cooperate in the development of further studies and the financing of the works. Through this outcome, the PSOE, at the time the ruling party in Spain, strengthened the position of its regional affiliate PSE-PSOE in the Basque Government without a firm financing commitment, while the members of the latter government (EAJ-PNV and PSE-PSOE) chalked up a success.

Although a committee with members from both governments was set up to specify the details of the financing, this agreement did not crystallize in a time-scale and financing commitment. The Basque Deputy Minister for Transport at the time notes that the agreement, which also included investment in other infrastructures in the BAC, was of a political nature and that in any case the important item in that agreement was not the rail line but the extension of the port of Bilbao (Interview 14). In fact, the aforementioned advisor to the Spanish Minister underplayed, only a few months after the agreement, the commitments made in it due to the difficulty of facing the extra cost involved and the necessity to consider the problems of the whole nation-state (Fernández Lafuente, 1989). The priority of the Spanish Government, formalized in the 1988 Council of Ministers decision, was the Sevilla-Madrid-Barcelona-French border corridor and, according to Pérez Touriño, who occupied senior positions at the Ministry then, the planning team at the Ministry saw the Vitoria-Irun line as costly and questionable (Interview 6). Both this interviewee and Antonio Monfort (Interview 10), another senior official at that time, point out that due to these different

priorities the Ministry left the initiative of producing preliminary studies of the line to the Basque Government, which allowed buying time and 'beating around the bush':

> 'And thus, to be clear, it could be said in a more or less political-colloquial language that that process is relatively numbed. I mean, it is not the Ministry the one that takes the initiative of setting in motion all the procedure and all the process, as it is with the Madrid-Sevilla [line] or as it is starting to be with the Madrid-Barcelona [inaudible], but, well, if the Basque Government wants to get this through let's ask them to analyze it. The Basque Government accepts it, understands it, knows perfectly what we are talking about... There is no deception, but a reality that is shared' (Interview 6).

In short, the Ministry, through its *authority* and in spite of the initiative and lobbying of the Basque Government, controlled the time-scale of the process although, through *reasoning*, the latter managed to persuade RENFE and the Spanish Government to substantially modify the route of the line.

Once the *Plan Director de Infraestructuras 1993-2007* or PDI (Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Transportes y Medio Ambiente, 1994) integrated the Vitoria-Irun HSR line in the planning of the Spanish rail network, the Ministry responsible launched the process to develop the *Estudio Informativo* of the line, in effect the study that defines the general characteristics of the line. As explained in Chapter 5, this *Estudio* was produced in coordination with the Basque *Plan Territorial Sectorial* of the rail network in the BAC (Departamento de Obras Públicas y Transportes, 2001), a procedure in principle not necessary but that allowed, according to the *Estudio*, to enrich the latter and facilitate the incorporation of the project in local spatial planning (Ministerio de Fomento and INECO, 2000). A senior official at the Ministry involved in the process explains that in fact this cooperation allowed a fast production of the *Estudio*, in particular in the light of anticipated environmental and political problems (Interview 9). The at the time Basque Minister for Transport and Public Works pointed out a delay caused by the Spanish Government in the first half of 1998, before launching the public consultation process (El Mundo, 1998; El País, 1998a); however, this delay arguably had little significance since it seems to have lasted less than half a year (Interview 9). In terms of the characteristics of the line established by the *Estudio Informativo*, these were fundamentally defined by the Ministry and, to a lesser extent, by the Ministry of the Environment, but a number of local authorities and a reduced number of individuals managed to persuade both governments to make slight modifications to the project.[15] The Spanish Government, again through its *authority*, thus controlled the timing of the process and the characteristics of the line, although the involvement of the Basque Government seems to have facilitated this action.

[15] These influences are addressed in Section 7.4.1.

7.2.2 Central authority challenged: from domination to negotiation (2001-2006)

After the final approval of the *Estudio Informativo* in February 2001, the Spanish Government and in particular its Ministry of Development continued to play the primary role in determining the timing of the process. Thus, in the first stages it delayed the development of the necessary basic and construction projects of the different sections of the line. In the opinion of the aforementioned senior official from the Ministry, in particular until the end of 2001, when the management of the development of projects was entrusted to infrastructure manager GIF, the line lacked the decisive political push that was given to other lines granted a higher priority[16] (Interview 9, also Interview 15). After this phase, the Spanish Government started the tender of the works for eight sections before the 2004 Spanish general election, after which this tender process was subsequently suspended under a new ruling party. In 2005 it awarded the contracts to draft the construction projects of the whole Vitoria-Bilbao section, and it finally awarded the contract for the start of construction works in April 2006.

The Basque Government did not accept the fact that the Spanish Government decided on the timing of the implementation process, yet due to its lack of competences it was not able to directly intervene itself. In other words, it was not able to overcome, through their exercise of *authority*, what they saw as *domination* by the Government of Spain.[17] Although in July 2003 the Basque Government managed to award the contracts for the construction projects of four sections in spite of an appeal by the Ministry of Development, a second appeal led to suspension by the Spanish Constitutional Court of the tendering, started in March 2005, of the construction works of two sections. However, the Basque Government was able to effectively influence the development of the line through other modes of power.

The initiative of the Basque Government, although at certain points it may have hindered the implementation of the line when the relationship with the Spanish Government was tense,[18] might have also prompted the latter to launch the tender of projects in order to avoid appearing as delaying the process. This proposition is difficult to confirm; however,

[16] For instance the Ourense-Santiago line and the Pajares bypass in the north-west of Spain, both mentioned by the interviewee. These two projects, as opposed to the Vitoria-Irun line, had not been proposed in the 1994 Spanish infrastructure plan (Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Transportes y Medio Ambiente, 1994).

[17] This conflict is illustrated by this statement by Amann, Basque Minister for Transport and Public Works (1998-2005): 'And there it came the great debate, especially when the project had just been finally approved. It had just been approved and we said 'well, it's already approved; let's do the works.' 'Oh no, now it depends on how I plan Spain.' 'No way, man. Tell me about the planning... Well, we don't share it.' 'Well, then you'll see.' 'No, we won't see. We do it ourselves'' (Interview 15).

[18] This causal link has been suggested in the press (El Mundo, 2003) and by members of PP, the ruling party in the Spanish Government from 1996 to 2004 (Interviews 13 and 21).

the Basque Government was certainly influential in the negotiation that led to the April 2006 agreement between the Spanish Government, the Basque Government and infrastructure manager ADIF that established the basis of the implementation of the Vitoria-Irun line. Although the Basque Government had expressed its willingness to participate in the development of the line from the beginning of the policy process, only after the *Estudio Informativo* was approved an agreement was announced – yet not signed – that involved the Basque Government in its implementation (El Correo, 2002a). However, it was only when the PSOE came into power at nation-state level, in particular, when the 2006 General State Budget was debated in the Spanish *Cortes Generales* (the Congress of Deputies and the Senate) that a negotiation over such an agreement took place. This agreement was not necessary in order to develop the line, as the aforementioned officer of the Ministry noted (Interview 9), but provided advantages for both the Spanish and the Basque Government. The ruling party (PSOE) sought the – unnecessary for budget approval purposes – support of the Basque Government's party EAJ-PNV in order to widen its then fragile parliamentary support and possibly strengthen its Basque affiliate PSE-EE in the negotiation of the General Budget of the BAC, while EAJ-PNV regained influence in the *Cortes Generales* and ensured investment in the Autonomous Community (El Correo, 2005b; Surio, 2005). According to news sources, the agreement was concluded at the highest political level, between, first, Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero and the president of the PNV and, second, by the Second Vice-President and Minister of the Economy and Finance and the President of the Basque Government (El Correo, 2005d).

The content of the agreement, which entrusted the Basque Government with managing the implementation of the Gipuzkoa section (Bergara-Irun) and advancing the funding for it, to be subsequently recovered via *Cupo*, was based on a Basque Government's proposal of July 2004 (El País, 2004i, 2004j). According to actors centrally involved in the process, this arrangement sought on the one hand to accelerate this section, which was less advanced than the Bilbao-Vitoria one (Interviews 9 and 16) and on the other to emphasize the involvement of the Basque Government so that the project was not seen as imposed on the BAC (Interviews 8 and 9). In short, as expressed by the Basque Minister for Transport and Public Works when the agreement was signed, it allowed to tackle more effectively the high technical and, above all, social complexity of the project (Interview 16). The then Spanish Secretary of State for Planning and Infrastructures expressed the value of this cooperation as follows:

> 'And the truth is that at all times I tried – I tried – to not have any kind of problem with the Government of the Basque Country because, you know, we sought a common objective, which was the construction of the infrastructure. And we had problems that did not exist elsewhere, and we had go to hand in hand to overcome them' (Interview 8).

Ultimately, the agreement did not only satisfy the Basque Government's aspiration to promote and participate in the development of the line, but it also facilitated its implementation for the Spanish Government.[19] Thus, although the latter exerted its *authority* throughout the whole period, the former managed to exert power through *negotiating* its participation in the implementation of the line. This participation, however, was not caused only by the Basque Government's initiative. Other regional actors, in particular those belonging to the contestation to the project, seem to have influenced the Basque and Spanish Governments' attitude towards implementation. This indirect exercise of power will be addressed in Section 7.4.

As the previous two sections show, *the Spanish Government, in particular through its Ministry responsible for rail infrastructure planning and development, largely controlled the time-scale and characteristics of the Vitoria-Irun project through its authority. However, the Basque Government was able to exert a considerable influence on this process through persuasion rather than authority*. In the first stages, it managed to change the route of the line through what may be termed *reasoning* – the provision of a convincing argument – and, in the later stages, it became involved in the implementation of the line through *negotiation*, whereby both sides had something to gain. The Basque Government on the one hand succeeded in adapting the characteristics of the line to regional needs, by improving the integration of Bilbao in the network and the links between the three Basque cities, and increased its involvement in its implementation, which may have strengthened the government parties in the BAC. On the other hand, the Spanish Government achieved a better optimization of its investment in the region by adopting the Y-shaped route and widened its parliamentary support by making concessions to the Basque party EAJ-PNV. In addition, of course, the ruling party in Spain would likely increase its electoral support in the BAC both directly and through its regional affiliate. In any case, the development of this line has been affected not only by Spanish and Basque state actors. As suggested during this section, other actors seem to have had an influence – albeit arguably less – on this process. These can be classified as, first, those state actors related to European integration (EU institutions, other nation-states, and trans-border actors) and, second, largely non-state actors, in particular related to the Basque Autonomous Community. The remainder of the

[19] Leopoldo Barreda, a long-term member of the PP in the BAC, insightfully characterizes the relationship between both governments during this period: 'first, it [the debate] was very much presented in the realm of political prestige and sovereignty, [...]; then it was brought into a more practical ground' (Interview 13).

chapter presents an analysis of the episodic agency power exercised by each of these two groups.

7.3 European integration: influences beyond the nation-state

The process of European integration, understood as involving a decreasing relevance of nation-state borders in determining the development of policy, may potentially have a decisive influence on transnational high-speed rail planning and implementation. This influence may be commonly identified with that of EU institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, or the European Investment Bank (EIB). Nevertheless, two other types of actors related in a certain way to European integration may be identified that are relevant to the policy field studied in this research. The first ones are other nation-states, which by having competences over sections of transnational corridors may influence not only the development of these sections but also of those located in the territories of other nation-states. The second type of actors is formed by networks of association among subnational state and non-state actors which seek to influence the development of infrastructure corridors that transcend nation-state borders. This section examines the extent and form of the effective influence of these three types of actors on the development of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line.

7.3.1 Unsuccessful inducement by EU institutions

In the first section of this chapter, it was noted that the capacity of EU actors to influence the development of high-speed rail lines was in principle directly related to the provision of financial support in order to foster this development. Nevertheless, at least during the period of the Vitoria-Irun line case studied in this research (1986-2006) this support has been limited and scarcely significant. By the end of 2006, a very limited amount of funding – exclusively from the TEN-T Fund – had been obtained from EU institutions for the Vitoria-Irun HSR line (see Table 2). Although this contribution was aimed at co-financing studies and projects, a senior official involved in the project considers it has not been influential in changing its time-scale (Interview 9). As the table shows, from 2007, once construction works had started, the EU contribution through TEN-T Funds and EIB loans has increased significantly, and in fact this senior official notes that in recent years the TEN-T Funds have

gained more importance.[20] In addition, an important amount of funding has been obtained through EIB loans since 2012. In any case, before 2006 the influence of EU funds might have come more from the expectation of obtaining EU financial support than from the actual funds received. However, the only specific sign in this respect was suggested by the aforementioned ministry official. In his opinion, the inclusion of the Vitoria-Dax line as a 'key link' of the trans-European HSR network may have contributed to launch the drafting of the *Estudio Informativo* in the mid-1990s (Interview 9). In any case, he does not think that being part of such a network was a decisive factor in promoting the line.[21]

Table 2. EU financial support to the Vitoria-Irun high-speed rail line

Period	**Object**	**Funding source**	**EU contribution (€ million)**
1994-1999	Study on the Spain-France rail link, through the Atlantic coast (1996 application). Assistance to finance the drafting of the *Estudio Informativo*.	TEN-T Fund	0.162
2000-2006	Joint financing of studies and projects	TEN-T Fund	16.0
2007-2013	Joint financing of the platform works of the Arrazua/Ubarrundia-Elorrio, Abadiño-Galdakao and Astigarraga-Irun sections	TEN-T Fund	84.1
	Joint financing of the final construction projects of the Elorrio-Bergara and Bergara-Arrasate/Mondragón sections and the design of the railway power supply equipment for the line	TEN-T Fund	2.4
	Construction of high-speed rail line between Vitoria, Bilbao and San Sebastián in priority TEN-T corridor 3 connecting Iberian Peninsula to France (finance contracts signed between June 2012 and July 2013)	EIB loans	1,400.0

Sources: J. Ballesteros Sánchez, Directorate General of Railways, Ministry of Development (2012, personal communication, 8 February); ADIF (2012); EIB (2013).

Apart from financial support, the EU may in principle contribute to the promotion of HSR line development by facilitating coordination through the European Coordinators and the TEN-T Executive Agency, replaced in 2014 by the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency. The data obtained for this thesis does not grant significant importance to their

[20] This statement is also supported by the EU contribution to the projects managed by the TEN-T Executive Agency since 2007 relevant to the Vitoria-Irun HSR line, which amounts to 14.1 % of the total cost of these projects (INEA, 2014).

[21] This limited influence of EU funds is not generalizable to high-speed rail development in the rest of Spain. Several relevant interviewees highlighted the decisive importance that Structural Funds and, especially, the Cohesion Fund have had in transport infrastructure development in Spain over the last decades (Interviews 4, 10 and 11). The Madrid-Barcelona HSR line, for instance, received in the 2000-2006 period a contribution of 3,349.5 million Euros from the Cohesion Fund, out of a total investment of nearly 9,000 million Euros (ADIF, 2013). This suggests that the Government of Spain exercised its episodic agency power by prioritizing certain lines at the expense of others such as the one addressed in this research.

participation, which in any case mostly exceeds the time-frame of this case study. With regard to Etienne Davignon, the European Coordinator relevant to the Vitoria-Irun line, the three interviewees who worked in the Ministry at that time agree that he has had no relevance with regard to the cross-border section, apart from being informed and updated about the progress on it (Interviews 8, 9 and 11). His only contribution might have been making France aware of the possibility of obtaining EU funds if it increased the pace of development of its sections (Interview 9). Nevertheless, the Spanish Secretary of State for Planning and Infrastructures between 2004 and 2011 argues that the figure of the European Coordinator is gradually gaining importance (Interview 8), so it is likely to have been more influential in recent years.

A further possible influence of the EU may have been on nation-state policy, in particular on the characteristics of the high-speed rail line and the planning of the national network. Pérez Touriño points out that the basic rationale of the government has been, first, to seek the inclusion of projects in the trans-European network so that they would be eligible for EU funding later on and, second, to consequently incorporate them in the nation-state plans (Interview 6). Nevertheless, little evidence supports this thesis in the case of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line. Once the Basque proposal of a Y-shaped route was assumed by the Spanish relevant ministry in February 1989, the foreseeable consequence was that it became integrated – as it was – in the next Spanish infrastructure planning exercise, namely the PDI (Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Transportes y Medio Ambiente, 1994). The influence of EU developments seems to have been limited, since the first proposal of a trans-European HSR network by the High-Level Group, set up by the Commission and that included member state representatives, was prepared afterwards, during 1990 (High-Level Group "The European High-Speed Train Network," 1995, p. 3). Although the PDI explicitly recognized the coherence of its planned network with the High-Level Group's proposal and emphasized the importance of integrating the Spanish HSR network in the European one (Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Transportes y Medio Ambiente, 1994, p. 148), the features of the Vitoria-Irun line and its position within nation-state planning had been established beforehand.

In short, the influence of EU state actors has been quite limited in the case of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line, at least until the end of 2006 – or, in other words, until the start of construction works. The only instance of specific influence is suggested by a ministry senior official, who points out that the incorporation of the Vitoria-Dax line as a 'key link' of the trans-European HSR network may have helped to launch the *Estudio Informativo*. Although due to its lack of competences EU institutions would need to exercise power through modes other than *authority* (e.g. *inducement*, by providing financial incentives attached to certain conditions), little evidence has been found that confirms this exercise.

7.3.2 Other nation-states: negative inducement through lack of action

As part of a transnational transport corridor, the functionality of the Vitoria-Irun link depends on its continuity in France and, to a lesser extent, towards Portugal. Although some interviewees noted the lack of decisiveness to develop the link with Spain by the Portuguese Government (Interviews 4 and 13), the case of France is the most significant. The Government of France and rail infrastructure manager SNCF have generally had other priorities than the connection with Spain, and in any case they have regularly prioritized the Mediterranean link via Catalonia. As early as 1988, when the decision on the track gauge change and the establishment of high-speed rail lines in Spain was being considered, these two French actors supported the development of the link along the Mediterranean coast, depending on progress on the Spanish side (El Correo, 1988j; El País, 1988a). This preference was restated by the French Minister for Transport in 1990, once the decision by the Spanish Government to prioritize the Sevilla-Madrid-Barcelona-French border corridor had been taken (El País, 1990a); was formalized in the 1991 French master plan for the high-speed rail network, which prioritized the Mediterranean link (El País, 1991d); and was ratified in the subsequent 2003 French master plan, where the only commitment to extend the Paris-Bordeaux HSR line towards Spain was to debate this development in 2006 (El País, 2004a). Although the Spanish Government's priority has been the Mediterranean corridor, its progress on both cross-border links has been greater than the French Government's one. The difference in priorities between both nation-state's governments was publicly highlighted at various points by Minister Borrell (El País, 1995), Minister Arias Salgado (El País, 1998h), and Secretary of State Vilalta (El País, 1999d). Furthermore, it is also pointed out by Spanish interviewees that participated in bilateral meetings with representatives of the French Government (Interviews 7, 8 and 11)

This clear divergence of priorities has arguably influenced negatively the development of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line. The Technical Secretary of the Ministry of Development stated, when asked about this line, that 'the problem is not so much Madrid but France', since it was not known when they would link with the Basque Country (El Diario Vasco, 1999). Nevertheless, evidence about specific instances of this negative influence is difficult to find. The clearest episode may have been the non-inclusion of the line in the 'quick start programme', promoted by the European Commission in 2003 to trigger the development of a number of high-priority projects of European interest, an absence which, according to the then Spanish Commissioner for Energy and Transport, was due to the lack of progress on the French side (El País, 2003e). However, the impact that its inclusion in the list may have had is uncertain in any case since, according to a Spanish senior official who worked on that programme, the compilation of the list had merely "propaganda" purposes (Interview 7). The

coordination between the Spanish and French infrastructure managers carried out within the Vitoria-Dax EEIG, established in 2005 to jointly address the implementation and operation of the cross-border connection, seems to have been useful to accelerate the recent definition of this section of the line (Interview 9), but no evidence was found of its influence on the development of the rest of the network.

The cases of France and Portugal suggest that their governments and rail infrastructure managers have exerted a *negative inducement* to develop the Atlantic link through the BAC – or a positive inducement to effectively develop other links, such as the Mediterranean one. This negative inducement is also reinforcing or two-way; i.e. the reluctance of one government to prioritize its section of the link discourages the other to do the same with its own section, and vice versa. However, and although as noted above particularly Spanish Government officers and politicians highlighted the difficulties derived from France's different priorities, the importance of this negative inducement must not be overemphasized. First, the Vitoria-Irun HSR line would still be functional without a new French section since the Hendaye-Bordeaux line in France has the UIC track gauge and is therefore able to support freight and conventional passenger traffic, although with less capacity and speed than a new high-speed rail line. And, secondly, since the late 1990s the Spanish Government has anyway prioritized other lines with seemingly less economic justification or importance within the network (e.g. the aforementioned Ourense-Santiago line and the Pajares bypass),[22] so the rationale of network functionality has not been the only one. Hence this negative inducement may have been, at least during the last period of the case studied, somewhat limited.

7.3.3 Transnational networks of association

Finally, the planning of a trans-European HSR network has led to a series of networks between subnational state and business organizations, with the objective of lobbying those governments responsible for developing a transnational Atlantic rail corridor. As former Basque Minister López de Guereñu suggests, their engagement in these networks sought to overcome the competence limitations of the government (Interview 16). On the one hand, the Basque Government participated, along with the Regional Council of Aquitaine, in the

[22] If the PDI is understood as a technical effort to plan for the increase in infrastructure investment in Spain (Interviews 10 and 11), it is indicative that the Vitoria-Irun line and its link with Zaragoza are the only sections of the high-speed rail network defined in the PDI which are not operative at the time of writing, unlike the A Coruña-Ourense and the Albacete-Alicante HSR lines, which had not been planned as high-speed in the PDI.

creation and running of the Aquitaine-Euskadi Logistic Platform (PLAE) and was also in charge of leading the Working Group on Transport of the Atlantic Arc Commission, one of the six Geographical Commissions in the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR). In this latter case, the then Director for Transport of the Basque Government and coordinator of this Working Group notes that their aim was to make their voice heard at the European level (Interview 18). On the other hand, two business networks with similar lobbying aims were formed at different stages: the Conference of Chambers of the Atlantic (CCA); and the International Conference of Chambers of Commerce of the Atlantic Trans-European Rail Axis (CEFAT).

In spite of the interest that these networks may have concerning the development of new political spaces within an integrating Europe, no evidence was found of their actual influence on the development of the Vitoria-Irun line and, more generally, the Atlantic rail transport corridor. Firstly, the role of the PLAE does not seem to have been decisive. Its Director in 2005-2007 characterized it as a 'small cross-border missionary' in its beginning, working in a difficult terrain due to the concentration of competences in the Spanish and French central states (Interview 19). According to him, the work of the Platform with respect to the cross-border rail link involved occasional meetings with the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs, which were scarce, vague and with few outcomes, and daily coordination work with Spanish and French state actors.[23] In terms of the Atlantic Arc Commission, land transport was scarcely addressed and in any case its work was centred on cooperation initiatives among regions (e.g. regarding the establishment of 'motorways of the sea') and on contributing to the drafting of EU documents such as White Papers (Interview 18). Finally, a senior representative of the Chamber of Commerce of Bilbao notes that the two mentioned business networks had a certain media impact and gathered the support of a significant number of subnational institutions, including at some point regional and local governments (Interview 25), but no direct causal link could be ascertained between their activities and developments on the Vitoria-Irun HSR line.

The episodic agency power that actors related to the European integration process have exerted concerning the development of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line has thus been limited. Firstly, the EU through its financial support and pan-European HSR network masterplans has not been significantly influential, at least until the start of construction works in 2006. Secondly, developments in Portugal and, especially, France, do not seem to have contributed

[23] In fact, the interviewed senior representative of the Chamber of Commerce of Bilbao remarks that the Chamber did not have an active role in the PLAE since they did not consider this organization very attractive from a practical point of view (Interview 25).

to promote the line, yet in any case the actual *negative inducement* exerted by them does not seem to have been decisive. Finally, in spite of the lobbying activity of subnational and cross-border networks of association, no evidence could be found of their actual exercise of power on the development of the line. On the whole, the dynamics within the Spanish nation-state seem to have dominated the policy process. Nevertheless, as occasionally pointed out in the previous section, these dynamics have not only involved the Spanish and Basque Governments. The next section examines the power that may have been exercised by other actors, primarily related to the Basque Autonomous Community.

7.4 Other actors: resisting the dominant exercise of power

> 'Power, as the realization of outcomes, cannot simply be assumed from the capacities of those exercising power [...]. There is always a dialectic to power, always another agency, another set of standing conditions pertinent to the realization of that agency's causal powers against the resistance of another' (Clegg, 1989, p. 208).

Although there were certainly different preferences among actors regarding the characteristics and time-scale of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line, the previous analysis may suggest that the exercise of power has been carried out largely unidirectionally, as 'power to' develop a project according to the different agencies' access to means and resources. Thus, the relative importance of each actor in the policy process may have seemed as mainly defined by these capacities and not by the constraints to their action. Although in fact their power has been dominant in episodic agency terms, other actors from mainly the private sector and the civil society have provided some friction to its exercise. In other words, the 'power to' of pro-HSR line actors became also 'power over' other actors who resisted it.[24] This section examines the episodic agency power exerted by these actors through an analysis of the dispute with those that promoted the project, in particular the Basque Government.

7.4.1 The apparent lack of influence of Basque actors

Within the subnational arena, a number of actors have attempted, largely unsuccessfully, to modify, delay or stop the Vitoria-Irun HSR line. This objective was sought, firstly, by a diverse range of civil society organizations, grouped initially in *AHT Gelditu! Elkarlana* as

[24] Notwithstanding this distinction, actors in the latter group were not necessarily situated in antagonistic discursive terms with respect to those in the former, as the case of the Basque Chambers of Commerce explained below shows.

the main contestation organization and later in the *Red por un Tren Social* or Network for a Social Train. Their impact on the policy process in terms of episodic agency power, however, has not been discernible. *Elkarlana*, as a grass-roots movement, had a certain mobilization capacity (Interviews 2, 22 and 31), but its demonstrations rarely reached 10,000 participants.[25] The *Red*, in turn, despite an important membership that included the main regional trade union ELA, did not have the mobilizing capacity of *Elkarlana* as it lacked the unequivocal support of the *Asamblea contra el TAV* (Interviews 22 and 28). In fact, according to several members of the contestation movement, it functioned more as a discussion group or lobby than as a mobilization organization (Interviews 2, 22 and 31). Both the *Red* and *Elkarlana* seem to have functioned more as producers of a common discourse (Interview 23) than as actors that exerted actual episodic agency power in the policy process.

Apart from these two organizations, Basque left-wing political party *Ezker Batua* occupied a privileged position to influence the policy process since it was a member of the Basque Government from 2001 to 2009. From the beginning of its participation in the government, *Ezker Batua* expressed its discrepancy with the project, stated explicitly in the document of adhesion to the Basque Government (El País, 2001). In the end of 2002, they proposed a U-shaped alternative project with lower speeds and cost than the official project (El País, 2002b), which they claimed was supported by experts from the Department for Transport and Public Works (El Correo, 2002b). Similarly, the academic Roberto Bermejo, who participated in the development of *Ezker Batua*'s alternative proposal (Interviews 22 and 35), maintains that at some point Basque Minister Amann accepted it (Interview 35). However, publicly the EAJ-PNV members of the government – the ruling party in the government and the abovementioned Department – did not recognize this and, although they stated they would consider specific contributions to reduce the environmental impact of the project, they claimed these would not delay or modify the line's route (Amann, 2003a; El País, 2002c). This suggests that EAJ-PNV sought to alleviate the tensions within the government rather than to reach an agreement that would satisfy both parties. This may thus have been a case of *manipulation*, by which an actor conceals its intent to another, but it is likely that both parties knew precisely what the situation was: the former Coordinator of the Chairmanship of *Ezker Batua* is indeed sceptical that there was any possibility of an

[25] Media outlets rarely specified the number of participants in the demonstrations against the high-speed rail line, beyond 'thousands' or 'several thousands of people', although in one case they noted a number of 4,000, estimated by the municipal police (El Correo, 2006e). Interviewees from *Elkarlana* mentioned attendance limits of 10,000-15,000 (Interview 2) and of 6,000-7,000 (Interview 31).

agreement; he believes that his former party's attitude of conveying that image was due more to electoral reasons (Interview 22).

Apart from these attempts to confront the development of the line, actors also sought to modify its characteristics through the formal procedures of the policy process, occasionally resulting in modest modifications to the project.[26] Firstly, the common stance of local authorities in the surroundings of Durango, in Bizkaia, and the subsequent support of the Basque Government prompted the Spanish Government to accept the alternative to the south of the Ibaizabal river, which, in spite of its better environmental integration, was more costly, less flexible and adaptable to the functional requirements of the line, and did not run through a consolidated transport corridor (Ministerio de Fomento and INECO, 2000). Secondly, three modifications of the route proposed in the public consultation process were accepted, apart from the access to Vitoria, as they were compatible with other demands: the bypasses of Lezetxiki, Aduna-Zizurkil-Andoain, and Ventas in Irun (Secretaría General de Medio Ambiente, 2000). These modifications were the result of claims made by three local authorities, an academic from the University of the Basque Country and two individuals affected by the project. Concerning the access to Vitoria, the local authority of this city managed to persuade the Spanish Government – despite the Ministry's recommendation – to prevent the new line from running through the existing central station and to study an underground line through a new axis across the urban fabric, which, by building a new through station on it, would allow to keep the city integrated in the network.

A further, significant attempt to modify the characteristics of the project was proposed in 1998 by the Basque Chambers of Commerce, who suggested to radically change the characteristics of the line by developing a single high-speed rail (350 km/h) line through the three main Basque cities (Cámaras de Comercio e Industria de Araba, Bizkaia y Gipuzkoa et al., 1998). The Ministry of Development, after being consulted by the Basque Government (Interview 9), commissioned a study on the proposal that advised against it due to a number of technical reasons (e.g. its higher cost and environmental impact) (Ministerio de Fomento and INECO, 1999), of which the fundamental one was the impossibility of utilizing the Bilbao central station as a through station (Interview 9). The negative conclusion of the report suggests that the rejection of the Chambers' proposal was based on technical grounds,[27] although the delay it would entail may have also been important. As pointed out

[26] Further details of this are provided in Section 5.4.

[27] These technical grounds were, according to one of the consultants that drafted the Chambers' proposal, in any case debatable, since they centred on the infrastructure itself and neglected the operation and capacity benefits of a network with through stations (Interview 33).

previously, the Basque Government at that time was open to discussing alternatives, but without substantially modifying the project or its time-scale.

Thus, subnational actors achieved little direct influence in the policy process. The only episodes where this influence is evident refer to slight modifications of the route of the line in order to accommodate different requests by some individuals and, mainly, local authorities. In principle these changes on the route responded to a type of *persuasion* (*reasoning*) by the claimants since, as a senior official from the Ministry explained, they contributed to improve the spatial integration of the project (Interview 9). However, as suggested earlier in the chapter, these changes may have also been the result of an indirect influence on the behaviour of both the Spanish and the Basque Governments or, in other words, of an interest by these governments in gathering support and avoiding contestation to the project. First, the selection of the alternative to the south of the Ibaizabal river mentioned above indeed responded to a consensus among the concerned local authorities. In addition, and according to the aforementioned senior official, out of the 16 proposals to modify the route submitted during the public consultation process only the four that were compatible with the claims of the other concerned actors were considered (Interview 9). Indeed, the consensus sought generally involved a higher cost due to the improvement of the environmental and urban integration of the route. This interest in avoiding contestation is also partly the case of the Basque Government's will, formalized in the 2006 agreement with the Spanish Government, to participate directly in the implementation of the project. Although in this manner it obviously gained political ownership of the project, its participation also sought to reduce the local resistance to the project (Interviews 8 and 16). It is therefore important to examine in detail how the power struggles between the state and the contestation may have influenced the development of the line beyond specific modifications such as those just reviewed.

7.4.2 Countering contestation: between reasoning and manipulation

Although non-state Basque actors have not influenced the project significantly, there has been a change in the behaviour of the Basque Government that suggests that there has been a power struggle in order to prevent such an influence. This change has adopted four forms. Firstly, there was an insistence on dialogue in order to achieve a maximum consensus on the project. The organization of the 1998 three-day conference on the Basque rail system, the attention paid to the claims made during the public consultation process, which in fact involved a lengthening of the process, the meetings with contestation groups, and even the image of dialogue with *Ezker Batua* are instances of this attitude. Secondly, the Basque

Government emphasized the environmental adequacy of the project, in particular through an emphasis on mixed traffic (Amann, 2004; López de Guereñu, 2006b), and the measures to be adopted in order to reduce its environmental impact (Amann, 2001). Thirdly, this emphasis was accompanied by an effort to communicate the benefits of the project through several communication campaigns and documents (e.g. Departamento de Transportes y Obras Públicas, 2006) and a website (Gobierno Vasco, 2015), both of a clear regional scope.[28] Finally, there was also an attempt, mentioned in the previous chapter, to engage opposing actors in the implementation in order to reduce the contestation to the line (Interviews 22 and 28).

The aim of this behaviour was, in general terms, to neutralize or – if possible – satisfy the contestation without substantially modifying or delaying the project. This suggests that there was an actual exercise of power by other actors that needed to be countered in order to reassert the authority of the state, yet which form of power was exercised and by whom? First of all, leading party EAJ-PNV yielded the exercise of part of their *authority* in order both to achieve political objectives and facilitate the implementation of the project. These objectives included the political support of *Ezker Batua* to maintain the stability of the Basque Government and of left-wing nationalist *Euskal Herritarrok* (EH) to sustain the parliamentary agreement between both and the Lizarra-Garazi process promoted by largely nationalist forces. There may also have been an intention to gain electoral support among a population that might become convinced by some of the contestation arguments. Both those political parties and the regional electorate thus exercised *inducement* by conditioning their support to the leading party and the Basque Government.

Secondly, the government's behaviour seems to have intended to avoid the use of violence by certain actors, which could hinder the implementation of the project. The previous environmental conflicts over a nuclear power plant in Lemoiz, permanently halted, and a new motorway across the Leitzaran valley, eventually modified significantly, suffered the intervention of terrorist group ETA, which included the murders of nine persons linked to these projects (El País, 2008a).[29] In 1998, the Bilbao-based newspaper *El Correo* stated that

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[28] These campaigns, carried out towards the start of construction works, involved a travelling exhibition, advertising reports and advertisements in media outlets, and brochures and leaflets. They emphasized the regionally-relevant characteristics and benefits of the network, as the titles of some of these show: *The Basque Y: so that Euskadi* [the BAC] *does not Stop*; *The Y: so that Euskadi Progresses*; or *It is the Way: New Basque Rail Network* (Departamento de Transportes y Obras Públicas, 2005, 2006, 2007).

[29] The construction of a nuclear power plant in Lemoiz, Bizkaia, was virtually halted when, after three workers were murder in 1978 and 1979, the chief engineer was kidnapped and subsequently murdered in 1981. ETA killed the new chief engineer in 1982 and the construction of the plant was never completed. In the Leitzaran valley, Gipuzkoa, after threatening in 1989 the key persons involved in the construction of the motorway, the terrorist group started a series of attacks that resulted in the

the dialoguing attitude of the Basque Government responded to the fear of repetition of similar events (El Correo, 1998c). This is therefore a case of – although non-explicit in the period studied in this thesis – *coercion*, as it involves the threat of force. In short, the will to neutralize contestation seems prompted by the actual or anticipated pressure of regional actors exerted through inducement and coercion.

The way the Basque Government neutralized this exercise of power so that it did not affect the development of the Vitoria-Irun line was partly through *reasoning*, by explaining the benefits of the line to the Basque population, partly through *manipulation*, in those cases when the information provided was purposely biased[30] or when the goals underpinning its behaviour were concealed. The insistence on mixed traffic and its environmental and congestion reduction benefits seems to have been exaggerated since, according to experts interviewed, until only recently it was believed that the line would not carry goods due to the lack of experiences in Spain (Interview 9), and in any case freight traffic is a complex problem that does not only involve the infrastructure itself but also other aspects such as network management (Interview 11). Moreover, the emphasis on measures to reduce the environmental impact of the project does not seem to correspond to the policy outcome. Although in 2003 the Basque Government developed environmental and landscape instructions for the development of the construction projects of the line (Departamento de Transportes y Obras Públicas and ESTEYCO, 2003), ADIF is the ultimate responsible for these projects. In fact, a senior official from the Ministry of Development claims that the actual outcome does not substantially differ from other projects in Spain but that it was used to counter contestation actors (Interview 9).

With regard to the communication activities, leaving aside the disputable assumptions that underpin the developmental discourse, there are a number of missing aspects that suggest they have been omitted on purpose. Two instances are the insistence on modal shift from road to rail without mentioning the induced transport demand resulting from new infrastructure construction, and the non-consideration in the environmental performance of the project of the carbon dioxide emissions caused by this construction (Departamento de Transportes y Obras Públicas, 2005, 2006).[31] A last instance of manipulation has been the

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murders of two businessmen and two policemen. In 1991, the government of Gipuzkoa agreed with the majority of the contestation movement a modification of the route that avoided the valley (El País, 2008a).

[30] Note that a discourse analytical approach entails considering information as intrinsically biased. Manipulation is here deemed to exist when there is an intention to adopt this bias.

[31] In the absence of a more detailed analysis, the calculation of some data might have been skewed towards positive results. For example, the project's internal rate of return according to a cost-benefit analysis commissioned by the Spanish relevant ministry in the early 1990s did not reach 6% under any scenario (Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Transportes and INECO, 1992), whereas the Basque

insistence on dialoguing with opposing actors since they had no intention to modify the project or its time-scale (Amann, 2003a; El País, 2002c) but instead to achieve 'that social majority's acceptance of these infrastructures' (Interview 15).[32] Lastly, the unsuccessful attempt to co-opt opposing actors in the implementation can be conceptualized as failed inducement, as it entailed the incentive of partly reducing the negative impacts of the project.

To summarize, within the subnational arena, a series of organizations both from the contestation to the project (grouped in *Elkarlana* and in the *Red por un Tren Social*) and from the hegemonic discursive construction (the Basque Chambers of Commerce) have unsuccessfully attempted to significantly modify, delay or stop the project. The most noticeable influences have been some slight modifications achieved through the formal procedures of the policy process and a more responsive attitude by the Basque Government towards opposing sensibilities. *These changes may have partly responded to reasoning by those actors, but the evidence obtained suggests that they – especially the different Basque Government's behaviour – also sought to neutralize the exercise of actual inducement by political actors and foreseen coercion by certain sector of the contestation movement*. This was done – rather successfully for the time period covered in this research, since the development of the project was not altered due to that exercise – through *reasoning* and *manipulation*.

7.5 Conclusion

In accordance with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the standing conditions described in an earlier section, this chapter has shown that the Spanish central state has played the main role in shaping and promoting the development of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line. Through its *authority*, and despite apparent tensions within it, it controlled the time-scale and the definition of the characteristics of the project. Nevertheless, the analysis has also provided some insights into two of the issues identified in the literature review as requiring more academic attention: the importance of EU institutions and the role of subnational actors.

Due to the lack of competences of EU institutions concerning transnational transport infrastructure development, their potential influence comes from modes of power other than

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Government estimated this rate to be 8,38% in the mid-2000s (Departamento de Transportes y Obras Públicas, 2005).

[32] Nevertheless, as noted earlier with regard to *Ezker Batua*, it is likely that certain actors knew about the improbability of their influence.

authority, such as inducement through the provision of incentives (e.g. financial or technical support). However, no evidence was found of significant influence in the period studied in the case study. The existing financing opportunities did not function as a decisive incentive; in fact the use of the abundant Cohesion Funds seems to have been focused on other projects with a higher priority, such as the Madrid-Barcelona HSR line**.** Likewise, the influence of the drafting of trans-European HSR network outline plans on the development of the line seems to have been negligible. However, the time period addressed in this research, resulting from the characteristics of the studied case, does not encompass recent significant developments. From 2006, the potential EU financial contribution for cross-border sections has increased; the figures of the European Coordinator and the TEN-T Executive Agency have been consolidated and there are signs of their greater importance. Therefore, further research on a more recent period may indeed qualify these findings.

A different conclusion was drawn with respect to subnational actors. The Basque Government has indeed been able to exert a significant influence on the policy process through the exercise of different types of *persuasion*. During the first years of this process, it managed to persuade the Spanish Government to modify the route of the project through what I propose to term *reasoning*, by using part of the investment needed to develop the Bilbao-Vitoria line in order to improve the link with the French border. In the latter stages of the case, it brokered an agreement with the Spanish Government through *negotiation* that allowed it to become involved in the implementation of the line. This achievement, however, may not seem commensurate with the significant initiative and activity that the Basque Government displayed throughout the policy process, which testifies to the dominance of the central state. Nevertheless, the case in fact constitutes an illustration of the complex transport infrastructure development politics within the Spanish State of Autonomies. It illustrates, apart from the formal opportunities of participating in the policy process, how both the presence of regionally-based parties in the nation-state institutions and the strengthening of the central government party's regional affiliate may lead to changes in the development of a centrally-driven major infrastructure project.

Apart from EU institutions and the subnational state, the influence of other actors has also been examined, although generally it has not been very significant. A first group of actors is related to the transnational characteristics of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line: other nation-states and a series of transnational networks of association. However, only France seems to have exerted a noticeable influence (*negative inducement*) by failing to promote the French section of the Atlantic HSR link. A second group, on which analysis has focused especially due to the power struggles they engaged in with the Basque Government, are subnational actors who sought to modify, delay or stop the project. The existence of political incentives (*inducement*) and of potential threats of force (*coercion*) prompted the Basque

Government to intensify its effort to convince, partly through *reasoning* and partly through *manipulation*, those actors. Finally, it is worth pointing out the lack of influence of the private sector, which in other cases reviewed in Chapter 2 had played a more important role (Lemberg, 1995; Ross, 1998, pp. 203–205). Only the Chambers of Commerce were found to have significantly attempted to exercise power in episodic agency terms, although with little effect on the project. The continuing importance of the state in Spanish rail infrastructure planning and development and the unfavourable characteristics of high-speed rail for private participation may have been the two key reasons for the limited relevance of private sector actors.

To conclude, *in spite of the increasing importance of actors related to European integration and to the activity of groups from the private sector and the civil society, the power dynamics between Spanish and Basque state actors have dominated the policy process*. This resulted in a project which reproduced fundamentally both the subnational and the nation-state story-lines presented in the previous chapter: a modernized, high-speed rail network, which provides fast passenger transport between Spanish cities while it allegedly supports freight transport on a trans-European scale. The European story-line, although certainly in line with this policy outcome, was not sufficiently backed by actual influence in order to secure the effective implementation of the cross-border section Vitoria-Dax in a coordinated manner. The exercise of *authority* by the central state was recognized by most actors – although even the Basque Government challenged it at some point – so their influence or episodic agency power took place fundamentally through *persuasion* (*reasoning*, *inducement*, and *negotiation*). A more intricate power struggle took place among subnational actors, mainly opposed to the project, and the Basque Government, yet as it was shown it eventually had little impact on the development of the high-speed rail line, at least during the time period addressed in this research. All in all, this chapter and the previous one have provided a theoretically-informed examination of the policy process surrounding the Vitoria-Irun HSR line, through the lenses of discourse and power. Both analyses are brought together in the next chapter through a third, spatial perspective.

8 Relations and scale in rail infrastructure policy: discourse and power through a spatial lens

The previous two chapters have analyzed the policy process surrounding the Vitoria-Irun high-speed rail line from two distinct analytical perspectives: Hajer's (1995) discourse analytical approach and a power exercise analytical framework developed from the work of several theorists on power, in particular Clegg (1989). This final analytical chapter seeks, in response to the third research question of this thesis on the spatiality of transnational HSR policy-making, to spatialize both approaches and unify them through a focus on space. Relations, understood as constituting space, and scale, understood as framing the former, combine in order to produce a particular landscape of policy-making. Actors, discursively and materially associated to relational spaces of different reach but that may be assigned scalar features, interact through certain more or less proximate arenas, which may as well be related to certain bounded spaces, in order to produce policy. Furthermore, as policy-making seeks to adapt and plan for the transnational relations promoted by European integration, the scalar frames of regulation transcending traditional political spaces, which in conventional representative democracy provide the legitimacy for policy, may become restructured. Notwithstanding the debate about which spaces – scalar or otherwise – are the most suitable for a democratic politics, a necessary first step is to provide a description of how relations and scales unfold in transnational infrastructure policy-making, that is, to reflect on the spatiality of the process.

In Chapter 3, a conceptualization of space as relationally constituted but sensitive to scalar configurations was first proposed in order to be subsequently applied to the discourse and power analytical approaches. This application is presented in the first two sections of this chapter, by using the concepts and categories proposed separately for each approach. Thus, with regard to the former the following section examines the spatiality of both the content of discourse (that is, the spaces of concern and of reliance present in story-lines) and of the processes by which it is produced, reproduced and transformed (i.e. the discursive arenas through which these processes take place). Both aspects should not simply be considered separately, hence the section explores the relationship between the spatiality of the content of discourse and the spatiality of its production. In order words, it examines the extent to which the spatial mediation through which discourse is produced influences the spatial characteristics of the discourse. The spatialization of the analysis of episodic agency power is subsequently addressed in the second section of the chapter. Based on Allen's (2003) topological perspective on power, the exercise of power is considered to always take place *across* space (through relations of proximity and reach) and *through* space (via certain

arenas that actors seek access to). The resulting description of the spatiality of power is meant to provide a more complex and thorough picture of politics than scalar or multi-level perspectives.

In order to answer the research question, however, it is necessary to consider both approaches in a united fashion. Firstly, although the consideration of space as relationally constituted and potentially related to certain scalar frames provides a common basis for the spatialization of both approaches, it is possible to identify further points of convergence. The clearest common element is the assumption that discourse production and power exercise occurs through space, in this approach discursive and power arenas. In this respect, the topological understanding of power is also applicable to the dynamics of discourse: the latter may as well be produced by reaching into certain discursive arenas, near or far. The second step in developing a single approach to the spatiality of policy-making is to ascertain the role of relations and scales in policy-making. Both discursive and power arenas may be associated to certain scales (e.g. state institutions) and may indeed influence the content of discourse or influence the exercise of power across those spaces. Yet the importance of scale is not pre-determined and must be ascertained empirically. This is particularly relevant since, as discussed in the introductory chapter, scale is central to the definition of the spaces of conventional representative democracy. These two issues are thus addressed in the third section of the chapter, which is followed by a concluding section summarizing the findings and elaborating on the answer to the third research question.

8.1 The spatiality of discourse: spaces of concern, spaces of reliance and discursive arenas

Due to the spatial and, more specifically, territorial tensions that the development of transnational transport infrastructure involves, the spatial dimension is a key element in the actors' representations of the transport problem. This dimension was articulated in the discourse analytical approach developed in Chapter 3 through two main aspects: the content and the production of discourse. Firstly, two types of spaces can be distinguished in the content of the story-lines mobilized: the *spaces of concern*, or the geographical basis of the actors' discursively constituted interests; and the *spaces of reliance*, upon whose constitution the realization of such interests depends. Secondly, the production of discourse is mediated by certain spaces or *discursive arenas* (Linnros and Hallin, 2001), which might influence in turn the spatiality of discourse. This section thus complements the results presented in Chapter 6 with the application of these concepts to the discourse analysis. It first identifies

the spaces of concern and of reliance underpinning the different story-lines through which both the hegemonic discourses and the antagonistic discourse were articulated. Finally, it examines the discursive arenas through which the story-lines were produced, reproduced and transformed and how they related to the spatiality of these story-lines.

8.1.1 Relationality and compatible diversity in the hegemonic discourses

As the fundamentally Spanish-wide membership of the coalition formed around the story-line of the technocratic selective modernization of rail suggests (see Section 6.1.1), the space of concern of this story-line was defined by the limits of the nation-state. However, in this case this space should not be conceptualized simply in scalar terms. The geographical basis of its members' discursively constituted interests were in fact the relations facilitated by rail within the nation-state territory, and not those promoted by other modes of transport or, at least in the first instance, the Spanish territory as a whole. Attention was focused on enhancing the functioning of the rail network, not the performance of other transport modes or economic development throughout the nation-state. For example, the 1987 Rail Transport Plan made clear that its objective concerning infrastructure was to selectively modernize the rail network in order to make it competitive over other modes (Ministerio de Transportes, Turismo y Comunicaciones, 1987, p. 17). These relations, upon whose establishment the competitiveness of the rail network depended, thus also constituted the space of reliance of this story-line. The stance of the members of its discourse coalition with respect to the track gauge issue in Spain is also indicative of the identification of both types of spaces with the rail-based relations within the Spanish territory: the priority was to improve the functionality of the nation-state network rather than the integration with the European network through the adoption of the UIC track gauge, which would in addition cause significant problems in the Spanish network (El País, 1989e; Monfort, 1988).

The developmental discourse, hegemonic during the majority of the time period covered in the case study, presents a more complex spatiality. In fact, a key difference – if not the main one – between the four story-lines identified is their spatial characteristics. What they share, however, is the understanding of the spaces of concern as bounded and continuous since, through transport infrastructure development, they sought to enhance the economic development of certain territories, rather than simply the relations within them.

Thus, the space of concern present in the subnational story-line (see Section 6.2.1) was largely the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC), although it sometimes varied when

actors were related to smaller or greater spaces, for instance in cross-border arrangements (e.g. the BAC-Aquitaine cross-border region in Bujanda Arizmendi, 2006a).[1] The relations on which the realization of the interests of those actors that mobilized this story-line depended were generally of a trans-European reach and largely referred to freight transport: improved accessibility to markets was required in order to better compete in an integrated Europe (Amann, 2005; Atienza, 1989). This space of reliance was sometimes further identified with an Atlantic axis or corridor, an economically integrated space that needed to be established in order to counter the uneven development of the European territory. As Basque President Ardanza stated in a 1989 interview, 'there is a shared need [by the BAC and Aquitaine] to promote the economic development of the European Atlantic axis that allows balancing the degree of attraction that, due to agglomeration, the central and Mediterranean regions have in the current European integration process' (Ardanza, 1989). Interestingly, this duality of a Basque space of concern and a trans-European space of reliance is coherent with the political stance towards Europe of Basque moderate nationalism, as the at the time Director of the Aquitaine-Euskadi Logistic Platform eloquently expressed:

> 'Throughout history, each stage of socioeconomic development has required a certain living space, and thus today the differences, the local, the most intimate identity, the most non-transferrable feeling of belonging are cultivated most naturally with the openness, with the acceptance of the other, with relation, with exchange and with communication. [...] I believe that making ourselves known beyond our borders is vital for the Basques, we must get it right and say that we are here and that we want to relate to those from outside. That is the bet of the New Basque Rail Network, that is the bet of the "Y", the bet of the Basque identity of the future' (Bujanda Arizmendi, 2006b).

The spatiality of the nation-state story-line (see section 6.2.2) naturally revolved around the Spanish territory. As explained in Chapter 6, extensive high-speed rail development would significantly contribute to achieve its balanced development in order to catch up with the economy of other EU member states. The space of reliance was not strictly limited to those relations within the nation-state, but these seemed to have had priority over the network connections with Europe. In any case, this space was not particularly defined by relations of a certain length (for instance between the main urban areas or industrial nodes) but by a

[1] In fact, the concern with becoming marginalized was shared by actors related to other subnational spaces, to the extent that in some occasions groups of subnational state and private sector actors from French and Spanish Atlantic regions practiced story-lines that had as spaces of concern the corresponding regions or even the Atlantic axis as a space being itself marginalized (El Correo, 1989f; El País, 1988c, 2002d, 2004l). All these cases shared nevertheless the space of reliance (an Atlantic rail corridor) and, accordingly, engaged in networks of association that sought to promote its development.

general increase in accessibility that would presumably promote such balanced development. This was clearly expressed in the 2005 Spanish infrastructure plan, which sought to achieve this increase in accessibility without showing a particular concern for cross-border connections. Out of its 16 policy guidelines for the rail sector, the fifth one prescribed '[t]o set a target for a reduction in total travel times for all interurban links' (Ministerio de Fomento, 2005, p. 64), whereas there was little reference in them to the development of transnational links beyond ensuring the interoperability with the rest of the European network. The spaces of concern and reliance in this story-line thus approximately match those in the technocratic policy discourse story-line in terms of their scalar limits, although the two fundamental differences between them are, first, that in this case the space of concern is continuous (development was meant to be fostered throughout the nation-state) and, second, that the space of reliance is denser (the aim was not to act only on those corridors where rail may have been competitive, but to integrate as much Spanish territory as possible in the high-speed rail network).

The coincidence of the scalar limits of the spaces of concern and of reliance is more clearly seen in the European story-line (see section 6.2.3): the objective of trans-European HSR infrastructure development was to facilitate the establishment of a fully functional Single Market (space of reliance), with the expectation that the EU as a whole (space of concern) will benefit from it. However, the space of reliance is clearly networked – '[n]etworks are the arteries of the single market' (CEC, 1993, p. 75) – whereas the space of concern is, as in the previous story-line, continuous. The relations that form the space of reliance, furthermore, tend to be long-distance. According to González Finat, the CEC's point of view was that high-speed rail was not to reduce travel times between the main Basque cities to 30 minutes but to support long-distance connections (Interview 4; also CEC, 1991, p. 6). However, this distinction was to be blurred in the sustainable spatial structuring story-line.

The spatiality of this story-line (see Section 6.2.4) is indeed less defined than in the other ones reviewed, not surprisingly due to the varied membership of the discourse coalition. As with the previous story-line, different spaces of concern within the EU were said to benefit from transnational HSR infrastructure development, yet in the sustainable spatial structuring story-line this outcome does not simply result from the establishment of long-distance links but from facilitating relations of different reach, from the trans-European to the subnational. Thus, the new Vitoria-Irun HSR line would promote balanced and sustainable development on a series of spatial scales: the BAC would benefit from the establishment of intra-regional HSR relations as well as trans-border transport; the Spanish nation-state would enhance its own network whilst improving its integration with the rest of the European one; and the EU would be provided with a key link that facilitated the seamless

flow of goods and persons across its territory. Former Spanish Minister of Development Álvarez Cascos articulated this story-line in the Congress of Deputies as follows:

> I agree with the Honourable Member that this work is fundamental for three reasons: first, because it will allow to effectively structure [*vertebrar*] by rail the Basque Country with Spain's high-speed network; secondly, because it will allow to connect through the Basque Country the Spanish high-speed network with Europe; and third, because it will allow as well to link the three Basque capitals with each other and promote the territorial cohesion of the Basque Country' (Congreso de los Diputados, 2000).[2]

Therefore, in the sustainable spatial structuring story-line the spaces of concern and of reliance are – rather confusingly – varied: a number of scalar spaces would benefit for the establishment of a link that facilitates relations of a different reach.

All in all, *the spatiality of the hegemonic discourses' story-lines has been generally characterized by a 'compatible diversity'*: a significant variety in terms of the spaces of concern but sufficiently similar spaces of reliance to make the story-lines of the developmental discourse compatible. As shown in Figure 12 below, the different discourse coalitions were formed around distinct spaces of concern, hence their members were usually associated with certain, more or less bounded, spaces. The differences in the spaces of reliance may have in fact caused disagreements between coalitions (e.g. between the subnational and the nation-state ones), as ultimately these spaces are about policy objectives – they are formed by the set of spatial relations that, if established, are meant to enable the realization of actors' discursively constituted interests. However, their overall compatibility with the Vitoria-Irun HSR line – or, vice versa, the capacity of this line to fulfil different policy objectives – allowed to advance and carry out the project. In terms of the nature of these spaces, within the developmental discourse the spaces of concern are always continuous and largely bounded since the coalitions sought, through transport infrastructure development, to enhance the economic development of certain territories. This is not the case of the selective modernization story-line, where the space of concern is relational as it consists of just the relations facilitated by rail, with no explicit impact on regional development (hence the more limited discourse coalition). In contrast to the spaces of concern, the spaces of reliance are always relational, as their definition implies, yet in comparison with the antagonistic discourse (see below) their relations involve the linkage of more distant nodes over a wider area. However, they are also generally bounded, although the clarity of their boundary varies with the story-line.

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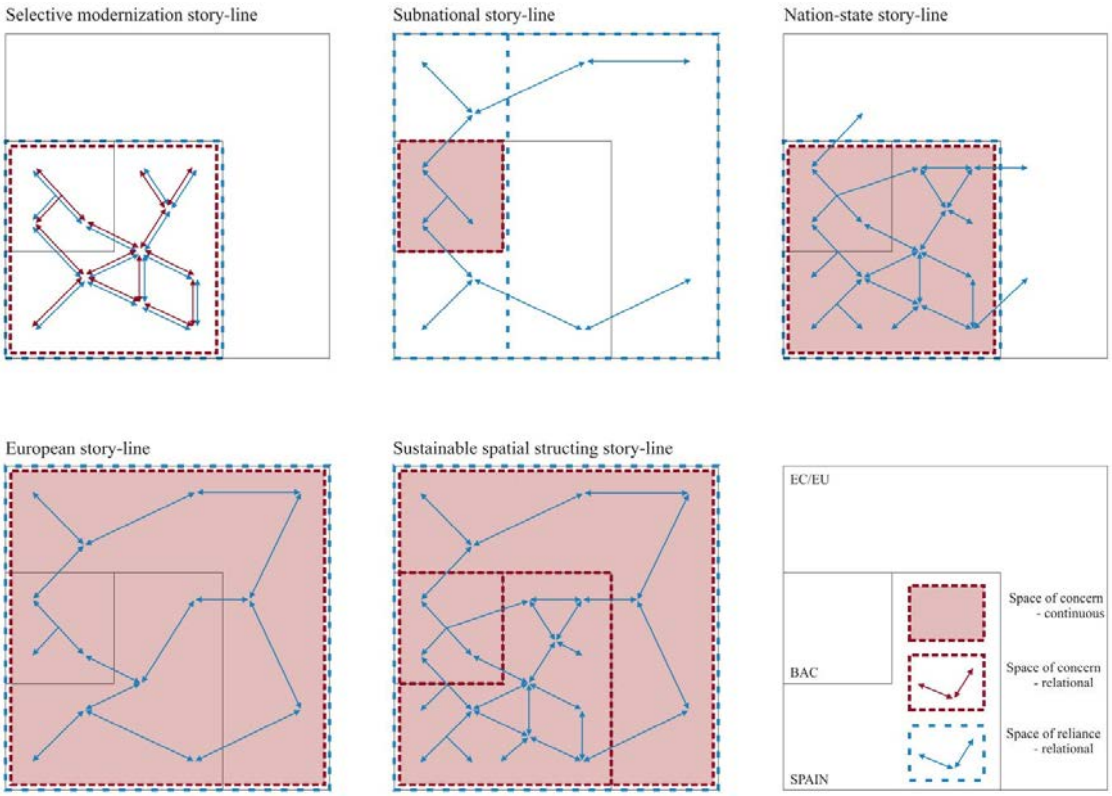
[2] This statement is the beginning of a response to a question to the Government made by a Member of the Congress of Deputies for Bizkaia from the same parliamentary group, which attests to the capacity of the story-line to bridge differences between actors, which in this example were basically spatial.

Figure 12. Spatiality of the hegemonic discourses' story-lines



8.1.2 Proximity and spatial continuity in the antagonistic discourse

The spatiality of the antagonistic discourse (see Section 6.3.1) is clearly based on the notion of proximity. The high-speed train, accompanied by the fragmentation of space caused by its linkage of distant points, would have a significant impact on locality not only in its immediate environmental sense but also regarding its socioeconomic development. The alternative to the existing model of development based in capitalist globalization lay, according to the members of the antagonistic story-line discourse coalition, in promoting this proximity at the expense of the long-distance relations facilitated by high-speed rail. As a member of agricultural trade union EHNE put it, 'so, indeed, many times the discourse is localization against globalization' (Interview 29). Placing the locality at the centre was the foundation on which an alternative to the current model of development was to be based. Thus, similarly to the environmental conflicts analyzed in della Porta and Piazza (2007), at least at the discursive level this coalition was not characterized by simple NIMBYsm as it addressed the wider issue of the model of development.

Accordingly, the space of concern of the antagonistic story-line is the locality or proximate environment. Although contestation actors certainly focused their attention on sites or settlements impacted by the line and occasionally mentioned the need to revitalize

the *euskaldeak*[3] (Interview 23), the space of concern has been usually framed as Euskal Herria, a greater Basque Country to which the BAC belongs and which has become the dominant geopolitical imagination of Basque nationalism (Mansvelt Beck, 2006). In any case, more important than the exact boundaries of the space of concern is its continuous nature: the area to benefit must be the whole region, not just the urban areas. Hence the duality occasionally used by opposition actors of *Euskal Herria* ('Basque Country') vs. *Euskal Hiria* ('Basque City'), a notion proposed by the Basque Government and a spatial planning think tank to conceptualize the BAC as a city-region (Interview 36; see also Departamento de Ordenacion del Territorio y Medio Ambiente and Fundación Metrópoli, 2002). Referring to this duality, the continuous character of the space of concern is expressed by a professor of urban and regional planning at the University of the Basque Country, who wrote critically against the high-speed rail line, thus:

> 'Euskadi is not a city. Euskadi is a country [*país*] with county towns [*cabeceras de comarca*], with rural towns, with agricultural areas that must be recouped, with wooded areas, with coastal areas, with urban areas, with everything. But it is not a city' (Interview 1).

The insistence on the necessity to facilitate local, intra-regional relations suggests that the boundaries of this story-line's space of reliance correspond to those of the space of concern. However, the emphasis on rejecting the project rather than on proposing alternatives – and therefore making explicit the relations to be established – prevents a precise definition of such a space.

This is less the case of the 'social train' story-line (see Section 6.4.1) which, being also based on the notion of proximity and having as space of concern Euskal Herria, advocated the development of a rail network 'of social utility' that satisfied the maximum number of users without inducing new overall transport demand and allowing at the same time freight transport on it (ELA et al., 2003, p. 3). Thus, the space of reliance basically consisted of dense relations within Euskal Herria, although it is important to note that this notion did not exclude passenger and, particularly, freight transport beyond its borders. Roberto Bermejo, an academic who was instrumental in providing a technical basis to the story-line, explains this with reference to the connection with Europe:

> 'We are perfectly linked with Europe. Firstly by car, at least in medium or not very long distances. Secondly, planes link with everywhere, and besides air transport will always be cheaper than rail, particularly if it is high speed, because it requires virtually no infrastructure. [...] A network for each country [*país*], better connected especially with the next cross-border country [*país*] and so on, fine, but not

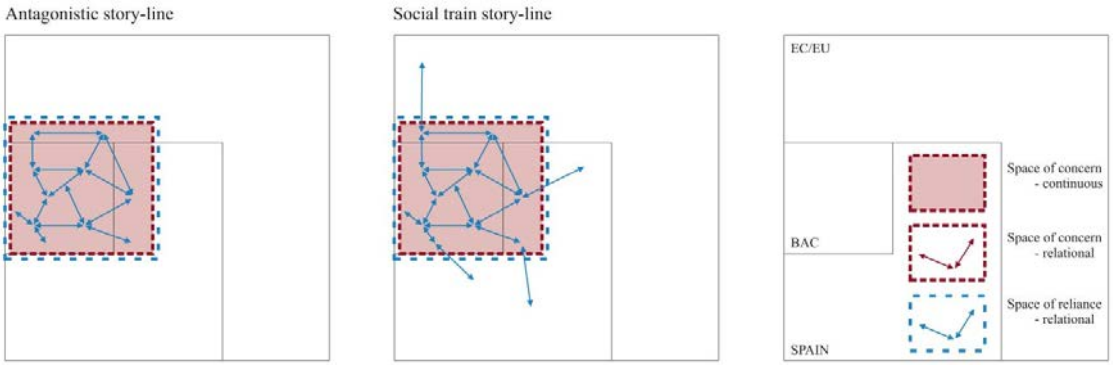
[3] Sub-regions or districts in Basque, used here to refer to traditional regions smaller than the provinces, *comarcas* in Spanish.

in high speed. [...] Now, we have always considered that – improving as well the passenger connection – the key element was freight transport, here, in the Basque Country, and generally in all Europe. We do recognize that' (Interview 35).

The image is thus of a patchwork of networks that serve their territories as homogeneously as possible, yet not in isolation from each other. Moreover, the promotion of long-distance HSR relations is seen as linked to the interests of an economic minority,[4] and hence local relations are prioritized.

A representation of the spaces of concern and of reliance of both story-lines can be seen in Figure 13 below. The two story-lines of the antagonistic discourse shared a common space of concern (Euskal Herria), which is coherent with the nationalist dimension of the contestation movement. The main spatial difference between this discourse and the developmental one is that the former tends to see space – both of concern and of reliance – in topographical terms, i.e. as a continuous surface where distance – and thus proximity – is important. Although the space of reliance in the antagonistic discourse is obviously networked, the grid is as dense as possible in order to homogeneously serve a continuous geographical area. In this respect it clearly contrasts with the more networked nature of the spaces of reliance of the developmental discourse, which promoted the reduction of travel times between distant points in order to benefit certain spaces commonly defined in scalar terms. *Discursive antagonism is thus reflected in the radically different types of spaces of reliance of each discourse*.

Figure 13. Spatiality of the antagonistic discourse's story-lines



[4] A minority which, as suggested by a member of the *Red por un Tren Social* at the Basque Parliament, is not just non-local but also off-space: 'On the economic side we see that actually all these infrastructures draw wealth out of the local and take it elsewhere. [...] So, who is interested in this? This is of interest to an institution so much from above that we the people are unable to see it, the economic interests are so much from above that we don't see it' (Parlamento Vasco, 2006b).

8.1.3 Spatial discursive dynamics: discourse production through distinct and scale-related discursive arenas

Once the main spatial features of the story-lines identified have been defined, it is necessary to analyze how they were produced, reproduced and transformed through discursive arenas. With regard to the technocratic discourse on rail transport policy, although the data collected is not exhaustive in this respect, there is evidence that the discursive arenas were limited to certain political institutions and networks of experts along with, to a lesser extent, the media. Until 1991, the planning of rail and road infrastructure was split between two ministries[5] with distinct approaches to transport infrastructure planning (Interview 6). Nevertheless, the network of experts that supported and practiced the discourse stretched beyond state institutions. According to a former senior official between 1985 and 1994, in those years there was an important interaction between the Spanish ministry responsible for rail infrastructure planning and the publicly owned consultancy firm INECO, in terms of both participation of the latter in Spanish infrastructure planning and of a significant interchange of staff between both bodies (Interview 6).[6, 7] Due to its importance within the discourse in producing and legitimating a particular form of knowledge, this network resembles Haas' notion of 'epistemic communities', 'a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area' (Haas, 1992, p. 3). Although the discourse was reproduced in the media to a certain extent (El País, 1987c), its production and reproduction remained largely confined to technical circles and the government departments responsible for rail planning. This explains that the space of concern was bounded by the Spanish borders and consisted specifically of the rail transport relations within the Spanish territory.

This limited nature of the discursive arenas was less visible in the developmental discourse. In the four identified story-lines, the relevant ministries or government departments were still important, but other state bodies such as those responsible for the economy or the environment and the government as a whole became more relevant as the policy issue gained centrality and the discourse widened its scope. This increased importance also entailed that the main media outlets became a relevant discursive arena, as they often covered and presented opinions on the issue (e.g. ABC, 2004; El Correo, 1988e; El País,

[5] The Ministry of Transport, Tourism and Communications and the Ministry of Public Works and Urbanism, respectively.
[6] This is the case of two of the interviewees in this research (Interviews 10 and 11), who worked both at the ministry and at INECO.
[7] A measure of the spatiality of these discursive arenas is the fact that the offices of the Ministry of Development, the Directorate-General for Rail Infrastructures, and INECO are located within walking distance of each other, in an area of two square kilometres in Madrid.

2005d). In general terms, it is reasonable to link scalar discursive arenas with the production of story-lines with bounded spaces of concern, a relationship that can be most clearly seen in the nation-state and subnational arenas. Firstly, both the Spanish government and the Spanish parliament naturally promoted the formation of a story-line with a space of concern defined by the Spanish territory. Access to the Government of Spain from the private sector involved bodies with a similar spatial coverage, such as the Association of Nationwide Construction Companies of Spain (SEOPAN) (Interview 24).[8] Similarly, actors in Basque state institutions usually framed their concerns around the BAC. The Basque Parliament was an important – although not influential in episodic agency power terms – space for discussion on the high-speed rail line. A former Member of it, from left-wing party *Ezker Batua*, highlights that the majority of political forces – both nationalist and non-nationalist – assigned a certain 'national' dimension to the institution, where any issue of relevance to the BAC had to be addressed regardless of its actual capacity to influence it:

> 'That is, there can't be a debate concerning Euskadi [the BAC] that has no space in the Basque Parliament and that does not leave us at least with the – the word comes to me in Basque – feeling that we decide on what is ours, even if it's not real, as you say' (Interview 22)

The previously discussed influence of environmental consultants on the Basque Government's – and possibly on the Basque citizenry's – stance with respect to the project took place through professional links with this government and through regional or regionally focused media (Olabe, 2004a; Olabe and Ansuategi, 2004; also Interview 34). Moreover, traditionally there seem to have existed informal networks involving Basque politicians and the Basque private sector, including the Chamber of Commerce of Bilbao (Interview 14).[9]

European arenas, due to the fact that its political actors are frequently related to smaller spaces such as nation-states or subnational regions, are arguably weaker in terms of promoting a pan-European space of concern. This is the case, for instance, of the Council of the EU, formed by the relevant nation-state ministers, the Christophersen group responsible for identifying TENs priority projects, which included representatives of – apart from the CEC and the EIB – the Heads of State or Government, and the High-Level Group on a trans-

[8] Although beyond the time-frame of the case study, the existence of this networked discursive arena is demonstrated by the designation as President of SEOPAN of the former Director of the Economic Office of Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero immediately after he left this post (El País, 2008b).

[9] Similarly to the Spanish case, the existence of these informal networks is illustrated by the appointment of the Basque Minister for Transport and Public Works between 2005 and 2009 as Secretary General of the Basque business association Confebask in 2010 (El Correo, 2010a).

European HSR network, formed by representatives of the CEC, the EIB, the private sector (including the CER and the ERT), and the member states.[10]

In fact, these European arenas may be better seen as arenas where no scale predominates among its actors. A number of arenas that also transcend nation-state borders and include actors relatable to different spaces can be further identified. Firstly, the Basque Government participated in forms of cooperation with the Government of Aquitaine, which was formalized in the 'Aquitaine-Euskadi Logistic Platform' (PLAE), and engaged in networks of association between Atlantic regions, including the Atlantic Arc Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, and cross-border cooperation structures (the *Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées*). Secondly, Basque private sector actors also engaged in networks with similar actors across the Atlantic area (the CCA and the CEFAT). Other arenas may have provided more specific and occasional opportunities for discourse production. For instance, a former CEC official mentions a conference in the late 1980s, when he was still working for French rail infrastructure manager SNCF, in which representatives of the Government of Catalonia, the Chamber of Commerce of Bilbao and SNCF discussed the possibility of developing cross-border rail links, an issue that at that moment was not well seen by the Spanish Government (Interview 5). Similar cases, although perhaps less influential due to the later date on which they were held and their wider range of participants, were two three-day conferences held in the BAC: one on the Basque rail system (Departamento de Transportes y Obras Públicas, 1999) and another one on the Trans-European Networks (Consejo Vasco del Movimiento Europeo, 2001).

The extent to which these eclectic discursive arenas have prompted discourse production and transformation is difficult to determine. In some cases it is reasonable to claim they have reinforced the existing story-lines by facilitating interaction between actors with similar concerns (e.g. subnational networks of association and the aforementioned late-1980s conference). In others, discursive arenas may have helped the convergence of story-lines towards the sustainable spatial structuring one (e.g. the PLAE and the Atlantic Arc Commission). Finally, other arenas seem to have been less influential, either due to their one-off character (the other two aforementioned conferences) or because they functioned more as sites of power struggles or power arenas (see next section) rather than arenas for discursive interaction (e.g. the Council of the EU and the High-Level Group on a trans-European HSR network). What seems certain is that all these arenas helped to reproduce the developmental discourse, beyond differences with regard to the spaces to be benefitted (spaces of concern) and, to a lesser extent, the spaces to be developed (spaces of reliance).

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[10] See Section 5.3.1 for further details on the latter two groups.

In contrast, the antagonistic discourse was produced and reproduced through significantly different arenas. The *Asamblea contra el TAV*, which initiated the contestation movement, had an assembly-based local character and the youth social centres *gaztetxes* as key spaces of discourse production and reproduction (Interviews 2 and 23). The antagonistic discourse coalition, formalized in *AHT Gelditu! Elkarlana*, emerged as a result of three conferences between 1999 to 2001 in a social centre in Bilbao and the town hall of Elorrio, located near the centre of the Y-shaped Vitoria-Irun HSR line (Interviews 2 and 29). The reproduction of the discourse by this coalition took place mainly through public and rural spaces and informal networks: demonstrations in the Basque cities and towns affected; information and discussion sessions in municipalities; protest marches, sit-ins and other non-violent actions on sites related to the project; and the production of communication materials such as leaflets, documents and videos (Interview 2). As several interviewees pointed out, the intention of *Elkarlana* was to generate a grassroots social movement and hence its work was based on local mobilization and information (Interviews 2 and 31). In addition, minority media outlets *Egin* and *Gara*, with a left-wing and pro-independence editorial line, also contributed to produce and reproduce this discourse (e.g. Antigüedad, 2001; Cabareda, 1995). In turn, the *Red por un Tren Social* functioned more as a discussion group able to generate an alternative discourse (Interviews 22 and 28) yet without *Elkarlana*'s grassroots mobilization (Interview 2), and thus the arenas where the social train story-line was mobilized were more limited to Basque academic circles,[11] informal networks among associations, and regional media and communication networks. In any case, what all these arenas have in common is their local character; the antagonistic story-lines were rarely practiced beyond the boundaries of the BAC or Euskal Herria.[12] Not surprisingly, the discourse presented a local and topographical dimension which included but was not limited to nationalist positions, as a member of *Elkarlana* points out:

> 'Well, we, as a movement, have been a Basque movement, clearly. [...] I think that national expression is an – I think – very heartfelt, very cherished expression. 'But it's a movement only of *abertzales*.'[13] No, it's not only of *abertzales*. [...] I think that in the anti-HST movement there are many people that do not carry the label of 'nationalist' or '*abertzale*', but simply they are in the struggle because it is an important struggle' (Interview 31).

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[11] As noted in Chapter 6, the technical basis to the story-line was provided by a group of academics at the University of the Basque Country (Interviews 2 and 22).

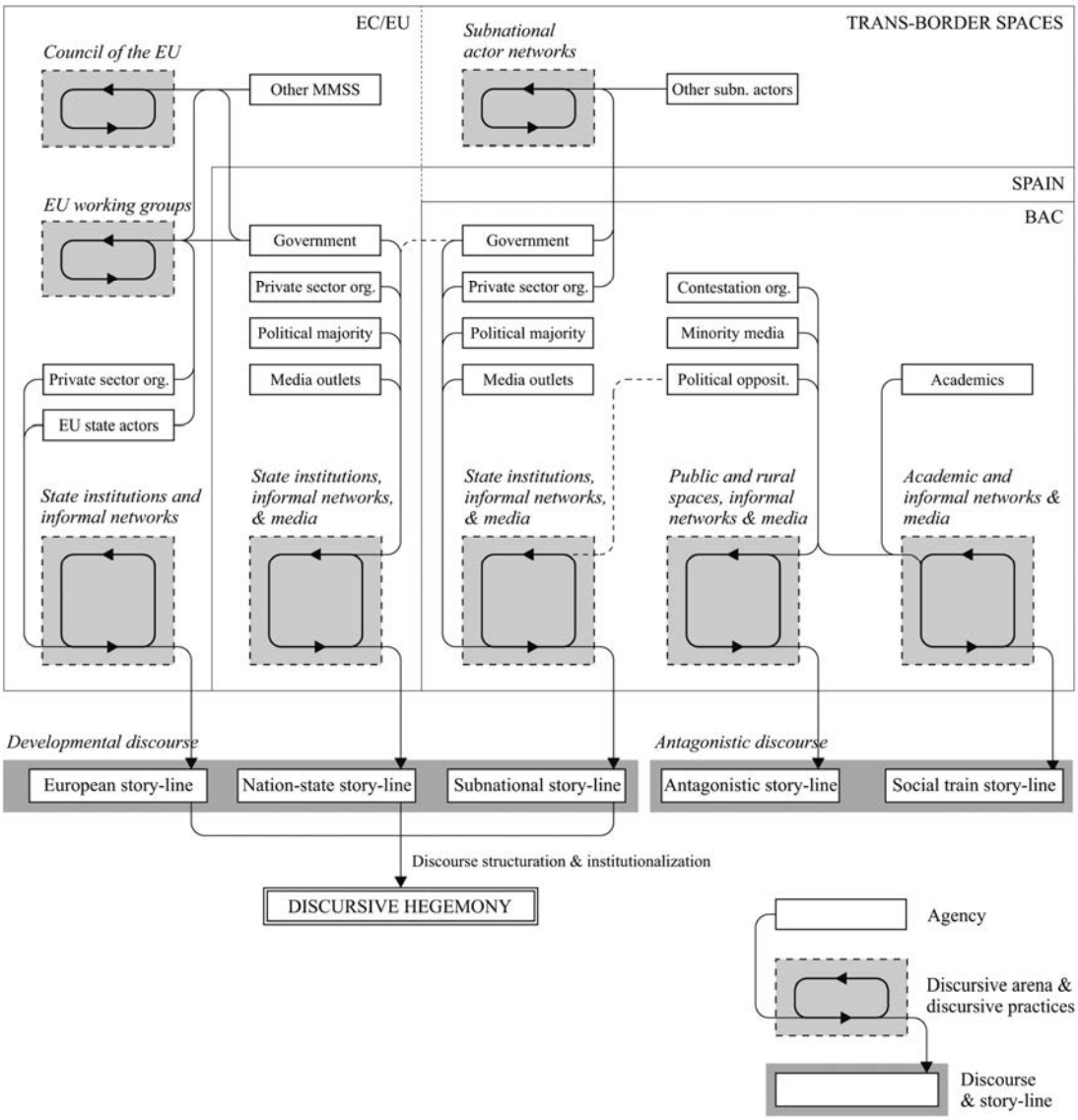
[12] However, actors from the contestation movement participated in meetings with other similar movements within and outside the Spanish nation-state (Interviews 2 and 31) and, in turn, actors from other movements occasionally were involved in events in the BAC (Interview 26). Arguably, these different movements shared the antagonistic discourse in its main features, but the articulation of the story-lines for the particular case addressed in this research was fundamentally done in Basque arenas.

[13] 'Patriot' or 'nationalist' in Basque (Aulestia and White, 1992, p. 1).

Access to the main discursive arenas by proponents of the antagonistic discourse was limited, and in any case it was restricted to Basque state institutions. Opposing political parties have generally had a minority presence in the Basque Parliament which, as was shown in Chapter 6, allowed them to engage in argumentative interaction with the proponents of the hegemonic discourse. This presence resulted once in a parliamentary agreement between the Basque Government and the left-wing nationalist party *Euskal Herritarrok* (EH), which provided further opportunities for interaction. Moreover, the left-wing political party *Ezker Batua*, which opposed the project, was a member of the Basque Government between 2001 and 2009. Finally, meetings with representatives of the Basque Government were also held with members of *Elkarlana* and the *Red por un Tren Social*, in particular the opposing Basque trade unions. Nevertheless, as it was shown in Chapter 6, access to the Basque Parliament and the Basque Government by these actors did not result in any significant impact on the hegemonic developmental discourse.

The discursive dynamics discussed in this section are represented in Figure 14. For the sake of clarity, the diagram has been simplified and hence some data have been omitted: the technocratic discourse and the sustainable spatial structuring story-line; the differences within actors and arenas; and certain arenas with limited influence (trans-border contestation networks and one-off conferences). In any case, the diagram shows how the production of discourse was mediated by arenas mainly related to a certain scale, linked to the state and the media in the case of the developmental discourse and to more marginal spaces in the case of the antagonistic one. Those arenas that involve actors associated to different scales (Council of the EU, EU working groups and trans-border subnational actor networks) have not been found to be significantly influential and therefore do not result in discourse production. By means of the structuration of discourse and its institutionalization through particular policies and institutional arrangements, the developmental discourse achieved hegemony in the discursive order.

Figure 14. Spatiality of the discursive dynamics



To summarize, this section has shown how the hegemonic discourses were articulated through a series of story-lines that spatially differed significantly in terms of their spaces of concern. However, although their clearly networked spaces of reliance did not necessarily match, in the developmental discourse story-lines they were compatible enough to prevent major disagreements over the Vitoria-Irun HSR line. In contrast, the antagonistic discourse was articulated through story-lines based on the notion of proximity, to the extent that their spaces of reliance covered as homogeneously as possible a continuous geographical area. The radical difference between the spaces of reliance of the developmental and the antagonistic discourses mirrors the contrast between the models of development advocated by each discourse and reflects the existing discursive antagonism. Moreover, *the arenas*

through which both discourses were produced, reproduced and transformed differed not only in their characteristics but also in their spatiality. Whereas the different story-lines of the developmental discourse may be associated to discursive arenas related to particular scales ranging from the subnational to the European, other arenas where actors were associated to different scales seem to have helped to consolidate the wider hegemonic discourse. In turn, and in line with its spatiality, the antagonistic discourse was produced and reproduced in other types of discursive arenas fundamentally related to the 'local', understood as those spaces encompassed by the BAC or Euskal Herria. Argumentative interaction between both discourses was scarce and in any case largely limited to Basque arenas.

8.2 The spatiality of power: a politics of reach through topology and power arenas

Following the analytical framework presented in Chapter 3, the basic assumption of the spatialization of policy-making with respect to power is that its exercise is always mediated by space. On the one hand, power takes place through relations of proximity and reach and, furthermore, the characteristics of these relations are inherently linked to the modes of power exercised. Thus, certain modes of power tend to be more effective at a distance, and vice versa. On the other hand, the exercise of power also occurs through certain spatial fixities or *power arenas*, which constitute those spaces where power struggles take place and the use of means and resources is temporarily fixed. Accordingly, this section spatializes the analysis of episodic agency power presented in Chapter 7 by focusing on two aspects. It first addresses the spatiality of the actual power exercised, by examining the relations on space that constitute it and the modes of power adopted. Secondly, it identifies the arenas through which power has been exercised and reflects on how access to them has conditioned this exercise. However, these two aspects do not address a series of power struggles that, although not resulting in an effective exercise of power, are clarifying with regard to debates on the spatiality of power. A last subsection therefore focuses on them.

8.2.1 Bringing the far-off within reach and distancing the nearby through authority

The clearest conclusion of Chapter 7 has been that central state actors have exercised their authority throughout the policy process to determine the characteristics of the Vitoria-Irun

HSR line and its time-scale. Most of the actors involved in the policy process, including EU and Basque state institutions, recognized this authority and sought to influence the development of the projects through other modes of power. In this respect, distance between the exerciser of power and its object was not important; Spanish state actors, and in particular the Spanish Government, were able to reach into a border region in Spain and develop and implement a particular policy in spite of the strong opposition showed by certain actors.

Indeed, the exercise of power through distance does not mean authority has not been challenged on the basis of such a distance. The obvious example of this has been the activity of the contestation movement which, as explained in the discourse analysis of Chapter 6, included both nationalist and 'local impact' dimensions. The Spanish Government's authority –and frequently the Basque Government's too – was not recognized as the high-speed rail line was stated to be promoted by economic and political elites. In fact, the project is considered an imposition in documents produced by the *Asamblea contra el TAV* (2002) and *AHT Gelditu! Elkarlana* (2001a).[14] As a member of *Ekologistak Martxan*, an environmental organization integrated in *Elkarlana*, argued, 'it is a project that is decided by supranational[15] entities, but that is imposed in this country [*país*] in complicity with local authorities and elites that support it and defend it' (Interview 31). This lack of recognition also involved carrying out practices that claimed for a form of democracy more based on proximity, such as the organization from 2006 of a series of popular consultations in several concerned localities (Barcena, 2009).

In any case, more significant than this has been the conflict of competences between the Spanish and Basque governments in the first half of the 2000s, since in this instance it was a (subnational) state actor that did not recognize the Spanish Government's authority to determine the timing of the project. The non-recognition of the exclusive competence of the central state in developing the line was based on the alleged failure to meet the foreseen deadlines on the project (El País, 2002a). The subsequent tendering of construction projects and works by the Basque Government was justified, according to the then Basque Minister for Transport and Public Works, with reference to the functionality of the new line:

> 'Since the central government does nothing to develop the 'Y' as a trans-European network, the Basque executive works as if it was an internal network that would serve the [Autonomous] Community. For that we already have all the competences. Later on it can be reclassified as trans-European, which is what is important' (Amann, 2003a).

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[14] The *Red por un Tren Social*, with a more conciliatory attitude towards the Basque Government, did not employ such terms in its documents (ELA et al., 2003; Red por un Tren Social, 2006).
[15] The nation here is to be understood as the Basque Country.

The stance of the Spanish Government was no less firm, and reflected the strong territorial dimension of the conflict. The struggle over space is shown by the vocabulary used by the Spanish Minister of Development in a visit to the BAC a few days after the Basque Government awarded the contracts for the construction projects of four sections of the line: 'I think that the Basque Government should deal with the issues within its competence and leave other people's houses to be managed by their title holders' (Álvarez-Cascos, 2003). In spite of the central state's eventual prevalence, this case is indeed indicative of the potential territorial struggles associated with exerting power 'at a distance'. An editorial by the Madrid-based conservative and centralist newspaper ABC, which refers to the tendering of eight sections of the project by the Spanish Government, illustrates this point expressively:

> 'It is about addressing an economic and social need of the Basque Country, but it equally involves a political dimension that translates into the effective presence of the [central] State in the development of this [Autonomous] Community, which must also be defended without any fear' (ABC, 2004).

Although the exercise of authority by the Spanish central state was not noticeably affected by distance, this is not necessarily the case of the other modes of power identified in the analysis. Nevertheless, the influence that the Basque Government managed to exert through reasoning and negotiation does not seem to be related to the distance to the Government of Spain either, but to its lack of competences regarding the high-speed rail line. Likewise, the possible inducement by the activity – or lack thereof – of the High-Level Group on a trans-European HSR network and the Government of France occurred notwithstanding their distance to the project. In both cases, then, persuasion by subnational, European and other national state actors was able to reach to far-off places. Where distance seems to have been important is in the power struggles between the Basque Government and the other Basque political actors. Out of the three ways the Basque Government has exercised power in this respect (manipulation to neutralize opposition parties, manipulation to counter coercion by certain groups of the contestation, and reasoning and manipulation to gain electoral support), the latter two seem to a certain extent related to proximity. The exercise of coercion, since it involves the threat of force, is facilitated by physical proximity,[16] and the use of the media and communication instruments to shape public opinion is arguably easier in a limited space due to the less variety of interests involved. Moreover, interaction between Basque actors

[16] The Head of the Minister for Transport and Public Works' Cabinet between 2006 and 2009 points out how meetings in the local authorities governed by the pro-independence left were logistically very complicated due to the security arrangements employed (Interview 19). He also mentions that EAJ-PNV mayors (the ruling party in the Basque Government) in the Goierri, an area in Gipuzkoa where contestation to the project was very high, faced intense pressure – even physical – by some supporters of such pro-independence left.

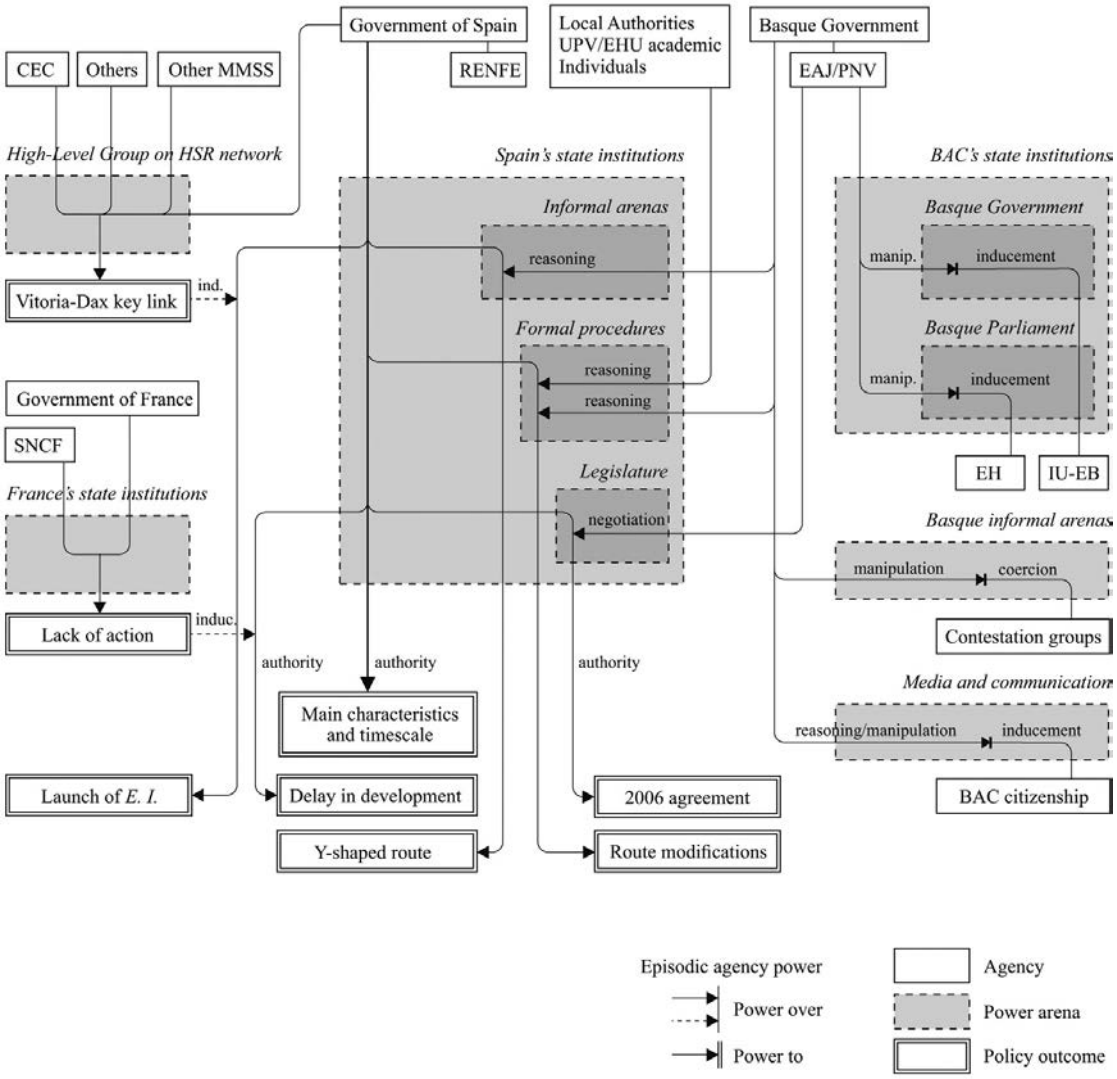
was facilitated by the small dimension of the region: interviewees from the contestation movement mentioned meetings with members of the Basque Government in a government's office (Interview 22), in the head office of a trade union (Interview 28), in a hotel (Interview 35) – all in Bilbao – and even in farmhouses (Interview 23).

In other words, these power dynamics indicate the existence of *a topology of power whereby the Spanish central state was able to reach even into those areas where contestation was strongest, while subnational actors in the vicinity of the project struggled to influence the process or were simply excluded from it*. Through authority, the far-off was brought within reach of the central state at the same time that more proximate actors were distanced from it. The Basque Government had to exert persuasion (reasoning and negotiation) in order to *reach out* to the central government and influence the development of the high-speed rail line *within* its territory. Only coercion and the modes of power related to communication (manipulation and reasoning) seem to have had some relation to proximity. All in all, these explanations do not sufficiently elucidate how power is exerted across space since they do not specifically address the spaces where the struggles to exercise this power take place. This is necessary to, for instance, clarify what 'reach out to the central government' means. A complete assessment of the practices of proximity and reach through which agencies seek to exercise power requires the consideration of power arenas and the ways they mediate such an exercise.

8.2.2 Spatial power dynamics: the centrality of the Spanish state power arenas

The power arenas through which agencies seek to influence the policy process are spaces where the use of means and resources is temporarily fixed. As such, as argued in Chapter 3, they may include well-defined, physical arenas such as the executive and the legislature of the state, but also other more networked arenas such as informal networks or the media. Figure 15 depicts the power dynamics identified in the case study and how these have been mediated by those *power arenas*. Following the analytical framework, agencies, episodic agency power exercises, power arenas and policy outcomes are represented. It is important to note that, conversely to the fact that a group of actors may constitute a single agency if their behaviour is unified, an agency may function as a power arena in those cases when it becomes a site of power struggles. For instance, the Basque Government constituted an agency when dealing with the central government, but it also became a power arena through which left-wing political party *Ezker Batua* sought to influence the stance of ruling party EAJ-PNV concerning the development of the high-speed rail line.

Figure 15. Spatiality of the episodic agency power dynamics



The diagram clearly shows how *the successful exercise of episodic agency power was almost always mediated by Spanish state institutions*, be it informal arenas (contacts with the government), the formal policy development procedures (e.g. consultation processes), or the *Cortes Generales* or legislature of Spain. The Basque Government thus reached out to these arenas in order to influence the development of the project, mainly through reasoning but also, at some point, through negotiation by the nationalist party EAJ-PNV. Nevertheless, power dynamics in arenas beyond the nation-state have also appeared to influence the policy process, albeit indirectly through inducement. Firstly, the Spanish Government participated in the High-Level Group that defined the Vitoria-Dax key link, which according to a ministry senior official may have prompted the launch of the *Estudio Informativo* (Interview 9). Secondly, decisions not to promote the Atlantic cross-border HSR link originating from French state institutions have negatively induced the development of the Spanish section. In

both cases this exercise of power seems to be indirect – the consequence of a first policy outcome – and hence it is represented as dashed line and not involving any power arena.

Although the effective exercise of power took place through power arenas related to the central state, a series of significant power struggles occurred in BAC-related arenas between the Basque Government or the party in charge of transport infrastructure planning (EAJ-PNV) and opposing political parties (*Ezker Batua* and EH), contestation groups and the Basque electorate in general. As explained in the previous chapter, these struggles were dominated by the ruling party through reasoning and manipulation, yet the relevant aspect here is that the arenas where they took place were included within the BAC's borders: the relevance of *Ezker Batua* stemmed from its participation in the Basque Government and that of EH from its presence in the Basque Parliament, the neutralization of contestation groups by the government was done through meetings with them in different types of spaces,[17] from government offices to farmhouses, and the attempt to influence Basque public opinion was carried out through regionally-based communication campaigns.[18]

The diagram maps only those instances when evidence was found of a specific exercise of episodic agency power. Therefore, it does not show the possible influence of Basque actors on the Basque Government's attitude with respect to the line, for instance when it supported spatial integration measures in the formal consultation process. A first reason for this is the doubtful impact that this attitude has had on the actual project, since a senior official involved in it maintains that the actual policy outcome does not significantly differ from other cases within Spain (Interview 9). Second, the actual influence of contestation actors and the Basque citizenry on the general attitude of the Basque Government is difficult to determine, so it was represented only when a particular exercise of power was identified. Moreover, any electorate naturally conditions the development of policy by its respective government – this is also obviously the case of the Spanish Government – , hence this exercise of power is implicit in the actual governmental agency.

Finally, the diagram shows that, apart from the cases of the High-Level Group and French state institutions, where power was exercised indirectly, access to power arenas has been necessary in order to be able influence policy development in episodic agency terms. In

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[17] It is important to note that the contestation actors that participated in these meetings did not necessarily intend to exercise coercion (the data collected for this case study certainly did not point at this). The inclusion here of this mode of power responds to the intention of Basque Government actors to avoid potential coercion by certain groups, based on the experience of previous environmental conflicts, as explained in Section 7.4.

[18] In the last two cases, the exercise of coercion by certain contestation actors and of inducement by the Basque citizenship does not take place through these arenas, but through other spaces such as construction sites and polling stations, respectively. Since in the case studied these two modes of power are not actual but potential, the arenas represented here are those through which the Basque Government exercised its power.

this respect, it is remarkable how Basque actors were only able to access central state arenas through the Basque Government and, by representation in the legislature, through nationalist party EAJ-PNV. Contestation actors, although as it is shown in the next subsection they tried to reach out to other arenas beyond the BAC, centred their struggles in Basque power arenas. The previously cited member of environmental organization *Ekologistak Martxan* notes that this focus of action was easier and was somehow more workable in the Basque society – proximity is thus important here too (Interview 31). In fact, Figure 15, as it only shows the effective exercise of episodic agency power, does not represent other power struggles that did not result in a change in policy development but that are nevertheless valuable to inform the discussion presented in Section 2.3 on the spatiality of policy-making. The following subsection addresses them.

8.2.3 Politics of scale vs. politics of reach through unsuccessful power exercises

The lack of effective access by a diverse of agencies to the main power arenas (fundamentally Spain's state institutions) indeed omits a number of attempts to achieve influence in the policy process which provide insights into the spatiality of power. Firstly, subnational state institutions and business organizations sought to lobby the governments with a role in the development of the line by engaging in networks of association with similar entities (Interviews 15, 16 and 25). The Basque Government in particular sought to overcome its limited competence on the issue, as former Basque Minister for Transport and Public Works López de Guereñu notes:

> In terms of the 'Y', the complexity of promoting the issue was partly the sphere of competence. Because no matter how much we have always, very intensely developed stable relations on different issues with the surrounding regions, well, we have always clashed with – let's say – the limitations set to us by the central government to even make international agreements' (Interview 16).

These networks of association that transcend the borders of the BAC may be interpreted as Cox's (1998) 'spaces of engagement', whereby its members reorganize themselves at a different scale – or 'jump scales' (Smith, 1992, 2003) – in order to achieve more influence in the policy process. Nevertheless, in line with the topological view of power adopted in this thesis, *they may be better conceptualized as the constitution of an agency in order to reach into power arenas relevant to the policy at stake*. Thus, the participation of the Basque Government in the Atlantic Arc Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), which may be seen as a clear instance of 'jumping scales', sought to enter arenas (EU institutions) through which they could actually influence the

development of EU policy. The words of the Director for Transport of the Basque Government from 2005 to 2007 express this intention to reach out to these arenas:

> Ultimately, we realised that at European level somehow we did not have a voice as regions, so we understood that the CPMR and the Committee of the Regions was *a forum to which* we could take our voice as such. [...] We participated – and in Transport, besides, very actively – but always with that perspective of saying 'well, everything that leaves these working groups can be taken as our voice *to Europe*.' [...] So we said 'clearly, the Spanish state will defend *in Brussels* whatever it wants or interests it at that moment. Well, and what is the way we could take our voice?' And here we found a route that was interesting for us' (Interview 18, emphasis added).

Apart from participating in these networks of association, the Basque Government also sought direct access to a relevant EU institution: the European Coordinator of Priority Project no. 3, Etienne Davignon. In spite of the understanding between both actors, the little influence of Davignon during the period covered in this case study, notwithstanding his access to the relevant nation-state arenas, made this interaction irrelevant for promoting the development of the high-speed rail line. Its importance seems to have been limited to supporting the Basque Government's stance on the project in the face of strong internal contestation, an aspect mentioned by two former members of the government (Interviews 16 and 18).

The second instance of ineffective efforts to influence the policy process comes from the contestation movement which, although it concentrated its efforts on power arenas within the BAC, also sought to reach out to others. First, a number of Basque local authorities, organizations and individuals filed in 2001 an administrative appeal against the final approval of the *Estudio Informativo* by the Ministry of Development; however, this appeal was dismissed by the National High Court of Spain[19] in 2005.[20] Second, contestation actors maintained relations with other movements within and outside Spain, in particular with the Italian *No TAV* ('No HST') movement in the Val di Susa[21] (Interviews 2 and 31), but joint attempts to influence EU and nation-state actors took place only recently.[22]

Regardless of the influence that both the Basque Government and the contestation movement might have achieved in EU arenas, the truth is that these in turn were largely ineffective in terms of accessing the Spanish state power arenas. The only identified possible

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[19] *Audiencia Nacional de España*.
[20] National High Court (Administrative Chamber) ruling of 12 January 2005.
[21] See della Porta and Piazza (2008) for an extensive analysis of this movement.
[22] Indeed, these relations consolidated in 2010 in a joint declaration ("Charter of Hendaye," 2010) signed by associations and movements against high-speed rail from France, Spain and Italy and addressed to the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the governments of these countries.

influence took place indirectly through a policy outcome resulting from the work of the High-Level Group on a trans-European HSR network. No other policy outcome (e.g. the regulations on EU financial aid) or EU actor (e.g. the CEC) were able to have a noticeable impact on the policy process in episodic agency power terms.

The analysis presented in this section shows that rather than seeing power struggles as involving a politics of scale, whereby actors organize themselves at appropriate scales to influence policy-making, a topological view of power places emphasis on the politics of reach (see Section 3.3.3), i.e. how actors seek to exercise power across space, by dealing with the distance with both the policy outcome and the power arenas relevant to it. Obviously, arenas that involve a larger scale encompass a higher number of actors and hence exerting influence through them is more difficult. The challenge for agencies, however, is not only to overcome this problem caused by scale but also to reach into those arenas. For instance, the influence of the Basque Government in Spanish state arenas did not stem from its association with other subnational governments, but from its penetration in Spanish state institutions through various means, including the presence of nationalist party EAJ-PNV in the Spanish legislature. The 'jumping scales' involved by the networks of association in which Basque state and private sector actors engaged was not able to have the desired influence without effective access to fundamentally nation-state arenas. A topological view of power does not therefore mean that scale is irrelevant, but that is secondary to the actual exercise of power across space.

To conclude, this section has shown how power was exercised through a politics of reach, both across space and through specific arenas. In a highly formalized transport infrastructure policy-making environment, the Spanish central state was able to exercise its authority across the nation-state territory, even in an Autonomous Community located in its border and with a significant degree of autonomy, and overcome the resistance and preferences of actors more proximate to the future high-speed rail line. These, in turn, had to exercise other modes of power (mainly reasoning and negotiation) in order to be able to influence the development of the project. Fundamentally, these dynamics occurred through certain power arenas where the use of means and resources is temporarily fixed and where power struggles took place. Again, Spain's state institutions constituted the key arenas through which power was exercised – and through which the Basque Government was able to be influential – whereas other arenas such EU or Basque state institutions were largely ineffective to impact on the policy process. Basque arenas nevertheless constituted important sites of power struggles between the government and actors from the contestation movement, which rarely reached out to arenas beyond it. The section, in short, sought to present an approach to the spatiality of power that transcends a purely scalar view of politics, where reorganization on a

higher scale provides the possibility of achieving more influence. The priority task for agencies is to access those arenas through which the exercise of power is likely to be more significant, and this does not need to happen through this reorganization.

8.3 Synthesizing: space in infrastructure policy-making

As argued in the introduction to this chapter, fully answering the third research question requires complementing the analysis presented in the previous two sections with two further steps. The first one consists in advancing a united approach to the spatiality of policy-making by jointly considering discourse and power arenas as the spaces through policy-making takes place. Second, the relations that constitute space and the scales that may frame them must be explicitly addressed in order to present a complete description of the spatiality of policy-making. This step would also help to validate the specific conceptualization of space that underpins the spatialization of the discourse and power analytical approaches. Attention to relations and particularly scales is all the more relevant since traditionally the spaces of a democratic politics have been defined through boundaries and continuity. Accordingly, this section first focuses on unifying the discourse and power analytical approaches through a focus on arenas, to subsequently clarify the importance of relations and scale in policy-making.

8.3.1 Discourse and power on space: towards a single conceptualization of space in policy-making

The analytical framework developed in this research adopted two distinct approaches to discourse and power, which were subsequently spatialized by drawing on debates on the spatiality of policy-making. The basic assumption underpinning such spatialization is that both discourse production and the exercise of episodic agency power are mediated by space, in particular through what has been termed discursive and power arenas. Treated separately throughout the analysis, it is necessary to examine their commonalities and differences in order to advance an integrated spatial approach to the study of policy-making.

A simple look at the two diagrams on the dynamics of discourse production and exercise of power indicates that power arenas are more specific than discursive arenas. Discourse production does not take place, as power struggles may do, ‘behind closed doors’, but in spaces which defy a cut-and-dry definition. The practice of a discourse through parliamentary activity may continue in a working lunch with fellow party members, in a

statement to the media and in an evening event with members of the business sector, not to mention informal communications between the proponents of such a discourse.[23] Also, the power dynamics explained in this thesis refer exclusively to the case studied, whereas discourse production is relevant to this case but is not limited to it. The Vitoria-Irun rail link did not occupy a central place in the production of, in particular, the European and nation-state story-lines, which involved a larger context that included not only other projects but also wider societal developments. Moreover, the diagram on power only represents the specific instances of power exercise identified in the analysis; it thus omits the variety of power struggles that took place concerning the studied case but did not result in a change in the development of the project.

However, this difference in definition does not mean that a relationship between both types of arenas cannot be established. Power arenas are generally contained within discursive arenas, except in those cases where they can be considered sites exclusively of episodic agency power struggles. The clearest case is state institutions which, apart from being central to the production and reproduction of discourse, encompass specific sites where power struggles take place, such as the executive and the legislature. Thus, considering Spain's state institutions, the legislature functioned as a discursive arena, where story-lines related to spaces other than the nation-state territory had a limited influence, yet at the same time it was the site of episodic agency power struggles in the development of the General State Budget that would lead to the 2006 implementation agreement between the Spanish Government, the Basque Government and rail infrastructure manager ADIF. Indeed, state institutions are arguably the arenas which best combine the discursive and the episodic agency power dimensions. As sites where the use of means and resources in order to produce policy outcomes is temporarily fixed, they are central to the exercise of power, whereas other arenas such as the media or informal networks between actors seem to be basically – although not exclusively (e.g. the use of media for manipulation) – limited to discourse production.

Overall, discourse was mainly produced and reproduced in arenas which, although frequently localized, were linked to certain scales, in particular in terms of the story-lines' spaces of concern. The arenas that involved actors related to different scalar spaces tended to function more as power arenas as they brought together different interests and were usually less frequent than scalar arenas. This is arguably the case of the Council of the EU or the working groups on trans-European transport networks. Given the national perspective on rail

[23] Nevertheless, this lack of definition does not diminish the importance of accessing these arenas in order to influence discourse production.

transport prevalent in member state actors mentioned in Chapter 2 (Johnson and Turner, 1997, p. 173; Romein et al., 2003), it is doubtful that a single story-line was shared within these institutions. An exception to this rule is the trans-border subnational actor networks which, in their constitution as an agency to influence the policy process, seem to have worked as well as discursive arenas where story-lines related to the marginalization of the diverse regions represented were produced and reproduced.[24] The importance of scale in discourse production introduces the key issues of how relations constitute the spatiality of policy-making and the extent to which scalar frames play a role in them.

8.3.2 Prevalence of scale in discursive production and in the exercise of authority

The examination of both relations and scale in the policy process may be first addressed separately for discourse and power. With respect to the story-lines mobilized by actors in the policy process, it has been shown how these are generally, although to different degrees, underpinned by scalar understandings, in particular concerning their spaces of concern. Scale is a useful notion to represent space in a simplified and easily understandable manner, but it is also related to existing or imagined political boundaries. Discursive arenas were therefore commonly associated to certain scales, and utterances often referred to the spaces defined by the corresponding boundaries. The spaces of reliance could generally be ascribed to a certain scale, although they were less explicitly stated and certainly less sharply defined. There were, however, notable differences in the clarity of the scalar definition of the story-lines' spatialities. Whereas the subnational and the European story-lines present clear spaces of concern and of reliance, the sustainable spatial structuring story-line is noticeably vague. Nevertheless, the fundamental difference in spatial terms between the hegemonic developmental discourse and the antagonistic one is in fact the emphasis on networks in the case of the former, especially with regard to the spaces of reliance, and the centrality of topography concerning the latter. As explained earlier, whereas the developmental discourse sought to connect distant points through high-speed transport links, the antagonistic discourse prioritized serving as homogeneously as possible a continuous geographical area.

[24] In fact, the distinction or identification between agency and discursive and power arenas should not be established a priori. An executive, for instance, may function as an agency by acting as a single entity and in a non-predetermined manner, but it may also be the site of episodic agency power struggles and of discourse production and reproduction. Its identification with any of these three categories depends on the particular process studied.

This discursive difference in fact reflects the duality of the 'space of flows' and the 'space of places', proposed by Castells (2010) and used with reference to transnational transport networks by several authors (Albrechts and Coppens, 2003; Hajer, 2000; Jensen and Richardson, 2004). Nevertheless, the analysis of the spatiality of discourse permits to qualify this duality, at least with respect to transport infrastructure. In this distinction, the networked, 'global' or 'pan-European' space of an elite is opposed to the 'local', self-contained and continuous space of a majority (Albrechts and Coppens, 2003; Castells, 2010), yet the space of flows is not necessarily alien to locality. The example of the subnational story-line, based on a small space of concern yet advocating an extensive space of reliance, demonstrates that places are not necessarily overcome by flows; these may in fact become embedded in them, as part of a network that prioritizes distant relations at the expense of others. The local thus becomes the arena where both discourses – and the material relations associated to each of them – coexist and conflict. Following the conceptualization of space developed in Section 3.3.1, and apart from the profound implications that relational approaches to the ontology of space have for the notion of self-contained places,[25] the duality 'space of flows vs. space of places' is not based on their different nature (e.g. networked vs. contiguous) but on the density and reach of the relations that constitute it. Whereas one set of relations is characterized by the linkage of a few distant points, the other is defined by physical proximity and presents a higher density of relations. Therefore, rather than the notion of places being opposed to flows, *a conceptualization that integrates this relational ontology of space contrasts topography, whereby distance is central to relations, with topology, which distorts the topographical space by giving more prominence to connectivity*.

In terms of episodic agency power, even a topological approach that conceptualizes power as constituted through social interaction across space leads to the conclusion that scale matters. The means and resources available to actors, which include the competences legally granted to them, are used in a stable manner through specific power arenas. Thus, in order to influence the development of an infrastructure project that crossed the BAC, Basque actors had to reach out to the arena through which power was exercised in any part of the Spanish territory. The centrality associated to sites of power such as this one does not stem from power being concentrated *in* them, but from the temporarily fixed exercise of power *through* those arenas. The presence of more important networked arenas might have unsettled this centralized landscape of power, but engagement in networked political spaces that transcended political borders (see Section 8.2.3) did not yield noticeable results. Indeed, this

[25] See for instance Massey's (1991) outward-looking description of Kilburn in London in comparison with Castells' (2010, pp. 453–456) account of Belleville in Paris as constituted through physical contiguity and self-containment.

conclusion on the importance of scale is arguably reinforced by the characteristics of the case studied: since a clear definition of competences grant the possibility to exercise significant authority throughout the nation-state territory, the legally-defined scalar limits of this authority are important. Since, as noted in Section 1.1.2, traditionally legitimate political power is organized territorially, scale is central in authority as a mode of power, and hence a case where other modes of power are prevalent might result in a different conclusion.

A common characteristic to both discourse and power is that not only the exercise of power happened through practices of proximity and reach, but also the production of discourse: actors reached into certain discursive arenas in order to influence the production and transformation of discourse. However, distance seems here more important than in the exercise of power. Discursive arenas were generally related to a particular scale and the production of discourse rarely happened in arenas linked to more than one scale, except perhaps the subnational story-line (in BAC arenas and in the Atlantic subnational actor networks). The centrality of discourse to the production of the subject and its relationship to routinized practices indicate the importance of the spaces of everyday life (from the corridors of Brussels to local *gaztetxes*) in discourse production and hence the unlikelihood of producing discourse beyond them.

In short, *policy-making around the Vitoria-Irun HSR link happened through relations across space yet with scale playing a central role*. In discursive terms, scale is a useful notion for representing space and is undoubtedly linked with political boundaries, hence the clearer definition of spaces of concern. Discursive arenas and the relationship between actors and certain, bounded spaces, most clearly seen in the case of state actors, influenced the production of discourse around particular scalar spaces. Similarly, scale was also relevant in the episodic agency power dynamics. The embeddedness of scale in the means and resources available to actors meant that their temporarily fixed exercise of power through certain arenas granted these arenas a scalar quality. Nevertheless, this does not seem to be generalizable since in other cases scale may have less relevance for the exercise of power.

The spatialization of the analysis on discourse and power thus shows that the policy process surrounding the Vitoria-Irun HSR line has happened through relations across space, as actors reached into the arenas that mediated the production of discourse and the exercise of power. However, the relational constitution of space was compatible with an important presence of scale in the content and production of discourse and the exercise of power. In terms of episodic agency power, the embeddedness of scale in the means and resources available to fundamentally state actors entailed that, through the temporary stabilization of their use in certain arenas, these acquired scalar attributes. This scalar quality of power arenas was also present in discursive arenas, which were generally related to a certain scale and in turn

influenced the spatiality of the story-lines, in particular the definition of the spaces of concern.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a complex picture of the spatiality that policy-making has adopted in the case studied. It addressed the spatial dynamics of discourse production and the resulting representations of space in discourse, which reflected the existing antagonism through contrasting topological and topographical understandings. It also described the intricate spatial practices involved in the exercise of power, both across space and within particular arenas where power struggles took place. Overall, it has hopefully shown how struggles over and across space, which in the case of the development of transnational HSR infrastructure were likely to be acute, unfolded. Compatible and conflicting conceptualizations of space were developed and reproduced in distinct arenas, and occasionally clashed in heated debates in a parliamentary commission or an isolated farmhouse. The specific attitudes to the studied transnational HSR link that these notions on space led to were subsequently mobilized through power struggles in arenas often distant from the very terrain on which the tracks would be laid. Networks were formed across vast spaces, encompassing the political and economic elites of a variety of subnational areas, and European Commission officials strived from their Brussels offices to inject some dynamism on that delayed 'key link', yet the central government proved to be largely unresponsive. The application of the adopted analytical approach, in short, sought to provide a spatially-nuanced understanding of transnational HSR policy-making, in particular of the spatiality of the state and the rationales articulated by actors.

Firstly, with regard to the tension between the trans-border flows promoted by transnational infrastructure development and the spatiality of the state that seeks to regulate them, this chapter has shown how at least in this case the nation-state remained the most important spatial frame for infrastructure planning. In the terms set by the analytical approach on power, its exercise to influence the development of the high-speed rail line occurred fundamentally through nation-state arenas and largely through authority exercised by central state actors. This does not imply, however, that alternative spatial configurations have not been attempted. Agencies emerging through the reorganization of actors in cross-border or transnational arrangements – in the case of the Atlantic Arc Commission closely fitting the reach of the relations sought – have not been noticeably influential in the time period covered by the case study, nor have been EU actors. The complex landscape formed by transnational networks of association of state and non-state actors, cross-border

subnational cooperation arrangements, and bilateral institutions set up to improve the coordination between central state actors, superimposed on the conventional Russian doll-landscape of the Autonomous Community, the Spanish nation-state and the EU, was eventually unable to translate itself in actual episodic agency power. Blatter's (2004) notion of functional governance, which seeks to regulate socioeconomic relations through a narrow scope and a variable geometry of scale among other characteristics, is largely absent in this case, where the multi-functional, formal and stable territorial governance of the nation-state was dominant.

In terms of the rationales articulated by actors in the policy process, the analytical approach has demonstrated the complex ways in which space is present in them. The actors who promoted the Vitoria-Irun were discursively related to different spatial scales or spaces of concern and to the establishment of different but compatible set of relations or spaces of reliance. In turn, although locality certainly had a central presence in the contestation to the project, the simple identification of the protests with NIMBYsm is not adequate. The discursive focus on proximity was not merely based on an egotist stance but on the opposition to a model of development that promoted long distance spatial relations at the expense of shorter ones. Overall, the spatial concerns of actors, although frequently expressed through scales, are better understood as involving relations of different spatial reach. In some cases these relations were compatible enough to permit the formation of a single discourse; in others, they conflicted to the extent of reflecting discursive antagonism.[26] In this respect, as argued in the previous section, the duality 'space of flows' vs. 'space of places' may be better conceptualized as a conflict between topological and topographical spaces. Transport infrastructure development, through the support to spatial relations that it provides, involves a struggle over space that, rather than being based on mobility vs. absence of it, is based on an insurmountable difference between distinct types of relations across space, in one case those between a limited number of distant nodes, in the other those covering a certain physical area as homogeneously as possible.

[26] It is important to note, however, that the spatiality of discourse is not independent from its content (e.g. a belief in market integration entails the establishment of certain spatial relations) and therefore is not the only factor in determining discursive antagonism.

9 Conclusion

> 'See, the question that comes to my mind is: why doing a PhD thesis on a project which also has a significant political component? Because the area in the territory... the State, the Autonomous Community, reaching agreements... Terrorism was against the project there, and they placed bombs, and... So there you play with so many variables that a – let's say academic – confusion is created' (Interviewee).

Complementing the limited number of studies that have critically addressed the politics of transnational transport infrastructure, this research endeavour has sought to contribute to the understanding of European integration through devoting close attention to how this process is produced, reproduced and contested on the ground through the development of high-speed rail infrastructure. Hence the study of a single, complex case – "political" according to the interviewee above, who saw the policy problem fundamentally in technical terms – to reveal the tensions that this development may involve. At the same time, this empirical study required the definition of a detailed research approach, particularly in the light of the variety of perspectives on the topic and its weak or partial theorization. In other words, the objective was to combine the study of an information-rich case of transnational HSR policy-making with a theoretically sound and analytically rigorous approach. Facing the "academic confusion" derived from such a case may indeed have been a challenge, but it was an essential aspect of the task.

Through the lenses of discourse, power and space, the three preceding chapters have provided both a description and an explanation of the production, reproduction and transformation of rationales on transnational HSR policy-making, of the influence of actors in the policy process, and of the presence and relevance of the spatial dimension in these two cases. This chapter presents a summary of these findings and situates them within the wider field of transnational transport infrastructure politics and European integration. Thus, the first section synthesizes the results of the research in accordance with the proposed research questions. It first provides an answer to the secondary research questions specific to the analytical framework and case study selected, to subsequently address the three main research questions and the consequent contribution to the literature on transnational HSR development. The second section summarizes the developments on the Vitoria-Irun HSR line between the start of the works in 2006 and 2014, suggesting in turn their implications for the research findings. Finally, the third section of the chapter reflects on the wider contribution of this research to the study of the relationship between infrastructure development and European integration. It first assesses the value of the proposed theoretical and analytical approach for this study. It then reflects on the democratic implications of transnational infrastructure politics on the basis of the empirical results, and finally proposes several areas for further research.

9.1 Transnational high-speed rail infrastructure politics: research findings

The results of the analysis presented in the previous three chapters sought to provide an answer to the three research questions, which would in turn contribute to fulfil the aim of the research project. These were:

1. What are the rationales mobilized around transnational high-speed rail policy-making, to what extent are they compatible or mutually exclusive, and how are they produced, reproduced and transformed?
2. What is the influence of actors in the development of transnational high-speed rail infrastructure, how do they exert it, and at the expense of whom?
3. How is space present in transnational high-speed rail policy-making and how does it determine the production of the aforementioned rationales and the influence of actors in the policy process?

Answering these questions required the application of a particular analytical framework to a certain case, a step guided by the set of specific, secondary research questions presented at the end of Section 1.3. Thus, this section first addresses this set of questions by synthesizing the results of studying the Vitoria-Irun HSR policy process through an approach that combined discourse analysis, social and political theories of power and a spatially nuanced perspective. Thereupon, it elaborates on these findings to answer the three main research questions in relation to the existing literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

9.1.1 Discourse production, episodic agency power and the spatiality of policy-making in the Vitoria-Irun high-speed rail line case

As explained in Chapter 3, discourse theory claims that the formation of a hegemonic discourse involves the exclusion of a radical otherness, from which actors with alternative, discredited understandings struggle to challenge the former (Hajer, 1995; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). This feature was arguably present throughout the Vitoria-Irun HSR line policy process, but it became evident since opposing political actors emerged in the early 1990s. The hegemonic, developmental discourse that followed a previous technocratic discourse conceptualized transport infrastructure provision as being fundamental to balanced economic development and as potentially contributing to environmental protection. In contrast, an antagonistic discourse informed by alter-globalization perspectives was

constructed around the assumption that high-speed rail represented a model of development detrimental to not only the environment but also local economies and societies. This did not imply, however, that the hegemonic discourse was monolithic. It was articulated through a series of story-lines that reflected different concerns with respect to the high-speed rail line, from avoiding marginalization within an integrating Europe to achieving the 'sustainable spatial structuring' of its territory. Although the importance of space in these story-lines was variable, the divergence between them was largely spatial; they were characterized by different, more or less scalar, spatial frames of reference. Notwithstanding the diverse 'spaces of concern' of the story-lines, the compatibility between their 'spaces of reliance' allowed blurring the discrepancies between the actors sharing the same discourse. In contrast, the radically different spaces of reliance of hegemonic and antagonistic story-lines (the former clearly topological, the latter largely topographical) reflected the antagonism between the two discourses.

The struggle for discursive hegemony concerning the high-speed rail line took place mainly in subnational arenas, due to their proximity to the project and the local roots of the contestation movement. The hegemonic and antagonistic discourses, however, were produced and reproduced in fundamentally distinct arenas: state institutions, informal networks between state and private sector actors, and mainstream media in the first case; public and rural spaces, informal networks within the contestation movement and minority media outlets in the second. The spaces for argumentative interaction between the proponents of both discourses were in fact limited and encompassed mainly Basque state institutions. From a first articulation of the antagonistic discourse that rejected discussion in the terms of the hegemonic discourse, some of the contestation actors sought to achieve broader social support by adopting some of these terms and engaging academics in the construction of a new story-line, thus seeking a story-line that 'sounded right' (Hajer, 1995, p. 63). However, both the political majority that supported the hegemonic discourse and the late stage of the policy process did not facilitate meaningful argumentative interaction, and discursive antagonism remained. Although the new contestation story-line shared some principles with the formerly dominant technocratic discourse, from the perspective of the developmental discourse they were dismissed and excluded from the hegemonic discursive order.

In terms of the exercise of power, the main finding has been the continuing dominance of nation-state institutions in transnational HSR development. Their position in terms of means and resources was already privileged as they had the main competences to undertake this task, but in practice they managed to control the policy process through their exercise of power, mainly through the authority granted by the legitimacy assigned to state power. However, Basque state actors did use the opportunities they had to influence the process,

certainly through reasoning but also through negotiation by using the access of the Basque nationalist party EAJ-PNV to the Spanish legislature. In any case, as this example shows, the exercise of power always took place through nation-state arenas. The importance of actors primarily concerned with the transnational dimension of the line was, however, minor. In spite of the potential of EU institutions to induce the development of the line, mainly through financial support, no evidence was found of a decisive actual influence.[1] Moreover, although subnational state and non-state actors actively engaged in transnational networks of association to *reach into* relevant power arenas, their efforts were unsuccessful. Finally, contestation actors were a priori clearly in a weak position to influence the policy process. They had a minority representation in formal state institutions, which in any case were restricted to the Basque Autonomous Community and therefore were not central to this process. The main focus of their action on Basque arenas, as with discourse, led to intense power struggles which nevertheless did not impact the development of the project.

Finally, as this account of the policy process hopefully shows, the understanding of transnational infrastructure policy-making was aided by the adoption of a spatially-nuanced approach. In discourse analytical terms, on the one hand, the different spaces (e.g. the EU or the nation-state) linked to the sites of discourse production and reproduction largely determined the varied perspectives within the hegemonic discourse; on the other, their different qualities (e.g. state institutions or public spaces) reflected – if not contributed to – discursive antagonism. Space was also important in the exercise of power. Although distance in itself was not an obstacle for the exercise of authority remotely at the expense of more proximate actors, proximity was relevant both in the exercise of certain modes of power (e.g. coercion) and in the development of the contestation movement, a feature that at the same time restricted its potential influence. The spatiality of a transnational HSR line also resulted in the involvement of actors that transcended nation-state borders, whether the EU or networks of association of a transnational nature, although they have been largely inconsequential. In short, access to and effective influence in discourse and power arenas determined the development of the policy process. The latter, in addition, did not simply take place through and across space; it was importantly mediated by scale. Both discursive and power arenas were usually associated to scalar spaces, which in turn influenced discourse production and power exercise: on the one hand, these spaces were generally reflected in the story-lines that articulated the wider discourses; on the other, scale determined the space over which state power could be exerted.

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[1] As noted in Section 7.3.1, the Spanish Government made substantial use of EU funds to finance the development of other high-speed rail lines.

9.1.2 Rationales, influence and space in the policy process: contribution to literature

The findings of this research first qualify the assertion of the existence of a single discourse 'shared by policy makers at different levels of government' (Hajer, 2000, p. 135) that pushes 'towards a new European space of uniform flow' (Jensen and Richardson, 2004, p. 3). By conceptualizing the articulation of discourse through a series of story-lines, this research has shown how the hegemonic discourse could accommodate a variety of perspectives, of which the promotion of a 'Europe of flows' was just one of them, which nevertheless remained compatible. Although the different discourse coalitions shared the general understanding of the transport infrastructure problem, the specific contexts in which the story-lines were produced prompted different articulations of the discourse. Importantly, the boundaries of the hegemonic formation were clearly defined, with a wide variety of perspectives being pushed to its 'outside'. In addition, the analysis has provided insights into the processes through which discourse was produced, reproduced and challenged, an under-researched issue as discourse analysis on transnational infrastructure policy has largely focused on the content of discourse (Hajer, 2000) and EU policy-making (Jensen and Richardson, 2004; Peters, 2003a). The exception is Linnros and Hallin's (2001), who analyzed the discursive struggles in the environmental conflict over the Øresund link. In line with their findings, this research has shown how contestation was neutralized by the proponents of the hegemonic discourse by incorporating part of their arguments (i.e. the social nature and environmental benefits of the line) into their story-lines. Both studies indeed confirm the difficulties that contestation movements have when seeking to challenge the hegemonic discursive construction by using the latter's terms, as other authors had highlighted (Fischer, 2003, p. 88; Hajer, 1995, p. 57).

In terms of the influence of actors in the policy process, this research has confirmed the continuing dominance of nation-state actors in transnational HSR development. In consistence with the authors that have highlighted the incapacity of EU policy to effectively drive transnational infrastructure development (e.g. Ross, 1998, p. 202), the influence of EU institutions up to 2006 in the case studied has been negligible. The definition of the characteristics and integration of the high-speed rail line in nation-state planning preceded EU action, the Commission initiatives to facilitate TEN-T implementation had little effect in the period studied and, importantly, the financial incentives were not sufficient to determine the development of the project. The case studied, however, provided valuable insights into the relatively unexplored role of subnational actors. As in the Catalan example noted by Marshall (2013, p. 152), Basque state actors managed to exert influence in the policy process through the use of persuasion, making use of their high degree of autonomy and presence in

the Spanish legislature. With regard to non-state actors, the lack of private sector influence in episodic agency power terms confirms the difficulties in engaging private capital in high-speed rail development noted by Ross (1998, pp. 195–198) and demonstrated by existing experiences in Europe such as the construction of the Channel Tunnel (Ross, 1998, pp. 203–205).[2] The active yet seemingly inconsequential contestation to the project, in turn, contrasts with the delays caused to the Øresund link (Ross, 1995) and the Turin-Lyon line in the Italian Val di Susa (della Porta and Piazza, 2008, p. 21). To summarize, the findings concerning the influence of actors are, with some distinctive features, largely in line with the existing literature,[3] but the thorough and theoretically informed approach has also allowed to provide a detailed and consistent account of the actual workings of power in transnational HSR infrastructure policy-making.

Finally, the contribution on the presence and influence of space in transnational HSR policy-making lies more in the insights allowed by the spatially-nuanced analytical approach than in obtaining new data on the topic. The application of this perspective reveals a policy-making landscape formed by the activity of actors across space and through certain arenas that mediate their production of discourse and exercise of power. In particular, the notion of scale was important in defining the spaces to which actors related and in framing the capacity of the latter to influence the policy process. Thus, the central government of Spain was able to secure its influence through the use of its authority in arenas associated to the nation-state territory. The lack of influence of less formalized and functionally specific governance arrangements such as transnational networks of association indicate the dominance of what Blatter (2004) has termed territorial – instead of functional – governance. Moreover, the analytical approach to space also reveals how attitudes to transnational HSR development should not be simply understood through a multi-scalar imaginary, as conventional transport and political economic approaches to TENs, or through the tension between the space of flows and the space of places (Hajer, 2000; Jensen and Richardson, 2004). As the case study showed, the different concerns of actors over space are better understood as involving varied and possibly conflicting sets of relations (e.g. trans-European vs. intra-regional) rather than simple scalar geographies (e.g. the European vs. the local). In this respect, and in line with Prytherch's (2010) insightful analysis of the spatial vocabularies of Catalan regionalism, actors may articulate complex spatial imaginaries that combine relations with scale to position themselves in a wider spatial context.

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[2] This lack of influence contrasts with the important role that private sector actors played in discourse production.

[3] Attention to developments since 2006 may in fact qualify this assertion. The following subsection provides an initial discussion on this.

This points at the significant contribution of a relational conceptualization of space to the understanding of the spatial conflicts resulting from transport infrastructure development beyond the 'flows vs. places' duality. If places are understood as the temporary stabilization of relations of different length, they are not simply potentially overcome or 'wiped out' (Albrechts and Coppens, 2003) by external flows but are instead constituted by them. As 'sites of multiple geographies of affiliation, linkage and flow' (Amin, 2004, p. 38), places involve a politics not only of the local but also of the national and the transnational. In the studied case, actors discursively and materially related to sets of relations of different spatial reach converged around the Basque Autonomous Community and struggled to advance their interests in the making of transport infrastructure policy. Thus, as argued in Section 8.3.2, the supra-local or the 'space of flows' is not necessarily opposed to the local or 'space of places' but may indeed be embedded in it. A more adequate notion than 'flows' to reflect this may be 'networks' but, due to the fundamental difference in the spatialities of the developmental and antagonistic discourses, it is proposed that *the conflict should instead be framed as between a topological space and a topographical space*. Rather than between the local and the trans-local, the struggle was between two distinct and largely incompatible set of relations: one characterized by a limited number of links between distant nodes, configuring a landscape shaped by uneven connectivity; the other based on the homogeneous coverage of a geographical area through short and dense relations, reflecting the importance of proximity and distance.

9.2 Postscript (2006-2014)

The findings presented above refer to the period covered in the case study, which finished in September 2006 with the start of construction in the Vitoria-Bilbao section of the high-speed rail line. At that stage not only the project had been defined, but also the conditions for its implementation had been formally established through an agreement between the main actors that would undertake it. However, from this date on a distinct period started that involved not only different policy-making dynamics (e.g. decision-making on the funding to be allocated to the project) but also important contextual developments, in particular the economic recession which started towards the end of the decade and the increasing EU action on transnational transport infrastructure development. Moreover, limited academic attention has been devoted to this topic during the past decade. Hence, even though the 2006-2014 period has not been analyzed in depth in this research, it is valuable to provide a brief account of it and suggest its possible implications for the research findings.

9.2.1 Rail line construction: from terrorist actions to the economic downturn

Since the start of works in the Vitoria-Bilbao section in September 2006, contestation to the project entered a new, more intense phase. The biggest demonstrations organized by the contestation movement seem to have taken place at this stage. The demonstrations of November 2006 in Vitoria and of December 2006 in the town of Arrasate, which according to a long-standing member of the contestation movement marked its mobilization limits (Interview 2), reached, according to their organizers, 10,000 and 15,000 participants respectively (El Correo, 2006e, 2007a). In addition, local contestation by local authorities and other actors intensified through, first, the organization of popular consultations in affected municipalities[4] and, second, the hindering of administrative processes, such as boycotting the signature of the land expropriation certificates at relevant town halls (El Correo, 2008c, 2008d). In January 2008, regional and nation-state actors sought to counter resistance to the project through the launch of an information campaign by the Basque Government and the setup of an information stand on the line in the train stations of the three Basque cities by the Spanish Ministry of Development (El Correo, 2008e). The situation had indeed been aggravated when, at the end of 2007 and a few months before the Basque Government started – in April 2008 – the construction works in the section under its responsibility, the Basque terrorist group ETA established the line as one of its priority targets (El Correo, 2007b). After numerous acts of sabotage against the works and three bomb attacks against the construction companies (El País, 2008c), in December 2008 two members of ETA shot dead Inaxio Uria, a Basque businessman and co-owner of one of these companies (El País, 2008d).

The murder of Uria prompted a firm commitment from the Spanish Prime Minister and the Basque President to continue the works (El País, 2008e) and indeed had, according to several of its members, a strong impact on the contestation movement (Interviews 2, 22, 29 and 31). However, the effects of the economic recession and developments beyond the Spanish borders would pose further obstacles to the project's implementation. Firstly, although coordination between the Spanish and French governments would be facilitated by an Intergovernmental Commission established at the beginning of 2009 to supervise the definition of the international section of the Vitoria-Dax link, the French Government announced in June the suspension of the studies on a new high-speed rail line between Bayonne and the Spanish border for environmental reasons (El Correo, 2009). With the

[4] According to Barcena (2009, p. 277), by June 2009 ten consultations had taken place in localities along the route of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line. With participation rates ranging between 31% and 94%, in all cases over 85% of the participants opposed the line.

cross-border connection undefined, the Spanish and Basque governments decided to adapt the existing line between the outskirts of San Sebastián and the French border to the UIC track gauge (El Correo, 2011a).[5] Moreover, a significant budgetary reduction led the Portuguese Government to defer the development of the Lisbon-Madrid HSR link, which belonged to the same trans-European corridor (El País, 2010a).[6] In Spain, the economic situation appeared to prompt a shift in the government's attitude towards infrastructure planning and development. The Minister for Development stated in May 2010 that 'we have planned public works beyond the needs and realities of the country' and announced a 6,400 million-Euro adjustment in the ministry's investment in 2010 and 2011 (Europa Press, 2010). The government recognized that this cut would involve a delay in the construction of high-speed rail lines of between six months and a year (El Correo, 2010b) and, in fact, towards the end of 2010 the works on most of the sections of the line had virtually stopped due to the exhaustion of ADIF's resources for that year (El Correo, 2010c).

Nevertheless, for the following two years the development of the line progressed seemingly smoothly and its wider context showed some favourable signs for its implementation. The European Commission presented in October 2011 a proposal of an infrastructure package that included revised TEN-T guidelines, which included the Vitoria-Irun HSR line in its 'core network' (consisting of the parts of the TEN-T with the highest European added value), and a new 50 billion-Euro infrastructure financing instrument for the 2014-2020 period (CEC, 2011).[7] In the same month, ETA announced the permanent cessation of its armed activity (El País, 2011). By the end of 2012, only the construction works of the central node of the line, which links the branches implemented separately by the Spanish and Basque governments, and of a 6.6-kilometre section in Bizkaia remained to be tendered.[8] The situation, however, seemed to worsen in the first quarter of 2013. The Spanish government had reduced by 38.5% the amount assigned to the line in the 2013 General State Budget, and in February the companies undertaking the construction of one section of the line decided to stop the works after knowing the limited funds allocated by ADIF to that section for that year (El País, 2013a). Despite Prime Minister Rajoy's

[5] This would provide continuity to the network until a new cross-border link was developed. Thus, the main station in San Sebastián would become a through rather than terminus station in the high-speed rail network.

[6] This project would be withdrawn 'permanently' by the Portuguese Government in March 2012 (El País, 2012).

[7] The regulations on the revised guidelines and the financing instrument (the Connecting Europe Facility) were approved in December 2013 (EP and Council, 2013a, 2013b).

[8] This excludes the international section between the vicinity of San Sebastián and the French border, less advanced as it requires coordination with the French Government, and the new rail accesses to the three Basque cities, which have been planned independently and are not essential for the operation of the line.

commitment to complete the works (El País, 2013b), the delays in construction and particularly in tendering the works of the central node of the line tensed the relationship between the Basque and Spanish governments until the end of 2014 (El País, 2013c, 2014). In addition, the French Government decided in June 2013 to postpone until 2030 the construction of the Bordeaux-Spanish border HSR link due to lack of funding (El País, 2013d).

Finally, in February 2015 the Spanish Council of Ministers authorized the tender process for the remaining sections of the central node of the line (El País, 2015a). With this decision, the works on the entire line – except the international connection and the accesses to the three cities, which would be temporarily carried out through the existing tracks – were underway. If the deadline set in January by the Minister of Development is met, the line will become operational in 2019 (El País, 2015b), a year earlier than foreseen at the time yet nine years after the date laid down in the first TEN-T guidelines.

9.2.2 Possible implications for the research findings

This brief account suggests a number of implications for the research findings presented in the previous section. In terms of discourse, events after 2006 suggest that there have not been substantial changes in the developmental discourse and that antagonism has consolidated. Firstly, although senior politicians recognized the need to revise the existing transport infrastructure policy and the debate indeed entered the mainstream media in Spain (El País, 2010b, 2010c), the developmental discourse does not seems to have been fundamentally challenged by the radically different economic context. Although there has been an emphasis on rationalizing infrastructure policy, its importance in promoting economic growth and balanced development does not appear to have been questioned. For example, the current Minister for Development stated in 2013 that 'we will move forward with the structuring of our country through rail, but we will do it with projects that are rational and shorten travel times' (Pastor, 2013).[9] What seems to have gained more prominence in the discourse is, in line with the sustainable spatial structuring story-line, a concern with freight transport. Apart from a greater presence in the media (e.g. El País, 2008f, 2010d), this concern prompted the production of a strategic plan for the enhancement of rail freight transport in Spain (Ministerio de Fomento, 2010) and a report on the impact of the new Vitoria-Irun HSR line on freight transport in the BAC (Departamento de Transportes y Obras Públicas, 2008). As

[9] Also, in an editorial titled 'HSR with restraint', Spanish newspaper *El País* claimed that 'the high-speed network is a factor in progress, but its development must be revised' (El País, 2013e).

this story-line became more important, however, antagonism seems to have been enhanced, in particular after the intervention of ETA in the conflict, by the positioning of opposing actors as against progress and in some cases as against freedom. For instance, the Basque President stated that 'the train is the future and is progress. Progressing is not placing bombs against the train, but getting on it' (El País, 2008g).[10]

With regard to the exercise of power, the review of the 2006-2014 period confirms the continuing dominance of the nation-state in rail infrastructure development. However, as a result of the 2006 agreement that gave the Basque Government the responsibility to implement the Bergara-Irun branch of the line, this government was able to determine its time-scale and thus presumably exert pressure on the Spanish Government to develop their branch between Vitoria and Bilbao. Moreover, two other significant aspects qualify the findings of the case study. The first one, not explicit in the previous subsection, is the growing relevance of EU actors. As showed in Section 7.3.1, the EU financial contribution grew notably in the 2007-2013 period, and the consolidation of the institutions of the European Coordinator and the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (until 2014 the TEN-T Executive Agency) may have increased their influence. The second aspect is the influence that contestation actors seem to have had in the initial period of the construction stage. In spite of their failure in the discursive struggle, it appears that the use of coercion by certain groups and of authority by local authorities has in fact delayed the necessary land expropriation processes (El País, 2008i; El Correo, 2011b). This is indeed an instance of the difficulties that contestation actors may pose to the implementation of the project if they are not taken into consideration in earlier stages of the policy process (Romein et al., 2003; Ross, 1995). A final mention must be made of the impact of the French Government's decisions. Since the Vitoria-Irun line not only has a trans-border functionality but also supports relations between cities in Spain, the deferral of the development of the high-speed rail link with the Spanish border seems to have mainly affected the development of the international section in Spain; in the rest of the line nation-state and subnational dynamics appear to have been more decisive.

Finally, from the perspective of the spatiality of policy-making, the construction of the line seems to have brought to the foreground the discursive and power arenas most proximate to the route of the high-speed rail line. Surely the reproduction and practice of discourse continued at the numerous arenas described in the analytical chapters and the

[10] Utterances in this line were abundant after the murder of Uria. The then Spanish Minister stated that '[n]othing will stop us achieving our objective. We will keep building infrastructures of coexistence and progress' (El País, 2009). Similarly, an editorial by *El País* and an opinion piece by environmental consultant Antxon Olabe were titled, respectively, as 'Bullets against progress' (El País, 2008h) and 'The train of freedom' (Olabe, 2008).

essential allocation of funds for the works occurred mainly through nation-state and Basque state institutions, yet important discursive and power struggles between opposing actors happened through sites in the immediate area of the line. As popular consultations were being organized in affected municipalities, a travelling exhibition was set up by the Basque Government in seven towns in Gipuzkoa and information stands were installed by the Ministry of Development in the stations of Vitoria, Bilbao and San Sebastián.[11] Importantly, coercion by both the terrorist group ETA and other contestation actors was facilitated by proximity. The construction works and the offices of the companies involved constituted a material and accessible site for the exercise of this type of power, and the signatures of land expropriation certificates were boycotted through the occupation of the town halls where they were to take place (El Correo, 2008c). While coercion in the first case was countered by strengthening the security services on the works (El País, 2008j), in the second it was avoided, interestingly, by distancing the arenas where the signing events were held: from the relevant town halls to the corresponding Government Representation Departments, located in the provincial capitals (El País, 2008i). The struggle over space arguably became more evident at this stage.

The more than eight years that passed since construction started in September 2006 therefore seem to have involved both continuity and change in the discourse, power and spatial features of the policy-process. Although the discursive order does not appear to have changed significantly – even in the face of the economic recession which started towards the end of the past decade – antagonism may have consolidated, aided by the use of violent means by part of the contestation movement. This violence managed to temporarily slow down the implementation process, but the role of subnational state actors in the construction of part of the line and the insufficiently explored growing relevance of EU actors also seem to have been significant. This last stage of the implementation process has also given more prominence to local arenas, transferring the conflict from distant sites of decision-making to the spaces where the line was being developed. Naturally, more in-depth research on the 2006-2014 period would confirm, qualify or question these implications for the findings drawn from the case study.

[11] The communication campaign undertaken by the Basque Government also included the renovation of the website on the project, a media information campaign, and the delivery of a leaflet on the project to every Basque household (El Correo, 2008e).

9.3 Wider debates on the study of transnational infrastructure politics and European integration

Beyond the in-depth attention to a particular case and the contribution to existing literature on the topic, the aim of this research has been to advance the understanding of how European integration occurs on the ground by critically focusing on transnational HSR policy-making. To this end, an analytical framework that adopts a social constructionist perspective, is sensitive to the detailed workings of power and presents an elaborate understanding of space was developed. This last section seeks to broaden the discussion and reflect on the contribution of this research to theoretical development, the insights it provides into debates on the democratic nature of transnational infrastructure politics, and the avenues for further research that it points at.

9.3.1 Contribution to theoretical development

Pursuing the objective of performing a detailed analysis of a process that lasted for an extended period of time using an analytical framework that draws from three distinct approaches risks both covering an excessive breadth of information and insufficiently examining the distinct theoretical approaches. For instance, the remarkable and evolving variety of political actors in the Basque Autonomous Community showed very rich discursive dynamics that may not have been fully elaborated on in this research (e.g. the discursive spatial ambiguity of the Spanish parties' regional affiliates PSE and PP-PV or the detailed dynamics within the contestation movement). Also, power struggles occurred within institutions and organizations that could not be adequately reflected here, for example between the Spanish Prime Minister and the ministers responsible for transport and the economy, or between the different groups of the contestation movement. In theoretical terms, devoting attention to several approaches may have also undermined the capacity to contribute to each of them. Every effort has been made to minimize these drawbacks; however, it is expected that the combined use of these perspectives on an information-rich case would provide insights into transnational HSR infrastructure policy-making that neither the study of a particular aspect of this process nor the adoption of a single theoretical approach would provide. This research has sought to explain, in an integrated way, the rationales underpinning the behaviour of actors, the effects of this behaviour, and how these two issues are inextricably linked with space. Nevertheless, it also permits to draw some conclusions on the distinct theoretical perspectives adopted.

Hajer's (1995) discourse analytical framework has indeed been adequate for the adoption of a social constructionist perspective that transcends understandings of behaviour based on rationality and self-interest and places a critical focus on how dominant constructions of a problem are produced and become dominant while others become marginalized and struggle to challenge the former. Nevertheless, its application calls attention to two aspects. As mentioned in Section 3.1.3, Peters (2003b, p. 233) has argued that Hajer's approach does not sufficiently clarify the role of agency in discursive dynamics. Certainly the capacity of actors to act was restricted as they were 'entangled in webs of meanings' (Hajer, 1995, p. 56), but examples were found where agency was key to the development of discursive constructions (e.g. in the emergence of the 'social train' story-line) and to the positioning of actors (e.g. of contestation as against progress). This suggest that the relationship between structure and agency is not predetermined and therefore the role of theory should be limited to allow for the explanation of the empirical manifestation of this relationship. Where the approach seemed to be unsatisfactory was in accounting for the role of interests – themselves discursively constituted – in shaping in turn discourse and its dynamics. The analysis suggests that a story-line may be practiced not only because of its discursive power but also because it favours certain interests, and these two reasons are not always easy to disentangle. This is the case, for instance, of the promotion of the developmental discourse by business actors: to what extent did it respond to a genuine construction of the transport problem or to the particular interests of their members?

Secondly, the examination of the influence of actors in the policy process has followed a relatively simple conception: agencies realize their aspirations in the policy process through the exercise of a certain mode of power and in accordance with the means and resources available to them and to other agencies in line or opposed to them. Notwithstanding its simplicity, the intention is that this theoretically informed approach provides a solid basis from which to approach power struggles in the policy process, which in the study of transnational infrastructure policy-making has been under-theorized. A further contribution has been the proposal and empirical testing of a list of modes of power: authority; domination; coercion; manipulation; and persuasion, which in turn includes inducement, negotiation and, based on the obtained evidence, reasoning. Nevertheless, this approach did not seem to be suited to adequately explain the influence of a *potential* (as opposed to actual) exercise of power. As shown in the thesis, the Basque Government sought to counter not only the actual but also the anticipated exercise of power by actors from the contestation movement. Although presented as an episodic power struggle, this instance may have been better conceptualized as an exercise of power (episodic agency power) to neutralize the capacity of other actors to exercise it (dispositional power). The influence of the latter actors may have been based either on past instances (e.g. violent intervention in

previous environmental conflicts) or on an assessment of that dispositional power (e.g. of their mobilizing capacity). This suggests that the understanding of the exercise of power by one agency requires the integration, as a variable in the analytical framework, of the capacity of other agencies to exercise it as estimated by the former. This could also serve to better explain general behaviours that do not pertain to specific conflicts; for instance, the Spanish Government's receptive attitude to integrating local concerns in the definition of the line's route and to engaging the Basque Government in its implementation, a behaviour that seemed to respond to an interest in avoiding contestation.

Thirdly, it is hoped that the nuanced spatial approached developed in this research permits not only explicitly considering space in transnational infrastructure policy-making, but also achieving a better understanding of its role beyond simpler notions based on levels, scales or the duality flows vs. places. It is argued that these conventional conceptualizations of space obscure the real relations involved in that process by underplaying the extent to which these may transcend boundaries and constitute spaces that are not geographically continuous and bounded. In contrast, this research has sought to see policy-making – or, in other words, the production of discourse and the exercise of power – through the workings of actors across and through space, in a politics of reach through which they seek to overcome distances and access arenas. In fact, apart from drawing on human geography debates on scale and relationality, the terms discursive and power arenas have been proposed, inspired by Linnros and Hallin (2001), to refer to those spaces through which policy-making takes place. However, this approach has also demonstrated that scale must not be dismissed and in fact plays an important role in policy-making through its framing of discourse production and the exercise of power. Indeed, the adoption of a relational understanding of space does not reject the notion of scale, but considers that it must be established not a priori but through empirical analysis.

By decoupling who is involved in policy-making from the spaces through which they achieve discursive or episodic agency influence, this spatial approach also provides a better critical insight into who gains and who loses in the policy process. The nation-state story-line, for instance, does not simply represent in an unproblematic manner the views of its citizenry, but represents a particular view promoted by certain actors actively involved in its production and reproduction. Likewise, it is not the Basque Autonomous Community as a whole that managed to influence the policy process, but particular Basque Governments and political parties. However, it may be argued that, in a policy issue such as rail infrastructure planning, where in principle the means and resources available are concentrated among a limited number of actors, the adoption of such an approach is not as insightful as in more complex topics such as regional governance (e.g. Allen and Cochrane, 2007). Yet the differentiation of spatial relations that transnational high-speed rail implies nevertheless

points at the value of a relational approach to space, since actors within a certain scalar frame will be discursively and materially related to sets of relations of different reach. In other words, *rather than seeing trans-European relations as advancing a wider interest, they should be regarded as related to particular sets of actors*. This leads to the democratic implications of transnational HSR politics as revealed by the research results.

9.3.2 Democratic challenges revealed by the three-dimensional approach to policy-making

As introduced in Section 1.1.2, the conventional notion of the nation-state as the legitimate scale of politics is based on the establishment of a fundamental link between its territory and a people or nation. Assuming this notion and notwithstanding the growth of transnationalism and the existence of other nationalisms,[12] the Vitoria-Irun HSR line policy process does not pose important democratic concerns in terms of episodic agency power. Most of the instances of power exercise that led to a policy outcome occurred in nation-state arenas. In addition, manipulation has been exercised, but other 'soft' modes of power such as persuasion and negotiation and, in particular, the authority of the Spanish Government, which works through recognition, have been prevalent. Although contestation groups and parties have seemingly been manipulated by the Basque Government or its ruling party, the vast majority of the elected representatives supported the project, at least at nation-state and regional state arenas. Within the Spanish nation-state arenas, however, one concern with the unequal influence of subnational actors must be highlighted. Access to the Spanish legislature by nationalist parties entail the potential direct influence of regional actors, a possibility that does not exist for Autonomous Communities with no nationalist parties present in it. Apart from this conventional idea of the nation-state as the appropriate scale for a democratic politics, regional/local, particularly non-state, actors had a limited influence in the policy process.

What seems to have been more controversial is discourse production. From a constructionist and interpretative point of view, the issue with the hegemony of discourse is not the extent to which it is detrimental to the 'real' interests of the less powerful, since these cannot be determined from outside their own terms of discourse.[13] Rather, the concern is about how the hegemonic construction of the problem has been constructed and by whom. In

[12] See footnote 3 in Chapter 1.
[13] As noted in Section 3.2.1, the notion of 'real interests' has been used by Lukes (2005, p. 28) in his three-dimensional view of power, which was dismissed precisely due to its conflict with a social constructionist perspective.

this respect, two particular aspects are worthwhile of attention: the representations of space in discourse and the role of the private sector in discourse production and transformation.

With respect to the first one, it has been explained how the spaces of concern of the hegemonic developmental discourse's story-lines were defined in scalar and spatial continuity terms (fundamentally the BAC, the Spanish nation-state and the European Union). This consideration of the spaces of concern masks the diversity within them and implies that the benefits would be obtained homogeneously throughout it. Therefore, the presence of scale in discourse may be perverse: territories are diverse within, they do not constitute actors in themselves, as Colomb et al., building on Oriol Nel·lo, highlight in a recent working paper on devolution and independence in Europe:

> 'They [geographers and planners] can unpack the fraught spatial metaphors, which have taken a central role in political, media and popular debates and which are often used to mask the reality that it is not *territories* which compete, but social groups, economic interests and political projects' (Colomb et al., 2014, p. 11 original emphasis).[14]

Story-lines, according to the results of this research, therefore conceal not only possible incoherencies within the discourse but also – potentially – the diversity of actors associated to their spaces of concern. In fact, the basic narratives that constitute story-lines seem to be complemented by simplified spatial understandings (based on scale and continuity) and associated to the discursive arenas in which these story-lines were produced and transformed. However, the need to constitute a collective subject in order to achieve discursive hegemony may also have played a role in their definition. The concept of myth, as Hajer (2003) has suggested, contributes to this constitution: a 'dystopian myth', represented for instance by the isolation of Basque society from European integration, 'makes people cohere to avoid a catastrophe' (Hajer, 2003, p. 105). The fact that the spaces of concern frequently correspond with the spaces of political representation (e.g. in the nation-state and subnational story-lines) adds importance to the democratic concern that this concealment of diversity implies. The challenge would then be to disentangle the various groups and interests tightly wound in story-lines and to develop alternative, spatially differentiated story-lines that take into account and reflect such heterogeneity.

Secondly, the production of the hegemonic discourse was characterized by an important presence and – at least in some cases – influence of private sector actors. The influence of the private sector in the emergence of a discourse supporting the development of transnational transport networks has been pointed out on several occasions (Jensen and

[14] Similarly, Marcuse (2005) has warned of the perverse political implications of using the term 'cities' as if they were actors, components of globalization or unified aggregate groups.

Richardson, 2004, pp. 73–75; Peters, 2003a), and indeed the presence of the ERT, the CER and other private sector organizations as the only non-state actors in the High-Level Group on a trans-European HSR network is remarkable. However, this discursive relationship between state actors and the private sector was also present in Spanish and Basque discursive arenas, fundamentally through informal networks. The specific influence of the Spanish construction lobby on the emergence of the nation-state story-line could not be demonstrated, but Basque industrial actors, in particular the Chamber of Commerce of Bilbao, were active and important in promoting the subnational story-line. It is true that the majority of political representatives supported and practiced – in other words, reproduced – the developmental discourse, but from a discursive approach the democratic nature of politics should not be evaluated through the reproduction of discourse, but through its production and transformation.

In short, if the policy process is seen in terms of the exercise of power, this research has not led to worrying results on the influence of non-elected institutions or interest groups. The fact that power was effectively exercised mainly through authority and through arenas associated to the Spanish nation-state is not problematic if the conventional notion of this space being the natural frame for a democratic politics is adopted. In addition, the influence of central state actors and, to a lesser extent, of subnational state ones entails that the 'democratic deficit' attributed to EU policy-making due to, among other factors, its lack of accountability and distance from citizens (Føllesdal and Hix, 2006; Weiler et al., 1995) is not a significant issue here. The principle of subsidiarity, which as noted in Section 1.1.2 sought to find a balance between the effectiveness and legitimacy of policy, was insufficient to ensure the completion of EU priority projects by their planned date and satisfy the expectations of the European Commission. Similarly, the lack of influence of cross-border and transnational arrangements, such as the Atlantic networks of association in which subnational state and private sector actors engaged, confirms the prevalence of the traditional, territorial spaces of representative democracy. Nevertheless, both the potential of scale to conceal diversity within the spaces represented by it and the significantly uneven access to discursive arenas by non-state actors pose important concerns about the democratic nature of transnational infrastructure policy-making.

9.3.3 Directions for further research

On the basis of the research undertaken for this thesis, three avenues for further work are suggested: one related to the actual research results; another that refers to more recent

developments; and a final one on theory building for the analysis of transnational transport infrastructure and, more generally, spatial politics.

Firstly, the results of the analysis of the policy process of the Vitoria-Irun HSR line point at some particular topics that, due to the scope of the thesis, have not been fully addressed. A first, potentially productive one is the production of discourse that transcends the case studied. This refers not just to the European story-line (Section 6.2.3), which has been addressed elsewhere in various ways (Jensen and Richardson, 2004; Hajer, 2000; Peters, 2003a), but also the nation-state story-line (see Section 6.2.2), about which there is no agreement on whether it is underpinned by a radial or a networked conception of infrastructure development. Moreover, further attention to subnational actors may result in fascinating accounts of regionalist spatial imaginaries, as Prytherch's (2010) work on Catalonia shows. Also in discursive terms, research on other contestation movements would provide insights into the possible discursive overlap in terms not only of content (e.g. by presenting alter-globalization features) but also of spatiality (i.e. whether or not they are also based on the idea of proximity), and therefore into the potential for building trans-local discourse coalitions. A second topic for further research concerns the influence of actors in the policy process. In this respect, additional attention to the role of subnational actors would complement the findings obtained for the singular Spanish case. The focus on the French section of the Vitoria-Dax link, where some evidence was found of regionally-caused delays, would permit a direct comparison with the case studied here. Moreover, although transnational networks of association have not been found to be influential in this case, their relevance in constituting political spaces that transcend the nation-state deserves careful attention and possibly further research to test this thesis' results. A possible and comparable case could be the Mediterranean Arc transnational cooperation area (Durà i Guimerà and Oliveras González, 2013).

The second direction for further research concerns those recent developments that may have important implications for the results presented in this thesis. In this respect, two main issues may be identified. As briefly explained in the postscript on the 2006-2014 period, the 'deepening' of European integration continues and there are signs of a growing importance of EU institutions in transnational infrastructure development, although they were not addressed in detail in the thesis. Secondly, the extent to which the current economic downturn will contribute to discourse transformation remains to be seen. Concerning the Vitoria-Irun line, it seems to have slowed down the implementation of the project due to a reduction of the resources available, yet it does not appear to have fundamentally challenged the principles of the developmental discourse. Nevertheless, critical reports on HSR development are now being produced beyond the academic environment and contestation movements. In October 2014, the French Court of Auditors released a report which calls for

greater guarantees of relevance and profitability in promoting new high-speed rail projects in the light of a biased decision-making process and the unsustainable cost of the French HSR system (Cour des Comptes, 2014), and in March 2015 the Spanish think tank FEDEA presented an analysis on the Spanish HSR corridors in operation in 2013 that concluded that none of them were financially or socially profitable (Betancor and Llobet, 2015).[15] As key agents of knowledge production, the intervention in the public debate of experts not specifically linked to contestation movements might prompt discourse transformation.

Finally, a third avenue for further works involves the refinement of the theoretical framework. A first task would be to correct the drawbacks pointed out in Section 9.3.1, fundamentally a clearer integration of the role of interests in the production of discourse and the inclusion of the capacity of actors to exercise power as a variable in actually influencing behaviour. Yet probably more valuable would be to advance a more thorough theorization of the role of space in the policy process. This would on the one hand clarify the relevance of distance in this process and the actors' necessity – or lack thereof – to overcome it in order to pursue their interests, yet more significantly it would devote detailed attention to the characteristics of arenas and their links with the outcomes of the policy process in terms of both discourse production and exercise of power. This would provide a sounder critical basis for the study of transport infrastructure politics and would contribute to the wider body of work that seeks to integrate space in the study of social and political processes.

[15] FEDEA is a think tank on applied economics sponsored by some of the main Spanish banks and Spanish-based companies (e.g. Santander and Repsol).

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Appendix A. Data collection

As mentioned in Chapter 4, data collection for the case study consisted of two distinct periods. The first one involved the systematic online search of relevant documents, which resulted in the collection of a significant amount of the total number of official documents and newspaper articles and of the entirety of the parliamentary proceedings. The second period involved a series of fieldtrips intended for collecting the remaining documentary data and to conduct the necessary interviews. These fieldtrips, which in total encompassed around three months, were undertaken in three distinct periods:

- Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) (11-15 September 2011)
- BAC (26 November 2011-22 December 2011) and Madrid (8 January 2012-5 February 2012)
- BAC (6 May 2012-20 May 2012) and Madrid (20 May 2012-2 June 2012)

The purpose of the first fieldwork period was to ensure the adequacy of the case and the feasibility of its study. Four interviews were carried out and several sites relevant to the case were visited. The second and third fieldwork periods involved the collection of the documentary data not available online and the conduction of the majority of interviews. As data was being collected, it was systematically organized in order to facilitate its later retrieval and analysis. The following sections provide more details on the collection of each type of data.

Fieldwork involved a certain level of direct observation of environmental conditions (Yin, 2009, p. 109). I visited the three main stations of the line (which had information centres on the project), the cities in which they are located (Bilbao, San Sebastián, and Vitoria-Gasteiz), and three towns bypassed by the infrastructure (Amorebieta-Etxano, Durango, and Ordizia). The settings of the interviews (government or other types of offices, universities, cafés, etc.) also provided information of the environment where actors develop their activities. However, since this direct observation was not done in a systematic and significant manner as its relationship with the research questions is not clear, it has not been used as a research method.

Official documents

Apart from those documents obtained through online means, policy output, policy-making, and communication documents were accessed through three publicly accessible

documentation centres: the Library of the Spanish Railways Foundation (Madrid); the Transport Documentation Centre of the Ministry of Public Works (Madrid); and the Environmental Documentation Centre of *Ekologistak Martxan*[16] (Bilbao). In some instances documents were provided by interviewees (e.g. communication outputs) and in one case a written request was made in order to access a specific document (a feasibility study on the high-speed rail line) that was not publicly available anymore. When possible documents were digitalized fully or partly, either directly or by previously photocopying them, in order to facilitate their storage and analysis.

Newspaper articles

The collection of this type of documents focused on two newspapers: the Spanish *El País* and the Basque *El Correo*. *El País* is the highest-circulation daily newspaper in Spain (Información y Control de Publicaciones, 2012) and has a specific section on the Basque Autonomous Community since 1997. In turn, *El Correo* is a Bilbao-based newspaper with the seventh highest circulation of all the general information daily newspapers in Spain (Información y Control de Publicaciones, 2012). It was selected as an additional source that could provide more detailed evidence on subnational developments. The possibility of using a European source of news (EUobserver) was considered, yet after a pilot search it was discarded due to the limited results obtained.

Data collection proceeded first through online means. All articles from *El País* were obtained through the newspaper's online archive and the LexisNexis database (the latter only available from 1996). In terms of *El Correo*, only those articles published in 2006 were available online, so the majority of them (from the period 1986-2005) were collected in the Library of the Provincial Council of Bizkaia, in Bilbao, through either microfiches or CD-ROM (the latter option available from 2004 onward). The procedure for locating the articles at this library was as follows: a number of months when key events had happened were sampled (a total of 17) and subsequently the newspaper was checked manually for each day of such months.

In addition, a number of articles from different sources were also accessed by other means. The Environmental Documentation Centre in Bilbao holds a selection of materials relevant to the case from different newspapers. These materials were particularly useful to obtain the editorial views of other newspapers. Moreover, interviewees occasionally

[16] Basque environmental association. According to its website, the Documentation Centre is supported by the Bilbao City Council and occasionally by the Basque Government.

mentioned specific articles such as editorials or opinion pieces, which if relevant were later searched for online. The table below summarizes the collection of *El País*, *El Correo*, and other newspapers' articles.

Table 3. Newspaper article collection

Newspaper	Time frame	Source	Type of search
El País	1986-2006	Newspaper's online library and LexisNexis	Keyword search: *red ferroviaria* (rail network)
El Correo	1986-2005	Library of the Provincial Council of Bizkaia (Bilbao)	Checked months were key events had occurred
	2006	Online newspaper library	Keyword search: *red ferroviaria* (rail network)
Others	1986-2006	Environmental Documentation Centre (Bilbao) Other newspapers' online archives	Documents related to the project

Parliamentary proceedings

Parliamentary proceedings focused on the Spanish Congress of Deputies and the Basque Parliament. The Congress of Deputies (*Congreso de los Diputados*) is the lower house of Spain's legislature (the *Cortes Generales*) and has greater powers than the Senate (*Senado*), the upper house. In turn, the Basque Parliament is the legislature of the Basque Autonomous Community. The activity in both legislatures (for both plenary sessions and thematic committees) is transcribed verbatim and made fully available through their respective online archives, a fact that facilitated enormously their collection. The types of proceedings gathered mainly comprise debates on non-legislative motions, written and oral questions to the government, and appearances of the government before the plenary or a thematic committee. The online search was carried out with the use of a number of keywords that included "*alta velocidad*" (high speed), "*redes transeuropeas*" (trans-European networks), and "*País Vasco*" (Basque Country), among others. A total of 118 relevant initiatives were accessed (64 from the Congress of Deputies and 54 from the Basque Parliament).

Interviews

The first step of interview data collection involved the identification of potential interviewees. This was done through the purposeful sampling (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 28) of interviewees that represented the wide range of actors related to the case whilst providing relevant and useful information on it. Thus, the preferred individuals either had

occupied a position of responsibility in the studied policy process, represented organizations concerned with the project, or had a valuable knowledge of the case due to an extensive involvement in it. Therefore, target interviewees included senior officials and politicians in the European Commission, the Spanish government, and the Basque government, Members of Parliament involved in thematic committees relevant to the case, individuals involved in business bodies, political parties, trade unions, and other types of organizations, and experts. The standard procedure for arranging interviews consisted first in approaching the prospective interviewees by e-mail and following up with phone calls in case there was no reply. In some occasions access to interviewees was gained through contacts made in the course of the research.

A total of 36 semi-structured interviews were carried out, all of them in Spanish. They generally lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were conducted face to face, one on one, and on a single occasion. Apart from being easier to record, Bryman (2008, p. 457) notes that face-to-face interviewing is better suited than telephone interviewing for qualitative, long interviews and it also allows to observe the interviewee's body language. There were however some exceptions: in two instances the interview was conducted telephonically due to the lack of direct access to the interviewee (one of them in three different dates according to the interviewee's availability); and in other two cases they were carried out with two participants, following a suggestion by the contacted individuals. Three of these 36 interviews, conducted during the first fieldtrip, were planned to obtain an overview of the case from the perspectives of different actors or 'helicopters' (Hajer, 2006, p. 73). Appendix B presents a list of the interviews conducted, including these 'helicopter interviews' and a series of informal conversations with individuals that provided guidance on accessing information and in some cases further contacts.

The interviews were conducted following an interview protocol (Creswell, 2009, p. 183) or guide (Bryman, 2008, p. 442) tailored to each case, which contained a limited number of open-ended questions referring to the research questions. In addition to this, the protocol included a heading with key information on the interview and interviewee, a reminder of issues to address before starting the interview, and a list of relevant key events or phases. A sample of the interview protocols used is provided in Table 4. Before starting each interview, I summarized the purpose of the study, introduced the format and length of the interview, explained the use of the data to be obtained, and agreed with the interviewee whether his or her contribution would be kept anonymous or not. The majority of the interviews were audio-recorded following agreement with the interviewee and in all cases notes were taken during them. Although recording interviews may prevent respondents from expressing their views comfortably (Bryman, 2008, p. 452), among other advantages it allows the researcher to focus on the interview, it helps to avoid bias in interpreting the

interviewees' answers, and it facilitates their more systematic analysis (Bryman, 2008, p. 451). Immediately after each interview I made notes of the first impressions about it, the main issues that emerged, and the tasks to follow up (e.g. accessing new documents or contacting new prospective interviewees). Finally, the interviews were fully transcribed word for word.

Table 4. Sample interview protocol (translated from Spanish)

Interviewee	José Luis Burgos	**Date and place**	16 May 2012, Bilbao
Relevant position	Deputy Minister for Transport (1987-1991). Basque Government - Ministry of Transport and Public Works.		

(Provide description of research and interview)
(Agree on anonymity and recording)

1. Discourse

- *What was the positioning of the Basque Government with respect to the project?*
    - Type of line:
        - Type of traffic (passengers, goods)
        - Relations (interregional, intrarregional)
    - Modes of transport: roads; rail; high-speed rail; aircraft.
- *Did it change over time? Why?*

2. Power

- *How did a certain policy change come about? What or who prompted it?*
- *How was the interaction with:*
    - Basque institutions (Basque Parliament)?
    - Other Basque actors (political parties, Chamber of Commerce, etc.)?
    - Nation-state institutions (Spanish Government)
- *Which was their role?*

Main phases / events

- 1987 – Rail Plan of the Basque Country. Santa Águeda corridor.
- 1988 – Gauge change and introduction of high-speed rail in Spain

Appendix B. List of interviews

Type of actor	Interviewee	Organization and most relevant position(s)*	Date(s)	Recorded
Informal conversations / meetings				
State actor	Juan Sánchez Agüero	*Basque Government - Ministry of Transport and Public Works* • Engineer	29.07.2011	No (phone conversation)
State actor	Juan Carlos Huertas de Andrés	*Government of Spain - Ministry of Development* • Deputy Director General for Infrastructure Planning and Transport	27.01.2012	No (meeting)
State actor	Carlos García Salvador	*Government of Spain - Ministry of Development* • Directorate-General for Rail Infrastructures	30.01.2012	No (meeting)
State actor	Pablo Vázquez Ruiz de Castroviejo	*Government of Spain - Ministry of Development* • Transport adviser. Permanent representation of Spain before the European Union (1993-1998)	30.01.2012	No (phone conversation)
Expert	José Manuel Vassallo Magro	*Technical University of Madrid* • Senior Lecturer/Reader, Transportation Department, Civil Engineering School	23.05.2012	No (meeting)

'Helicopter interviews'					
1	Expert	José Allende Landa	*University of the Basque Country* • Professor of Urban and Regional Planning	13.09.2011	Yes
2	Non-state political actor	Anonymous	*Asamblea contra el TAV* • Former member *AHT Gelditu! Elkarlana* • Member	14.09.2011	Yes
3	Journalist	Luis López	*El Correo* • Writer / journalist	12.09.2011	No
Interviews					
4	State actor	Alfonso González-Finat	*European Commission* • Director of Transeuropean Networks, Directorate General Energy & Transport (2000-2004) • Responsible for Transeuropean Networks (1996-1999) • Head of Unit, Networks and Transport Infrastructure (1991-1995)	25.01.2012	Yes
5	State actor	Anonymous	*European Commission* • Former official, Directorate General Transport and Energy	18.02.2012; 20.02.2012; 15.03.2012	No; no; yes (phone interview)
6	State actor	Emilio Pérez Touriño	*Government of Spain - Ministries of Public Works and Transport* • Senior positions in the 1985-1994 period, including Secretary General for Land Transport Infrastructures (1991-1994) *Government of Galicia* • President (2005-2009)	10.04.2012	Yes
7	State actor	Antonio M. López Corral	*Government of Spain - Ministry of Development* • Director General for Economic Programming (2000-2004). Member of the Van Miert High Level Group	30.05.2012	Yes
8	State actor	Víctor Morlán Gracia	*Government of Spain - Ministry of Development* • Secretary of State for Planning and Infraestructures (2004-2011) *Congress of Deputies* • Member (1986-2008). PSOE	26.01.2012	Yes
9	State actor	Anonymous	*Government of Spain - Ministry of Development* • Senior official, Directorate-General for Rail Infrastructures	28.05.2012	Yes

10	State actor Expert	Antonio Monfort Bernat	*Government of Spain - Ministries of Public Works and Transport* • Senior positions in the 1985-2005 period, including Director General for Rail Transport Infrastructures (1994-1996) *INECO* • Several positions since the 1980s, including Director General (2005-2010)	29.05.2012	Yes
11	State actor Expert	Casimiro Iglesias Pérez	*Government of Spain - Ministries of Public Works and Transport* • Senior positions in the 1994-2008 period, including Director General for Planning and Territorial Coordination (2005-2008) *INECO* • Director of Consulting (2009-)	22.05.2012	Yes
12	State actor	Pere Macias i Arau	*Congress of Deputies* • Member (2008-). CiU *Government of Catalonia* • Minister for Spatial Policy and Public Works (1997-2001) • Minister for the Environment (1996-1997)	29.05.2012	Yes
13	State actor	Leopoldo Barreda de los Ríos	*Congress of Deputies* Member (2011-). PP *Basque Parliament* • Member (1990-2011). Basque Popular Group	11.05.2012	Yes
14	State actor	José Luis Burgos Cid	*Basque Government - Ministry of Transport and Public Works,* • Deputy Minister for Transport (1987-1991)	16.05.2012	Yes
15	State actor	Álvaro Amann Rabanera	*Basque Government - Ministry of Transport and Public Works* • Minister (1998-2005). EAJ-PNV *Basque Parliament* • Member (1990-1999)	13.12.2011	Yes
16	State actor Private sector actor	Nuria López de Guereñu	*Basque Government - Ministry of Transport and Public Works* • Minister (2005-2009). EAJ-PNV *Confebask* • Secretary General (2010-)	19.12.2011	Yes
17	State actor	Francisco José Ormazábal Zamarkona	*Basque Government - Ministry of Spatial Planning, Housing and Environment* • Minister (1995-2001). *Eusko Alkartasuna* *Basque Parliament* • Member (1980-1995; 1998-99). *Eusko Alkartasuna*	19.12.2011	Yes
18	State actor	Iñigo Palomino Zubiaurre	*Basque Government - Ministry of Transport and Public Works* • Director for Transport (2005-2007). Coordinator of the Transport Group of the Atlantic Arc Commission (CRPM)	15.05.2012	Yes
19	State actor	José Manuel Bujanda Arizmendi	*Basque Government - Ministry of Transport and Public Works* • Head of Minister's Cabinet (2006-2009) *PLAE* • Director (2005-2007)	11.05.2012	No
20	State actor	Julio Herrero Romero	*Basque Parliament* • Member (1986-1995). Basque Socialist Group	14.12.2011	Yes
21	State actor	Gonzalo Machín Espósito	*Basque Parliament* • Member (1998-2005). Basque Popular Group	01.12.2011	Yes
22	State actor Non-state political actor	Oskar Matute García de Jalón	*Basque Parliament* • Member (2002-2009). *Ezker Batua-Berdeak* *Ezker Batua-Berdeak* • Former Coordinator of the Chairmanship	21.12.2011	Yes
23	State actor Non-state political actor	Iñaki Antigüedad Auzmendi	*Basque Parliament* • Member (1990-1994; 1998-2001). Several Basque left nationalist groups *AHT Gelditu! Elkarlana* • Member (2001-)	17.05.2012	Yes

24	Private sector actor	José María Duelo Marcos	*SEOPAN* • Director of Economic Studies	23.05.2012	Yes
		Alicia Revenga Martínez de Pazos	*SEOPAN* • Manager of Export Group		
25	Private sector actor	Anonymous	*Chamber of Commerce of Bilbao* • Senior representative	10.05.2012	Yes
26	Non-state political actor	José Luis Ordóñez	*Izquierda Unida* • Coordinator of the Ecology and Environment Federal Area *Coordinadora Estatal en Defensa del Ferrocarril Público* • Spokesperson	29.05.2012	Yes (phone interview)
27	Non-state political actor	Santos Núñez del Campo	*Comisiones Obreras (CCOO)* • Former engineer of the Transport Federation	22.05.2012	Yes
28	Non-state political actor	Mikel Noval	*ELA* • Coordinator for the Environment	15.05.2012	Yes
29	Non-state political actor	Josu Xabier Larrinaga Arza	*EHNE* • Technical Coordinator of Bizkaia	30.11.2011	Yes
30	Non-state political actor	Francisco Segura	*Ecologistas en Acción* • Transport Coordinator	17.01.2012	Yes
31	Non-state political actor	Iñaki Bárcena Hinojal	*Ekologistak Martxan* • Member	05.12.2011	Yes
32	Non-state political actor	Juan José Álvarez Rubio	*Eurobask* • Secretary General	09.12.2011	Yes
33	Expert	Javier Bustinduy Fernández	*BB&J Consult* • Director General	24.01.2012	Yes
34	Expert	Antxon Olabe	*A. Olabe Ambiental* • Partner	05.12.2011	Yes
35	Expert	Roberto Bermejo Gómez de Segura	*University of the Basque Country* • Senior Lecturer/Reader, Sustainable Economics	13.09.2011	Yes
36	Expert	Ignacio Alcalde Marcos	*Fundación Metrópoli* • Vice President *Taller de Ideas* • Director of Urbanism	24.01.2012	Yes
		Gabriel Escobar Gómez	*Taller de Ideas* • Director of Spatial Planning		

* Unless indicated otherwise, the positions refer to the time of the interview.

Appendix C. Data analysis

The analysis of data to answer the three research questions was developed independently for each of them, according to the respective dimension of the analytical framework. This appendix provides details on how this analysis was conducted, with a particular emphasis on the process of coding used to reduce the data into the necessary themes. When coding, apart from the specific codes used for each of the three dimensions, all data were coded as either 'case-related' (when referring to the Vitoria-Irun HSR line) or 'context-related' (those with a broader scope) in order to prioritize the analysis.

Discourse analysis

The discourse analysis of data was broadly based on the ten steps suggested by Hajer (2006, pp. 73–74): desk research; 'helicopter interviews'; document analysis; interviews with key players; sites of argumentation; analyze for positioning effects; identification of key incidents; analysis of practices in particular cases of argumentation; interpretation; and second visit to key actors. Due to time constraints and the limited availability of interviewees, however, this last stage was not carried out. More specifically, the conducted analysis consisted of:

1. A first reading of documents and a preliminary coding based on the actual content of data. Documents included interviews, newspaper articles, a selection of official documents, and a selection of parliamentary proceedings.

   Examples of codes: 'marginalization'; 'economic competitiveness'; 'balanced development'.

2. A preliminary definition of structuring discourses and story-lines based on the examination of the coded data.

3. Confirmation and qualification of this definition through the merging of the first list of codes in new categories based on the identified discourses and story-lines and the interactions between them. When necessary, second-order codes were used to refer, for instance, to the emergence of a story-line or to its discursive practices.

   Examples of codes: 'marginalization story-line'; 'developmental discourse'; 'developmental vs. antagonistic discourse'.

4. Write-up of the basic discursive structures and dynamics. This allowed the refinement of the content of discourse and the identification of positioning effects (e.g. 'contestation is

against progress') and of key incidents in the discursive dynamics (e.g. the emergence of a story-line).

5. Detailed analysis of particular instances of argumentative exchange. These were the debates in the Basque Parliament between 1998 and 2006 (a total of ten debates, nine in plenary sessions and one in a parliamentary committee).

Analysis of episodic agency power

1. Write-up of a first section on the standing conditions (means and resources) framing the exercise of power.

2. Coding of those data that showed signs of influence in all newspaper articles and semi-structured interviews. It was carried out according to specific periods and general issues.

    - Examples of codes: '1986-1989'; '1989-1994'; 'developments in other nation-states'; 'subnational issues'.

3. Individual analysis of the different periods and issues identified. Development of a first narrative and identification of episodes (when a change in the characteristics of the high-speed rail project or in the course of events occurred) through newspaper articles and official documents. The scope of the episodes was kept fairly wide to avoid a narrow focus in the analysis.

    - Examples of codes: 'Ep. 2. Change to HSR and UIC track gauge'; 'Ep. 5. Start of construction through tender of works'.

4. Establishment of causal relationships through the analysis of interviews. The theoretical categories proposed in the analytical framework were used, but no further coding was carried out.

Spatiality of policy-making

1. Review and re-coding, when relevant to the spatiality of discourse production and of the exercise of power, of the data coded for the previous two analyses. The codes referred to either discursive structures (the different discourses and story-lines) or to the arenas through which discourse was produced and power exercised.

    Examples of codes: 'space in social train story-line'; 'nation-state power arenas'.

2. Analysis of the data coded in the previous phase. The analysis resulted in the identification of spaces of concern and of reliance, but no new codes were developed.

3. Establishment of relationships between the spatial categories applied and both the production of discourse and the exercise of power. When necessary, non-coded data were accessed and coded.

Appendix D. Ethical considerations

As a social sciences-based piece of research with a focus on the politics of transport infrastructure development, it included the conduction of interviews with actors related to varying degrees to this process and the use of materials produced by them. Since it involved living human participants and data derived from them, an important aspect of the research endeavour was to ensure that it was conducted ethically. This section details the steps taken for this purpose.

Widely accepted ethical standards in research are the informed consent by the participants, the balancing of the risk to participants and the potential benefit to the wider community, and the right of participants to remain confidential (UCL, 2015). In general terms, participants were fully informed about the study and the use that would be made of the data obtained from the interviews, and the disclosure or otherwise of their identities was agreed with them. The risk to participants was moderate, yet in any case I endeavoured to help them make an informed decision about their participation. In addition, data was kept strictly confidential and undisclosed. Access to it was restricted to the researcher and was stored securely. Further details of the measures adopted with respect to participants and the risks and benefits involved in the research project are provided below.

Measures concerning participants

Since the documents used were or had been publicly available, the ethical questions with regard to participants concerned the interviewees. A total of 38 adults were interviewed, following the sampling procedure described in Appendix A, plus a number of informal conversations that were not used in the analysis were carried out. The interviewees were actors from state institutions, private sector and non-state political organizations, and experts. The research did not involve children or vulnerable adults such as individuals with mental health problems or with learning disabilities, the elderly, prisoners or young offenders. No payment or incentive was made to the research participants except a drink when the interview took place in a public place such as a cafe.

When addressing potential and actual interviewees, an effort was made to fully inform them of the nature of the study and the use of the information obtained through the interviews. They were first approached through e-mail or, in those limited cases where their address was not available, phone. If the e-mail was not replied, it was followed up with a phone call. When contacting potential participants, I introduced myself, explained the purposes of my research project and the interview, detailed the main characteristics of the

latter and the use that would be made of the data obtained from it, including the possibility of keeping it anonymous, and mentioned the dates when the interview could be held. In case of a positive response, the specific time and place of the interview was decided by the participant within the dates indicated. As mentioned in Appendix A, before the start of each interview I reminded the interviewee of the information provided in my initial contact and, on the basis of this, they verbally decided both whether the interview would be audio-recorded or not and whether their contribution would be kept anonymous or not. I verbally agreed and complied with their decisions.

In this respect, of the 38 individuals that participated in the 36 conducted interviews, four chose to remain anonymous. In these four cases I made every effort to guarantee that they could not be identified and that the data they provided could not be traced back to them. Accordingly, in the list of interviews (see Appendix B) these participants are named as 'Anonymous' and their roles within their organizations are kept sufficiently undefined. In addition, when they were cited or quoted in the thesis, particular attention was given to guaranteeing that their anonymity was not compromised by the presentation of data obtained from their interviews.

Risks and benefits to the researcher and the researched

In the first place, the research did not pose particular risks to the researcher. However, basic precautions were taken when carrying out the research fieldwork, particularly in remote locations or at night (e.g. carrying a switched-on mobile phone). Secondly, the topic under study was expected to be sensitive due to the conflicts that surrounded the selected policy process in particular towards the end of the past decade, when numerous relevant actors were threatened and the Basque terrorist group ETA murdered one of them. Nevertheless, generally the response of potential participants was positive and they were keen to share their experiences and opinions. The improvement of the situation when the fieldwork started – ETA announced the end of its armed activity in October 2011 – appears to have contributed to this. In any case, the voluntary nature of the interview and the possibility of making their contribution anonymous were emphasized by the researcher both when first contacting them and before starting each interview. Apart from the contribution to studies on transport infrastructure development and politics, the research outputs may also provide a comprehensive and detailed narrative of a case to participants who have often been involved in it only partially. Thus, they may promote a reflexive understanding of the policy process studied and of the roles of the actors that participated in it.