7 A multidisciplinary approach of railway station development: A case study of ’s-Hertogenbosch

Gert-Joost Peek
Strategy & Marketing, ING Real Estate Development International, The Hague, the Netherlands

Erik Louw
OTB Research Institute for Housing, Urban and Mobility Studies, Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands

7.1 Introduction

Railway stations have a dual character, as they are nodes in transportation networks as well as places in the city (see chapter 3). A combination of accessibility and potential as a concentrated area of urban activity therefore makes station areas favoured locations for the development of structuring nodes in the network city (Bertolini and Dijst 2000 p. 41). With reference to Castells (1989), Bertolini (1996 p. 332) subsequently pinpoints the tensions this combination embodies: “On one hand, stations offer a (potential) connection to several material and immaterial flows that create value in the current ‘informational’ mode of development. Stations are (or may become) important nodes in both transport and non-transport (e.g. business, consumption) networks. The connection to ever denser, faster and further reaching transportation systems, as well as the development there of office complexes and shopping centres are materialisations of this network dimension of station areas. On the other hand, stations identify a ‘place’, a both permanently and temporarily inhabited area of the city, a dense and diverse conglomeration of uses and forms accumulated through time, that may or may not share in the life of the node. The mixture of housing, small
business premises and informal public spaces of the station’s neighbourhood are an expression of this local dimension.”

These tensions may result in synergy when node and place reinforce each other. “For instance [...] a high level of accessibility may provide the critical mass of demand for the development of particular activities. In turn, a high density of activities may induce the necessary support for the development of transportation networks” (Bertolini and Spit 1998 p. 9). But these tensions are also accountable for the long and complex process of (re)development in which both transportation and urban development issues simultaneously need to be handled (Bertolini and Spit 1998 p. 17).

A multifarious array of both node and place-based actors crowd station area redevelopment processes, of which local government and the railway company are characteristic. Depending on the local context, other actors will also play a decisive role. These include different levels of the public administration, different transportation companies, and actors in the real estate market, such as developers, investors, and end users. In addition, particularly at station areas set in dense, historically-stratified urban districts, local residents and businesses may also have a significant stake in the process.

The objectives of this heterogeneous array of actors are diverse and their expectations are often very high. Depending on their disciplinary background in education, their professional experience and their particular business or policy objectives, all participants in the redevelopment process see their own opportunities and have distinct views about the ways in which others can assist in achieving their goals. The dual character of the station area and its resulting possible synergies raise the expectations of the participants. This makes them interdependent, so that capitalising on the synergies requires collaboration; but such a condition is difficult to achieve and maintain when the actors involved invariably have different viewpoints.

The literature on urban redevelopment, including station location, can roughly be divided into two areas of emphasis. On one side we see a focus on the literature of the redevelopment, which describes more and less successful cases, and provides us with content-based models as with the node-place model of Bertolini. On the other side is the literature that deals with the process management issue, in which most attention is given to the interactions of the actors involved, and little attention is given to aspects concerning the content of the redevelopment (i.e., Bruijn et al. 2002).

We believe the dual character of the station location to be such a massive force driving force for these redevelopment processes that it deserves much more attention, especially from a process management perspective. Actors should be seen in this context as individual representatives of the