

Do Mobility Hubs Make the City? Transport-Urban Planning Coordination in Service of Sustainable Cities and Urban Design: Insights from French and Saudi Cases

Ali Hasan

Doctor in urban and regional planning (France-LVMT)

Senior Urban Planner (Saudia Arabia)-Architect

Abstract

Contemporary urban discourse increasingly emphasizes new paradigms of mobility; however, the role of mobility hubs as central elements of urban structuring remains insufficiently explored. Transport stations, as emblematic nodes of mobility, are neither new nor neutral objects. Deeply embedded in the historical evolution of cities and in social practices, they have progressively transformed into transmodal infrastructures, reshaped by technological and organizational innovations.

In this perspective, this paper introduces the concept of the High Level of Service Station (HLSS) (Hasan A., 2017), inspired by the principles of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and high level cycling systems. The HLSS extends beyond the conventional understanding of transport infrastructure, suggesting that the station's influence exceeds its physical boundaries to actively contribute to the production of a more integrated and sustainable urban environment.

This approach is situated within the broader framework of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), an operational planning strategy that seeks to replace Car-Oriented Development by reinforcing the integration between transport systems and urban form. In parallel, contemporary urbanism has shifted from traditional zoning approaches toward paradigms such as New Urbanism and Smart Growth, which prioritize mixed-use development, accessibility, sustainability, and multimodal coordination.

Within this evolving theoretical context, the paper investigates how mobility hubs can act as catalysts for urban transformation. It examines their capacity to support the transition from congested and polluting urban environments toward more sustainable and accessible cities, while also strengthening territorial identity and attractiveness. Furthermore, it questions their role in limiting urban sprawl and promoting a compact, proximity-based city model.

These issues are explored through comparative case studies in Reims (France) and Medina (Saudi Arabia). While Reims reflects a long-standing tradition of integrated transport and urban planning, Medina represents an emerging yet rapidly evolving context, characterized by strong ambitions in urban development and transformation.