

Conflicts over infrastructure and mega-projects in Europe: who, how and why?

Abstract

Infrastructure and urban projects in advanced capitalist societies have been contested by opposing movements for years mostly at a local and regional scale. However, the last years have seen the emergence of opposing movements which have become of national or even international concern and now seek to constitute alliances at an international level. The Stop Useless Imposed Megaprojects (UIMP) network is an example of these alliances.

By analysing 22 infrastructure and urban conflicts existing across Europe we aim to identify regular patterns across time, space, conflict outcomes and forms of opposition in order to deepen understanding of the connections between such conflicts and the existing opposition.

The results suggest that opposition emerges in circumstances where the driving forces (mainly States, Regional Governments and Privates) fail to include in the decision-making process considerable sectors of the affected communities. Besides, whenever opposing movements succeed both in their “resistance” actions and the unfolding of their narrative and discourse, national and international synergies occur reinforcing the resistance.

However, as observed in the outcomes, stopping mega-projects appears to be a difficult goal to achieve. Indeed, just one of the analysed projects was cancelled.