

Knapp, Wolfgang; Schmitt, Peter

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Re-structuring competitive metropolitan regions: on territory, institutions and governance. RheinRuhr compared with London, Paris and the Randstad Holland

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Re-structuring Competitive Metropolitan Regions: On Territory, Institutions and Governance

*RheinRuhr compared with
London, Paris and the Randstad Holland¹*

by Wolfgang Knapp & Peter Schmitt²

(Paper no. 437 - ERSA Congress 2002)

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1. Background and scope

Although an increasing number of studies consider the globalised economy as being 'placeless' by taking into account the quasi universal availability and mobility of the essential production factors, the mainstream of contemporary approaches still take on board territorial aspects when the re-structuring of economic activities is under investigation. Particularly metropolitan regions in advanced economies are today both prominent as well as eminent objects for such examinations. Examples are the 'Globalisation and World Cities Study Group and Network' (GaWC) at Loughborough University or the Los Angeles School of Economic Geography (see, for instance, Scott & Agnew & Soja & Storper 2001). On the other hand, the political responses and reflexes, as well as various institutional aspects, mainly covered by the discussions on appropriate 'local/regional governances', are further issues with growing recognition, not only in the scientific community (Keating 2001, Danson 2000, Benz et. al. 1999, Heinz 2000)³.

According to Keating (2001), city-regions need to be considered as actors that pro-actively establish themselves in different political as well as economic arenas, ranging from the national up to the global scale. Here, in line with Newman & Thornley (1996), it is not only commonly perceived that a critical mass is needed to compete successfully in the globalising economy, but also many city-regional administrations or agencies have started to seek enlargement of their territorial base and/or to enter into region-wide coalitions or networks (Lambregts 2000:7).

Regarding the characteristics and specificities of such 'metropolitan regions' as 'places', and certainly even as 'nodes', their different 'geographies' are represented essentially through various economic and politico-institutional – and not to forget symbolic – activities and practices; the latter will be neglected in the following⁴. Here, many aspects have to be taken on board when analysing the interplay between the 'realities' these metropolitan regions are facing nowadays and the appropriate recipes to form competitive capacities for them. Moreover, the interaction of 'localisation' and 'globalisation' processes seems to constitute another dimension regarding the question of the ability of specific 'territories' to facilitate adequate structures for economic development and long-lasting prosperity. What is central to this seems to be corresponding institutional capacities in line with innovation-

oriented policies in order to shape the trajectories of the envisaged economic development paths.

This paper is by nature a comparative analysis of the four metropolitan regions as named in the sub-title in terms of the issues briefly raised above, which today generate lively debates and ultimately diverse political actions. To start off, the territorial shape of such 'metropolitan regions' will be investigated by taking into account their specific 'spatial configurations'. This will be followed by a discussion on their complex relations concerning the issue of urban competitiveness and urban economic change in the framework of globalisation and internationalisation. It will be argued that the regional institutional base is an essential prerequisite for metropolitan competitiveness. This discussion will finally lead to the concluding question in what sense our four exemplary 'metropolitan regions' are 'regions' in the sense of being subjects which are able to shape their competitive assets.

2. Constituting '(metropolitan) regions'

A great number of examinations of urban or city-regional economies reduce these 'spatialities' to empirically given administratively bounded cities and simultaneously to 'containers' for socio-economic processes. However, 'regions' are comprehended within historically shaped processes and their emergences need to be understood as parts of socio-spatial structures and collective consciousnesses. Questions of spatial scales, territorial shapes, institutional formations and cultural identities are thus given preference by a number of social scientists and human geographers.

Anssi Paasi (1986, 1991) seeks to develop a framework for understanding how 'regions' emerge and are continually reproduced and transformed by and through the practices of individuals and institutions at a variety of spatial levels. His conceptual centrepiece is what he refers to as the socio-spatial process of the 'institutionalisation' of regions. He considers this interdependent and mutually constituting process as consisting of four stages, which are only distinguishable analytically from each other.

The first is what he calls the 'development of a territorial shape'. This is determined in principal by the localisation of social practices and the reach of power relations that give the region its boundaries and situates it within a larger spatial structure. The formation of the region's 'conceptual' or 'symbolic shape' also comprises attaching a specific symbol (including the region's name and/or logo) to the region in order to facilitate the formation of regional images and consciousness. The status quo in a particular territory, consisting of those social practices which give the region a territorial shape, needs more than the mere identification of symbols with territory. It also requires the 'emergence of institutions', the establishment of more formal vehicles, such as education, law, and the media, accompanied by local/regional practices in economics, politics, administration and culture, which socialise individuals into varying, regionally structured, interpretative communities. These are not limited to the locality and can consist of wider, more spatially diffuse structures of experience. Finally, the fourth stage of the institutionalisation process contains the maintenance and continued reproduction of the region as a social entity. The region is now firmly established materially, socially and in the consciousness of its members, as well as capable of acting for itself. In the end, these processes can lead to the administrative or political independence of a region.

In reality, however, Paasi's idealised model to 'institutionalise' regions is rarely realised in our societies. According to Weichart (2000), the implementation of so-called "designer regions" is rather a commonly taken way of institutionalising regions in order to achieve certain – mostly competitively motivated – aims. An example is the introduction of the European Metropolitan Regions as a strategic concept in National German Spatial Planning documents (Stiens 2000).

Such designing efforts are also undertaken in EU documents concerning the transnational spatial visions elaborated under the umbrella of the INTERREG IIC programme. Here, the metaphors "driving forces" or "economic engines" are taken up in order to assign to such city-regions outstanding roles in order to stress certain spatio-economic impacts that might be central for the EU's spatial policies⁵.

However, besides these connotative aspects, the question of the empirical evidence for such claims comes to the fore, and, what is even more in the focus of this paper, the aspect of how to compare these 'spatialities', which are mostly represented by vague schematic illustrations without territorial borders or by territories that are not based on intra-regional functional relations. Exemplary documents are the ESDP, the aforementioned 'Spatial Visions' elaborated for so-called transnational co-operation areas, the above-mentioned German National Planning Document on European Metropolitan Regions or regional spatial development concepts on, for example, the Flemish Diamond, the Randstad or RheinRuhr (Lambregts 2001:13). How are the facts and figures represented in these documents related to such constructed 'designer regions'?

3. Demarcating 'Functional Urban Regions' as comparable objects for further investigations

In order to cope with this lack of information regarding the major metropolitan areas in North West Europe, a rather simple, but no less efficient method to define and demarcate functional urban regions has been developed. The goal was to overcome the aforementioned problem of linking 'places' such as 'metropolitan regions' with corresponding data that are comparable at least throughout Europe. The urban dynamics (for instance urban sprawl) and the prosperity of places are two central items necessary to form a base for further empirical studies. To do so, the GEMACA group demarcated so-called Functional Urban Regions (FURs) in order to compare selected keystones of city-regional performance and competitiveness. Even though the application of such keystones is still restricted due to the poor availability of harmonised data at NUTS III level⁶ or for even smaller statistical units in Europe, the results are sufficiently interesting to represent the status of North West Europe's city-regions in a different light. Therefore, the approach had to take on board only those data which are precisely and consistently defined (population, jobs, commuters).

This method provides comparable city-regional units based on the same criteria. In other words, by means of this approach, it is possible to bridge the various definitions

throughout Europe (Cheshire & Gornostaeva 2001) as to what actually constitutes a city or a city-region. As Cheshire & Gornostaeva (2001:179) argue, *"there is even less recognition of how vital a common definition is if valid comparisons of demographic economic and social development patterns are to be made"*. The two authors refer to the illustrative example of London, where in the past 40 years several demarcations have been used to define the political unit of London (ibid.).

The GEMACA approach took on board the long tradition of defining metropolitan regions in the United States⁷. Besides the administrative/political definitions that are represented by the respective politicians, metropolitan statistical areas have been defined by the structure of employment, the population density and the intra-regional commuter flows. The development of population or employment is often followed by different processes of polarisation, on the one hand, and/or decentralisation, on the other, which normally does not take place within the boundaries of a single city⁸. Even comparing prosperity or decline by means of socio-economic indicators, such as unemployment or highly educated labour forces, within the traditional boundaries of individual cities in Europe is a thorny issue. The city-regional landscapes in Europe are differentiated through numerous distinct functional units with different development paths, ranging from 'high-quality residential areas' via 'aerovilles' to 'industrial backyards'. These units are spread all over the city-region, but are of course somehow interrelated to each other (Kunzmann 1998). These interrelated-functional patchworks should be covered systematically as a whole city-region. Only then can reliable statements be made concerning some keystones on the competitiveness of such 'units'.

But it is not merely aspects regarding the residents in a city-region and their social backgrounds that are of interest, even their productivity is crucial to measuring the city-regional performance. The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita is the most widely used indicator to measure prosperity, particularly by the European Commission. Since GDP is calculated at workplaces, and population is counted at place of residence, it is obviously important to take account of the commuter flows. Concerning the case of London, Cheshire & Gornostaeva argue that prosperity is systematically more overstated as the focus narrows to the areas with successively greater concentrations of jobs relative to residents. An example is Inner London-West, which is consequently designated as the

'richest region' in the EU (2001:182). Regarding the metropolitan region RheinRuhr – which can be seen together with the Dutch Randstad as an example of a somewhat polycentric urban region (see below) – a striking counterpart to Inner London-West is the city of Leverkusen, located between Düsseldorf in the north and Cologne in the South. The city can be regarded as a one-company town, because it is the home base of the huge chemical engineering multinational Bayer AG, and thus a 'place' with a proportionately greater inflow of commuters relative to employment.

Thus it becomes obvious that for comparative analysis a useful definition of a city-region is needed, which somehow offsets these discrepancies of intra-regional polarisation and decentralisation in order to arrive at a more realistic picture of, for instance, city-regional performance. Consequently, the GEMACA team has defined the aforementioned Functional Urban Regions (FURs) on the basis of concentration of employment and population, and finally on the spheres of economic influence provided by commuting patterns. These three constitutional parameters have been tested with several 'numeral indices' within the GEMACA team in order to establish useful and suggestive demarcations for the largest North West European city-regions. The box below illustrates the applied course of the chosen criteria for the demarcation of a total of 14 FURs in North West Europe.

- 1) The main morphological agglomerations were defined as a group of neighbouring municipalities with a population density above 7 hectares, or cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants
- 2) The main economic cores were defined as sets of contiguous units (neighbouring cities) with at least 7 jobs per hectare or 20,000 jobs per city.
- 3) The functional urban region, which includes the main economic cores and neighbouring municipalities in which over 10% of the active population work in the main economic cores (thus main economic cores plus the 'commuter hinterland') .

All together, the FURs of North West Europe, which were under investigation within the GEMACA II project, form a comparable basis for further investigation concerning their competitive and performative qualities. In order to convey a better picture of these 'constructed geographies', the following table and maps (regarding the four city-regions of interest in this paper, namely Paris, London, the Randstad, and RheinRuhr) provide some useful insights.

Table 1: Functional Urban Regions of NW Europe

FUR	population (million)	% of country	area in km²	administrative units (NUTS 5) (e.g. wards/'commune' (Fr.)/'Kommune' (Ger.))	Total employment (in '000s)
London	13.2	22	12,840	2021	5,503
Paris	11.8	21	19,681	2054	5,312
RheinRuhr	11.7	14	11,485	150	4,582
Randstad	6.8	44	5,973	181	2,860
RheinMain	4.0	5	7,431	304	1,709
Brussels	3.7	36	7,233	186	1,504
Birmingham	3.1	5	3,351	323	1,247
Manchester	2.7	5	2,087	297	1,078
Lille	1.9	/	2,662	230	675
Glasgow	1.8	3	3,177	284	674
Antwerp	1.5	15	2,286	58	630
Liverpool	1.4	2	828	156	510
Dublin	1.3	37	3,017	407	670
Edinburgh	0.8	1	2,598	147	370

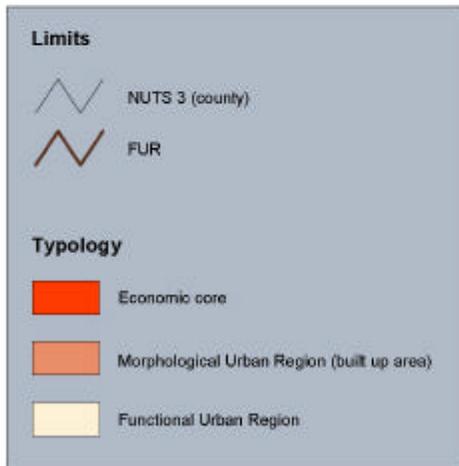
Source: Lecomte (2001a:7)

Note: The applied 'GEMACA method' to demarcate the FURs was carried out in summer 2000. However, it should be noted that the dates of observation of the applied data are not always similar; in such cases the latest available data were used. Moreover, it should be added that the 'FUR Lille' is a French-Belgian cross-border region.



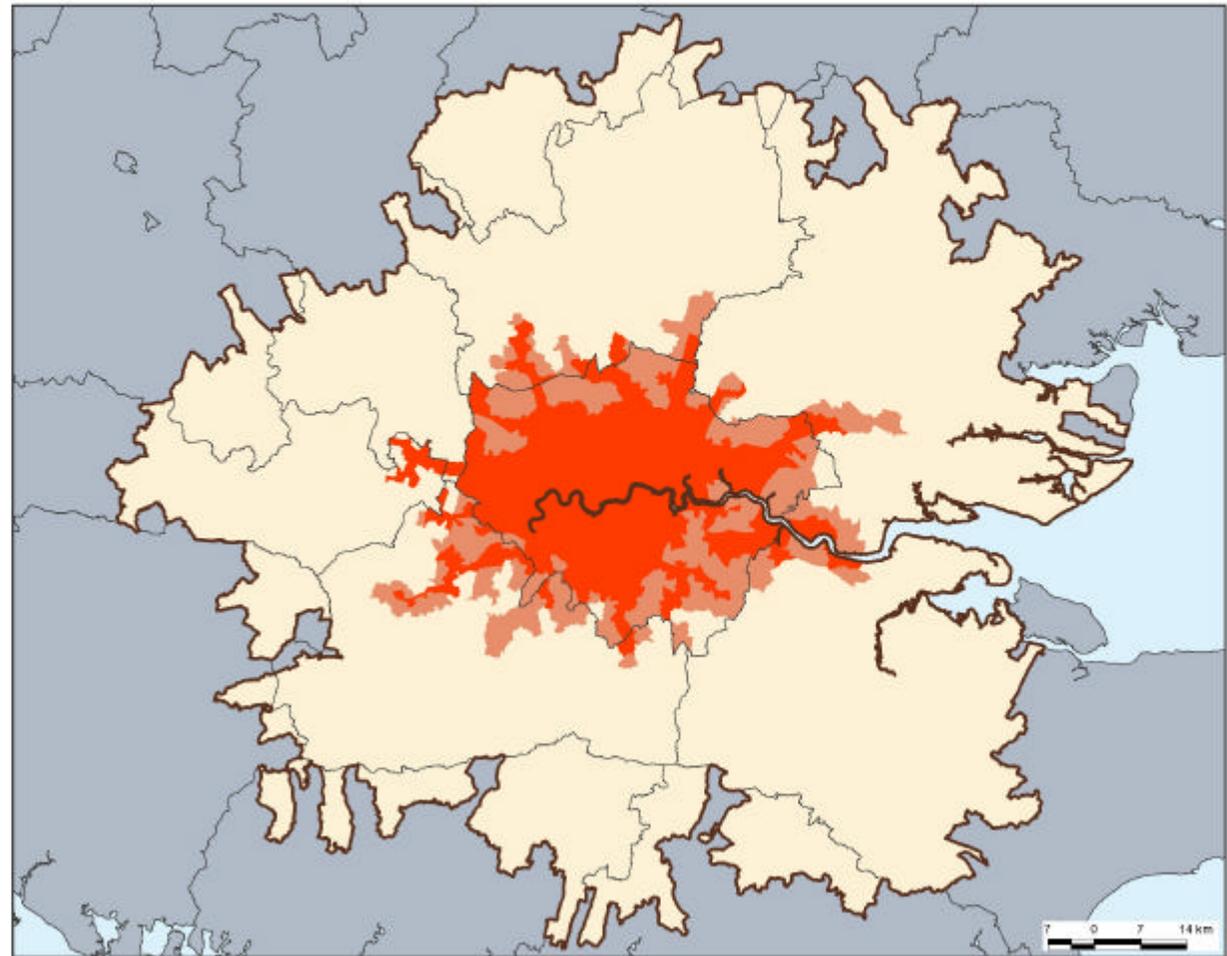
Date : National Institutes of Statistics

Background : MACON



LONDON

FUNCTIONAL URBAN REGION 1991



Echelle : 1/1 000 000



PARIS FUNCTIONAL URBAN REGION 1990

Data : National Institutes of Statistics
Background : MACON

Limits

- NUTS 2 (region)
- NUTS 3 (département)
- NUTS 5 (municipality)
- FUR

Typology

- Economic core
- Morphological Urban Region (built up area)
- Functional Urban Region





Date : National Institutes of Statistics

Background : MACON

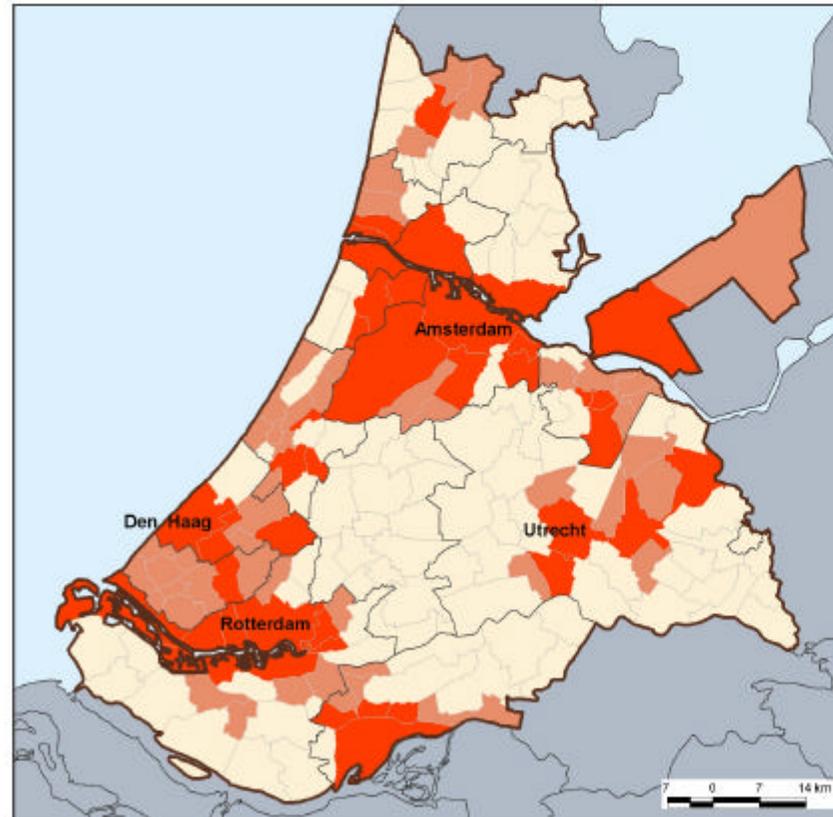
Limits

-  NUTS 3 (corop)
-  NUTS 4 (municipality)
-  FUR

Typology

-  Economic core
-  Morphological Urban Region (built up area)
-  Functional Urban Region

RANDSTAD - HOLLAND FUNCTIONAL URBAN REGION 1992



Echelle : 1/1 000 000





Data : National Institutes of Statistics

Background : MACON

Limits

- Border
- NUTS 1 (land)
- NUTS 3 (kreis)
- NUTS 5 (municipality)
- FUR

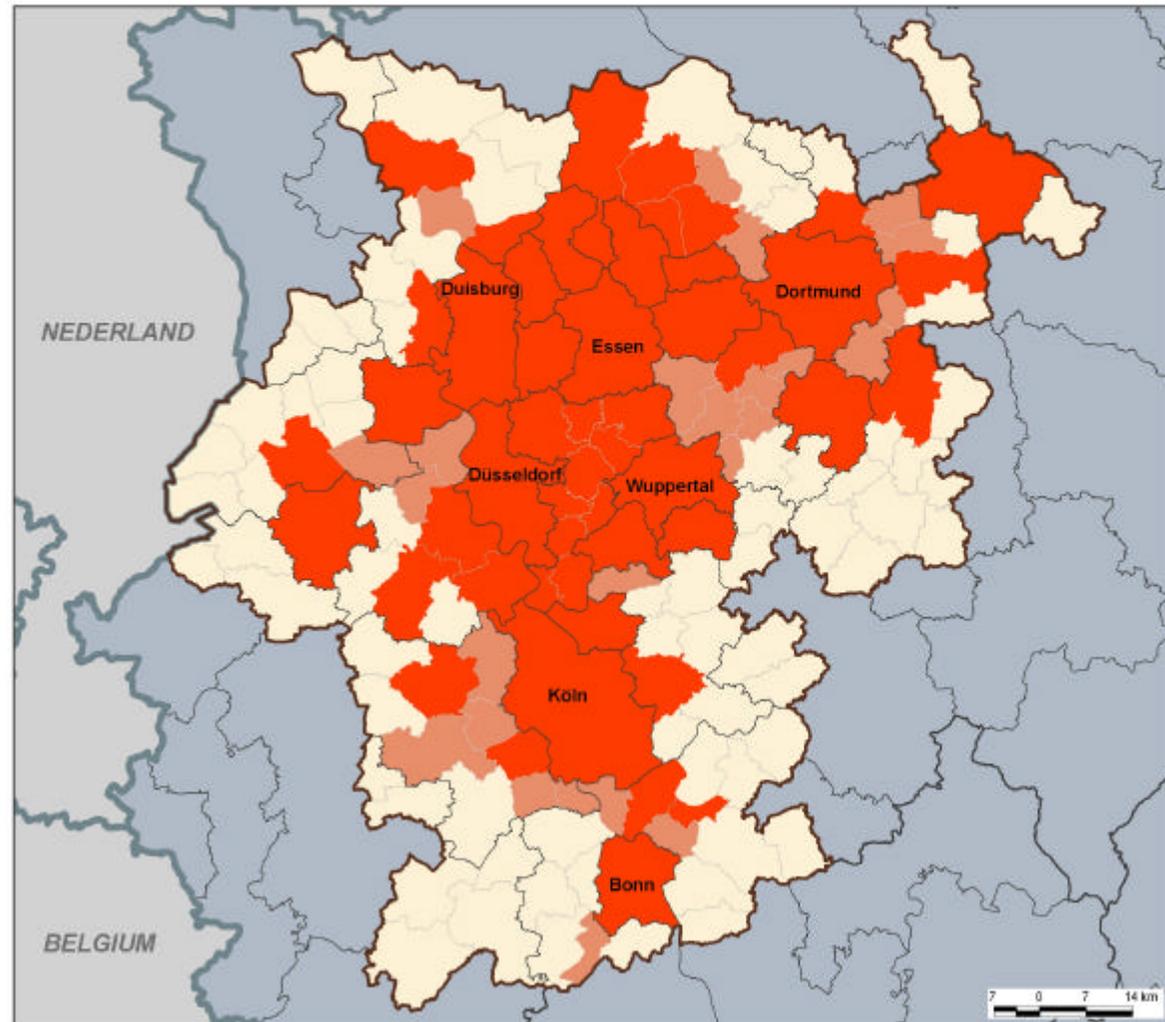
Typology

- Economic core
- Morphological Urban Region (built up area)
- Functional Urban Region

RHEINRUHR

FUNCTIONAL URBAN REGION

1999



Echelle : 1/1 000 000



Comparing the four FURs which will be analysed more closely in this paper, one can say that the relationships between the economic cores and their hinterlands seem to be quite different. Long-distance commuting seems to be rather more popular in the monocentric regions (with very concentrated peaks of high densities of employment) such as London and Paris. The rather dispersed picture of the economic cores in the quasi 'polycentric configurations' RheinRuhr and Randstad might lead to the conclusion that here the energy consumption attributable to commuting flows is due to a lesser extent to shorter distances to places of work. However, exceptions cannot be highlighted in such generalising maps. Naturally, one has to recall the different policies for land-use planning – and thus the different development paths – these four FURs have seen. Examples are the different planning cultures regarding, for instance, satellite cities, preservation of open space, infrastructural planning, etc. However, with the exception of the Randstad, these FURs are almost identical in terms of population and jobs. Considering only the economic cores, it is interesting to note that RheinRuhr counts more than 1 million inhabitants more than Paris and almost 2 million more than London, whilst the numbers for total employment are rather different (3.8 million in RheinRuhr, 4.3 in Paris, and 3.4 in London). This demonstrates very clearly the high density of employment in the French and English capital cities (by considering only their economic cores), whereas the numbers of residents are comparably low in relation to the areas they occupy.

However, the individual maps illustrate that metropolitan regions are only partly reproduced mentally by the regional stakeholders. Certainly, in the cases of Paris and London, such rather dispersed imaginations of these metropolitan regions are more commonly established than in the case of the polycentric FURs of RheinRuhr and Randstad. Here a lot of stakeholders have considerable difficulty conceptualising these polycentric patchwork in their mental maps, because their daily activities are still focused rather on one or more dominant cores, such as Cologne and Dortmund or Amsterdam and Rotterdam respectively, or even core (sub-)regions such as the north or south "wing" in the case of the Randstad (Ipenburg & Lambregts 2001), or the Ruhrgebiet, Bergische Land and the Rheinschiene (city-row along the Rhine) in the case of RheinRuhr (Schmitt & Knapp 2001).

Taking on board our constructed 'geographic representations' termed 'Functional Urban Regions', it is important to outline that they are naturally not congruent with the territories of corresponding politico-institutional bodies. Politicians in general represent only NUTS-regions, even though these vary considerably in size throughout Europe. Thus the questions of constituting adequate regional organising capacities is a crucial – and in most cases even a thorny – issue with regard to the shaping of competitive assets of metropolitan regions today.

4. Polycentric and monocentric urban regions: a useless debate?

Following the observations of Klostermann & Musterd, polycentrism, which basically denotes the existence of multiple centres within one area, seems to have become one of the defining characteristics of the urban landscape in advanced economies. Nonetheless, they claim, in line with Camagni & Salone (1993), that there is still a lack of a theoretical framework and a clear typology and taxonomy of these urban configurations. Polycentricity, in their sense, can refer either to intra-urban patterns of clustering of population and economic activity (the functional patchwork and linkages around metropolitan centres) or to interurban patterns, such as RheinRuhr or the Dutch Randstad.

The 'monocentric model' is apparently no longer suitable for exploring the evolving spatial patterns in urban Europe or North America. City-centre locations still matter – especially in the case of innovative activities based on the exchange of high-quality and complex information which demands high frequencies of face-to-face contacts. They are, however, no longer the only urban cluster of economic activity, but are part of a wider spatial division of labour within the urban area with other significant clusters of economic activities. In other words, the notion of the compact, densely settled and mixed city, which is mostly associated with European (industrial) cities, can today be related only to some parts of the urban landscape. Current innovations in the urban region are not just taking place in 'inner cities', but also at the periphery. There is increasing evidence that a new phase of development of the urban periphery is emerging which is no longer characterised predominantly by quantitative growth, i.e. a wider array of economic functions and

qualified jobs. The new spaces-of-growth poles show a broad variety of spatial forms and functional specialisations, forming in line with infrastructural networks 'new intermediate zones'. The old notions of 'the city' are disappearing at the fringes of large metropolitan areas, which are increasingly affected by developments that do not fit into the former, established dichotomy of centre and periphery.

In this sense of 'intra-urban polycentricity' on a smaller scale, most of the larger cities, and also so-called monocentric cities like London or Paris, are today rather to be seen as polycentric urban configurations. If these developments of new locations take place within the context of an 'urban landscape', like the closely urbanised corridor between Düsseldorf/Duisburg/Oberhausen in the west and Dortmund/Hagen in the east, to take a somewhat extreme example, we can notice the development of new spatial qualities.

However, the characteristics of intra-urban polycentricity may take place not only at the level of a city and its adjoining post-suburbia, or in a polynucleated region with one dominant core city, but also at that of interurban polycentric configurations like RheinRuhr and the Randstad, which show the following characteristics: *"They consist of a number of historically distinct cities. They lack a clear leading city, which dominates in political, economic, cultural and other aspects (although, inevitably, one of these cities has the largest number of inhabitants). Instead, they tend to consist of a small number of larger cities that do not differ that much in terms of size or overall economic importance together with a greater number of smaller cities. The cities making up these polycentric configurations are located in more or less close proximity (mainly within maximum commuting distance) (...) These cities are not only spatially distinct, but also constitute independent political entities"* (Klostermann & Musterd 2001:628).

Such polycentric urban regions are in many respects qualitatively different from polycentric city-regions with a dominant core (Klostermann & Musterd 2001:626f.). One difference concerns the issue of political entity. Polycentric developments within one city-region obviously have a greater chance of taking place within one political entity as a result of negotiations between one core city and smaller neighbouring cities (though these may not necessarily be easy to resolve). If a number of distinct and independent cities are joined together in one or more horizontal urban systems, the field becomes considerably

more obscure. More than one polycentric city have to manage the various problems which exist between core, suburbs and surrounding areas. In view of these difficulties, it seems to be hardly manageable to form organising 'regional governance structures' at the level of the polycentric urban regions as this usually implies adding another institutional layer to the existing system of distinct local authorities, which normally behave according to the principle of 'every man for himself' or even of sub-regional associationalism (see chapter 6).

Another difference relates to the identity and the representation of a polycentric urban region. Even polycentric cities can still be seen as 'imagined communities'. The historically rooted identities and strong symbolic representations (architectural landmarks, local culture, sports teams, etc.) may contribute to the persistence of monocentric mental maps. One might argue that in 'polycentric urban regions', the development of new patterns of economic and socio-cultural activities goes beyond the boundaries of these historical delineations, and that local identities become blurred without being replaced by a polycentric urban regional identity. The relationship between local and regional identities is especially questionable in a region like RheinRuhr, which to date is still no more than a political 'planning concept' introduced top-down, without any affiliating support from regional media, for instance, which might contribute to the development of a 'polycentric-structured mental map'.

5. Urban competitiveness and urban economic change

5.1 The contemporary re-scaling of political economy

Recent debates concerning socio-economic and territorial development stress that the largely national mode of economic regulation, which helped to sustain the post-war Fordist growth paradigm, is being re-configured (Swyngedouw 1997; Jessop 1997a, 1997b; Brenner 1997, 1998). In the globalising post-national area, new geographies of governance are emerging where state capacities are being re-organised both territorially and functionally. In the midst of this re-composition of political space, one can detect a growing appeal to the region and the large city as key sites for the territorial embedding

of innovation and the configuring of socio-economic prosperity (Storper 1995, 1997; Keating 1997; Morgan 1997).

For Jessop (1997a), this 'relativisation of scale' (Collinge 1996) and re-territorialisation of state power and institutional capacity is leading to three interrelated, empirically observable trends in state restructuring, which are, however, not necessary, but are only contingent upon particular contexts, structures and agencies (MacLeod & Goodwin 1999). First, this is leading to a continuing movement of state power upwards to supranational regimes, downwards to local and regional levels, and sideways in the form of trans-local and regional linkages – with the effect that today there appears to be no relatively privileged level in and through which other scales are managed. This 'de-nationalisation of the state', or hollowing out of state activity, has serious implications for the ways in which cities and regions are governed, particularly as regional and local states are seen to have accrued an enhanced role in such governance ('regionalisation of regional policy'). The second trend, the "de-statisation of the political system", or the shift from government to governance, is associated with a relative decline in the state's direct management of social and economic projects, and an analogous engagement of quasi non-state actors in a range of public-private partnerships and networks. This has taken place at various scales, but the shift to urban governance has been particularly noted. Finally, as a third trend the 'internationalisation of policy regimes' alludes to the heightened strategic significance of the international and global contexts within which actors now operate, and to the more significant role of international policy communities and networks. The extent to which the key objective of socio-economic intervention by the emergent state form has shifted from a concern to secure balanced domestic growth towards an imperative to attain international economic competitiveness, is a concomitant of this trend. At both regional and local level, this has helped to foster the rise of the 'entrepreneurial city' and the region as economic spaces where supply-side initiatives favour the promotion of technology and innovation, flexibility and a 'productivist' re-ordering of social policy (MacLeod & Goodwin 1999:506).

5.2 Urban assets and economic competitiveness

Both the ways in which cities as locations are involved in processes of economic competition and the changing significance of urban assets for competitiveness seem to have become a rather controversial issue.

The ongoing globalisation is increasing the competitive pressure on firms, and hence on cities, through many different channels like the 'internationalisation' of trade, the 'multi-nationalisation' of processes, financial integration, and the internationalisation of information, know-how, and technologies (Gordon 1999:1001). The currently uneven impact of competition for mobile investment (in any wealth/employment-creating sector), economic growth (in terms of gross value added or gross GDP), desirable residents (who represent income, human capital, political power and demand), public funds or hallmark events and major infrastructure provides a further motive for exploring competitive strategies as means for resolving urban problems. The 'internationalisation' processes have also given credibility to the use of urban strategies as means for pursuing national and international competitiveness, as the notion of global cities and metropolitan regions as 'growth engines' in the national and international context shows.

The growing perception of links between internationalisation and urban competition reflects not only the transnational extension of economic integration, but also, in a more general sense, of heightened competitiveness – both as fact and ideology –, and of the increasing recognition that 'geography matters' for economic performance (Gordon 1999:1001). All these themes are prominent in the academic literature over the last two decades, typically by pointing to the heightened importance of some factors traditionally associated with agglomeration. The key idea is that the urban economy allows firms (as well as other organisations) the chance to substitute external economies of agglomeration for internal economies of scale, by offering close access (on a face-to-face basis) to sources of business intelligence, skilled labour, components and support services (even though some firms think that it is rather unproductive to provide them at their own expense). This option should be particularly attractive to small firms (both those which are new and those serving niche markets), to businesses operating in uncertain environments, and to those whose production processes are difficult to routinise.

Although normally presented in less schematic terms, this is the thrust of several bodies of literature focused on the circumstances of the last two decades:

- The most wide-ranging of these has argued that a more turbulent and intensely competitive international economic environment, coupled with an increasing emphasis (within advanced economies) on qualitatively differentiated products, is undermining the profitability of Fordist strategies focused on internal economies of scale and long production runs, in favour of 'flexible specialisation'. Varying kinds of 'new industrial space' are seen as supporting the untraded interdependencies that are critical to competitiveness for the new, flexible forms of business.
- A more specific argument focused on the kind of local 'milieu' facilitating the development of innovative businesses, in terms not only of the tangible benefits of clustering for such activities, but also of local cultures supportive of change and risk-taking.
- A further argument for the heightened importance of new urban assets identifies growing internationalisation of business operations, capital mobility and information flows as key stimuli. According to the 'world city' hypothesis, the command and control centres of transnational business require immediate face-to-face access to a wide range of specialised internationally oriented services in order to cope with the inherent uncertainties of operations across very different environments, which could only be achieved in a limited number of global and metropolitan regions.

In the world of business affairs, a more crucial source is the work of Michael Porter (1990, 1996, 2000), which is important regarding the view that success depends on developing unique skills and know-how in particular industries, and concerning the linking of the presence of clusters of internationally successful businesses in related activities to particular attributes of their home city-regions. He suggested that the critical competitive factors no longer involved resource availability, labour costs, or accessibility via external infrastructure to other cities and markets, but rather qualitative aspects of the environment, which is intensified through clustering. These new competitive factors, such as institutions that build their knowledge-base and cultural assets, the efficiency of business-related infrastructure, an inviting place for people and enterprises to concentrate,

or the skills and attitudes of workforces, seem to be rather more open than traditional assets influenced by territorial agencies.

Against this, Krugman's (1995, 1996) critique of policies to boost national competitiveness has been seen as challenging to the whole notion that places could be meaningful actors in economic competition, since that was hitherto the preserve of private business. In his opinion, the asset sets which cities develop do not facilitate inter-firm competition, which is based fundamentally on cost efficiency, innovation, marketing and other factors internal to the firm. At best, the locational attributes of places are basic requirements or necessary conditions for competitive success, but not sufficient conditions. Moreover, whenever local authorities try to intervene in affecting the competitive advantage of their territories, they end up with a sort of neo-mercantilism which serves primarily to re-distribute resources and benefits within an area, detrimental to the objective allocation of resources, neutrally evaluated by the market.

However, following Camagni (2001:101f.) we can put forward four arguments that contradict this vision:

- Firms use locations as competitive tools, and use global mobility to optimise production and distribution costs. Territories, on the other hand, are not just the passive objects of location decisions by firms, but communities made up of economic subjects who act in their own interest by trying to keep or attract firms. Workers, subcontracting firms, suppliers of intermediate inputs, and services are all agents which can achieve their goal not solely by competing on prices and wages, but also by upgrading the quality of their services through tools which involve the local authority. Locations are in a sense bought and sold on a globalising market.
- Firms rely more and more on externalities, in the form of local public goods (i.e. endowment of human capital, social capital).
- Local firms are increasingly engaged in co-operative processes with other firms, collective actors, and the public administration for the conception and provision of selected external assets and 'specific resources' that cannot be easily obtained via spontaneous market developments. The competitive tools reside more in the local milieu (based on the untraded interdependencies that occur within the local territory and

enhance its innovative capability) than in a specific firm located in its geographical space.

- Local territories and **milieus**, given their nature of clusters of public goods and externalities, enhancers of interaction and local synergy, compete and co-operate with each other, building their own comparative or competitive advantages.

Besides the economic issue of how important urban assets are for the success and failure of firms operating in particular places, the remaining political question is just how meaningful is the notion of a collective urban economic interest, and how are the priorities of competitive strategies actually constructed (Gordon 1999:1002). These issues have especial salience in global cities and large metropolitan regions, where the success of specialised international service sectors may be of substantially greater salience to external stakeholders than to their own citizens. Mobilisation of a representative coalition of the diverse local economic interests (serving a variety of different market areas) to secure collective competitive action can never be taken for granted. Where competitive policies do emerge, it is likely that they will depend on a smaller core of influents with very particular interests (favouring larger firms, international business, high technology, certain groups of workers, etc.). Hence, there are likely to be conflicts of interest that must be attended to if territorially-oriented competitive strategies are to be pursued in these places.

Moreover, on the internal dimension, metropolitan regions are becoming more heterogeneous, multicultural, and pluralistic. New demands are being placed on the political agenda, ranging from environmental concerns to issues of social justice and identity politics. Yet the policy options that are available to metropolitan regions as political systems are constrained by the external competitive environment. Nevertheless, a suitable broad definition of urban competitiveness, which is not concentrated on a narrow policy agenda of boosterism and growth, should imply a concern for the structure, beneficiaries and durability of economic growth, recognising possible tensions and trade-offs with employment quality, local services and environmental conditions (Keating 2001).

5.3 Internationalisation as a key motive for competition among metropolitan regions

So-called 'global cities' like London and Paris and 'metropolitan regions' like Randstad and RheinRuhr are key objectives of the respective nation states' interest in developing competitive territories, which is driven by the globalisation and internationalisation processes mentioned above, and by more discontinuous challenges, such as the process of European integration or the transformation processes in eastern Europe.

In the case of **Paris**, despite a regional policy requiring restraint on its growth in the interests of national balance, active promotion of the city goes back to the formation of the Common Market and the State's ambitions to use it as a mean for establishing a more independent international role for France (Gordon 1999:1006). The development of 'la Défense', which anticipated developments 25 years later in London's Docklands, was – for instance – explicitly intended to attract corporate offices from competitor cities such as London and Brussels. The 1965 'Schema Directeur' for the Paris Region is an explicit strategy for promoting spatial divisions of labour within France in order to strengthen the capital's international competitive position. Other examples are the Parisian 'Grands projects' of Presidents Pompidou and Mitterand and the 'Ile de France 2000' project, which have continued this policy of boosting Paris's competitive position as a vehicle simultaneously to boost France.

London is a particularly interesting case in an examination of the interaction between internationalisation and urban competition. Since the middle of the 1980s, both characteristics were, with waves of speculation, linked to the take-off of global financial markets and the run-up to the Single European Market, and, additionally, there has been a growing consciousness of London as a world city with global competitors (Gordon 1999; Newman & Thornley 1997). Central government developed an increasing interest in promoting the competitive position of 'the UK's number one asset'. In a period marked by the absence of a city-wide authority, there was a series of major studies commissioned by different governmental bodies, including: 'London: World City' (1991) undertaken for the London Planning Advisory Committee of the boroughs, 'The City Research Project' (1995) for the City of London corporation, 'Four World Cities' (1996) for the central government

Office for London, and 'The London Study' (1998), commissioned by the Association of London Government (representing the boroughs) and the EU.

Particularly in the first two cases, a major stimulus was the completion of the Single European Market and the questions which this potentially raised about London's national and international roles. But it was also observed that New York and Paris, among others, had already explored ways of enhancing their positions. A counterpart to the example of 'London: World City' was the 'Ile-de-France 2000' project's bid to make Paris the economic and cultural capital of Europe. In the consultative paper 'London – Making the Best Better' (1993), the Government expressed concern that other European cities, such as Paris, Berlin and Hamburg, were organising themselves to compete more effectively for inward investment. In the most recent of the above-mentioned studies ('The London Study'), however, competitiveness is less central than for its predecessors, and instead the simultaneous achievement of economic, environmental and social equity goals have been stressed.

Stimulated by the prospects of the Single European Market, also the Fourth Spatial Planning Report (1993) re-formulates the international outlook of Dutch planning, which was pushed into the background in the 1970s when Dutch planning became more inward-looking by promoting a growth-management policy (Faludi 1994:494). The focus was on the contribution of physical planning to safeguarding the economic position of the Netherlands in a changing international and technological context. Thus the proposed policy was concerned mainly with infrastructure (integrated in European networks), removing transport bottlenecks, and reinforcing the position of the three major cities, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague. Following further European integration in 1992, it was expected that the competition between urban regions would increase and that the **'Randstad Metropolis'** would have the chance to engage in this competition. The Randstad was conceived as a worthy polynuclear metropolitan opponent facing other, more monocentric European competitors. Moreover, its decentralised and dispersed structure, with the Green Heart, the buffer zones between urban districts, and the Randstad greenbelt, was recognised as a favourable asset in the international competition.

In contrast to other city regions in Europe, politicians and planners in North Rhine-Westphalia have not given so much attention to what is by far the largest urban region: **RheinRuhr**. The crucial turning-point – against the background of growing interregional competition for locations – was the introduction by the Federal Government of so-called 'European Metropolitan Regions' (EMR) within the framework of a new Federal action plan for national spatial development (Raumordnungspolitischer Handlungsrahmen, 1995). Within this and other official governmental documents, seven metropolitan regions, including RheinRuhr, are portrayed as possessing competitive assets in terms of their innovative, creative and societal dynamics (reflecting the work of Porter). Regions such as RheinRuhr are now defined as spatial-functional locations with positions of wide-ranging importance on an international scale. They should serve as driving forces of societal, economic and cultural development and sustain Germany's and Europe's competitiveness. For the first time, RheinRuhr was thus presented as a functional unit, no longer as a purely morphological agglomeration.

Due to the realisation that the future of the State does not rest with Fordist mass production (especially in the Ruhr area), and with regard to the challenges of European integration and globalisation, especially due to the fact that single municipalities as parts of a polynucleated urban region are too weak and too small to develop a position comparable to other global cities, the state government of North Rhine-Westphalia decided to take up this concept. The cities along the Rhine and the Ruhr were to be bundled to form a 'global city-region' in order to overcome the deficiency of lacking 'a global city'.

However, the State Development Plan (1995) for North Rhine-Westphalia does not contain a comprehensive description regarding the implementation of this new spatial construct. The clarifications given are rather descriptive as they characterise only the existing economic metropolitan features, such as the European-orientated transport infrastructure, intercontinental accessibility supported by two international airports, economic strength and significance for foreign trade (comparable to Paris and London), science and research capacities (which hold a leading international position), or the location of major, globally operating enterprises. Most of the (not only political) regional stakeholders have not so far become sufficiently aware of the existence and the economic importance of the EMR

concept. Neither regionally sanctioned new approaches nor strategic actions for regional development have been implemented so far. Moreover, and in contrast to the more open discourses on the strengthening of their leading city-regions in other European countries, the political 'discourse' about the Metropolitan Region RheinRuhr is currently being carried out in a modest way, particularly because of the feared objection that such a region could be developed at the expense of other areas in North Rhine-Westphalia. From the federal state's point of view, the potential weight of RheinRuhr is feared to disturb the balance of power between the federal state and its municipalities and (sub-)regions.

6. The regional institutional base as a prerequisite for metropolitan competitiveness

From an institutionalistic perspective on regional economic development, the focus is clearly directed to the wealth of regions (not the individual firm), with upgrading of the economic, institutional and social base considered as the prerequisite for entrepreneurial success. Thus, for instance in the view of Amin (1999), there are four novel areas of action which emerge from the 'wealth of regions' perspective, namely building clusters and local economies of association, learning to learn and adapt, creating or broadening the local institutional base, and enhancing a regional culture of social inclusion and social empowerment. The following deals not with all these issues that policy-makers need to consider in devising practical solutions to encourage regional endogenous growth, but only with the question of appropriate city regional guidance and management structures in RheinRuhr, London, Randstad, and Paris.

Spatio-economic scale enlargement makes the Functional Urban Region a logical basis for present-day urban policy. Efficient guidance and management structures strengthen the competitive metropolitan position in an international context. The scopes of intra-regional co-operation, internal co-ordination and efficiency of administration and a region's uniform outward presentation of itself become important locational advantages. However, functional urban regions must be understood as a dynamic socio-economic interrelationship or as a hybrid system of economic and socio-cultural practices (which can

be perceived in territorial terms), and as a context of activities based on institutional and spatial proximity. Such functional regions with unstable boundaries (which change with changing social practices), normally do not coincide with the existing territorial administrative and steering structures (typically fragmented over a range of levels and agencies).

Endeavours to put the urban-regional action level in the foreground are thus faced with serious obstacles and resistance. The pivotal problem is to develop political-administrative structures and to create efficient guidance, management and marketing structures, also in cases of a discrepancy between the existing administrative and steering structures, and the actual (and potential) 'FUR-scale'.

Concepts like 'institutional' or 'organising capacity' (van den Berg 1997) are concerned with regional governance initiatives which aim to create new connections, reconfiguring the policy communities that cluster around sectoral programmes and/or re-composing the relations between state, locality, the economic sphere and civil society. Following van den Berg, 'organising capacity' can be defined as the capacity to involve all relevant stakeholders in order collectively to develop new ideas and policies which support sustainable development in metropolitan regions. Seven pillars are distinguished, which together make up a region's organising capacity: (1) the structure of the formal institutional framework and the role of the various public actors within this framework; (2) strategic networks among public actors, between public and private actors, or among private actors as a means to cope with the specific problems of functional urban regions; (3) leadership from key persons and/or organisations to utilise the potential of networks and to direct the efforts of the parties involved; (4) spatio-economic conditions may 'bind' actors together and thus be an important incentive to collaborate (however, the opposite effect is also possible); (5) a vision of city-regional development, producing strategies and concrete objectives; (6) political (and financial) support to bring about positive collaboration at the local level; and (7) societal support from those directly involved or interested, notably the regional population and specific market parties.

Just how all these pillars of organising capacity might develop is hard to identify, but it should be clear that no single approach is appropriate for all city-regions and situations.

More city-regional co-operation and co-ordination is embedded in specific contexts, in particular in different political-administrative structures at the national scale (more centralised states like France, UK and the Dutch 'decentralised unitary State' versus federalist states like Germany with strong local self-government), in distinctive territorial structures (monocentric city-regions or polycentric regions with a dominant core city versus inter-urban polycentric configurations without a clear leading city such as RheinRuhr and Randstad), and in specific actor and power constellations, structures of interest and potential for compromise under the given circumstances.

Any reflection on contemporary efforts to build up government and governance capacity at the city-regional scale suggests that the majority of these do not in any way achieve the tasks which were pointed out in concepts such as 'organising capacity'. Nor do capacity-building efforts flow in a linear way from mobilisation, to institutional design and routinisation. This is similarly the case in the analysed FURs, even though the scope and specific contexts differ. Therefore, it is not easy to characterise the current situation. Regarding the (never-ending) process of the development or improvement of city-regional government and governance, perhaps one can say that RheinRuhr is only just a 'beginner', Paris is in an 'advanced position' and London and the Randstad are somewhere in between. Moreover, we can say that RheinRuhr and London (after the new regionalism of the late 1990s in the UK) are not making any headway at present, the Netherlands are transforming their vision of the Randstad/Green Heart into action via implementation of the new Delta metropolis concept, and the current situation of the governance in the Ile-de-France can be characterised as an unstable system with opposite possibilities for development.

EUROPEAN METROPOLITAN REGION RHEINRUHR: a 'designer region' with some regional associationalism – and a regional future as a complex combination of multiple local futures?

Similar to other urban-regions, the administrative and institutional landscape in RheinRuhr can be described as the overlapping and juxtaposition of several authorities, institutions and organisations. However, unlike in many other urban-regions, questions of regional

government and governance are not on the political agenda. The *Land* government hopes only for more intra-regional city-networking. Intra-regional co-operations are limited through the condition that they should not be detrimental to local autonomy. Regional stakeholders, such as development agencies, (sub-)regional offices or district administrations, are also only focused on developing their 'own places' of responsibility.

On the other side, recent regionalisations of territorial policy-making (especially Regional Development Conferences and the specific strategic planning process of the former International Building Exhibition (IBA Emscher Park)) in the Ruhr have been steps towards more (sub-)regional behaviour. Studies carried out to monitor the processes of regionalising structural policy and of the IBA emphasise that one of the main effects of these policies lies in so-called "process benefits". These include improvement of the co-operative atmosphere, strengthening the regional identification of stakeholders, intensifying contacts between parties active on the regional stage, establishing co-operative structures (working groups, regional conferences, etc.), developing co-operative procedures (consultations, discussion procedures, co-ordination procedures, etc.), building a higher degree of consensus, mobilising policies at the regional level, etc. However, such a stimulation of co-operation and consensus-building can only be successful in the long term if co-operation is continued and positive and negative incentives (of a financial or other nature) can stimulate and rationalise more co-operativeness. A primary object for further research should therefore focus on the incentives with which the required co-operativeness can be achieved.

The regionalisation policies have provided an opportunity to establish new (sub-)regional organisations, such as the Emscher-Lippe Agency, the Development Agency Eastern Ruhrgebiet Ltd. or the Regional Office Bergisches City-Triangle, which extend beyond the immediate task at the federal state and represent a further (real) process benefit. However, the idea of RheinRuhr as a 'multi-regionalised space' or as a territory set up by individual co-operation areas and network structures requires at the end some kind of coordinator and moderator and new practices of regional management. Unfortunately, the proposal of a new RheinRuhr agency (voluntary and open to all territorial authorities, to replace of the existing Ruhr District Association of Communities (KVR)) was not realised. It should be established not only to lobby for regional representation and to build strategic

alliances in a more globalised world, but also to organise flexible and (temporally) limited co-operations in different fields (inter-local co-ordination and regional moderation) within the city-region.

To date, RheinRuhr is a long way from being established in the spatial structure and social consciousness of society, and as a 'territorial unit' is hardly ready to be discursively and materially constituted for all purposes, such as for place marketing or regional development policy. One important consequence of this condition is that there is a lack of regional organising capacity.

The hitherto narrow endeavours of the *Land* government to 'design' a 'European Metropolitan Region RheinRuhr' in order to establish an institutional and political practice, and thus to produce a territorial social practice, should thus include more than the upgrading of the region's infrastructural facilities or the improvement of inter-continental accessibility and intra-regional mobility and the hope of more inter-municipal co-operation and urban networking. Besides such measures, and instead of the further adoption of a 'wait-and-see policy', the interrelation between the enhancing of complete and non-economic, one-sided regional discourses, the shaping power of organising capacities and regional (self-) governance and the formulation of strategic issues as points of departure for concrete measures and their implementation should be regarded as the central and fundamental framework of tasks in the future. The experiences of the IBA Emscher Park planning process and the idea of a RheinRuhr agency should be taken up. 'Soft forms' of co-operation must be complemented in the long term by innovations in the area of legally binding commitments, and by the establishment of regional (quasi-) territorial authorities. All of this must first and foremost be politically willed and pushed for.

LONDON REGION: no true regionalisation, but a number of new regional institutions increasing the complexity of governance with potential for intra-regional competition and a new regional territoriality resulting in new boundaries dissecting the South-East region and separating Greater London from its hinterland

Regarding the London region, the new regional territoriality resulted in new boundaries and what are now three sub-regions to replace the former South East, dissecting the whole London Region and separating London (as one sub-region) from its hinterland. In central government accounts, economic failure in the 'regions' is seriously undermining the ability of the nation to compete in global markets. Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) – 'powerhouses for regional regeneration' – are concerned with reversing this problem. This explanation, however, seems misleading if it implies a necessary relationship between economic dynamism and the regional scale without first examining the complex connections between socio-economic, political and cultural factors that come together to produce 'regions'. No attempt was made to define the geographical basis of regions, issues of regional identity, etc. Policymakers are, in effect, treating regional spaces as given, and not unpacking the multifarious construction of territorially defined collective entities such as regions. RDAs have been given an overarching strategic function: to develop a Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and to formulate an action plan for its implementation. Each RDA has produced an RES to sharpen competitiveness, show local awareness and restraint, and highlight the distinctive contributions they can make to economic development.

Central government continues to have an important stake in the governance of the London Region, expressed through regional planning guidance to the new regions surrounding London, and the need for it to give its approval to the London Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London. Government institutions include a Minister for London and three regional government offices responsible for the tripartite South East Region. In addition, the traditional rivalry between central and local government in London is maintained. Political-institutional rivalry exists also across all three regions of the hinterland, with a number of sub-regional divisions, based on single-purpose bodies/agencies.

The fragmentation of responsibilities throws up problems of co-operation and co-ordination. Institutional solutions, such as the London RDA and the new RDAs in the hinterland, and the Greater London Authority, have been tried. In Greater London, the leadership role of the mayor may go some way towards establishing the required co-ordination in addressing problems. But what has not been tried is a true form of

regionalisation recognising the FUR. Regarding informal responses, there seem to be few political or financial incentives to co-operate. While the reforms have improved the co-ordination position within the core, they have created problems of co-operation and co-ordination for the wider region. They may effectively undermine existing, non-formalised co-operation born out of the absence of formal mechanisms of strategic or regional government, such as the South East Region Planning Advisory Body (SERPLAN), which gave way to the (sub-)Regional Planning Boards.

The new GLA has the same outer boundary as the 1965 GLC (Greater London Council), but the new London Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), which will include all aspects of development, economic and social as well as physical, with a spatial dimension, will need to acknowledge the major issues of interaction which exist between Greater London and its wider hinterland, and also the direct spatial linkages, including, for example, the Thames Gateway corridor or the 'Western Wedge' extending from West London and Heathrow Airport to rapidly-growing areas further west. Starting from a common understanding of London's wider hinterland and the relationships with it, attention has therefore been given to a new joint arrangement between the London Mayor and Assembly, and the Regional Chambers and RDAs for both the South East and the East. A joint forum is being established, which will examine this range of interactions and thereby inform the SDS and also future government-issued regional planning guidance prepared for these adjoining regions.

At present, however, central government's focus on competitive bidding for inward investment and competitive marketing (as a major rationale for regionalisation in England) favours non-co-operation. There is no concordat between regions to prevent the development of inter-regional competition. If RDAs take full advantage of this regulatory gap, there is a future potential for increased regional inequalities and a race to the bottom. RDAs are certainly being squeezed between the demands of the state and the expectations of localities. With three regions covering the wider London area, it is thus likely that London will be divided into corresponding spheres of interest, challenging central government to act as mediator and facilitator of regional co-operation.

THE RANDSTAD: new regional initiatives to establish a supra-local framework for co-operation and planning and endeavours to develop the Randstad into a more integrated Deltametropolis⁹

While the Randstad as a planning concept has occupied a central position in national planning strategies for the last 50 years or so, successful attempts to actually establish a supra-local framework for co-operation and planning in the area have been rather thin on the ground. During the past decades many initiatives have indeed been launched to establish such frameworks in the Netherlands, but the traditional three-tier system of government (national government, provinces and municipalities) has proved rather resistant to change.

Most of the initiatives entailed the introduction of a formal or informal fourth tier in between the municipal and provincial tiers. At present, experiments with the formation of official city-regions are on-going. The provisional results, however, seem to be mixed at best. In the meantime, the rise of the network paradigm in – amongst other areas – the fields of administration and spatial planning seems to provide new impulses to the spontaneous or 'bottom-up' establishment of flexible and innovative co-operative arrangements on different spatial scales. Among the new initiatives are some that focus exclusively on the (spatial) development and the (international) promotion of the Randstad as a whole. While these initiatives (most notably the Delta Metropolis Coalition and the Bureau Region Randstad) still have to prove their endurance and effectiveness, they may be taken as signs that an increasing number of both public and private actors think it is worthwhile to adopt a Randstad perspective in planning and development issues.

Within the Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning, national policy for the first time emphasised the need to 'increase the administrative co-operation in the Randstad as a whole, and between the relevant cities'. The key day of discussion on regional co-operation in national policy then took place in the early 1990s and focused on 'city provinces', currently defined as 'city-regions'. Of the seven regions nationwide, four are located in the Randstad (Regional Body Amsterdam: ROA, Urban Region Rotterdam, Urban District Haaglanden and the Administration Region Utrecht: BRU). However, after ten years of discussion, still no city-region has been created. Nevertheless, the idea of city-

regions seems quite fruitful for several reasons. Firstly, central municipalities and suburbs are looking more and more in the same direction. Secondly, municipalities are looking beyond each other's boundaries and collectively have started up numerous projects. And thirdly, as a result of regional co-operation, the provincial administrations have been activated and are deliberating about their future position in province and region.

Concerning regional initiatives in the Randstad, since the mid-eighties several regional coalitions on spatial planning have been launched. The first coalition to exceed the territory of one province was the Randstad Consultative Body on Spatial Planning (RoRo), set up in 1985 by the Provincial Executive of Spatial Planning in North-Holland, South-Holland and Utrecht, and supplemented by Flevoland as an ad hoc member in 1989. Its objectives aimed at co-ordinating and fostering province-crossing spatial policy and planning; sharing information about plans; combining policies for the entire Randstad; and preparing administrative co-operation. In 1987, the RoRo presented a common vision of the provinces on the Randstad, which was intended to act as a basis for the Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning (1988) by the national government. This Memorandum itself stressed the need for further administrative co-operation in the Randstad and this might explain the formation of five (voluntary) coalitions in the Randstad in 1988/89.

All these coalitions were uniform, including one or two governmental tiers and operating mostly on a supra-provincial scale. The smaller municipalities, private parties and social organisations were largely missing. Most coalitions were internally focused and did not have the instruments to wield strong executive powers. Spatial views were either drawn for parts of the Randstad, or were combined and co-ordinated from views on lower spatial scales.

In the period 1996-2000, the concept of the network city penetrated the spatial debate. The report 'De Ruimte van Nederland' (1999) observes some urban regions being increasingly developed into an amalgamate of various centres and nodes with one housing and labour market, and recognises with Amsterdam, Central Utrecht and the South Wing (Rotterdam) three such large network city-regions in the Randstad (alongside three others in the rest of the Netherlands). The network region of Amsterdam (Regional Coalition Amsterdam: RSA) wholly reflects the current spirit of the times: it is not an administrative

body, but a forum where parties meet each other and where varying partners jointly solve common issues. The RSA can be seen as an arena for consultation, trouble-shooting and negotiation. In the RSA, co-operation is voluntary because of occasional alliances. This type of network region seems perfectly to satisfy the current aversion among administrators against new administrative structures and models.

Since 1999 the Bureau Regio Randstad has been active, itself the result of the co-operation between the four provinces, the four big cities and the four urban regions Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. With the help of working groups, process co-ordination and intrinsic co-ordination, this body should develop a common vision to advance the economic position of the Randstad from an international perspective, the quality of the landscape, mobility and accessibility, the development of corridors, and the strategy of urbanisation.

Finally, the Association Deltametropolis, an informal get-together for city councillors, chambers of commerce and private stakeholders, was founded (1998). The Deltametropolis concept stands for the two-part quality improvement of the living environment in the Randstad: as a 'delta' (a dynamic natural biotope) and as a 'metropolis' (a dynamic urban area) through 'diversity' (the broadening and deepening of the repertoire of social, economic, and cultural activities), 'competition' (participation in the international competition to create sustainable human well-being), and 'synergy' as the driving force. The development process for the Deltametropolis consists of the interaction of consulting, research, information, and forming coalitions and alliances to unite the supporters of these ideas. The Fifth Spatial Planning Memorandum (2001) introduced the Deltametropolis concept for the first time in a document of national government. In response to central government's invitation to submit investment claims for the period 2003-2015, the Randstad authorities recently worked out a detailed investment programme for the Deltametropolis.

To sum up, and in comparison to the co-operations in the early nineties, it is notable that most coalitions now include all three governmental tiers, a wider plurality of actors is involved, and the objectives are also more pluriform. Moreover, the focus has widened from the combined supra-provincial scale to the Randstad scale. However, the actual

influence of all coalitions is limited and their instruments remain confined to consulting, advising, information supply, and research. Therefore, initiatives still lack executive powers. A powerful regional Randstad body with its own authorities is still missing. National government, provinces and municipalities are so deeply rooted that any adjustment seems very hard to make.

PARIS REGION: a relatively advanced but unstable system of regional governance with an Ile-de-France Regional Council as a future intermediary body trying to co-ordinate local networking or as a budding regional leader?

The current period is one of transition towards the governance of the Ile-de-France region (which as an administrative region corresponds to the FUR of Paris), insofar as we are departing from one system of government/governance to take on another. In the former structure, it was the State which ran the region through its policies, expenditure and financial resources, and especially through centralisation. The State structured collective actions around itself, being the veritable pilot of the Ile-de-France.

For several years now, this system of government /governance has been changing in such a way that certain elements of the former system still exist, and new, observable trends are in no way ineluctable, with a 'return back' to the previous system still possible. The increasing power of the region, the structuring of political players around meso-territories (inter-municipalities), and the increasing fragmentation of economic players, based on more intensive conflicts, have collectively resulted today in an unstable system of governance – especially as the State no longer plays a pilot role. It still occupies an essential place, in particular with investment and direct intervention via the ministries and the Prefecture of the region. However, it has become a different kind of state, with a less centralised (less interventionist, more co-operative) and less unitary conception of its territory ('territorialisation of government policies').

Besides the growing inter-municipality in the region and the territorial restructuring of the Chambers of Commerce, what is most important is the increasing power of the regional authority. There has, in fact, been a politico-institutional development regarding regional

functions; the region has found entry into several bodies which were previously denied to it by law. We can also see the (modest) development of its capacity to mobilise economic and social players on regional projects.

Regarding the question of regional 'organising capacity', we can stress that in the Paris region the public actors who strongly support regional co-operativeness are both the 'Préfecture' (i.e. the representative of State government) and Ile-de-France Regional Council. The private actor supporting more regional co-operativeness is the enterprise representation MEDEF. However, even if they do not admit it 'openly', the 'départements' and their economic development agencies are, in fact, not in favour of more region-wide governance. The State-government representation, the Regional Council and the Regional Economic and Social Council work at the regional level.

Concerning a vision or guideline of urban-regional development, there is a regional masterplan, which is currently being applied and is scheduled to be evaluated in 2003. The new future masterplan will probably include a quite detailed economic development strategy. The existing State-Region agreement, and (following this global program) the agreements between Regional Council and each 'département', provide political and financial support. At the local level, the regional government financially supports economic projects such as clusters.

However, societal support is derived mainly from the national scale and is important for Paris both as the capital city and in its role as a global city. Regarding the inhabitants of the region, there is no real regional consciousness or identity.

The current evolution of players and new interrelations between them has resulted, as has been stated, in an unstable system of governance insofar as there are no players who seem to be in a position (legitimately, with regard to adequate resources) to take on the governance of the Paris region. The current system is built on fragmented regional stakeholders and new roles and relations. The structuring elements of governance in Ile-de-France today thus aim at solving a two-sided problem. On the one hand, local players need stability. Since the order established by the State has disappeared, it is important to create a new system under which the region and inter-municipal structures emerge as the

new powers. On the other hand, this new order requires more than ever the involvement of economic players and representatives of the business community.

Regarding the future development of the regional governance of the Ile-de-France, the authors of the case study define possible scenarios depending on the attitude of the Ile-de-France Regional Council (CRIF) towards the above-mentioned processes. The urban-region may continue to fragment in the light of current rationales (inter-communal structures, the rise of certain départements) and, in the long term, the Ile-de-France will disappear as a frame of reference for public policies and collective action, giving way to 'balkanisation' into meso-micro-territories. According to the two other scenarios, the regional policy is reactive, dependent on the policies of different actors, but the CRIF tries to co-ordinate the various local networking initiatives, or the CRIF tries to act on the initiatives and strategies of the other players by making itself the central player in the Ile-de-France and thus gain regional leadership. The networking of the regional territory is less politically risky than the regional leadership model because it preserves greater autonomy and balance between the existing authorities. On the other hand, it gives the region only an intermediary and not its own strategic role. However, both scenarios may even be combined and in any case offer the urban-region an improvement on the existing situation.

7. Concluding question: RheinRuhr, London, Randstad, Paris – in what sense regions?

Paasi's description of 'regions' as social constructs, i.e. the condensation of a complex history of economic, political and social processes into a specific cultural image, may help to provide a more institutionally sensitive and spatially enriched understanding of contemporary city-regional transformation, development and governance. As mentioned above, the interdependent and mutually constituting processes of the 'institutionalisation' of regions comprises the development of territorial and symbolic shape, the emergence of institutions, and the establishment of a region in the spatial and social consciousness of society. On its establishment in the sense of Paasi's model, a region has become a

localised/regionalised social structure, capable of acting for itself. By indicating the degree to which RheinRuhr, the Randstad and the functional urban regions Paris and London meet these 'stages', we will be able to assess the extent of institutionalisation of these regions.

The **territorial shape** of a region refers to the localisation of social practices in economy, politics and administration through which regional transformation takes place.

For historically shaped city-regions, like the city of Paris, the boroughs of London, the Dutch provinces and individual cities of the polycentric regions RheinRuhr and the Randstad, the territorial shapes are very clear and can easily be found in any atlas. On the other hand, the territorial shapes of Paris or London as functional urban regions, and also the European Metropolitan Region RheinRuhr and the Randstad and its sub-regions North and South Wing, are unclear and not officially identified. In the *Land* development plan for North Rhine-Westphalia (1995), the new region RheinRuhr was shown as a linearly bounded area, congruent with the physical agglomeration, neglecting its functional aspects, which are only indirectly associated with structural density. The demarcation of the Randstad is unclear even in many scientific and policy documents, in spite of the fact that the Randstad concept has been widely used for decades now. However, its true social practices are developing more and more a territorial shape that may be described by the concept of a 'functional region': commuter patterns, labour-market integration, housing-market integration, regionalised patterns of various social activities, etc. Moreover, following Paasi the analysis of 'boundaries' needs to transcend notions of static 'territorial lines' so as to become more contextual.

Concerning the development of **symbolic shape**, establishing territorial symbols, naming and mapping are seen as instrumental as they evoke powerful emotions of identification with territorial groupings and generate action. Naming the region is important, as it is essential to enter the minds of people and maps possess a constructing power and do not simply reproduce a certain spatial situation.

Again, the historically grown regions and cities have a far more distinct symbolic shape compared to newer constructs, such as functional urban regions, designer regions like the

RheinRuhr metropolitan region or the 'planning doctrine' Randstad. Whereas global city-regions like Paris and London gain from the image of their dominant core city, polycentric regions like RheinRuhr and Randstad to a large extent lack symbolic shape. At best, a conceptual shape of the region is discernible on the cognitive level at a sub-regional level, as in the case of the central Ruhr area. Even the label 'Metropolitan Region RheinRuhr' is not undisputed: the Ruhr sees itself as a metropolis, or city marketing promotes individual cities within the RheinRuhr as a 'metropolis' of the surrounding area. This is, of course, not simply a struggle over words, insofar as the mapping and naming of space is part of the ongoing struggle for political and scalar representation and the act of representing a community by name has real material consequences. Without territorial symbols as 'key words' in the dominating story of a territorial community, however, it is difficult to evoke powerful emotions of identification with territorial groupings. The Randstad, on the other hand, demonstrates that a powerful symbol expressed in its name and on maps (a ring of cities on the border ('Rand') of a Green Heart) is in itself not sufficient to evoke very dominant feelings of identification and to facilitate common actions.

The third stage in the process of institutionalisation is the **emergence of a plethora of organisations and institutions**, which provide an active means of reproducing the material and mental existence of the territories. Concerning this institutional shape, the provisional appraisal of the regions compared turns out to be ambivalent. Besides the Ile-de-France Regional Council, which has the potential to co-ordinate the various networking initiatives and gain regional leadership, there are no metropolitan authorities which aim to co-ordinate economic and spatial development within these regions. Nevertheless, and in contrast to RheinRuhr, for the London region and the Randstad mention must be made of recent institutional initiatives like the Greater London Authority and the leadership role of London's mayor or the Delta Metropolis, the Bureau Region Randstad and the Administrative Committee for the Randstad. The local governments involved do not recognise the need to form a regional administration and are unwilling to help in establishing such an administration and give substance and implementation to the policy such an administration wants to pursue. There is also little enthusiasm and power at the State and at the district/province level for intervening in metropolitan development affairs or to stimulate and organise the willingness to co-operate on the city-regional scale. Moreover, there are no political parties targeting a city-regional public. A number of new

sub-regional institutions are increasing the complexity of governance in all metropolitan regions and the need for co-ordination.

Paasi's last stage involves the **establishment of a region in the spatial structure and social consciousness of society** and means at first that the 'territorial unit' is used for all manner of means, not only for such purposes as place marketing or fund raising. Not surprisingly, the overall poor development of territorial, symbolic and institutional shapes shows that the constituting processes of the city-regions compared have not progressed very far. Especially the RheinRuhr region and a London region that covers Greater London and its hinterland so far remain more a fiction than a fact. Although the Randstad has a clearly established role and meaning in society and in the consciousness of the people, and politicians, scientists, journalists and individual households all deal with the Randstad as a region, it also lacks most of the dimensions that would contribute to its institutionalisation as such. Paris/Ile-de-France is similarly not really established in the spatial and social consciousness of society, even if it has developed an advanced city-regional government and governance.

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¹ The authors refer mainly to the empirical results produced within two recently completed international research projects (EURBANET: Polycentric Urban Regions in the North Western Metropolitan Area & GEMACA II: Group for European Metropolitan Areas Comparative Analysis; second project). Both were conducted and co-financed by the European Union under the umbrella of the INTERREG IIC programme for the North Western Metropolitan Area.

² Dr. Wolfgang Knapp is Senior Research Fellow at the Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia (Department of Regional Planning) in Dortmund; Peter Schmitt is Research Fellow at the University of Duisburg (Department of Geography)

³ A good survey of the interplay between the two briefly outlined trends is given by Kujath (1998).

⁴ To gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between such characteristics, see, for example, Camagni (2001).

⁵ See, for example, the Spatial Vision for the North Western Metropolitan Area.

⁶ NUTS = Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques

⁷ Naturally other methods do exist, such as the definition of 'built-up areas' (produced through the British Census). Broadly equivalent to this are the French agglomeration or the N.U.R.E.C. (Network on Urban Research in the European Union) approach to analyse 'morphological criteria'.

⁸ Moreover, for reasons of space the rise of the (city-)region due to the regionalisation of life-styles, and, of course, the consideration of them as loci of economic, political and cultural activities can only be mentioned here, but not discussed in greater detail (see, for example, Keating 2001).

⁹ The following section refers mainly to an unpublished paper produced within the EURBANET project (Hoppenbrouwer et. al. 2000).