

**Re-structuring Competitive Metropolitan Regions in  
North-west Europe:  
On Territory and Governance**

*Wolfgang Knapp and Peter Schmitt*

Contact details of the authors:

*Wolfgang Knapp*, Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development, Construction and Building of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia (ILS), Deutsche Str. 5, DE-44339 Dortmund, e-mail: [wolfgang.knapp@ils.nrw.de](mailto:wolfgang.knapp@ils.nrw.de)

*Peter Schmitt*, Department of Geography, University of Duisburg-Essen, Lotharstr. 1, DE-47057 Duisburg, e-mail: [peter.schmitt@uni-duisburg.de](mailto:peter.schmitt@uni-duisburg.de) *and* Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development, Construction and Building of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia (ILS), Deutsche Str. 5, DE-44339 Dortmund, e-mail: [peter.schmitt@ils.nrw.de](mailto:peter.schmitt@ils.nrw.de)

**Abstract:** This paper intends to build a bridge between academic debates on the contemporary rescaling of political economy, with regard to urban governance, and the strategic approaches produced by policy makers and planners with a view to establishing region-wide governance-structures for metropolitan regions. To do so, the authors use empirical evidence from several north-western metropolitan regions, namely London, Paris, Randstad and RheinRuhr, which were under study in the framework of two research projects, namely, EURBANET and GEMACA. The paper commences by discussing whether ‘places’ can actually compete, and this will be followed by a short historical survey of the nation state’s interest in developing global cities and metropolitan regions as competitive territories.

After taking into account their specific ‘spatial configurations’ we will then focus on the territorial shapes of such regions. The authors present a rather simple method to demarcate city-regions as comparable ‘Functional Urban Regions’. It will then be argued that to optimise their development and to exploit their potentialities, political focus should be directed towards upgrading the economic, institutional and social base, which is a prerequisite for entrepreneurial success. The article chiefly deals with the issue of establishing appropriate city-regional ‘organizing capacities,’ and provides a critical overview of the situation in four exemplary regions. In the concluding section this perspective will be extended by discussing in what sense these ‘Functional Urban Regions’ are actually ‘regions’?

**Keywords:** Functional Urban Regions, Internationalisation, Urban Competitiveness, Organizing Capacity, Urban/Regional Governance.

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## **Introduction**

In this article we intend to build a bridge between the academic debates concerning the contemporary re-scaling of political economy and urban governance with those on the strategic approaches of metropolitan regions produced by policy makers and planners to establish region-wide governance-structures. With the help of empirical evidence, which resulted from two research projects, namely, EURBANET and GEMACA<sup>1</sup>, focus will concentrate on four metropolitan regions in North West Europe, namely London, Paris, Randstad and RheinRuhr. Our main point will be the ongoing restructuring of competitive metropolitan regions and among them especially on questions of territory and governance. It is not intended, however, to deal with newly emergent forms of metropolitan economic development strategies in general besides the overarching goal of such initiatives to enhance regional economic competitiveness.

To begin, the question will be raised as to whether places are actually able to compete, because 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 rather controversial issues. This will be followed by a short historical survey of the nation state's interest in developing global cities and metropolitan regions as competitive territories. In our view, metropolitan regionalism refers to all strategies designed to establish institutions, policies or governance mechanisms at a geographical scale, which approximates to that of existing socio-economic interdependencies within an urban agglomeration. This puts the territorial shape of such 'metropolitan regions' on the agenda by taking into account their specific 'spatial configurations'. Within the aforementioned GEMACA-project, therefore, a rather simple, but no less efficient method to define and demarcate city-regions as comparable 'Functional Urban Regions' has been developed. By means of this approach, it is possible to bridge various definitions throughout Europe as to what actually constitutes a city or a city-region as an economic area.

Following an institutional perspective on city-regional development, we argue that for the optimal development and exploitation of their potentialities, and for focus to be directed to the wealth of regions (not to individual firms), with the upgrading of their economic, institutional and social base considered as a prerequisite for entrepreneurial success. The current article does not however deal with all of these issues, the focus here being substantially dedicated to the question of building city-regional 'organizing capacities' in the four aforementioned case study-regions. Referring to Paasi's (1986, 1991) approach with regard to the 'institutionalisation' of regions, we will come back to a broader perspective in a concluding section that discusses the question of in what sense these 'Functional Urban Regions' are actually 'regions'?

## **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 (cf. 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 regions in general and metropolitan areas in particular as key sites for the territorial embedding of innovation and the configuring of socio-economic prosperity (cf. Storper 1995, 1996; Keating 1997; Morgan 1997).

Contemporary forms of metropolitan or region-wide governance are grounded upon strategies to stitch together a new 'structured coherence' (cf. Harvey 1989) for urban development within city-regions, whose economic, political and social geographies have been reconfigured in recent decades. The current debates on metropolitan cooperation and coordination represent a new politics of scale in which local, state-level and federal institutions, as well as public and private actors, are struggling to adjust to diverse restructuring processes that are systematically unsettling inherited patterns of territorial and scalar organisation<sup>2</sup> within such city-regions. In the context of contemporary debates on urban governance, the politics of scale refers to the decentring of national urban hierarchies and national intergovernmental systems and to the concomitant emergence of new sub-national political strategies to position cities and metropolitan regions within supranational circuits of capital, money, commodities and labour (Jessop, 1997c, 1998a, Brenner 1999, 2000).

This rescaling of urban governance is intertwined with at least two other contemporary rescaling processes, namely the 'glocalisation' (Swyngedouw 1997) of economic activities since the crisis of Fordism in the 1970s (Storper 1996, Cox 1997) and the re-territorialisation of state institutions at diverse spatial levels as they attempt to adjust to the new socio-economic conditions and constraints of the post-Keynesian epoch (Jessop 2000, Brenner 1998, Gough and Eisenschitz 1996). The resurgence of debates on metropolitan governance, therefore, must be understood in relation to these ongoing processes of economic globalization/localization and political re-territorialisation through which the scalar frameworks of social life are reconfigured.

Even in an era in which technological transactions at a global scale have been enhanced and a number of studies consider the globalising economy as being 'placeless', the sources of industrial competitiveness are still tightly embedded within territorially localised production complexes (global-city-regions, industrial districts, export-processing zones etc.), which provide firms with place-specific clusters of non-substitutable locational assets, including specific labour power, technology, infrastructure and 'un-traded interdependencies' (cf. Storper 1996, Scott 1998, Cox 1997). The up-scaling of capitalist control capacities and commodity chains towards the supranational and global levels has been closely intertwined with a downscaling of productive capacities and competitive assets towards the metropolitan agglomeration and regional level (cf. Dicken 1998, Knox and Taylor 1995, Sassen 1991). Storper (1996:248f.) points out that, '*there is a dialectical dynamic of globalisation and territorialisation at work in the construction of city economies today. (...). The organisation of reflexivity by local, regional, national and global firms pushes all of them towards cities*'.

City-regions have played a central role in this (unevenly articulated) geo-economic shift. Since the late 1980s, the regional scale has gained importance as an arena for a new wave of policy experimentation and institutional reform. According to Keating (2001), city-regions need to be considered as actors that pro-actively establish them-

selves in different political as well as economic arenas, ranging from the national up to the global scale.

Metropolitan cooperation and coordination is increasingly being viewed as a key instrument for enhancing regional economic competitiveness (cf. Clarke and Gaile 1998, Benz et. al. 1999, Danson 2000, Heinz 2000). The overarching goal is the establishment and consolidation of what might be termed as a metropolitan growth machine through which to channel both public and private resources into coordinated regional development strategies. Here, in line with Newman and 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 (cf. Lambregts 2000).

As already noted above, the nationally configured framework of state power associated with the post-war Fordist-Keynesian order has also been reconfigured and re-scaled since the crisis of the 1970s, primarily through a number of different neo-liberal projects. However, these projects have not actually entailed the claimed 'rolling back' of state power, but rather its de facto re-calibration to new spatial scales on intervention, to establish new forms of corporate development and to challenge traditional lines of democratic legitimation and accountability (cf. Swyngedouw 2000, Peck 2001, Brenner and Theodore 2002).

For Jessop (1997a), this 'relativation of scale' (cf. Collinge 1996) and re-territorialisation of state power and institutional capacity is leading to three interrelated, empirically observable trends in state restructuring, which are contingent upon particular contexts, structures and agencies (cf. MacLeod and 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 'denationalisation 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'). Nonetheless, countering this trend is the continuing survival of the national state in most societies as their principal factor of social cohesion and its residual role in securing social redistribution. 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. Countering this tendential shift, however, is a tendency for government to acquire an enhanced role in meta-governance, i.e. in directly or indirectly organizing the self-organization of inter-organizational partnerships and networks (cf. on governance and meta-governance Jessop 1998b). Finally, as a third trend, the 'internationalisation of policy regimes' alludes to the heightened strategic significance of the international and global contexts in which actors now operate, and to the more significant role of international policy communities and networks. However, there is also a growing internalisation of inter-

national constraints, that is, their integration into the policy paradigms held by domestic policy-makers. On the other hand, there are efforts (especially on the part of the more powerful states) to influence the form and content of international regimes. 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 (cf. MacLeod and Goodwin 1999:506).

### **Urban assets and economic competitiveness**

Ongoing globalisation increases the competitive pressure on firms, and hence on cities, through many different channels such as that of the 'internationalisation' of trade, the 'multi-nationalisation' of processes, financial integration, and the internationalisation of information, 'know-how', and technologies (cf. Gordon 1999:1001). The currently uneven impact of competition for mobile investment (in any wealth/employment-creating sector), economic growth (in terms of GVA or GDP), desirable residents (who represent income, human capital, political power and demand), public funds, hallmark events and major infrastructure provides a further motive for exploring competitive strategies in order to bring the city or city-region into a superior position. The 'internationalisation' processes has also given credibility to the use of urban strategies as means of pursuing national and international competitiveness, as the notion of 'global cities' or 'metropolitan regions' being 'growth engines' obviously highlights.

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, that of the heightened competitiveness – both as fact and ideology –, as well as of the increasing recognition that 'geography matters' for economic performance (cf. Gordon 1999:1001). All of these themes have become increasingly prominent in the academic literature over the last two decades, typically 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 expenses). This option should be particularly attractive to small firms (both those that 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 econo-

mies of scale and long production runs, in favour of 'flexible specialisation'. Varying kinds of 'new industrial space' are seen as supporting the un-traded 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 the growing internationalisation of business operations, capital mobility and information flows as key stimuli. According to the 'world city hypothesis' (Friedmann 1986), 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 central source of such argumentation is the work of Michael Porter (1990, 1996, 2000), which is important in respect of 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 (2001:101) we can put forward some arguments that contradict this vision. At first, 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 are 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 that involve the local authority. Locations are in a sense bought and sold on a globalising market. Secondly, firms rely more and more on externalities, in the form of local public goods (i.e. endowment of human capital, social capital). Thirdly, 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. And finally, local territories and milieus, given their nature as clusters of public goods and externalities, and 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 (cf. Gordon 1999, 2001). These issues have particular 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 upon a smaller core of influents with very particular interests (favouring larger firms, international business, high technology, certain groups of workers, etc.). As such, there are likely to be conflicts of interest that must be attended if territorially oriented competitive strategies are to be pursued in these places. It is then a political challenge to discover how the benefits of competitive success can be extended more widely across groups, sectors and areas in the city-region.

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 suitably broad definition of urban competitiveness, which is not concentrated on a narrow policy agenda of bolstering 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 (cf. Keating 2001).

### **Internationalisation as a key motive for competition among global cities and metropolitan regions**

The case for metropolitan regionalism has recently shifted from a social welfare justification aimed at the redistribution of resources to an economic justification aimed at regional growth and prosperity (Swanstrom 1996). As a result of this, the issue of metropolitan political reform has been rediscovered during the 1990s. Today the challenge is to make the interconnected economies of all municipalities in the city-region



competitive in the global marketplace. Moreover, 'global cities' such as 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 above mentioned globalisation and internationalisation processes, as well as 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 means to establishing a more independent international role for France (cf. 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 that 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 organizing 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 achievements of economic, environmental and social equity goals have been stressed.

Stimulated by the prospects of the Single European Market, the Fourth Spatial Planning Report (1993) also 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 (cf. Faludi 1994:494). The focus was on the contribution of physical planning to safeguard the economic position of the Netherlands in a changing international and technological context. Thus the proposed policy was mainly concerned 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* would have the chance to engage in this competition. The Randstad was conceived as a worthy poly-nuclear 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 as regards international competition.

In contrast to other city regions in Europe, politicians and planners in North Rhine-Westphalia have not given 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 and Europe’s competitiveness. For the first time, RheinRuhr was thus presented as a functional unit, and 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, particularly given the fact that single municipalities as parts of a poly-nucleated 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 thus to be bundled together 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 instead 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, the economic strength and significance of 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 thus far not yet 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 thus 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, it is feared that the potential weight of RheinRuhr may disturb the balance of power between the federal state and its municipalities and (sub)-regions.

### **Paris, London, Randstad and RheinRuhr as 'Functional Urban Regions'**

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

Paasi (1986, 1991), for instance, 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.

In reality, however, 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 (cf. Weichhart 2000). One such example being the introduction of the European Metropolitan Regions as a strategic concept in National German Spatial Planning documents (cf. Stiens 2000). Such design efforts are also undertaken in EU documents concerning the transnational spatial visions elaborated under the umbrella of the INTERREG IIC programme. Here, the metaphors of 'driving forces' and '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 policies<sup>3</sup>.

In this context, the question of the empirical evidence for such claims comes to the fore, which is mostly represented by vague schematic illustrations without territorial borders or by territories that are not based on intra-regional functional relations. However, spatio-economic scale enlargement makes the 'Functional Urban Regions' (FUR) a logical basis for present-day urban policy. Such FURs must be understood as dynamic socio-economic interrelationships or as hybrid systems 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.

In order to compare selected keystones of city-regional performance and competitiveness as regards the major metropolitan areas in North West Europe, within the GEMACA-project a rather simple method of defining and demarcating FURs was developed (GEMACA 2002, Lecomte 2001). The objective was to take on board only such

data that was 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 as to what actually constitutes a city or city-region as an economic unit.

As Cheshire and Gornostaeva (2001:179) argue, there is normally '*less recognition of how vital a common definition is if valid comparisons of demographic economic and social development patterns are to be made*'. However, in order to examine several indicators such as social conditions, competitive success etc. it is indispensable that inclusive, consistent and comparable definitions of city-regions are used. To give only one example, probably the best single indicator for measuring the competitiveness of cities is the rate of growth of real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head. Since GDP is calculated at workplaces, and population is counted at places of residence, it is obviously important to take into account 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. One example here is that of 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 comparably greater inflow of commuters.

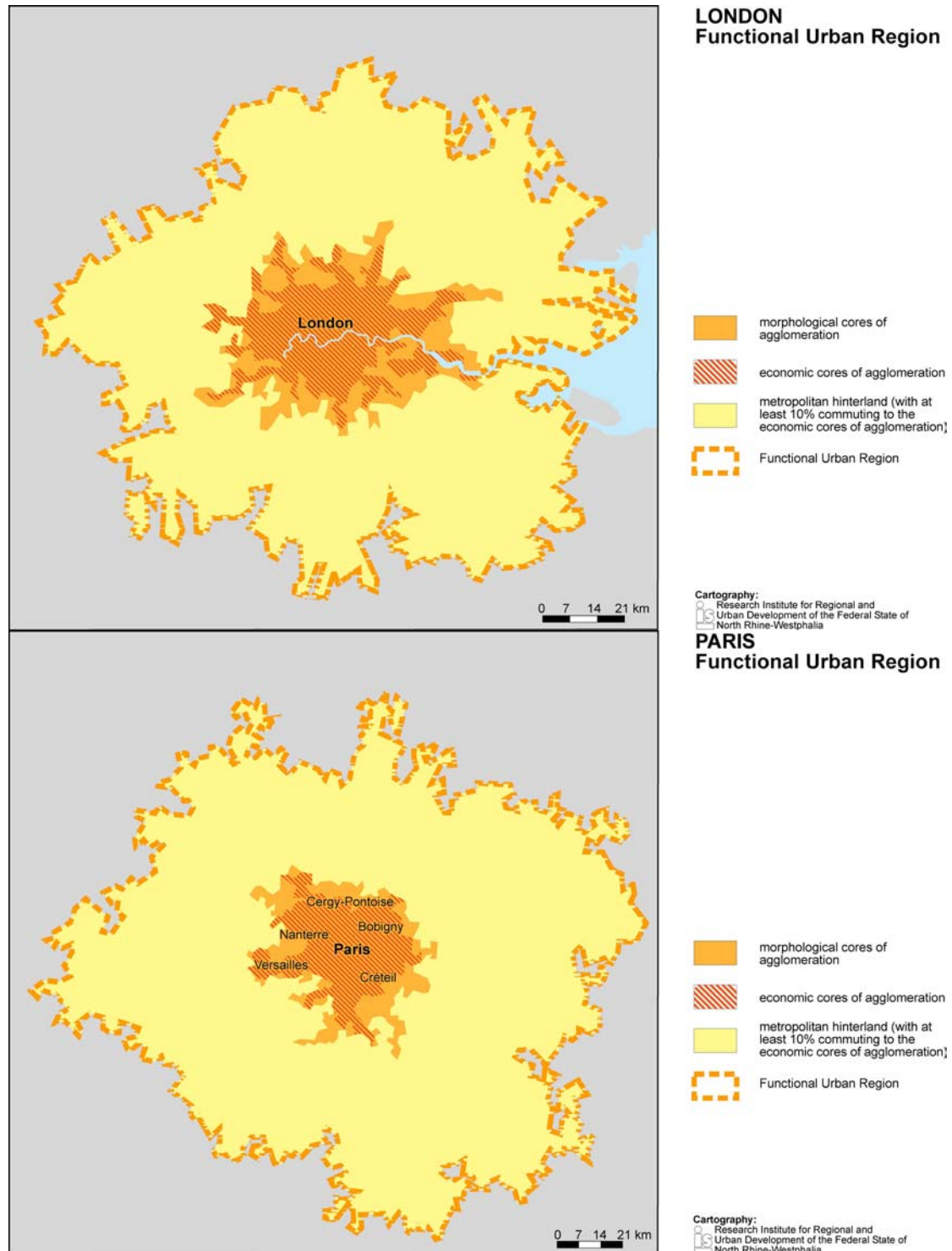
GEMACA FURs, therefore, are designed to capture urban economies as well as the regional worlds of inhabitants and realistic (co-)operation areas for city-regional political activities. Moreover, (economic) geographers have claimed for some time that they are able to define city-regions in such a way that makes it useful to study them in an internationally comparable sense. The basic principle is to identify significant morphological agglomerations and employment concentrations (= core cities) and the areas from which these economic centres draw their workforce, and extend their economic influence (GEMACA 2002:18). 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.

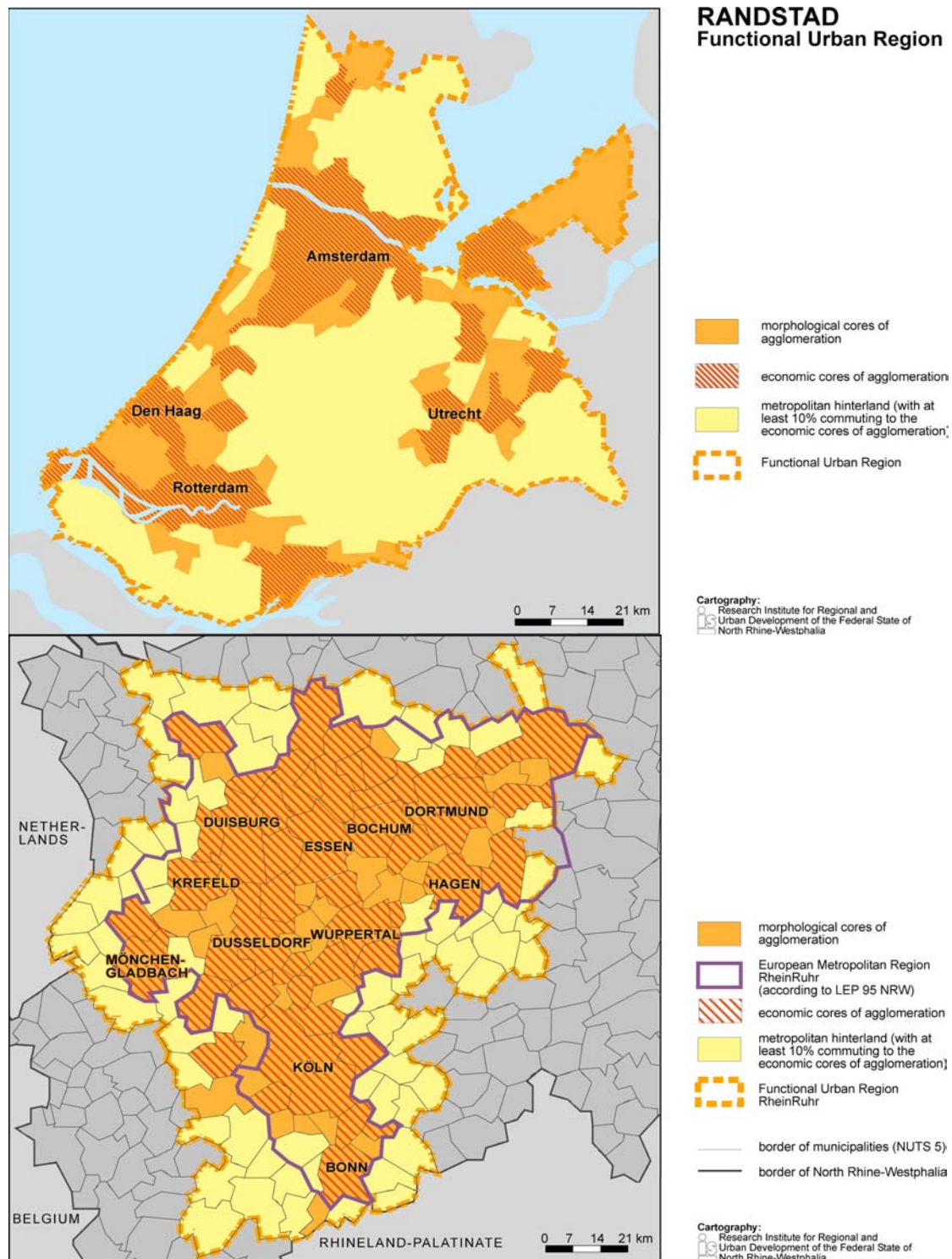
The main morphological agglomerations are defined as a group of neighbouring municipalities with a population density above 7 per hectare, or cities with more than 60,000 inhabitants. Economic cores are municipalities or contiguous municipalities respectively containing 20,000 or more jobs, with a density of at least 7 jobs per hectare. The term 'municipalities' has to be understood as a neutral expression to cover the smallest practical spatial units for which data is currently available for the EU-15. These are for instance 'Städte' and 'Gemeinden' in Germany, 'communes' in France or 'census wards' in the UK. Finally, the third step is to define the hinterland within the FUR. Those spatial units are added from which 10% or more of their economically active population worked in one of the above defined core cities.<sup>4</sup> The second condition needed to become a member of the FURs hinterland 'club' is that these

units need a direct neighbour that fulfils the same '10% commuting criteria' in order to form a contiguous pattern of the FURs 'hinterland'. The resulting FURs are clearly less than perfect for any further studies, but it has to be doubted whether perfect demarcations do ever exist.<sup>5</sup>

Comparing the four FURs, which will be analysed more closely in this paper (cf. figures 1-4), one can say that the relationships between the economic cores and their hinterlands seem to be quite different. Long-distance commuting is apparently 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 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 that these four FURs have seen. Examples here are the different planning cultures regarding the city-regional spatial concepts such as satellite cities, preservation of open space, and infrastructural planning, etc.

It is obvious that the monocentric model of urban development is no longer suitable for exploring evolving spatial patterns. 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 – even if there is still a lack of a theoretical framework and a clear typology and taxonomy of such urban configurations (cf. Klostermann and Musterd 2001, Camagni and Salone 1993, Meijers and Romein 2003). Polycentricity can either refer to intra-urban patterns of clustering of population and economic activity (the functional patchwork of different fields of activities and linkages around core cities) or to inter-urban patterns (polycentric urban regions, city-networks or city clusters).





The notion of the compact, densely settled and mixed city, which is mostly associated with European (industrial) cities, can to be related today only to some parts of the urbanized area, particularly in north-western Europe. Current innovations in the urban region are not just taking place in ‘inner cities’, but also at their ‘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’ around suburbia with new centralities and peripheries. 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 the so-called monocentric cities like London or Paris, are today rather to be seen as polycentric urban configurations.

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 poly-nucleated 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 and Musterd 2001:628).

Such polycentric urban regions are in many respects qualitatively different from polycentric city-regions with a dominant core like the London and the Paris FURs. Differences relate, particularly, to the issue of political entity and to the identity and the representation of polycentric urban regions – insofar as these urban regions can be characterised as ‘socio-spatial conflict zones for the articulation of multiple interests, identities and cultural differences’ (Albrechts 2001:734).

As table 1 shows, the FURs of London, Paris and RheinRuhr dominate North West Europe in terms of area, population and jobs. Their populations range from 11.7 to 13.2 million inhabitants. London is the top economic area, closely followed by Paris and RheinRuhr. The percentage of the population of London that is economically active is relatively high, but the output in terms of GDP is not much higher than that of the Paris FUR. However, there is a relatively large output gap between Paris and RheinRuhr, whereas, they are almost similar in size concerning the other criteria. The Randstad FUR leads a second group of regions with among others RheinMain and Brussels. The weight of the Randstad in relation to the Netherlands as a whole becomes obvious, as it comprises 45% of the population, 41% of the overall jobs in the Netherlands and 50% of the national GDP. The FURs of London and Paris do however cover almost a quarter of the national amount of jobs and almost a third of the national GDP, which underlines their superior position in their national urban systems.



Table 1: The largest 'Functional Urban Regions' in Northwest Europe

FUR	Area (in km <sup>2</sup> )	Population (last available data)		Jobs (in 1999)		GDP (in 1999)	
		in 1,000	share of national total	at place of residence (in 1,000)	share of national total	in bil- lions- EURO	Contribution to the national total
<b>London</b>	12,840	13,230	22.9%	6,350	24.1%	413.2	30.2%
<b>Paris</b>	19,681	11,750	20.5%	4,890	21.6%	395.2	29.3%
<b>RheinRuhr</b>	11,485	11,700	14.5%	5,110	14.3%	302.4	15.3%
<b>Randstad</b>	5,973	6,980	45.2%	3,090	40.9%	185.3	49.6%
<b>RheinMain</b>	7,431	4,010	5.0%	1,700	4.7%	132.7	6.7%
<b>Brussels</b>	7,233	3,670	35.9%	1,390	35.1%	96.4	40.9%
<b>Birmingham</b>	3,351	3,070	5.3%	1,320	5.0%	55.9	4.1%
<b>Manchester</b>	2,087	2,680	4.6%	1,220	4.6%	52.3	3.8%
<b>Lille</b>	2,662	1,940	n.a.	640	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Glasgow</b>	3,177	1,770	3.1%	730	2.8%	46.5	3.4%
<b>Antwerp</b>	2,286	1,540	15.1%	610	15.4%	38.9	16.5%
<b>Liverpool</b>	828	1,370	2.4%	530	2.0%	22.6	1.7%
<b>Dublin</b>	3,017	1,300	36.6%	670	43.2%	42.3	47.5%
<b>Edinburgh</b>	2,598	830	1.4%	400	1.5%	20.8	1.5%

Sources: Population Censuses, Labour Force Surveys and EUROSTAT (GEMACA 2002:76, amended)

### The regional institutional base as a prerequisite for metropolitan competitiveness

From an institutional 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 of 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.

Efficient guidance and management structures strengthen the competitive metropolitan position in an international context. The scope of intra-regional co-operation, internal co-ordination and the efficiency of administration and a region's uniform outward presentation of itself thus become important locational advantages. However, as mentioned previously, Functional Urban Regions must be understood as a dynamic socio-economic interrelationship of economic and socio-cultural practices (which can be perceived in territorial terms). 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 bring the urban-regional action level into the foreground are thus faced with serious obstacles and even outright resistance. The pivotal problem here then 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'.

Following Healey (1997), building a new city-regional capacity involves three tasks: 1) mobilisation, or the generation of the impetus and power to create new relationships and alliances and to develop new policy agendas; 2) institutional design, or the creation of new arenas, rules of engagement, and modes of practice; 3) mainstreaming, through which the new relationships, networks, and agendas become normalised and embedded in the flow of governance activity. In building a framework to assess the development of such 'institutional capacity', we can also build on the work of Van den Berg and Braun (1997, 1999), who define regional 'organizing capacity' as the capacity to involve all relevant stakeholders in order collectively to develop new ideas and policies which support sustainable development in metropolitan regions. They list seven pillars contributing to organizing capacity, which are: (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 of coping 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 of these pillars of organizing 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.

### **RheinRuhr: 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 (KNAPP 1998, KNAPP et. al. 2003). However, in contrast with the situation in many other urban-regions, questions of regional government and governance have not been placed on the political agenda. The *Land* gov-

ernment merely hopes for more city-networks in the region. Intra-regional co-operations are limited in order not to harm local autonomy, or encroach on local interests. Regional stakeholders, such as development agencies, (sub)-regional offices or district administrations, are also only focused on developing their 'own places' of responsibility.

Organizing capacity is not only a matter of local and regional government and traditional planning and developing procedures, but is also closely related to steering in strategic networks among and between public and private actors. Concerning this second factor of organizing capacity, we have seen innovative forms of the regionalisation of territorial policy making over the last decade, which can be interpreted as modest signs of more (sub)regional governance (Knapp et. al. 2003): a regionalized structural policy, established in newly constructed 'Handlungsregionen' (regions forming the object of concerted action) in order to develop a medium-range development concept (Regionales Entwicklungskonzept)<sup>6</sup>; the comprehensive regional development programme of the International Building Exhibition (IBA) Emscher Park for the northern part of the Ruhrgebiet (running from 1989 to 1999), aiming primarily at the improvement of the environmental situation, the creation of a more diversified economic structure, and the bringing about of innovation in an otherwise non-innovative environment; the strengthening of regional production clusters. These regionalisation policies can be traced back to land initiatives aiming at mobilising the power of regions within the land, respectively RheinRuhr, to exercise self-assertion, develop co-operative procedures, and establish co-operative structures. Recently, there has been a discussion on a certain upgrading of the existing Ruhr District Association of Communities (Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet) and on the establishment of a Ruhr district.<sup>7</sup>

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 and/or other nature) can stimulate and rationalise more co-cooperativeness.

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 in the end requires some kind of co-ordinator and moderator, as well as new practices of regional management. Unfortunately, the proposal of a new RheinRuhr agency (voluntary and open to all territorial authorities) 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.

Besides a change in the mentality of various regional and local stakeholders, leadership from key individuals or institutions to utilise the potential of co-operative structures and to direct the efforts of the parties involved is equally important. Such leadership can rely on the specific competencies of key figures and key institutions and on the charisma of public or private individuals, as the IBA Emscher Park model, with its (private limited) Planning Company and its innovative managing director has demonstrated impressively.

The spatial-functional dimension (which is quite specific for inter-urban polycentric urban regions) and spatio-economic conditions in general, opportunities for, and threats to, the metropolitan economy also play a role in determining the feasibility of the building of regional organizing capacity.

The further an urban region is functionally tied together and integrated, the greater the chance for a better regional appreciation of existing problems and challenges. Spatio-economic conditions may bind actors together and thereby become an important incentive for collaboration. As with the other studied city-regions, RheinRuhr has become an 'urban field' for the activities of different actors (enterprises, commuters, households), even though the spatial scope and spatial orientation of interactions between places vary between types of interactions and do not coincide in all cases with the city-region as a whole. Nevertheless, regional spatial relations increase and strengthen, while the spatial scope of labour-, shopping- or leisure-markets is widening to a more regional scale. On the other hand, regional disparities in demographic and economic growth rates, social problems and images especially between the Ruhr area and the southern part of RheinRuhr, but also within the Ruhr area make regional cooperation more difficult, though actors have shown that, to a certain extent, they are capable of defining regional interests.

The fifth pillar of organizing capacity is a vision of city-regional development, binding all policy aspects together and producing strategies and concrete objectives. The normative-descriptive phrasing in the *Land* development plan concerning the European Metropolitan Region RheinRuhr emphasises development-oriented aspects, such as the preservation of, for instance, important international headquarter functions, locations for financial and service facilities, as well the ambition to maintain the region's central position in terms of international accessibility. Neither visions nor guidelines for the future of RheinRuhr however currently exist. Nobody seems willing to push for a 'top-down' discourse, or to encourage regional discourses, including the RheinRuhr population. It is thus hardly surprising that specific strategies and concrete objectives have thus far similarly not been developed. Indeed it is patently obvious that the *Land* government is satisfied with RheinRuhr ranking in the top class of city-systems; that means that North Rhine-Westphalia does indeed possess a region of European importance in terms of infrastructural endowment and facilities.

With political and societal support as the last two pillars of organizing capacity, we have to stress that although a higher level of (sub)regional co-operation plays an important role in the political rhetoric, the different interests of local or regional stake-

holders are still of prime importance in concrete political decisions. From the point of view of the *Land* government, the potential weight of RheinRuhr in comparison with the rest of North Rhine-Westphalia is still regarded as a threat. Societal support hardly exists from those directly interested or involved (notably specific market parties and the population at large) and politicians do not call for it. Industry and its actors are interested in simplifying political and administrative structures. From the point of view of metropolitan inhabitants, the distinctive construct of RheinRuhr as a whole remains to this day an abstract spatial configuration.

The hitherto narrow endeavours of the *Land* government to create a designer region 'Metropolitan Region RheinRuhr' in order to establish an institutional and political practice, and thus to produce a territorial social practice, must therefore 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. In addition to such measures, and instead of the further adoption of a 'wait-and-see policy', the interrelation between the enhancing of non-economic one-sided regional discourses, the shaping power of organizing capacity and regional governance and the formulation of strategic issues as points of departure for concrete measures 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 however 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 the establishment of regional (quasi-) territorial authorities.

### **London: Reshaped government and governance in Greater London, increasingly fragmented governance in the separated 'hinterland'**

There has never been a political entity to match the Functional Urban Region London (or the south-east region). Sub-national (economic) governance in Britain during the 1980s and 1990s was characterized by central government control and local-level delivery via an ever expanding range of locally and regionally based actors which led to increased fragmentation, complexity and competition. The functions of the former Standing Conference on South East Regional Planning (SERPLAN), which was comprised of representatives from the county planning departments and prepared advice for central government on regional issues, were taken over by the regional planning boards of the new Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). However, in creating the RDAs the new Labour government in 1999 – 2000 split the south-east region into three parts: the west and south of London with the South East RDA, the north-east with the East RDA and Greater London with its new London Development Agency (LDA). There is no mechanism for the coordination of these three parts of the Functional Urban Region.

Central government produces regional policy in the form of Regional Guidance for the South East that must be followed by all of the local authorities and other bodies within the region. Recent Guidance was produced in 2001 and directed at making towns and cities more attractive, increasing densities in the new development, balancing the location of new activity across the region and in particular, encouraging development to the east of London (Thames Gateway).

In response to calls for a more coherent and strategic approach to urban policy and the implementation of EU regional policy, central government launched Government Offices for the regions (GORs) in the mid-1990s. The GORs sought to coordinate regional activity across various government departments and were given, among other things, strategic control over the key central government urban policy tool, the Single Regeneration Budget. However, the GORs, in this respect the GOL (Government Office for London), which continue to exist lacked accountability to the regions they served, as well as credibility with other locally and regionally based organizations. For instance, the GOL, the one organization charged with a strategic role in the 1990s, was generally pragmatic and short-termist, and lacked legitimacy in the eyes of other London-based stakeholders. Moreover, considerable overlap existed between its powers and those of the private sector-led agencies promoting London, namely, the London Planning and Advisory Committee (LPAC) and the London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Finally, the activities of several major government departments and inward investment agencies remained largely outside GOL's influence and hampered endeavours for a more integrated economic development policy.

The setting up of the RDAs in England by the Labour Government in the late 1990s constitutes a further major change in the institutional form of state economic regulation. These boards appointed and funded by central government with responsibilities for the economy and employment, with territories corresponding to the long-standing official regions were foreshadowed by intra-regional networking by business, local authorities and economic agencies which developed during the 1990s. RDAs involve greater regional autonomy than do GORs and TECs (now the Learning and Skills Councils, LSCs). They have considerable responsibilities such as the provision of grants to firms, land assembly, commercial property development, innovation strategies etc., they also lead on national government's local regeneration programmes, have a role in determining the central government subsidy to regional inward investment, and last but not least, should coordinate training, other economic development agencies and the economic policies of local authorities. In practice however their role is limited by low levels of funding and a lack of control over the key levers of economic development, as well as by a lack of jurisdiction over related elements such as education, transport, and housing. Their capacity for autonomous action thus remains heavily constrained by government. RDAs as further institutional actors of economic governance within the regions will be involved in continuous conflicts between the numerous existing bodies and will in particular have to deal with the ambiguities of local private-public partnerships and the interests of elected local authorities.

While the RDAs boards are un-elected and consist mainly of business people and local authority representations, their legitimacy has been addressed, obliquely, by government encouragement of the setting up of Regional Chambers that may develop into directly elected regional assemblies one day. RDAs 'shadowed' by Regional Chambers should mobilize regional identification and cooperation and weld different interests together through the formulation of consensual strategies. However, the statutory English regions that build the geographical basis of the RDAs have no necessary economic, social or cultural commonality and they have never had state regional structures, which could have constructed a sense of commonality. The setting up of RDAs as 'powerhouses for regional regeneration' seems, therefore, misleading if it implies a necessary relationship between economic dynamism and a given regional scale with-

out first examining the complex connections between socio-economic, political and cultural factors that come together to produce 'regions'.

As was noted previously, the London FUR is now split into three more or less artificial sub-regions, each with its own RDA. In Greater London, the LDA was linked into the new political structures for London (see below) reinforcing the economic and political separation of London from its 'hinterland' created by asymmetrical power arrangements which provide London with a Mayor and elected assembly and the rest of the South East with a heterogeneous system of single and two-tier local authorities. Central government's focus on competitive bidding for inward investment and competitive marketing (as a major rationale for regionalisation in England) favours non-cooperation. 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 future potential for increased regional inequalities and 'a race to the bottom'. The integrated nature of many of the region's economic issues, however, necessitates close working within the London FUR.

The new London Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), for instance, 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.

*In sum*, the city-regional picture is now even more fragmented. The institutional actors of economic governance and the related (potential) conflicts and tensions between these bodies within the sub-regions of the FUR London or, in other words, the necessity for more regional cooperation and coordination on the intra-regional and the FUR scales have further increased. In this complex system of governance, central government continues to play a dominant role in particular through providing the basic statutory framework of Regional Guidance.

The restoration of Greater London strategic governance in 2000 initiated a phase of intensive evolution in economic governance as the result of the creation of a Mayor and the associated LDA which was designed to take the lead role as regards regeneration and development in the metropolitan core of the FUR – even if the potential of new city-level governance is constrained by the manner in which power has been devolved by the central state and is thus now reliant on a multi-scalar partnership working with a wide range of agencies.

After the politically motivated abolition of the Greater London Council (GLC) in 1986 there was no government for the whole of the metropolitan core. The powers of the GLC were reallocated to central government, to the lower tier of the boroughs or

to some kind of joint body. The system of governance that emerged was characterized by a proliferation of institutions and partnerships operating in the absence of any strategic coordination and with limited democratic accountability. Moreover, it was characterized by contestation by local and central government, but also between local authorities and quasi-governmental agencies. A complex multi-layering of activity and confusion characterized urban policy and limited policy integration. There was a lack of strategic vision, because the London Planning Advisory Committee (set up to discuss strategic city-wide planning issues) was only an advisory body for central government, the GOL (charged with a strategic role) was never required to locate its activities within any overall strategy, or the public-private London Pride Partnership was not able to carry its vision for London in the 1990s forward. Instead, the strategic policy vacuum was filled by central government (Minister for London, Cabinet Sub-Committee for the capital, GOL, Strategic Guidance for London) influenced by representatives of the business sector.

However, in 1997 a major change took place in British politics resulting also in significant effects on the institutional context for planning and development in London. Having won the election the Labour Party began the process of implementing its devolution programme and reinvigorating city-level governance within London. Following the White Paper 'A Major and Assembly for London' and a referendum on the proposed new structures, in 2000, a Mayor and the 25 Members of the London Assembly were elected. Their key responsibilities as set out in the Greater London Authority (GLA) Act (1999) comprise transport, planning, economic development, environment, policing, fire and emergency planning, culture and health. The form of devolution is clearly one limited to responsibility and central government retains control of law-making powers, sets the regulations and allocates most of the finance. Thus central government has retained its dominant role in Greater London and many of the powers of the GLA arise from the taking over of existing quangos.

The mayor, who has an executive role, formulates policy, has responsibility for devising and coordinating strategies to tackle London-wide issues that have to be consistent with national policy, makes appointments to new executive bodies (see below) and proposes a budget. He does not have much financial autonomy, because the GLA takes over existing central government grants for special purposes such as transport, economic development and regeneration etc., receives a small annual general-purpose grant from central state coffers to cover operating costs and has access only to a very limited amount of own resources (congestion charging and workplace parking fees). The role of the Assembly is to scrutinise the mayor's activities and to make appointments to the permanent executive. The mayor's proposals and budget are reported to the Assembly for endorsement.

Three new executive (functional) bodies were set up to assist the GLA in formulating and delivering transport, economic development and regeneration strategies and fire and emergency planning, respectively Transport for London, the LDA and the Fire and Emergency Planning Authority.

Unlike other RDAs, the Mayor controls the new LDA. He appointed the LDA's Chief Executive, Chair and a 15 Member Board to lead the LDA, which is required under legislation to be business led, and set also the administration budget. The Assembly



provides members to serve on the LDA Board. Thus there is an element of democratic accountability via the Mayor and the Assembly. A further difference with that of the other RDAs is that the LDA is legally formed as a local authority with the Mayor (and not the Minister for the Regions) approving the economic strategy. However, as an RDA, the LDA must also address national targets set for it by the Department of Trade and Industry that focus on issues of competitiveness, innovation, enterprise and investment. In common with other RDAs, low levels of funding and a lack of control over the key levers of economic development limit the LDA's role. This means in practice that the LDA must operate via partnership with a wide range of agencies to deliver its strategic role.

On the one hand, the creation of the Mayor, GLA and LDA does provide possibilities to move towards more joined-up action. On the other however, these bodies have been imposed, and are thus dependent upon the pre-existing complex and fragmented institutional landscape. New arenas for contestation are opened not only between the Mayor, the Assembly and the LDA, but also between the GLA and central and local government, GOL (until it was replaced by the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy), and other economic development and regeneration agencies. Spatially, the new bodies must attempt to integrate policy across local (metropolitan Spatial Development Strategy/London boroughs own Unitary Development Plans), sub-regional (London-wide-strategy), Greater London, South East (London/'hinterland' separation) and the national scale (developing London's global city activity/overheating of London and the South East).

Following its leadership role in the development of a strategic vision for the economic development of London, in 2001 the LDA published its development strategy 'Success Through Diversity' which is based on four guiding principles (LDA 2001:9): support London's economic growth as a world business centre and as a balanced regional economy; develop London as a city of knowledge and learning; support London's renewal as a vibrant, cultural and linguistically diverse and inclusive city; ensure sustainable development. Yet despite the commitment to this wide array of issues the strategy is stronger in its objectives and actions for economic development especially in the finance, business services and media sectors. Moreover, there is a tension at the heart of this World City model of growth insofar as it is 'successful' and yet rife with poverty and inequality and insofar as it places constraints on growth in other parts of the urban economy (rise in land prices, high salaries, capacity problems of the transport system etc.).

The Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy for London, which he calls the London Plan, develops a similar vision for 'London as a exemplary, sustainable world city' based on three interwoven themes: strong, diverse long term economic growth; social inclusiveness to give all Londoners the opportunity to share in London's future success; and fundamental improvements in London's environment and use of resources' (Mayor for London 2002: xii) – with a particular emphasis on developing London's world city activity.

*In sum*, whereas central government has retained its dominant role in the region, some political power is devolved to an elected Mayor and Assembly within the main core area, but the state is still able to maintain control through the setting of regulations

and the maintenance of its grip on financial power. Insofar as the Mayor is using his political and symbolic power to press for greater influence and resources, a new site of conflict is unfolding. Moreover, by adding city wide institutions to the existing overcrowded institutional landscape, fundamental difficulties continue in terms of policy coordination and delivery and with regard to ensuring political accountability. Within the operation of a complex system of interaction are embedded a range of tensions evident both horizontally (i.e. between central government departments, pan-London organizations etc.) and vertically (i.e. between the levels of national state, London-wide institutions, boroughs, counties etc.). Emphasis on working in a joined-up manner, partnership and consensus downplays the range of different interests operating across scales in multiple areas. Finally, as mentioned above the new bodies' geographical area of responsibility only covers greater London. Therefore there will need to be cooperation between the strategies for London and the work of local authorities, regional agencies etc. in the whole Functional Urban Region.

### **Randstad: Two wings or a more integrated Delta-metropolis?**

'The Randstad' refers to the grouping of the four main cities of the Netherlands in the form of a horseshoe at the edge of the western part of the Netherlands within a fragmented green area of wetlands. Cities in the Randstad specialise and are increasingly complementary to each other. Particularly in the northern wing of the Randstad the complementarities are leading towards an economic urban network of transportation, financial businesses, specialised service sectors, media and creative industries between Leiden, Haarlemmermeer (Schiphol), Amsterdam, Almere, Utrecht and Amersfoort. The interrelations between ministries, juridical services, traditional industries and harbour activities in the Rotterdam/The Hague conurbation, which forms the urban backbone of the south wing of the Randstad, are less complementary (Van Wijk 2003). In general, regional spatial relations increase and get more dispersed, while the spatial scope of functional markets is widening to a more regional scale, even though this is often not the scale of the entire Randstad. Ties between the north and south wings, however, remain tenuous. Therefore, it is questioned whether the Randstad differentiates internally and is thus actually evolving into two different sub-regions, each with its own profile and potentials: the economically powerful Amsterdam-Utrecht area in the north east of the Randstad and the weaker Rotterdam – The Hague area in the south.

This possible evolution of the Randstad is strengthened by the fragmented governmental system of municipalities and provinces, each of which focuses on its own areas, and also by the fact that the planning for the Randstad is not really regionalised. It seems that the northern and southern parts of the Randstad are also becoming increasingly separate subsystems of policy-making. The latter is hesitant to adopt policies and institutional structures above the level of Rotterdam and The Hague. The province of South Holland promotes no inter-municipal cooperation. In contrast to the northern part, also in general a cooperative behaviour is almost non-existent. Whereas national government sees the Randstad as an interrelated economic key area both of the Netherlands and of North West Europe, the emerging new patterns of regional behaviour, manifesting themselves in different scales of networks, and the weak interest on more regional organizing capacities are however not really central to national/regional policies at the current time.

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 (see for the following Hoppenbrouwer et. al. 2000).

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 at best to be rather mixed. In the meantime, the rise of the network paradigm in – among 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). The idea was to equalise city-regional disparities and to give the region the strength to prevail in interregional competition. The new city province would take over the provincial areas of authority and would also assume the strategic areas of authority of the municipalities within its limits. Central government allowed the municipalities to negotiate the specific details of their city-province. However, after ten years of discussion, no city-region has yet been created. Equalisation as one motive of the planned change was obviously difficult to reconcile with collaboration within the region, with too many compromises being required. Central cities like Amsterdam or Rotterdam wanted a powerful city province in order to realise regional equalisation and regional development programmes. They divided the city into neighbourhoods, with the expectation that the city province would become inevitable as a result. The surrounding municipalities were more or less willing to work together but not to be equalised. When the inconsistent compromises were submitted for popular approval in referenda in the mid- 1990s, they were however rejected.

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 have collectively started up numerous projects. With the Regional Authority of Amsterdam (ROA) a partnership arrangement for the urban conurbation was established which

continues to manage some state subsidies but has little policy jurisdiction in other respects. 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. In contrast to earlier Memorandums, which focused on general and social issues, now a strategy of strengthening the Randstad as the main economic region within the Netherlands was pursued. Financial and other support was given to key development projects in the cities and to strengthen the Rotterdam seaport and the Amsterdam airport.

The Fifth Memorandum 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 able 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 per-

spective, the quality of the landscape, mobility and accessibility, the development of corridors, and the strategy of urbanisation.

In the 'Metropolitan Debate' (Frieling) of the 1990s it is more or less agreed upon that the Randstad is not a metropolis, but despite all failed policies can still become a polycentric metropolitan area. The 'bottom-up' development of both public and private actors interested in creating a metropolitan economy resulted in the foundation of the Deltametropolis Association (1998), a rather informal body in which city authorities, district water boards, Chambers of commerce and a variety of semi-public and private stakeholders discuss the way the Randstad can develop into a competitive European metropolis. Aldermen of the four main cities took the initiative, followed by medium-sized towns and other organizations and institutions. Parallel to the Association, the Friends of the Deltametropolis include private actors, e.g. developers and financiers.

The main objective of this think-tank and lobby group is to transform the current incoherent region of cities into a more coherent city-region. 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 (Bureau Regio Randstad 2001).

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. Randstad-scale projects should be put on the regional and national agenda and ways of implementing them should be defined. Projects include DeltaNet, improving the Randstad's transportation system, and Waterrijk, improving the regional water network. The Fifth National Memorandum on Spatial Planning (2001) introduced the Deltametropolis concept for the first time in a document from the national government. The interpretation of the concept, however, is less ambitious than the concept the Deltametropolis Association had in mind, focussing merely on the key economic role of the Deltametropolis. Nevertheless, 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, though the major projects on the wish list have yet to be approved by the state.

In comparison to the co-operation of the early nineties, it is notable that most collaboration now includes all three governmental tiers, a wider plurality of actors are involved, and the objectives are also more pluralistic. Moreover, the focus has widened from the combined supra-provincial scale to the Randstad scale. However, the actual influence of all institutions is limited and their instruments remain confined to consulting, advising, information supply, and research. Therefore, initiatives still lack executive power. A powerful regional Randstad body with its own authorities is thus still missing. National government, provinces, municipalities and the 'decentralised unitary state' are so deeply rooted that any adjustment seems very hard to make. At present, it would be a considerable step forward to strengthen the 'intermediate' role

of the four provinces in the Randstad and the cooperation between them (instead of further hopes on city-provinces/regions) and to 'link' the structural pattern of government (i.e. the provinces and the municipalities) to flexible associations. The fifth Memorandum introduced the new idea of 'government networks' in order to establish joint administrative coordination of strategic spatial policy issues for municipal and provincial authorities throughout the Randstad. However, the value of this idea is questionable and has still to be proven. Besides the institutional fragmentation and internal orientation of key persons, the Randstad also lacks identifying power for various reasons. Investments in new Randstad-consciousness and identity are, therefore, important in order to develop more political and social support for metropolitan governance.

### **Paris: a new territory of collective action and new territorially based political leadership**

For two decades, the once strongly centralist France has been undergoing a process of decentralisation. In the early 1980s a number of state powers were transferred to local governments, that is to municipalities and departments, and to regions that were established as local governments in their own right, while the '*commune*' was reinforced in its role of manager of the local territory. The '*departement*' moreover now has its own elected President, and is no longer directly dependent on the *prefect*, the local and regional representative of the government, who has become an intermediary, encouraging the local authorities to adopt national policies and co-ordinating the actions of the administrative network at the regional and departmental levels. The 'region' was transformed into a public territorial authority with a President elected by a Regional Council and given a crucial role in co-ordinating the investments of the local authorities (regional planning, *aménagement du territoire*), education, training and transport.

Since 1986, the Île-de-France (which more or less covers the FUR of Paris) has also had an elected President and a Regional Council. However, decentralisation has not been implemented in this region in the same way that it has in the other parts of France, because Paris is the political and economic capital of France (cf. for the following Lefèvre and Roméra 2001). Significant policy sectors such as regional planning and transport have remained under the control of central government. Whereas in other metropolitan regions master plans are elaborated and implemented by local governments, in the Île-de-France the final approval of the existing 'Schéma Directeur de la Région Île-de-France' (SDRIF) remained in the hands of the state and was imposed on local governments in 1994, all of whom had voted against it. The new instrument of cooperation between the state and Regional Councils, the 'Contrats de Plan Etat-Region' (CPEs), which should specify the priorities of both actors in all policy sectors and regulate the financing of specific actions over a five-year period were controlled by the state and reflect state policies everywhere until the end of the 1990s, but this was all the more true in the Île-de-France, where the 'Conseil Régional de Île-de-France' (CRIF) had no definite policies or clear priorities.

The state could run this metropolitan region all the better because territorial fragmentation has been more acute than elsewhere. Until very recently the Île-de-France municipalities showed no real interest in co-operation, whereas municipalities in other areas have joined more and more integrated joint authorities such as 'communautés urbaine', 'communauté d'agglomération' and 'communautés de communes' in order

to compensate for territorial fragmentation and to carry out policies. The city of Paris, which dominates the region, has always refused to cooperate with either other municipalities or *departements* – although in 2001 an office for ‘territorial cooperation’ was established and joint projects should be developed in the future. In addition, the CRIF could not play a mediating role between the state and other local governments.

However, the current period is one of transition: The Île-de-France is becoming a new territory of collective action and policy-making is moving towards becoming more a matter of cooperation between a multitude of regional stakeholders. The state remains the strongest actor and still occupies an essential place, in particular with investment and direct intervention via the ministries and the regional *prefect* who direct the various state administrations at the local level – but it has become a different kind of state displaying a less centralised and more regionalized, less interventionist and more cooperative type of mentality. Moreover, new actors are now entering the governance system. Besides the growing inter-municipality in the region, what is most important is the increasing power of the regional authority (CRIF). 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.

In contrast to the first state-led CPERs, the existing CPER (2000-06) was elaborated together with the CRIF in a more open process. For the first time the Regional Council argued on the basis of a regional plan and a list of specific actions for the future development of the region. Both documents were the result of discussions between local governments within the region. The 2000 Act on ‘Solidarité et Renouvellement Urbain’ (SRU), changed the governance of some policy sectors further and according to this act the elaboration of the new master plan will be changed. The Regional Council, which was never part of the Public Transport Regional Board, (‘Syndicat des Transports Parisiens’) is now a member of the newly created ‘Syndicat des Transports de l’ Île-de-France’ (STIF). For the first time the ongoing revision of the SDRIF will not be conducted by the state, the new regional master plan will be elaborated by the CRIF and approved by the region.

The state remains in charge by dint of its chairing of the STIF board and through having 50 % of the votes, and it will not be left out of the process of SDRIF revision. It will work on the new plan through its own regional services located in the *prefecture*. However, the regional council seems to have gained more autonomy and a more active and relevant partner for the state. The recent transfer of more powers to local governments, notably the regions, in the fields of professional training and education and the creation of a Regional Development Agency in 2001 are further illustrations of such an evolution. The ‘Agence Régionale de Développement’ (ARD) was established as a partnership body between the CRIF and the Chambers of commerce and also now includes seven of the eight *departements* of the region. The CRIF, which provides 95 % of its budget, wants the ARD to be a strategic actor in charge of regional economic and social development.

Recently, associations of municipalities have also entered the governance system of the Île-de-France. The 1999 Inter-municipal Cooperation Act (law ‘Chevènement’)

and the related considerable financial incentives have created '*communautés d'agglomération*' which must bring together more than 50,000 people and several municipalities. They are in charge of economic development, strategic planning and environment policies in their area. Inter-municipal cooperation receives the business tax and extra money from the state, and their strategic plans, namely the elaborated sectoral policies and projects to implement those plans were taken into consideration in the last CPER. While the Île-de-France municipalities showed no great interest in such cooperation activities in the past, subsequently about ten *communautés agglomération* (2002) have been established.

All of these changes have the potential to bring about a significant evolution in regional organizing capacities. Actors who strongly support regional co-cooperation are both the '*Préfecture*' (i.e. the representative of State government) and Ile-de-France Regional Council. Even if they do not admit it 'openly', the *departements* and their economic development agencies are, in fact, not in favour of more region-wide governance. Moreover, the emerging governance remains largely a public-public affair. However, some charges in the involvement of the private sector in the policy making process can be seen. In the debate over regional strategies and priorities in the field of economic development and employment that was launched by the CRIF in 1999 some Chambers of Commerce, employer's unions and trade unions were active participants.

Societal support is mainly derived 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, no real regional consciousness or identity exists. Concerning a vision or guideline of urban-regional development, the state is in charge of assessing the previous SDRIF in 2003 and the new regional master plan will be elaborated together with major regional players and directed by the CRIF. According to the SRU Act, this will be a '*Schéma de Cohérence Territoriale*' (Territorial Cohesion Plan) which will bring together a strategic plan, a transport plan, an environmental plan, and a landscape plan, etc. Approved by the region, this new regional master plan will be the legal framework for all municipal and inter-municipal new '*Plans Locaux d'Urbanisme*' (Urban local land-use plans).

The current evolution of players and the new interrelations between them has resulted 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 the Ile-de-France today thus aim to solve 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 and other private actors.

The future development of regional organizing capacities is a matter of territorial leadership and several scenarios are possible. Besides a further reformed state control, the city-region may continue to fragment in the light of current rationales (inter-communal structures, the rise of certain *departements*) 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 more positive 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, thus gaining 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. Both scenarios may even be combined and in any case offer the urban-region an improvement on the existing situation.

### **On the hard way to city-regional organizing capacities ...**

The potential benefits of city-regional scale government and governance seem to be well understood and there is thus an emergent international agenda of metropolitan reform. However any reflection on contemporary endeavours for organizing capacities 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 'organizing' or 'institutional capacity'. Nor do capacity-building efforts flow in a linear fashion from the mobilisation of actors, to institutional design and routinisation. This is similarly the case in the analysed FURs, even though the scope and specific (national) contexts differ in each.

The outcomes sketched out above seem to represent at best partial and temporary resolution to the problems of governing large metropolitan areas. Regarding the (never ending) process of the development or improvement of city-regional government and governance, RheinRuhr seem to be only just a 'beginner', whereas Paris is in a relatively 'advanced' but unstable position with opposite possibilities for future development. London with its incomplete city-regional reform and the Randstad are somewhere in between. Moreover, we can say that RheinRuhr is not making any headway at present. The new institutions of Greater London government/governance respond to demands for a 'voice for London', but also expose other regional governance problems. New relations with neighbouring authorities in the FUR have yet to be worked out, as have new co-operative arrangements of governance between the boroughs, LDA, training agencies, etc. The value of the new impulse for building regional organizing capacity in the Randstad and of the further implementation of the new Delta-metropolis concept has also to be proven.

### **RheinRuhr, Randstad, Paris- and London-Region – in what sense 'regions'?**

Paasi's (1986, 1991) 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. 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 'dimensions', 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.

By indicating the degree to which RheinRuhr, the Randstad and the Functional Urban Regions of Paris and London meet those 'dimensions', we will be able to assess the extent of the institutionalisation of these regions. Paasi's observations about the 'institutionalisation' of regions here are only used as a model for a better understanding of the current situation and the deficits of the regionalisation processes in the studied city-regions, however, it is not intended to describe the different interdependent and mutually constituting processes in detail.

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's North and South Wings, 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 thus generate action. Naming the region is important, as it is essential to enter the minds of people, as maps possess a constructing power and do not simply reproduce a certain spatial situation. Again, the histori-

cally grown regions and cities have a far more distinct symbolic shape compared to newer constructs, such as functional urban regions, designer regions like the Rhein-Ruhr metropolitan region or the 'planning doctrine' Randstad. Whereas global city-regions such as Paris and London gain from the image of their dominant core city, polycentric regions like RheinRuhr and the Randstad to a large extent lack symbolic shape. At best, the 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. In polycentric urban regions the historically rooted identities and strong symbolic representations (architectural landmarks, local culture, sports teams, etc.) may contribute to the persistence of varying monocentric mental maps on a local scale. One might argue that the development of new patterns of economic and socio-cultural activity goes beyond the boundaries of these historical delineations, and that local identities become blurred without being replaced by polycentric urban regional identities in the long run. However, the relationship between local and regional identities remains questionable without symbols connected to the city-regional scale, without public, private, and social institutions which take the region as their territorial organizing principle, therefore reproducing 'planning concepts' in daily life, and without any affiliating support from regional media which might also contribute to the development of a 'polycentric-structured mental map'.

The third dimension 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, for the Ruhr-area, the London region and the Randstad mention must be made of recent institutional initiatives such as a strengthened Association of the cities in the Ruhr area (instead of the existing KVR) and/or an own Ruhr District Administration, 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 another institutional layer and normally behave according to the principle of 'every man for himself' (especially in polycentric urban regions without a dominant core city) or even of sub-regional associationalism. There is varying 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. Finally, a number of new sub-regional institutions are increasing the complexity of governance in all metropolitan regions as well as the need for co-ordination.

Paasi's final dimension involves the **establishment of a region in the spatial structure and social consciousness of society**, meaning 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 here have not as yet progressed very far. In particular, RheinRuhr and a London region that covers Greater London and its hinterland thus far remain more fiction than 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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<sup>1</sup> URBANET deals with Polynuclear Urban Regions in North West Europe and especially with the question: To what extent do polynuclear urban regions constitute adequate arenas for regional cooperation and strategic action in the field of spatial planning in order to enhance their competitiveness and quality of life? (Ipenburg and Lambregts 2001; Meijers, Romein and Hoppenbrouwer 2003). The GEMACA (Group for European Metropolitan Areas Comparative Analysis) has studied the Economic Performance of major European metropolitan regions in North West Europe. (GEMACA 2002). Both projects were part of the INTERREG IIc programme of the North Western Metropolitan Area and co-funded by the European Commission.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of the politics of scale is derived from the work of Smith (1993, 1995). It refers to the proposition that geographical scales such as the urban, the regional, the national and the global are not pre-given but are socially constructed and politically contested (see also Delaney and Leitner 1997; Marston 2000; Macleod and Goodwin 1999). The notion of a 'new politics of scale' underscores the ways in which the scalar organization of capitalism is itself becoming an important stake of ongoing socio-political struggles.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the Spatial Vision for the North Western Metropolitan Area.

<sup>4</sup> Particularly the 10% threshold, which demarcates the outskirts of the FURs, was a thorny issue. To reduce it to for instance 5% would result that in the RheinRuhr case the FUR then covers easily almost the whole of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia or even beyond. Such a regionalisation would be too far away from any realistic discussion on city-regional governance in polycentric urban regions. On the other hand, to apply a threshold of above 10% would result to a FUR that is almost only constituted by economic cores, particularly in the interurban polycentric configurations such as RheinRuhr and the Randstad (see below). Such a demarcation would neglect the sensitive interplay between the economic cores on the one hand and their so-called 'hinterland' on the other hand.

<sup>5</sup> 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'.

<sup>6</sup> RheinRuhr extends over ten ‚Handlungsregionen‘ following the demarcations of the districts of the Chambers of Industry and Commerce and thus over ten Regional Conferences with their own Regional Development Concepts.

<sup>7</sup> The Ruhr area falls under three (RheinRuhr under four) different District administrations (Regierungsbezirke), which among others carry out regional planning. The territory of each District extends beyond the boundaries of the Ruhr (or the RheinRuhr) area, and the administrations thus take responsibility first of all only for their part of the region.

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