



Planning polycentric urban regions in North West Europe

Value, feasibility and design

E U R B A N E T R E P O R T 2

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Preface

This volume is based on a series of field studies carried out within the framework of the research project EURBANET. This project focused on four polycentric urban regions in the North Western Metropolitan Area in Europe and has explored the practical value of this kind of region as a planning concept. Special emphasis was put on the possible contribution of this concept to the strengthening of the territorial competitiveness and quality of life in these areas. Besides, the project also focused on the role of polycentric urban regions in the transnational planning process. This volume deals with the questions of the value, the feasibility and the design of a regional perspective rather than separate local perspectives of spatial planning in polycentric urban configurations. These questions are explored in the Randstad, the Flemish Diamond, Central Scotland and the RheinRuhr.

EURBANET was one of the almost fifty projects for transnational co-operation in spatial planning that were executed under the umbrella of the North Western Metropolitan Area Operational Programme. This Programme was part of INTERREG IIC, a Community Initiative to promote transnational co-operation among public bodies and private parties from different countries through projects on regional and local issues. INTERREG IIC was co-financed by the European Commission. EURBANET was carried out by a consortium of five academic research institutes from the four countries where the regions of research are located.

EURBANET was carried out by a consortium of five academic research institutes from the four different countries where the regions of research are located:

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1 Introduction

Evert Meijers and Arie Romein

The concept of polycentricity is becoming increasingly popular in spatial policies. It basically refers to the existence of a number of urban centres in a certain area. Spatial planners attach great value to such polycentric urban patterns on several levels of scale, ranging from the European to the regional. Although both the meaning of the concept and the purposes of policies differ between the various scales, polycentricity in general is chiefly considered a means to achieve either a more balanced spatial pattern of development (European Commission, 1999) or a higher level of international territorial competitiveness for the area at stake. This volume explicitly deals with polycentric urban configurations on the regional (sub-national) level of scale. Urban polycentricity on this scale is roughly demarcated as the upper range of individuals' daily activity patterns. This usually covers a larger area than just the individual city and its immediate hinterland. On this scale, the concept of polycentricity most frequently refers to an urban configuration that should be equipped for policies to strengthen regional competitiveness.

Regional polycentric configurations emerge when nearby but formerly separate and independent cities in a region merge into a single functionally coherent system. Such regional urban systems are referred to by various concepts that are largely synonymous, for instance 'polycentric urban regions', 'networked cities', 'polynucleated metropolitan regions' or 'city clusters'. Here, we will use the concept 'polycentric urban region'. The Application Form of the URBANET project (OTB, 1999: 8) defines this concept as a region composed of a collection of historically and administratively distinct smaller and larger cities located in more or less close proximity (roughly within commuting distance), the larger of which do not differ significantly in terms of size or overall economic and political importance. This type of urban region is most widespread in Northwest Europe. Located at relatively close distance, the Randstad, the Flemish Diamond and RheinRuhr are classic examples. A few examples are also found outside Northwest Europe, such as the Kansai area in Japan (Batten, 1995), the Spanish Basque Country (van Houtum and Lagendijk, 2001), the Padua-Treviso-Venice area in Northern Italy, and the southern Californian urbanised area in the USA (Kloosterman and Musterd, 2001). The polycentric urban region has more than already a decade attracted growing attention by professionals of varied backgrounds, including both academics such as geographers, economists, social and political scientists, as well as planners and policy-makers. The ways in which academics and planners and policy-makers deal with this type of region differ. So far, the empirical-analytical research by academics has strongly focussed on the tenability of the notion of the polycentric urban region being a functional spatial entity. In spite of considerable regional variations, it is beyond doubt that the

spheres of influence of the urban centres in polycentric regions are increasingly fusing together and that these regions tend towards functionally integrated spaces. Functional urban markets tend to coalesce and daily activity and mobility patterns, in particular the home-to-work trips of individuals living in adjacent urban centres continuously scale up and become more polycentric in shape. The question remains, however, as to how far these urban configurations are genuinely single, region wide functional systems.

Amongst planners and policy-makers, on the other hand, the debate on the polycentric urban regions focuses on strategic motives and action: these professionals consider the region an 'actor' rather than, or in addition to, a 'space' (cf. Keating, 2001). Against the background of a growing belief that the region is becoming the most important spatial level of international territorial competition, high expectations exist among planners, policy-makers and other stakeholders about the potentialities of polycentric urban regions to organise an attractive metropolitan investment, production and living environment that is able to compete internationally. Bailey and Turok (2001: 698) observe that the concept of the polycentric urban region allegedly offers 'a sound basis to promote regional economic competitiveness. (...) It promotes the advantages of stronger interaction between neighbouring cities to develop specialised and complementary assets, while avoiding large-scale urban sprawl and destructive territorial competition'.

Despite the growing interest in polycentric urban region, literature on this concept is still limited and rather unconsolidated (Bailey and Turok, 2001: 697). Consequently, a diversity of sometimes more or less implicit definitions, operationalisations and approaches of this type of urban configuration is still in circulation (Kloosterman and Musterd, 2001: 623). This volume aims to contribute to the debate on the polycentric urban region, focusing on whether, and how, the polycentric urban region indeed constitutes an adequate arena for policy making, as is frequently hypothesised. The relevance of this problem is described by Lambregts (2000: 13) as follows: 'planning for polycentric urban regions in many cases involve planning at a relatively new scale, based upon new starting points and taking aboard new strategic objectives. Our understanding of polycentric urban regions and their potential contribution to achieving spatial development objectives with regard to their competitiveness has to be deepened.' This volume is based on research activities carried out as part of the European project EURBANET, one of 45 transnational projects carried out within the framework of the North Western Metropolitan Area Operational Programme (NWMA Programme) between 1999 and 2001. The NWMA Programme fell under one strand of the INTERREG II Community Initiative, subsidised by the European Regional Development Fund, and more in particular the strand of INTERREG IIC that supported transnational co-

Figure 1.1 The four polycentric urban regions explored in EURBANET



operation among public and private parties in regional planning. The EURBANET project explored to what extent polycentric urban regions in the NWMA constitute adequate arenas for regional co-operation and strategic action in the field of spatial planning, in order to enhance these regions' competitiveness and quality of life. Answering this question has been contingent on a broader understanding of the spatial dynamics of polycentric urban regions, the specific meaning of competitiveness and quality of life in their contexts, the ways they function politically and institutionally, and the perspectives this offers to formulate policies that strengthen their territorial competitiveness. EURBANET has examined these questions from a comparative perspective through studying four different polycentric urban regions in Northwest Europe, i.e. the Randstad in the Netherlands, the Flemish Diamond in Belgium, RheinRuhr in the State of North Rhine Westphalia, Germany, and Central Scotland in the United Kingdom (see Figure 1.1). The three 'contin-

tal' regions are located close and are part of the core economic region of Europe that is alternatively called the 'blue banana' (cf. Jobse and Musterd, 1994: 76-78), the 'pentagon' (European Commission, 1999), or the 'superconnected global powerhouse' (Spatial Vision Group, 2001). Some even suggest a trend towards functional integration of these three regions into one transnational polynucleated macro region in the making (Dieleman and Faludi, 1998; D'Hondt, 2001; Zonneveld, 2001), but there is still little proof for that (Romein, 2002). For the time being, these three regions can be considered independently. Central Scotland is located more peripherally, not only within Europe but also within the United Kingdom. It however has the potential, from the point of view of a balanced spatial pattern of development, to develop into a counterweight global economic integration zone (Spatial Vision Group, 2001).

The findings by the four regional research teams that participated in EURBANET lie at the heart of this volume. Each of the chapters 3 to 6 presents the findings on one particular region. Each chapter is structured according to the same pattern, presented and explained in Chapter 2, after a brief general and theoretical discussion on the polycentric urban region from the perspective of international territorial competitiveness. This type of region is considered both a space and an actor. An important conclusion in this respect is that in particular our knowledge of the region as an actor is still limited. By providing a synthesis of the regional case studies, the final chapter 7 primarily attempts to extend our general knowledge from this perspective.

This volume is the second in a series, published by DUP on the theme of the polycentric urban region and based on the EURBANET project. The first volume (Ipenburg and Lambregts, 2001) focused on the perceptions and opinions of stakeholders on the sense, and nonsense, of applying the concept.

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2 Theoretical and practical background to the study

Arie Romein and Evert Meijers

2.1 Introduction

This chapter briefly puts some general notions of this volume into a broader perspective. The first two sections deal with territorial competitiveness. In the past, that is up to the early 1980s, it was merely nation-states that competed. Recently, however, a trend of scaling down of this type of competitiveness to sub-national regions or cities can be observed. Section 2.2 presents some major conditioning tendencies of this general trend, whereas section 2.3 deals more explicitly with the phenomenon of territorial competitiveness on this lower level of scale, both from a theoretical (do cities compete at all?) and a practical, policy related point of view. These two sections are rather general in the sense that they do not make clear distinctions between geographical scales. This is because most of the current literature on sub-national territorial competition lacks such explicit distinctions and rather uncritically mixes cities, urban areas, metropolitan agglomerations, city regions, or just regions. This is remarkable because different levels of urban scale have different qualities and identities, so therefore hold different positions in international territorial competition, and hence should focus on different competitive strategies.

Sections 2.4 and 2.5 explicitly focus on the polycentric urban region. The emergence of the polycentric urban region as a space is placed within the perspective of the rather universal tendency in the current post-fordist era of urban areas to transform from monocentric to polycentric configurations. In regions, composed of a collection of distinct cities of various sizes located in more or less close proximity without a clear 'primate city', it is this entire configuration rather than its individual cities that has become the new locus of political, economic and cultural activity (Lambregts, 2000: 5). In such cases, the region appears to be the most appropriate level not only of problem analysis (the region as a space) but also for policy making (the region as an actor). Given Lambregts' observation, it can be hypothesised that adopting a strategic regional perspective for policy making in polycentric urban regions has surplus value.

Section 2.6 then presents the three aims of this volume in more detail. These could be characterised as exploring the value, the feasibility, and the design of regional planning in polycentric urban regions from a theoretical perspective and practical experiences. The practical experiences are partly derived from regional workshops with public and private stakeholders, organised by the URBANET research teams. The final section, 2.7, gives a brief overview of the structure of the case study chapters, notably based on the substance of section 2.6.

2.2 The rise of urban and regional competition

Since the mid-1970s, territorial competition has increased in size, strength and diversity and has been scaled down from the nation-state to the city and the region as the principal geographical platforms. Growing transnational networks that interconnect large cities and city regions have become an 'alternative metageography that replaces the mosaic of states'¹ (Beaverstock *et al.*, 2000: 123). Any proper attempt to analyse both the reinforcement and the scaling-down of territorial competition would be extremely complex and requires a much larger volume than this single chapter. We will therefore only pay brief attention to some major, interwoven conditioning tendencies. Rather paradoxically, if we take into account that territorial competition has been scaled down, these conditioning tendencies are strongly related to the seemingly everlasting trend towards globalisation.

Since the mid-1970s, urban economies have been transformed into a post-industrial stage. Urban economies, particularly in the western world, have experienced a structural process of de-industrialisation. Many large, vertically-integrated plants in raw material based and heavy industries closed down in the 1970s and 1980s and left many industrial cities with hollowed-out industrial landscapes and economic and social crises. Some have never recovered from these crises, while others have been more successful in developing a 'post-industrial' economy. Competitiveness is a key word in this process. Successful cities have experienced a rapid growth in the size and diversity of its service sectors, in particular advanced producer services (law, accountancy, ICT etc.) and financial and leisure services. Industry has not completely disappeared from such urban areas, but new industries are primarily information and knowledge-based high-tech and high-touch sectors (Hall, 1995). An important high-touch sector that is at the heart of many contemporary urban economies is that of cultural industries, including film and theatre, but also new media, fashion, furniture design, architecture and advertisement (Scott, 1997; Kloosterman, 2001). In general, the post-industrial city produces less material commodities and more services and signs (Byrne, 2001). The 'weightless' urban economies tend to articulate with global circuits, a process strongly conditioned by a large-scale trend for revolutionary improvements in 'telematics' and transport technologies. Modern telematics is able to combine data, voice and video into an infinite variety of new knowledge-intensive products and services (Graham and Marvin, 1996). These products are electronically transmittable from their urban production sites to oth-

¹ This observation includes a paradox that will not be elaborated here, but is nevertheless worth noting: the cities and city-regions that are interconnected in these networks both compete and co-operate.

er urban places around the globe in a split second, and against plummeting costs due to ongoing technological innovations. The last few decades have also seen a reduction in the frictional effects of physical distance on the transport of material goods and people, following technological innovations that have increased speed and lowered costs. Due to these developments, the proximity of economic activities has lost much of its importance and economic production, R&D, marketing, advertisement and command and control functions interconnect within networks that link urban places and, moreover, tend to extend geographically up to the transnational or even global level.²

The growing flows of goods, people, information and capital following the above tendencies materially challenge the boundary-making and territory-protecting activities by nation-states that have been part of their competitive strategies. World-wide, most nation states have responded to this challenge by policies to liberalise many types of markets, ranging from capital to telecommunications. In Europe, the EU is a 'plurinational level of governance' (Scott, 1998) that has been created by national states and progresses towards one single market, with one single currency, in which the barrier effects of national borders against the free flow of goods, capital and people steadily diminish. The reverse side of this medal is the vanishing protection by national borders for cities, and regions, from world-wide competition (Brotchie et al., 1995: 35). Cities and regions have become more and more receptive to decisions that are being taken thousands of miles away, either for investments in new down-town operational headquarters or for plant closures. It is chiefly because of the greater freedom of location due to the diminishing effects of national borders and the ongoing neutralisation of the frictional effects of distance, that specific local and regional qualities play a growing role in the location decisions of firms, professional workers and tourists. Hence, both opportunities and responsibilities for territorial competition have been scaled down from nation states to urban areas and regions.

2.3 Urban and regional competitiveness in theory and practice

The basic question in a volume on territorial competitiveness is whether cities do compete. Lever and Turok (1999: 791) answer this question briefly as follows. 'Some (...) have argued that they do indeed compete, although in a different way than commercial enterprises with a single hierarchical decision

² In literature this tendency is mostly described as an intra company phenomenon, i.e. taking place within the organisational framework of multinational corporations, but it is definitely not restricted to this framework.

making body and a single objective, profit maximisation. Unlike such enterprises, they compete for mobile investments, skilled workers, tourists, public funds and hallmark events such as Olympic Games'. An opposite opinion is put forward by the economist Krugman, who considers the idea that cities and regions, or even nation states, compete more or less in the same way as firms do 'theoretically illegitimate and empirically wrong' (Hallin and Malmberg, 1996: 333). In fact, his work of the 1990s is a major source of inspiration for scholars who argue that cities do not compete at all with each other. 'Instead of competing', according to Lever and Turok (1999: 791), cities 'are merely the locus for competing firms. The sets of assets that 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'.

Although some oppose the idea that cities or urban regions can compete, in practice this type of territorial competitiveness has become an increasingly important field of policy making, and a steadily growing flow of academic studies and policy reports on this theme has been published in the past decade. Remarkably, these reports contain little discussion on clear and balanced sets of objectives that are adjusted to the specific problems and opportunities of the city or region in question. Irrespective of the background of a city or region, there appears a generally shared notion of the sectors that are most rewarding in terms of social and economic prosperity to focus policy on competitiveness on. Hall (1999: 175) distinguishes four key groups of services with high profit levels: finance and business services, command and control functions within large global corporations and organisations, creative and cultural industries, and tourism. According to Hall, urban centres with a higher than average involvement in these groups show a better than average economic health. In the Netherlands, a recent study by the Central Planning Office (CPB, 2000) shows that the development policies of the country's twenty-five largest cities focus on three of the same few economic sectors, chiefly ICT, multimedia and tourism, irrespective of their specific problems and potentialities. It is highly doubtful whether this focus, also adopted by many cities elsewhere, to develop a flourishing economy is effective *per se* in, for example, depressed urban areas with high rates of blue-collar unemployment since the industrial decline of the 1980s.

In the industrial economy, a greater change for cities to attract investments was primarily related to a richer endowment of factors, first and foremost physical production factors like infrastructure, land, and skilled blue-collar workers, as cost-effectiveness was the main objective of investors. In the current informational service economy, urban areas and regions are engaged in a

European or even global competition over development opportunities and assess their competitiveness on a broader, less tangible and rapidly changing series of attributes. Given the currently rising intensity and growing complexity of territorial competition, theory building on this theme is still at an initial stage and develops in various directions. Two such directions are briefly discussed here. The first one is based on recent research of industrial dynamics. The quintessence is that long-term competitiveness has to do less exclusively with immediate cost efficiency and more with firms' ability to innovate and to upgrade their knowledge base. In this approach, the territory is most often not seen merely as a 'container' endowed with attractive factors, but rather as a milieu where physical, human, social and cultural capital is created, accumulated and sophisticated over time (Hallin and Malmberg, 1996). It is these 'qualities outside the firms' that makes cities themselves competitive rather than simply being the locus for competitive activities by firms (Donald, 2001: 263). The endowment of physical production factors still matters, but is increasingly insufficient to upgrade territorial competitiveness all by itself. Manuel (2000) answers the research question which factors determine the competitiveness of 'ICT regions' by the so-called Crystal of Incubation. This crystal is a hexagon that interconnects the six C's of 'chutzpah', centres of opportunity, conditions, co-operation, competition and concentration. The model refers to qualities and characteristics that are also mentioned in other studies on regional industrial dynamics, including territorially concentrated and networked interrelations between clusters of firms, services and research institutes; relations of trust; formal and informal institutional networks; the societal status of entrepreneurship; and sophisticated inter-firm competition. What matters is to improve the innovative and quality dimensions, next to cost-effectiveness, of the regional economic environment. Collective learning through rapid interchanges of expertise, information and 'tacit knowledge', facilitated by formal and informal institutional frameworks on the basis of common codes of communication and networks of trust, is essential (cf. Glaeser, 1998; Donald, 2001).

A second approach to urban competitiveness is based on the notion of the quality of life of cities. This approach primarily focuses on the attractiveness of a city for highly mobile talented workers in the informational economy. It has become evident that the quality of human capital in urban centres has become a key to success in the competition for key groups of advanced services. Turok (1999) concludes that the urban labour force is nowadays more than a passive recipient of economic change. Instead, new strata of highly skilled and flexible professional specialists have become key players in the current post-industrial urban labour markets. The city's quality of life is considered an important focus of competitive policy in order to attract this highly skilled human capital, which in turn makes a city attractive for capital

investments in advanced services and industries. Conceptually, a city's quality of life is not yet an unambiguously defined notion (Rogerson, 1999; Randall and Williams, 2001) and includes a broad and diverse series of attributes. Some of these attributes are spatial, such as physical accessibility, the presence of nearby green zones, and varied cultural and recreational facilities, or at least tangible, such as qualities of the hospitality infrastructure, the advanced producer services complex, and the labour market. Others are, however, rather intangible, such as trendiness, lifestyle amenities and cultural diversity and openness (Sassen, 1995; Jobse and Musterd, 1994; Jensen-Butler, 1997; Lever and Turok, 1999; Donald, 2001; Florian, 2002). Firmly related to a city's quality of life, in particular its intangible attributes, are the building and marketing of the city's image. Permanent alertness by city policy makers is required, because most key players on the urban labour market, in particular the younger generation, are 'mobile subjects' who hardly bind their personal identity to a particular place and its fixed social setting (ESPON, 2000: 47). Instead, they constantly set their own image, based on lifestyles and life-cycle dependent interests, against the background of the residential environments offered by cities (Vermeulen, 2002: 10).

Some critical remarks can be made on both approaches to territorial competitiveness. The first approach, based on industrial dynamics, presupposes a territorial foundation of urban or regional competitiveness. Cultural industries cluster in fashionable inner city areas because localised networks of creativity and social life and a strong sense of place provide firms with resources, inspiration, contacts and social enjoyment. Face-to-face contacts and local inter-firm linkages that are based on proximity within urban or regional environments are considered a sound basis for competitiveness. Amin and Thrift (2002: 56) however, challenge this idea by criticising the 'overemphasis on the benefits of inter-firm co-operation, face-to-face contacts, local transactions, shared knowledge and collective learning on the basis of ties of proximity'. Their general hypothesis is that cities are 'assemblages of more or less distanced economic relations which will have different intensities at different locations. Economic organisation now is irremediably distributed, even when economic activity seems to be spatially clustered' (ibid: 52). On the basis of this hypothesis, they tend to replace the idea of the city as a 'territorial economic engine' with an understanding of cities as 'sites in spatially stretched economic relations' (ibid: 63). What matters in service and cultural industries is the combination of the global corporate reach of some firms and the real time economy by local proximity.

A second criticism is that direct causal links between the presence of innovative milieus, or quality of life factors, on the one hand and the economic and social development of cities or regions on the other, are often presupposed,

but rarely elaborated. In fact, much appears unknown with regard to the interdependencies between the presence of an innovative milieu, a city's image or quality of life, its attractiveness for people and investments, and its social and economic prosperity (cf. Hall as quoted in Rogerson, 1999; Hallin and Malmberg, 1996). And if we should succeed in obtaining more in-depth knowledge on such interdependencies, the next problem is how to transform this into concrete policies and development plans. It is not clear, for example, how quality of life as a personalised concept, including intangible qualities like the trendiness and cultural openness of downtown areas, should be 'made spatial' and translated into policies to improve the quality of places. Finally, it is becoming increasingly unclear who should formulate policies and implement plans to improve the quality of life or processes of knowledge transmission and innovation. The assumption that municipal governments will take charge has become increasingly strained because these have been subject to fundamental changes to their structures, functions and boundaries.

The above brief review ignores the theme of territorial competitiveness within the specific geographical context of polycentric urban regions. Donald (2001) emphasises that it is the scale of the city region rather than the single city that provides sufficient critical mass to be competitive. Although she touches the issue of scale within the discussion on whether territories can compete, in general little is known yet on this. In the Conclusion to this volume, some general remarks, based on the four case studies, on the theme of territorial competitiveness in the polycentric regional setting will be presented. The last two sections of this chapter pay some attention to these configurations.

2.4 The polycentric urban region as a space

Industrial cities were relatively compact built-up areas, easy to distinguish from their rural hinterlands, and clearly separated from neighbouring cities and towns. Nevertheless, the dynamics of the western European city has shown a gradual outward progress of population growth since the early 1960s. According to a life cycle model by van der Berg *et al.* (1982), population growth gradually shifted from the 'core', the inner city area and adjacent residential suburbs, to the 'ring', an extensive commuting area surrounding the core, and finally to rural locations outside its daily urban system. The ongoing residential suburbanisation has been accompanied by the de-concentration of manufacturing industries, commerce and retail activities, producer services, and most recently new urban entertainment centres and other artefacts of the emerging leisure society. Bontje (2001: 770) observes a 'process of

continuous de-concentration of population, work and services' during the post-war period in Northwest Europe. A permanent outward moving process of urban functions encompasses wider and wider areas and includes growing numbers of formerly free-standing towns and villages. According to Breheny (1995), a frontier of migration rolling back from London down the urban hierarchy has been accompanied by a radically changing settlement structure, economic landscape and commuting pattern across the entire Southeast of the UK.

There are more changes, however, than just a spatial tendency of dispersal. It has been frequently suggested that de-industrialisation and modern telecommunications have made distance and proximity, and therewith the industrial city that was based on agglomeration economies, obsolete. The death of the city has been frequently forecasted. According to others, however, the city has not only proven resistant to death, its *raison d'être* has even been reinforced. In this latter view, the western city has strengthened its central and essential role as the major channel for all kinds of flows (cf. Graham and Marvin, 1996; Glaeser, 1998; Hall, 1999; Indovina, 1999; Sassen, 2000; Sassen, 2002). Although there is general agreement now that the city is not dead, it has indeed fundamentally changed, compared with its industrial predecessor. This urban transformation is frequently labelled as post-Fordist (cf. Blotevogel, 1998; Lever, 2001; Shaw, 2001). Sudjic even sees a 'new incarnation' of the city. In this new incarnation, 'the diffuse, sprawling and endlessly mobile metropolis is so fundamentally different from the city as we have known it, that our equipment (i.e. concepts and language) to make sense of what is happening has lagged far behind the changes' (Amin and Thrift, 2002: 3). Beauregard and Haila (2000) are among the few that are not fully convinced of a sharp break from the past, but even they observe many new spatial elements in the contemporary city.

In spite of the net continuous outward de-concentration of cities since the industrial era, many contemporary metropolises have evolved as the effect of simultaneous processes of selective spatial de-concentration and re-concentration. Re-concentration takes place in both city cores, but also in new sub-centres at increasing distances from the cores. Consequently, most post-industrial cities are now polycentric configurations with dispersed patterns of residential locations and multiple centres of employment and services that are interconnected by growing infrastructure networks. Polycentrism is no less than 'one of the defining characteristics of the urban landscape in advanced economies' (Kloosterman and Musterd, 2001: 623). Any explanation of this highly dynamic spatial transformation of urban areas towards polycentrism, a multi-faceted and multi-scale process at the intersection of a broad pallet of economic, social, cultural, political and spatial forces, is far

beyond the scope of this chapter. What basically matters is that the kaleidoscopes of locational preferences of both households and firms are broadening (cf. Champion, 2001a; Glaeser, 1998; Hall, 1993; Kloosterman, 2001; Scott, 1998; Scott *et al.*, 2001), and that these broader sets of locational needs and aspirations are much better met by polycentric varieties of places than by cities in the narrow sense. Polycentric urban areas are fragmented or atomised urban landscapes on a much larger scale than the former self-containing entities of a central city and its immediate hinterland. This scale is even larger in the case of regions where collections of towns and cities that are located at close proximity tend to merge together into urban landscapes. The multiple centres that make up such configurations are far from identical: they differ in size, image and nature. Down-town clusters of financial services, edge-city based high-tech industries, waterfront developments, airport cities, tourist resorts, and large shopping malls or entertainment centres are only a few centres of the current post-Fordist urban regions. In general, it is often stated that boundaries have blurred in polycentric urban configurations in a way that the meaning of what is urban, suburban, exurban and even rural is increasingly ambiguous (cf. Scott *et al.* 2001; van der Laan, 1998; Champion, 2001b). The Ghent Urban Studies Team (1999) even replace 'urban' with 'urban condition' when referring to the new encompassing polycentric configuration.

In the past, suburban dwellers depended on central cities for most functions. This made the relationship between city centre and suburbs a hierarchical one. In today's polycentric urban regions, the relationships within the kaleidoscope of places are no longer hierarchical. People increasingly de-couple their location decisions on 'home' from those on 'work', 'leisure' and other activities – the 'city à la carte' – and spread their time-space budgets on daily and non-daily activities over increasing areas. Hence, mobility patterns take place over continuously increasing distances and become more polycentric in shape (Clark and Kuijpers-Linde, 1994; Dieleman and Faludi, 1998; van der Laan, 1998). The 'up-the-rent-gradient' type of daily commuting and non-daily trips that dominated the separate monocentric cities have been transformed into criss-cross patterns across the polycentric urban landscape. Growing shares of these patterns by-pass central cities and connect the growing variety of suburban locations. Suburban centres are increasingly rivalling downtown areas, because increasing numbers of people live, work and spend their leisure time in these suburbs and rarely visit downtown. Frequently, the highest demographic and economic growth rates of urban regions do not occur in central cities but in the surrounding suburban nodes. Case studies from several countries reveal that suburban centres offer even more jobs now than central cities (Cervero, 1995; Brotchie *et al.*, 1995; Spence and Frost, 1995; Byrne, 2001). The central city cores have not become obsolete, however. Many lost 'mass' of population and employment, but many have also experienced a

growth in the advanced service economy, command and managerial functions that link cities to circuits of global capitalism, or cultural and fun industries. Cities that have remained unsuccessful in territorial competition are the exceptions to a general tendency of urban *renaissance*.

In regions where medium-sized cities and towns are located in close proximity, previously more or less self-contained systems of individual cities and their hinterlands tend to fuse into polycentric urban configurations on the higher levels of scale (Bontje, 2001; Dieleman and Faludi, 1998; Champion, 2001b; Lambregts et al., 2001). Although still administratively independent, the cities in these emerging polycentric urban regions tend to lose their independence as functional systems: their labour markets, housing markets, leisure markets, and other urban functional markets scale up towards the regional level. Interconnected by mobility patterns with extending spatial scopes, these new urban configurations tend to develop functionally into urban networks. Taking into account the blurring of the meaning of urban, suburban, exurban and even rural, Schmitt et al. (2001: 18) describe the polycentric RheinRuhr region as a 'dispersed and unbalanced patchwork of all kinds of constructions, topographies and spaces, with elements of urban as well as rural landscapes that tend to develop in their formerly unencumbered open landscapes'. This drive towards the polycentric urban region as a space is, therefore, the superlative of the emerging polycentric city. Whether polycentric urban regions have already turned into genuine single coherent and networked functional systems, is however still a major research question.

2.5 The polycentric urban region as an actor

Regions in general have not only become more important spaces, they have also benefited from the redistribution of tasks and responsibilities among the several tiers of government that has taken place over the past decades (cf. Wannop, 1995; Keating, 1997, 2001; Danson et al., 2000). Within the European Union, many national governments have handed over or are now sharing quite a number of tasks and responsibilities with both lower (local and regional administrations) and higher tiers of government (the European Commission). Decentralisation trends have been responsible for the former whereas the ongoing process towards further European political and economic integration has contributed to the latter. The transfer of power from the national level to both the regional and the supra-national levels is well illustrated by the establishment of the Committee of the Regions by the EU and the fact that a substantial part of EU-policy funding directly addresses regional issues.³

This is not, however, a unilateral process from 'Europe' down to the regional

communities; these latter have become more active (Keating, 2001) themselves in the partial disengagement of national governments. As observed, it is these regions rather than their constituting cities (or the national states) that are competing strongly with each other for the huge flows of resources that circulate around the world. Instead of being perceived as passive elements, subject to the whims of larger (global) developments, regions should rather be viewed as 'communities made up of economic subjects which act for their interest in trying to keep or attract firms, workers, subcontracting firms, suppliers of intermediate inputs, services and factors' (Camagni, 1999). The smaller localities among them, such as individual city governments, are facing the constraint that the territory they control is often too small to create effective policies on competitiveness and quality of life. Given the transformation of classical monocentric cities into polycentric urban regions, the problems and challenges these face, for example as regards labour market dynamics, the ecological environment, and accessibility, increasingly ask for responses that extend beyond municipal jurisdictional boundaries (cf. Knox and Agnew, 1998). Coupled with the growing perception that a certain critical mass is needed to compete successfully in the 'globalising' economy (Donald, 2001), many city administrations have started to seek enlargement of their territorial base and/or to enter into region-wide coalitions or networks (cf. Newman and Thornley, 1996).

Entering into region-wide networks seems to have most significance for public actors in polycentric urban regions, as, in particular, many spatial issues arise that are better dealt with on the regional than on the local level of scale. There is a growing belief that polycentric urban regions rather than their individual cities are facing the challenge to turn globalisation as much as possible to their benefit. In this respect, Scott *et al.* (2001: 13) state that the 'individual city in the narrow sense is less an appropriate or viable unit of social organisation than this regional networks of cities'⁴, with its wider set of assets and broader spatial scope to meet the demands of firms and households in the post-Fordist network society. By networking, the individual cities can allegedly organise agglomeration economies on a regional scale, without incurring the increasing agglomeration diseconomies that large metropolises entail. Such diseconomies, among other things congestion, pollution, the

³ A major pillar of EC-policy concerns the development of regions in the EU that for some reason lag behind. Since the EC prefers the implementation of its regional development programmes to be monitored within the regions benefiting, the policy has encouraged the formation of regional institutions more than once (see Wannop, 1995). In 1999, about one third of the EU's spending was on its regional policy

(http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/activity/erdf/erdf3_en.htm).

⁴ Scott *et al.*, 2001, mention the polycentric Randstad Holland as an example of a global city region.

high cost of land and office space, crime and the concentration of poverty, are generally less articulated in polycentric urban regions than in large monocentric metropolises (cf. Ipenburg and Lambregts, 2001). The creation or reinforcement of the organising capacity of a polycentric urban region is crucial to realising both the external and internal potentialities (cf. Van den Berg and Braun, 1999) from the point of view of international territorial competitiveness. Some planners even voice the ambition that polycentric urban regions could successfully compete with the highest-level world cities like New York, London or Paris. Dieleman and Faludi (1998) temper this enthusiasm by stating that polycentric urban regions are rarely able to compete with these largest cities for genuine 'top functions', but attribute to them the potential to develop specialised high-level economic niches.

The above comments suggest a broadly shared understanding that emerging polycentric urban regions constitute the appropriate platform for regional co-operation and strategic action on spatial development issues. The point of departure is that certain localised competitive advantages, including features contributing to quality of life, are more likely to be optimised if they are dealt with from a regional rather than a local (single city) perspective. Within this framework, it should be realised however, that a region as an actor these days requires politicians and administrators to adopt a governance rather than a government perspective on the planning of many spatial issues. This implies a perspective that puts emphasis on co-operation across administrative tiers, across administrative sectors, and between public, private and interest groups. It should also be taken into account that different issues call for different alliances with different spatial scopes and competencies, and different life spans (cf. Boelens, 2000). It is clear, therefore, that governing a region is an intricate affair. Putting multi-level and multi-actor governance into practice is a complex task that may be hampered by a lack of understanding, even if politicians and administrators agree on its usefulness. This complexity is even larger in polycentric urban regions, because these cover a considerable number of public authorities on different levels of scale and with different competences. Policy-making is an a-symmetrical pluricentric rather than a horizontal polycentric process in such regions (see Section 4.5.3 for an explanation). The establishment of a polycentric urban region as an actor has to deal with a large number of public and private actors, all having their own goals and preferences and often having differences in procedures, culture and power, perceived and real. There is, however, little theoretical and practical knowledge on the complex issue of governance of polycentric urban regions and how it relates to issues of competitiveness and quality of life. It is not clear, for example, how it should be organised institutionally, nor what kind of particular policy measures could be chosen and implemented. This volume explores these questions and gives some first and provisional answers.

2.6 Towards a framework for the case studies

The overarching objectives of the four case-studies in this volume are exploring the potentialities with regard to competitiveness of these regional urban configurations and, as a next step, considering and advancing the polycentric urban region as a planning concept. As part of these explorations, the studies focus on three different aims. These aims can well be characterised as exploring the value, the feasibility, and the actual design of regional planning in polycentric urban regions. The first aim is to establish the need for regional planning in polycentric urban regions, whether it is useful to adopt a regional perspective in dealing with spatial developmental issues in the polycentric urban regions studied. Anticipating an affirmative answer to this question, the second aim explores the possibilities for developing a regional approach in polycentric urban regions by examining the strength of the existing base for establishing a regional approach in planning and co-operation in the four regions studied. The third aim is to explore what such a regional planning approach in polycentric urban regions could actually contain. Planning concepts and policies that are relevant to the competitiveness and quality of life of the four polycentric urban regions will be presented, along with some indicators as to how the relevant institutional arenas or frameworks of governance can further develop to implement such concepts and policies.

2.6.1 Value of regional planning in polycentric urban regions

For a decade or so, polycentric urban regions such as the Randstad and RheinRuhr have been conceived and conceptualised as more or less comprehensive metropolitan regions or networks in quite a number of strategic planning documents. This, however, does not mean that the 'actors on the ground' necessarily feel that they are part of a comprehensive metropolitan region. Neither does it guarantee that such regions easily become the scene of co-ordinated action among stakeholders with the objective of contributing to economic, social, or environmental objectives at different spatial scales. In part, this seems due to a lack of understanding of what the value of adopting a regional approach in planning and action for such regions is. The results of over a dozen interviews with people, involved in the ESDP (European Spatial Development Perspective) process, point out that polycentric urban regions are viewed indeed as building blocks in the European polycentric system of urban nodes, but that few ideas exist about their exact role, functioning or potentialities (Faludi and Waterhout, 2001; Waterhout and Faludi, 2000). In addition, the results of a large number of interviews with stakeholders in the Randstad, the Flemish Diamond, the Glasgow-Edinburgh Region, and Rhein-Ruhr, suggest that the concept of polycentric urban regions does exist in the

minds of the majority of local actors, but again, advanced ideas about the potentialities of such regions and the possibilities for taking advantage of them appeared to be rather sparse (Ipenburg and Lambregts, Eurbanet report, 2001).

In order to make the potentialities of polycentric urban regions clear, the choice was made not to start with an abstract study of these potentialities, but to explore the practical value of regional planning in polycentric urban regions on the basis of current spatial development practices in the four case study regions. In this way both the practical relevance of the research findings could be enlarged and regional variety could be accounted for. After all, each region faces its own specific problems, challenges and opportunities regarding competitiveness and quality of life. So in order to examine the potential of adopting a regional planning approach, each case study in this volume makes an inventory of three or four of the most pressing spatial development issues relating to competitiveness and quality of life in their region. During the course of EURBANET it became apparent that there was considerable overlap in the planning issues dealt with in the four polycentric urban regions, making it possible to identify three key issues:

- internal and external accessibility;
 - uneven spatial economic development;
 - spatial diversity and the quality of open space.
- In addition, each study reflects upon the possible effects (in terms of new trade-offs, new solutions, new barriers, etc.) if the same issues are viewed from a regional and polycentric point of view.

It must be kept in mind, however, that, while being relevant issues in all four case-study regions, these three key-issues are rather broad categorisations and may have different interpretations for different regional contexts. These different interpretations are worked out in the case-studies. Our hypothesis is that these key issues, that dominate current planning debates, are expected to be more effectively and efficiently dealt with by rephrasing them on a higher spatial scale (the regional one) than the local one. If this is true, then the value of regional planning for and in polycentric urban regions will become clear.

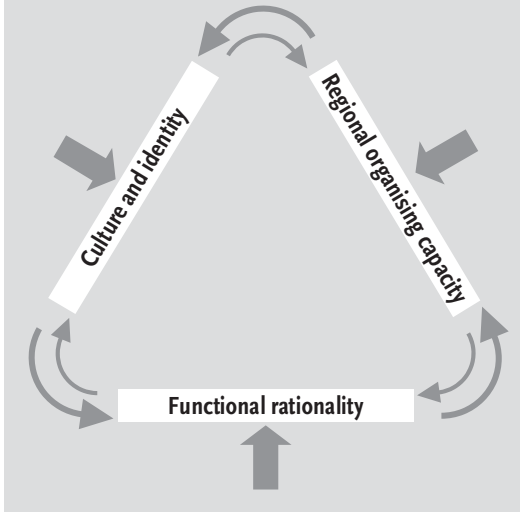
2.6.2 Feasibility of regional planning in polycentric urban regions

The feasibility of developing and implementing a regional polycentric view as part of strengthening the competitiveness and quality of life in a specific polycentric urban region almost by definition depends upon the involvement and support of various groups of local, regional and even national actors.

Even if – from a distance – it seems a-priori valuable to adopt such a view, the actual willingness of actors to accept, further develop and eventually implement such a view also depends on the way they conceive the polycentric urban region in question. It may be argued that commitment is more easily mobilised when actors (whether they are local planners, local entrepreneurs, local consumers of culture, etc.) think of the region as a more meaningful entity. From the interviews that were held with regional stakeholders in all four regions, it became clear that the extent to which stakeholders perceive their respective regions as comprehensive or meaningful polycentric urban regions varies both between and within the regions (Ipenburg and Lambregts, 2001). So while the first aim of the case studies was to examine the practical value of adopting a regional polycentric view in the four polycentric urban regions, the second aim is to explore how far these regions offer a base for adopting such a view.

It could be argued that the meaningfulness of conceiving a polycentric urban region as a relevant entity for regional planning – and with that the basis for a regional planning approach in such regions – depends on a number of factors. A good point of departure to identify these factors is provided by van Houtum and Lagendijk (2001). They assume that, in general, a region is made identifiable by three congruent interpretative dimensions – strategic, cultural and functional – resulting in three types of identity – strategic identity, cultural identity and functional identity. They argue that, in the case of polycentric urban regions, the strategic identity is important because the will and intention to create an interdependent polycentric urban region is often ahead of the actual reality. ‘Strategic’ refers to the voluntary development of a geo-strategy, which aims at the strengthening of both the external position of the region and internal interdependency. The cultural dimension concerns the shaping of a feeling of belonging together and the creation of cultural elements that help to perceive the polycentric urban region as an entity. The last dimension, the functional identity of a polycentric urban region, has received much attention in recent debates that focus on the tenability of the notion of the polycentric urban region as a coherent functional entity. It refers to the existence of economic, political and social linkages and ties between the cities involved. While these three dimensions seem useful in identifying a polycentric urban region, we are more concerned with how we can assess whether or not a regional planning approach for and in polycentric urban regions can take off. The strategic dimension implies some co-production of policy and co-ordinated action already present in the region that defines the strategic regional interests. However, such a co-production of policy and co-ordinated action needs some administrative and institutional arrangements at the regional level (Scott, 1998; Keating, 2001). Organising governance at the level of polycentric urban regions has so far been difficult, which complicates

Figure 2.1 Relevant factors determining the feasibility for a regional approach



the development of a regional approach. It therefore seems relevant to include the organising capacity (in an administrative and institutional sense) of a region as an important factor.

While basing ourselves on the framework for identifying a polycentric urban region as developed by van Houtum and Lagendijk (2001), we propose the following amended framework to assess the feasibility of a regional approach in the polycentric urban regions that are examined in this volume. In our framework, we replace the strategic

dimension with the administrative and institutional dimension. Figure 2.1 shows the three dimensions, or factors, determining the potential to develop a regional planning approach for, and in, polycentric urban regions, and the strong relationships that exist between these three dimensions.

Functional rationality

Functional rationality refers to the idea that strong functional linkages and interdependencies within a polycentric urban region make it more meaningful to adopt a regional planning approach. We can conclude that a more meaningful approach is also a more feasible one, assuming that there is less willingness to consider a polycentric urban region as a relevant entity for planning when there are weaker functional linkages and interdependencies. So far, only a few authors have attempted to construct a single operational definition of functional rationality and they have particularly focussed on the daily flows of people, translated into 'travel to work areas', 'daily urban systems' (van der Laan, 1998) or 'functional urban regions' (Cheshire and Hay, 1989). However, functional rationality involves more than just commuting. According to Pumain (1999: 6) a functional urban unit 'is constituted by markets of, for example, labour, retail, services, culture or housing. It is structured on major roads, railroads and terminals. And it functions by flows of people, goods, energy, information and money.' Markets, infrastructure and flows are thus seen as determining a polycentric urban region's functional rationality. It can be assumed that in polycentric urban regions interaction is enabled by infrastructure, represented by flows and given meaning to by markets. The requirements for functional rationality do not mean that a polycentric urban region needs to be one single, compact, functionally coherent and 'closed' system. Polycentric urban systems tend to be 'open' and multi-layered complexes of nodes, networks, flows and interactions of global, regional and local scales (Albrechts, 2001). Consequently, the spatial scope and orientation of

interactions between places do not necessarily coincide exclusively with the polycentric system as a whole. Rather, these scopes and orientations vary considerably between types of interactions and are dynamic; for some the network has become one single polycentric 'urban field' but for others it is either too large or too small (cf. van Ham *et al.* 2001).

Regional organising capacity

Regional organising capacity is another important factor influencing the feasibility of regional planning in polycentric urban regions. Van der Berg and Braun (1999: 995) describe this capacity as 'the ability to enlist all actors involved and, with their help, to generate new ideas and to develop and implement a policy designed to respond to fundamental developments and create conditions for sustainable development'. Next, they consider regional organising capacity to be determined by seven other factors: the formal institutional framework (the administrative organisation); strategic networks; leadership; vision and strategy; spatial-economic conditions; political support; and, finally, societal support (van der Berg and Braun, 1999: 995-997). Keating (2001: 379) describes the concept of a development coalition, a place-based interclass coalition dedicated to economic development in a specific location. From his political point of view, Keating claims that the context for building such a development coalition is determined by the current competitive situation of the region, but also by factors such as culture, institutions, leadership, social composition and external relations. He remarks that for regions constituting themselves as an actor institutions, leadership and an ability to carry a definition of the interests of the region are required. The question is whether or not there is room for regional planning and, moreover, for multi-level governance in general. The four case-studies in this volume pay most attention to the existing formal institutional frameworks as stressed in both of the overviews mentioned above, which are often too static and hierarchical to recognise and deal with the complex, multi-scalar interplay of trends and forces that is urban dynamics. However, if they can adjust and accommodate them, then a regional planning approach in polycentric urban regions becomes more possible.

Culture and identity

Finally, factors relating to culture and identity play a role. This cultural dimension refers to a frame of reference, orientation, and interpretation that structures the consciousness and behaviour of a regional society and is reproduced and reconstructed by the acts of the regional population (cf. Buiks, 1981). Thus, as culture structures the behaviour and consciousness of a society, socio-cultural factors must be regarded as relevant factors in explaining a region's economic, spatial and social development. Following the distinction in culture and identity this factor is split into two elements. The first

one is a common culture and refers to the existence of a shared history and shared values, norms and beliefs in a region. Social relationships, shared understandings, and norms of co-operation and reciprocity all ease regional networking. Sharp cultural divides on the other hand impose barriers to regional co-operation. Major sources of cultural differences are language, ethnicity, religion and political preferences. The second element distinguished is regional identity. This is a concept that is foremost a social construct and therefore a dynamic phenomenon. Moreover, it is a contextual and multi-layered concept. One belongs to many groups that together furnish one with a whole variety of discrete identities, which vary in relative or contextual importance (Hogg, 1992). Some of these are linked to a geographical entity, for instance the neighbourhood, city or country one lives in, but probably also the region. The existence of such a regional identity in the polycentric urban region, hard to define as it is, helps to generate societal support, including that by major stakeholders, for a regional planning approach. Regional identity is more easily found in regions that are characterised by a certain territorial shape (clearly demarcated), by a symbolic shape (regional symbols), by institutions taking the region as their territorial organising principle (cf. Paasi, 1996), and by the region being a political space (cf. Keating, 1997). However, cultural homogeneity and a regional identity is often not present in polycentric urban regions. On the contrary, Albrechts (2001:734) characterises polycentric urban regions as 'socio-spatial conflict zones for the articulation of multiple interests, identities and cultural differences'. Whereas the absence of a strong identity does not necessarily undermine a region's base for adopting a regional or polycentric view, the presence of a sharp cultural divide *may* do so.

Between these three factors, functional rationality, organising capacity and culture and identity, a high level of interdependency exists, as is illustrated in Figure 2.1. It is easily understood that strong functional interrelationships must be associated with high levels of interaction, which in turn facilitate the construction of a common identity as well as the interaction among administrators and other relevant actors. Conversely, whether a region is characterised by a sharp cultural divide or by a strong common identity can make a difference. In the former case, interaction between the parts may be limited whereas the latter case does not pose barriers to interaction and the development of functional relationships. Obviously, the presence or absence of a common identity or cultural divide also influences the quality of political and administrative relationships within the area.

To summarise, a regional approach in polycentric urban regions is more meaningful and more feasible when the region concerned:

- better reflects a particular functional rationality;

- is home to political and other institutions willing and able to organise governing capacity at the regional level;
- can be associated with a distinct culture and identity.

2.6.3 Design of regional planning in polycentric urban regions

Having explored both the value and the feasibility of adopting a regional planning perspective in polycentric urban regions, the next step is to examine what such a regional planning practice could actually look like. For this, the key issues – internal and external accessibility, uneven spatial economic development, spatial diversity and the quality of open spaces – serve as ‘vehicles’ to illustrate how a regional planning practise in polycentric urban regions could be given shape. Wherever possible, ideas on how to improve existing policies by rephrasing them on a regional rather than local scale are presented. These suggestions on the substance of policies come coupled with ideas on how to improve regional planning, taking aspects of regional governance into account.

2.7 Structure of the case studies

The four regional case studies in this volume follow the same structure. Before turning to the questions related to establishing the value and feasibility, and to exploring a potential design of regional planning, the first sections set out the current position of the polycentric urban regions. Each case study chapter therefore starts with describing the region in terms of some major characteristics. This is followed by a presentation of major spatial trends relating to population, urbanisation and socio-economic dynamics. Basic features such as economic profile, population development or the quality of specific infrastructure may also indicate whether and how the regions stand out from their wider environments. This overview of spatial dynamics provides a basic understanding of the context in which the key issues of competitiveness and quality of life have been raised and are discussed. In particular, it presents some spatial conditions that should be taken into account when developing substantive ideas on how to deal with these key issues in terms of policy outlines. The third section explains the policy context, national and/or regional, with respect to polycentric urban regions and regional planning for such regions, and reflects the value attached to the examined regions as a spatial level of planning. This has consequences for the feasibility of regional planning in these areas and will indicate whether the regions of research are recognised as polycentric spatial entities worth planning for.

The next three sections focus on the three aims of the case studies. The

regional findings concerning the value of regional planning and a polycentric perspective in the polycentric urban regions based on the three key issues that were selected (as explained in 2.6.1) is presented in section four. Each key issue is addressed in a separate subsection, and follows a similar pattern. First, some trends and developments concerning the key issue are presented, followed by an overview of the way current policies try to tackle the issue as well as of the different viewpoints and position of various groups of stakeholders. Each subsection ends with some outlines for new policies departing from the regional, polycentric perspective. The fourth section therefore also addresses the third aim of the case study, namely the aim to design regional, polycentric policies.

The fifth section is completely concerned with the exploration of the feasibility of regional planning for and in polycentric urban regions and is structured according to the three main factors identified in section 2.6.2 – functional rationality, regional organising capacity and culture and identity.

The sixth and final section of each case study builds on the third aim of giving shape to regional planning in polycentric urban regions, but is less concerned with outlining policies. Rather, given the starting points provided by the first five sections, mechanisms to promote regional planning in each individual polycentric urban region are brought forward.

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3 Randstad

Eric Hoppenbrouwer, Evert Meijers and Arie Romein

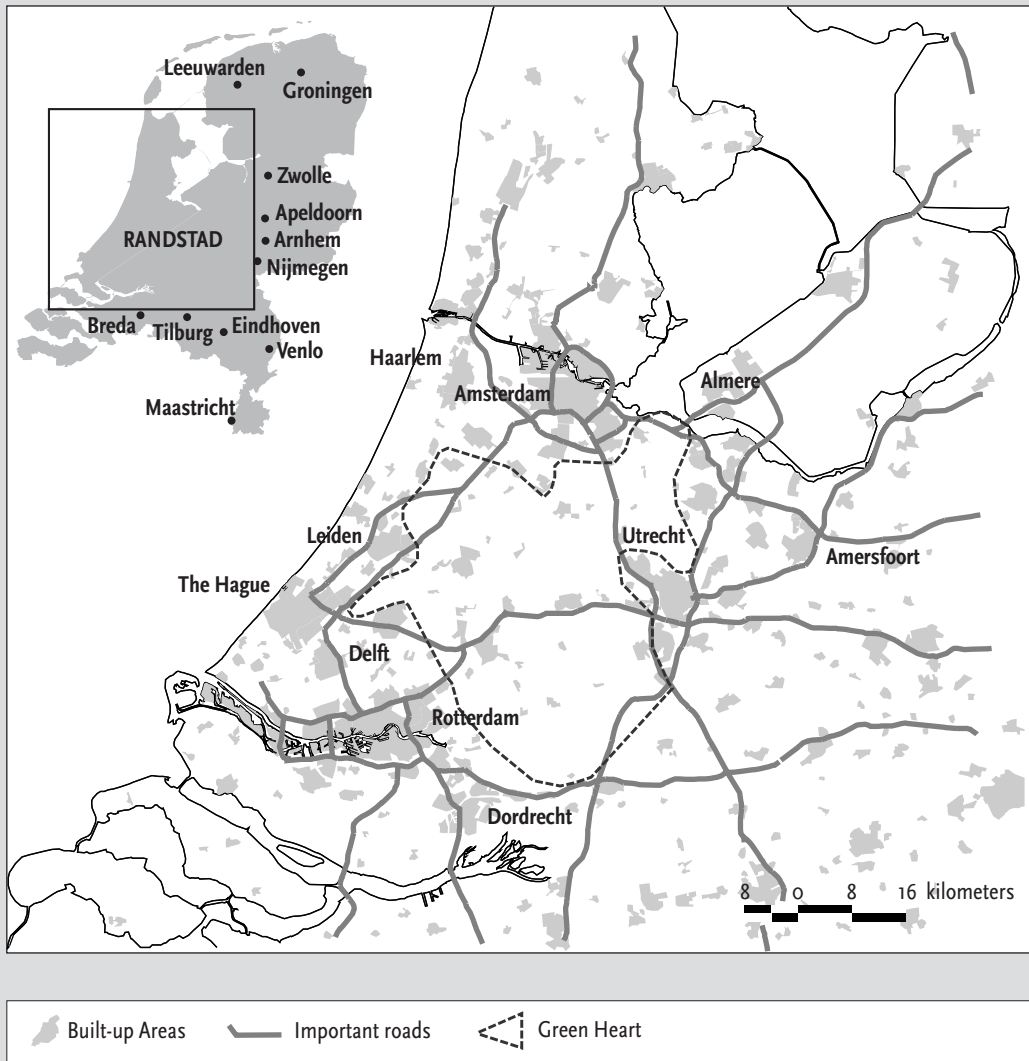
3.1 Defining the region

The Randstad is the horseshoe-shaped urban constellation in the western part of the Netherlands (Figure 3.1). The Dutch word 'Rand' means 'rim' or 'ring' and refers to the position of the Randstad encircling a green open area named the Green Heart. Recently, the name 'Delta Metropolis' has also become popular to refer to this area. The Randstad is composed of four provinces: North and South Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland. With almost 7 million inhabitants (44% of the Dutch population) and 45% of the employment concentrated on just 21% of its territory (figures for 1999), the Randstad is the most highly urbanised core region in the Netherlands. The anchors of this urban conurbation are formed by the four largest cities of the Netherlands: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. Together with some dozens of other medium-sized and smaller cities and the absence of one predominant centre, the Randstad can be characterised as a polycentric urban region. In fact, it has been referred to in the literature as a prime or classic example of such a region (Hohenberg and Lees, 1985; Batten, 1995).

Its polycentric urban pattern relates to the fragmented political and administrative structure which prevailed in North-western Europe in the late Middle-Ages and following centuries (Dieleman and Faludi, 1998). Strong urbanisation processes in the Western part of the Netherlands continued and interest in the urban pattern in this area started to increase in the 1920s. The term Randstad dates from this time, and it became a planning concept shortly after the Second World War. Together with its counterpart the Green Heart, the Randstad-concept became firmly established in Dutch planning. While national policies in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s were focused on dispersing growth out of the Randstad towards more peripheral regions of the country, the late 1980s and 1990s witnessed an increased interest in a strong international position for the Randstad. The principle of concentrated deconcentration was replaced by a compact city policy. The most manifest element of the latter policy was the designation of large-scale building locations adjacent to existing cities, the so-called VINEX-locations. The late 1990s then saw an increasing interest in network concepts reflecting the interdependencies between the cities of the Randstad. Notwithstanding these shifts in policy and approaches, the concepts Randstad and Green Heart have been invariant in spatial planning since their introduction in the 1950s (Zonneveld, 1991).

As the Randstad is a spatial concept, the region has no official administrative status and hence no formal administrative boundaries. A common distinction

Figure 3.1 The Randstad



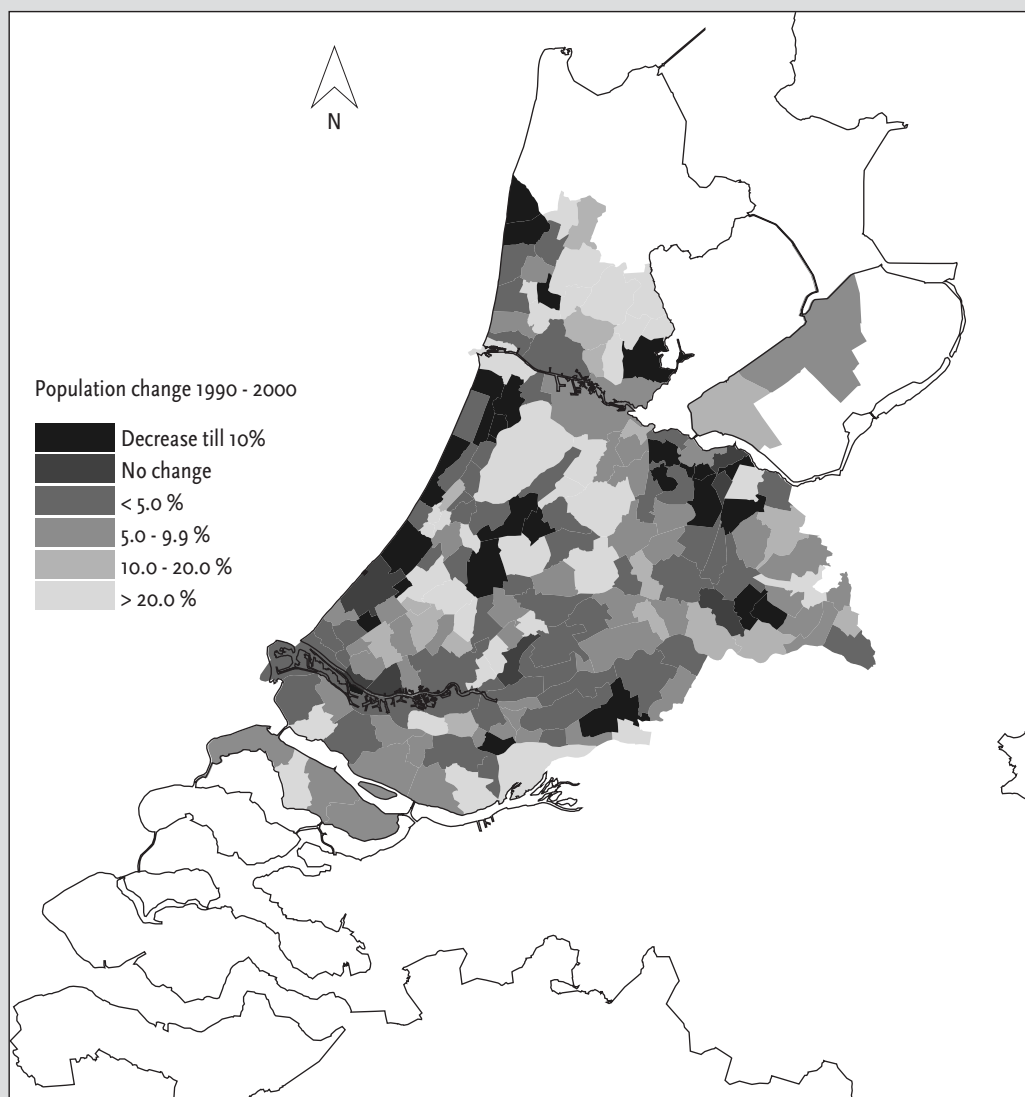
within the Randstad is into two 'wings'. The North Wing covers the urban area from Haarlem via Amsterdam to Utrecht, while the South Wing stretches from Dordrecht to Leiden.

3.2 Spatial dynamics

3.2.1 Demographic developments

Though one of the most densely populated areas in the world with 967 inhabitants per km², the population of the Randstad continues to grow. During the 1990s the population grew by almost half a million (463,000) people. In the

Figure 3.2 Population development in the municipalities of the Randstad, 1990-2000



Source: CBS, processed by OTB

year 2000, its total population reached nearly seven million (6,987,000).⁵ Quite remarkably, the share of the population of the Netherlands that lives in the Randstad has remained fairly stable in spite of the latter's demographic growth: it increased only 1% between 1980 and 2000.

Although the Randstad is the most highly urbanised part of the Netherlands, the region's population geography has been characterised by urban decon-

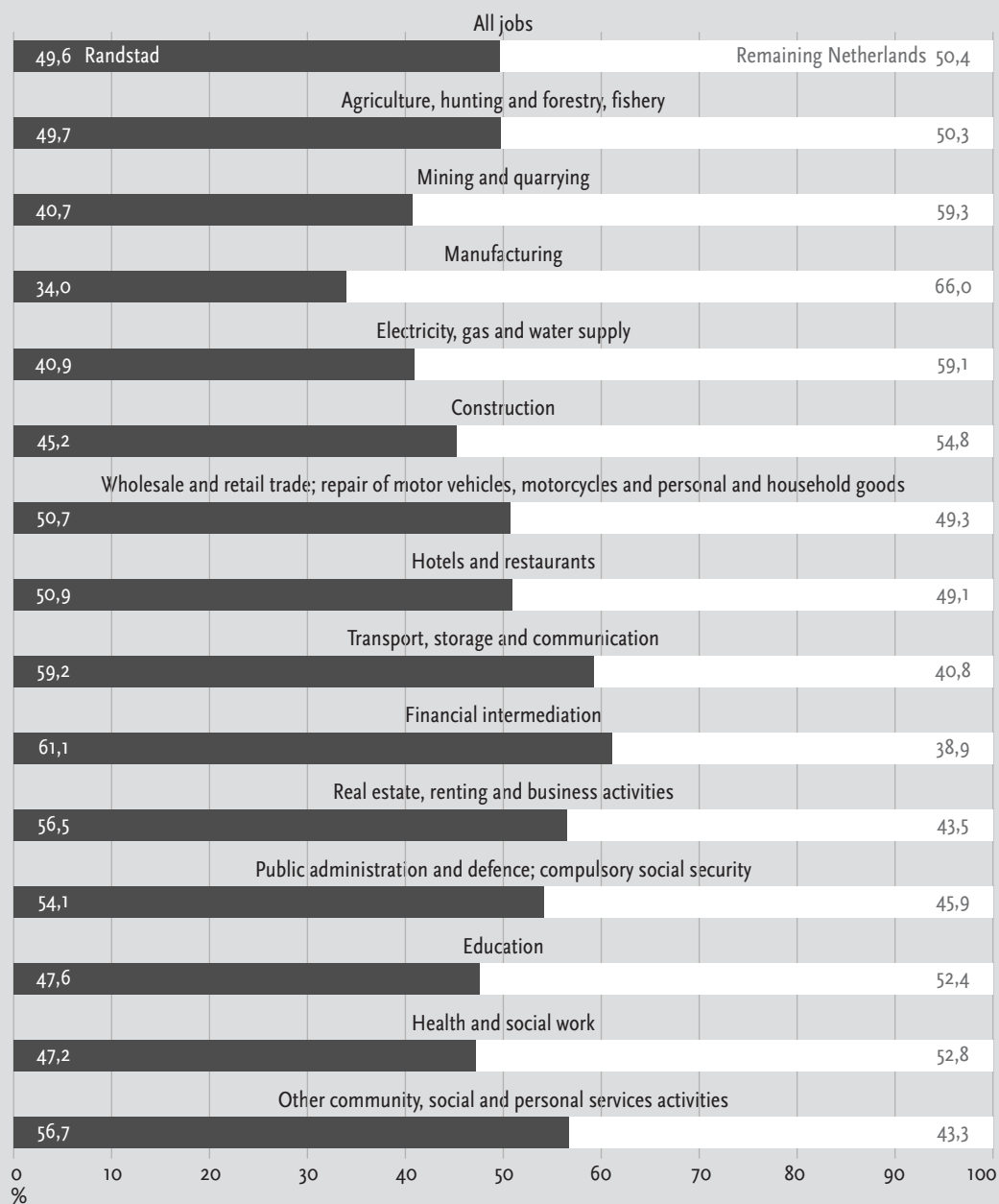
⁵ The four Randstad-provinces except the Corop-region called 'Kop of North Holland'.

centration for several decades. As already mentioned above, the policies of 'concentrated deconcentration' and 'compact city' were both responses by the planning authorities to the process of suburbanisation that started in the 1960s. Whereas the former attempted to guide this process into a limited number of designated new towns and growth centres, the latter tried to slow suburbanisation down. Suburbanisation caused population decline in absolute figures in the four largest cities of the Randstad until the mid-1980s. Since then, these 'big four' have started to grow again but still at rates considerably below the national average. In contrast with the largest cities, rather high population growth rates have been witnessed by new towns and, to a lesser extent, by intermediate and small towns and rural municipalities, particularly at the fringes of the Randstad and in the Green Heart (Bontje and Ostendorf, 1999). Figure 3.2 illustrates that suburbanisation into the Green Heart was still continuing in the 1990s. In addition, new towns such as Almere and Houten saw their planned population increase in that decade.

The recovery of the population growth in the large cities has been due partly to the acceleration of immigration that started in the 1980s. More precisely, since then over half of the population growth of the Randstad is due to immigration. In absolute figures, since 1990 the Randstad has shown an average annual net immigration surplus of 31,750 people.

3.2.2 Socio-economic performance

In addition to its high population density, the Randstad is also the most powerful economic region of the Netherlands. It concentrates 45% of the country's jobs (1999) into one fifth of the national area and it generates 47% of the national added value (1997). An interesting basic indicator of the economic progress of the Randstad is the net growth of the number of companies in the area. Data for 1998 shows almost twice as much new start-ups than closures: 41,147 versus 22,377 (Vereniging Kamers van Koophandel, 1999). The fastest growing group of branches in terms of new start-ups are 'construction' and 'real estate, renting and business activities'. The growth of the latter group indicates the tendency of the Randstad economy towards a service economy. In 1997 the number of companies (of 10 or more employees) in 'real estate, renting and business activities' was the third largest (14%) after 'wholesale, retail trade and repair' (24%) and 'manufacturing' (15%). Considering its fast growth rate, as well as the process of de-industrialisation that has been as self-evident in the Randstad as in most other advanced urban economies since the early 1980s, the group of 'real estate, renting and business activities' branches may be expected to become the second largest very soon. Agriculture, fishing and mining as well as public utilities appear on the other hand to be the least important sectors of the Randstad economy. It should be taken

Figure 3.3 Share of the Randstad in total Dutch employment by economic branch, 1998

Source: CBS, processed by OTB

into account, however, that Figure 3.3 shows numbers of companies and not numbers of employees. It is quite possible that public utility companies are relatively large in terms of number of employees.

The tendency of the Randstad economy towards a service economy is also

Table 3.1 GVA per capita in the four Randstad-provinces and the Netherlands (1985-1996)

	1985	1990	1995	1996
Utrecht	11150	15938	21974	22515
North Holland	13695	16807	22053	22625
South Holland	11850	15712	20366	20745
Flevoland	-	11384	14196	14044
Netherlands	11697	14889	19613	20027

Source: CBS

reflected in the relative shares of different economic sectors in its employment structure. Taking into account that the Randstad hosts almost half of all jobs in the Netherlands, figure 3.3 shows the region's relative dominance in five branches of the service sector: 'financial intermediation', 'transport, storage and communication', 'real estate, renting and business activities' and 'other community, social and personal services'. In addition, the 'hotels and restaurants' and 'wholesale and retail' branches are slightly overrepresented in the Randstad.

The economic performance of the Randstad is reflected in its Gross Value Added. In spite of its relatively large share in service jobs, the average GVA per capita in the Randstad does not exceed the national figure: €19,982 versus €20,027. Table 3.1 presents a more detailed picture of the Randstad by focusing on its four provinces.

Flevoland is considerably below the Dutch average, because the number of jobs is still much lower than the number of residents in this new province. On the level of both Randstad Wings, the North Wing stands out as a better performing region: its average annual growth rate of 6.5% over 1995-1999 is almost twice as high as the average of 3.6% in the South Wing.

These relatively high growth rates over a longer period have also resulted in a comparatively low level of unemployment. Out of a population of about 7 million people, only a little more than 100,000 were unemployed in 1999 and in the previous years unemployment figures halved. As a consequence, the labour participation rate in the Randstad increased from 62% (1990) to 69% in 1997.

3.2.3 Accessibility and infrastructure

In one of the first policy documents explicitly dealing with the Randstad, *De ontwikkeling van het Westen des Lands* (Rijksdienst voor het Nationale Plan, 1958, p.61), a comparison is made of the internal accessibility in the polynuclear Randstad conurbation and the internal accessibility in the mononuclear prototypes of London and Paris: 'Also in the future, travelling times between agglomerations in the Randstad can be more favourable than the travelling times needed in the metropolises to travel from the suburbs to the centre, bearing in mind further traffic improvements.' Currently we know that this forecast has been far too optimistic.

Congestion has been increasing ever since, in particular in the Randstad. Despite a tripling of the length of national roads since 1965, congestion has been increasing disproportionately compared to the number of trips made. Though congestion can no longer be considered a problem confined to the Randstad alone, this region still gets the largest share by far, with 41 of 2001's 50 most problematic congestion spots in the national road network. Congestion in the Netherlands is measured using *voertuigverliesuren*, the number of hours spent in a traffic jam by all cars. Between 1990 and 1997 these lost hours increased by 35% to 19.2 million hours.

More than half of the growth in mobility in the Netherlands is explained by demographic factors, such as the population growth, the number and composition of households, and the labour participation rate. The demand for mobility has further increased through growing prosperity and leisure time. Moreover, spatial policy has played a role. The policy of concentrated deconcentration (see next section) in growth centres in particular has led to increased mobility. It can be assumed that a more polycentric functioning of the Randstad, meaning also a more polycentric orientation of households and firms in search of fulfilment of their needs, increases mobility. Increased quality of infrastructure, in particular concerning the car, has played a role as well. Finally, individual attitudes and preferences are important (AVV, 2000).

Notwithstanding the congestion, one could say that the infrastructure within the Randstad is of a relatively high standard, with the dense network of motorways coupled with a dense network of railways with frequent connections. The external accessibility of the Randstad is excellent, having the world's biggest port and one of the major European airports (a hub) within its borders. Motorway connections to Belgium and Germany and the waterways for inland water transport also contribute to this.

3.3 Policy context concerning regional planning

Planning the Randstad has a long history and was already present in the very first spatial policy documents for the Netherlands that appeared in the 1950s and 1960s. During the past half a century of planning, the substance of these policies has varied considerably. The following presents a brief overview of spatial policies for the Randstad.

Policy attention on the Randstad started in 1951 when the Working Commission for the Western Netherlands, which included representatives of the major cities and the provinces concerned, was founded to discuss urban

development in that part of the Netherlands. From a retrospective perspective, it was a Working Party set up under the auspices of the Commission that formulated the Randstad-Green Heart doctrine, and with it the rationale for Dutch national planning (Van der Wusten and Faludi, 1992). Its 1956 report '*Het Westen... en overig Nederland*' was the first spatial plan specifically for the Randstad made by any Dutch government. According to Faludi and Van der Valk (1994), 'the report was intended to make the need for planning obvious'. In 1958 the Working Commission published the final report '*De ontwikkeling van het Westen des Lands*' in which it defined the Randstad as a horseshoe made up of two arched wings (a north and a south wing), also denoted as conurbations. It was recommended that the groups of cities and agglomerations making up these conurbations should be prevented from coalescing by means of green buffer zones. According to the planning principle of radiation, spill-over was directed towards new towns localised at the exterior of both wings. It was envisaged that the large open area situated in the midst of the urban ring, the Green Heart, would function as a permanent counterweight against the increasing urbanisation in the Randstad.

Eventually, the recommendations of the Commission were elaborated in the First Memorandum on Spatial Planning (Ministerie van VROM, 1960). The main emphasis was on a policy of 'dispersal', achieved by providing incentives to firms moving to problem areas and by decentralising government institutions away from the Randstad. This was in response to the rapid economic development of the Randstad and the lagging behind of the remaining parts of the Netherlands, which resulted in unwanted differences in prosperity, migration flows to the Randstad, and signs of congestion in the Randstad (Quist, 1993).

The Second Memorandum on Spatial Planning (Ministerie van VROM, 1966) aimed to disperse the population from the crowded western part of the Netherlands to the north and south. The Memorandum took a powerful stand against the suburban sprawl that was taking place in the Green Heart. The struggle against suburbanisation became synonymous with the policy of keeping open the Green Heart (Van der Wusten and Faludi, 1992). Under the policy heading of 'concentrated deconcentration' it was attempted to accommodate the suburban growth by the development of designated spill-over centres, or new towns, within the urban districts around the four largest cities. During the 1970s, this policy was extended over larger distances from the major cities by means of the foundation of so-called growth centres. Many authors consider the policy of concentrated deconcentration successful from the point of view of preventing the Randstad from uncontrolled urban sprawl (e.g. Hall, 1984). Faludi and Van der Valk (1991) concluded that there were more than half a million witnesses to the success of the policy, i.e. the number of people who had moved to the designated growth centres.

Ironically, the growth centre policy was introduced a few years after the publication of the 'Oriënteringsnota' of 1973 that perceived the policy of concentrated deconcentration as a threat to urban development. In spite of the success of this policy, it was feared that continuing deconcentration of urban structures into extended urban zones or urban fields would largely disintegrate their vital urban *milieux* (Zonneveld, 1991). Consequently, the focus was on the spatial scale of urban districts. The Third Memorandum on Spatial Planning (Ministerie van VROM, 1976) – also called the Urbanisation Memorandum –, largely reflected this new track. It emphasised the improvement of the existing urban structures by concentration and intensification of developments within urban districts, not in the last place on the fringes of the Randstad. This policy shift was accompanied by the sharpening up of the concept of the Green Heart, including the refining of the demarcation of this open area.

During the 1980s, the increased concern over the decline of urban cores following twenty years of continuous suburbanisation finally led to the death blow to the policy of concentrated deconcentration. 'Impoverished cities with an underclass in dilapidated neighbourhoods were the modern version of the disorder which planners seek to eliminate' (Faludi and Van der Valk, 1994, p.185). As a response to urban sprawl, the concept of the 'compact city' was introduced in the Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning (Ministerie van VROM, 1988). This concept was symbolic of a policy aiming to stop the exodus from the central cities and the corresponding erosion of the supporting power of urban services. The objective was to intensify and optimise existing land uses and services within urban districts. Alongside the switch in focus from concentrated deconcentration to concentric growth, the Fourth Memorandum also displayed a strong international perspective. With the integration of the European Union which started in 1992 it was expected that the competition between nations would be increasingly replaced by competition between urban regions (see also section 2.2). Therefore, strong urban regions were needed and in particular the Randstad. In a way, the international competitiveness of the Randstad had already been emphasised in the 1950s by the Working Commission and, echoing this, the Randstad was now conceived as a worthy polynuclear metropolitan opponent facing other, often monocentric European competitors. Again, the Randstad's decentralised and dispersed structure was recognised as a favourable asset in the international competition. The Green Heart, the buffer zones between urban districts, and the Randstad greenbelt gave it a park-like allure that was hard to copy by most monocentric metropolises. On the other hand, its decentralised structure implied a large amount of traffic and transport. In the early 1990s, the compact city policy was further elaborated in the Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning Extra (VINEX) (Ministerie van VROM, 1991a), of which an actualised

version (VINAC) still prevails today. The VINEX intends to guide urban developments and redevelopments towards locations within existing cities and towards new greenfield sites directly adjacent to the cities (Dieleman and Musterd, 1999). The idea is to reduce the amount of car-kilometres and to restrict further growth of criss-cross patterns of traffic cutting through the Green Heart. New high-quality public transport facilities should connect these locations to the nearest large cities. The VINEX draws a firm line around the Green Heart in order to restrict developments exclusively to local needs (Faludi and Van der Valk, 1994). In this way, the Randstad-Green Heart 'doctrine' has turned into a rigid spatial perspective to consolidate the demarcation of 'red' and 'green' (Hajer and Zonneveld, 2000).

In the late 1990s, spatial concepts based on the network metaphor began to dominate the planning debate. According to the report '*De ruimte van Nederland*' (Ministerie van VROM, 1999a), a forerunner to the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning (Ministerie van VROM, 2001), some urban regions were developing into an amalgamate of various centres and nodes with one housing and labour market. 'Residents and companies do not focus on one centre. Dependent on their needs, they give preference to varying locations, which form together a complete and diverse supply of living and working environments' (Ministerie van VROM, 1999a). This tendency has led to the conceptual switch from the compact city to the 'complete city', with its spatial translation into the 'network city'. Three large network cities were recognised in the Randstad: Amsterdam, Central Utrecht and the South Wing (The Hague and Rotterdam). It was recommended that these network cities should be developed into complete and vital urban areas composed of multiple complementary centres and diversity in urban environments. Ideally, these should be connected by a rapid public transport system. The 'network city' pushed the planning concept of the Randstad a little to the background through focusing on a lower spatial scale. The concept of the Green heart still acted as a counterpart to the 'red' developments in the surrounding urban areas.

Finally, when the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning appeared⁶ (Ministerie van VROM, 2001) the focus was again on the Randstad as a whole. The 'network city' concept was left out in favour of a concept addressing a higher spatial scale, namely *stedelijke netwerken* (urban networks). The Randstad is considered to be one of the six Dutch urban networks of national and inter-

⁶ This document is at this moment (2002) no official policy. It still needs to be agreed in the Dutch parliament. Given the changes of government that took place in the summer of 2002 and that will occur after the snap elections in January 2003, the policy proposals are likely to change somewhat. However, the value of the concept of *stedelijke netwerken* (urban networks) seems to be undisputed.

Table 3.2 Key words describing the position of the concept of the Randstad in national spatial policy by period

Period	Major policy documents	Key words
1950-1973	Het Westen... en overig Nederland (1956) De ontwikkeling van het Westen des Lands (1958) First Memorandum on Spatial Planning (1960) Second Memorandum on Spatial Planning (1966)	Randstad wings: North and South wing Decentralised metropolis Radiation outwards Concentrated deconcentration Keeping open the Green Heart
1973-1988	Oriënteringsnota (1973) Third Memorandum on Spatial Planning (1976)	Concentration in urban districts Intensification of fringes Refining open central area Growth centres Buffer zones Compact city
1988-1998	Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning (1988) VINEX (1991)	Randstad Metropolis Randstad International Ecological infrastructure Metropolitan business environment Compact city
1998-now	De Ruimte van Nederland (1996) Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning (policy proposal)	Network city Urban networks One housing and labour market Complementarity Diversity

Source: Zonneveld, 1991, actualised by authors

national importance. The ideas on complementarity and complete urban areas are still valid, but transferred to a higher spatial scale. There is much focus on regional co-ordination and co-operation for the spatial development of urban networks such as the Randstad.

The conceptual history of the 'Randstad' national spatial policy is summarised in table 3.2 by key words and major documents representing distinct periods. It clearly shows the alteration of the underlined major policy lines concentrated deconcentration, compact city and urban networks. Moreover, it shows that the Randstad concept has been firmly linked to another concept, the Green Heart, and that both have been perceived on varying spatial scales. The spatial scale has switched from the Randstad wings in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s to urban districts in the late 1970s and 1980s, to the Randstad as a whole in the late 1980s and 1990s, scaled down again towards the lower scale of network cities at the end of the 1990s, but, now again lying on the scale of the Randstad. Notwithstanding these shifts of policy and approaches, the concepts 'Randstad' and 'Green Heart' as such have been invariant in spatial planning since their introduction in the 1950s (Zonneveld, 1991). Both concepts have captured a robust and strategic place in national spatial policy. It is clear, therefore, that the policy context is very positive towards regional planning on the scale of the Randstad.

3.4 Key issues

Chapter two presented three general key issues for spatial planning in polycentric urban regions – internal and external accessibility, uneven spatial-economic development, and spatial diversity and the quality of open space. While common for the polycentric urban regions examined in this volume, they are given a somewhat different interpretation in each region. In the case of the Randstad, actual policy developments – the publication of the new spatial planning documents – provide the background for discussing these key issues. Elaborating on the trends and developments mentioned in the second section of this chapter, the issues are placed within the regional context of political discussions, policies and controversies. Finally, some recommendations to deal with the issues from a regional perspective are made.

3.4.1 Internal and external accessibility

Policy debate

Two policy documents are particularly relevant when discussing the current political and policy debate on internal and external accessibility. These are the proposed Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning (Ministerie van VROM, 2001) and the new National Traffic and Transportation Plan (NVVP; Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat, 2000). The NVVP includes a campaign on improving the accessibility of the Randstad: the '*Bereikbaarheidsoffensief Randstad*'.

Internal accessibility

The issue of urban vitality predominates the debate about future spatial policies. As accessibility is of increasing importance for a city's economic vitality in the network society, there is much emphasis on this theme in policy documents. The Fifth Memorandum argues that the further development of urban networks such as the Randstad towards more coherent entities involves an increase in mobility between the nodes in the network. The intention to accommodate this increase is clearly expressed in the Memorandum, thus raising new challenges concerning the internal accessibility. The 'members' of urban networks, notably municipalities, are required to co-operate in developing an integral transportation system on the network level, connecting individual cities and urban districts, for persons and goods. Other priorities are the improvement of the quality of public transport, better accessibility by car, and the improvement of points for transferring from car to public transport.

The Fifth Memorandum aims to explore two different options for a Randstad-wide transportation system: the improvement and expansion of the existing transportation network (mainly railways connecting city centres) and the addition of a new transportation system on the inner skirt of the Randstad,

around the Green Heart. This latter could be another rail system or a system using the magnetic levitation technique. No decision has been made yet, but the national government has committed itself to the building of fast connections by rail between the four largest cities, as part of the plan to keep the Randstad accessible (Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat, 2000).

Other measures to improve public transportation and accessibility by car are listed in the NVVP. The NVVP places much emphasis on the 'user pays' principle (road pricing) and on making better use of the existing infrastructural capacity. The *Bereikbaarheidsoffensief Randstad* proposes a system of road pricing in which the fee differs according to the scarcity of space on the road. This means that at certain times (the morning rush hours) and at certain places (notably the motorways towards the largest cities) a fee will be levied. The expected dispersion of traffic flows in space and time should reduce congestion. The largest cities agreed on this system in exchange for funds to improve their accessibility by public transport and by road. However, these plans encountered much resistance in society. The former government therefore suggested replacing this system by a flat rate on kilometres driven. The current cabinet, however, abandoned these plans entirely.

The four large cities in the Randstad, the so-called 'G4', contributed to the policy debate by stating that an integrated approach to the road system, the public transport system and the interconnections between these systems is needed, with future investments focused on the missing links and the linkages that lack capacity (G4, 2001). They called this new system Deltanet.

External Accessibility

The Fifth Memorandum emphasises the need to take an international perspective in planning. Consequently, there is much emphasis on the need for good connections between the Randstad and other major urban centres in Northwest Europe. It is suggested in the Memorandum that the existing rail connections between the three continental polycentric urban regions function as a kind of 'circle line'. Referring to the Trans European Networks project, the need for a more quality-oriented policy in densely-populated areas such as the Northwest European Delta is stressed. In the NVVP, no major new connections are planned besides the highspeed railways to Germany and Belgium, and the Betuweroute. All these projects are still under construction. Despite its rapid growth, international data-communication receives very limited attention, perhaps because of the perceived prime responsibility of the private sector in this field.

Comments on proposed policies

Here, some comments made by public and private stakeholders on the pro-

posed policies in the NVVP and Fifth Memorandum with regard to the accessibility of the Randstad will be presented. The comments focus on two issues: (1) a difference between the spatial scale of the Randstad and the scale on which transportation issues should be tackled, and (2) the interaction between accessibility and spatial development.

(1) The Randstad and the spatial scale of transportation systems

Questions have been raised about the Randstad being marked as one urban network (VROMRaad, 2001; CPB et al., 2001). For instance, the VROMRaad assumes that, in order to qualify for being one urban network, the cities should be within a distance of one-hour travelling, which is not the case for the entire region. Pursuing this is no option either, as it would require huge investments in transportation systems and generate huge flows over large distances, which are not desired from a spatial and environmental perspective. A combination of planning agencies states that most travel undertaken by people still takes place within urban districts (CPB et al, 2001).

The question of whether or not the Randstad can be seen as one urban network is relevant in the light of transportation systems and the spatial scale these systems should aim at. The development of a transportation system oriented at the most important centres and centres of the second order has been proposed (VROMRaad). While thinking about public transportation systems at a Randstad scale (inner or outer circular line) is deemed necessary, the VROMRaad values the development of city-to-city connections and already-scheduled transportation systems on the scale of the urban district more. Transport relations on a Randstad-scale are not common enough to legitimise the construction of large scale new transportation networks such as *Rondje Randstad*. This view conforms with the preference of regional administrators, who are in favour of first improving the existing regional rail networks instead of constructing a new fast public transportation system on the inner ring along the Green Heart (Bureau Regio Randstad, 2001).

(2) The interaction between accessibility and spatial developments

The Fifth Memorandum remains rather vague on the spatial consequences of the improvement of public transportation systems in the Randstad. This is clear from the proposals for policy on a new transportation system such as a *Rondje Randstad* and for the policy concerning Schiphol Airport. Schiphol, and to a lesser extent also the Port of Rotterdam, offer good opportunities to integrate spatial and transport policies. However, the Fifth Memorandum, as well as the NVVP, view these mainports from a transport-oriented perspective and neglect their structuring effects on spatial investments. In particular Schiphol Airport has great strategic value for spatial planning, because the knowledge-based services sector is very dependent on good external and international

accessibility. The further development of Schiphol should be designed to address this sector's needs (VROMRaad, 2001). Generally speaking, the lack of interaction between accessibility and spatial developments in both planning documents is a deficiency. The decision to construct a new transportation system on a Randstad-scale should be accompanied by a spatial investment program around the new nodes of this transportation system (VROMRaad, 2001). One reason is that demand for transportation between locations on the inner circle of the Randstad – currently too limited to support a system like *Rondje Randstad* – can be 'organised' by locating new functions such as working and housing in nodes on the inner circle. The impact of a policy that combines the improvement of the existing public transport system (as presented in the NVVP), the construction of a *Rondje Randstad* and a spatial investment programme aimed at urban nodes on this inner ring of the Randstad has been forecast in a research report by the Milieu- en Natuurplanbureau (2001). Compared with the current situation, this combination of investments would lead to an increase in accessibility of jobs from locations within the Randstad by 30-35%. It was also observed that the current accessibility of jobs by car is remarkably better than by public transport. A polynuclear functioning of the Randstad seems very much dependent on the road system.

Outlines for future spatial policies

The outlines in this section should be seen within the perspective of the tension that can be observed between the aim to strengthen the relationships within the Randstad, and hence allow mobility to increase and the aim to improve the accessibility of the region.

Spatial scale of transportation systems

Actual traffic flows demand a fast scaling-up of public transportation systems from the local to the scale of the urban region. Public transport must adjust to the rising polycentric nature of traffic flows on this latter, sub Randstad level of scale. Therefore, the existing plans for light-rail connections such as Randstadspoor, Randstadrail, Agglonet, the Rijn-Gouwelijn and Regionet need to be implemented as soon as possible, whilst bearing in mind the possibilities of integrating these separate light-rail systems into one system in the long-term to serve the higher Randstad scale. Uniformity in these various systems, and the development of ideas about a Randstad-wide transport system needs immediate attention, given the long period of realisation. In the meantime, the North Wing and South Wing are promising spatial scales for organising transport integration. Therefore, the light-rail systems of Amsterdam and Utrecht need to be extended and integrated, while the Randstadrail-system needs to be extended further to Dordrecht, Leiden and Gouda.

An integrated Randstad system has great strategic importance, although currently there is only limited demand for it. By decreasing travelling times, its value derives from its ability to join the Randstad cities together, to further increase the coherence and perhaps consequently the metropolitan character of the Randstad and to develop larger labour, shopping, education and leisure markets in the Randstad. These are supposed preconditions for a true polynuclear functioning of the Randstad. In order to achieve an effective scaling up of the transport system, a strategy is needed that increases accessibility by both car and public transport, while ensuring the interconnectivity of both systems. Moreover, attention to a transport system that integrates the entire Randstad in the long run should not be at the expense of systems on the lower scale of urban regions. Both systems are necessary, the latter in the short run and the former as an addition at a later stage. To ensure their complementarity, both systems must be linked at certain exchange nodes and aim to fulfill different transport demands.

Road pricing and road-adaptation

Theoretically, road pricing, as proposed in the *Bereikbaarheidsoffensief Randstad*, would have a positive impact on the internal accessibility. However, the suggested replacement of the initially proposed time and place specific fee by a flat rate on driven kilometres will lose all necessary differentiation and will not contribute to the original goal of a better dispersion of traffic flows to reduce congestion and, hence, to improve the internal accessibility of the Randstad.

One of the major causes of congestion is the conflict that arises when local traffic interferes with long-distance traffic and these problems will only increase when a more coherent Randstad means more long-distance traffic in the region. Separating these flows and providing undisturbed, perhaps paid, circulation on the major routes is necessary, although complex and costly.

Spatial policy to increase the internal and external accessibility

Spatial policies can make a structural contribution to the improvement of the internal and external accessibility by siting spatial functions at locations that make an efficient and sustainable way of transportation more likely. Given the 'natural' preference of businesses to be located near well accessible and possibly multimodal nodes in transport systems, spatial investments should be centred on nodes of public transport that need to be easily-accessible by road as well. Such nodes are characterised by a certain accessibility as well as by the intensity and diversity of activities there (Bertolini, 1999). Both assets need to be more or less balanced: excellent accessibility requires the development of spatial functions of a high order around that node and *vice versa*. This means that the construction of an additional transport system on the scale of

the Randstad should be accompanied by major investments around its stations. Clarity about the future location of these stations (Randstad's inner circle?) would be welcome information for the planning of current spatial investments. A synergy between real estate policy, spatial policy and infrastructure policy is needed. This consideration could be part of the new location policy that replaces the VINEX' ABC-location policy. Spatial functions that depend strongly on good external accessibility must be able to be located near the mainports (Schiphol Airport, Port of Rotterdam, Amsterdam Internet Exchange) or, if relevant, in the corridors towards RheinRuhr and the Flemish Diamond.

External accessibility

The key to the improvement of the external accessibility of the region is transnational co-operation. While the Fifth Memorandum only remarks that other airports and seaports are close-by, we propose the development of a transnational policy that enables the three continental polycentric urban regions and the central area in between to make better use of each other's facilities (airports, seaports, data-communication). Complementary development patterns of the mainports should be striven for, although this seems hard to achieve given the current situation of competition. Reliable, comfortable and efficient links from the Randstad with the airports in Brussels and RheinRuhr, for instance by high-speed train, are necessary.

3.4.2 Uneven spatial economic development: urban vitality

Policy debate

Considering the position of the Randstad in the international economy is not new. The Second Memorandum on Spatial Planning (Ministerie van VROM, 1966) ranked cities according to the number of inhabitants, leading to four different types of urban environments: the A, B, C and D-milieu. Each milieu represents amongst others the level of amenities available. The D-milieu (about 250,000 inhabitants) has the highest level of amenities. During the preparation of the Second Memorandum, there was a debate about the E-milieu (Zonneveld, 1992), an environment of metropolitan standard (E stands also for Europe). Planners wondered whether or not it was possible and desirable to create an E-milieu in the Randstad. It became clear that only the entire urban constellation of the Randstad provided starting points for the development of this environment of metropolitan standard and the focus would have to be on qualitative instead of quantitative aspects. In particular it was considered that the functional relationships in the Randstad needed to be strengthened. In the end, the policy makers did not choose this E-milieu type, as it required a concentration of urban functions and so did not con-

form with the spatial dispersal policy adopted. In addition, the large-scale restructuring of inner city areas to accommodate E-milieus proved to be politically unacceptable, both at national and local council level.

Renewed interest in the Randstad as a place of business for international economic activities is found in the Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning (1988) and many local plans from the late eighties and nineties. For the Randstad, the aim was to develop a metropolitan business climate. A further elaboration of ideas about this development focussed on:

- the realisation of high-quality environments for living, working and recreation;
- the development of high-quality amenities and facilities of international allure;
- the strengthening of functional coherence between Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague on the one side, and between these three cities, Schiphol Airport, the Port of Rotterdam and the Green Heart on the other side;
- marketing of this metropolitan business environment;
- the development of a functional division of tasks and specialities between Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague on the one side and the city of Utrecht in its function as a national centre on the other side.

Elaboration of these ideas took place in the so-called NURI report (*Nadere Uitwerking Randstad Internationaal*, Ministerie van VROM, 1991b). However, the objectives of this report were soon scaled down to a less ambitious level. The final report contained little more than an overview of current or anticipated policy actions. In particular, policies to promote the functional division of tasks and specialisms between the G4 proved to be a difficult theme: local and supra-local actors did not want to commit themselves to such thoughts.

Meanwhile, the national government launched a concrete investment programme for strategic projects in urban areas, called 'Key-Projects'. A prime criterion in selecting the projects was the contribution of the project to the development of metropolitan business locations in the Randstad (Hereijgers and Van der Veer, 1992). While most of these projects related to urban restructuring, a second generation of Key Projects concerned the development of the areas around the future stations of the High Speed Train. Four of these new Key Projects are situated in the Randstad, in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht respectively. These projects are meant to contribute to the strengthening of the international position of the Netherlands, to intensive land-use, and to the sustainable development of mobility (Ministerie van VROM, 1999b).

Strongly influenced by recommendations from stakeholders in the Randstad-region, the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning (2001) launches the idea

of the Delta Metropolis for the Randstad: a metropolis of international standard in the watery delta of North West Europe. In order to create such a metropolitan environment, the national government introduces the concept of the 'urban network', as the G4 cities are not considered individually to have the potential to become metropolitan in the international sense. In general, it is stated that the network economy requires high-quality places and a good accessibility of such urban networks in order to cope with international competition. This implies the improving of their urbanity, the addition of qualitative assets, and good accessibility. Fitting in with this approach are a better mixture of living and working locations, a greater diversity in residential and working environments, protection and possibly further development of landscape, nature and cultural historical values, and, finally, the creation of urbanity and nodality (i.e. urban centres) within the urban networks. For the Delta Metropolis, the Fifth Memorandum expresses the metropolitan ambitions by strengthening the unique delta-character of the region and by improving the infrastructure networks to provide fast, safe and reliable options for communication. In its spatial vision for the Delta Metropolis, the Fifth Memorandum states that the Randstad has enough critical mass to function as an important urban region in Europe. The role of the local spatial environment and the quality of life for the attraction of companies is acknowledged. It is recommended that the Randstad aims to provide excellent working environments for the following range of internationally operating companies:

- metropolitan environments for the business services sector and urban tourism;
- urban and green environments for the R&D sector;
- logistical nodes: international sea and airports;
- seaport locations for chemical and other industry.

Comments on proposed policy

While lipservice is being paid to the importance of the international profile and the business locations in the Randstad as a metropolitan region, the Fifth Memorandum proposes no real policies to develop business locations of metropolitan standard. Before recommending certain policy initiatives to make up for this in the next section, we will focus on three issues. The first one is the background theme of polycentricity and 'metropolitanisation'. The quest for attracting high-class international companies, institutions and activities goes deeper than just the availability of high-class business locations with metropolitan allure. The background is that of a polycentric urban region willing to organise metropolitan forces in a by definition dispersed spatial structure. The second issue is the relationship between accessibility and urban vitality. The last issue concerns the accuracy of the Randstad as a framework for developing top business environments.

Background: polycentricity and metropolitan ambitions

The ambition of policy-makers in the Randstad is clearly the development of a metropolis. However, rather than the traditional sense of metropolis – a huge accumulation of urban functions, people and activities within one densely-built urban area – it is felt that polycentric urban regions need to take their polynuclear character as a starting point for developing future spatial policies. Therefore, focus must be on the enhancement of the specific qualities of polycentric urban regions, while also making up for their specific shortcomings. Many of the positive qualities relate to ‘quality of life’, such as having the Green Heart within easy reach. Next to this close relationship between ‘the urban’ and ‘the rural’, there is a great variety of business and residential environments (but no real E-type locations), relatively less congested urban areas and limited social problems in the cities. Of course, spatial planning cannot entirely be credited for the latter, but it may have contributed to keeping problems on a small scale. The general feeling in the Randstad is that these assets must be seen as important competitive factors and need to be assured in the future. On the other side, polycentric urban regions are lacking certain advantages that cities like Paris and London have, such as for instance the critical mass for regional transport systems.

The Delta Metropolis: the right framework?

It is generally acknowledged that the Randstad or Delta Metropolis is the Netherlands’ most important asset in the global competition for investments. However, the Fifth Memorandum is rather vague about its policy intentions for promoting this region. According to some (VROMRaad, 2001), the entire Delta Metropolis should be positioned much more explicitly as an economic region of metropolitan standard. In fact, the concept of the E-milieu type of environment has even been applied to the whole Delta Metropolis.

Considering the metropolitan business climate in the Randstad, stakeholders are increasingly convinced that none of the cities is able to reach a top international position on its own. Currently, several cities in the Randstad host some international top amenities⁷, notably business and cultural services in Amsterdam, port-related activities in Rotterdam and international political and judicial institutions in The Hague, in particular EU and UN institutions. However, these various functions are under pressure due to the continuing concentration of top functions in so-called Global Cities. The spatial scale of the Randstad seems to provide new opportunities to resist the pressure and

⁷ These include: headquarters of banks and other multinationals, headquarters of internationally operating political-economic organisations, top educational facilities and top research institutes, international airports and similar mainport functions and top cultural facilities (VROMRaad, 2001).

even enhance the metropolitan business environment, in particular for some economic niches (Dieleman and Faludi, 1998). If the several cities co-operate and co-ordinate their spatial-economic policies, opportunities will arise for making use of each other's complementary economic profile, for preventing unnecessary and harmful internal competition, for joint international marketing and for administrative network externalities. This co-operation and co-ordination is not easily accomplished, as was shown by a study by the CPB (2000). This study revealed that most of the 25 largest Dutch cities focus on the development of the same economic sectors (notably ICT, multimedia, tourism) by applying the same instruments.

Accessibility as a precondition for urban vitality

Excellent internal accessibility seems an absolute precondition for polycentric urban regions to remain or develop into an economic region of metropolitan standard. The VROMRaad (2001) considers the polycentric nature of the Randstad a possible constraint in its ambition to develop top locations: a regional transportation system has yet to be developed to make sure that the Delta Metropolis does not suffer from its dispersed urban structure compared to more compactly-built metropolitan areas. One of the reasons for this is the enlargement of the basis for activities of metropolitan standard. Other conditions for attracting metropolitan economic activities must be met as well, some of them relating to external accessibility such as quality improvement of airport and seaport facilities, international connections and information and communications technology.

Outlines for future spatial policies

Our outlines for future spatial policies follow from the comments made in the previous section. We will first present some outlines relating to the deep-rooted issue of making the Randstad a competitive metropolitan region, after which we will deal with the development of business locations of metropolitan standard in more detail.

For a regional approach concerning business locations in the Randstad, a vision of the future economic status of the Randstad is indispensable. Do the relevant actors, for instance, aim to create a 'Global City Region' (Scott, 2001)? Do they really want further economic integration within the region? Do they strive for the attraction of international top activities in economy, culture and the political-judicial sector, and, of more importance, are they willing to co-operate to accomplish this? Answers to these questions need to be laid down in a vision of the future economic status of the Randstad, made up by actors in the region themselves in order to gain political commitment. As became clear in the previous section, strengthening the specific polycentric spatial structure provides starting-points for such a vision.

Furthermore, when ‘The Metropolitan’ in the network society becomes foot-loose in some respects, as is argued by Boelens (1998), then there is a need for spatial planning to provide the conditions for unexpected meetings of different people, functions and activities as well as for a multi-dimensional use of space. Alongside promoting the Delta Metropolis through the organisation of metropolitan events, spatial planning should aim at developing nodes; multiple urban functions integrated with a transportation node. These nodes are characterised by a mixed use of space, intensive and multiple land use. This is believed to not only increase urban vitality, but also to diminish urban developments outside urban areas, thus enhancing spatial diversity (Hoppenbrouwer, Louw and Maat, 2000). Therefore, urban functions must be concentrated in nodes, which come in a great variety of types, depending on their accessibility and the types of urban functions located there. Business locations of metropolitan standard need to have an accessibility profile that fits the needs of the activity involved, for instance international headquarters in the financial and business services sector need a very high level of accessibility of a particular kind, i.e. good infrastructure for data communication as well as a major international airport.

Turning to the specific development of high-class business locations, some recommendations for future spatial policies can be made. The Fifth Memorandum provides opportunities for the members of urban networks such as the Randstad to develop spatial-economic policies together. We propose that the issue of top business locations is one of the main items in these policies. The development profiles for the new Key Projects need to be co-ordinated, aiming to create more differentiation and complementarity. First of all, the preferences of international firms and institutions must be recorded and direct policy-making. However, regional co-ordination is a prerequisite to prevent a very dispersed pattern of too many business locations. It is desirable that the national government plays a role in making the few selected locations for international high-class activities more attractive. This could be done by providing additional funds for, for instance, the improvement of the accessibility or for making multiple land use possible. The existing Key Projects fit very well and this policy needs to be continued and expanded to include not only the stations of the High Speed Train – although a welcome criterion for a selective approach – but also a limited number of other locations. One of them should be Schiphol Airport. Despite being a station of the High Speed Train, Schiphol Airport is not a Key Project. This is a ‘missed opportunity’ as this highly dynamic location attracts a great deal of investment. At this very moment, an uncoordinated proliferation of office locations over several places nearby is taking place.

3.4.3 Spatial diversity and the quality of open space

Policy debate

In the Netherlands, there has been much discussion about preserving valuable green areas from urban developments, particularly in the Randstad where the demand for space by many economic sectors is high. The Green Heart is the most important 'green and open' area in the Randstad and an important element of the urban structure. In the words of the National Planning Agency: 'The structure of an urban concentration on the rim and an open rural central area with agricultural, natural, recreational, cultural-historical and scenic functions and assets together constitute a structure which results in a metropolitan climate for location, with peace, quietness, space and green within a short distance' (RPD, 1999:48). The concepts of concentrated deconcentration and the compact city aimed to protect the open space, reduce the growth of car mobility and maintain the socio-economic support of the city. In that sense, the protection of natural green areas is seen as support for the vitality of cities as well: 'Without the restrictive policy the Green Heart would urbanise and the cities would 'ruralise' and disappear from the map as international centres. Since the panoramas, landscapes and scenic areas of the Green Heart add greatly to the quality of life of citizens, the Randstad becomes very advantageous as international economic location' (RPD, 1996, p.16).

Political pressure to provide more space to businesses and housing has been increasing in recent years. At the same time, the agricultural sector is losing its strength to counter urban development. Its economic position is becoming weaker, though other 'green' claims for space, such as water, nature and leisure and tourism are gaining weight. Moreover, the agricultural sector is taking on more and more of an industrial urban shape with bricks and greenhouses. As a result, the stringent distinction between the 'urban' and the 'rural' is becoming less evident, so diminishing the spatial diversity in the Randstad. However, the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning still favours a rural-urban division. In this Memorandum the increase of pressure on the open space of the Netherlands is still considered to be a large threat. It is observed that more and more space is needed for functions such as housing, working, transport, leisure and recreation, resulting in the amount of open space diminishing, fragmenting and decreasing in quality. To tackle the deterioration and fragmentation of the open landscape, the instrument of red and green contours has been formulated. In this policy of contours a distinction is made between red contours around built-up areas, green contours around valuable green areas and so-called 'balance areas'. The latter cover no less than 62% of the national surface in-between red and green contour areas. The

red contours form the boundaries of the current built-up areas, supplemented by the additionally-required space for urban expansions until 2015. The green contours mark out areas with particular ecological, landscape or cultural-historical assets. Specific natural assets and cultural-historical or archaeological monuments are preserved by these contours. Within the green contour areas a so-called 'no, unless' regime is enforced. This means that interventions within and in the immediate vicinity of the green contour areas are not permitted if these interventions have a harmful effect on the existing assets and essential characteristics, *unless* there are no reasonable alternatives and if it is a matter of weighty public interest. In this case, measures must be undertaken to compensate for the intervention. For the balance areas the aim is to improve the quality of the landscape. The balance areas also serve as 'search areas' for possible extensions of red contours. The goal of the policy of contours is to maintain and strengthen the spatial diversity in both city and countryside.

It is proposed that the responsibility of drawing the contours lies with the municipalities, while the actual and legal establishment of the contours is a task for the provinces. The national government will indicate how municipalities should define the boundaries of the red contours. The contours may be altered every five years. The Memorandum indicates that the desired diversity of red and green contour areas does not apply to the spatial level of an individual city, but to the level of urban networks. Without co-ordination, therefore, it is feared that contrasts will disappear and open spaces between cities will be subjected to great pressure. Instead of the cities individually, participants of an urban network are expected to jointly offer a complete program of residential and working environments and jointly plan the countryside. Within this urban network the existing urban space must be optimally utilised through 'intensification, combination and transformation' (Ministerie van VROM, 2001). In theory, this means a scaling up of a compact individual city policy to a regional compact city policy.

Comments on proposed policy

The Fifth Memorandum policy of contours attracted much attention in the public debate and was not well-received. According to the VROMRaad (2001) the Fifth Memorandum hardly pays attention to the disadvantages and risks of the policy of contours. In fact, the policy of contours needs to be elaborated still to a large extent. Questions have been raised about many aspects, for instance about the administrative and planning burdens of drawing contours, about the risks of developing too fast and too extensively when red contours can be revised so often, about adjusting contours harming the credibility of spatial planning, about the lack of a supplementary set of instruments to stimulate tight red contours, about opportunistic behaviour of municipalities

for whom wide red contours are of strategic importance for growth and financially beneficial, on speculation with land, on the poor relation between tight red contours and residential preferences and land prices, etc (Milieu en Natuurplanbureau, 2001; CPB et al., 2001; VROMRaad, 2001). Also, for the green contours much remains unclear: what should be included, should 'everything' included be equally protected, and what can municipalities 'do' with them (VROMRaad, 2001). The *Milieu en Natuurplanbureau* (2001) is even more critical in that the selection of land protected by green areas is currently way too limited as 80% of the valuable landscapes are located in 'balance areas' which are under severe pressure as 'search areas' for development. With regard to these areas, the Fifth Memorandum lacks a clear vision. Finally, the implementation of a contours policy has been debated. There seems to be overall agreement on the necessity of some co-operation at the regional level using a development strategy as a basic starting point (VROMRaad, 2001; ANWB et al., 2001; IPO, 2001; CPB et al., 2001). At present, the policy of contours seems very defensive and restrictive, while a more pro-active approach seems to be needed.

Outline for future spatial policies

The proposed outlines focus on two related topics, the division of responsibilities in the implementation process of a policy of contours and the types of contours.

Division of responsibilities

Many organisations propagate a spatial development policy in which spatial plans are developed at the relevant level. In 1998, the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) already advocated a spatial development strategy that offered more possibilities for regional co-ordination via the active involvement of stakeholders. The key words of this spatial development policy are *differentiation* and *selectivity*. The WRR argues that specific local situations require specific approaches. Three distinct regimes are identified:

- Basic areas in which no concrete national policy decisions are necessary. This regime can remain confined to the definition of basic quality requirements.
- Regional development areas in which expression is briefly given to the spatial development strategy. In this regime the supra-local interests come to the fore. After the government has designated a development area with the relevant objectives, the initiative is with the co-operating municipalities. The provincial administration has the role of a director and can deploy financial incentives and the power of decision-making as main instruments. In the case of failing municipalities or provinces, transfer of authority to a higher administration level is possible.

- National projects, which are areas of national interest that need protection or where intervention should take place given the vision on the main spatial structure. In this regime the national government has the right to decide.

This multi-level, differentiated segmentation of responsibilities can increase the coherence, suitability and administrative effectiveness on distinct levels, leaving the traditional three-tier system undisputed. To realise spatial development objectives, co-operation between authorities is needed, but the responsibilities are clear.

These three WRR-regimes fit in fairly well with our proposal of, what we call, 'administrative contours'. Instead of red contours, 'pencil lines' can be drawn where on one side single municipalities are permitted to develop and on the other side developments need the involvement of more municipalities and the province. Moreover, projects of national importance should be given priority by provinces and municipalities. In this way the competencies of the public parties are better marked.

Types of contours

Given the difficulties the red contours have caused, and the proposal for administrative contours just made, it might be better to abandon the idea of red contours. Green contours, on the other hand, must be extended. Not only must they encompass purely ecological areas, but also valuable cultural landscapes with agricultural and open-air recreational functions. The green contours need to be approved by the Government for at least ten years and firmly and legally anchored in land use policy. Moreover, although water holds a prominent place in the Fifth Memorandum and in particular in the Deltametropolis-concept, 'blue contours' are lacking. These contours should be determined by the government and should indicate the water functions that have to be taken into account. In this way the relationship between spatial planning and water management can be made concrete. Next to it, various 'black' contours should be distinguished in order to identify main transport networks such as main roads and railways. Finally, the location of ICT backbones i.e. the fibreglass networks with a high digital capacity, crucial for access to the Internet and the digital data communication, should be indicated. These 'virtual contours', together with the above-mentioned administrative, green, blue and black contours form the basis for further regional development and should all be respected. They could form the basis for a layer-approach. The Memorandum does not elaborate on the layer-approach, though it starts with the identification of three such layers. The contours identified in the Memorandum match two of these layers, but ignore the third one, the network layer, hence ignoring the current change in the planning context by the growing importance of flows, movements and networks.

3.5 Basis for a regional approach

The previous section made clear that key issues in polycentric urban regions can often be better dealt with through regionally co-ordinated policy-making and action. In the third section of this chapter we established that the policy context in the Netherlands already favours such regional co-ordination. Whether or not such regional co-ordination evolves is, however, dependent on a variety of factors relating to the functional rationality, the organising capacity and the culture and identity of the region concerned.

3.5.1 Functional rationality

Territorial interaction is strongly linked with functional rationality, or in other words, its degree of functional integration. For example, interaction can be hampered by the presence of physical barriers or, conversely, be stimulated by the availability of an adequate infrastructure. Conversely, developing patterns of territorial interaction can also lead to new forms of functional integration, for example, by the spatial expansion of particular markets. Following Pumain's (1999) definition of a functional urban unit (see 2.6.2), we can assume that interaction in polycentric urban regions is enabled by infrastructure, represented by flows and given meaning to by markets. Considering the dense infrastructural networks, the available quantity of interconnecting infrastructure in the Randstad cannot be a barrier to interaction, although the effects of congestion are starting to be felt. Therefore, we will focus here on flows and markets. For this, we use a two-step approach.

First, we examine whether the particular markets display a polycentric shape, matching the underlying spatial and urban structure of the Randstad by showing the *spatial orientation* of the traffic flows that represent these markets. We hypothesise that a more polycentric market is indicated by a change in the spatial pattern of traffic flows from a concentrated pattern towards a more diffuse criss-cross pattern. Second, we focus on the *spatial scope* of the various markets and examine the extent to which these spatial scopes are approaching the level of scale of the Randstad as a whole. We assume that such a widening of the spatial scope implies functional integration of that particular market on a higher spatial scale. Taken together, we put both steps into a time-dynamic context. If the distances travelled for different purposes appear to increase over time, the spatial scopes of particular markets expand, perhaps even to the extent that they coincide with the spatial scope of the Randstad.

Legend Figures 3.4 up to 3.9

The figures 3.4 up to 3.9 display the evolution of traffic flows between 1986 and 1998. These traffic flows are categorized according to the motive for the traffic movement: work (labour market), business purposes, shopping, education, social visits and finally, leisure and sports. Each figure displays two maps, one representing the situation in 1986 and one representing the situation in 1998. The data on movements was generated in the yearly 'Onderzoek Verplaatsingsgedrag (OVG)', which is conducted by the CBS. For this research, a large number of households keep travel diaries, recording movements by all kinds of transport, including walking. The Randstad is subdivided into Corop-regions, the Dutch Nuts 3 level. Most of the time a Corop includes one larger city with its surroundings. Intra-Corop trips and flows between Corop-regions below a certain threshold value are not displayed. The threshold values are for Figure 3.4 (travel to work) 1,000,000 movements a year, for Figures 3.5 up to 3.9 500,000 movements a year. The thickness of the arrows represents the number of movements in one year in a certain direction. The length is more or less arbitrary. The flows to and from other parts of the Netherlands are aggregated into three sets of arrows, representing the North (the provinces of Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe and the Corop-region 'Kop van Noord-Holland'), the East (Overijssel and Gelderland) and the South (North-Brabant, Zeeland and Limburg) respectively.

Spatial orientation of traffic flows

We concentrate on six particular markets, determined by the specific purposes of the trips: labour, business visits, shopping, education, social visits and stays, and leisure and sports.

Figures 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 present the development of inter-Corop traffic flows between 1986 and 1998 on the labour market, the market for business travel and the shopping market respectively. Although the commuting flows on the *labour market* are strongly focused on the agglomeration of Amsterdam, especially from other regions in the North Wing, and to a lesser degree on The Hague in both years, it is the overall pattern of enormously growing inter-Corop travel-to-work flows between 1986 and 1998 that stands out (Figure 3.4). Moreover, the proportional growth of travel-to-work flows to and from the three regions outside the Randstad, notably the East, is also worth mentioning. This is in correspondence with the spreading out of the economic core from the Randstad towards the East. Figure 3.5 presents the number of flows for *business visits* between Corop-regions. There does not seem to be any appreciable difference between both years at first sight: there are no dominant Corop-regions and the flows to and from other parts of the Netherlands are stable. However, a closer look reveals a slight increase in 1998 compared with 1986 in longer distance business trips. Nevertheless, short distance movements between neighbouring Corop-regions still dominate.

On the *shopping market* only a very slight increase of traffic flows can be observed (figure 3.6). Figure 3.7 presents the development of traffic flows in the Randstad for education. The rare inter-Corop movements for reasons of *education* are most likely to represent trips to institutions for tertiary education, either vocational training or academic education, as these usually serve larger areas.

Figure 3.4 Travel to work flows between Corop-regions in the Randstad, 1986 (left) and 1998 (right)



Figure 3.5 Travel for business purposes between Corop-regions in the Randstad, 1986 (left) and 1998 (right)

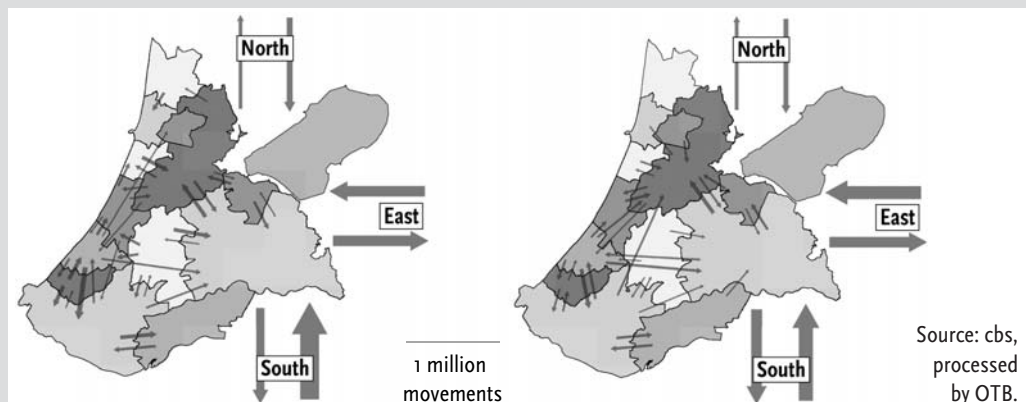
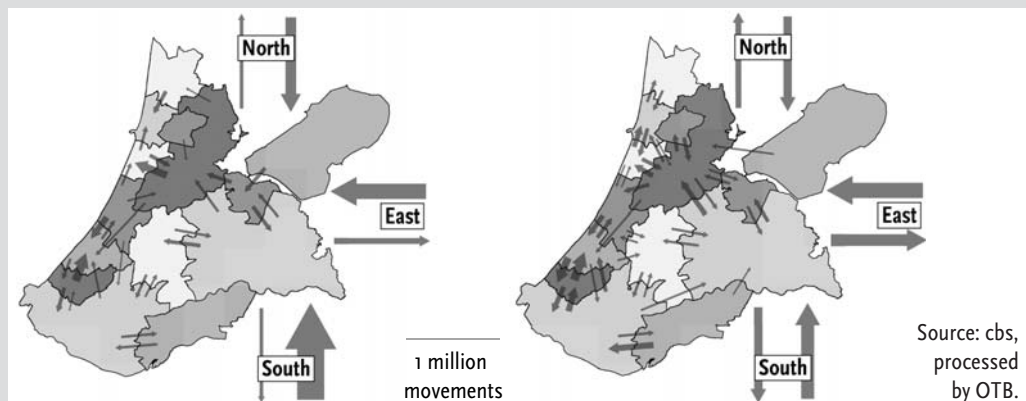


Figure 3.6 Travel for shopping between Corop-regions in the Randstad, 1986 (left) and 1998 (right)



The pattern on the market for *social visits* is rather diffuse (Figure 3.8). This category is for paying visits to relatives, acquaintances and friends. Both 1986 and 1998 display many criss-cross movements between non-adjacent Corop-regions. Moreover, this criss-cross nature has strengthened in the intermediate decade. In particular the number of socially motivated trips between the North and the South Wing considerably increased. In general, the rather dense pattern of flows for visits and stays that is pictured indicates that many people in the Randstad maintain a set of social relationships that spans the entire Randstad or large parts of it. In addition to this network of relationships in the Randstad, a great deal of movements are oriented towards the other three regions outside the Randstad, particularly the East. So, the focus of the movements with visits/stays as a motive is not only internal but also external. The criss-cross pattern of inter-corop movements for *leisure and sports* that was self-evident in 1986 and included many movements between non-adjacent Corop-regions, strengthened still further in the period to 1998 (Figure 3.9).

Taking all six particular markets into account, four main conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, a comparison of the flows for all the markets together in 1986 and 1998 shows an increase in flows between corop-regions. It is most likely that the growth in the population and the economy has contributed strongly to this. Secondly, the same comparison reveals that the dispersion of spatial relations increased. This indicates that these markets are becoming more polycentric. In addition, the functional relationships with other parts of the country also strengthened, especially with the East and the South. Thirdly, not all the markets contribute equally to this strengthening and spatial extension of functional relationships. The flows for education purposes showed only a slight increase and those for business purposes did not show a further functional integration at all. The markets for labour, shopping, social activities and leisure and sports on the other hand clearly show more polycentric patterns, resembling the polycentric nature of the Randstad. Finally, despite the fact that most markets show a more dispersed pattern of spatial relations, they still do not operate on the scale of the Randstad as a whole if we take all the movements into account. This is confirmed by several authors, e.g. Van der Laan (1998), although Van Ham et al. (2001) note that a more differentiated view is necessary, at least for the labour market. For some groups of highly qualified, high income and mobile professionals the region has become one single labour market, but it is subdivided into smaller markets for other workers. The labour markets of lowly or unskilled and less mobile workers do not even surpass the level of individual cities and their immediate hinterlands.

Figure 3.7 Travel for education between Corop-regions in the Randstad, 1986 (left) and 1998 (right)

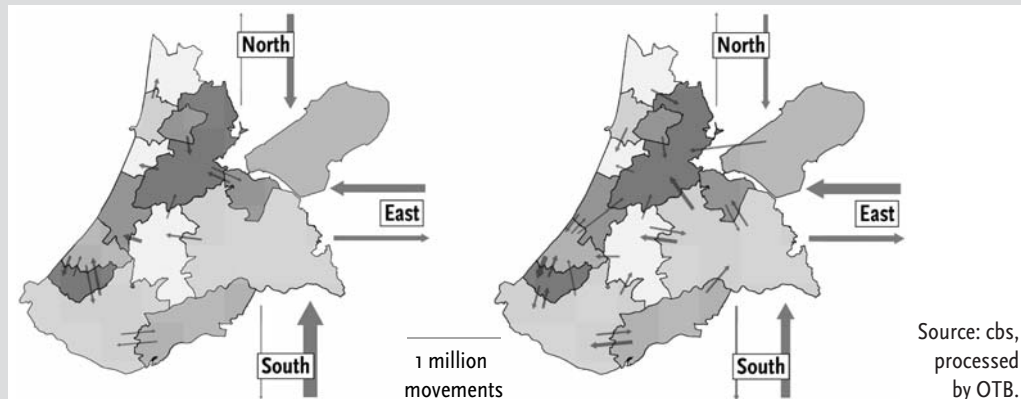


Figure 3.8 Travel for social visits between Corop-regions in the Randstad, 1986 (left) and 1998 (right)



Figure 3.9 Travel for leisure and sports between Corop-regions in the Randstad, 1986 (left) and 1998 (right)

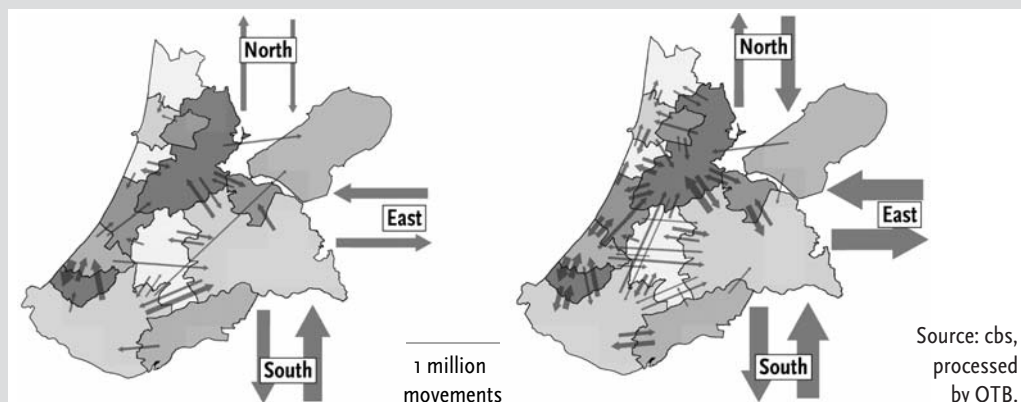
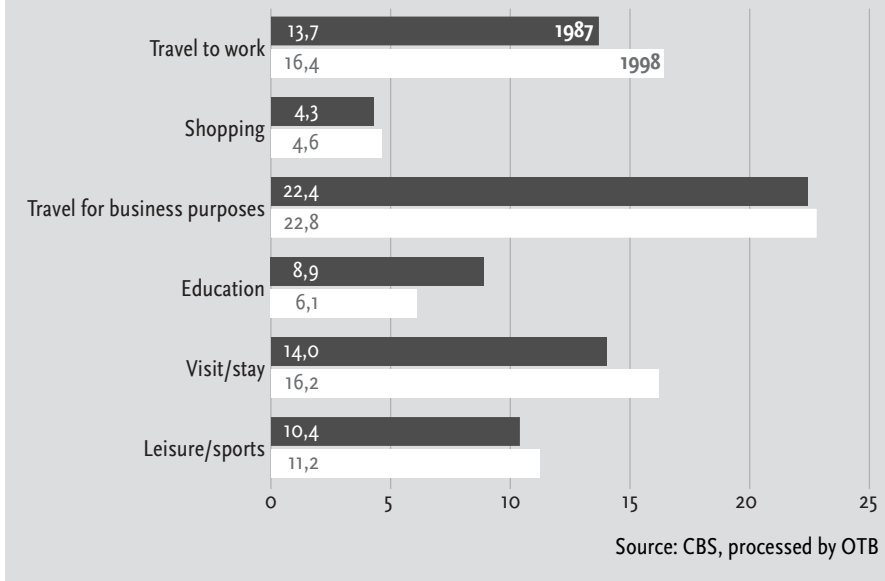


Figure 3.10 Spatial scope of different functional markets in the Randstad in 1998 compared to 1987 in km



Spatial scope of functional markets

It appears that some markets increasingly show a tendency towards a more polycentric nature. Here, the question of whether these markets' spatial scopes are expanding and approaching the scale of the Randstad as a whole is addressed. A wider spatial scope of a market is assumed to imply functional integration of that market on a higher spatial scale. Travelled distance is used as an indicator of the dynamics of spatial scope. In general, the average daily distance covered per person in the Netherlands rose from less than 33 to 39 kilometres between 1985 and 1997 (CBS). This may indicate a general scaling-up of markets in the Netherlands. The average distance travelled for different motives in 1998 is slightly larger in the Randstad provinces than in the Netherlands as a whole. When we look at the distinct markets more closely, it appears that most of these markets more or less followed the general tendency of a steadily increasing spatial scope between 1987 and 1998. Figure 3.10 shows the average distance covered for a trip for the six different motives in the Randstad.

The largest relative increase in spatial scope is the labour market (19%), followed by social visits and stays (16%), leisure or sports and shopping (both 7%). The increase in spatial scope of the market for business purposes is only limited (2%). However, in absolute terms, the average length of trips for business purposes is larger than for all other purposes. Finally, the market for education is the only functional market for which the spatial scope shrunk and by a considerable amount (-31%). While the average lengths of trips of the various markets have increased, they do not achieve the spatial level of the Randstad as a whole. For example, travel for business purposes has the widest spatial scope but only amounts to 23 kilometres. None of these mar-

kets has yet experienced a process of scaling-up to the level of the Randstad as such and this is also unlikely to happen, given that these numbers represent averages per trip. However, the trend points clearly to an increasing widening of spatial scopes covering larger distances, especially for business travel, travel to work and visits and stays.

3.5.2 Organising capacity

One of the problems urban administrators and planners encounter in their attempts to safeguard local competitive profiles involves the fact that many challenges to a city's competitive position either relate to developments taking place at supra-local levels, or that need supra-locally co-ordinated action to be overcome. The standard response to this dilemma entails the expansion of planning territories, either by municipal amalgamation or by establishing supra-local frameworks for co-operation and co-ordination. For the Netherlands the former is illustrated by the decline in the number of municipalities from 913 to 548 between 1970 and 1998 (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 1998). The new supra-local frameworks for planning and co-operation mainly emerged around the largest Dutch cities. During the past decades many efforts have been made to establish regional frameworks in the Netherlands, for instance *BoN-regio's* and *kaderwetgebieden*, many of which have entailed the introduction of a fourth tier in between the municipal and provincial tiers. The traditional Thorbeckian three-tier system (national government – provinces – municipalities) has proved rather resistant to change and no solutions have been created that were acceptable to all parties, including the citizens. At present, the rise of the network paradigm (most visible in the urban network concept) seems to have provided new impulses for the 'bottom-up' establishment of flexible and innovative coalitions on the regional spatial scale. Some of these new initiatives focus exclusively on the development of the Randstad as a whole, for instance the Delta Metropolis Association and the Bureau Regio Randstad. These initiatives may be taken as indicators that an increasing number of both public and private actors think it is worthwhile to adopt a Randstad perspective in planning and development issues, although they still have to prove their endurance and effectiveness.

We will now present an overview of some important coalitions with a supra-local framework for planning and co-operation in the Randstad area that have developed over the past two decades. The main characteristics of the various initiatives will be presented and, by comparing the initiatives from the two periods, certain trends can be seen (see Table 3.3). Focus is on two separate time periods in which a considerable number of initiatives for supra-local governance were launched (1985-1990 and 1996-2000). See table 3.3. Before 1985, only a very few initiatives exceeded the provincial scale in

Table 3.3 Coalitions at supraprovincial level in the Randstad, 1985-1990 and 1996-2000

Name	Pluri- formity	Public Parties	Private Parties	Exter- nality	Randstad scale	Randstad Spatial view	Instru- ments
Period 1985-1990							
Randstad Consultative Body Spatial Plan	--	+/-	--	+/-	+	+	-
Consultative Body 5 Cities North Wing	--	+/-	--	--	--	--	-
Consultative Body Urban Nodes	--	+/-	--	--	--	--	--
Covenant Accessibility Plan Randstad	+/-	++	--	+/-	++	-	+/-
North Wing Consultative Body Randstad	+	++	--	+/-	-	-	--
Steering Committee Green Heart	-	+	--	+/-	--	-	-
Representation of the Randstad Region	-	+/-	--	++	+	+	-
Period 1996-2000							
RegioNet	-	+	--	-	-	--	--
Administrative Platform South Wing	+	++	--	+/-	+/-	-	+/-
Administrative Commission Randstad	+	++	--	+	++	+/-	-
Delta Metropolis	++	+	++	++	++	+/-	-
Advisory Committee South Wing	+/-	+	++	+/-	-	--	--
Bureau Region Randstad	++	++	--	++	++	+/-	-
Steering Committee Starting off Randstad	-	--	++	+/-	++	+	--
Steering Committee RandstadRail	+/-	+	--	-	-	--	-

++ very strong + strong +/- reasonably - weak -- very weak

the Randstad. Between 1990 and 1996, public and private stakeholders of the Randstad may have awaited the further developments of the so-called BoN-regions and city provinces before forming new coalitions. BoN (*Besturen op Niveau*) regions were proposed in 1990 and eventually implemented around seven large cities – of which four were in the Randstad – and these inter-municipal co-operations were to develop into ‘city-provinces’, equal to the ordinary provinces. However, no city-province has yet been created.

Regional initiatives in the Randstad

The first period (1985-1990) when many institutional initiatives were launched took place parallel to the publication of the Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning (1988). Following the expected increase in international competition between urban regions due to further integration of the European Union, the Fourth Memorandum put emphasis on powerful regions, especially the Randstad. The Memorandum stressed the necessity to ‘further the administrative co-operation in the Randstad as a whole, and between the relevant cities’. This might explain the rise of administrative initiatives in the Randstad between 1988 and 1989, in which five coalitions were formed (see Table 3.3). These voluntary coalitions had in common the main objective to safeguard and strengthen the position of the Randstad in the national and international economy. Even before these initiatives were launched, the Randstad Consultative Body for Spatial Planning (RoRo) came into existence. It was set up in 1985 by the Provincial Executive of Spatial Planning in North-

Holland, South-Holland and Utrecht, later joined by Flevoland. It aimed to develop cross-border consistency between the provincial spatial planning policies and combine them for the entire Randstad, as well as to prepare administrative co-operation.

In the second period, the late nineties, the concept of the network city penetrated the spatial debate. First, there was the network city in a forerunner of the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning (*De Ruimte van Nederland*, 1999a). The policy proposals in the Fifth Memorandum itself propagated the idea of urban networks, one of which encompasses the Randstad. The network-metaphor puts emphasis on co-operation, and indeed, many institutional initiatives have been launched (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 shows that the pluriformity of actors is much larger in the period 1996-2000 than in the period 1985-1990. Most coalitions of the first period are rather uniform and include only one or two actors, mostly public authorities. The coalitions in the period 1996-2000 are characterised by much more pluriformity, involving three to seven different types of actors. In particular the Delta Metropolis Association⁸ contains a large diversity of both public and private actors. In 1996-2000 private actors increasingly participated in these coalitions, unlike the coalitions in the period 1985-1990, which consisted mainly of public actors. Nevertheless, most coalitions are particularly internally oriented and do not put the Randstad in a wider national and international context. The exceptions to the rule are the Representation of the Randstad Region, Delta Metropolis Association and Bureau Region Randstad, who try to establish the Randstad-region in a wider international arena. The scope of the coalitions in 1996-2000 has moved increasingly to the scale of the Randstad, whereas in 1985-1990 the focus was mainly on the interprovincial scale. On the other hand, no single coalition, in either period, had or has the objective goal to draw up one spatial view for the entire Randstad. Finally, because the instruments of the coalitions of this period were or are confined to consulting, advising, information supply and research, their factual influ-

⁸ Delta Metropolis Association was set up by the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht in 1998. Delta refers to the delta of the Rhine and Meuse as a constant reminder of the character of the natural environment and the typical conditions this creates for any form of human land use. Metropolis refers to the ambition to be part and parcel of the European network of world cities. At present the association has 36 members (cities, chambers of commerce, waterboards, housing corporations, business associations, transporters organization, nature and landscape organisations), while several others have applied for membership. The Delta Metropolis Association aims to be an interchange of ideas and innovating concepts to improve synergy in the metropolitan system. The association states that there used to be no platform for any serious kind of discussion on this scale, with members from public and private bodies (<http://www.deltametropool.nl/>).

ence has been limited. So far, all these initiatives have lacked executive powers. The authorities of the three tiers of the Thorbeckian system are so deeply rooted that transferring these authorities to a regional body is a very difficult task. Within the Thorbeckian system, it is unlikely that such a regional body will develop. Therefore, in the future Randstad regional bodies must be based upon co-operation between both public and private parties.

3.5.3 Culture and identity

A common culture

'Common culture' refers to the existence of a shared history in the region and to the sharing of values, norms and beliefs between the actors in the region. The existence of a common culture supposedly eases interaction, thus stimulating a further regional integration. Major sources of cultural differences are language, ethnicity, religion, and political preferences. The Randstad is not divided by different languages nor different ethnicities; nearly all the people speak Dutch and are Dutch. Religion is a minor issue in the Netherlands and probably even less so in the Randstad. There are differences in political preferences, as anywhere else, but these also tend to be of less importance. Of course it is interesting to note that the last decades have shown an increasing intake of foreign people bringing with them their own culture. The larger cities particularly are becoming multi-cultural, which, though it might lead to cultural cleavages and segregation within some individual cities, it has so far had little impact on interurban relationships.

Besides possible cultural differences, history is also important. As part of the important, influential Holland region, all the cities in the Randstad share a common history, experiencing the same periods of prosperity and decline in past centuries. This common historical background and the absence of cultural cleavages have clearly contributed to the existence of a common culture in the Randstad.

A regional identity

Besides a common culture, regional identity can be distinguished as an element of the cultural dimension. To properly judge the existence of a regional identity within the Randstad, it is necessary to first examine the question to what extent and in what sense the Randstad is actually a region. It is assumed that the type of region is a major factor in explaining the existence of a regional identity. Good points of departure are provided by the work of Paasi (1986, 1991, 1996) and Keating (1997).

Paasi describes a region as a social construct i.e. the condensation of a complex history of economic, political, and social processes into a specific cultur-

al image. He uses the term 'institutionalisation of regions' for the socio-spatial process in which a region becomes established and clearly identified in different spheres of social action and social consciousness. This process of institutionalisation comprises four interdependent and simultaneously occurring stages: the development of territorial shape, the development of symbolic shape, the emergence of institutions, and the establishment of a region in the spatial and social consciousness of society. By indicating the degree in which the Randstad meets these stages, the extent of institutionalisation of the Randstad-region can be established.

Territorial shape

The territorial shape of a region refers to the localisation of social practices in economy, politics and administration through which regional transformation takes place before coming to be identified as a distinct unit in the spatial structure. Important indicators for this stage are boundaries. Although many Dutch people will have an idea of what should be seen as the Randstad and what not, there is no official demarcation of the territory of the Randstad. Different actors use slightly different demarcations. The lack of clear and official boundaries has its consequences for the existence of a regional identity. The blurred character of the boundaries makes the distinction between 'us' and 'them' more difficult.

Symbolic shape

A second stage in the institutionalisation of regions identified by Paasi is the formation of a conceptual or symbolic shape. In this stage, symbols become connected to the region. These symbols are instrumental as they evoke powerful emotions of identification with territorial groupings and generate action. Naming the region and mapping are important parts of this stage, as these are essential to enter the minds of people. Next to naming and mapping, a number of different and regionally specific symbols can be found, for instance flags and buildings. Most symbols in the Randstad are not linked to the Randstad region but to individual cities making up that region. It is questionable whether and to what extent these local symbols can function as symbols for the Randstad region. Nevertheless, the Randstad has one powerful symbol which is expressed in its name and on maps: a ring of cities on the border ('Rand') of a green centre. In the light of the controversy on spatial development in this 'Green Heart', it could be hypothesized that the Green Heart has even more symbolic power than the Randstad concept.

Institutional shape

The third stage in the process of institutionalisation is the emergence of institutions. This was partly the key subject in the preceding section. However, Paasi (1991: 246) does not only relate this stage to administrative institu-

tions, but, as he puts it, to 'a plethora of organizations and institutions, all of which provide an effective means of reproducing the material and mental existence of the territories'. As such, this stage involves the establishment of more formal vehicles such as education, law and media, alongside local or regional practices in politics, economics, administration and culture (MacLeod, 1998). Recent trends indicate that institutions are increasingly organised on functionally connected spatial levels instead of on the existing administrative regions. These 'old' administrative entities are no longer the realms in which social, economic and cultural processes can be caught by definition. Examples are the regional clustering of schools, regional transportation authorities, chambers of commerce and all kinds of public and social services on the level of the urban district or even higher. However, despite this scaling-up, the Randstad is the territorial organizing principle for just a few institutions.

Spatial structure and social consciousness

Paasi's last stage involves the establishment of a region in the spatial structure and social consciousness of society. This does not necessarily mean that the region has gained an administrative status. Rather, the 'territorial unit' is used for various goals, such as place marketing or as a weapon in an ideological struggle over resources and power in, for example, regional policy (MacLeod, 1998). Remarkably, the Randstad region has entered the spatial structure and social consciousness of society very well. In all kinds of policy-making, especially spatial planning, but also in transportation⁹ and economic policies¹⁰, the Randstad is a significant territorial unit. Faludi and Van der Valk (1994) credit mainly spatial planners for this established role of the Randstad: being the core of Dutch planning doctrine, the joint Randstad/Green Heart concept has been strongly institutionalized by the general public.

Regions as a political space

Keating (1997) distinguishes some dimensions of regions that are quite similar to Paasi's stages but in addition he addresses the political dimension of regions in more detail. Keating sees regions as political spaces if they provide an arena for political debate, a frame for judging issues and proposals, and a space recognized by actors as the level where decisions may legitimately be taken. One of the factors constituting political space is the role of the party system. In the Randstad, there are no political parties and political bodies

⁹ The government has just launched a campaign on improving the accessibility in the Randstad, the 'Bereikbaarheidsoffensief Randstad'.

¹⁰ The Randstad is being pictured as the 'economic engine' of the Netherlands.

directly oriented to the region. National politics dominate even the local and provincial elections. Another factor is the regional electoral system. This is of minor importance in the Netherlands, since there is no system of proportional representation based on regional lists. Yet, regional representation is an issue when composing the national electoral lists. A more important factor identified by Keating is the existence of regional media. According to Anderson (1983) this factor should receive much more emphasis. Referring to nations, he stresses the importance of media, especially newspapers, in making people believe that they belong to a certain nation. Television and radio are also important media and a clear trend towards sub-national television and radio channels can be noted, even in a small country such as the Netherlands. However, this has not led to television stations for the Randstad. Instead, the three major cities host stations aimed at these cities and their hinterlands. A similar trend can be seen for radio stations. Concerning the printed media, it is very interesting to observe that there are no newspapers with a clear Randstad coverage.

Conclusion

Using Paasi's stages and Keating's dimensions, it is clear therefore that the Randstad has only a limited identifying power. Paasi's stages revealed that the Randstad-region has no precise spatial boundaries, lacks any symbolic shape except for one (its morphological form) and has a poorly developed institutional shape. Despite all this, the Randstad has a clearly established role in society and in people's consciousness. Applying Keating's dimension, it was revealed that the Randstad is not a political space either, with no political parties aimed at a Randstad audience, nor any media operating at the Randstad level: no television, radio or Randstad newspapers. The fact that the Randstad has a clearly established role and meaning in society and in people's consciousness is mainly due to its dominant position in many fields of policy making. This holds in particular for spatial planning, which in turn reflects its demographic and economic dominance in the Netherlands. Although many actors deal with the Randstad as a region it lacks most of the dimensions that would contribute to its institutionalisation as such. Consequently, regional identity in the Randstad is at best weak. It does not evoke strong feelings of identification with the people living there.

3.6 Mechanisms for promoting regional planning

In section 3.4, three key issues in polycentric urban regions were presented and suggestions for future spatial planning were made. Often, these suggestions require a co-production of spatial policy by multiple public tiers as well

as by different public sectors, such as economy, housing, environment, nature and transport. Moreover, the involvement of civil society and the market sector is important. In this section, we deal with the ways in which such spatially-relevant public decisions in polycentric urban regions can be taken. We do not provide a blueprint for spatial decision-making in polynuclear urban regions, but draw conclusions from earlier attempts at regional decision-making, as discussed in section 3.5.2, and the current context for policy and decision-making in the Randstad (see section 3.3). Particularly relevant in this context are the proposals set out in the Fifth Memorandum, which started an interesting debate on regional co-operation and co-ordination. We contribute to this debate by summing up recommendations for shaping the spatial decision-making process in the Randstad.

3.6.1 The debate on decision-making in urban networks

The national government wanted to stimulate regional co-operation by introducing the concept of urban networks. This concept is expected to stimulate the formation of strategic alliances, not the creation of new governmental layers. According to the Fifth Memorandum, the indicated urban networks (the provinces and municipalities involved) have to develop a vision for the development of their network, which acts as a starting point for policies concerning the planning of new working and residential locations, regional economic development, connections between centres and the design and use of inner- and outer urban recreational areas and open space. To accomplish this, the national government envisages an enduring, but partly also project-based co-operation in which municipalities and provinces participate. However, the Fifth Memorandum remains rather vague about the way co-operation and decision-making on the scale of the urban network takes shape. Further details are promised at a later stage. This easy way of dealing with or even neglecting the theme of decision-making is frowned upon. Though the national government recognises the importance of building governing networks in the Randstad, it fails to translate this into governmental consequences by developing new arrangements for co-operation (Teisman, 2001). The CPB et al. (2001) speak of a gross underestimation of the complexity of spatial planning tasks in urban networks. Past experiences have not been very promising, for instance the time-consuming and effortful process of determining the investment programme for the Randstad. In general, co-operation is much easier accomplished when:

- it means a reduction of costs for the actors involved;
- it means an enforced base of power for the actors involved;
- a financial premium stimulates the co-operation.

One of the things the national government could do, is to reward regional co-

operation, using for instance the funds for improving the economic structure (*ICES-gelden*).

Besides this lack of ideas, Teisman (2001) observes that the Fifth Memorandum follows two different lines concerning the governing of the Randstad that are not in harmony with each other. On the one hand, there is a centralising line, which follows from the one-sided decision by the national government about who is responsible for the implementation of their policy. The new Spatial Development Act will enforce the national government's possibilities to have their policies executed and maintained. Moreover, they reserve the right to be involved in developing plans for the Randstad. On the other hand, there is a more decentralising policy line, where municipalities and provinces are enabled to design policies oriented at spatial development and are responsible for drawing the red and green contours. These two lines could come into conflict.

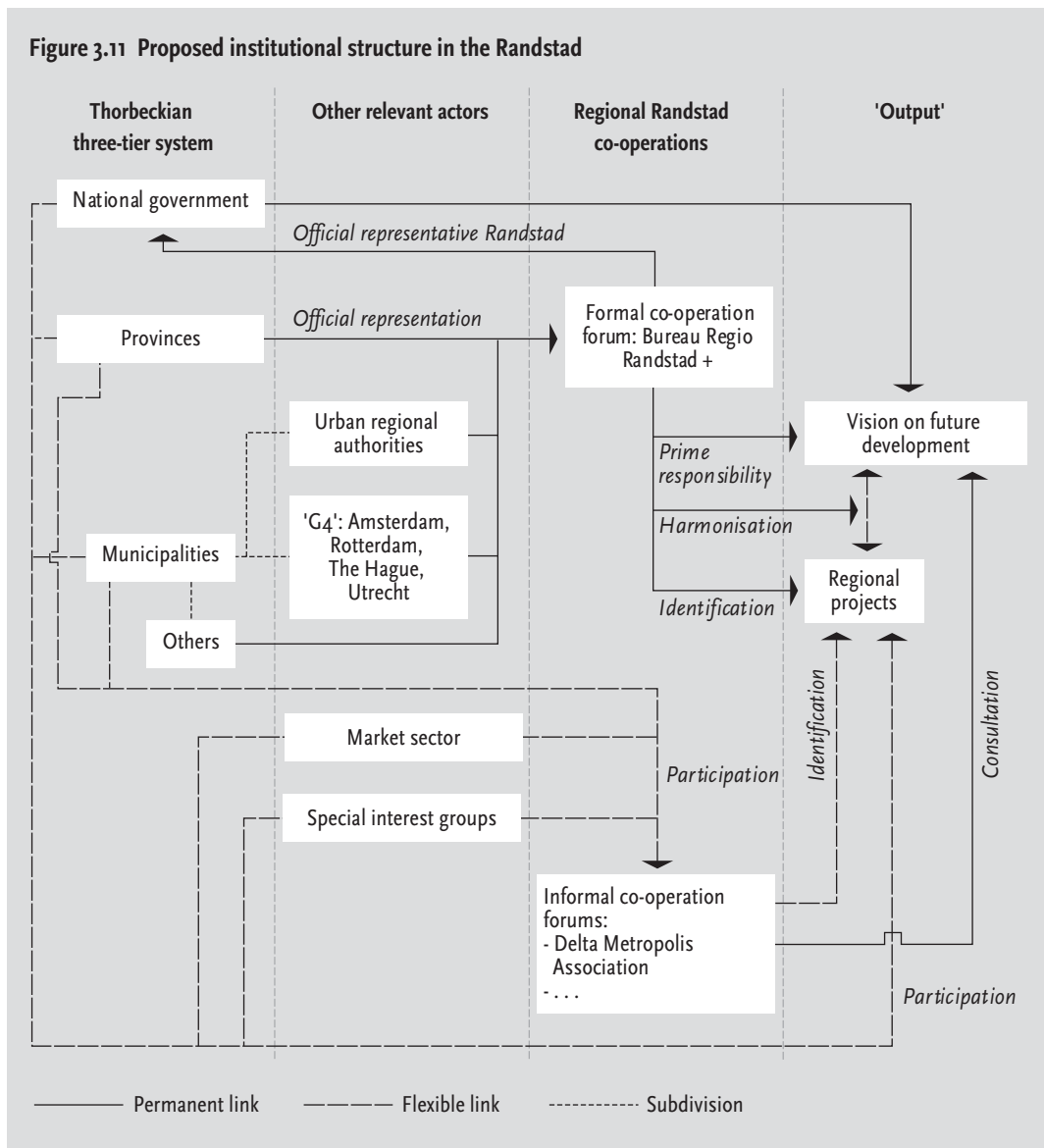
Another theme in the debate is the spatial scale of decision-making. There seems to be agreement on the fact that the current administrative organisation does not match the scale on which many spatial developments are taking place, making integral area-based planning, for instance in the Randstad, very complicated (VROMRaad, 2001). Others point to the fact that there is no single spatial scale on which decision-making must be centred. Many spatial decisions need to be made at a lower scale than that of the entire Randstad. The complex intertwining scales on which spatial problems occur particularly present the urban networks with difficult governing challenges (CPB et al., 2001). A clear distinction and division between the different spatial scales of decision-making in the Randstad is therefore recommended.

3.6.2 Recommendations for spatial decision-making in the Randstad

Issue-based co-operation

The great dynamics in spatial scales on which planning issues occur means a search for a flexible governance structure. Clearly, the creation of one new administrative layer for the Randstad does not fit these dynamics, not to mention the apparent unfeasibility of creating such a fourth administrative layer in the Dutch context. Therefore, the solution must be found in co-operation and the co-production of public policy by all relevant actors. It is necessary that all these actors agree on a way for dealing with regional issues in the Randstad. Traditional weaknesses of network regions are poor democratic control and legitimacy (Nieuwenhuijsen, 2000). By giving the traditional Thorbeckian tiers an important role, democratic legitimacy seems more assured.

Figure 3.11 Proposed institutional structure in the Randstad



The exact shape of the regional co-operation in the Randstad should depend on the project or issue dealt with. Thus, co-operation can take the shape of flexible, temporary or continuous, short-term or long-term, thematic or area-based, development-oriented or conservation-oriented co-operation. Moreover, co-operation should not be fixed to the scale of the entire Randstad, but at an appropriate scale, as a lower spatial scale is the best level for dealing with certain issues. There is also an institutional reason behind this: co-operation on a subregional level (such as the urban regional authorities) is much better instrumentally equipped in the current Dutch administrative constellation than co-operation on a Randstad-wide scale. Figure 3.11 presents our ideas on how to institutionally structure regional co-operation and co-ordination in the Randstad.

There is a need and basis for a less noncommittal, slightly formalised body for regional co-operation. A formal Randstad-consultation forum in which the four provinces, the four largest municipalities, the four urban regional authorities and representatives of the other municipalities (perhaps also four) join forces is envisaged. This body could evolve from the Bureau Regio Randstad, that needs to be extended (what we call the Bureau Regio Randstad +, see Figure 3.11). The public partners in this bureau are of equal standing. The administrative layers involved should transfer certain competences in order to enable this Randstad-forum to adopt and maintain a regional approach in the Randstad. Examples of competences are the safe-guarding and promotion of the Randstad interests from an national and international perspective, safe-guarding and promotion of regional interests and integral investment programmes on a regional scale and the co-ordination of projects that are of strategic importance for the Randstad. Besides this, this formal body must act as a framework from which issue-based subregional and temporary co-operations are formed, stimulated and monitored. Moreover, this formal co-operation forum should act as an interlocutor for the national government on Randstad issues. Note that this does not imply the creation of a new regional administrative layer, but a re-organisation of existing administrative layers into a regional body. In addition, informal meeting platforms for administrators and private actors in the Randstad in order to promote a regional approach need to be organised. The Delta Metropolis Association is a fine example of a vehicle for such less formal meetings and co-operations.

We are aware that our proposals for the institutional structure described here may be difficult to realise, even though some parts of it are developing in a promising way. Moreover, this structure does bring together relevant actors, but it does not guarantee effective and efficient co-operation. What should be kept in mind, however, is the reason behind these proposals. The aim is to make regional planning possible. Regional planning in the Randstad has a clear value. The higher objective is to address spatial issues (including many more than just the key issues described here) that demand a regional approach more efficiently and effectively. Moreover, regional planning opens up the road to exploit the potential advantages relating to complementarity and synergy that the Randstad has and that are made clear through taking a regional perspective.

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4 Flemish Diamond

Louis Albrechts and Griet Lievois

4.1 Defining the region

The *Spatial Structure Plan for Flanders (SPF)* in 1997 introduced the concept of the Flemish Diamond as an international competitive urban network within North Western Europe. It is a densely populated, morphologically and functionally urbanised area with amalgamated suburban areas and residential centres and can be seen as a fine example of a polycentric urban region. It is located in the central part of the Flemish area (Figure 4.1) and consists of the big cities of Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent, four regional cities Leuven, Mechelen, Sint-Niklaas and Aalst, and a number of smaller cities (Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, 1997: 46).

The Flemish Diamond has a large concentration of high-quality industrial, commercial, cultural, and service activities which generate high added value. It generates 57% of the total Belgian GDP (€0.21 billion) on some 10% of the

Figure 4.1 The Flemish Diamond



Source: Albrechts and Lievois, 2001c: 32

national territory. All the large Flemish Universities, i.e. Leuven, Ghent, Brussels and Antwerp are situated within the Flemish Diamond. The universities of Leuven, Ghent and Brussels each cover various types of sciences. Consequently, the Flemish Diamond supplies a concentrated variation of higher education. With the exception of Bruges, the most attractive historical Flemish cities on an international level are situated in the Diamond: Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent (Structuurplan Vlaanderen, 1996: 22). The fact that six important 'art cities', the four mentioned above and also Mechelen and Leuven, are located in or very near to the Flemish Diamond, results in a high-level resource for combined heritage tourism. Finally, the Flemish Diamond is characterised by a large qualitative supply of cinemas and international cultural events.

Although the Flemish Diamond as a concept is rather new, the underlying idea of developing the Flemish core area, roughly between Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent, is not new. Parallel to the planning process of the SPF, the Directorate-General for Regional Policies (DG XVI) of the European Commission launched a study concerning 'The Perspective Development of the Central and Capital City Regions' (Commission of the European Communities, 1996). In this report, different metropolitan systems in a wide area, 'the CCC-area', were analysed.¹¹ The Belgian part of this metropolitan system was called ABG-stad, an acronym that refers to Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent as its major constituting urban areas. Moreover, before and during the introduction of the SPF, concepts of the so-called *Belgian Central Area* emerged. An atlas of Belgium, published in 1992¹², at the time when the SPF process started, illustrates how geographers interpreted the existing Belgian settlement system and saw developments in inter-urban relations in the near future.¹³ The author (Denis, 1992: 480) expected the Brussels Capital Region to depend more and more on its international vocation and function in-between Flanders and Wallonia. The most important challenge for Brussels was identified as how to use its international influence in a balanced way on Flanders and Wallonia.

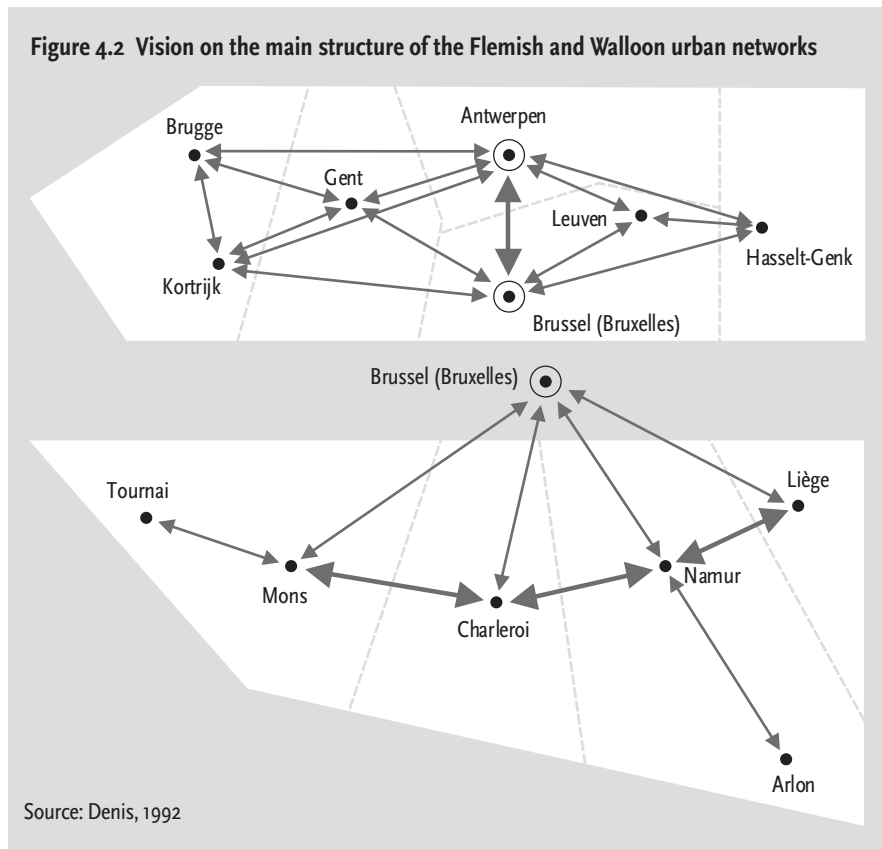
Van der Haegen et al (1982: 357) identified six growth poles for Flanders, the core being the axis between Brussels and Antwerp. These two large cities are characterised by complementarity: Brussels as the national and international

¹¹ With about 90 million inhabitants, this area covers the South-East of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands except its norther part, the whole of Belgium and Luxembourg, the northern part of France, with the regions Ile-de-France, Haute-Normandy, Picardy, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Lorraine and Champagne-Ardenne, and the German 'Länder' Northrhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Pfalz, Hessen and Saarland.

¹² Denis (1992) 'De steden', in: *Geografie van België*, Denis eds., Gemeentekrediet, Brussel, pp.428-482.

¹³ However, they do not explain on what factors these inter-urban relations are based (Denis, 1992: 480).

Figure 4.2 Vision on the main structure of the Flemish and Walloon urban networks



Source: Denis, 1992

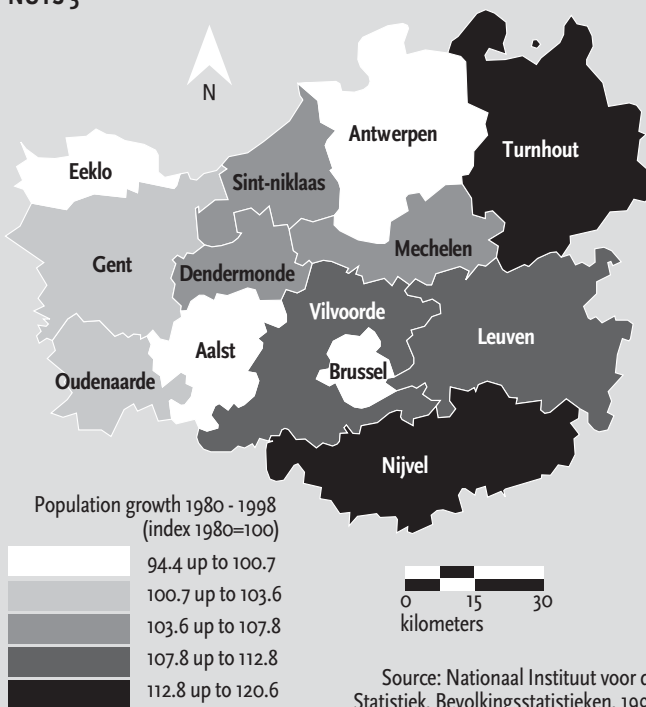
capital centre and Antwerp with its main port as the most important commercial, industrial and Dutch-speaking cultural centre. The other large city of Ghent and the medium-sized regional cities of Bruges, Kortrijk, Leuven and Hasselt-Genk would complete this axis (see also Figure 4.2). The same axis was analysed in a summarising study on European cities (Vandermotten *et al.*, 1999: 123). The conurbations of Antwerp and Brussels are also considered part of a broader urban structure, the ABC-axis, linking Flanders to Wallonia. Van der Haegen (1982: 480) defined the 'Walloon city axis' as a structuring element of the French speaking part of Belgium. This axis encompasses the historical industrial axis with Liège as economic centre, Namur as the location of the Walloon government and parliament, Charleroi as the centre of social affairs, and Mons as the cultural centre (see Figure 4.2). Furthermore, economists and spatial planners saw Charleroi, at the western side of the Walloon axis, as an important element in a broader functional link with Antwerp and Brussels. This ABC-axis concept had its roots in the historically important relationship between the harbour and industrial activities of Antwerp and the industrial activities of Charleroi, mainly based upon large-scale steel manufacturing.

In the following section the most important spatial dynamics of the region will first be characterised, before turning to specific spatial issues on a regional level.

Table 4.1 Population of the Flemish Diamond 1998

Area (N3) - 'districts'	Population
Brussels	953,175
Antwerpen	931,718
Mechelen	303,856
Turnhout	402,283
Aalst	261,792
Dendermonde	186,276
Eeklo	79,584
Gent	493,329
Oudenaarde	113,912
Sint-Niklaas	222,683
Halle-Vilvoorde	554,110
Leuven	453,772
Nijvel	344,508
Total	5,300,998

Source: Nationaal Instituut voor de
Statistiek, Bevolkingsstatistieken,
1998

Figure 4.3 Population growth in the Flemish Diamond 1980-1998, NUTS 3

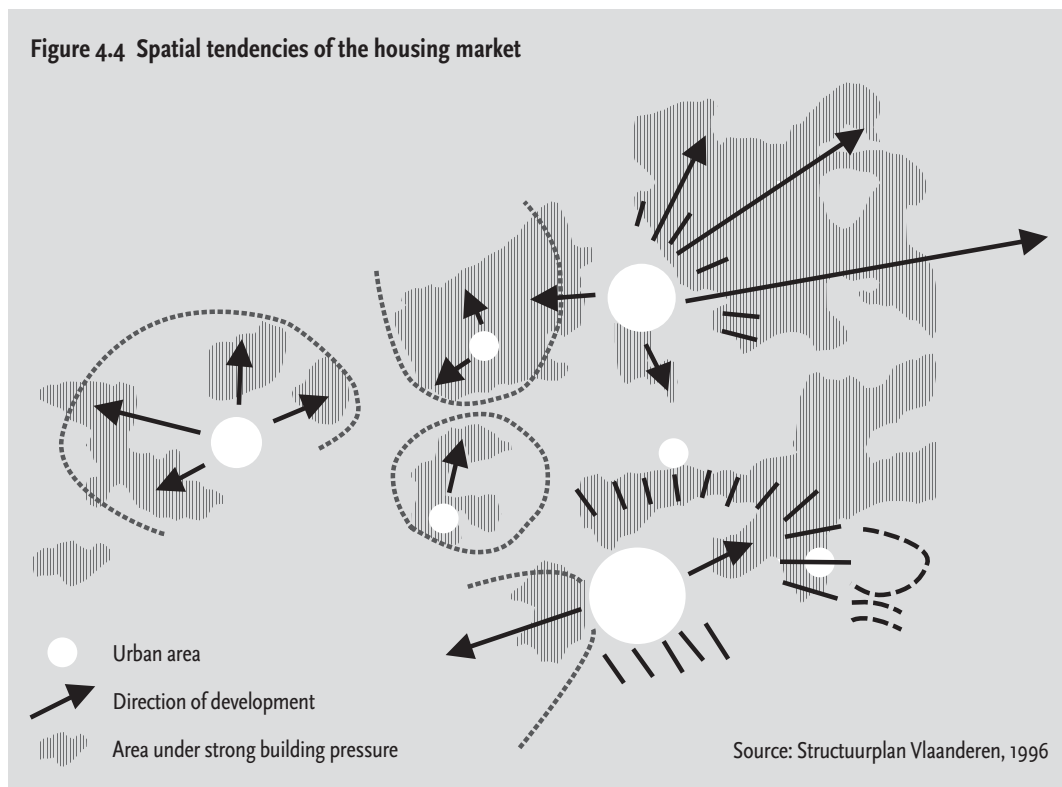
4.2 Spatial dynamics

Spatial deconcentration

In 1998, the Flemish Diamond had over five million inhabitants (Table 4.1). The population density of the Flemish Diamond is very high: in 1998, the average population density was 903 inhabitants per square kilometre. Unsurprisingly, the most densely populated areas are the Brussels Capital Region (5.906 inhabitants per square kilometre) and the district of Antwerp (913 inhabitants). Looking at the population dynamics over the final decades of the twentieth century, Figure 4.3 shows that the districts of Turnhout and Nijvel (level Nuts 3) experienced the largest demographic growth rate between 1980 and 1998. In the largest agglomerations of Brussels and Antwerp, but also in Ghent, this growth rate was, on the other hand, very low. The population of the Brussels Capital Region even decreased over this period.

Data on the lower level of Nuts 4 areas show that the highest population growth rates were situated at the eastern fringe of the Flemish Diamond. The major cities of Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent, i.e. the urban cores of the Nuts 3 areas (see Table 4.1 and Figure 4.3), as well as the smaller cities of Aalst and Mechelen, faced population losses of up to 10% between 1980 and 1995 (SERV, 1996). In 1996, Antwerp and its periphery, the Brussels periphery, Leuven, Ghent, Aalst and Mechelen were clearly the most densely populated areas.

Figure 4.4 Spatial tendencies of the housing market



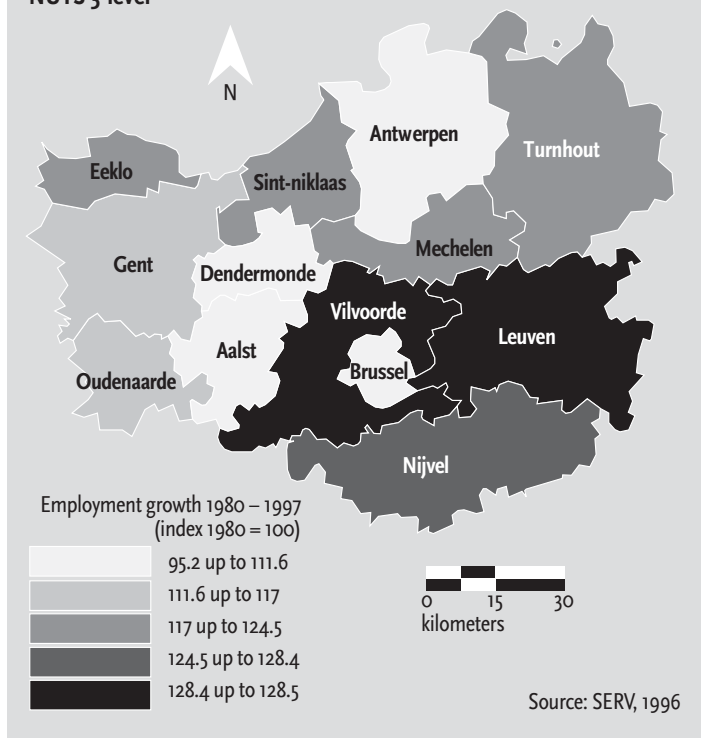
Both the population losses of core cities and the high population densities of the largest cities' peripheries, suggest a process of spatial de-concentration away from the major urban centres.

The de-concentration process within the Flemish Diamond is reflected by some other indicators as well, including the dynamics of the housing market. Overall, the Flemish Diamond offers a large variety of dwelling types (Structuurplan Vlaanderen, 1996: 11-12), but the market is under strain outside urban areas due to centrifugal developments (Figure 4.4).

A second indicator is the geographical pattern of employment growth. In 1997 there were more than 1.8 million people employed in the Flemish Diamond. In the years between 1980 and 1997, the highest growth rates could be noticed in a west-east oriented area around Brussels, while the growth rate of Brussels itself was among the lowest in the Flemish Diamond (Figure 4.5). A similar 'donut type' of spatial growth pattern, although less pronounced, can be seen in the districts of Sint-Niklaas, Mechelen and Leuven vis-à-vis Antwerp. Although this spatial pattern is rather crude due to the large size of Nuts 3 areas and does not contain information about job displacements per se, it is nevertheless another indicator of a process of urban deconcentration.

It is clear that the nature of employment in the Flemish Diamond changed between 1980 and 1997. Employment in the secondary sectors of manufacturing, fuel and power, and construction, declined from a total of 35 to 22% dur-

Figure 4.5 Employment growth 1980-1997 in the Flemish Diamond, NUTS 3-level



ing these two decades. Employment in non-market services (administration, education etc.) remained constant while employment in market-services increased from just over 30 to 40% in the same period (R.S.Z. Jaarverslagen). Figures of Nuts 3 areas show that employment in the service branches, both non-market and market, has largely concentrated on the vertices of the Flemish Diamond: Antwerp, Leuven, Brussels and Ghent. A more detailed view of the geography of employment shows a clear dominance of the service sector in the Brussels-

Leuven area, including Zaventem International Airport (SERV, 1996). This is not surprising, given the status of Brussels as the political centre of Europe, Belgium, the Flemish Region, the French Speaking Community, and of course the Brussels Capital Region itself.¹⁴ As a result, Brussels has a very important share of the office locations in the area, including the headquarters of 44 of the 100 biggest enterprises in Flanders. The Flemish Diamond itself contains 97 out of the 100 biggest companies in Flanders (Structuurplan Vlaanderen, 1996: 22).

A last indicator of spatial deconcentration is the growth of the region's gross domestic product (GDP). EUROSTAT data from 1996 on Nuts 3 level show that the highest shares of the region's GDP were generated in its three 'urban corners', Brussels and its periphery, Antwerp and Ghent. However, growth rates of the GDP per capita between 1980 and 1996 were much higher in the surrounding districts Halle-Vilvoorde, Sint-Niklaas, Mechelen and Aalst than in the urban corners.

¹⁴ The federal system of Belgium includes two types of constitutional elements: Regions and Communities. Both types are each responsible for a different set of government domains. Basically, economic and territory-related matters are attributed to the regions, i.e. the Flemish, the Walloon and the Brussels Capital Regions. Language, culture and people related matters are transferred to the Communities, i.e. the Flemish, French-speaking and German-speaking Communities. This federal system is discussed more comprehensively in section 4.5.2.

Transport infrastructure

The Flemish Diamond covers five international gateways: Brussels international airport (Zaventem), two international seaports (Antwerp and Ghent) and two high-speed train stations (Brussels and Antwerp). Brussels international airport is in particular a European hub: 80% of the passengers in 1995 were European (Structuurplan Vlaanderen, 1996: 30). The seaport of Antwerp is the fourth largest in the world with an international maritime traffic flow in 2000 of almost 120 million tonnes. Its throughput is, moreover, only slightly less than that of the third largest seaport, HongKong with 127.5 million tonnes (www.portofantwerp.be).

The Flemish Diamond is situated very centrally in the European system of main roads, railways and waterways. However, all these connections are rather unilaterally oriented towards Brussels. The well-known consequence is traffic-congestion in the peak-hours, with a higher concentration of traffic between Brussels and Leuven and on the Antwerp Ring (Structuurplan Vlaanderen, 1996: 37). This also implies that cities and other concentrations of economic activities and their surroundings become increasingly inaccessible. Another disadvantage within the Flemish Diamond is the fact that mobility primarily means car-mobility, while the public transport system is inadequately utilised.

4.3 Policy context concerning regional planning

The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (CEC, 1999) aims to stimulate polycentric and balanced development in the urban areas of Europe. This strategic planning document is very broad and abstract and does not refer specifically to the Flemish Diamond, though a number of its policy options for polycentric development can already be seen in the SPF and its options for the Flemish Diamond. These ideas are related to the formation of an urban network, the international position and 'gateway' function of this area, the strengthening of accessibility, and the importance of adequate regional planning policies.

The Second Structural Outline for the Benelux (BENELUX, 1996: 57) indicates that the Flemish Diamond is situated in a north-south axis from Amsterdam to Charleroi, including the Randstad, the Brussels Capital Region and the Walloon Triangle. The Outline states that the Belgian part can be regarded as one spatial entity, though a major challenge will be the spatial harmonisation of the three Belgian regions Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia within a Central Belgian Urban Network because each has its own planning powers. Indeed,

since the 1980s the three regions have been free to change and amend, or even replace the old Belgian planning legislation. They have done so at different speeds and in various manners (Albrechts, 2001b).

In 1995, the Brussels government adopted the *Brussels Regional Development Plan* (RDP). The authors of the Plan formulated a policy in order to strengthen the urban community's sense of belonging to the city of Brussels as the capital city and to reaffirm its status as a region in the Federal Structure (CPDT, 1999: 44). The Brussels Capital Region was eager to stress its image of important metropolis with an international allure, its status of autonomous urban region with its own government and legislative assembly elected by local residents and its central role in the Belgian and European institutional structure. Consequently, the general principles of the organisation of space and urban composition in Brussels have been focused on two key objectives set out in the 1989 government declaration: (1) stabilising a diversified population, and (2) ensuring the expansion of economic activity, i.e. bringing the proliferation of office buildings under control and preserving industrial and port activities, by guaranteeing social progress and a good quality of life in the city. In fact, the Brussels Capital Region tends to stress its autonomous position, without making explicit its relationship with the Flemish or Walloon Region. With the adoption of a new regional development plan, which is expected during the last quarter of 2002, it appears that the Brussels Capital Region will turn to a new vision of inter-regional co-operation. The second regional development plan focuses on twelve main priorities. Besides these priorities, the Brussels Capital Region intends to work on some 'transversal conditions', which should facilitate the realisation of these priorities. Inter-regional and international co-operation on spatial planning and policy coherence between the three Belgian regions make up part of these transversal conditions.¹⁵ However, concrete actions and the results of these statements are still awaited.

The *Walloon Area Development Scheme* SDER has been reflecting on contacts with other Belgian regions for a longer time (Gouvernement Wallon, 1999: 164), stating that this is necessary to face global trends and challenges. At the same time, it would allow the regions to tackle interregional problems such as mobility. According to the SDER, the North West Metropolitan Area projects (Interreg II-C) can create a permanent framework to stimulate contacts between Belgian regions. The Walloon spatial project positions the region in its broader interregional and international contexts, translated into two concepts: metropolitan areas and their interlinking Eurocorridors (Gouvernement Wallon, 1999: 129). In line with the *Benelux Second Structural Outline*, the SDER

¹⁵ See www.gewop.irisnet.be.

distinguishes four metropolitan areas in the region's broader external context: the Brussels central urban area, the Lille urban area, the Saar-Lor-Lux-area¹⁶ and the MHAL-area¹⁷. The Brussels central urban area fits in with the Walloon Triangle, formed by Brussels, Mons, Charleroi and Namur, and with the Flemish Diamond (Gouvernement Wallon, 1999: 129). The Walloon Triangle is described as the 'Walloon pendant' of the Flemish Diamond (Gouvernement Wallon, 1999: 106) within the context of a Central Belgian Urban Network. This implies an increased co-operation with both the Brussels Capital Region and Flanders. The SDER refers to co-operation within the ABC-axis as an example.

On the lower regional level of Flanders, the concept of the Flemish Diamond has had important impacts as well. With its introduction, some Flemish areas outside the Diamond have perceived this urban network as a threat to developments in their own area, fearing that the lion's share of benefits would be taken by the Flemish Diamond at their expense (Albrechts, 1998: 423). Vanhaverbeke (1998: 435) however, shows more or less the opposite: the Flemish Diamond makes an important economic contribution to the rest of Belgium. Basically, the Flemish Diamond constitutes a core of high-level services, such as accountancy, financial services, legal services, transport and logistics, that industries outside this area need. Moreover, the Flemish Diamond contains a great deal of international factors that are important for the competitiveness of adjacent Flemish districts. Apparently, during the past few years some districts outside the Flemish Diamond, such as Kortrijk and Westhoek, have accepted the concept of the Flemish Diamond. In some way, they formulate their own point of view and their strategic actions by taking the concept into account. One example is a strategic plan drawn up by the district of Westhoek in the province of West-Flanders, which considers the Flemish Diamond to be a positive element (Streekplatform Westhoek vzw, 1998). Moreover, the plan formulates a specific strategy towards the Flemish Diamond and stresses the need for a growing networked relationship with this area.¹⁸

Overall, the Flemish Diamond is still a rather new and unexplored concept and is used in planning processes in different ways and not region-wide. Some areas on the lower provincial and local levels within the territory of the Flemish Diamond allow for the concept, while others are less willing to do so. On the inter-regional level of the Belgian federal state, the Brussels Capital Region in particular stresses its autonomous status and hardly explores its

¹⁶ Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg.

¹⁷ Maastricht-Heerlen-Aachen-Liège.

¹⁸ This plan also puts forward a strategy towards the Nord-Pas-de-Calais-region and the Lille metropolis.

relationship with the Flemish Region and the Flemish Diamond. The policy context summarised in this section shows that for spatial planning little value is as yet being attached to the Flemish Diamond.

4.4 Key planning issues

After three introductory sections, this one comes to the first aim of this research: to establish the value of planning on the regional level of scale. The section explores whether there is a case for a regional approach to planning and action in the Flemish Diamond. It does so by elaborating on recommendations for regional spatial policies on three selected key-issues. Due to the selection of only three issues, the answer will not be comprehensive. The issues are, nevertheless, considered of major importance from the point of view of regional competitiveness and, moreover, shared by all four regions that are examined in this volume. Of course, the Flemish Diamond, as well as the other three regions, gives its own interpretations of the issues, that are described in general terms as (1) internal and external accessibility, (2) uneven spatial economic development, and (3) spatial diversity and the quality of open spaces (see Section 2.6).

4.4.1 Internal and external accessibility

In terms of traffic, the Antwerp and Brussels urban areas are clearly the most congested ones in Belgium to the extent that their accessibility is threatened at certain periods of the day (Albrechts, 2001a: 742). Recent observations indicate the delays that were caused on Brussels and Antwerp main roads because of traffic jams. According to calculations by the Flemish Traffic Centre in Antwerp, in 1999 a total amount of 41 million hours was spent on the main roads around Brussels. From these 41 million hours, 3 million (7.3%) were lost waiting in traffic jams. For Antwerp this percentage was 4.5 – 1.2 million lost hours on a total of 26.8 million. These losses may escalate since average increases of 35% of the amount of passenger movements and 40% of freight traffic is predicted for the first decade of this century on the main roads of the Flemish Diamond (Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, 2001c: 34).

From the perspective of territorial competitiveness, neither the Flemish Diamond nor its major individual cities of Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent will be very successful in attracting investment, or even in retaining their actual functions, if reasonable levels of internal and external accessibility are not assured. Indeed, easy access to markets, customer or clients, high quality national and international transport links with other cities and the ease of

Table 4.2 Main competences related to transport planning by level

Level	Main competences related to transport planning
Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Taxation policy (i.e. needed for road pricing, fuel-prices) ■ National railway company ■ Traffic regulation and control ■ National airport
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Construction, maintenance, and control of roads ■ Construction, maintenance, and control of waterways ■ Regional bus company
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Construction, maintenance, and control of local roads ■ Parking policy

Source: Albrechts, 2001b: 179-180

travelling around within the city are still considered essential factors for locating business (Healey and Baker, 2000: 6). Hence, there is a growing demand by different actors to tackle the growing problem of congestion in a structural way. Proposals for structural solutions are increasingly focusing on a shift, albeit modest and realistic, from individual car mobility towards more qualitative public transport. In order to avoid stagnation of the economy and a deadlock over environmental policy, new and creative ideas on a decrease in car mobility are urgently needed (Albrechts, 2001a: 742). In general, such an increasing demand for an efficient public transport system is a challenge almost all large European cities are facing (Vandermotten *et al.*, 1999: 39).

Politically, traffic and transport are seen as one of the most difficult and persistent challenges for the coming decades, especially for the Brussels Capital Region and the Flemish Region. Currently, transport planning is being tackled on different levels of scale, and many of the specific competences needed to conceive a coherent transport policy are scattered over the federal, regional (Flemish, Brussels Capital and Walloon Regions) and local levels. Table 4.2 presents a (non-exhaustive) list of the main competences in this field. In addition to this scattering of competences, policies on traffic and transport also face considerable arrears in the basic investment in roads, rail, public transport in general, etc.

Although the regions are important ‘actors’ to take necessary actions to discourage the use of private cars and to stimulate collective transport, some aspects of this ‘modal shift’ also involve local authorities. Usually, local authorities have the most direct impact on how facilities that favour the use of public transport, are planned. Some examples of local competences are the construction of park-and-ride facilities, parking policy, the development of station zones and the location of functions attractive to public transport users in the vicinities of railway and metro stations. Worthwhile initiatives are already being taken to improve public transport efficiency within parts of the Flemish Diamond. These involve different levels of scale: international (high-speed train), national, regional (express net), and local (metro and bus).

The development of the so-called regional express nets on the regional level is worth mentioning. A regional express net provides a combined public transport system with train, bus and metro connections within an area of some 30 km around one central city. Its development requires co-operation between a region and federal and regional public transport companies. For the development of the Brussels Regional Express Net, an economic co-operative structure has been set up between four public transport companies i.e. the National Railway Company and the three regional public transport companies.

In spite of worthwhile initiatives, there are few signs of clear policies that try to link the three different levels of scale mentioned in Table 4.2 and to co-ordinate initiatives for overlapping areas, for example within the framework of the Flemish Diamond. The cities of Brussels and Antwerp and the area between Brussels and Leuven are subject to projects, discussions, or global visions on how to organise a powerful public transport. These initiatives involve authorities and public transport companies of different scale levels, but hardly reveal any mutual tuning that would provide added value to the Flemish Diamond as a whole. Some background information is relevant in this respect. Firstly, the philosophies behind these different projects vary. The Brussels Regional Express Net is a typical example of a radial structured network that considers Brussels as a network city. The Flemish provinces of Antwerp and Flemish Brabant on the other hand, defend the polycentric grid network that better fits an urban network. Taking into account the very advanced stage of the Brussels Regional Express Net, it is not very likely that new ideas and different points of view can easily be adopted. Secondly, the planning periods for transport infrastructure expand over several decades. The realisation of railway infrastructure can take at least ten years, but in some cases even twenty-five. Consequently, a co-operation structure that can respond spontaneously and quickly to basic problems is impossible. Last, but not least, many experts are not convinced at all that both the concept and the study-area of the Flemish Diamond as such are the most suitable for developing a public transport system for the central urban area of Belgium.¹⁹ As to the Flemish Diamond as a concept, political sensitivity for imposing it on Brussels and parts of the Walloon Region is an important factor here. As to its area, the interplay of several spatial scales is of great importance. There are other areas, especially south of Brussels and in the north of the Walloon Region, but also important gateway areas in both east and west Belgium, that should, or have to be included in a project like this. Of course, the concept and possibilities of a polynucleated base structure remains valid, albeit over a wider area than the Flemish Diamond.

¹⁹ This became clear at one of the EURBANET workshops, held in 2001.

Despite the above, opportunities for collaboration and networking are increasing. The Brussels, Flemish and Federal governments are aware of this 'traffic problem'. A structural debate between both regions is already taking place over the Brussels Regional Express Net. There is a growing open-mindedness by both because most of the solutions to the traffic problems in the Brussels area, both within and across the borders of the Brussels Capital Region, are sought in the Flemish territory and with the National Railway Company. Moreover, the provinces and municipalities acknowledge that they have to contribute to a coherent transport policy. Structural solutions however clearly exceed their means and capacities (Albrechts, 2001a: 742). On the conceptual level, traffic and transport provide an opportunity to look at the Belgian central urban area in analytical terms as one polycentric urban area with a system of connecting access links, and in policy terms to guarantee interregional and international accessibility together with high-level internal accessibility and improved liveability of the area. This strategic issue could be one of the few win-win situations. A powerful public transport system could help to avoid the construction of new roads, which is also beneficial to the environment (less pollution by cars, none or little additional space needed for roads). The average citizen wins as this increases the spectrum of his or her individual mobility and offers him or her less time consuming transport. The economy wins because the area and its crucial nodal points remain accessible, which adds to the selective development potential of the area (Albrechts, 2001a: 742).

The Flemish Diamond as a concept for developing an integrated public transport system automatically demands an approach at different scale levels. Starting from a more global image or concept (containing the Flemish Diamond, but also Brussels and the Walloon Triangle) a co-operation between the federal state and the three regions is needed. Important matters in this respect are inter-regional co-ordination of restrictive policies related to the use of the car (parking conditions, pricing instruments) and inter-regional co-ordination on spatial planning policies (location policy, development of spatial programmes for multi-modal nodes). The very essence of a public transport system involving different scale levels implies the need for the public transport nodes to be planned and organised according to their functional position in this multi-layered network (HST, national fast connections, regional express nets, metro or bus systems). Consequently, the local authorities are crucial partners. Hence, a multi-level approach appears more promising than a strict regional approach.

4.4.2 Uneven spatial economic development

The case of uneven spatial development in the Flemish Diamond discussed in this section concerns office space in top business locations. A qualitative

and differentiated planning of business sites for the location of head-quarters of international enterprises and institutions has become crucial against the background of tendencies mentioned in chapter 2, like the ongoing economic globalisation, the rise of a knowledge based economy reflected by growing urban service and industrial high-touch sectors and the strengthening of inter-urban competition. The main challenges are how to make cities attractive to international investment and highly skilled manpower by providing development-areas for office space on locations with high potentials.

A general problem in the Flemish and Brussels Capital Region is a bad spatial tuning of supply and demand in business sites and office locations. Within the Flemish Diamond there is an uneven balance of supply and demand for office locations between Brussels and the rest of the area. An estimate of the amount of office space in the Flemish Region plus Brussels Capital Region shows that 9.6 million square meters out of a total of 15.1 million, i.e. 63%, is located in the Brussels Capital Region. Other important suppliers of office space are the Brussels peripheral zone (1.05 million) and the Antwerp area (1.65 million)²⁰, but they are much less important than the Brussels Capital Region. This dominance of Brussels is related to the city's unique mix of official functions, including the head-quarters of NATO, the European capital city, and the capital of the Federal State of Belgium, the Flemish Region/Community, the Brussels Capital Region and the French Community. It goes without saying that the city remains a very attractive location for offices and high-quality services. A survey executed by Healey and Baker (2000: 10) shows that Brussels will continue to be perceived by most European companies as the future political capital over the next five years.

In spite of the huge supply of office space, growing demand nevertheless leads to a strained market for office space. This implies some negative consequences, such as:

- an increasing quantitative lack of office-space in specific Brussels areas, especially the city centre;
- pressure from the real-estate sector on available space to the extent that residential buildings are gradually taken over by offices; and
- some areas, especially some decentralised Brussels areas and the Louiza-area characterised by old office-buildings, are not equipped to meet rising technical standards due to an increasing demand for high quality office infrastructure.²¹

Real estate agents forecast that the Brussels Capital Region in general will

²⁰ Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, 2001b, p. 11.

²¹ Jones Lang Lasalle, 2001, s.p.

only be able to cope with the demand for office-space until 2003. Specific areas that can and will take up new developments in Brussels are its Northern Area, the surroundings of the high-speed train station, some decentralised areas, and the periphery and the surroundings of the national airport Zaventem. As a consequence of the strained Brussels office market, other parts of the Flemish Diamond have also become more popular recently, such as the Antwerp area, which has competitive prices compared to the Brussels Capital Region, the presence of highly-qualified personnel, and good accessibility.²² In general, a spatial tendency for office-locations to deconcentrate (co-inciding with another tendency towards concentration in city centres) has made the triangular area between Brussels, Zaventem and Antwerp, incorporating places like Mechelen, Aalst, Vilvoorde, Machelen, Leuven, Edegem and Kontich, into 'a golden triangle' for the office market.

Looking at this recent spatial trend, it can be said that the real estate market does contribute to the concept of the Flemish Diamond. One project developer describes how the entire area between Brussels, Antwerp and Leuven, as well as the area south of Brussels, is becoming one single central location for office space in Belgium. It is characterized by a common set of important location factors, like a multi-modal transport network (main roads, high-speed train, an airport) and the supply of highly skilled employees (Verhaeghe, 1999: 1). Remarkably, these common location factors are hardly taken into account in the planning of office locations on this spatial scale. The Flemish Region and the Brussels Capital Region do not agree or have a mutual understanding on the planning of this issue. Neither are they able to perceive the planning of office space on the higher spatial level and larger area of the Flemish Diamond. Only very recently, the Flemish Planning Administration finished a study of major trends and policy options concerning office location.²³ This study reveals the major trends in office development in the Flemish Diamond and more specifically in the triangle between Brussels, Antwerp and Leuven. It offers a global framework on the differentiation of office milieus, according to their location, accessibility by public transport or by car, intensity of space-use, scale and responsible authorities. The challenge for the Flemish Region is to apply these principles in the development of its location policy.

Until now the only framework that has guided the planning of office locations in the Flemish Region is that of the contour planning process of urban

²² Jones Lang Lasalle, 2000, s.p.

²³ See Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, 2001b, *Ruimte voor kantoren. Ruimtelijk-economische aspecten van kantoren en kantoorachtigen in Vlaanderen*.

areas, which imposes quantitative tasks on the development of office space in urban areas. This does not seem to offer the best framework to develop a more global development perspective because it concerns only the Flemish Diamond. Moreover, within the Flemish Region, each urban region explores and determines its own development perspectives for office space, so the planning of office locations is rather ad-hoc. The need to put this issue into a broader spatial perspective, for instance that of the Flemish Diamond, has not yet been recognized. Also, the Brussels Capital Region has a strict 'self-containing' attitude towards the planning of office space, aiming to keep office space and related functions as much as possible within her own borders. Attempts at co-operation between the Flemish Region and the Brussels Capital Region evidently seem to struggle due to the dominating position of Brussels. The distinction between Brussels and 'the rest' is still important, which is illustrated by the following observations:

- the Brussels and Flemish planning administrations do not seem to be very active in communicating with each other as office locations are concerned;
- the Brussels Capital Region has a rather negative attitude towards any development that implies the spreading of certain activities outside its boundaries;
- many international companies and organisations still attach great psychological importance to the location of their head-quarters in Brussels (and to a '02-phone number'); and
- in some cases there even seems to be a functional specialisation and distinction between real estate developers mainly active in Brussels and others who decisively search for interesting markets in the surrounding areas.

The Brussels Capital Region would clearly benefit from mutual communication and collaboration on the planning of office space with the Flemish Region. A more balanced supply of office areas on the one hand and residential areas on the other hand would improve the viability of Brussels. Indeed, some (Baeten, 2001: 118) state that the 'Europeanisation' of Brussels is polarizing the area into a wealthy subclass of 'internationals' and a domestic workforce whose comfortable place in the city is more and more under siege. Without co-ordinated planning, it is argued, the internationalisation of Brussels may threaten the viability of large inner-city residential areas and make access to affordable housing increasingly difficult.

In conclusion, the concept of the Flemish Diamond in terms of the development of spatial perspectives for office locations, is actually being realised by real-estate companies that focus on the triangle between Brussels, Antwerp and Leuven. The Flemish planning administration considers this as a very positive tendency. A limited form of networking between the Flemish planning administration, regional economic development agencies, and private

real-estate developers of office locations has been started up within the framework of a Flemish study-project.

4.4.3 Spatial diversity and the quality of open space

The Flemish Diamond is characterized by a high fragmentation of space. The pattern of homogenous urban areas, surrounded by a diversified but coherent rural space, has disappeared. Now, scattered elements of more traditional urban structures are found next to diffused and more space-consuming activities and fragmentary networks. Growing densities of traffic and degradation of natural landscapes are among the consequences with adverse effects on the region's competitiveness and quality of life. One of the important policy challenges is to retain and avoid the spatial overflow of cities and villages and to create a supply of differentiated working and residential areas.

The challenge of spatial fragmentation is being tackled on different levels of scale. The policy field of urbanisation in Belgium involves several authorities on regional, provincial and municipal level. Many local and all provincial authorities have started structure planning processes that will deal with urban problems. However, themes like urbanisation most likely raise conflicts of competence between the local and provincial and the regional authorities (Albrechts, 2001a: 741). These local and provincial authorities value the 'concept of subsidiarity' in its true sense: most decisions should be taken at a level as near to the people as possible. Nevertheless, the SPF has introduced new ideas towards urban policy that involve planning processes in which all three levels, local, provincial and regional, take part. One of the Plan's basic principles, 'deconcentrated clustering', suggests a tension between spatial dispersion and concentration (Albrechts, 1998: 417). To translate this principle into concrete policy, the Plan introduces two spatial categories, urban areas and open space. Each spatial category is linked with a specific type of policy i.e. urban area policy and open space policy. The urban area policy implies that quantitative tasks related to housing and business sites are strictly divided between urban areas and smaller centres in open space areas. Spatially, these quantitative tasks for larger urban areas should fit within 'contours'. The contour planning processes demand intense co-operation between different actors, including spatial planning administrations, policy makers and different sector representatives from the three planning levels. So far the contour planning processes have been started in at least eight large and regional urban areas in Flanders.

The involvement of three planning levels (Flemish region, provincial level, local level) is essential in the contour planning process as introduced in the Flemish Region. If these various planning partners do not participate in an

active way, decision making related to urban areas will fail (Beersmans and Liekens, 2000: 170). However, such necessary co-operation and networking meets some constraints. First, contour planning processes are very time-consuming: the average planning-process takes two to two and a half years, mostly because the nature of these processes is new to all planning actors. Consequently, the organisation of these processes is quite demanding and collaboration or at least mutual learning between the several urban areas involved in a contour planning process is not very likely to take shape. Another difficulty is the positioning of the contour planning process in relation to other spatial planning processes. It is often not obvious to what extent specific development perspectives or objectives should be tackled or realised within either the urban contour planning processes or the spatial structure planning processes. This implies that the concept of subsidiarity is still alive and involves consuming discussions and negotiations.

Due to the very nature of the issue, the different legal bases, and the different planning cultures, the approaches towards urbanisation are quite different between the three Belgian regions. Where the Flemish Region aims at a clear 'contouring' of urban areas, the Brussels Capital Region has no choice but to consider its administrative borders as 'the only border' and to deal with the consequences of urbanisation within this border. Its overall 'city project' includes specific programmes (tasks) for housing, business-locations etc. for the region itself. The principle of structuring and restructuring cities and villages, as put forward by the Walloon Region, envisages an end to the deconcentration of activities towards their peripheries (Gouvernement Wallon, 1999: 25). However, no specific planning processes to turn this principle into concrete policy – apart from the more traditional sectoral plans – are proposed.

Finally, there are also obstacles at the level of inter-regional co-operation. The topics of sub-urbanisation, urban restructuring and concentration seem to generate more 'mental opposition' between the Flemish and Brussels Capital Region than opportunities for smooth co-operation. Spatial planning policies in the Brussels Capital Region focus on a very 'self-containing' perspective: every effort is made in order to keep all functions and activities within the regional borders. For a region that is subject to the negative impacts of highly concentrated urbanisation, such as spatial fragmentation and social segregation, bad environmental conditions, and urban decay, the spread of activities towards its periphery is of course considered an adverse tendency. It is therefore not surprising that the contour planning process of the Flemish periphery around Brussels, where quantitative tasks for housing and business-sites are part of the programme, is continuously postponed.

Nevertheless, despite these constraints towards co-operation and networking, there is a base for mutual learning and exchange of experiences on an international level. Both the Netherlands and Flanders are actively dealing with the idea of contour planning. Moreover, the problem of urban fragmentation and sprawl is without any doubt also of high importance in other polycentric urban regions. Within the North Western Metropolitan Area this issue would offer an interesting base for communication and mutual learning on a trans-national level, hence building a basis for more successful policies. Each area would benefit from the experiences, ideas and points of view communicated by other polycentric urban regions.

The urbanisation and fragmentation of open space causes the deterioration of the natural environment. Due to the spatial expansion of different functions and activities, large homogenous open areas become very rare. Important natural areas, woods, and ecological infrastructures are threatened and are disappearing. Open space fragments become very uniform and lose quality. Important challenges are to reinforce the relations between natural structures and polynuclear urban structures, and how to reduce the strains on the ecological environmental.

The challenge of the decreasing quality of open spaces is being tackled on different scale levels by different actors. On the regional level, both the Flemish Region and the Brussels Capital Region recognise 'blue and green networks' as structuring systems. In the Flemish Region, the SPF and the Decree on Nature Conservation, both from 1997, provide the legal base. The SPF aims to make one coherent, structuring framework of the river valleys, together with linked open areas and corridors of open space (Albrechts, 1998: 417). The open space policy aims to safeguard, or even restore, open spaces. Housing, employment and services are grouped in the many already existing centres outside large urban areas. It is, however, not these built-up centres but agriculture and nature that dominate the open spaces (Albrechts, 1998: 417-8). The SPF states that the natural structure of Flanders should be differentiated into several green policy categories and that a specific area-oriented policy should be formulated towards these categories by means of spatial implementation plans.²⁴ These plans define demarcation of natural and agricultural areas as a task for the Flemish Administration for Spatial Planning, in co-operation with the public sectors responsible for agriculture, nature and

24 The SPF's objective is to demarcate a total surface of 125,000 ha of large natural areas (GEN) and large natural areas in development (GENO), 150,000 ha where nature and other functions have equal importance and natural connecting areas between the two. Apart from these categories, the development of 10,000 ha ecological woods is proposed.

woods, and with the provinces and local authorities. The delineation process of open spaces has proven to be a delicate undertaking (Albrechts, 2001a: 741). Green policy categories have also been put forward by the Flemish Decree on Nature Conservation, albeit in other terms.²⁵ Co-ordination of spatial planning and environmental policy is also important for the physical system underlying nature and agricultural land use. It is important, therefore, in order to guarantee a coherent policy that both legal instruments, the SPF and the Decree on Nature Conservation, are developed through mutual harmonisation (Kuijken, 1999: XVIII). Besides, they also correspond with the European guidelines of *Natura 2000* and EECONET, the pan-European conservation strategy for landscape and bio-diversity.

Alongside the SPF, the Flemish Government also adjusted its Environmental Plan (*Milieu Natuur Plan 2* or *MiNa Plan 2*). The Plan describes of how the Flemish environmental policy for the period 1997-2001 and was drawn up by the Flemish environmental administration and public institutions, including the Flemish Administration for Planning and Statistics. Related to several themes, the *MiNa Plan 2* provides an overview of specific development perspectives, strategies and actions (some of them binding for the Flemish Government). In the Plan, the concept of sustainable development is a central perspective. In the Flemish Region, the provinces and municipalities have the task to refine the ecological network as conceived on the regional level (Albrechts, 2001a: 741) by both the SPF and the *MiNa Plan 2*. The provinces and municipalities are very eager to take this responsibility. At provincial and municipal levels, policies towards nature conservation are developed within the frameworks of provincial and municipal structure plans, provincial environmental plans, and municipal plans for nature development.

In general, the spatial impact of natural protection seems to be rather rigid in the Flemish Region: green, but also blue networks have to be literally delineated. In a recent policy report, the minister of Environment states that the main open space categories should be demarcated in 2003, partly because it is an important part of green networks on European level (*Natura 2000*) and global level (Dua, 2000: 72). Taking into account how much time it takes to finish the demarcation process for an urban area, it is very doubtful that this time-limit will be reached.

25 According to the Flemish Decree on Nature Conservation the main Flemish Ecological Network (VEN) consists of the large natural areas (GEN) and large natural areas in development (GENO). A minor integral intertwined and supporting network (IVON) exists for the areas with an equal meaning for nature and other functions and the natural connecting areas.

In the Brussels Capital Region a concept literally called 'Green and Blue Networks for the Brussels Capital Region' was introduced in 1998. In order to deal with the shortage of green space in the city, the green networks are designed to connect existing 'green elements' and to preserve and expand the biodiversity. 'Green networks' is in plural because of a primary and a secondary green network are planned for design. Both the green and blue networks are conceptualised with the dual function of improving both the ecological environment and the quality of life in the city. Moreover, both the green networks and the blue network plans involve actors of different kinds and on different levels. These include the Regional Administration for Environmental Policy, the administrations for equipment and transport, and the local administrations of the nineteen municipalities the Brussels Capital Region is composed of. But also the Brussels Regional Public Transport Company and the National Railway Company are important partners in the communication process. In Wallonia, the SDER bases the development and protection of its natural patrimony on the forming of an ecological network (Gouvernement Wallon, 1999: 213). This ecological network is mainly made up of valuable areas detected by the *Natura 2000* programme. Since spatial development perspectives are realised in 'sector plans', these are the primary spatial planning instruments to protect 'green' and 'blue' in the Walloon Region.

The above reveals important differences between the three regions with regard to their legal base, planning approaches, and characteristics of the problems related to the protection and development of natural entities. This observation constrains policy co-operation and networking on the quality of open spaces on the trans-regional level in Belgium. The problems in the field of open space are so structurally different between the 'urban' Brussels region and 'the rest' of the Flemish Diamond, that this issue cannot be considered as the best engine to start a process (Albrechts, 2001a: 741). On the other hand; nature and environmental issues do not stop at borders. Strategic issues in the field of natural protection and development can offer an important base for co-operation on trans-regional level. Co-operation between the Federal State of Belgium and the three Regions is currently organised in the Coordination Committee for International Environmental Policy (CCIM). This Committee can function as a very suitable platform for co-operation between the three regions with respect to national and international themes.

On trans-national level, the MiNa-plan 2 states that cross-border co-operation should be stimulated, especially in areas where cross-border environmental problems can be distinguished. However, the plan designates the Benelux Area as the most suitable for co-operation between the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region and the Netherlands. More specifically, the areas where an Interreg-co-operation is functioning are seen as opportunities for starting

cross-border co-operation. In such area-oriented environmental projects, different functions and activities can be analysed in an inter-connected way. These co-operation structures already form networks within the framework of existing European projects (S.O.S., Nature 2000).

The above discussions on the three selected key-issues show that flexible, multi-level approaches, appropriate to the issue at stake, are more promising than strict regional approaches. The feasibility of such flexible multi-level forms of co-operation and co-ordination remains a delicate issue, however. The current policies to tackle selected key-issues are very much 'coloured' by the specific nature of the federalised state of Belgium. Co-operation and networking within the context of a Flemish Diamond is impeded both by perceived differences in interest between the Regions, in particular Brussels vis-à-vis 'the rest' and decentralisations of spatial planning tasks to lower public levels such as urban area municipalities. The rather autonomous status of the Regions within the federalised state can lead to an unwillingness to co-operate in spatial planning and other policy fields, such as city marketing and city-branding. The next section further elaborates on this feasibility.

4.5 Basis for a regional approach

Following the model presented in section 2.6, this section considers the extent to which the Flemish Diamond is already functioning as one single region in economic or governance terms, or is already seen as a region in cultural terms. In this study, the last aspect is closely interwoven with governance in the sense that we look at culture from the perspective of policy-making.

4.5.1 Economic functioning

In 1996, the planning team involved in the design of the SPF reported on the development perspectives of the Flemish Diamond. Prior to what was the first attempt to formulate such a development perspective, the report describes the functional and morphological base of the Flemish Diamond. In this description, the SPF-planning team presents a set of criteria for an urban network that contains²⁶:

- the quality of the urban areas themselves;
- complementarity of the urban areas belonging to the network;

²⁶ These are inspired by the criteria formulated by the Dutch *Rijksplanologische Dienst* (Rijksplanologische Dienst, 1991).

Table 4.3 Coherence and complementarity within the Flemish Diamond

Field	Yes	No	Remarks
Housing market	x		Supply of different dwelling types
Higher education	x		Specialisation within each university; co-operation between research-units at universities and economic enterprises
Employment	x		Mainly specialisation in function of gateways (airport, seaports)
Headquarters of important companies	x		Specialisation in function of gateways and large cities (Brussels: political-administrative function, Antwerp: seaport)
Administrative functions		x	Brussels is the only important centre
Culture	x		5 Historical cities; differentiated supply of international cultural events
Congress centre		x	Brussels is the most important congress-centre
Hospitals	x		Different medical specialisations (tropical medicine, burning wounds, hart diseases, sport injuries, ...)
Connections		x	Emphasis on road-traffic, no complementarity with railways and waterways

Source: Structuurplan Vlaanderen, 1996

- flows of goods, people and information between urban areas (the interurban relations);
 - physical links between urban areas: hard interconnecting infrastructural links as well as soft structuring natural links;
 - various forms of organisational linkages between urban areas: soft interconnecting links for consultation, co-operation and the exchange of information.
- The conclusion of the report was that the Flemish Diamond meets four of these five criteria. As to the fifth criteria, however, this area suffers an important lack of institutional and organisational co-operation.

The SPF-planning team also defined some fields or domains to operationalise the issue of regional coherence and complementarity within the Flemish Diamond. Table 4.3 shows the findings. Overall, there appears to be good coherence for spatial functioning in the Flemish Diamond.

4.5.2 Regional governance²⁷

A changing context related to economic and cultural globalisation and growing territorial competition has led to important changes in urban governance (Kearns and Paddison, 2000: 846). Formal governments are no longer able – or not as able as they thought they were previously – to direct events (Kearns and Paddison, 2000: 845). More complex forms of self-organising, inter-organisational networks are gradually replacing traditional policy-making. As Goldsmith (2001: 331) states, the ever-increasing fragmentation of political institutions leads to an increasing number of political networks. Several political,

²⁷ This paragraph is mainly based upon Albrechts (2001b).

social, cultural and economic actors are part of these networks and contribute to a decision-making process on different scale levels to achieve efficient policy-making (De Decker and Vranken, 2000: 303). In short, *government* is giving way to *governance*. The key political task – and the essence of governance – is the management of the new networks in which the boundaries between public and private spheres and sectors have become blurred and a flexibility of approach in a variety of mechanisms is essential if policies and problems are to be tackled successfully. It is essential for governments and other institutions at different scale levels to work together to address the challenges posed by post-industrialism and globalisation. Kearns and Paddison (2000: 846) add that other changes in the political, social and spatial spheres also involve – or affect – the role and activities of urban governments. Political decentralisation, encapsulated in the concept of subsidiarity, has been championed on the importance of being responsive to local needs and to differences in political decision-making. The concept of subsidiarity refers to this phenomenon. Cities are also attempting to ‘delink’ or ‘decouple’ from national governments because they consider them less useful and relevant to their fortunes in the interurban competition that is becoming increasingly fierce.

The formal institutional framework in which the Flemish Diamond is ‘captured’ is a federal system. The process of federalisation took place in several stages and lasted more than 25 years. As a result, the Belgian unitary State has evolved towards a Federal State where sovereignty is divided between the federation (national government), Regions, and Communities, each with their own specific responsibilities and powers. On the federal level, legislative power belongs to the Parliament, consisting of the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate. In most federal systems, some powers are usually also transferred to the constituent entities, such as the states in the USA and *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Belgian federal system, however, embraces two instead of one type of constituent entity: *Gewesten/Régions* (Regions) and *Gemeenschappen/Communautés* (Communities). There are three Regions (the Flemish, the Walloon and the Brussels Capital Region) and three Communities (the Flemish-speaking, the French-speaking and the German-speaking Community). Regions and Communities are each responsible for a different set of government domains. Basically, economy-related (such as economic development and public works) and territory-related matters (such as spatial planning and environmental policy) are attributed to the Regions, while language-related (such as culture) and person-related matters (such as welfare) are transferred to the Communities. The Communities are not territorially defined, but represent both linguistic areas and monolingual or bilingual institutions outside these areas, mainly in the bilingual city of Brussels. Hence, the Regions and Communities cover different territories, but are also overlapping. This double set of federated entities has created a very complex

institutional framework. Like the federal State, each Community and Region has its own legislative body (council), executive power (government) and administration. In Flanders, moreover, the councils and governments of the Flemish Community and Flemish Region, though not legally 'merged', are organised and managed as one entity in which both retain their separate legal personality. While having the same legal power, their law-making rules do have a different scope, according to whether they are dealing with community or regional matters. In 1996 the Flemish Council adopted the name of the Flemish Parliament.

Since the constitutional reform of 1980, the three Regions have ultimate responsibility for spatial planning and environmental policy. Nevertheless, formal co-operation on spatial planning by these Regions is rather limited. The three regional ministers for spatial planning meet only occasionally, while co-operation at an administrative level is organised on a very ad-hoc basis (van der Lecq, 2001: 157). Although the Flemish Diamond includes Brussels, as yet there have been no official initiatives by the Flemish Region to co-operate with the Brussels Capital Region on spatial planning. The latest policy report by the Flemish minister of Spatial Planning (2000) gives very little support to inter-regional co-operation (Van Mechelen, 2000). The Flemish Spatial Planning Decree of 1996 has also further deconcentrated full planning powers for the Flemish territory to the intra-regional level of the provinces, who are now entitled to define Provincial Structure Plans, Provincial Implementation Plans, and regulations. The lack of trans-regional co-operation appears an obstacle to the further development of the Flemish diamond concept, which is trans-regional by nature.

This limited trans-regional co-operation is also illustrated by the strong distinction in the way the Regions adopt European spatial policy-making. For the Walloon Region, whose spatial development perspective accentuates collaboration and harmonisation with other regions, European and inter-regional orientation is very important. Walloon planning authorities appear to see the European spatial planning context as a high priority demonstrated by the Walloon Region's responsibility for planning and regional policy during the Belgian presidency of the European Union (from July to December 2001). In contrast, for the Flemish Region, the European dimension to planning does not appear to be such a high priority, although it does recognize the importance of the European policy context. The conceptualisation of the international urban network of the Flemish Diamond proves this. But as the SPF (*Structuurplan Vlaanderen*, 1997: 310) mentions, the Region prefers to develop and implement its own spatial perspective before participating actively in co-operative structures on a higher scale level. Until now, very few resources (human and financial) have been invested to position Flemish spatial plan-

ning in a European context, or just to integrate the concept of the Flemish Diamond into European projects.

Governance finally implies equal collaboration between public and private parties. Sometimes, these public-private partnerships are considered constructs in which the public partners set general conditions and the private partners take actions and provide funds. In our view, however, there is a wider scope. In the Flemish Diamond, experiences with these partnerships have, as yet, been minimal. The Flemish Government recently decided to create a Knowledge Centre for Public-Private Co-Operation, responsible for stimulation, analysis and consultation on various possible co-operation projects.

The psychological impact of the regionalisation of Belgian spatial policy cannot be ignored. The emergence of the Flanders, Walloon and Brussels Capital Regions as distinct regional entities, with substantial political and functional significance, has unquestionably affected the way in which citizens, planners and politicians conceptually compartmentalise Belgium. Spatial planning has not remained unaffected by this development. Given the existing structure of political institutions and the now-emerging relations between the Regions, spatial planning currently rarely considers interregional issues. Whereas planners in the early 1960s may have focused on the interplay of local and national interests, it is now the regional level that is of primary importance.

4.5.3 Perspectives on policy making

In 1996, de Rynck suggested a strategy to activate policy-making related to the concept of the Flemish Diamond. He starts from a pluricentric perspective on policy-making, which is clearly distinct from the monocentric and polycentric perspectives (de Rynck, 1996: 3). The monocentric perspective is characterised by a hierarchy: one dominant actor sets conditions for all other actors. A polycentric perspective is characterised by a horizontal power structure: actors depend on each other for mutual agreements and understandings. De Rynck places the relationship between Flanders, the Brussels Capital Region and Wallonia or the relationship between the cities of Ghent and Antwerp in such a polycentric perspective. In a pluricentric perspective, the power of decision-making is divided between several authorities in an asymmetrical way. This is the case in the Flemish Diamond, where several regional, provincial and municipal authorities are involved. The possible outcome of negotiations is conditioned by specific interactions of power and influence, and is therefore extremely unpredictable.

Whether actors within a pluricentric perspective negotiate on common objectives with respect to a certain area (here the Flemish Diamond), depends on

the way they perceive the following issues:

- the area itself;
- their own space for actions and the area they are located in;
- their own interests in this configuration;
- the conformity of these interests with other actors' interests; and
- their position of mutual dependency vis-à-vis other actors (de Rynck, 1996: 4).

The relationship between this perception and several external factors is ambiguous. On the one hand, actual changes in external factors (like the change of employment rates, the decline of an industrial sector, traffic-congestion) determine how specific actors will change their perception and main objectives. On the other hand, it is also possible that external factors do not change, but their translations into perceptions do. The translation from external factors into certain perceptions can occur on an individual base (one actor) or a collective base (different actors) through several channels: media, studies and seminars; external visions and ideas (like the European or Benelux level); individual changes; pressure by persons or groups with great influence; and interactions between different actors through communication and debate. The most important external factors with respect to the Flemish Diamond are some actual trends related to the international competitiveness of mostly European urban regions. The official approval of the SPF can be considered as a positive external factor – an 'initiating-platform' for recognising the concept – but also as a threatening factor, a Flemish strategy to 'conquer' outsiders. Furthermore, there seems to be a great deal of attention paid to the concept of the Flemish Diamond at the Benelux and European level. This is perhaps the most powerful external factor, although we do not know yet to what extent actual interactions within the Flemish Diamond occur from the perceptions on these international levels.

Currently, some initial translation and application of the concept of the Flemish Diamond in policy-making does exist, be it in a very limited and disparate way. Without doubt, the Flemish department of Spatial Planning (AROHM) has played a key role in communicating and developing the concept. However, it works in a rather centralist way, without involving other public or private actors. AROHM stimulates other (lower) planning levels to apply the concept of the Flemish Diamond by communicating its vision through short reports. These reports are drawn up for specific planning processes, like provincial spatial planning processes or the demarcation of urban areas.²⁸ In addition, the concept is also being applied by other departments. For instance, the

28 Similar to the concept of 'deconcentrated concentration', one of the options of the Structure Plan for Flanders is to demarcate large, regional and small urban areas. This involves an intensive planning process where the Flemish, provincial and local planning levels work together.

department for Roads and Traffic (AWV) is working on a transport plan for the Flemish Region. In calculating trend scenarios, it makes a clear distinction between roads inside and roads outside the Flemish Diamond. Outside policy-making arenas, the media gradually tends to use terms like 'Vlaamse Ruit'²⁹, 'gouden ruit'³⁰ or 'gouden driehoek'³¹ in their vocabulary. Unquestionably, this is a very important step toward the communication of the concept.

At this stage in planning processes in Flanders, it is the provinces that are most active in applying the concept of the Flemish Diamond. Provincial actors – and some local actors – have great interest in realising perspectives concerning the Flemish Diamond, because a location policy related to this concept has a direct effect on their scale-level, for instance regarding the creation of business-sites or the improvement of external and internal accessibility. Yet, they have little authority to actually realise these elements or ideas. This lack of authority is perhaps the most important asset of provinces, according to de Rynck (1996: 12). First, they can be regarded as impartial and thus non-threatening actors. Second, they represent the most important sub-areas within the Flemish Diamond. The deconcentration of the structural planning process to the provinces provides important platforms where the concept of the Flemish diamond is communicated to stakeholders, especially local authorities. The provinces' governors may be especially crucial actors as they are supposed to be above the daily political affairs and represent the 'common interests'. One problem, however, is that the level of provinces only has meaning within the Flemish Region, there is no equivalent level in Brussels. The large cities within the Flemish Diamond are involved in strategic planning in their own way, although all the municipal authorities are encouraged to utilise their position in the Flemish Diamond. It is important, however, to find an equilibrium between respecting these local authorities' own responsibilities (powers) and putting in essential objectives for the Flemish Diamond. In summary, the perceptions on the Flemish Diamond as a concept are still at a very early stage. Consequently, it is very important to boost (1) open communication in order to present the concept and encourage actors to utilise it, and (2) translations of external factors into the perception of the Flemish Diamond, preferably by influential economic actors.

²⁹ This is the Dutch translation of 'Flemish Diamond'. Unfortunately, after having conceived the metaphor 'Flemish Diamond', the SPF-planning team found out that the image had been used in Dutch for other purposes. So, not to confuse the images, they fell back on the second meaning in English, a geometric shape – 'de Vlaamse Ruit'. This image corresponds more or less with the actual shape of the network, though it is clearly less powerful than the original (Albrechts, 1998: 420).

³⁰ 'Golden rhombus'.

³¹ 'Golden triangle'.

4.6 Mechanisms for promoting regional planning

4.6.1 Promoting the concept within a multi-level environment

Governance is above all a multi-level activity (cf. Kearns and Paddison, 2000: 848), that not only involves public, but also private 'stakeholders'. Proposals for mechanisms to promote planning with a regional approach and scope need to take these two features of governance into account.

In general, multi-level activity requires strong decentralisation and political fragmentation. The Flemish Diamond, like other polycentric urban regions, is characterised by an existing division of policy-making between several scale levels and sectors. The formulation of spatial policies for the Flemish Diamond requires co-operation between the three regions i.e. the Flemish Region, the Brussels Capital Region and the Walloon Region. Also, their decision-making process sometimes needs a more global perspective, for example on the level of the Central Belgian Urban Network, with contributions by the three regions and not just the Flemish Region. In general, greater inter-play of different scale levels (Europe, Federal State, the three regions, Flemish and French speaking communities, provinces and municipalities) is needed strategically and tactically according to the issues at stake.

The existence of different scale levels and sectors has become a dominant aspect of the development of a policy-oriented concept like urban networking. Governance and re-scaling (or 'the jumping of scales') are inter-connected. At the same time, however, there is no specific predominant scale level where economical, social or other problems can be solved. In the current circumstances of multi-level governance and overlapping networks, our understanding of how the urban system operates is probably inadequate for governance to be sufficient and effective. Central questions are how decision-making powers (and processes) are divided into different spatial constructs, how the links between different scale levels appear, and how forms of co-operation structures could be organised within the polycentric urban regions. Mutual consent and trust between the large variety of 'stakeholders' in polycentric urban regions seem indispensable for the creation of an open decision-making process. This decision-making process, the establishment of forms of co-operation, and the division of tasks between several scale levels and actors make part of the process of formation of urban networks. Still, overall problems concerning voluntary collaboration seem to suggest the need for some overall loose framework, providing some stimuli for network guidance.

There are, however, some weaknesses or vulnerabilities of the governance concept, such as democratic control and legitimacy. In some literature, governance is described as a way to increase efficiency in policy-making. It is the capacity to get things done in the face of complexity, conflict and social change.³² Other sources however state that governance, even when it may earn its legitimacy out of this increased efficiency, attacks the principles and strengths of democratic policy-making, to the benefit of non-transparent decision-making processes amongst different, non-elected elites.³³ Decision-making threatens to move more and more into the hands of non-elected actors. It is possible that a pragmatic way of assuming tasks and taking decisions in very closed and selective arenas leads to a decrease in public involvement, information and communication. This is why transparency, dialogue, a broad regional discourse that incorporates all public and private stakeholders as well as the civil society are so important. Open and informal structures supported by leading politicians and other key persons that connect urban networks can therefore be considered as strategic issues. According to the issues at stake, some actors or planning levels seem to be more able to take the initiative. Within a network structure, the activity of these steering 'agents' can be described as network managers for these specific issues. De Rynck (1996: 14) refers to specific actors who have more power sources (like the Flemish Government) or who have more interest in realising some perspectives (like the cities of Ghent, Antwerp and Leuven or the Brussels Capital Region). So the steering capacities of some actors could be more powerful than of others. Within a network structure, the activity of these steering 'agents' can be described as network management.

De Rynck (1996: 16-19) made some recommendations for an organisational approach with respect to the Flemish Diamond. Even if there is a minimal political base, he stated that someone would have to assume the responsibility of 'promoting the concept'. Somebody has to initiate a platform that enables the start of the project, possibly by distributing a first strategy report to some influential politicians in the Flemish Region, the Brussels Capital Region and the Walloon Region. These 'leading personalities' could start a process, stimulate the creation of a wide social base, and enable a more intensive process of preparation (without any further engagement). Inspired by de Rynck (1996: 16) we refer to

- cabinets of the Flemish, Brussels and Walloon prime-ministers;
- the presidents of the Flemish, Brussels and Walloon Parliaments;
- the provincial governors within the Central Belgian Urban Network;

³² See Kearns A. and R. Paddison (2000) and De Decker P. and J. Vranken (2000).

³³ Denayer W. and P. Saey (2001).

- the mayors of the large cities in the same area;
- leading personalities in the Flemish, Brussels and Walloon social-economic world.

De Rynck states that a group of the above mentioned people could act as a sounding board, stimulating an open brainstorming process and the creation of a solid project-base (a governance structure). However, some conditions are rather important:

- the project agenda should start from a global perspective and should not be written by one specific actor (e.g. the Flemish Region);
- the global interests should be formulated in an open way, enabling inter-regional as well as intra-regional issues (the Flemish Diamond in relation with other Flemish areas, the Walloon Region);
- the agenda should stick to a content that is focused on the scale-level of the Flemish Diamond and its international positioning;
- regional concepts (like the Flemish Diamond) should incorporate the flexibility to become a part of or even overflow into new concepts on a different scale.

4.6.2 Issue-based projects gradually building up the concept of the Flemish Diamond

In formulating ideas for strategic projects, the importance of issue-based projects and the forming of strategic alliances based on co-operation on a voluntary basis cannot be underestimated. In this context EUROCITIES (2001) is a very good example of an urban network, where cities are invited to discuss matters of mutual interest.³⁴ Goldsmith *et al.* (1997: 222) illustrate how the Eurocities-network is based upon the premise that large cities are the engines of economic growth and social, cultural and technological innovation. The activities of the EUROCITIES network mainly focus on: lobbying the EU institutions, sharing expertise and setting up innovation laboratories, monitoring progress and raising awareness and issuing timely publications.

Inspired by Goldsmith *et al.* (1997: 223-224) we can describe three positive outcomes of this European city networking. The first one is the implementation of projects, partly funded by European grants. Such grants are not evenly distributed and generally go to the more active cities. In other words, it is not network membership per se which is important, what counts is active membership. There is, in addition, a positive benefit related to membership in the

³⁴ The following Belgian cities make part of EUROCITIES: Antwerp, Brussels, Charleroi and Ghent (see www.eurocities.org).

form of informal relationships that foster integration and co-operation amongst stakeholders, which could be difficult outside the network. Important in this context is a third benefit derived from network membership, which reflects the capacity for mutual learning and adaptation, the importance of mutual respect. These possible outcomes are important sources of inspiration to encourage networking within the Flemish Diamond and transnational urban networking within the NWMA. However, active network membership is, in the Flemish Diamond, more likely to be obtained through smaller projects that gradually build up the concept. The area contains a number of heterogeneous stakeholders (business organizations, public institutions, pressure groups) who may establish links for co-ordination. If they grow into a well-functioning network, this network can serve as a catalyst for future development (Albrechts, 2001a: 737). Rather than by developing one global and initial project, working at concrete projects with a limited scope seems more likely to enable actors to form networks based upon mutual trust and respect. However, trust ties must be built up slowly and carefully. The current experiences with the contour planning processes of regional and large urban areas already shows how difficult it is to gain the confidence of local actors on an ad-hoc base. Nevertheless, these processes are actually the only co-operation structures between local, provincial and regional institutions and give a bottom-up input to the concept of the Flemish Diamond. Another example is the way the Flemish planning administration is trying to build a global vision related to the development of office locations in the triangle Brussels-Antwerp-Leuven. This project involves co-operation of the Flemish public planning administration and private real estate developers. If such a project could be expanded towards the Brussels Capital Region, this could be the start of a forum related to top-locations in the Flemish Diamond. On a wider base the domain of public transport seems to be most likely to produce success in co-operation, because this strategic issue may be one of the few with a win-win situation for the three regions involved.

In its contribution to the European Commission's White Paper on Governance (2001), the EUROCIITIES network highlighted the importance of network models of governance. It corresponds strongly to the realities of our times by recognising the interdependence and overlapping nature of different spheres of government, each with its own contribution and role (EUROCIITIES, 2001: 1-2). According to EUROCIITIES (2001: 3), the network approach suggests that governance should be based on looser patterns of relationships between autonomous agencies, associations and citizens. The statements by EUROCIITIES (2001: 3) incorporate a number of basic elements of a real network:

- networks are created through mutual benefit and a shared purpose but guarantee at the same time the possibility for members to keep their own identity;

- they also retain the ability to adapt as problems change and new responses are learnt; and
- the approach implies not just a decentralisation of government, but also an expansion of horizontal linkages in the system of governance.

The main focus still aims at nodes: which actors could be linked to each other in a network structure and could instigate the development of the Flemish Diamond as an urban network? Or, based upon Castell's definition: what kind of networks can be part of or can overlap with the Flemish Diamond and what does this mean for the nature of the nodes?

Albrechts (2001a: 738-739) stresses the importance of informal arenas and forums, which have the advantage of bringing together new people, new networks and new ideas. The design of informal arenas has to suit the specific politics and contextuality of the polycentric urban region. This contextuality can be explored through some appropriate strategic issues, although the selection of these issues is not a neutral or random selection (Albrechts, 2001a: 739). It is important that the actors are involved in this selection to ensure that they are considered as important issues – not only to the political system, but also to pressure groups, business community, citizens etc.

Conclusions

This case-study showed that for the time being, there is only a weak political, social or cultural platform for a global network-approach to the Flemish Diamond. Taking into consideration the political-institutional structure of the area, a trans-national or trans-regional context is certainly needed in order to promote the concept of the Flemish Diamond to the different regions, provinces and municipalities. Moreover, flexibility is needed to change or adapt existing concepts (like the Flemish Diamond) into new images or *leit-bilder*, if possibilities of co-operation might be threatened. The most important features strongly interconnected with the definition and characteristics of networks in general are:

- a collection of different entities, pursuing a specific goal;
- being able to obtain this goal more easily through collaboration, than by acting individually;
- entering into relationships with each other in order to obtain this goal;
- forming a larger, organised and connected system, the network;
- using these relationships and the network in order to learn and reach a higher level of intelligence.

These are aspects that should also apply to urban networks and with that, the Flemish Diamond. In addition, the importance of involvement of the main actors, flexibility and adaptability must not be underestimated. Urban networks are essentially voluntary and arise from unplanned circumstances.

They are resistant to centralised planning or control and contain elements of the 'unseen hand' of the market model as well as the co-operation and mutuality of the hierarchical model (EUROCITIES, 2001: 4).

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5 Central Scotland

Nick Bailey and Ivan Turok

5.1 Defining the region

Figure 5.1 Central Scotland



The core area of Central Scotland is defined here as the river valleys of the Clyde and the Forth (Figure 5.1). It encompasses the two city-regions of Glasgow and Edinburgh together with their surrounding settlements in Dunbartonshire, Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and the Lothians, and extends north to include Falkirk, Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Fife unitary authority areas (Figure 5.2).

There is no single 'correct' boundary for a region like Central Scotland. The region as defined in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 is based on an examination of a range of factors, including physical geography and labour market flows. Arguments can be made for a broader definition of the region, extending west to Ayrshire, or north to include the Tay valley with Dundee and Perth, or even further north to take in the Aberdeen city-region, so encompassing the whole of urban Scotland. The region has been defined in a relatively modest way in part to simplify the work and in part to maximise the chances of identifying common regional interests if such exist. If there is reason to believe that collaboration across the region as it is defined here would be both beneficial and feasible, then discussions

can turn to the precise boundaries which should be employed. At the present time, the precise boundaries matter less than the analysis of relationships between areas.

5.2 Spatial dynamics

At the heart of this chapter is the intention to identify key issues for planning (see sections 2.6.1 and 5.4) that would benefit from a Central Scotland perspective rather than a framework that deals with its core cities separately.

Figure 5.2 Central Scotland unitary authorities

These issues can be assessed against the background of some main features and dynamics of the region that are discussed below.

5.2.1 The legacy of industrial decline

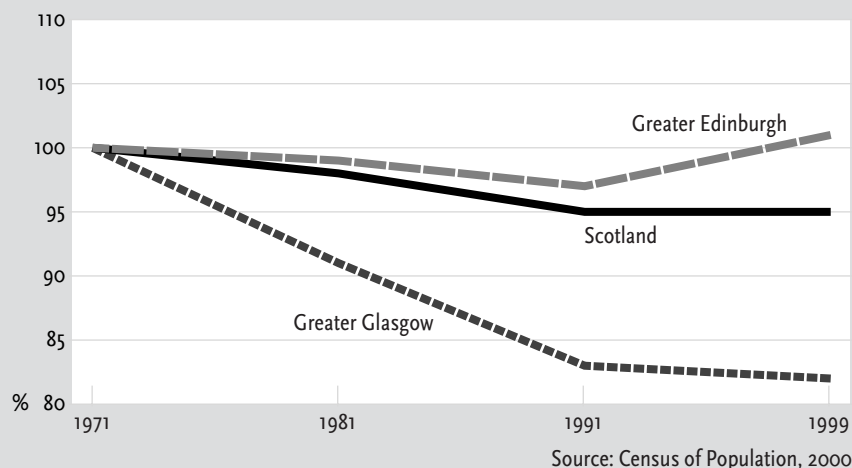
Overall, Central Scotland has undergone remarkable restructuring over the last 30 years. Although there are signs that it began to turn the corner in the late 1990s, growth overall remains below the British average. The decline of ‘resource-based’ industries (mining, metals, heavy engineering, port facilities) has come about as a result of increasing international competition; increasing mobility of goods and capital; and the development of new materials and labour-saving technologies. The lack of government support for manufacturing compared with some other European countries has hastened the demise and made the process of adjustment more painful than it might have been. For Central Scotland, the result has been the loss of a highly integrated, export-oriented regional economy. Employment has fallen overall, while

restructuring has shifted the demand for labour away from full-time, manual occupations traditionally occupied by men, towards part-time non-manual occupations occupied by a higher proportion of women. This employment decline and restructuring have driven out-migration from the region. The region has also lost its strategic role as a port linked to key export markets as the balance of trade has shifted away from Trans-Atlantic routes to trade with mainland Europe. The key surface connections today are by road and rail to the English Channel ports. In more general terms, the development of the Common Market has tended to favour countries and regions closer to the centre of Europe, and has made Central Scotland an increasingly peripheral location.

Some figures illustrate the overall scale of the employment losses as well as the shifts from manufacturing to services.

- The total number of jobs in the region fell by 8% between 1971 and 1998, compared with a rise of 7% in Britain as a whole and a rise of 19% in the rest of Scotland. In absolute terms, Central Scotland lost 106,000 jobs.
- If Central Scotland had had growth at the average rate for Britain over this period, it would have had 200,000 more jobs in 1998 than it did in practice.
- The decline in full-time equivalent jobs was much greater than total employment losses – 17% or 210,000. This reflects the shift from full – to part-time working. Full-time employment fell by 262,000 while part-time working rose by 155,000.
- The region lost 285,000 manufacturing jobs between 1971 and 1998 – 20% of all employment and 55% of all manufacturing jobs in 1971. Of these, 219,000 were located in Greater Glasgow, 29,000 in Greater Edinburgh and 40,000 in the rest of Central Scotland.
- Employment in the coal mining industry fell by 93% over the same period, with the loss of 27,000 jobs.
- Gains in the service sector totalled 244,000 with the highest rates of growth in the Central towns (up to 57,000 in absolute terms), followed by Greater Edinburgh (up to 91,000) and Greater Glasgow (105,000).

In response, the population of the region has declined through out-migration (see Figure 5.3). This can be seen as a positive response for individuals and for the region: migration is a key mechanism for maintaining labour market balance. On the other hand, out-migration has negative multiplier effects as it reduces demand for private and public services. The groups that move out also tend to be younger and are more likely to be economically active, so that prolonged population decline tends to deprive a region of valuable labour resources. The population of the region declined by 356,000 (10%) between 1971 and 1999, while the population of Britain as a whole rose by 3%. For almost all of the period, the population was growing through natural change

Figure 5.3 Population development in Central Scotland, 1971-1999

(an excess of births over deaths) so the population fall understates the levels of out-migration. In the 1990s, the population of the region began to increase again slowly, mainly due to the reduction in the rates of out-migration from Greater Glasgow.

The distribution of the regional population decline over its two city-regions was very uneven throughout the past three decades. The Greater Glasgow city-region lost 385,000 people (18%) between 1971 and 1998. The pace of decline has slowed markedly, down from an average of 18,000 per year throughout the 1970s and 1980s to 3000 per year in the 1990s. In part, the latest figures were boosted by the temporary economic problems of the south-east of England, which slowed out-migration from Scotland between 1989-94. Greater Edinburgh also lost population during the 1970s and 1980s, but at a much lower rate of on average, 1,000 annually. The rest of the region saw population growth at the same rate. During the 1990s, the Greater Edinburgh and Stirling areas experienced strong growth in population and were amongst the fastest growing areas in Scotland.

Out-migration operates to maintain labour market balance if it offsets the loss of employment. In Central Scotland out-migration has been insufficient to offset these losses: levels of unemployment have therefore risen. Official measures of unemployment (the claimant count or the slightly broader ILO unemployment rate) do not adequately reflect such a trend because those who are not actively looking for work, as they see little prospect of securing employment given the state of the labour market, are counted as inactive rather than as unemployed. The employment rate is therefore a better indicator of the negative impacts of restructuring on the working age population. In 1971, the employment rates for Greater Edinburgh and Greater Glasgow were relatively close – a gap of 3.0% (Table 5.1). Over the next twenty years, the gap widened considerably, to 7.3% in 1981 and 10.1% in 1991.

Table 5.1 Employment rates for Greater Edinburgh and Greater Glasgow¹⁾

	1971	1981	1991
Greater Edinburgh	70.9	71.2	70.5
Core	69.0	72.1	70.2
Rest	74.7	69.9	71.0
Greater Glasgow	67.9	63.9	60.5
Core	67.5	61.6	54.5
Rest	68.4	65.7	64.6

¹⁾ Employed population as percentage of working age population.

Source: Census of Population

This gap in employment rates is a crucial determinant of economic output and thus income differentials between the two cities (Bailey et al, 2002). Over the period 1993-98, Greater Edinburgh's GDP per head was 16% higher than the British average (and the second highest of any city in the country), while Greater Glasgow's GDP per head was 5% below average. The difference is partly explained by the difference in productivity, but the more important reason is differences in employment rates. In Greater Edinburgh there were 47 full time people in employment for every 100 residents, while in Greater Glasgow there were only 40.

Thus, economic change has been very uneven across Central Scotland, leading to growing contrasts between east and west. Part of the explanation is that Edinburgh City was not affected by the same level of manufacturing decline. It had a lower proportion of jobs in manufacturing to begin with and this declined at a slower rate than in Glasgow during the 1970s and 1980s. It also gained more from the expansion of financial and public services. Edinburgh's emergence as a leading financial and political centre has accelerated in recent years, making it one of the fastest growing and most prosperous cities in Britain. The effects have spilled over into the adjacent area of the Lothians and, to a lesser extent, to parts of Fife and the Borders through migration, commuting and business relocation. This extended period of growth, combined with tight planning control of land supply in Edinburgh has led to rising wage, property and house prices in and around the city. Coupled with growing congestion and travel unreliability, this threatens the city's competitiveness as a business location. To maintain the momentum of development, public agencies are searching for ways to alleviate the pressures by identifying under-utilised land, drawing in labour from further afield, and improving the transport system.

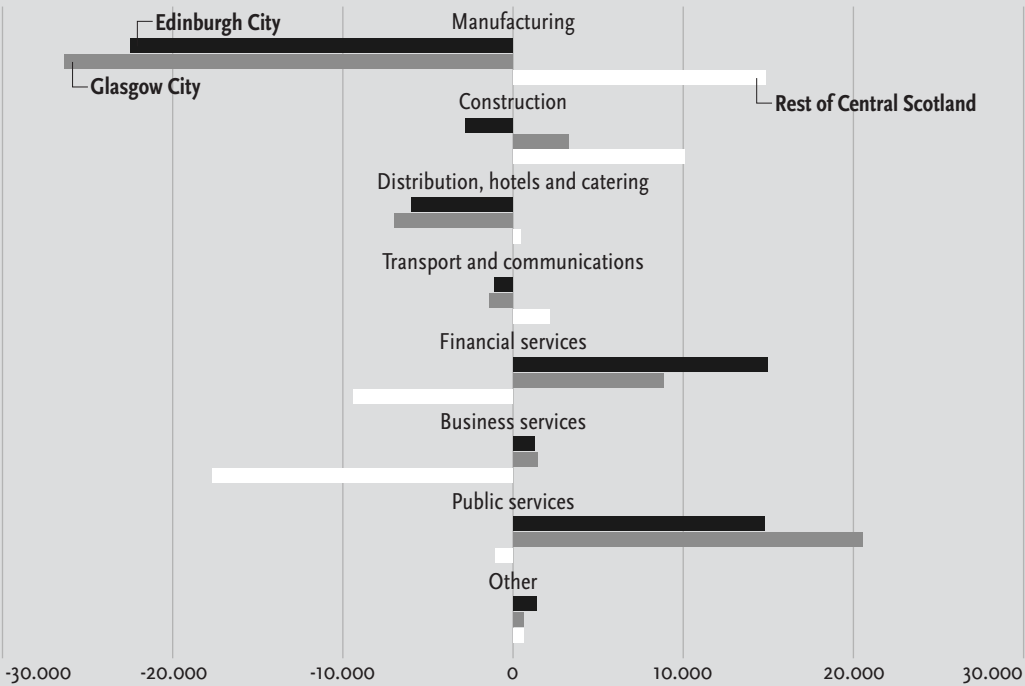
The scale and persistence of labour market disparities between east and west suggest there are barriers to physical and functional integration. Otherwise one would expect higher levels of west-east commuting and migration, and

east-west business relocation and expansion. The nature of these barriers requires further research. They may go beyond literal physical obstacles, to include individual and institutional attitudes and inertia, investor confidence and locational preferences, and the quality and cost of transport links. There has been some acknowledgement from the Executive recently that this divide could be holding back economic growth: 'it is important that [the] dynamism [of the Edinburgh economy] is captured and not constrained by the shortage of skills or property or other productive inputs as resources within this single area become scarcer ... [E]conomic activity should be broadened further across Scotland for the benefit of all the regions. In particular, it can be broadened across the central corridor to reduce the present pressures: this area is – by global standards – small enough to promote as a single region of economic dynamism' (Scottish Executive, 2000a, p.65). Unfortunately, there has been little discussion as yet within the Executive or more widely in the Scottish business or policy communities of how this laudable aspiration might be pursued in practice. It is illustrative that none of the various examples of business expansions from Edinburgh to Glasgow that emerged during the research for this work had any public sector encouragement or even interest shown in them afterwards. For instance, a major financial institution in Edinburgh opened a satellite administrative centre in Glasgow in 2000 because of the tight labour market, high staff turnover and property constraints in Edinburgh. The outcome has been very beneficial with the Glasgow operation enjoying much higher levels of staff retention and lower property costs. Such cases could usefully be given wider publicity.

Statistics on industrial specialisation within the region do not provide strong evidence for economic integration or the emergence of a division of labour between cities across the region (Figure 5.4). Manufacturing is disproportionately strong in locations outside the core cities and this tendency has been increasing over time. This partly reflects market processes of net decentralisation associated with lower density and more extensive plant layouts. It is also linked to government efforts to facilitate industrial investment in these locations through physical infrastructure programmes and the failure, at least until recently, to invest in decontaminating and servicing vacant and derelict land within the cities, particularly Glasgow.

It should be noted that the problems of communities adversely affected by economic restructuring are not only confined to the core cities or major towns. The loss of mining and manufacturing jobs, combined with the continuing decline of employment in farming, have had a particularly severe impact on a number of smaller communities across the central parts of Central Scotland. There has been a tendency to ignore questions of access to employment and services from deprived areas. These areas have far lower

Figure 5.4 Employment in core cities and outer rings compared with national patterns, 1997¹⁾



1) The figure shows the number of jobs in each sector in a given area, less the number there would have been had the area had the same employment structure as Britain as a whole.

Source: Annual Employment Survey

levels of car ownership and are heavily dependent on public transport. Yet the accessibility of new employment for residents of these areas is rarely considered by planners. The growing centralisation of services, in retail but also in the public sector (health, for example), exacerbates problems. These areas are frequently seen as marginal and peripheral by the urban-oriented city-regions. Their interests are poorly served by a view of Central Scotland which focuses on the two core cities and the major settlements surrounding them. If the region were viewed as a whole, these locations could come to be seen as more central – the underused ‘Green heart’ of Central Scotland, potentially.

5.2.2 Positive dynamics

In comparison with many urban core regions in northwest Europe, where constraints on further growth are increasing, Central Scotland faces relatively low pressures on its physical and human resources. The physical infrastructure (the ‘hard assets’) of the region has capacity for expansion, although there may be particular areas of constraint. This includes the roads network and the water and sewage systems, as well as the social infrastructure of

housing, schools and hospitals. Regional development is less constrained by public opposition to house-building, business parks, new roads, etc. than in many parts of the UK. The long years of decline have created opportunities for growth: in large parts of the region the infrastructure has spare capacity and there is surplus labour and land available, although prior investment in land preparation and skills training may be required.

There is a perception that 'soft assets' affecting quality of life are becoming increasingly important as factors affecting investment decisions. The ability of Central Scotland to offer a relatively high quality of life for those in employment is a major asset. The two core cities play a very valuable role as regional service centres, offering high quality retail, leisure and cultural activities. Both have strength as destinations for tourism and are key locations for major one-off events and regular festivals, which raise the profile of the region. In addition, the environment is relatively clean and the region has easy access to areas with exceptionally high quality of natural environment, in the Highlands and along the coasts, although many of these lie outside its boundaries.

External connections to the region have also been a source of new investment and new opportunity. One of the most obvious links has been the generation of employment through inward investment. In the 1980s and early 1990s, this investment was dominated by manufacturing and assembly operations, especially electronics assembly work. American and Far Eastern companies used Scotland as a base for exporting into Europe. The largest part of this investment was steered into greenfield sites, away from the core cities. Locations in the New Towns and along the M8 motorway were the most favoured. These decisions reflect a variety of factors, including ready availability of labour, 'permissive' planning which allowed development of greenfield sites, subsidies under regional policy and hidden subsidies through infrastructure investment (including housing policy). In more recent years, a larger proportion of inward investment has been in other activities, particularly services, including 'call centre' employment and shared service centres, with a significant proportion of this going to the cities. This shift appears to reflect changes in the availability of inward investment to Britain as a whole, rather than a change in the competitive position of Scotland in particular.

5.2.3 Summary

To summarise, it is obvious that for many years economic and demographic trends have not been favourable. During the 1970s and 1980s Central Scotland as a whole lost jobs and consequently population through out-migration. There has been something of a turnaround since then, but growth continues

to lag behind southern Britain and the core regions of Europe. This may be because many of the underlying weaknesses of the economy remain, such as the narrow export base, the lack of research, design and development activities, the level of external ownership and control, and the relatively low rates of new business formation (Bailey et al, 1999; Scottish Executive, 2000a). Apart from these structural issues, there also appear to be more immediate obstacles to investment and faster economic growth in key locations. These obstacles may be tackled more easily and are the focus of concern in this study, such as road congestion, derelict land, property deficiencies and labour shortages.

Given the coincidence of growth pressures in the East and high levels of need in the West it is surprising that more serious consideration has not been given to co-operation between the cities for their mutual advantage. As the largest concentration of population and activity in Scotland, there may be much to gain from the Central Belt having a common perspective on where it wants to go and how it might get there.

5.3 Policy context concerning regional planning

There is growing interest in many European nations in more collaborative approaches to development planning. Until very recently these developments by-passed Scotland, partly because of the prevailing ethos of decentralisation and localism. Since 1997, concerns about devolution and the creation of the Scottish Parliament have been dominant. In addition, national politicians and institutions have been cautious about introducing explicit spatial plans and priorities that could constrain their discretion. These might expose territorial differences and provoke opposition from places that believed they were losing out in some way. The recent statements on Scottish economic and social policy (Scottish Executive, 2000a, 2000b), say little about their implications for particular places or about spatial issues generally.

The first sign of a possible shift in thinking emerged in June 2001 when the Development Department launched a consultation paper reviewing the arrangements for strategic planning (Scottish Executive, 2001). Its focus is on the form, content, and procedural aspects of structure plans and local plans. However, it also raises the possibility that some form of national planning framework might be introduced for the first time. It could 'look at Scotland as a whole, how the country was likely to develop and change, and how the planning system could assist in delivering that change' (ibid, p.8). This would represent a major advance in helping to understand how Scotland functions

as a place, to identify the main drivers of change, and to draw out the implications for planning, public policy and investment decisions. Looking at it in more detail, the paper expresses caution and mixed messages about the likely scope and significance of this framework. Its scope 'would not be comprehensive and all embracing' (ibid, p.8). Yet it could cover the causes and consequences of spatial change, including settlement patterns, demographic changes, the economy, environmental challenges, strategic priorities for transport, investment in land and other infrastructure, and the spatial dimension of social justice (ibid, p.9). This is obviously wide-ranging, if not comprehensive.

In terms of its power to influence other policies and investment decisions, the national planning framework is described as a 'light touch' statement (ibid, p.4), a non-statutory 'national overview document' setting an 'overall context' for structure and local planning, and certainly not a prescriptive 'national plan' (ibid, p.9). Yet, it would not be purely descriptive or analytical, since 'it should be aspirational' (ibid, p.9). It would also be drawn up with 'extensive stakeholder involvement ... (and) some form of scrutiny by MSPs (Members of the Scottish Parliament)' (ibid, p.9), and be subject to periodic review. The logical implication of these last few comments is that it could potentially constitute a very significant statement, carrying weight through its Scottish Executive status and the consensus it generated among politicians and stakeholder organisations.

The paper makes clear that a single national framework is on the agenda, with no possibility of sub-national strategies for areas somewhere between the scale of Scotland as a whole and individual local authorities or city-regions. It is particularly assertive in stating that a strategic plan is not needed for Central Scotland. Four reasons for this are given:

- the Central Belt is not a functional economic region;
- it is not a coherent planning unit to which the public can relate;
- it might be divisive in focusing on the contrasts between Edinburgh and Glasgow; and
- the process of preparing it would be too unwieldy because of the large number of local authorities and other interested organisations (ibid, p.4-5).

However, as the largest concentration of population and economic activity in Scotland, with considerable cross-boundary issues and interdependencies between towns and cities in the region, there is much to gain from a common regional perspective. Any national framework should devote special attention to the Central Belt of Scotland, given its economic and demographic significance and the increasing functional linkages across it. Closer collaboration within a regional framework could help the area to function better as an economic unit, and thereby facilitate faster and more durable development. As

the main driving force of Scotland's economy, it is in the interests of the whole nation for the Central Belt to increase its growth rate without running into resource constraints and bottlenecks.

Elaborating upon this line of thought, this case-study tries to identify:

- the general reasons why a more explicit regional perspective would be useful particular issues which would benefit from this larger scale approach; and
- how progress could be made towards this given the current organisational fragmentation across the region.

The basic argument is that there are shortcomings associated with the local scale of current arrangements, including insufficient attention to broad economic and demographic challenges, which require far-sighted responses. There are also deficiencies in policy co-ordination across districts, departments and agencies, and insufficient linkages between land-use decision-making, transport and other infrastructure investment. The lack of a forum for strategic thinking and collaboration across Central Scotland means that the ability to anticipate and respond to economic opportunities suffers, and regional growth is slower than it might be. This is damaging to Scotland as a whole. Some of the challenges facing different parts of the region are complementary, but require a larger scale perspective to be recognised as such.³⁵

The spatial structure of Central Scotland has acquired a more polycentric form in recent decades through the development of major new settlements (the New Towns) and the expansion of secondary centres. In addition, the share of population and jobs in the core cities declined for several decades through decentralisation, especially in the 1960s and 1970s (Bailey *et al*, 1999). The trend in the last decade has been towards selective reconcentration (or at least a slowing down of decentralisation from Glasgow), encouraged by consistent planning policies in both east and west for many years, coupled with active efforts to support the redevelopment of brownfield sites. The trend is stronger in Edinburgh, partly because property market conditions are more buoyant, making it easier to 'steer' development. In the west, public investment is still required to promote brownfield development, especially for eco-

35 These points are not necessarily new. The Scottish Office prepared a broad spatial plan for Central Scotland in its 1963 Programme for Growth and Development in recognition of the regional interdependencies. A decade ago the Glasgow Development Agency organised a conference with civic leaders from Edinburgh and Glasgow to explore the possibility of closer collaboration between the two cities, called 'Urban Complementarity'. Whatever the merits of the argument, the conference had no lasting effects because the prevailing political imperative was towards localism and competition (on the part of the government) and devolution or independence for Scotland (on the part of the opposition parties).

nomic uses. This objective has been undermined by some inward investors insisting on greenfield locations, which have often been poorly connected to areas of unemployment. The planning system remains under pressure from housebuilders for green belt controls to be relaxed.³⁶ Incremental suburban expansion continues, facilitated by the desire of outlying local authorities to attract population and investment.

A long-term settlement strategy for Central Scotland needs to recognise the prime importance of the city cores as fixed assets, including their transport systems, telecom and other infrastructure, and very sizeable concentrations of historic buildings, modern architecture and generic office and retail property, reflecting many years of sustained investment. The city cores also house clusters of higher order facilities that are regional, national and even international attractions, such as quality hotels, bars and restaurants, comparison shopping, performing arts, nightclubs, museums, galleries and universities. A tight planning regime can help to safeguard these commercial and cultural hubs, sustain property values and maintain investor confidence. Support for out-of-town office, business and retail developments on the other hand would threaten these hubs. A long-term settlement strategy also needs to strengthen the links between land-use patterns and transport. The growth of dual earner households and rising mobility mean that housing and employment for selected groups are not in close proximity. This implies that these should be planned with an understanding of how journeys to work will be undertaken and with a view to maximising the use of existing rail and road infrastructure, especially where excess capacity exists. Where capacity is constrained there is a need for additional investment, whether funded publicly or privately. Existing and proposed structure plans across Central Scotland need to relate to each other more closely. For example, the strategies explicit in the *Glasgow and Clyde Valley Structure Plan* and emerging in the *Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan* could perhaps be joined up into some form of Central Belt growth corridor strategy. This could be used to help address the housing needs of Greater Edinburgh and the employment needs of Greater Glasgow in a co-ordinated manner consistent with the transport infrastructure.

In sum, the current policy context leaves little room for planning between the national and local, or city-region level. The denial of the need to develop a spatial strategy for Central Scotland in a recent paper reviewing arrangements for strategic planning seems, however, too quick and is, to say the

³⁶ This is not to say that large scale strategic land releases have not happened in the green belt. The south-east wedge of Edinburgh is a good example, where land for more than 5,000 houses will soon be made available.

least, questionable. The next section demonstrates this by means of three key issues that could be more effectively dealt with using a regional planning approach.

5.4 Key planning issues

The spatial dynamics and challenges mentioned in the former sections raise specific concerns for policy attention. These can be defined as regional issues because they cannot be addressed as well at the local level. The case for a regional approach is broad and depends on several linked arguments. The general issues mentioned in chapter two identify the main principles in this discussion, though Central Scotland, as with the other regions, lends a specific interpretation to these issues.

5.4.1 External and internal accessibility

External connectivity

Scotland's peripheral location in an increasingly integrated Europe makes fast and efficient external connections vital for regional competitiveness. This includes the capacity, frequency, reliability and costs of air, rail, road, sea and telecom connections to the rest of the UK and mainland Europe. Such services are important for exporting and importing goods and materials, for tourism, and for the intensity and quality of personal contacts and relationships that firms and other organisations have with collaborators and customers abroad.

The growth of export-oriented knowledge intensive industries (such as financial services, software and biotechnology) means that the increase of the frequency of direct air services from Central Scotland to other European cities is becoming increasingly important. Immediate difficulties are the regular road congestion along the M6, M62 and M25 motorways in England, on roads leading to major ferry terminals along the east and south coasts, and capacity constraints at some of the major ferry terminals. These add to the costs of road transport from Scotland. Meanwhile, freight transport by rail is constrained by the limited carrying capacity of the UK rail network, partly because of the dominance of passenger services. A united voice representing regional interests would create a more effective lobby for the improvement of external links.

The scale of investment required to develop and maintain major physical infrastructure and facilities such as airports, ferry terminals and rail interchanges makes it important to plan such investment on the basis of a strate-

gic regional perspective so as to maximise their market area and operational efficiency. Such facilities can also play an important catalytic role in stimulating further development of related activities nearby, so their potential economic and environmental impacts need to be taken into account in the location decisions too. These points apply not simply to the building of new facilities, of which there may be few, but also to the refurbishment, improvement and expansion of existing facilities. Lessons should be learnt from the duplication of transport infrastructure in the past, having led to higher costs, smaller markets, and slower growth than might have occurred from unified facilities. The clearest example is the three airports serving the region's population of only 3.5 million. According to the managing director of Scottish Airports, the decision in 1962 to support three airports has had adverse long-term consequences in increasing operating costs, splitting the market and reducing the viability of international services for airlines: 'a transport visionary would probably have chosen a (single) central airport location to serve the Scottish Lowlands' (Murphy, 1999). For instance, traffic volumes have grown much faster at Manchester airport, partly because it has benefited from a larger undivided market and economies of scale in the use of fixed assets such as runways and terminal buildings, and in staffing and other variable costs. Manchester's growth as a major international hub has also allowed Liverpool to specialise in a different, complementary niche as a low cost airport for budget airlines and 24 hour air freight services.

There are similar arguments in relation to investment in telecommunications infrastructure. It is more cost-effective to supply larger economic centres than smaller ones in more dispersed locations. The main cities in the Central Belt are already better endowed with high capacity-high speed cables than the rest of Scotland because of their higher densities and volumes of activity. Each successive wave of innovation in telecoms is likely to serve the core cities first, then surrounding areas. It makes sense to promote the region as a single entity in order to build upon these strengths and enable it to compete with regions elsewhere in Europe by keeping pace with fast changing technology and securing investment in the latest optic fibre broadband infrastructure and related facilities. These technologies offer rapid, low cost, direct internet connections which are important in influencing the ability of places to attract call centres, internet and other technology companies. They are also an important infrastructure for the emerging knowledge economy.

Intra-regional connectivity

Improving accessibility and mobility between the major population centres within the region is another obvious regional issue. Local authorities are more concerned with local connections, while structure plans and transport partnerships focus on the connections within city-regions. Because improved

connectivity would facilitate the flow of goods, services, people and information across the region, and increase firms' access to a wider pool of labour, business services, information and markets, a regional perspective concerned with the efficiency of the wider transport system is a necessary complement. This is, however, currently missing.³⁷ A regional perspective should also assist integration and enhance the economies of scale associated with a larger concentration of activity for the benefit of regional competitiveness and growth. The demand for travel is also growing because of rising car ownership, longer commuting distances, the concentration of services in fewer centres, and more extensive business linkages as a result of outsourcing and just-in-time production. This is very important in industries that handle high volumes of materials, components and final products, such as electronics. This growth in demand for travel has to be accommodated and channelled into sustainable modes where possible.

There are some important bottlenecks and missing links in the transport system. There are important potential benefits to the system as a whole from undertaking these projects in a co-ordinated way. For example, a rail connection between the two city centres of Glasgow and Edinburgh and their airports would assist regional integration. If linked to a north/south rail link across Glasgow and an east/west link across Edinburgh (with connections to Edinburgh Business Park), there might be useful synergies. A regional rail system would also enhance the area's image among visitors and investors. Further benefits would flow if such investments are tied in with economic development and land-use policies. A regional perspective is needed to recognise the benefits that flow from linking up separate local projects and to ensure the vision and high level support to make them happen. Within current governance arrangements however, projects are primarily justified on the basis of their local benefits, with little scope to recognise the broader gains. Since major transport projects can be disruptive during construction, the temptation for local decision-makers may also be to downplay them.

Another potentially beneficial rail project is a high speed connection between the core cities running along an existing line through Shotts. This could help to fill several intermediate travel gaps, e.g. between Glasgow and Livingston, and between Edinburgh and Lanarkshire towns such as Motherwell. Livingston is one of Scotland's fastest growing towns, but is badly served by rail connections. The reopening of an old line between Airdrie and Bathgate

37 A Central Scotland Rail Capacity Study was recently initiated by the Scottish Executive and Strategic Rail Authority. It may begin to remedy the missing regional perspective, although it is not really couched within a wider land-use and economic framework. It is too soon to comment on the outcome.

would link deprived areas east of Glasgow to growth areas in Lothian. A regional perspective provides a useful reminder that the benefits of investment are likely to be greater on links between major population centres than on links from one city into sparsely populated areas. In focussing on new and enhanced physical capacity, it is important not to neglect other important issues that affect transport flows, particularly price, but also service quality and reliability. This is also relevant to the motorway network, since congestion and poor maintenance increase journey times and reduce quality for commuters and businesses. Sections of the M8 motorway and A80 trunk road are heavily congested and probably warrant investment in additional lanes or alternative routes. The M74 northern extension is also important to ease congestion on the Kingston Bridge, to improve links across the south side of Glasgow and to open up vacant land in the East End of the city for economic regeneration. Investments in these situations would benefit the whole region, but the specification of reliability of journey times and service standards should be included in the project studies.

5.4.2 Uneven spatial economic development

Priority areas for development

A regional perspective on strategic locations for new development is important to inform local planning policies of wider considerations. Consistent regional priorities agreed by key stakeholders could also help to connect public infrastructure investment and to guide private investment. A regional framework could raise awareness of the variations in development pressure, need and spare capacity across Central Scotland and of the resulting opportunities. The emphasis might be on policies providing complementary benefits to different places e.g. relief for overheating areas by assisting people from less prosperous areas to access jobs there, or encouraging selective business relocation or expansion. The creation of a more efficient and equitable settlement structure will, however, not be achieved overnight or by central direction. It requires sensitivity to market forces and business requirements, and respect for the preferences of local communities.

Two kinds of development areas deserve attention. First, strategic economic development areas are important to generate additional jobs and to create space suitable for inward investment and indigenous business expansion. Priority might be given to sites accessible to areas of high unemployment and with tracts of vacant and derelict land. These need prior investments in reclamation, consolidation of fragmented ownership, improved road access and other infrastructure, and landscaping to make them more competitive places for economic development (Glasgow City Council, 2001). Designation with some special status would help to provide the profile and concentrated

resources to boost investor confidence and generate momentum. The region may also need a small number of greenfield development areas, especially where the quantity or quality of brownfield land is inadequate. These would be planned employment sites accessible from a wide radius by public transport, close to existing settlements and performing functions that complement rather than compete with established business locations. The regional strategy would need to strike a difficult balance between supporting the release of greenfield sites for selected development and avoiding damage to the prospects of other sites needing redevelopment and regeneration. A useful start could be made by targeting consistent priority areas for the plethora of special area-based government programmes, including urban and regional aid, European funds, social justice initiatives, enterprise zones and employment zones. The current patchwork is complicated and contradictory in many respects. Arrangements for co-ordinating the various territorial partnerships could also be explored. Some national development organisations appear to have no spatial framework within which decisions are made. Clearer information about development opportunities and incentives in priority areas could be made available to investors. Examples of successful business relocations from congested areas suffering high staff turnover to lower cost, more stable locations could be publicised to raise awareness.

Second, residential areas located close to public transport infrastructure and well connected to expanding economic opportunities warrant priority for housing development to accommodate in-migration and household formation. New development might be focused in places offering higher residential densities and more intensive development, thereby promoting better access to local facilities, lower costs for public services, and greater benefits from public transport investment. Locations in and around the main cities and towns should be prioritised. In addition, certain places between Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling are attractive to some two-earner households because they maximise access to several economic centres.

Joint planning and marketing of regional assets

There is a strong case for promoting the region as a single entity for the purposes of attracting tourism and inward investments. Both the joint marketing of Edinburgh and Glasgow as attractive places and the greater scale and diversity of visitor attractions they offer together might draw a larger number of visitors and tourists to the region. Those that came might stay longer because of the wider choice of places to visit and things to do. A recent 'Twin Cities' project illustrates the possibilities. It involved the Scottish Enterprise and the local tourist boards in Edinburgh and Glasgow co-operating with the British Airports Authority and major airlines (motivated by empty seats) to promote the region as a single package in the weekend city-break market in

mainland Europe. The complementary attractions of the two cities – history and culture in Edinburgh, shopping and night life in Glasgow – and the ease of travel between them were the main selling points.

There are possibilities for foreign direct investment too. Many foreign companies investing in productive facilities here are unlikely to distinguish closely between places that are 30 to 40 miles apart. They may be attracted by a larger Central Scotland labour pool and a broader choice of business services, research facilities, educational institutions, and other specialised infrastructure than are available in a single location. In the late 1980s, the Scottish Development Agency (SDA) produced a memorable device to promote the image of a unified region – a schematic map of the Central Belt showing all the electronics firms and suppliers of ‘Silicon Glen’. In financial services, Central Scotland is already seen as a single centre for fund management with ‘Edinburgh-Glasgow’ currently ranked second in the UK, sixth in Europe and fifteenth in the world (British Invisibles, 2000).

There is also a strong case for pooling resources and sharing risks in developing projects of regional or national significance that would not be feasible for places on their own. Such projects tend to involve substantial public funds, depend on large population thresholds for viability and have sizeable spillover effects on surrounding areas. As a result, they need to be planned jointly for financial and operational reasons. Besides the transport and ICT infrastructure projects mentioned above, examples include major cultural facilities such as national galleries, conference centres, country parks and other big visitor attractions, as well as large multi-functional property schemes with region-wide catchments and impacts.

Projects that do not involve new physical works can also warrant collaboration. Both cities are famous for cultural events and festivals that depend upon and contribute to the range and quality of local facilities, hotels, restaurants and other infrastructure. Co-operation between the cities could strengthen such events by providing additional venues, complementary attractions, overflow accommodation and programming events to generate continuity and synergy. Other projects could involve co-operation between advanced research and training institutions to pool resources and gain economies of scale by developing new specialised courses or promoting technological innovation in related fields. The Alba project in Livingston is a good example. It is a collaborative venture between the universities, development agencies and selected business services (such as lawyers) to develop the skills and capabilities in advanced semiconductor design (multiple software systems on a single silicon chip) for Scotland to become a world leader. There are also various ad hoc research collaborations between Central Scottish uni-

versities, although there is undoubtedly scope for more systematic activity of this kind.

5.4.3 Spatial diversity and the quality of open space

Environmental policies

The quality of the natural and built environment of large parts of the region suffers from neglect and disinvestment. Fragmented responsibilities often mean that long-term sustainability and quality considerations have low priority. The thinly populated green core of the Central Belt tends to be treated as a kind of 'no man's land' by the public organisations that cover it; there is always greater pressure and stronger demand for public investment within their main built-up areas.³⁸ In addition, competition for investment between neighbouring authorities in the context of scarce public resources tends to mean that the less attractive, more costly to develop brownfield sites get relegated below high amenity greenfield locations. The pressure to attract new investment of whatever kind can also mean that standards of urban design and environmental management are sacrificed.

The case for a regional perspective hinges on the ability to take a more strategic view of environmental issues and assets. This might include agreeing certain norms for countryside protection and improvement, setting common standards for prominent new property developments, agreeing principles for reclaiming and improving derelict and contaminated land, pooling resources and raising additional funds to target towards agreed priority areas. Purposeful environmental actions may generate short-term employment gains through the work created as well as longer-term benefits for the quality of life of local communities and the overall image and attractiveness of the region for investors, visitors and key workers. Central Scotland needs a stronger vision for the physical environment and its contribution to the economy and society.

Area specialisation

The arguments for promoting area specialisation are more tentative. On the one hand, a larger number of related firms and supporting institutions situated close together is supposed to develop competitive advantage. 'Cluster' theories suggest that businesses benefit from interaction with related firms and

³⁸ The Central Scotland Countryside Trust is one exception to this. It is a long-standing partnership-based organisation created by the local authorities covering the area. Substantial tree-planting has been undertaken to improve the image of the rural core. It is now refocusing on improving public access and enjoyment of the countryside, and on promoting biodiversity.

support organisations, as this promotes communication, learning, innovation and efficient deployment of resources (Porter, 2000). Differentiation between such ‘clusters’ on the other hand, also permits larger regional centres to emerge that contain higher order, specialist functions. For instance, Glasgow is emerging as a more important centre for film and television production, with the supporting infrastructure and labour force required, while Edinburgh is a stronger centre for advertising and public relations. In the retailing of comparison goods, there is some evidence of increasing specialisation as a result of a combination of market forces and competition between locations. Glasgow city centre has long had the advantage of serving a larger market than Edinburgh, its pre-eminent position in the region reinforced by a substantial programme of investment in the public realm through street-scaping, car parks and public transport. In contrast, the Edinburgh city centre has seen its market area contract, partly through leakage of Lothian residents’ non-food retail expenditure to Glasgow. There may be an opportunity for a strategic decision about the location of the highest order retail outlets across Central Scotland. It might be sensible for Edinburgh not to compete head-on with Glasgow through major new property schemes and associated public investment. This might help to alleviate some of the traffic congestion and pressures for property and labour in the city centre, and allow further growth of sectors in which Edinburgh has greater strengths. Glasgow might benefit from a higher quantity and quality of retail investment and employment.

5.5 Basis for a regional approach

The last section drew attention to three policy issues that affect the competitiveness of Central Scotland. These are essentially regional issues i.e. issues that are best addressed by policies with a regional scope. This raises the question of whether there is a basis for a regional approach within Central Scotland. This section examines whether Central Scotland is a single region in functional-economic terms, is able to develop regional organising capacity and could be seen as a meaningful entity in social or cultural terms. Positive answers to these make regional planning more meaningful and feasible.

5.5.1 Functional rationality

Evidence that Central Scotland is a functional region would clearly support the case for region-wide planning to manage the interactions and interdependencies. Here, the question of whether Central Scotland functions as a single integrated region is merely seen in economic terms. The question can be approached in several ways. The narrowest test for functional integration is whether a region forms a single local labour market area. Clearly, Central

Scotland as a whole does not constitute such a single integrated labour market. The revised travel-to-work areas (TTWAs) produced by the government using 1991 Census data, show a region divided into six areas. Flows between the two main city-regions were very small in relation to flows in the rest of the labour market. In 1991 only 1% of Greater Glasgow's workforce came from Greater Edinburgh and 2% of the latter's workforce came from the former (Bailey et al, 1999). Traditional radial flows from the suburbs to the two core cities continue to dominate travel patterns. There has been a trend for TTWAs to grow larger over time, reflecting the growth of personal mobility and the decentralisation of population and jobs from the cities. For people living in towns between Edinburgh and Glasgow, commuting and shopping journeys also appear to extend further than before into both catchment areas. Nevertheless, there is still a considerable way to go before Central Scotland is covered by one TTWA.

There is also evidence from migration studies that the two labour markets operate independently of each other. People migrate into and out of both city-regions from and to other parts of Britain, but migration flows between them are relatively small: 'the east and west of Scotland have disconnected migration streams; they relate separately to the South of England but not to each other. Migration losses from the Clyde Valley are losses to Scotland not gains to the East' (Webster, 2000, p.46). One of the consequences is that high levels of unemployment in the west co-exist with relatively low levels in the east. Both commuting and migration propensities vary by gender and by socio-economic group. According to 1991 Census data, unskilled manual workers travelled an average distance to work of six kilometres while professional and managerial workers travelled an average of eleven kilometres (Bailey et al, 1999). Yet, for a small, mobile and highest-paid section of the population, i.e. professionals and managers, the region functions increasingly as a single labour market. It may also be perceived as such by some inward investors, particularly those employing high proportions of skilled technical and professional staff. There are several examples of companies in semiconductor design, opto-electronics and pharmaceuticals that have located in West Lothian recently, because it is considered to offer access to the whole Central Scotland labour market.

The extent to which Central Scotland has formed a single economic region has varied over time. The development of coal, iron, steel and heavy engineering industries in the nineteenth century formed the basis of a highly integrated economy covering almost the entire region. This was clearly expressed in the regional plans for Central Scotland produced in the 1940s. Maintaining coal production levels in Central Scotland was considered to be of national strategic importance. With deposits around Glasgow increasingly

worked out, the plans envisaged relocating 200,000 miners and their families to other parts of Central Scotland. Most were to move east to the coal fields of the Lothians, Clackmannan and Fife. Only Edinburgh City appeared detached from this economy, partly as a result of the planning policies pursued there. The Green Belt proposals in the city development plan of the same period (Abercrombie and Plumstead, 1949) were designed explicitly to keep mining and manufacturing from encroaching on the city. Since the 1960s, industrial decline and the loss of coal mining have given the region a set of common challenges and have also fuelled competition between areas for private investment and public resources. The Central Government recognised the common problems in its 1963 White Paper on the regeneration of Central Scotland (SDD, 1963). The strategy it heralded (of targeting investment into the most attractive business locations or 'growth areas') may well have helped to undermine the core city of Glasgow by depriving it of resources for physical reconstruction, economic development and job creation (Robertson, 1998; Webster, 2000). Currently, statistics on industrial specialisation within the region do not provide strong evidence for economic integration or the emergence of a division of labour between cities across the region, as noted above. Rather, the picture is dominated by a contrast between the two core cities on the one hand and the rest of Central Scotland on the other.

Evidence on business relationships, finally, indicates that east-west connections are somewhat stronger. A recent survey by the authors of 1,650 companies across the region found that:

- Firms in the Glasgow area reported that 9% of their total sales were to customers in the Edinburgh area, with a similar level in the reverse direction.
- The proportions were highest for firms in business services (12% and 10% respectively) and wholesaling (12% and 14% respectively).
- The proportions were lowest for manufacturing firms (7% and 7% respectively).
- Firms in Glasgow reported that 5% of their purchases were made from businesses in the east, while firms in Edinburgh made 9% of purchases from the west.
- The proportions were highest for firms in transport and communications (5% and 15% respectively) and lowest for financial services (3% and 5% respectively).
- Finally, 15% of firms in Edinburgh said that their most important collaborator was in the Glasgow area, while 11% of Glasgow firms said their main collaborator was in Edinburgh.

Although these figures still do not indicate very strong east-west ties by businesses, the degree of functional integration it suggests at least supports the argument for a stronger regional perspective. Functional specialisation can-

not easily be planned or directed from the centre. It is more of a 'natural' process that has emerged over time as a result of particular physical, economic and institutional attributes of cities and towns. There are nevertheless two arguments for trying to reinforce this 'natural' process of differentiation. First, this develops competitive advantage and greater capacity for innovation in each city through having a larger mass of related and supporting firms and activities in close proximity. Policies might support sector specialisms through customised infrastructure and business development programmes that facilitate knowledge exchange. Second, differentiation reduces duplication of activities across the region and permits more competitive regional centres containing higher order, specialist functions.

5.5.2 Organising capacity

The organising capacity of a region as a single entity depends among other things on its governance structure. Central Scotland has never had its own tier of government and this is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future. The region is too large a part of Scotland to make this feasible politically. Powers at the Scottish level have recently been greatly strengthened through devolution from London to the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. This new body is unlikely to want such a powerful potential rival, and public opinion may be wary of another level of public administration.

However, institutional arrangements at the local level have been characterised by increasing spatial and functional fragmentation, and there has been a strong case for promoting greater co-operation and co-ordination. Local government reform in 1975 created strong city-regional authorities, which combined strategic planning across a broad territorial base with responsibility for major services including education, social work, roads and transport, police, water and sewerage. They were the strongest form of regional government that Britain has seen, although even these authorities were undermined by the increasing number of competing government agencies (Wannop, 1995). Below the city-regions were district councils responsible for housing, local planning, refuse collection, leisure and recreation.

Subsequent local government reform in 1996 abolished the regions and districts, and replaced them with unitary authorities. The two regions of Lothian and Strathclyde became fifteen single tier authorities. The core authority for Glasgow City was actually reduced in size, although already severely under-bounding the physical and functional city. With no regional tier to redistribute resources from prosperous to declining districts, the new arrangement created considerable incentives for authorities to compete against each other for population, investment and jobs.

Many of the new unitary authorities were considered too small to have responsibility for strategic planning and were required to collaborate with neighbours in strategic planning areas (SPAs), defined by the national government. Five SPAs cover Central Scotland, with one for each of the metropolitan regions, and one each for Falkirk, Fife and Stirling/Clackmannanshire. For Glasgow city-region, eight unitary authorities were brought together. Collaboration was to be achieved however, not through a formally constituted joint board with majority decision making, but through a weaker joint committee arrangement whose recommendations had to be agreed unanimously. The smallest suburban authority thus has the same power of veto as the core city which contains half the region's population and more than half of its jobs. With no control over major services or investment to implement its plans, and reliant on the voluntary agreement of its partners, the strategic capacity of these committees appears greatly weakened. Whether this brings longer term benefits by forcing the planning process to become more participative and inclusive – weaker policy but stronger implementation through greater commitment of local stake-holders – remains to be seen. The concern must be that policy will reflect the 'lowest common denominator' of extreme compromise in the effort to secure unanimous backing.

Central Scotland also faces difficulties in co-ordinating the work of the many different agencies of the Scottish government that have emerged over the past 30 years. The Scottish Office set up the Scottish Development Agency in 1975 with a remit to promote economic development and urban regeneration. In 1991, the SDA was divided into thirteen Local Enterprise Companies (LECs), with one covering Greater Edinburgh but four for Greater Glasgow. Other agencies have been added or given expanded roles, including the Scottish Special Housing Association, the Housing Corporation (merged to form Scottish Homes in 1989), new water companies, transport authorities, education and training organisations and local development companies.

Overall, institutional arrangements within Central Scotland have tended to become more fragmented in spatial and functional terms over the past two decades. This has encouraged competition between localities for investment, population and public funds, and impeded policy co-ordination and collaboration. The 1996 reorganisation of local government contributed to this by replacing the four regions of Central, Fife, Lothian and Strathclyde with 20 single tier councils. Moreover, there are complex patterns of overlapping boundaries between local authorities, LECs, health boards, structure plan teams, tourist boards, transport partnerships and European funding partnerships, all covering different territories. No organisation or collaborative arrangement spans the two city-regions.

Recent recognition of this fragmentation problem has led to the introduction of mechanisms for functional co-ordination within particular localities, such as community planning and local economic fora, but not between localities. Local authorities within the Edinburgh and Glasgow city-regions collaborate to produce structure plans to guide land-use patterns and investment decisions. Moreover, multi-agency partnerships have been formed in Glasgow City, Lanarkshire and Edinburgh City to promote economic development and social inclusion agendas (Bailey et al, 1999). These arrangements are limited to comparatively small areas for which it is relatively easy to establish a set of common interests. The only broader partnerships are engaged in allocating European structural funds and in transport planning. Both cover broader areas but provide only weak strategic guidance.

As to transport planning, groups of authorities from different structure plan areas are beginning to collaborate. The need for such collaboration reflects the limited scale of the structure plan areas. Separate transport partnerships cover the east and west of Central Scotland. No arrangements exist, however, to cover the whole of Central Scotland. What is clearly lacking is a strategic steer from government and its agencies at the centre. Until the Scottish Parliament and Executive were established, it was difficult for the Scottish Office to do this with much legitimacy. The situation now is quite different.

If formal governance structures at the scale of the region are non-existent, one can also look for evidence of a regional perspective or a sense of common interests in collaborative arrangements established for particular purposes or projects. These may act as catalysts for further co-operation or by starting a dialogue over regional issues. Such collaborative arrangements are still scarce. The one example of a project with a truly Central Scotland scope is the Millennium Link – a project to re-open the Glasgow-Edinburgh canal route. This can be portrayed as a successful example of partnership working across the region, having involved a wide range of agencies and £80 million of capital investment. The significance of this voluntary partnership should not be overstated, however. It has had a relatively simple and uncontroversial task; the route for the canal is already determined and the project has a definite lead agency, British Waterways, which owns the canal along its entire length. Substantial European funds were also available to support the project. Another example of cross-authority working is the Central Scotland Countryside Trust and its efforts to develop a Central Scotland Forest. It covers parts of West Lothian, North and South Lanarkshire, Falkirk and East Dunbartonshire. It focuses on environmental improvements in areas adversely affected by economic restructuring and decline (industrial and rural), and aims to stimulate broader regeneration of the areas and communities affected by improving quality of life, creating new opportunities for access and recre-

ation; and providing employment and training opportunities. The Central Scotland Countryside Trust has also tried to stimulate a wider debate on relationships between east and west, and the role of locations between the two cities. A last interesting project, already mentioned above, has been driven by British Airports Authority and involves marketing Edinburgh and Glasgow as a two-centre destination in the city-break market. The key selling point is the complementary attractions offered by the cities.

Having mentioned these green shoots of collaboration, it should be noted that these are the exception rather than the norm. In recent years, the core cities have competed directly for a variety of national attractions or facilities: the former royal yacht *Britannia*, the National Gallery of Scottish Art and Design, Scotland's first Harvey Nichols (an up-market department store), its first Ikea store (the Swedish furniture giant), designation as UK City of Architecture and Design for 1999, and even the temporary home for the new Scottish Parliament. Resources for urban regeneration, housing, transport and other capital projects have also been increasingly allocated through competitive bidding processes rather than negotiated according to criteria of need, which may have fuelled the competitive ethos and made collaboration more difficult. Conference centres, tourist attractions and science centres have been duplicated when the region might have benefited more from large consolidated facilities. A recent book on Scottish architecture and planning, provocatively titled 'Clone City', characterised the increasing competition between Edinburgh and Glasgow as 'a bare-knuckle fight for investment and the building of cultural institutions' (Glendinning and Page, 1999, p.113).

5.5.3 Regional culture and identity

Physical geography has played a major role in both encouraging and hindering the development of Central Scotland as a single integrated region. From a broad perspective, it has given the area a clear identity as one of four sub-regions of Scotland. The name 'Central Scotland' or 'Central Belt' is well recognised and describes the lowland strip or isthmus between two regions of higher country; the Southern Uplands to the south and the Highlands to the north. This topography means that Central Scotland is relatively isolated from other major population centres in Britain. The nearest conurbation (Tyneside) is 160km away, while the nearest heavily urbanised region (the trans-Pennine region covering Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Hull) is 320 km to the south.

In spite of its physical isolation, no clear single regional identity has evolved. Within Central Scotland, identities and interests are shaped by a variety of factors. The east-west divide dominates, based around two parallel river val-

leys, the Clyde facing west and the Forth facing east. Edinburgh and Glasgow are classic examples of neighbouring cities whose differences have fuelled a strong rivalry. Edinburgh has been the seat of power in Scotland since late medieval times, and the centre for government, the law, the church and banking. Manufacturing was never as important as it was in many other British cities, partly because it was actively discouraged by the city's elite. Glasgow, by contrast, was the classic city of the industrial revolution. It grew explosively over the course of the nineteenth century with massive immigration from the Highlands and Ireland leading to some of the most severely overcrowded housing environments in Europe. External observers may regard the Central Belt as a single region, but locals seem to have little affinity with the Glasgow-Edinburgh nexus.

In interviews with key actors involved in spatial planning in the region, interviewees were asked about their 'mental maps' of Central Scotland and, in particular, whether they thought it functioned as a single region.³⁹ Most respondents felt there were overlaps between the two city-regions and significant interactions between them, but they could nevertheless be considered as two separate city-regions for most purposes. In a region as large as this, people's journeys to work, shop and entertainment are generally more localised.⁴⁰ The divide is reinforced by the popular media which play on the traditional rivalry, cultural differences, and resentment that exist between the cities.

There is scope to improve communication and social interaction across the Central Belt, particularly between civic leaders and officials. A wider regional understanding could help to build more constructive relationships between places. This would recognise the interdependence between the two cities and their surrounding towns, and might in turn encourage greater collaboration on practical projects and policies. Yet there is indeed some coherence to the notion of Central Scotland. For most of its resident population, lowland Scotland is Scotland. For instance, it is broadly the area visited by travelling fans of football teams in the Premier League. It is the principal catchment area for Scotland's main newspapers, as well as weekly entertainment magazines such as *The List*. It is also the limit of daily outings and weekend breaks for most families and school parties, and for sports clubs on reciprocal visits.

³⁹ Within the framework of the EURBANET-project.

⁴⁰ Unfortunately, no comparative information is available for other pairs or groups of cities separated by a similar distance, such as Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield, or Bristol and Cardiff.

5.6 Mechanisms for promoting regional planning

The fragile basis for a regional approach makes the question of how regional issues might be taken forward a delicate one. The structure of local government and other agencies in Central Scotland makes 'bottom-up' regional planning difficult without a strategic framework endorsed by the government since they can only operate within the limits of their mandate and none has a remit to consider this territory. Spatial planners in similar situations elsewhere have sometimes argued for some form of regional planning authority to internalise cross-boundary issues and to establish a broader perspective that recognises the inter-relationships between areas. However, there is no prospect of this in Central Scotland for the foreseeable future, partly because of the scale of recent institutional change in local government reorganisation and the creation of the Scottish Parliament and Executive. There would also be justifiable concerns about democratic accountability and the number of decision-making tiers. There is, however, a range of other mechanisms by which regional planning could be pursued without resorting to institutional change. They range from informal co-operation on simple projects to more formalised collaborative arrangements and strategic frameworks supported from the centre.

5.6.1 Informal co-operation on practical projects

There is a strong case for closer co-operation between local organisations on projects offering mutual benefits. Joint working should not have to be formalised or regulated since the prospect of gains all round should be sufficient to generate commitment. Yet it may take some external stimulus to overcome initial barriers between partners, given the limited history of joint working. This might involve pump-priming resources or encouragement by altering the rules of existing challenge funds, which tend to be divisive. Over time perceptions should change and practical co-operation should help the process of regional policy-making by building understanding, trust and stronger working relationships. These should yield longer-term gains when more complex policies are being considered, especially where the benefits to partners become less clear-cut and the issues more sensitive. Stronger local co-operation could also provide a coherent grass-roots perspective to inform government policy on economic and spatial development.

The immediate task is to identify practical projects that will provide something for each area; so-called 'win-win' situations. The notion that different cities and towns have complementary assets or face complementary problems and challenges could be helpful in this respect. It means pursuing the kinds of policies that meet the needs of different areas simultaneously

because these needs are interrelated. Joint marketing of different places for business or consumer tourism could generate benefits all round by expanding the market and sharing the costs. Neighbouring cities, such as Glasgow and Edinburgh, may have complementary visitor attractions and other facilities that add up to a more diverse and appealing package together. The recent example of the Twin Cities project could usefully be extended. In addition, the operators of direct retail outlets for clothing and furniture are apparently planning a 'Designer Outlet Trail' to link Livingston, Freeport, Tillicoultry and Alexandria for when a new fast-ferry service is introduced to Edinburgh.

Co-operation on marketing should lead to collaboration on other matters, including identifying and developing new visitor attractions, tourist facilities, cultural events and festivals. Market research could reveal deficiencies of the region and identify amenities that might be provided. Organisations could co-operate in assembling funding packages and designing suitable projects to meet external requirements. Joint working should spark new ideas and help to ensure that facilities and events are developed in complementary rather than competitive ways. This would give access to larger audiences and visitor numbers, reduce the risks of failure, allow for more specialisation and increase the amount of overflow accommodation available to either city.

5.6.2 Issue-based networks

Some issues are too complicated to handle this way. They require wider debate among affected interests or more structured procedures for meaningful progress. Policy-making may involve trade-offs rather than complementary outcomes, so negotiation may be necessary, especially if some places have to make concessions in the wider regional interest. Improved policy outcomes may also require a change in the behaviour of certain groups, businesses or public organisations. This is not achieved merely by passing legislation, approving 'paper' plans or pursuing a technocratic process. Cultural and attitudinal barriers may have to be addressed and territorial perceptions modified. If individual or community choices are to be restricted, effort needs to be devoted to persuasion rather than imposition. This is best achieved through consultation and dialogue.

The attempt to promote more use of public transport is an example. Taxing road users in the cities to limit car use and to pay for public transport improvements is likely to cause a backlash unless the popular argument is won and public opinion is shifted. Various communication channels will be needed to persuade people that the continued rapid rate of growth in car use is unsustainable. Environmental groups and other organisations in civil society also have a role to play in raising public awareness.

One way to progress such issues is to create region-wide networks or other fora on specific themes to build understanding, consensus and consistent policies among key actors. Transparency and dialogue are important to expose deficiencies in established policies and procedures to scrutiny and peer pressure. Constructive involvement of the media may help to promote public debate and reduce obstacles to regional thinking. Such networks may cover all sorts of issues. Fora for economic sectors where there are regional issues at stake, such as the creative industries or higher order retailing, could usefully share information and raise common infrastructural problems. Fora to address specific environmental concerns affecting the Central Belt, such as the quality of countryside amenities or derelict land, could bring interested parties together (such as landowners, pressure groups and public authorities) to formulate practical solutions. The Central Scotland Countryside Trust has an annual forum which seeks to do some of this.

5.6.3 Strategic leadership from the centre

Collaboration from the bottom up can achieve progress on regional projects where the benefits for each area are reasonably clear-cut and uncontroversial. It is more difficult where the issues are complex and the benefits uneven or long-term. Making decisions across territorial and functional boundaries is particularly difficult for local authorities and other public bodies since they can only operate within the limits of their mandate and none has a remit to consider Central Scotland. It is also problematic when government agencies in charge of key resources have different agendas. These situations require stronger leadership and encouragement from the centre.

The Scottish Executive and its agencies are capable of providing this. Since 1999 they have had the democratic mandate and legitimacy to do so. They have begun tentatively to recognise the potential benefits of larger scale spatial frameworks to guide investment and land-use decisions. However, their general concerns are that large-scale plans might be too prescriptive, comprehensive, controversial and time-consuming to prepare, and could raise unrealistic expectations (Scottish Executive, 2001). Yet, this is not inevitable. Such frameworks could be prepared in an inclusive manner involving a range of national and local stakeholders. This would make them less prescriptive and help to manage expectations. They could also be selective in scope and focused on essential issues to avoid lengthy preparation and to ensure they were strategic in orientation, without duplicating structure plans. They would have to 'add value' and should fulfil a positive, promotional role rather than impose constraints. Where decisions have to produce winners and losers within the region (such as rail access to the airports), the plan could help to rationalise them and put them into a proper balanced perspective. The Exec-

utive would pursue a supportive and facilitative role rather than a directive one, and ensure that the key departments were thoroughly drawn into the process.

This is not completely new. The Executive already has several clear roles in relation to public policies across the region. It prepares National Planning Policy Guidelines which give strong advice to local planners on issues considered to be of national significance, albeit with no explicit spatial reference. It is also responsible for ensuring that local authorities co-operate in sub-regional structure plan areas. In Glasgow and the Clyde Valley a specific joint committee served by a team of dedicated staff was created to ensure an efficient process. There is no obvious reason why the Executive could not encourage the local authorities across Central Scotland to carry out a similar regional exercise, albeit with a more selective and strategic focus. Scottish Executive participation in such a committee and staff secondments would give it extra weight and significance. Outside land-use planning, the Executive is also responsible for setting policy and allocating resources for economic development, physical regeneration, transport and other infrastructure. It is responsible for co-ordinating the work of a range of departments and agencies, and has direct control over the location of major public investments. Local authorities and related organisations should welcome more clarity and transparency about the principles and criteria guiding such decisions, particularly their spatial dimensions and implications for particular places. This would generate greater certainty in strategic planning and development, and alleviate some of the difficulties of achieving joined-up policies and decisions.

There is considerable interest among planning and development organisations, in political circles and among the wider public in the government's attitude to the regional challenges discussed above, evidenced by the extensive media coverage. Put simply, what is the best way to alleviate the pressures of overheating in Greater Edinburgh and to raise the employment rate in Greater Glasgow? How far should population and economic growth be contained within Edinburgh and the Lothians and with what implications for the countryside, congestion, future competitiveness and quality of life in the city, and public expenditure on the physical and social infrastructure needed for large scale housing, economic development and transport improvements? To what extent can population and economic growth be encouraged further west through infrastructure investment, house-building and incentives to facilitate migration, commuting and faster job-creation in Lanarkshire, Glasgow and indeed further west in Inverclyde and Ayrshire as well? What should the balance be between trying to steer growth from east to west and assisting the west to access opportunities in the east, thereby importing a share of its

wealth to boost local spending power in the west. The answers to these questions are not straightforward and will need to be worked out in consultation with others. This is precisely why a strategic framework would be helpful. Neglecting such issues could harm Scotland's economic performance and national cohesion.

5.6.4 Regional planning elsewhere

There may be some lessons to learn from approaches being pursued elsewhere. There is a definite trend in many European countries towards larger scale planning and development frameworks. They are concerned with the broad spatial pattern of economic, environmental and social change, and with the key drivers of change. That means understanding how regions function, the internal relationships between places, and the external relationships with other territories. Their policies cover issues ranging from the location of significant physical development, integrated transport and economic development strategies, to narrower land-use considerations, the quality of the environment and the regulation of site-specific development.

The procedures adopted in many instances are also relevant. They include a mixture of top-down and bottom-up arrangements to promote greater local ownership of regional policies and increased commitment to their implementation, as well as support and commitment from government bodies. The plans are prepared by local or regional government in conjunction with other stakeholders. Government departments, development agencies, transport planners and other key actors are engaged in the process and their policies and actions are expected to conform. The spatial framework is intended to guide their investment decisions and priority-setting. Regular monitoring of progress and review helps to ensure that the strategy is appropriate and kept up-to-date.

Conclusions

This case-study has explored the idea that collaboration at the scale of Central Scotland may bring benefits for regional competitiveness and cohesion. Its purpose has been to explore the case for a spatial development strategy for this region more closely. While arrangements for planning and governance more generally have been characterised in the past by fragmentation and growing competition between areas, this case-study has considered whether collaboration may be beneficial. As the largest concentration of population and economic activity in Scotland, with considerable cross boundary issues and interdependencies between towns and cities in the region, there appears to be much to gain from a common strategic perspective. This is a particularly interesting time. The new arrangements for local government

have had time to become established. The new structure plan authorities have produced draft plans whose interrelationships need to be explored. There is increasing discussion about the relationship between Edinburgh and Glasgow. The Scottish Executive's Framework for Economic Development set out an agenda for increasing the competitiveness of the Scottish economy, while also promoting social justice and environmental sustainability. It recognises that the uneven pace of development between areas within Scotland could be problematic for this agenda.

The study has sought to identify a range of issues for planning in Central Scotland which may require or benefit from a co-ordinated approach. There is a strong case for increasing collaboration between agencies involved in economic development, land-use planning and transport across Central Scotland. While useful gains can be achieved through informal co-operation and building consensus through issue-based networks, leadership from the Scottish Executive is vital for real progress to be achieved. The sort of approach that combines top-down and bottom-up procedures pursued elsewhere in Europe could usefully be applied here. The benefits would include a broad vision for the region, a statement of priorities for the location of major development and population growth, an opportunity to integrate transport and land-use considerations, and collaborative economic strategies. Structure plans, local transport plans and local economic development policies would be informed by and consistent with this framework. The spatial development strategy would provide a useful context for the city-region focus in structure plans and regional transport strategies. At least one of the structure plan teams has intimated as much that 'there is a need for a more co-ordinated national framework for achieving a better balance of development in Scotland with a higher level of economic development in the Glasgow and Clyde Valley area, where there is the capacity in terms of the labour force, environment and infrastructure to absorb growth' (GCVSPJC, 2000b, p.2)

Such an approach could be introduced at national or sub-national scales. A single national spatial development framework could be developed in association with the *Framework for Economic Development*. As a national framework, the main participants involved in preparing it would be national organisations such as Scottish Enterprise, departments of the Scottish Executive, Scottish Homes, environmental bodies and water authorities alongside professional organisations and national interest groups. Its national profile and Parliamentary support would confer certain advantages, although its coverage of such a large and diverse territory as Scotland might render it rather general and superficial. It might lack the precision required to give clear guidance on the location, scale and character of development. Any national framework should devote special attention to the Central Belt of Scotland, given the eco-

conomic and demographic significance of the region, and the increasing functional linkages across it. In particular, such a framework should pursue the proposals for enhancing the railway network, airport links and external connections outlined earlier, and identify consistent priority areas for economic and residential development to guide major infrastructure investment decisions and financial incentives. Beyond the national framework, the Scottish Executive also needs to find a way to ensure that the new structure plans (or 'strategic development plans') for the city-regions address the key linkages with the rest of Central Scotland. The boundaries for the Glasgow and Edinburgh city-region strategic plans should probably extend beyond those of the current structure plans because of the growing interactions with Falkirk, Stirling, Fife (including the new North Sea ferry terminal at Rosyth) and Ayrshire (including Prestwick airport). The increasing connections between parts of West Lothian, Lanarkshire and Falkirk warrant particular attention since there are no mechanisms at present for contiguous structure plan areas to co-ordinate their strategies. The Scottish Executive should specifically encourage these local authorities and planning teams to discuss and negotiate their cross-boundary interactions, since they cannot do so without a mandate. Such deliberations would also help to provide a local democratic check on the national framework.

Although there is little immediate prospect of this at present, we believe there is still a case for a regional planning framework for Central Scotland, and possibly for other regions of the country. These sub-national frameworks could be more concrete and specific than the national framework, and therefore more authoritative and useful in co-ordinating action and guiding investment. They would also permit more detailed involvement of local and regional stakeholders, thereby increasing local knowledge, ownership and commitment to implementation and review. Regional frameworks would focus on the linkages and interdependencies across each region, and encourage collaboration on projects of strategic significance. Local authorities, local enterprise companies, transport bodies, strategic planners and regional units of government agencies could assist in preparing them, mediated by the Scottish Executive. An evolutionary approach might be the best way to proceed. The Executive's role would be to support and facilitate collaboration and negotiation between local bodies and to help overcome territorial difficulties that may arise. It would also help to ensure that central departments, agencies, and utility companies were appropriately aligned with the strategic frameworks. The representatives of business organisations, developers, environmental groups and community organisations should also be consulted extensively, since they would have a part to play in ensuring their successful implementation.

The need for a sub-national framework is greatest in the Central Belt because of the density of economic activity and population, the coincidence of growth pressures and problems, the degree of organisational fragmentation, and the range of cross boundary issues and functional interactions between areas. Starting here would allow other parts of Scotland to decide whether to follow suit in due course, as with the regional transport partnerships.

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6 RheinRuhr

Peter Schmitt, Wolfgang Knapp and Klaus R. Kunzmann

6.1 Defining the region

Located in the western part of Germany (see Figure 6.1), RheinRuhr is by far the most urbanised area in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia. According to the *Landesentwicklungsplan NRW 95* (State development plan of North Rhine-Westphalia 1995) the core area totals more than 2,000 inhabitants per square kilometre. RheinRuhr can be considered a classic example of a polycentric urban region, especially if compared to Greater Berlin (see Figure 6.2).

It fits our definition of a polycentric urban region excellently: more than 10 million inhabitants live in a regional urban system of large cities (5 cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants – Cologne, Essen, Dortmund, Düsseldorf and Duisburg) and medium-sized cities (12 cities with over 200,000 inhabitants), complemented by a vast number of smaller towns. These cities are all within close proximity to each other; the largest inter-city distance being about 120 kilometres (Hamm – Bonn).

Figure 6.1 RheinRuhr



There is no generally recognised delimitation of RheinRuhr. Instead, a number of different demarcations based on different methodologies exists. Figure 6.3 presents the most important ones from our perspective. These include the boundaries of the region according to the *Landesentwicklungsplan NRW 95*; the Functional Urban Region RheinRuhr as defined on the

Figure 6.2 RheinRuhr in comparison with Greater Berlin



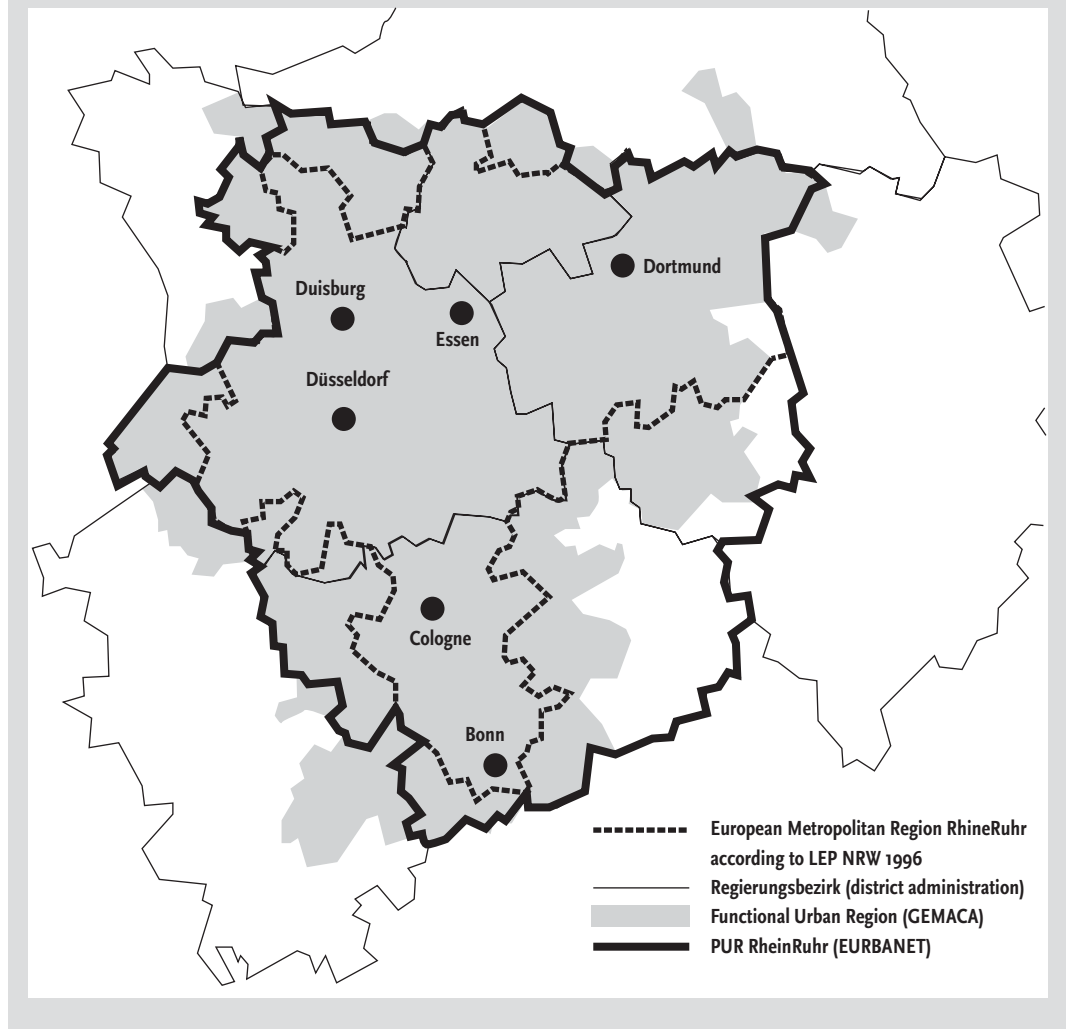
Source: Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung, 2000

basis of travel to work relations³⁹, and the demarcation chosen for the EURBANET project, which comes down to an aggregated delimitation of the Functional Urban Region at NUTS III-level (Kreise in Germany). The varying demarcations are of importance for understanding some of the statistical data presented in the following sections.

One of the most eye-catching aspects in considering RheinRuhr is the spatial and structural 'diversification'. According to the most common perception of the region (Schmitt and Knapp, 2001) it is divided into two axes: on the one hand, a city-row consisting mainly of the cities Düsseldorf, Cologne and Bonn along the Rhine (the so-called *Rheinschiene*) and, on the other hand the bigger cities along the Ruhr, namely Duisburg-Essen-Bochum-Dortmund (the so-called *Ruhrgebiet*). Considering the settlement structures in RheinRuhr, a very densely urbanised corridor between Düsseldorf/Duisburg/Oberhausen in the

³⁹ The methodology used in the Interreg projects GEMACA (Group of Metropolitan Areas Comparative Analysis) and GEMACA II is that a municipality belongs to the functional urban region if at least 10% of the working population works in one of the economic cores of the region. An economic core is defined using data on employment density (more than 7 jobs/hectare) and at least 20,000 jobs in one municipality.

Figure 6.3 Different demarcations in use for the RheinRuhr



west and Hamm/Dortmund/Hagen in the east shows that strong urbanisation processes not only emerged along the rivers Rhine and Ruhr, but also in the north of RheinRuhr, namely up to the river Lippe and partly beyond. However, these axes or corridors respectively also cover a relatively urbanised hinterland with strong commuter and consumer relations to the aforementioned core cities. Because of its dispersed settlement structure and a complex patchwork consisting of locations for industrial, housing, leisure, trade and retail activities, the term 'hinterland' seems somewhat outdated. Accordingly, the term 'new urbanised landscape' might be a more fitting way of referring to the area.

A superior image is attributed to the city-row along the Rhine. This sub-region has been marked for a very long time by an economic mix of manufacturing and services and, especially in the case of Cologne, historical and cultural sites. The river serves as an important transport corridor, giving these

cities an advanced position in the processes of post-industrial structural change. The *Ruhrgebiet* was a distinctive rural landscape in pre-industrial times. During the period of industrialisation, the region took on its characteristic shape through the spatial interactions of coal deposits, mine locations and iron and steel works, which resulted in an almost unremitting process of urbanisation and suburbanisation. The transformation process of post-Fordist structural renewal and the concomitant processes of suburbanisation and urbanisation have resulted in the current disorganised settlement structure.

In addition to the two axes, the remaining part of RheinRuhr can be seen as a kind of 'large green area': the so-called *Bergisches Land* with its geographical and functional centre, the city-triangle Wuppertal-Solingen-Remscheid, and its relatively mountainous and sparsely populated hinterland *Rheinisch-Bergischer Kreis* (county) and *Märkischer Kreis*.

6.2 Spatial dynamics

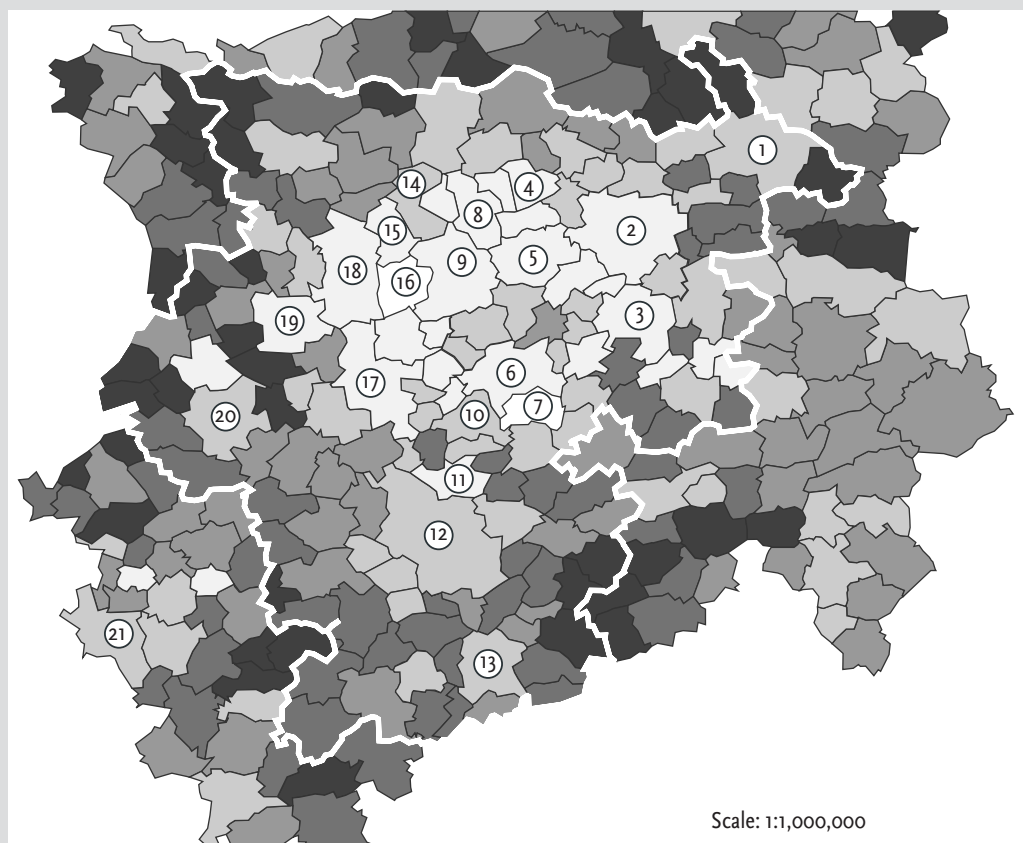
Some fundamental trends occurring in RheinRuhr have a strong influence on the emergence of spatial issues and their perception. Three main groups of such trends can be distinguished, relating to demographic developments and settlement structures, to spatial-economic performance, and to mobility and transportation.

6.2.1 Demographic developments and settlement structures

RheinRuhr currently encompasses some 11.7 million inhabitants (using the demarcation of the Functional Urban Region). In other words, more than 60% of the population of North Rhine-Westphalia and more than 10% of the German population live in this area. The absolute number of inhabitants within RheinRuhr has not varied significantly over the past decade. Whilst in the 1990s the natural population development in North Rhine Westphalia showed a decrease, regular migration flows led to a slight increase at the beginning of the decade. The population forecast made by the State Office for Data Processing and Statistics (LDS) in 1998 suggests, however, that from 2002 on, and in particular after 2015, the absolute number of inhabitants will decrease due to a larger natural decline, not compensated for by migration. This comes of course coupled by a greying of the population. While the current population rate in North Rhine-Westphalia stands at nearly 18 million exact, this number is expected to drop to 17.8 million by 2015.

While characterised by a steady population growth rate over the last decade,

Figure 6.4 Relative change to population at the municipal level (1990-1999)



—— Border of municipality
 —— Functional Urban Region RheinRuhr

□ -5,80 up to 0,00%
 □ 0,00 up to 5,00%
 □ 5,00 up to 10,00%
 □ 10,00 up to 15,00%
 □ 15,00 up to 36,64%

Average in North Rhine-Westphalia: 3,75

1 Hamm	8 Gelsenkirchen	15 Oberhausen
2 Dortmund	9 Essen	16 Mülheim a.d.Ruhr
3 Hagen	10 Solingen	17 Düsseldorf
4 Herne	11 Leverkusen	18 Duisburg
5 Bochum	12 Köln	19 Krefeld
6 Wuppertal	13 Bonn	20 Mönchen-Gladbach
7 Remscheid	14 Bottrop	21 Aachen

Map processing: Research Institute for Regional and Urban
 Development of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia

Source: Landesdatabank NRW

within RheinRuhr important shifts in the spatial dispersal of the population have occurred and these trends are expected to continue. Figure 6.4 presents two main intraregional developments with respect to the population. The first one takes place on the scale of the whole of RheinRuhr and concerns the main cities in the core region losing population to their 'hinterland'. The outskirts of RheinRuhr face urban sprawl, while the former core area is gradually diminishing. The most prevalent reasons for the strong demand for houses

and flats in the 'hinterland' of the core of RheinRuhr are without doubt the wish to live close to nature, in more child-friendly surroundings, and finally the relatively low land prices. A second major trend occurs more on the sub-regional scale of city-regions. While all bigger cities are losing population to their immediate surroundings, this is more true for the bigger county-free cities of the Ruhr area than for cities along the relatively prosperous Rhein-schiene. Up to the year 2015 cities like Essen and Dortmund are likely to lose 13.7% and 10.9% of their respective populations, which are higher rates than those predicted for Düsseldorf, Cologne and Bonn (LDS).

The process of continuing suburbanisation is not only caused by growing numbers of car-owners and by the extensive usage of cars in general, but cars also contribute to pushing people out of the city centres. The reasons for this include high traffic congestion, the lack of parking spaces, noise and air pollution. Suburbanisation is also a consequence of changing socio-economic trends and lifestyles. These trends include increasing incomes, the rising number of working women, smaller households, more time spent on leisure activities, and changes in housing preferences. Another aspect, apart from a few specific spatial circumstances, concerns the declining land prices from the core to the corresponding hinterland.

Demographic trends and their spatial impact raise a number of issues that need to be dealt with. The greying of the population and immigration have strong influences on the social-cultural appearance of RheinRuhr on the one hand, as well as on economic development on the other hand, the latter due to a shrinking labour force and demand in general. Another issue is the uneven spatial distribution of the different demographic effects. RheinRuhr will be reshaped by these demographic trends, which will have strong impacts on the spatial order of urban and more or less rural patterns, on the demand for social and transport infrastructure, and finally on the environment. Hence, the demographic dimension is one of the most important challenges for this area. In more concrete terms, the further urbanisation of landscapes as a result of the shrinking and dissolving core areas (cities) towards a functional urban-rural patchwork can be considered as a very specific case of polycentricity. It urgently calls for corresponding instruments and responses at the regional level, which, however, are not forthcoming at this moment. A regional approach focussing on the question how RheinRuhr should shape and organise these kind of patterns while preserving the open spaces, is needed.

6.2.2 Spatial-economic performance

A commonly accepted key indicator to measure the regional economic performance is the development of the gross value added (GVA) per capita and

Table 6.1 Share of employment by sector in RheinRuhr, in percentage

	1987	1990	1995	1997
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.1
Fuel & Power products	3.8	3.4	2.8	2.5
Manufacturing industry	30.8	30.1	25.2	23.7
Building & Construction	6.0	6.0	5.9	5.3
Public non-market services	19.0	18.9	19.9	20.0
Private market services	39.0	40.5	45.2	47.4
Total (=100%)	4,727,140	4,916,658	4,764,746	4,658,265

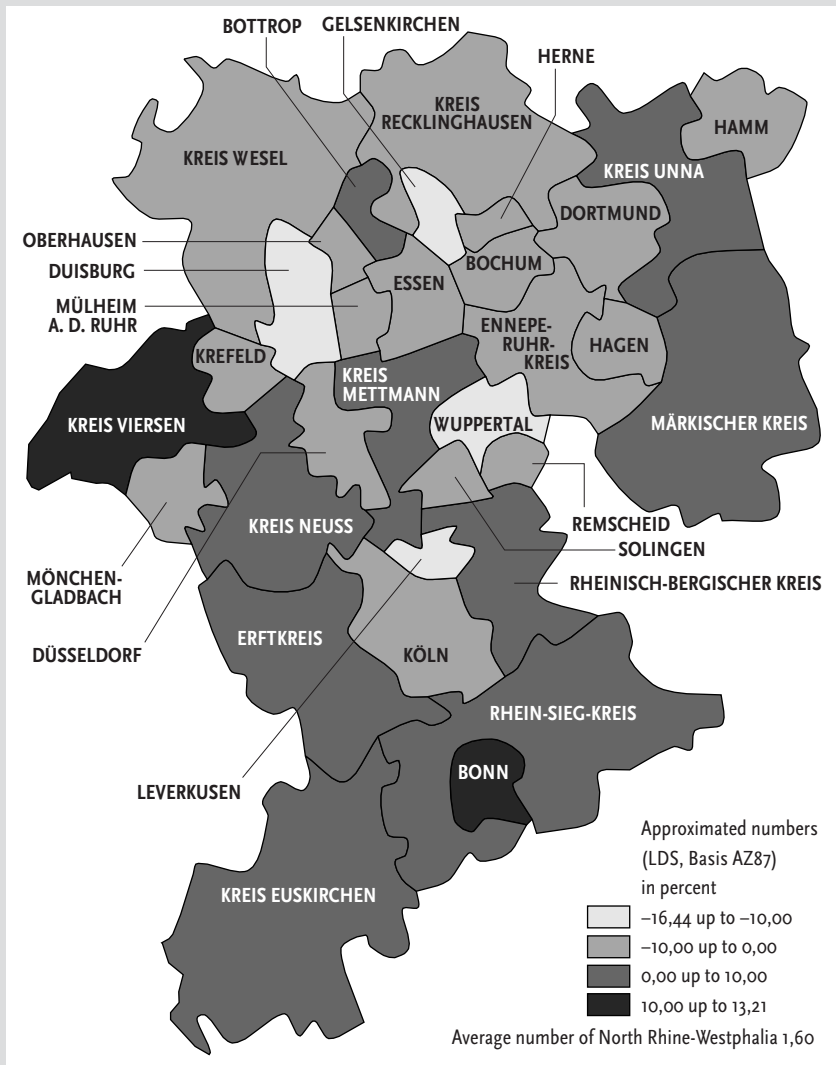
Source: Landesdatenbank NRW

the contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP). Here, the comparison of RheinRuhr with the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia shows that the absolute level of the GVA per capita is almost the same. This might be surprising considering that urbanised regions in advanced economies normally have better economic outputs than fairly 'sparsely' populated areas. These trends can be traced back to the fact that the 'hinterland' of RheinRuhr has developed very positively due to the emergence of a lot of successful small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and that other, considerably smaller urban regions in North Rhine-Westphalia outside of RheinRuhr (such as Aachen and Münster), have developed specific modern economic profiles (e.g. ICT, multi-media, and bio-technology industry). Taking a closer look at the local level presents a more differentiated picture. At this level, the superior economic position of the larger cities like Cologne, Düsseldorf, Bonn and Leverkusen in the southern part of RheinRuhr stands out, whereas the cities of the *Ruhrgebiet* are more or less at the same low level. This inequality between the *Rheinschiene* and the *Ruhrgebiet* is also present when taking the GDP into account. While the GDP developed positively in all the sub-regions of RheinRuhr, the regions around Cologne/Bonn and Düsseldorf performed much better.

Changes in the economic structure of the region are reflected in the share different economic sectors have in employment, shown in Table 6.1. The table shows a shift in the economic structure of RheinRuhr from the primary and secondary sectors to the tertiary and 'knowledge' sectors. However, the secondary sector still has a strong base in RheinRuhr, certainly when compared to other urban regions in advanced post-industrialised countries. If the relative change in the numbers of employees in a spatial sense is considered, the spatial shift – or rather deconcentration – of employees from the core to the surrounding areas becomes obvious (see Figure 6.5).

Between 1987 and 1997, several sub-regions, primarily in the *Ruhrgebiet*, lost employees, the cities of Gelsenkirchen (-16.4%) and Duisburg (-14.7%) suffering most from this negative development. The cities of Cologne, Düsseldorf,

Figure 6.5 Relative change in the numbers of employees within RheinRuhr between 1987 and 1997



Source: Landesamt für Datenverarbeitung und Statistik Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2000

Mönchengladbach, Hamm, and the county of Wesel, however, lost less than 3.1%. The winners were the counties close to the Rhine, such as Euskirchen (+8.8), and Rhein-Sieg-Kreis (+8.9), but also the counties at the eastern edge of the Ruhrgebiet, such as Unna (+9.5%) and Märkischer Kreis (+1.1%). These trends support two primary theses, which, not surprisingly, correspond to the demographic trends as elucidated in section 6.3.1. The first hypothesis is that a process of ongoing spatial diversification between the *Ruhrgebiet* and the city-row along the Rhine is taking place and the second is that, with regard to these two axes, the hinterland is always more advanced than the core cities. Exceptions are the city of Bonn (beneficiary of financial assistance after the

decision to shift the national ministries to Berlin) and the city of Bottrop (location of a large entertainment centre). The difference in spatial-economic performance between the *Ruhrgebiet* and the cities along the Rhine is also expressed in the higher innovative performance (Feldotto, 1996) and entrepreneurship in the *Rheinschiene*.

Obviously, there is a certain imbalance in economic performance within Rhein-Ruhr. Overall, the *Rheinschiene* performs better than the *Ruhrgebiet*, but a closer look at the RheinRuhr reveals a rather complex patchwork of sub-regions in more or less favourable situations. To compensate for these imbalances within RheinRuhr could be a major challenge for regional policy-making.

6.2.3 Internal and external accessibility

RheinRuhr is very much integrated into the dense network of roads and railways that marks the North West Metropolitan Area (NWMA). Together with the other rather polycentric urban regions such as RheinMain, Randstad, and Brussels/Flemish Diamond, it forms an area of extremely highly interconnected infrastructural systems (see Spieckermann et. al. 2001: 8, 20).

According to the accessibility study by Spieckermann et. al. (2001), the external accessibility of RheinRuhr is excellent compared to other metropolitan areas in the NWMA. This outstanding qualification can be traced back to two main reasons. First, RheinRuhr profits from its central-geographic position on the European continent. Second, it is very well interconnected within the European motorway, rail and HST network (ibid. 2001: 47,55,59,67). However, it lags slightly behind in accessibility by air, because neither RheinRuhr nor North Rhine-Westphalia has a major hub for passenger flights in the global aviation network (ibid. 2001: 70-72). As regards freight transport, Cologne/Bonn airport is a relatively important hub for north-western Europe, demonstrated by United Parcel Systems decision to base their delivery service for Europe here. Finally, RheinRuhr has some large ports. Due to its strong relation to the seaports in Rotterdam and Antwerp, Duisburg is the most important logistical centre in RheinRuhr and the biggest inland port in the world. The density of infrastructural facilities within the region is extremely high related to its geographical size or per capita (see Spieckermann et al. 2001: 32) and demand continues to grow steadily. The dominance of road transport in this is most striking. It mirrors the political unwillingness or rather incapability to shift a large amount of traffic from road to rail and simultaneously to reduce overall traffic through, for instance spatial policies.

Two different infrastructure 'corridors' can be distinguished, which are to a large extent congruent with the settlement structure and are closely connect-

ed to the two axes of *Rheinschiene* and *Ruhrgebiet*. The first corridor is formed by the north-south links between Düsseldorf and Bonn in the city row along the Rhine. The second one comprises the west-east links from Duisburg to Bonn, of which the main elements are the three parallel motorways. While congestion is also a problem in other parts of RheinRuhr as well, these two corridors, and especially the area around Duisburg and Oberhausen where they intersect, are characterised by heavy congestion. A survey by the *Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet* (2000) revealed that today's bottlenecks are likely to become even more problematic in the future. The traffic loads forecast for the year 2010 produced by the *Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet* (KVR 2000a) for car and truck indicates that the area around the cities of Duisburg and Oberhausen, which is the intersection of the two axes of the *Rheinschiene* and the *Ruhrgebiet*, is already one of the most congested spots in the region and the traffic load will continue to increase over the next decade.

Attempts have been made on a regional scale to improve the public transport-system. Transport associations cover a large part of RheinRuhr in order to integrate local systems, such as the *Verkehrsverbund Rhein-Ruhr* (VRR, established in 1980) and the *Verkehrsverbund Rhein-Sieg* (VRS, established in 1987). The latter was founded on the basis of good experiences with the VRR (Hoffmann and Kloecker 1989). The creation of such regional public transport associations must be considered a necessity in polycentric urban regions, which are confronted with a relatively complex set of traffic flow interconnections (Kallisch, 1995:567).

The city railway stations play an important role as interconnecting nodes in these traffic flows. Their quality and supply of services are a central issue when discussing the future standing of German railways in general and urban development in particular. Some ambitious projects around the major stations in RheinRuhr have been or are being developed.

The spatial dynamics and developments described so far raise specific concerns for policy attention that would appear to be more effectively dealt with on a regional scale rather than a more fragmented local approach. In section 6.5 some regional issues will be identified, elaborating on the key issues discerned in chapter 2. The general aim of the next section 6.3 is to present the current policy context to see whether regional policy-making in RheinRuhr is favoured at this moment.

6.3 Policy context concerning regional planning

6.3.1 Polycentricity in German national spatial development

During the urban history of Germany, a number of dense polycentric urban networks have developed. Their development can be traced back to different stages of foundation, such as: the Roman cities of Trier or Cologne, the emergence of independent cities in the middle ages and powerful networks of Hanseatic cities, the establishment of sovereign cities in feudal times up to the age of industrialisation (such as Essen or Oberhausen), and finally the foundations of new industrial towns during the Third Reich (e.g. Wolfsburg). The development of this polycentric urban system on the scale of Germany as a whole has been enhanced by two further circumstances: the long history of scattered regionalism in Germany, the so-called *Kleinstaaterei*, in the 18th and early 19th century and the decentralised federal system established after the Second World War. In this polycentric system both larger and smaller cities play an important role 'the urban system of larger urban agglomerations in Germany would not be so vital if it was not complemented by a dense network of hundreds of economically viable small and medium-sized cities with central place functions' (Kunzmann, 1998: 135).

During the last decade, the Federal German government intensified its efforts to formulate future-oriented principles and guidelines on spatial planning issues, in particular concerning larger conurbations or the so-called 'metropolitan regions of European importance' (see below). Two documents related to these strategic questions have been widely discussed. The *Raumordnungspolitischer Orientierungsrahmen* (officially translated and published in English as 'Guidelines for Regional Planning'), published in 1992 (BMBAU, 1992), is a concise policy document which outlines and communicates the prospects, principles and strategies for spatial and urban development in the Federal Republic of Germany. The other document was developed in 1994 by the Federal Government and entitled *Städtebaulicher Orientierungsrahmen* (BMBAU, 1994). This is a strategic framework for ten larger urban agglomerations in Germany. It aims to implement measures to develop and strengthen the polycentric urban system, to encourage urban co-operation within agglomerations or urban networks, to avoid agglomeration diseconomies in urban regions which suffer from development pressure (which includes RheinRuhr), to stabilise the settlement system in sparsely populated areas and to develop their endogenous potentials, and to enhance Greater Berlin's evolution into the network of European metropolises (Kunzmann, 1998: 150-151).

The *Raumordnungspolitische Handlungsrahmen* (Federal action plan for national spatial development, 1995) is a follow-up of the 1992 document focused on its implications (BMBAU, 1995). This action plan refers to ten areas where, with specific regard to the PUR RheinRuhr, the demand to strengthen German metropolitan regions within the European network is of interest. This document can be seen as a new approach by defining new spatial units in the German planning context. Moreover, six so-called 'metropolitan regions of European importance' out of the ten above-mentioned urban regions are identified. These are the urban regions RheinRuhr, RheinMain, Berlin, Hamburg, Stuttgart, and München, whereas the city-triangle Halle/Leipzig-Dresden is named as a stand-by candidate that is likely to join this league of European metropolitan regions in Germany in the future. They are defined as spatial and high-performance locations, whose outstanding functions transcend the national boundaries to have impacts on an international scale (Blotevogel, 1998: 405). Particular emphasis is put on the development and the promotion of these six European Metropolitan Regions (EMR). To this end, the federal states, as well as the local authorities, are requested to implement the following measures:

- strengthen the international accessibility by plane, train and infrastructure;
- promote inter-metropolitan networks and co-operation;
- encourage cross-border development concepts where appropriate;
- co-ordinate federal and local authorities in infrastructure development in metropolitan regions;
- promote inter-regional co-operation in the protection of natural resources and the provision of mitigation areas;
- develop regional marketing abroad;
- link smaller and medium-sized urban centres to European metropolitan regions.

Kunzmann concludes that these measures 'are quite general. In the end, they remain an expression of orientation rather than one of action, as the Federal Government has very little will to implement such measures. Hence, the enumerated action areas can only be used by policy makers in the *Länder* (federal states) or in metropolitan regions to support their own arguments' (1998: 153).

6.3.2 The EMR concept in the PUR RheinRuhr

Against the background of growing inter-regional competition for investments efforts are being made in Germany to bundle individual potentialities spread over a number of distinctive cities into a regional network in order to promote further economic developments. It is in this context that European Metropolitan Regions were established. Regions such as RheinRuhr act as dri-

ving forces of societal, economic, social and cultural development and are required to sustain Germany's and Europe's competitiveness. As individual cities, as parts of multi-polar urban regions are too weak and too small to develop a position comparable to other global cities, the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia became the first federal state to integrate the new spatial planning category (EMR) in its *Landesentwicklungsplan* (LEP, State Development Plan) in 1995. Planners, local authorities, as well as regional stakeholders, have puzzled over how to implement this new instrument within the *Landesentwicklungsplan* as it should be an addition to the long-standing planning tradition of North Rhine-Westphalia of the formation and conservation of central places interconnected by infrastructure axes (so-called development corridors). This juxtaposition, or rather overlapping, of the traditional geo-design of the *Landesentwicklungsplan* and a portrayal of bounded territory for the European Metropolitan Region RheinRuhr is, according to the general attitude in professional circles, insufficient to invite local and regional stakeholders to a discourse on the spatial planning and development of the metropolitan region RheinRuhr. A sketch that illustrates something like a network area RheinRuhr would be much more appealing for this purpose.

Public and private stakeholders in the region tend to be rather unconcerned about spatial planning at the federal-state level in general. A reason for this, according to Kunzmann (1998: 157), might be that strategic issues of planning at the federal-state level receives very low priority nowadays. Traditional sector policies, in particular economic as well as transport and infrastructural policies, dominate the political agenda. Moreover, the 1995 State Development Plan of NRW does not contain a comprehensive description for the implementation of the new spatial category EMR. The description of the overall goal seems to be more rhetorical in nature than suited to paving the way for an advanced framework to transform this goal into concrete measures: 'The greater significance of the European Metropolitan Region Rhine-Ruhr for spatial development in North Rhine-Westphalia, in Germany and in Europe has to be taken into consideration when development of the spatial- and settlement structure is at stake' (translated from: LEP NRW 1995: 16). In order to make this general goal more understandable, a few explanations are added. Disappointingly, these clarifications are rather descriptive as they characterise only the existing metropolitan features:

- due to its central-European position, the EMR RheinRuhr is provided with a European-orientated transport infrastructure at the intersection of extensive development axes;
- intercontinental accessibility is supported by two international airports;
- with regard to population size and population density as well as economic power and foreign trade significance, one can compare the EMR RheinRuhr with other European agglomerations like Paris and London;

- the EMR RheinRuhr is a service location and financial centre of European significance;
- due to its polycentric exhibition locations and media centres, it has a position of wide-reaching importance;
- the science and research capacities of North Rhine-Westphalia, with its focal point in the EMR RheinRuhr, hold a leading position internationally;
- the EMR RheinRuhr is a political and economic decision-centre, as well as a location for internal authorities, foreign trade representatives, globally operating large-scale enterprises and central associations.

The EMR concept for RheinRuhr accentuates economic development objectives rather than related spatial planning objectives, such as social compensation or the ecological protection of open spaces. The list below shows that this concept aims at a new consideration of RheinRuhr as a whole, at the co-ordination of regional stakeholders, and, as mentioned above, at the mobilisation and clustering of existing resources in order to enhance economic development:

- the further improvement of inter-continental accessibility and linkages with the supra-regional and regional air-transport, railway and road network;
- the elaboration and harmonisation of several regional development concepts, which have to lead to more intensive co-operation among regional stakeholders;
- the functional concentration for the extension of infrastructure, in particular for the common development of location requests; harmonisation of projects with European significance, e.g. acquisition of locations for authorities, science institutions and technology centres with international importance;
- the establishment of a network between the EMR Rhine-Ruhr and other contiguous urban regions.

So far, most of the stakeholders, political and non-political, have not 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. A policy which considers globalisation in a much broader sense, and which is also directed to the demands of residents living in RheinRuhr, should be more oriented to what might be understood as 'regional sustainable development'. Modernisation, the competitiveness of regions and economic growth – as well as forming appropriate alliances for it – are dominating the headlines of the current regional policies.

Although Blotevogel (1998) criticises the transformation of cryptic phrases from the *Raumordnungspolitischer Handlungsrahmen* (Federal action plan for

national spatial development) to the LEP NRW, he emphasises that the implementation of the EMR Rhein-Ruhr is a new way of dealing with spatial planning issues in North Rhine-Westphalia (1998: 407). Furthermore, he points out that the conceptual framework of the EMR RheinRuhr is still in process and he concludes finally 'it is as if a new geography is in the making' (1998: 409).

6.4 Key issues for spatial planning in Rhein-Ruhr

Chapter 2 presented three general key issues for spatial planning in polycentric urban regions. These are: internal and external accessibility, uneven spatial-economic development and spatial diversity and the quality of open space. While common for the polycentric urban regions examined in this volume, they are given a different interpretation in each of the regions analysed. Elaborating on the trends and developments mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter, these three issues stand central in this section, placed within the regional context of political discussions, policies and controversies. Finally, some recommendations to deal with the issues are made using a regional perspective.

6.4.1 Internal and external accessibility

This issue attracts the most policy attention at the level of RheinRuhr in general and is without doubt the most prominent of its critical issues. Five main topics can be distinguished which dominate the political and spatial planning debates. These are, however, partly in contrast to what was planned to be achieved by means of the federal state development plan. The five main topics, which will be elaborated below, are the following:

- upgrading of the existing public transport system;
- solving bottlenecks in the road network through infrastructural improvements;
- modal shift in freight transport from road to rail;
- enlargement of airports;
- RheinRuhr as international transport hub.

Upgrading the existing public transport system

The issue of upgrading the existing public transport system is currently well documented and greatly disputed in political and public circles, due to the current problems of German Railways. Even though the reasons given for the so-called 'crisis' of the German Railways are varied, some main reasons can be identified. First of all, German transport policy focussed mainly on the construction and upgrading of roads, and in particular motorways. The densi-

ty of the railway network was gradually reduced, which led to the closure of several railway stations, mainly in peripheral locations or in the hinterland of larger conurbations. Another problem has been the failure to modernise the network. In addition, market conditions support other transport sectors more than the railways in general. One example is that the federal state is in charge of the infrastructural endowment to support aviation, inland navigation and road traffic. Moreover, German Railways has to pay taxes for its energy consumption, whereas both inland navigation as well as aircraft have exemptions from certain taxes on their fuel. Another aspect is that the investment policy of German Railways is still concentrated on a few links between larger conurbations, in particular high-speed connections, whereas the system as a whole is neglected. Yet, although the train frequencies, as well as the density of the network, can be seen as adequate by comparison with other urban regions in the NWMA (Spieckermann et al. 2001: 32), the degree of quality and modernity needs to be improved.

Of the few alternatives for upgrading the public transport system, the 'Metro-rapid' idea for RheinRuhr stirs the imagination most. This magnetic high-speed train would serve as a new backbone of the intra-regional public transport system. Within the first building phase, it would link together the bigger cities of the *Ruhrgebiet* and the city of Düsseldorf. It is planned to link with Cologne, the Cologne/Bonn airport and the airport of Dortmund in a later stage.

It is interesting to notice that the Social Democrats in North Rhine-Westphalia promote the Metrorapid by talking about a 'Rhein-Ruhr-City' as a polycentric metropolitan region. Although the political objective is to shift more commuting traffic from road to rail by means of this relatively modern and fast means of transport, the opponents wonder if the investment of €3.68 billion is adequate for this and whether the Metrorapid is capable of being the backbone of the public transport system. Investments in the current network and in upgrading the so-called 'S-Bahn', the regional trains in RheinRuhr, might be a less pricey alternative. Discussions on the Metrorapid seem to be the last prospect for the federal state government to accomplish the ambitious aims of the State Development Plan and essentially to upgrade the regional attractiveness and accessibility of RheinRuhr. Additionally, significant underlying reasons are technological enthusiasm as well as the desire to position the state's own policy in the right light in the media.

Solving bottlenecks in the road network through infrastructural improvements

Judging from the daily newspapers, as well as papers by political partners, the demand for the upgrading of certain motorways belonging to the polycentric

urban region RheinRuhr to reduce traffic jams seems to be another important issue. Inadequate transport management, insufficient co-operation between supply and demand (e.g. haulage contractors) as well as deficient collaboration between transport and regional planning are seen as reasons for the existing problems in RheinRuhr. The writers of this paper are of the opinion that the level of infrastructure is acceptable: since more roads just generate more traffic, the political goal should principally be directed to shifting more transport from road to rail. In the *Ruhrgebiet* only 16% – in comparison to Munich or Berlin (about 30%) – of the overall traffic in 1999 was carried by public transport (Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet 2000a: 9).

Modal shift in freight transport from road to rail

Another question is how to deal with the rapid increase in freight transport. The majority of regional experts assembled in a workshop⁴⁰ on this theme argued that the German Railways, as the only supplier for freight transport on rail, is still not able to meet all the demands of modern logistics. This is one reason, why freight transport on the road has increased dramatically e.g. in the *Ruhrgebiet* by 14% between 1995 and 1999. By the year 2010 an increase of 40% (basis year 1995) is forecast (Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet 2000a: 6).

In general the reasons for the increase in freight transport are German reunification, the single European market, and the opening towards the eastern European markets, as well as stronger economic labour divisions and global networking. In particular in the *Ruhrgebiet*, the decreasing transport volumes in the coal and steel industries have led to the dropping of several rail routes for freight transport, because simultaneously the transport of goods on the road was, and still is, less expensive. A policy to establish multimodal freight terminals more or less failed and ideas for a circular freight train in Rhein-Ruhr have so far gained no political support. Thus, the implementation of a sustainable regional logistic system with, among other things, an emphasis on a modal shift in freight transport from road to rail in RheinRuhr might be more indispensable than ever.

Enlargement of airports

Even though a more sustainability-oriented transport policy is referred to in the federal state development plan, the recently discussed 'air traffic concept North Rhine-Westphalia' (1999) aims at the expansion of the airports. It is proposed that the two biggest airports, Düsseldorf and Cologne/Bonn, double their passenger numbers by the year 2010. However, the so-called 'regional airports' have recently lengthened their runways (e.g. Dortmund) in order to

⁴⁰ Organised within the framework of the EURBANET-project.

participate in this growing sector. These expansions of the regional airports are principally dedicated to charter flights, as well as to greater supplies of business flights to other major European and also German centres.

The progressive decentralisation and liberalisation in the aviation sector has caused even non-central hubs to grow rapidly. Moreover, political support is relatively strong because airports are considered to be 'job machines'. On the other hand, regulative restrictions, such as night-flight prohibitions, noise-abatement concerns in particular of residents living close to the airports, environmental restrictions for extending the runways, etc., limit the further expansion of the airports. Here in particular the question arises as to whether better co-operation among the airports – especially between Düsseldorf (somewhat restricted in its scope for further expansion) and Cologne/Bonn (not as restricted) – might lead to better results for competitiveness and quality of life in RheinRuhr than merely for sub-regions to insist on running their 'own' airport.

RheinRuhr as international transport hub

This last topic raises a rather strategic question which touches the self-image of RheinRuhr: to what extent is RheinRuhr a central hub in the (north western) European transport network, rather than a transit region? Should spatial development incentives in RheinRuhr be focused more on the establishment of important nodes in the European distribution system or rather be aimed at accelerating transport through the region in general? The trends and development section revealed that RheinRuhr does not serve as an international transport hub in terms of air traffic, but this does not mean that no complex freight transport patterns are present. Transit is an import aspect of these patterns.

Towards a new transport policy for RheinRuhr

The federal state development plan for North Rhine-Westphalia (LEP NRW 1995) sets out some broad guidelines for the infrastructural development concerning transport issues. The plan focuses on the creation of an attractive and profitable public transport system, the improvement of the competitiveness of the public transport system, the speeding up of accessibility by means of public transport and finally, the integration of the provisions for regional land-use planning (for industry and housing) with the objectives and measures for the public transport system (Bömer 2000: 114).⁴¹ The guiding principles are disappointing, given that after five years of implementation. It is clear that these plans have not been substantially achieved. The overview of trends and devel-

⁴¹ The same 'main political drift' can be derived from the more recently published national transport report (Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau- und Wohnungswesen 2000: 19-20, 22-28, 34-36).

opments (4.3.3) and also the consultation of regional experts on this issue⁴² even presented a rather contradictory picture. For example, the Metrorapid in RheinRuhr could serve as a ‘flagship project’ for the area, but is a classic example of a top-down approach. Moreover, the current discussion shows the typical local short-sightedness, because a positive response is only given by those municipalities that will get a stop along this planned new track. The missing regional discourse in RheinRuhr creates little support from most regional/local stakeholders in this region. Moreover, it may be that this heavy investment (about €3.7 billion) will be reduced somewhat for projects that upgrade the existing dense and adequate railway network to improve the service, standard and reliability of this system. This is only one example that should be tackled by a new transport policy for RheinRuhr as sketched out below.

The complex and still increasing transport flows in RheinRuhr need to be reshaped into more sustainable forms of transport and mobility. This region needs to develop new co-operative concepts for a sustainable regional mobility that will also comprise, besides the economic, ecological, and socially compatible management of transport, such aspects as cultural sustainability or the psychological/emotional characteristics of human beings. A principal guideline for this broad perspective is ‘satisfactory mobility’, which would generate less transport and have fewer consequences for the environment, whilst being accessible to everybody. One important element for such a mobility concept is certainly the ‘managing of the increasing amount of freight transport’. However, the first two issues discussed above (‘upgrading of the public transport systems’ and ‘road network improvement’) reflect the old-fashioned infrastructure policy, which is questioned by a lot of transport experts. They argue that the already existing transport infrastructure endowment is absolutely sufficient and even unsurpassed within North West Europe (Spieckermann et al. 2001: 32).

6.4.2 Uneven spatial-economic development

The uneven spatial development became obvious when discussing the socio-economic trends. In general, almost all of the indicators presented assigned more positive developments to the city-row along the Rhine, Düsseldorf-Cologne-Bonn. The sub-regions belonging to the traditional *Ruhrgebiet* lag behind, although even here some intra-regional differences can be extracted. The central and even sometimes the eastern *Ruhrgebiet* are in a slightly advanced position concerning the restructuring of their economies and the

⁴² Another workshop was conducted within the framework of the Interreg IIc project of Eurbanet.

corresponding impact on, for example, the labour market or entrepreneurship. The western and particularly the northern part of this area are still struggling with this enormous lengthy procedure of economic revitalisation, so the negative social as well as demographic impact is still perceptible.

Even though the spatial disparities are to some extent very evident at a very low spatial scale, different measures are needed for the developments of the entire area of RheinRuhr to enhance competitiveness. Such policies should find some of the necessary support in the region and should be focused on high standards and strategic priorities in such different areas as training and education, R&D, infrastructure and leisure and cultural facilities. They should aim at the systematic development of specialisation in the cities and sub-regions, which should be based on advanced labour divisions between these units. Strategic fields for regional development include multi-media, software engineering and e-business, waste management and recycling, sustainable energy production, water management or biotechnology.

An urgent measure which could be addressed is to balance the different innovative potentials within RheinRuhr. This idea is very much linked to the aspect of shaping an intelligent, future-oriented network of different clusters within RheinRuhr. This network should consist of complementary assets and should be focussed on profiling several fields of competencies, such as water management, energy supply, environmental technologies, media, software engineering and logistics, cultural and leisure industries, etc. in RheinRuhr. To do so, a better regionally co-ordinated cluster policy is needed that would limit the reproduction of several similar urban economic profiles and at the same time support the establishment of certain 'spots of clustered competencies'.

The crude and partly unproductive competition among the different sub-regions, here first and foremost the municipalities, to attract new businesses, bind more purchasing power and invent flagship-projects which are absolutely not unique in the region (such as urban entertainment centres, multiplex cinemas, concert halls) is still set to continue. Particularly in those parts of the *Ruhrgebiet* that are lagging behind the others, decision-makers are under extreme pressure to strive by means of such 'local' flagship projects (which are mostly of 'regional' significance) to enhance the competitive position of their area of interest. These developments result in the current unsustainable expansions in the leisure and trade sector for instance, which are running far ahead of demand.

It is important to find a more regional balance on the question, for example, of locating large-scale retail and leisure facilities. Limiting the current crude inter-local competition (with only one winner and various losers) would be

helpful to secure profitable investments in the long run. The speculative impact of recent projects is very high, so that the sustainability of such commercial projects is correspondingly quite low. Here again the federal state of North-Rhine Westphalia has to re-think its current policies concerning industrial areas, which speed up enormously the emergence of numerous new 'commercial halls' at the edge of RheinRuhr. As mentioned above, a much more restrictive land-resource policy could contribute not only to protect more 'open space' (see above), but also to limit the replication of facilities in the catchment area of the RheinRuhr. A more coherent regional approach on the level of RheinRuhr could be very helpful in this perspective.

6.4.3 Spatial diversity and the quality of open spaces

RheinRuhr is currently not only coping with a strong structural diversification, but also with a distinctive spatial differentiation, which overlaps and partly contradicts typical centre-periphery patterns. The functional urban patchwork of RheinRuhr largely arises from intensive tertiary processes, such as new urban entertainment centres, factory outlet centres, or area-intensive facilities for leisure activities, which tend to be located in the hinterlands around the cities belonging to the core area of the RheinRuhr. Formerly unencumbered landscapes are integrated into a patchwork of different types of construction, topographies and open spaces with elements of urban as well as rural landscapes. The disintegration of traditional urban and urban-fringe structures corresponds with the change towards the more regionalised lifestyles of the residents and subsequently the growing demand for higher quality housing, mostly in connection with open spaces. Hence, the region as a whole has to cope with this kinds of urbanised landscapes as a result of the gradual dissolution of the cities into a very specific case of polycentricity.

Although the number of people who prefer to live in such urbanised landscapes outside the core cities is still growing, the consequences of dispersed social-spatial relations are not necessarily desirable. These are, for instance, time-consuming commutes and shopping trips, higher energy consumption, pollution and rising traffic accident numbers, excessive land consumption, as well as the overall problem of providing an appropriate public transport system in less densely populated areas. Thus, private motor transport appears to be both the prerequisite for participating in such social activities as working, shopping, education, etc, and the source of adverse effects. This dependency on private car use causes further social segregation because not everybody is able to follow the trend towards the greater individualisation of lifestyles. The households which leave the inner cities tend to be young families and/or economically active people, whereas the older and relatively less mobile remain in the inner cities.

As a consequence of this, offices and light industry and also retail have decentralised further by following either their employees or their markets, or both. Other pull-factors for decentralised locations are the attractive settings provided by good accessibility in terms of transport and mobility, ample parking areas, less stringent restrictions regarding the architectural quality of their buildings (less cost-intensive), new organisational forms for production and logistics, the availability of space for further expansion, and lower land prices (see above). In particular, shopping centres on greenfield sites have become a threat to retailing in the city centres. Another example is provided by what are known as 'airport cities', which tend to draw various service activities from the traditional locations of the urban cores. Even manufacturing industries consider such decentralised locations. In addition, entertainment and leisure facilities have also located in such decentralised settings, so that all in all the expression 'sub-urbanisation' seems to be somewhat insufficient or even outdated for these decentralised agglomerations of housing, work, leisure and recreation facilities. These locations rather form a number of 'post-suburbias', which are strongly interrelated and thus contribute to a 'decentralised polycentric patchwork'.

In short, the negative impacts of the structural economic, social and spatial transformation towards a service and leisure society, pose new challenges for urban and regional development and planning policies. Consequently, a specific spatial policy on a co-operative basis focussing on the question of how RheinRuhr should shape and organise these functional patterns while preserving the open spaces is urgently needed. It demands the regional view on post-suburbia to be sketched. The perception of problems has, however, not been adequate so far and corresponding policies have therefore hardly, or only partially, been developed. To some extent existing policies reflect a long tradition of, for example, green-belt preservation. However, these practices need to be questioned with regard to whether they are still an appropriate response to secure this essential component for the quality of life in the inter-relational urban patchwork that is RheinRuhr.

Planning documents on all levels make some reference to the need to protect nature and to conserve landscapes and open spaces. It could be considered a general normative principle of spatial planning. In addition to these planning documents, several political initiatives and programmes have been introduced within the last few years that somehow touch RheinRuhr area. Examples are the 'regional green-belt concept' for the northern part of the *Ruhrgebiet* as an informal approach to planning. The IBA Emscher Park primarily tried to support, among other issues, the ecological modernisation in this part of RheinRuhr. One of the flagship projects was the issue of 'green-belt preservation' for the establishment of the so-called 'Emscher Landscape

Park'. However, these efforts could not roll back, for example, the steadily growing number of areas for settlement and transport use, even though the overall population in this area decreased over the last decade.

The *Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet* (KVR) has promoted active policies towards the preservation of open spaces or green-belts almost since its foundation in 1920. Here again, the success of such initiatives has to be questioned if we recall the trends illustrated in section 6.3. One might doubt whether these formal and informal instruments are efficient enough to correspond to the economically-oriented land and resource-consuming settlement and industrial planning. One could draw the conclusion that these policies are more symbolic than substantial to the people living in RheinRuhr. Consequently, other more restrictive instruments on the regional level are needed to cope with the increasing distortion of open spaces, the emergence of urban sprawl and, finally, decentralised multi-functional urban-rural patchworks.

Even though there are a number of brownfield sites in RheinRuhr, the crude inter-municipal competition means that there is no co-operation-based agreement among the municipalities that promotes location on these places. There are still many possibilities for the municipalities to run their own settlement and industrial policies, so such regional programmes as mentioned above, and even binding plans, do not hinder the developments described. Needless to say, the reasons for urban sprawl are manifold and cannot be discussed sufficiently here. Nevertheless, this is even more a governance problem within the region because local interests are more of a priority than strengthening, for example, the very important regional soft location factors by means of something like an 'Emscher Landscape Park'.

Motivating the civic society and trying to convince the competent bodies to respond to these developments, currently only being inadequately tackled in spatial planning policies could be one of the most prominent issues to be addressed. A Regional Park RheinRuhr connecting the existing greenbelts could raise awareness of the potentials of the existing open spaces to the civic society and be a motivating factor in trying to preserve such areas; or it could serve as an essential building block of a spatial vision for RheinRuhr. Here, the federal state government in its role as an 'enabling state' should express its interest by suggesting a restrictive land-resource policy. It should also re-think its current policies, for instance concerning the industrial real estate areas that are speeding up enormously the further 'sealing' of former open spaces.

Reviewing the three key issues in RheinRuhr, it is clear that taking a regional planning rather than fragmented local planning practises is needed in order

to tackle them. However, the possibilities of organising such a form of regional planning are determined by contextual factors, as presented in section 2. Section 6.5 will examine the basis for a regional approach in RheinRuhr by considering the extent to which this area is already functioning as a single region in functional or institutional terms, or is already seen as a region in cultural terms.

6.5 Basis for a regional approach

6.5.1 Functional rationality

Regional co-operation is certainly dependent on the existing functional interconnections and linkages. A detailed analysis of these connections can be seen as important input to a deeper discussion on how to form a basis for regional co-operation and strategic action. The efforts to map these linkages, undertaken within the framework of the *Landesentwicklungsplan* 1995, are, according to Blotevogel (1998), insufficient. He demands another form of geo-design in order to elucidate the goal of the intended discourse on a European metropolitan region RheinRuhr. 'This portrayal may seem somewhat strange, insofar as the metropolitan region is not primarily a physical but a functional category. Of course, a metropolitan region is always a locational space and always has a spatial form. More importantly, however, are its functional aspects. The latter are only indirectly associated with structural density and cannot be adequately represented by linear boundaries. A graph showing an urban network would probably have been more appropriate than a map of bounded territory' (Blotevogel, 1998: 406).

Knapp (1998) points out that the coherent structure of population and employment, as well as the integrated industrial complexes of varying degrees of elaboration and sophistication (clusters of coal and steel/heavy industry, chemicals, media or environmental engineering), indicate the level of functional connections in RheinRuhr. Within the INTERREG IIC project GEMACA II, so-called 'functional urban regions' were defined.⁴³ On the basis

43 Three dimensions of demarcation were defined on the basis of administrative boundaries and statistical data.

(1) The main morphological agglomerations were defined as a group of neighbouring municipalities with a population density above 7 hectares, or cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants. (2) The main economic cores were defined as sets of contiguous units (neighbouring cities) with at least 7 jobs per hectare or 60,000 jobs per city.

(3) The functional urban region, which includes the main economic cores and neighbouring municipalities in which over 10% of the active population work in the main economic cores (thus main economic cores plus the 'commuter hinterland').

of selected criteria referring to functional relationships, RheinRuhr was identified as being such a functional urban region (see also Figure 6.3 in section 6.1). Besides the coherent structure of labour markets and labour mobility, the spatial patterns of existing social-networks, such as shopping and leisure activities, might be congruent to these.

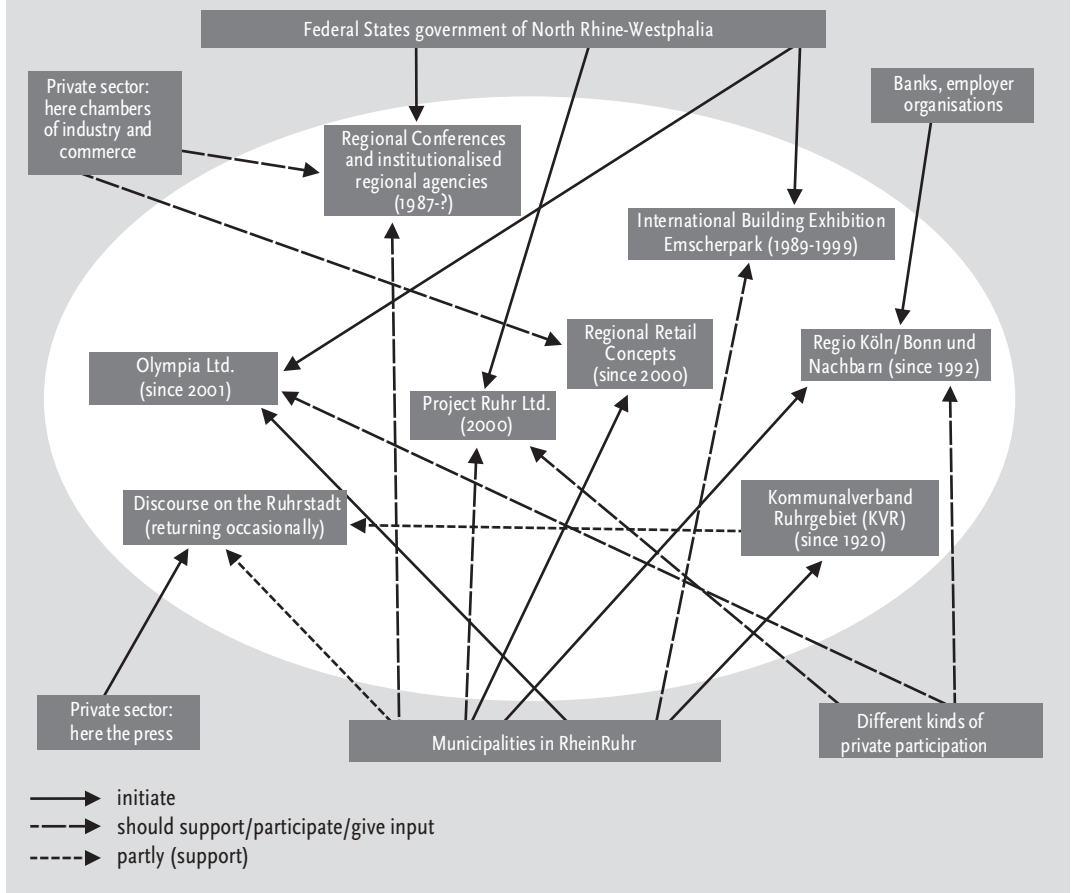
However, political awareness at the local level results in disintegration. The city of Duisburg, for instance, tends towards the city-row along the Rhine, which personifies the superior image of the cities of Bonn, Cologne and Düsseldorf, and thus Duisburg wishes to be a member of this club. The city of Dortmund is another example. Here, the local actors are trying to develop the city to make it the main centre of Westphalia. So, although this functional urban region RheinRuhr evokes the impression of a highly integrated network-area, there is an acute political awareness of disintegration at the local level according to the principle of 'every man for himself' (GEMACA, 1996: 99).

6.5.2 Organising capacity

The administrative and institutional landscape of the PUR RheinRuhr can be described as an overlapping and juxtaposition of several institutions, organisations and authorities. The following can be mentioned:

- 90 autonomous towns (county-free cities; including 11 higher-order centres);
- 10 Kreise (regions or counties) and their constituent *Gemeinden* (municipalities) performing functions, which cannot be undertaken by Kreise on their own;
- 5 *Regierungsbezirke* (district administrations) with five *Regierungspräsidenten* (district chief executives) who are responsible for sub-regional planning, together with four *Bezirksplanungsräten* (district/regional planning boards), which are made up of representatives from the counties and county-free towns, with 4 *Regierungsbezirke* touching the area of the PUR Rhein-Ruhr;
- 2 *Landschaftsverbände* (regional planning authorities), a higher communal association with responsibilities in the area of social infrastructure;
- the *Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet* (KVR) (Ruhr District Association of Local Governments), an association of local authorities of 11 towns and 4 regions in the *Ruhrgebiet*, which dates back further than any other regional association of its kind in Germany. It was formed in 1920 as the *Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk*, SVR and is currently responsible for protecting park areas, rivers and lakes, woodlands and similar green belt areas of supra-regional importance for recreational pursuits and for the conservation/development of an ecological balance, landscape preservation and improvement, setting up and running public leisure areas and facilities of supra-regional importance, PR activities for the *Ruhrgebiet*, and planning services in the fields of urban development planning, urban redevelopment, and cartography.

Figure 6.6 Institutional patchwork in RheinRuhr



Besides these administrative structures, several regionalising approaches have been undertaken in North Rhine-Westphalia in order to, among other objectives, stimulate and enhance co-operation and the implementation of mutually agreed projects at the regional level. Figure 6.6 summarises the most important initiatives, discourses and projects, while a few of them will be exemplified in greater detail.

The most prominent examples are the regionalised structural policy with their so-called 'regional conferences' on the one hand and the aforementioned International Building Exhibition (IBA) Emscher Park on the other. Even though contradictory findings and inherent deficits lie at the heart of these two models (see for instance Fürst and Kilper 1995, Danielzyk and Wood 2000), the gained process benefit of both is generally considered important when taking further steps towards regionalisation policies, particularly regarding the most urbanised area of RheinRuhr.

The positive experiences provided by these two approaches have not been introduced into the current regional (spatial) patchwork of organising capaci-

ties. The IBA Planning Company has ceased to exist without forming a regional Agency to take on its board the inherent philosophy (Krings and Kunzmann 1996) and to be responsible, above all, for organising flexible and temporary co-operation in different fields (inter-municipal co-ordination and regional moderation) within the region.

Instead the Federal State government has proposed to re-organise the regional co-operation by establishing a so-called Agency Ruhr, which should first and foremost replace the existing Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet (KVR) as a kind of 'urban development association', but carry on its ecological, cultural and social tasks (Junkernheinrich 2001). Thematic areas of the KVR not taken on by this agency (such as European affairs, regional leisure planning, stimulation of the regional economy and location development, regional information and public relations work) would have to be part of the municipalities' responsibilities in the *Ruhrgebiet*. However, due to their 'regional' character these affairs are unlikely to be taken up by local authorities.

After a controversial discussion and as a reaction to the refusal of the municipalities of the *Ruhrgebiet* concerning the planned foundation of the Agency Ruhr, a Projekt Ruhr GmbH (Project Ruhr Ltd) was founded as a top-down decision by the Federal State's premier of North Rhine-Westphalia. The overall goal of this new regional player is to develop this area, which still lags behind the cities along the Rhine such as Düsseldorf, Cologne and Bonn, into a 'Metropolitan Region' Ruhr (not RheinRuhr), whilst the disputed KVR will remain for the time being. The Projekt Ruhr GmbH is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Federal State. Its supervisory board is formed by almost the whole Federal State cabinet and the advisory committee consists of mayors and county district commissioners. This kind of agency is intended to be a platform for all individuals and private and public bodies who want to develop projects improving the innovative and competitive capabilities of the *Ruhrgebiet*. On the one hand the experiences gained by the IBA Emscher Park on how to implement certain projects will be taken up, though without maintaining its incremental planning culture. The most urgent projects in the Federal State's interest are to be co-ordinated by this agency, but a strategic spatial concept has not been discussed so far.⁴⁴

44 The foundation, however, has to be regarded rather in the context of the so-called 'functional modernisation' of the administrative landscape in North Rhine-Westphalia. The strategic goals of this agency resemble the principal objectives of the Federal ministry of Housing and Urban Development, whilst the innovative benefits developed by the IBA were not necessarily taken on board. The Federal State's influence can be considered as even stronger than in the case of the IBA.

The transformation of the EMR concept, however, has never been an item in this debate.

Co-operative cultures in RheinRuhr

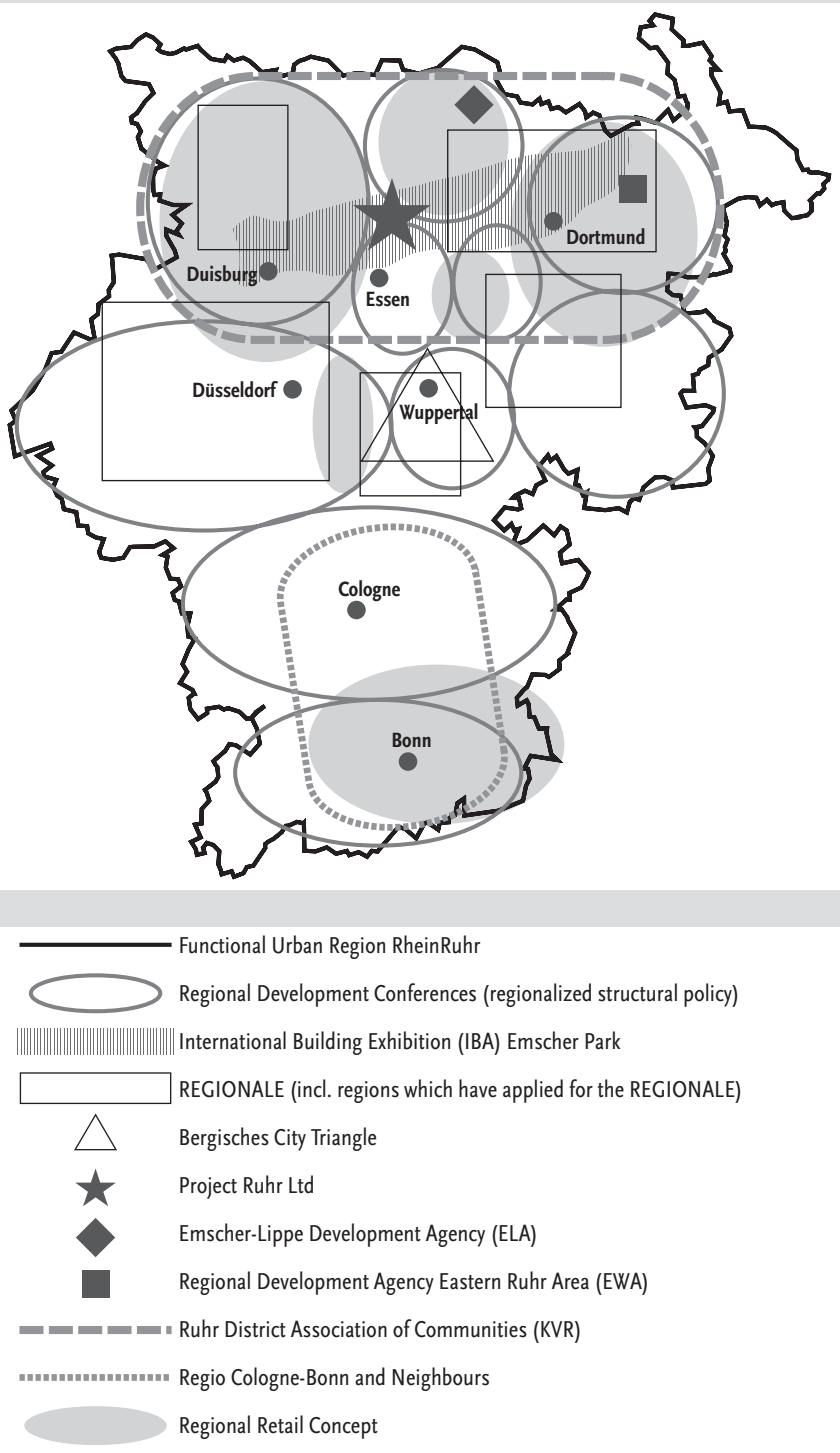
From the end of the 1960s until the middle of the 1980s, regional co-operation in North Rhine-Westphalia to initiate regional development processes was very rare. More recently, new paths for co-operation have been pursued within the framework of the regionalised structural policies (see above). In the 1990s, the landscape of institutions and approaches for regional co-operation in RheinRuhr (see Figure 6.7) may be described at best as a laboratory for regional governance (see Kunzmann 2001).

It is interesting to note that not only in the northern part of RheinRuhr (the *Ruhrgebiet*), but also in the southern part (along the Rhine) there are some regionalisation processes that are primarily aimed at improving regional co-operation. A counterpart of the KVR and Projekt Ruhr GmbH respectively is the Regio Köln/Bonn und Nachbarn (Cologne, Bonn and Neighbours)⁴⁵ as a Public-Private Agency, which bundles regional marketing interests, supports projects and facilities of regional importance and represents the region to the Federal State, the National State and the European Union.

In order to take up and to transform the philosophy of the IBA planning process, in 1997 the Ministry of Urban Development, Culture and Sport introduced the possibility to carry out spatial development concepts for the so-called 'REGIONALE'. The REGIONALE – 'Kultur und Naturräume in NRW' (areas for culture and nature in North Rhine-Westphalia) is a public bidding round initiated by the Federal State government. It invites the 'regions' in North Rhine-Westphalia to use a partnership approach to implement and present projects, events and initiatives within one conceptual framework to sharpen the region's profile. Every two years one of the regions approved will conduct the REGIONALE, starting with 2000 to 2008. The aim of the REGIONALE is to provide a lasting benefit for the region to promote identification within and the profile of the region. The regional applicants are required to agree on one guiding principle, whilst the selected projects and suggestions have to meet urban development and ecological standards. However, the application-procedure is a bottom-up approach to enhance the regional discourse in one specific region, which should be based on so-called 'Zukunftsforen' (future forums) such as round-table discussions to find consensus on common interests and objectives for this 'competition on structural subsidies' that are

⁴⁵ It covers the cities of Cologne, Leverkusen and Bonn and the surrounding regional districts Rhein-Sieg Kreis, Erftkreis, Rheinisch-Bergischer Kreis und Oberbergischer Kreis.

Figure 6.7 Recent (sub-)regional co-operations in RheinRuhr



granted by the Federal State. The REGIONALE 2002, for instance, took place in Düsseldorf, including some of its surrounding municipalities; the REGIONALE 2006 will be in the 'Bergische City-Triangle' (Wuppertal-Solingen-Remscheid).

In view of the regionalised structural policy's impact on the 'co-operation culture' and its 'institutionalisation' or forms of steadiness, one can conclude that it has led to very different results. In a few regions (such as the aforementioned 'Bergische City-Triangle') a kind of institutionalisation has opened the road for a new quality of regional co-operation. In most of these regions the agreed regional development concepts have been continued. However, the problem that a regional consensus is only possible if the envisaged project is regarded as undisputed is still valid. Projects of real inter-local relevance in sensitive fields of regional co-operation such as urban entertainment centres or larger industrial real estate areas are still being discussed outside of such round tables and thus are still controversial. In some regions, finally, the whole regionalisation process has fallen by the wayside again (cf. KVR 2000b).

The regionalised structural policy as a whole has rather weakened RheinRuhr region as a coherent polycentric urban region insofar as any criss-cross co-ordination among the single regional concepts has not been undertaken and the creation and implementation of the concepts were bound up with the four regional Regierungsbezirke. As a result of the current re-shaped objectives of the Federal State's structural policy towards supporting regional fields of competencies with strong labour force significance ('cluster policies'), the established '*Handlungsregionen*' (= 'regions for actions') gradually lose their importance. This is due to the fact that they are more congruent with administrative or organisational boundaries (here the chambers of industry and commerce) than with the existing spatio-economic relations (cf. Blotevogel 1994: 21-26). Therefore, the question arises as to which role is left for the regional conferences in the light of the current regional structural policy, which implies, due to its focus on branches and their interrelationships, much more flexibility in terms of sequential and territorial aspects (cf. KVR 2000b).

The actual state of factually-discussed inter-local co-operation in the catchment area of RheinRuhr is marked by an increasing sectoral collaboration in the field of retail (a few so-called regional retail concepts have been established so far, see Overwien and Thielen, 2001), housing (the region consisting of the city of Bonn and its surrounding hinterland can be seen as a pre-cursor in this respect) and finally cultural policy. On the other hand, the Federal state government has put considerable pressure on the cities in RheinRuhr to come to an agreement for a common application for the Olympic Games 2012. In the end, it was the Federal State premier's decision that the whole

region RheinRuhr, not parts of it, with the city of Düsseldorf as a flagship, will prepare an application.

Nevertheless, the recent course of the envisaged application for the Olympic Games in 2012 clearly demonstrates the lack of organising capacity and self-governance structures in RheinRuhr. Even though it is undisputed that such an application is a regional issue, bearing in mind the polycentric structure of RheinRuhr, the regional discourse in relation to this has been and is still at a very low level. Competitive and distributive aspects were at the heart of the discussion before there was any agreement on a common strategy as to how this application might be successful. In order to dispel the rivalry between several municipalities as to which of them should take part or not, the premier of North Rhine-Westphalia launched what is known as the Olympia Ltd. Rhein-Ruhr, an agency charged with preparing RheinRuhr application.

Another, at present only symbolic, discussion has emerged. The KVR together with a few mayors and interested associations (here: 'Pro Ruhrgebiet') have taken up a discussion initiated by a regional newspaper on a so-called 'Ruhrstadt' (Ruhr-City). The idea is to bundle together all the municipalities in the Ruhrgebiet. It is interesting to notice that this discussion is only politico-administratively motivated and thus a debate on further decentralisation, because a substantial debate on the possible added value of such a 'Ruhrstadt' has been neglected so far. It is characterised by issues such as the distribution of power e. g. the relation to the Federal State. What kind of guiding principles such a new administrative construct should aim at is not part of the debate. The 'edge cities' of the Ruhrgebiet, Duisburg and Dortmund, are not willing to follow this idea, whilst the centrally-located city of Essen considers itself as the centre of such a 'Ruhr City' and is naturally one of the strong supporters of this idea. But, it has to be noted that this kind of 'discourse' is characterised by an irregular boom, because since the SVR/KVR was founded in 1920, such rather 'anachronistic models' have been disputed several times from different perspectives (cf. i.e. Wirtz 2000, Priamus 2000).

All in all, the 'Regional Conferences', the specific planning process of the IBA Emscher Park or the 'REGIONALE' approach, as well as the sub-regional retail concepts are all steps towards more regional behaviour and consciousness and the so-called 'process benefits' should remain even in the longer term. Therefore co-operation should be further encouraged, and possibly rationalised, through both positive and negative incentives (of a financial or other nature). New organisations such as the Emscher-Lippe Agency, the Development Agency Eastern Ruhrgebiet Ltd. or the Regional Office Bergisches Städtedreieck are platforms demonstrating the steadiness of regional co-operation in RheinRuhr.

However, the idea of RheinRuhr as a 'multi-regionalised space' or as a territory made up of individual co-operation areas and network structures will require some kind of co-ordinator and moderator and new practices of regional management. This 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 temporary co-operations in different fields (inter-municipal co-ordination and regional moderation) within the city-region of RheinRuhr.

When considering RheinRuhr, one might gain the impression that these fragmented administrative structures and regional 'associationism' are practically a chaos of different ideas, visions and plans (see Figures 6.6 and 6.7). In the interests of efficient 'regional governance', various stakeholders do demand the bundling of regional tasks into politically legitimated regional bodies in order to simplify administrative structures and processes. On the other hand, the variety of flexible and problem-oriented forms of organisation and the non-existent regional self-organisation of RheinRuhr, due to its lack of common history, can be seen as the result of the increasing complexity of problems and challenges in such a polycentric urban region (Blotevogel 1998: 405).

Even though the discussed approaches to regional co-operations and administrative modernisation can be seen as signs of improvement, current political thinking does not include any further steps towards advanced urban networking for RheinRuhr. 'However, due to the lack of conceptual image of the region (guidelines, visions), the advantage of being part of an urban region with a spatial-functional division of labour bringing local identities as a power into the game has hardly been realised' (Knapp, 1998: 391).

6.5.3 Culture and identity

RheinRuhr as a polycentric urban region does not exist in the mental map of people, not even in the regional stakeholders (Schmitt and Knapp, 2001). In particular cultural and mental discrepancies exist between the *Ruhrgebiet* and the city-row along the Rhine. Popular expressions in this respect are the Rhinish way of life and the collegial mentality in the Ruhr area, the latter being primarily rooted in close neighbourhood relationships. The point is that the cities, institutions and people from the *Rheinschiene* do not want to be associated with the *Ruhrgebiet*. The *Ruhrgebiet* still suffers from its bad image (industrial landscape, densely populated, damaged by pollution, marked by urban sprawl, high unemployment etcetera). Apparently, while RheinRuhr as a whole cannot evoke feelings of identification itself, its two major sub-regions, the *Rheinschiene* and in particular the *Ruhrgebiet* seem to be regions with a certain regional identity.

The fact that RheinRuhr does not exist as a socio-cultural entity is also due to a lack of symbols for this region. Such symbols, when recognised by people living inside and outside the region, are important in identifying with a certain geographical entity. It is still doubtful whether the 'Metrorapid' might serve as such a symbol for identification. Another possibility is to initiate a general regional discourse in the media, which would not be restricted not only to infrastructural or sub-regional aspects and which might stimulate a process of more sophisticated dialogue on RheinRuhr as a whole.

The overview of the three main factors determining a polycentric urban region's basis for a regional approach does not present a very positive image of the potentiality for regional planning. Despite some functional linkages, RheinRuhr scores rather poorly on its organising capacity and cultural assets. Discussing further steps would seem to be a somewhat delicate issue at the moment. It is important to bear in mind the difference between the formal geographical definition of polycentric urban regions and the 'faction' of these regions (Knapp, 2000:71). This means, concerning RheinRuhr, on the one hand, the 'fiction' of a rich-in-content strategic spatial concept or concerning specific regional actors who are trying to activate a common regional identity, which does not exist at the moment (see also Blotevogel 1998). On the other hand, it symbolises a 'fact' with regard to an urbanised region or urban landscape, which comprises functional connections and infrastructural networks, shaped by a vacuity of political ideas.

The issues discussed in section 6.5, however, are dealt with more adequately by means of regional planning. Therefore, while keeping its delicateness in mind, mechanisms to foster co-operation on the region's spatial development at the level of RheinRuhr are explored in the next section.

6.6 Mechanisms for promoting regional planning

The previous section shows that regional co-operation to formulate strategies for common actions is a vital but also complex question among planners and regional/local stakeholders in Germany.

When looking at outlines for the organisation and implementation of corresponding future spatial policies in and for RheinRuhr, one needs first to examine who is addressing these issues and what their perspectives, viewpoints and so forth are. Consequently, an essential first step is to investigate the actual organisational structures, discourses and initiatives in the region. The perception and, if possible, the empirical response of current spatial

planning issues is a further point of departure in order to compile the input for a regional strategic framework to enhance the competitiveness and quality of life of RheinRuhr polycentric urban region.

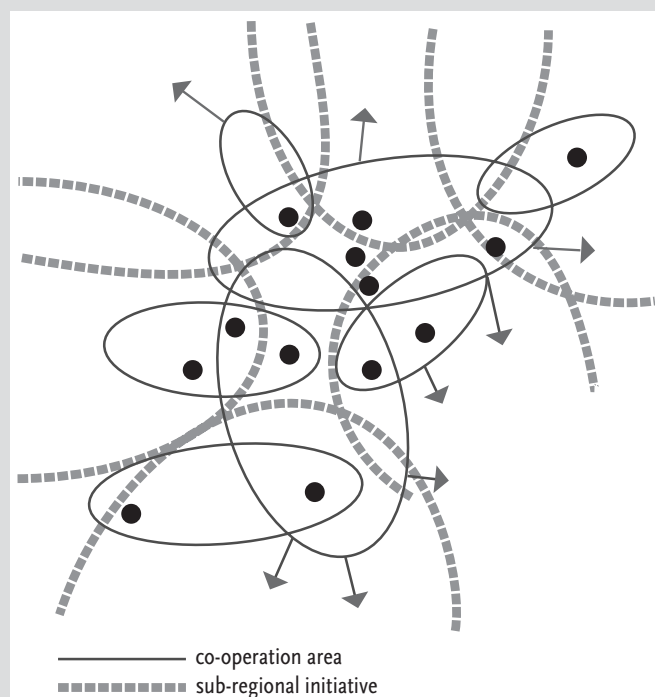
The regional discourse has been investigated by analysing numerous interviews, holding workshops and studying literature as well as political papers and the daily press concerning polycentric urban region-oriented perspectives on RheinRuhr as a whole, or at least on aspects that fundamentally touch this area. The result is, however, rather disappointing, because this area is not only politically and institutionally but also mentally fragmented (see Schmitt and Knapp, 2001). Consequently, the regional organising capacities are very low because none of the relevant regional stakeholders are trying to tackle planning and/or political issues of regional interest at the level of RheinRuhr.

The current developments show that this will not change in the short term, even though further forms of decentralisation and regionalisation are recognisable. Examples of the latter include the application by the so-called 'Regio Rheinland' (Bonn, Cologne and environs) for the 'Regionale 2008' and the application for the Olympic Games in 2012. The recent course of the envisaged application for the Olympic Games in 2012 demonstrates the obvious lack of organising capacities and self-governance structures in RheinRuhr. Even though it is undisputed that such an application is a regional issue and not a single-municipality one, the regional discourse in relation to this has been and is still at a very low level. Competitive and distributive aspects were highlighted before there was any agreement on a common strategy regarding how this application might be successful. In order to calm down the rivalry among several municipalities regarding which of them should take part in such an application, the premier of North Rhine-Westphalia launched what is known as Olympia Ltd. RheinRuhr, an agency charged with preparing the RheinRuhr application.

The brief synopsis on current 'regional matters' in RheinRuhr in previous sections indicates that neither a 'broad' regional discourse nor the shaping of regional organising capacities and self-governments are on the agenda of public and private bodies. Needless to say, the geographies of all 'initiatives' mentioned are different and ultimately not congruent with an advanced notion of RheinRuhr as a whole.

The discussion on RheinRuhr in general demonstrates that the reasons for thinking at such a spatial scale could be divided into two groups: the external and the internal reasons. The external ones can be derived from the increasing global competition to illustrate a place of location, which is still extending

Figure 6.8 Approaching a spatial vision for RheinRuhr: overlapping co-operation areas and sub-regional initiatives



Source: Klaus R. Kunzmann

in its size. This is very much in line with the political response to consider RheinRuhr simply as an important economic and competitive node in a globalised world, making the issue of regional marketing the most prominent one in the minds of the regional stakeholders in profiling RheinRuhr.

Internal reasons for regional co-operation at the level of RheinRuhr are more concrete in being issue-related. The three key issues identified in chapter 2 and elaborated in section 6.5 are prime examples. These themes should be considered as 'links', which do not however need to be

necessarily reflected at the level of the entire area of RheinRuhr. Here, the ambiguous sketch by Klaus Kunzmann (Figure 6.8) might function as a first approach towards a spatial vision. Co-operation at the sub-regional level can contribute in the form of single building blocks to an overlapping co-operation area in RheinRuhr. These internal reasons show, however, that they are very much economically/technologically oriented and are insufficient for a broader regional discourse that might embed all public and private stakeholders as well as the civic society. Issues that could be of relevance for initiating such a discourse include:

- IPSEN's notion of an 'open city' as an 'open-minded' arena for new approaches, ideas, persons, cultures, initiatives, etc.;
- shaping multi-cultural arenas in order to deal with ethnic-social conflicts, differentiation of ethnic minorities and their impact on polarisation and segregation;
- conceptualising sustainable development in order to restructure cross-local material streams and land-use patterns at the regional level;
- coping with the increasing emergence of urban landscapes as a result of the dissolution of the so-called 'European City', where classical centre-periphery relations are eroded as a relational-functional urban-rural patchwork; these developments are very much related to the phenomenon of regionalised life-styles and their impact on the regionalised tertiary processes.

Figure 6.8 hints also at various existing ‘spatial constructs’, which are partly shaped by concrete regional co-operative initiatives in RheinRuhr. The question of which strategic issue/challenge best fits with a certain geographic scale – region or subregion – is the thorniest one. The existing, partly overlapping, regional initiatives and crude competitions reduce synergetic partnerships to a minimum. The politico-institutional fragmentation leads to significant deficits concerning the government and governance structures for RheinRuhr. The strong competition, which is very much supported by the polynuclear nature and the geographical proximity of important ‘stakeholders’ within RheinRuhr, can be depicted as a hindrance rather than a positive synergetic effect.

Even though in the federal state development plan a delimitation supported by a few vague guidelines to position the so-called ‘European Metropolitan Region RheinRuhr’ does exist, no initiatives or policies are targeted to contribute to developing this region as a whole; they are merely dedicated to developing sub-regions. The most prominent reason for this is the political insecurity to push a ‘top-down discourse’, because the potential weight of RheinRuhr in comparison with the rest of North Rhine-Westphalia is still regarded as a threat. From the federal state’s point of view, RheinRuhr is a reasonable candidate to figure in the upper class of city-rankings, if it has to be proved that North Rhine-Westphalia does indeed possess a region of European importance in terms of infrastructural endowment and facilities. Thus the normative-descriptive phrasing in the federal state development plan concerning the ‘European Metropolitan Region RheinRuhr’ refers only to a very narrow perspective of the Global City discourse, which was primarily the theoretical base for this spatial guideline at the national as well as the federal state level. Here, only the development-oriented aspects are emphasised such as the preservation of, for example, important international headquarter functions, the location for international fairs and financial and service facilities as well as to maintaining the central position in terms of international accessibility. However, there are faint signs that the federal state premier’s office will, in the course of the modernisation of the federal state’s spatial planning guidelines, re-think the objectives for the spatial and settlement structures concerning urban regions, rural areas and, ultimately, the ‘European Metropolitan Region RheinRuhr’.

To sum up, the interrelation between a regional discourse and the shaping power of organising capacities and regional self-governance structures has to be regarded as the central and fundamental strategic issue. However, this input for a strategic framework needs to be completed by a third building block, which is the formulation and implementation of concrete objectives.

A strategic RheinRuhr framework

In the following section, the only issues considered are those that can be seen as strategic for the whole region and are first and foremost spatial problems/challenges. Taking into account all these aspects, three key dimensions have been selected that fulfil these preconditions. According to the 'ingredients' described above, the three-dimensional set for a future strategic framework can be illustrated as in Figure 6.9.

How does a strategic framework come into being? Outlines for the organisation and implementation of corresponding future spatial policies in RheinRuhr

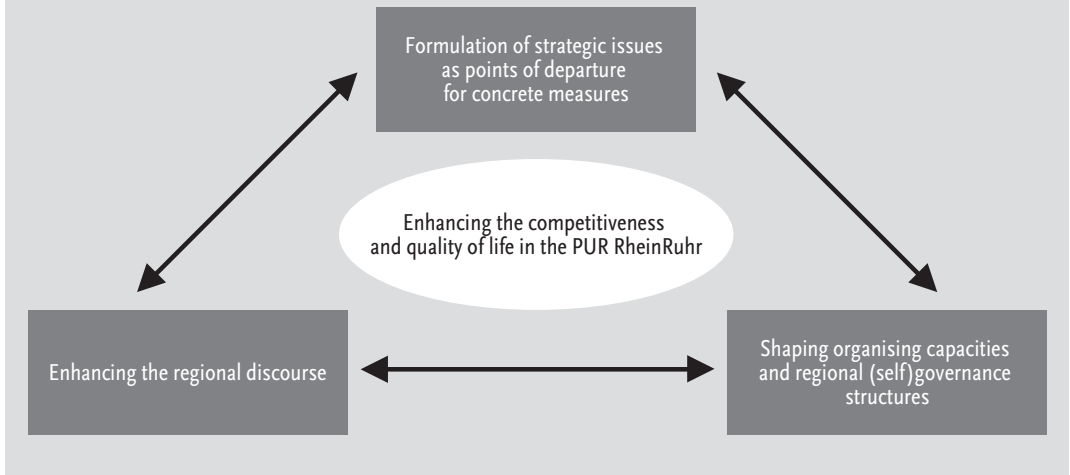
As elucidated above, the strategic framework is based on three pillars, which are strongly interrelated. Even though these three steps can be considered as a coherent set in the strategic framework, the temporal aspect should not be neglected. Therefore, the so-called 'regional discourse' is the pre-condition for the other two building blocks, whereby the aspect of shaping corresponding organising capacities and self-governance structures is also a pre-condition for finding the necessary consensus for concrete measures. However, these measures should still be borne in mind when talking about steps 1 and 2, because they explain the potential benefit of such a strategic framework.

Enhancing the regional discourse and shaping organising capacities and regional self-governance structures

The idea of the regional discourse is that it should help to fill the distinctive 'construct RheinRuhr' with social communication, so that it is very much tied to the lived reality of the citizens living in RheinRuhr. For this reason conceptualisation of a symbol is relevant for further orientation. This might be something like mental maps or corporate identities. Here an understanding of the region as a whole is not necessarily the objective, it is rather to recognise the regional interrelationships reflected in the life styles of individuals in a region. Hence, a kind of image management is needed to stress something that binds together this manifold urban-rural patchwork. This could be a so-called 'flagship-project' that communicates, even internationally, a unique facility, characteristic of RheinRuhr that is located in a certain place but has considerable linkages to other locations within this area as well. In order to sustain such social communication networks, regional forums on different topics of regional interest should be established. Various regional stakeholders, such as civic organisations, chambers of commerce, regional development agencies (but not political parties) are the addressees for these forums, in which subjects such as urbanity and entertainment, creative conceptions for brownfields, a spatial vision for RheinRuhr, etc. are discussed.

Other possibilities to enhance an interactive discursive process on the 'Metropolitan Region RheinRuhr' might be a newspaper or, better, magazine in

Figure 6.9 A three-dimensional set for a future strategic RheinRuhr framework



which such issues could be discussed and the results reported. In general, the inclusion of the 'media' in such a regional discourse can have far-reaching effects, as currently confirmed by the discussion on the 'Ruhrstadt'. These forums to mobilise the creative regional potentials would be better embedded in a setting that is not purely political, but gave room for new stakeholders who might have greater interest in regional matters. Here, however, the problematic question which remains is how to mobilise in particular those stakeholders coming from private bodies. Politics in general should be focused rather on having an enabling position in this process. This more moderating function should provide the necessary instruments, give hints and ideas, to enable the discourse to take place in non-hierarchical settings, using new technologies, for example might provide an appropriate platform (virtual discussion forums). However, the 'enabling state', here the federal state government, needs to clarify and to communicate its future perspectives for the urban regions in North Rhine-Westphalia in general and for RheinRuhr in particular.

Conventional ways of acting and decision-making processes need to be reshaped. The commonly developed solutions for the dilemma of RheinRuhr mentioned above need a corresponding response by the local decision-makers. Mutual consent is indispensable over the implementation of such 'innovative ideas and solutions'. Needless to say, they are a part of it as well as an indispensable resource for local and regional development, so that the current predominantly political and power-oriented concepts should be reassessed. This mutual relationship is the critical turning-point in relation to this, because it determines the motivation and the possible implementation of the products of such discussion processes. These informal and formal initiatives should pave the way for a more integrative and institutionalised RheinRuhr region, whereby a productive interdisciplinary discourse, which is not based on the currently conventional sectoral policy-making, should include 'new' stakeholders with 'new' ideas. This further institutionalisation

should be complementary to the existing bodies in order to point out their deficits and weaknesses and to ease their reform.

New partnerships, the creation of flexible arenas with voluntary participation outside of the political powers is the fundamental step towards the formation of 'new' self-governance structures for an adequate effective management of territorial development resources on an 'in-between scale' (as proposed, for example, by Gualini 2000, Fürst 2001, Healey 2002). These structures should be represented by horizontal linkages between relatively separate sector policies, and by a collection of such networks as described above in order to shape the regional organising capacities.

If these think-tanks and the corresponding implementation work well, a further step might be to launch a kind of agency as an intermediary body (in the shadow of hierarchies) in order to moderate, to inform and to involve other stakeholders/persons and partly to push the key players in this mutual network so that it will have long-lasting effects. The possible duties of such an information node could be manifold, the most important one being without doubt to link the ideas, visions and guidelines of the established think-tanks with the corresponding public and private decision-makers to ensure that they are given the appropriate concrete shape.

Once such a process as described above is in place, the implementation of concrete measures will be much more realistic than it is today. The two pillars described above should provide the necessary consent on how to organise and finally to implement the key issues within future spatial policies and decision-making processes. Besides the internal regional issues that could be partly tackled within this mutual network, this spatial vision should also include the aspect of a comprehensive division of labour with other competitive urban regions such as the Flemish Diamond, the Randstad or the RheinMain region.

The general demand for RheinRuhr is to conceptualise a profile that positions its specific potentialities and strengths (e.g. a differentiated landscape of cultural activities, a sufficient amount of infrastructures or some successful economic clusters such as multi-media, automobile, energy and environmental technology, etc.). This profile should be of a complementary nature to the contiguous polycentric urban regions such as the Flemish Diamond and the Randstad rather than copying their profiles.

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7 Value, feasibility and design of regional planning in polycentric urban regions

Evert Meijers and Arie Romein

7.1 Introduction

The four case studies in this volume focus on spatial planning within the geographical setting of polycentric urban regions. From the perspective of policy and planning, the major question is how the territorial competitiveness of such polycentric urban regions can be strengthened. Furthermore, this volume intends to contribute to the scholarly understanding of territorial competitiveness in this particular regional setting. This type of competitiveness is a multidimensional and versatile concept that, for instance, overlaps with the quality of life attributes of such regions. It is also clear that there is considerable regional variation, each region defining its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding its competitiveness differently. It was nevertheless possible to select three common key-issues of competitiveness to examine the different regional cases in a rather comparative manner. These issues are accessibility, uneven spatial economic development, and spatial diversity and the quality of open spaces. The exploration of the potentialities of a polycentric regional perspective of spatial planning and policy making, the major objective of this volume, is based on three subsequent research questions: (1) can the selected key-issues be more effectively dealt with by phrasing them on the regional instead of the local policy level; if yes, (2) is there a strong enough regional base – political and institutional – for adopting such a perspective; and finally, (3) how can such a regional perspective be shaped and designed? The answers to these questions, which should be seen against the background of the examined polycentric urban regions ‘as spaces’ and ‘as actors’, are summarised in the sections 7.2 to 7.4. In the final section 7.5, we conclude with a more critical, distant perspective on the concept of polycentric urban regions. Some favourable directions for future research are presented and, as a starting point for this research, we will refine the definition of polycentric urban regions from chapter 1.

7.2 The value of a regional perspective

Internal and external accessibility

The emerging polycentric urban landscapes are increasingly interconnected on a regional scale by criss-cross patterns of mobility between scattered centres of residence, production, work, and leisure. Adequate accessibility that allows the efficient transfer of goods, people and information across these regional polycentric configurations is a key issue in their territorial competitiveness as it is essential for attracting businesses and professional workers.

All the regions examined in this volume suffer from sub-optimal levels of accessibility. Congestion and considerable loss of time in traffic jams are daily realities, in particular in the three continental polycentric regions. On a transnational scale, the overarching process of globalisation has intensified patterns of functional interrelationships between urban agglomerations, irrespective of national borders. It is notably stressed by stakeholders in Central Scotland, an urban agglomeration that is peripherally located vis-à-vis the Central Zone of the North Western Metropolitan Area (Spatial Vision Group, 2000), that external accessibility on this higher level of scale is also an important key-issue of their competitiveness. Altogether, the dominant 'up-the-river gradient' mobility pattern within the former self-contained local entities of individual cities and their hinterlands, has been replaced by composite patterns of entangled local, regional and long-distance flows without clear hierarchical shapes. Effective transport policies in polycentric urban regions should approach these overlapping spatial scopes in a co-ordinated and balanced way, aiming at regional rather than strictly local benefits. Current policies to solve congestion have not been very effective however, not only because traffic flows grow rapidly in size, but also because there are few signs of clear and effective integrated multi-level planning. In some regions, in particular the Flemish Diamond, this is related to a lack of proper division of competence between the various levels of government at stake.

Uneven spatial economic development

The second key issue, uneven spatial economic development, primarily refers to the co-existence of strained market areas near areas of spare capacity within polycentric urban regions. Clear examples are the labour market in Central Scotland and the market of top office locations in the Flemish Diamond. This distortion of regional markets reflects barriers, either cultural, political institutional or physical, against the free flow of labour, investments or businesses, and hampers the potentialities of these urban regions to develop genuine metropolitan standards in the international territorial competition. It is a general opinion in the four case studies in this volume that a regional perspective in development planning is needed to exploit the complementary benefits for the region as a whole. Such planning needs to be based on a comprehensive vision of the future economic structure and profile of the region, to depart from the acknowledged strengths and weaknesses of its specific polycentric configuration, and to be implemented through intra-regional co-operation and co-ordination. Current policies however, are still too heavily based on fierce inter-local competition for investments, professional workers and leisure tourists. The patchwork of urban entertainment centres and shopping malls that has developed in RheinRuhr shows that such competition can lead to duplications and limited economic sustainability of new economic activities, rather than to complementary benefits for the region as a whole.

Spatial diversity and the quality of open spaces

The last key-issue concerns the increasing fragmentation of the green open spaces within polycentric urban structures, due to spatial extensions of residence, economic production and employment, transport infrastructure, and leisure and entertainment centres. These functions 'claim' more and more land and the formerly unencumbered open spaces crumble and degrade in quality. These tendencies are judged negatively from a competitive point of view: they harm the variety of urban scenery and rural landscapes across short distances, which are considered a basic competitive advantage of polycentric urban regions over large metropolitan agglomerations. Too much competitive freedom by municipalities to run their own policies regarding new housing projects, industrial estates, and entertainment centres, as well as conflicts of competence between local, provincial and regional authorities, are among the factors that explain this key-issue. The network perspective of policies to restore the quality of the green (and blue) structures that has been proposed for some polycentric urban regions, requires a multi-level approach. Such an approach should contain an overall view that surpasses administrative borders, even that of the region, but should also afford possibilities for local designs. Central Scotland is an exception with regard to this key-issue in the sense that this region faces low pressure on its physical and human resources after several decades of low to very low economic and demographic growth. The quality of the natural and built environment of large parts of the region suffers from neglect and disinvestment rather than from fragmentation. Nevertheless, the Scottish research team also begs for a regional planning perspective based on a strategic vision of the region's environmental issues and assets, related to their contribution to territorial competitiveness.

Potentialities of a regional perspective of planning

All the regional research teams are sure that policies that aim at strengthening economic competitiveness at the strictly local level of individual cities make increasingly less sense since these centres are becoming part and parcel of larger functional polycentric configurations. Competition by individual cities for investments in high-level services and hi-tech industries, for professional workers, for tourists with great purchasing power, and even for a marketable image, may leave opportunities that are offered by the larger regional system unutilised, or may even lead to wasteful duplications. Building on research findings by the case studies, two potentialities of regional co-ordination and action can be distinguished: the pooling of resources in order to share facilities and services and to achieve critical mass, and the development and exploitation of balanced complementarities. Based on these potentialities, co-operation and co-ordination in polycentric urban regions can shape wider arrays and higher levels of competitive assets than any of the individual cities is able to offer.

The potentiality to effectively pool assets that are spread across the region provides greater external economies for businesses. On the regional scale, businesses have access to larger and more varied pools of labour, suppliers, customers and services than in any of its individual nodes or locations. An earlier series of interviews with major stakeholders in the four polycentric regions examined, revealed that the pooling of highly qualified professional labour is considered a particularly important advantage (Ipenburg and Lambregts, 2001). The pooling of local labour markets of skilled personnel may solve a situation of unemployment in one area of the region and scarcity of workers in another. The surplus value of regional co-ordination and action can be fashioned by policy measures to improve labour mobility at the regional level, for example by developing region-wide information-systems to meet the supply and demand more effectively and by providing region-wide fast transport between major centres of residence and employment.

Besides the pooling of resources, co-operation by neighbouring cities in a polycentric urban region can focus on complementary specialisation in specific assets. Due to complementarity of its constituting cities, the polycentric urban region as a whole provides a broader package of high-quality metropolitan services to businesses, households, consumers and workers. These services may be advanced producer services, educational and R&D institutes, specialised types of retail, leisure and recreational assets, including scenic panoramas and green landscapes and last but not least residential environments (Ipenburg and Lambregts, 2001). Again, adequate levels of internal accessibility within polycentric regions is an important precondition for effective complementarity, and hence a subject of policy co-operation. Barriers to fast and reliable transport harm the opportunities for business people to exploit their business networks and for consumers to profit from local specialisation in cultural, leisure and recreational facilities that are spread across the polycentric region.

Multi-level approach

The belief that a regional approach to planning and policy-making has greater value than separate local approaches does not imply that the local perspective should be substituted by one single regional perspective. The tendency of the self-contained systems of individual cities to fuse into polycentric urban configurations has led to 'open and multi-layered complexes of nodes, networks, flows and interactions of global, regional and local scales' (Albrechts, 2001). Policies to improve the internal accessibility of polycentric urban regions for instance, need to take into account that mobility patterns in such areas are layered composites, and even that most daily movements may still take place on the sub-regional level of single city systems. The case studies of the Flemish Diamond and the Randstad conclude that a multi-level

approach, based on the interplay of several spatial scales, is more promising than a strictly regional approach.

7.3 The feasibility of regional planning

Chapter 2 discusses three general dimensions to determine the feasibility of planning that takes a polycentric perspective on the regional level. It was hypothesised that such planning is more meaningful and more feasible when the polycentric urban region concerned (a) better reflects a particular functional rationality, (b) is home to institutions willing and able to develop organising capacity at the regional level, and (c) can be associated with a distinct culture and identity.

Functional rationality

Functional rationality refers to the need for a certain spatial logic behind regional planning. This means that actors (enterprises, public and private institutions, households) have to maintain relations throughout the entire region to fulfil their needs for production, consumption and personal needs. Consequently, whether or not a polycentric urban region functions as one single functional entity can be deduced from the spatial scope of markets, from the infrastructure and from flows. Central Scotland reveals only a limited extent of functional integration, though some tendencies point towards further integration. Region-wide flows and physical links are more clearly present in the Flemish Diamond. Interestingly, the study of this region includes an assessment of complementarity between its urban areas, which provides a good perspective on the functional coherence of the region. The tendency towards further functional integration, however, is most evident in the Randstad study. Comprehensive research of mobility for several different motives, including work, shopping, social activities, business relations, leisure and sports, show that spatial interrelations are increasing in volume and becoming more dispersed. Moreover, the spatial scopes of most of these types of mobility are widening, even though they do not cover the entire Randstad yet. As polycentric urban regions cannot be defined as single, closed functional units, they also maintain a multitude of interactions with urban areas outside their borders. Some of their economic clusters, particularly those related to mainports (seaports, airports, or high-speed train stations), are connected more strongly within international rather than regional or sub-regional networks. The region hence is the appropriate platform to formulate and implement policies for only some of the spatial issues present, while others can be better dealt with on other levels. We still claim that there is reason, on the basis of the spatial-functional relations and their tendencies, for a regional focus for planning in the examined polycentric urban regions,

but that its spatial scope should be selective depending on the issue at stake.

Regional organising capacity

Whether or not regional organising capacity can be improved depends on a number of factors. These factors include the attitude to and vision of regional governance, in particular with regard to spatial planning, by administrators in the polycentric urban region. Also important are the formal institutional framework, the ability to articulate common and shared regional interests and leadership. In general, an increasing number of spatial issues preferably should be addressed through a governance rather than a government mode of decision-making. This implies that there are issues calling for planning formulated and implemented at multiple scales across the existing administrative tiers through co-operation and co-ordination by public bodies, private business organisations and non-governmental and civil-society organisations (see also section 7.4). All the case studies show that putting multi-level governance into practice is a complex task, even if politicians and administrators agree on its usefulness. Perhaps there is a lack of understanding of how multi-level governance works. This would explain the vagueness on this issue with regard to spatial planning in the regions where the polycentric urban region has been most explicitly adopted as a policy concept, i.e. the Randstad and the Flemish Diamond.

The four case studies put great emphasis on the question of whether or not the formal institutional framework leaves room for regional co-ordination. In general, the existing institutional frameworks are too static and too hierarchical to recognise and deal with the complex and multi-scalar interplay of trends and forces of urban dynamics and need to be adjusted. In the Randstad, the existing three-tier institutional structure of central state, province and municipality that determines spatial planning has proven to be very resistant to change and the necessary adjustments required for a governance mode of decision-making are only gradually being implemented. Central Scotland is another example where the existing institutional framework does not leave much room for formal regional co-ordination. Now the recent institutional reform has increased the power at the Scottish level, the Scottish Parliament is unlikely to allow a potentially powerful rival in the form of a regional administration for Central Scotland at its side. Several new institutional arrangements during the past two decades have even led to a region that has become more institutionally fragmented. Likewise, the federalisation of Belgium has not stimulated inter-regional or inter-local co-operation, which is, as a consequence, still in its infancy. In RheinRuhr, a considerable number of initiatives for regional co-operation and co-ordination have been undertaken, but these have not yet significantly improved the regional organising capacity. Current political realities are unlikely to lead to further steps

forward towards advanced urban networking. The authors of RheinRuhr study still refer to the region's institutional framework as 'an overlapping and juxtaposition of several institutions, organisations and authorities'.

Developing regional organising capacity furthermore depends on the ability to establish shared interests for the polycentric urban region. This ability is far from self-evident as there are many issues where the interests of places and stakeholders in a polycentric urban region are different or even opposite. Disparities between central cities and between a central city and its suburban nodes in economic performance, demographic growth rates, social problems like poverty and unemployment, and the attractiveness of residential environments, usually mean that the better off areas have little interest in adopting regional policies that may adjust this situation. Examples of such impeding intra-regional disparities can be found in all the case studies. Finally, leadership matters: a region's common and shared interests need to be picked up by leaders willing and able to elaborate on these. Such leadership can rely on the specific competencies of key persons and key institutions or on the charisma of public or private individuals (Van den Berg and Braun, 1999). The influential Delta Metropolis Association in the Randstad, for instance, was initiated by a professor who convinced the mayors of the largest cities to start a regional discourse on the future of the region. Soon other stakeholders in the region joined, and the scope of the Association expanded. It is also felt in the Flemish Diamond that someone should take the lead and assume responsibility for promoting the concept. The authors of this study indicate several people or organisations that could do so, ranging from elected administrators to leading personalities in the region's social and economic affairs.

Culture and identity

Recent thinking on urban and regional development places much emphasis on the cultural dimension. Here, the cultural dimension is concerned with the feeling of togetherness and the creation of cultural symbols that help in perceiving the polycentric urban region as an entity. Social relationships, shared understandings, and norms of co-operation and reciprocity all ease regional networking. Sharp cultural divides on the other hand impose barriers to co-operation. Cultural discontinuities possibly reduce the opportunities for relationships and interaction. According to Albrechts (2001: 734), who characterises polycentric urban regions as 'socio-spatial conflict zones for the articulation of multiple interests, identities and cultural differences', issues of culture and identity play a prominent role.

Cultural divides can be present even if the scale of the region is relatively small. Experiences in the polycentric urban regions Central Scotland and

RheinRuhr show that cultural, if not psychological cleavages hamper the building of regional organising capacity. There are strong cleavages between the Edinburgh and Glasgow urban areas and the *Ruhrgebiet* and the *Rheinschiene* respectively. In both regions, the most affluent areas, Edinburgh and Rhine, are not very enthusiastic about being identified with areas that have a reputation for economic downturn, unemployment, and environmental and social problems. This divide between east (Edinburgh) and west (Glasgow) in Central Scotland is being reinforced by the popular media who play on the traditional rivalry, the cultural differences, and the resentment that exist between the two cities. Within RheinRuhr the lack of a strong feeling of regional identity is also determined by the absence of regional symbols. Lurking cultural divides can be found in the Flemish Diamond as well, as this polycentric region extends over two Regions of the federalised state of Belgium, Flanders and Brussels, that are not culturally homogeneous, for instance with respect to language. The Randstad performs comparatively better when it comes to the cultural dimension, at least in the sense that there are no major cultural cleavages present. But, as elsewhere, this polycentric urban region is also foremost the product of strategic thinking by planners in a top-down manner. Although it has been part of a national planning doctrine for almost half a century, the Randstad still lacks undisputed boundaries, regional symbols, regional media, institutions that take the Randstad as their territorial organising principle, and a political arena. Locals in the Randstad therefore feel little affinity with any regional identity.

In general, the image that arises from the discussion of functional rationality, regional organising capacity and culture and identity leaves little room for feasible regional planning. The four regions show increasing functional interdependencies and relations, thus indeed providing some spatial logic for regional planning. Problems arise however, when it comes to the regional organising capacity, which is in general weak, although the Randstad provides some promising attempts to increase this capacity. Moreover, for most regions, cultural factors play an impeding role in regional planning. Nevertheless, the authors of the regional case studies agree on the need to establish a stronger basis for regional planning and the need to design mechanisms to formulate and implement regional policies. The latter is based on the possible value of a regional planning approach in these regions. However, different bases, ranging from a weak one in Central Scotland to a rather receptive one in the Randstad, call for some differentiation in the scope of regional planning in the four regions examined.

7.4 The design of regional planning in polycentric urban regions

The need for a governance perspective

All the case studies provide ideas for the policy content of a regional planning approach. Departing from the regional perspective, policy recommendations are given for each key issue. These recommendations vary across the regions, given their different definitions of the issues. Despite this variety, it has become obvious on a more generic level that regional co-ordination and co-operation are the keys to a more structural and effective way of dealing with these issues in polycentric urban regions. Regional co-ordination and co-operation make a more accurate formulation of problems possible, and, moreover, open up roads to solutions and resources that are beyond the means and capacities of individual local authorities. Policies and projects should not only be judged on the basis of their local benefits, but also, or even primarily, on their regional gains. There is considerable agreement among stakeholders in the different regions that regional planning that is based on co-ordination and co-operation requires a governance rather than a government perspective. What is needed is not a new regional layer of government, but a co-operative regional mechanism for planning and policy-making in which multiple public actors representing the whole spectrum of administrative levels in the region meet, and in which the involvement of the civil society and the market sector is guaranteed. Not only should this mechanism facilitate the addressing of issues across spatial scales, but also across societal sectors and domains. Furthermore, this co-operation should be issue-dependent rather than focused on a specifically bounded territory. According to Boelens (2000), different issues call for different alliances with different spatial competencies and different life spans.

A stepwise mechanism to promote regional planning in polycentric urban regions

In terms of dealing with mechanisms to advance regional planning in polycentric urban regions, in general three considerations are important. Firstly, proposed mechanisms must make the implementation of recommendations for regional policy attainable. Secondly, they must accommodate the lessons learned from earlier attempts to develop regional organising capacity, and finally, they need to take into account the current policy contexts of polycentric urban regions, in particular their different bases for adopting a regional planning approach. These different bases are strongly linked to the stage the regional discourse has reached. The four cases examined in this volume prove that one single 'blueprint' mechanism for developing a regional planning approach in polycentric urban regions makes little sense. This is well illustrated by the two most 'extreme' ones: the fragile basis in Central Scot-

land calls for a cautious and limited first approach, whereas the receptive basis in the Randstad allows for more far-reaching recommendations on building permanent regional policy networks than in any of the other three regions. Despite this regional differentiation, however, it appears possible to distinguish a general three-step process towards regional planning. The necessity and specific content of each step of course differ among regions.

The Flemish Diamond and Central Scotland case studies stress the importance of a 'small start'. This means that the first thing to do is to identify relatively simple and practical, but nonetheless strategic issues for which regional co-ordination and co-operation on a project basis is clearly beneficial to all the actors involved. The complementary nature of a city's assets, or complementary problems and challenges, seem helpful starting points here. Both studies stress the importance of such small-scale co-operation as a start up for more far-reaching and more complex co-operation as it increases and strengthens relationships of understanding, trust and mutual respect between actors. The German authors stress the importance of the regional discourse as initiator of regional co-ordination and co-operation. The concept of RheinRuhr could be given more substance through embedding it socially in the minds of all citizens, not only the policy-makers and some other major stakeholders. The regional discourse would benefit from the conceptualisation of symbols linked to RheinRuhr, or from the development of a flagship project demonstrating the regional interrelationships. Moreover, the media could play an important role in the regional discourse through discussing regional issues. This regional discourse is seen as the key to creating a self-reinforcing circle leading to regional planning. This circle encompasses three elements that positively influence each other: (1) the regional discourse, (2) the shaping of organising capacities and regional governance structures, (3) the formulation of concrete policy measures.

After this start, the step-wise approach advocated by the teams from the Flemish Diamond, RheinRuhr and Central Scotland proposes addressing more complicated issues. It could be done through increased trust and understanding or through increased regional discourse. More 'complicated' means that these issues require wider debate and may involve trade-offs rather than just win-win situations. These issues can best be progressed through the creation of region-wide issue-based networks or fora to build understanding, consensus and, in the case of political members, consistent policies. These kinds of networks are recommended in all the case studies, including the Randstad. While the authors of the RheinRuhr study propose that these 'regional forums on different topics of regional interest' should be composed of non-political stakeholders, the authors of the other studies on the contrary see an important role for administrators. Irrespective of the kind of actor involved in

region-wide networks, it is essential that their membership is active, not passive, as is stressed by the authors of the Flemish Diamond study.

The authors of the RheinRuhr and the Randstad studies, finally, go one step further by recommending permanent region-wide networks, Randstad and RheinRuhr Agencies, that do not focus on certain issues but are general in nature. In the case of RheinRuhr this is only a long-term perspective, but for the Randstad it seems – and has proven to be – achievable in the short term. For RheinRuhr, the role of such an agency is being described as an intermediary body that moderates and informs stakeholders and individuals that are not represented in the agency itself, and that pushes the key players to act and to continue the agency. Competencies of a Randstad Agency could include promoting the Randstad's interests from an international and national perspective, designing regional investment programmes and co-ordinating projects that are of strategic importance for the Randstad. Moreover, this agency could act as a framework from which issue-based subregional co-operations are formed, stimulated and monitored, and as an interlocutor for the national government on Randstad issues. In Central Scotland the latter role seems reserved for the Scottish Executive.

In general, the development of regional organising capacity is a matter of getting a self-reinforcing circle going, as is well described in RheinRuhr case study. This is by definition a long-term process. Compared to the other case study regions, the Randstad has an advanced position in this upward spiral. Nevertheless, by taking a more distant perspective, it becomes clear that in this region also much effort still needs to be made to develop the organising capacity that makes effective use of the potentialities of this region. For the Randstad, ideas on a firmly established permanent network structure – as is already under discussion in the region – should be implemented. For the other regions, one of the earlier steps is more applicable. In these regions, the rule that the best start is a small start holds true. Co-operation on issues with clear benefits to all partners is the first step, the addressing of more complex issues through regional networks or fora organised around specific themes the next one. The importance of having regional matters debated not only by professionals but also by the public at large – having a regional discourse – must not be underestimated and should be encouraged whenever possible.

7.5 Bringing the concept of polycentric urban regions further: towards a new definition and research agenda

The current status of the concept

During the EURBANET project, we found that the concept of polycentric urban regions was received with both enthusiasm and scepticism among academics, policy-makers and other stakeholders. The enthusiasm relates to the potential of the concept to make clear the benefits of a regional planning approach over a series of 'independent' local approaches. Moreover, the concept has the potential to position a region in broader perspectives, including the transnational, by presenting it as one single functional entity providing advantages of scale and complementarity. Important as well is the catalysing role the concept can play in regional co-operation and co-ordination. By applying the concept, relations and interdependencies can be better identified, making it easier for stakeholders to establish necessary co-operative links in policy-making and implementation. Finally, the concept plays an important role in building regional identity and awareness of regional interests, which also eases the development of regional organising capacity.

The scepticism is primarily related to the empirical underpinning of the concept. Critics are of the opinion that the polycentric urban region is too much planners' rhetoric that does not take into account much current knowledge of the spatial situation and developments on the ground. The impression that the concept is sometimes used for geo-political reasons, implying that it is not primarily based on geographic rationale (cf. van Houtum and Lagendijk, 2001), contributes to this opinion. The cleavage between the principle ideas underlying the concept, such as interaction between cities as a result of functional relationships, complementary specialisations and interdependencies, and on the other hand the spatial reality is regarded as too large by certain stakeholders to consider the concept useful.

The concept of the polycentric urban region appears to have reached a crucial stage. On the one hand, some interesting attempts have been made to introduce it into policies. Moreover, it has proven its worth as an analytical framework for research and discussion. On the other hand, however, consensus is still lacking on its main general principles for development and, in particular, how these could be instrumentally equipped. Zonneveld (1991), inspired by Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions, calls this stage of conceptualisation the 'pre-paradigmatic period'. Whether the concept of the polycentric urban region will grow into the core paradigm for the spatial development policies of regions with multiple urban centres depends on its future elaboration. The way the arguments underlying the perceived potential of the concept are

underpinned, combined with the way the arguments of sceptics are taken into account, will determine whether or not the concept of polycentric urban regions will stand the test of time. Anticipating the outcome of this test, we provide below some more concrete suggestions for directions of future research on polycentric urban regions, as well as a refined definition of this type of region.

A new research agenda and definition

The perceived advantages of agglomeration economies, such as pooled resources and critical mass, functional specialisation and complementarity and horizontal synergies through co-operation, are all too easily declared applicable to the often rather loose collection of close-by cities that often characterises polycentric urban regions. While we believe that these advantages are potentially present, their value should be underpinned by research into questions like, for instance, how far and under which conditions is a functional, complementary specialisation of certain functions or activities in cities beneficial, and how should such specialisation be achieved? Research should result in the identification of development strategies to improve the territorial competitiveness of the region and to optimise the spatial-functional structure of polycentric urban regions. More theoretically, research needs to focus on the applicability to such systems of cities of economic theories on synergy and networks and evolving paradigms such as ‘global city region’, ‘clusters’ and ‘innovative *milieux*’. From a general perspective, it seems that research should focus more on the relations between cities (or activities and functions within them) and the way these could be optimised, rather than on more static urban structures.

To refute part of the criticism for the polycentric urban region as a strategic concept, one could argue that it is meant to guide future spatial developments rather than to describe a current spatial reality. In this sense, the definition of the polycentric urban region, introduced at the start of this volume, is inaccurate. This definition – ‘a region composed of a collection of historically and administratively distinct smaller and larger cities located in more or less close proximity (roughly within commuting distance), the larger of which do not differ significantly in terms of size or overall economic and political importance’ – represents a rather ‘thin’ concept of the polycentric urban region. It is too descriptive and too much based on ‘an image on the map’ to make the polycentric urban region a strategic concept. Despite the fact that the definition provides useful criteria for identifying polycentric urban regions, it lacks a strategic component and therefore now needs to be refined. For this refinement, the focus on the optimisation of relations in polycentric urban regions, crucial in order to exploit the surplus value of the concept of polycentric urban region as has been made plausible by this volume, provides

a good starting-point. Inspired by the work of Camagni and Salone (1993) and by Capello and Rietveld (1998) (see Meijers (2002) for more details), we suggest a new definition that represents a 'thicker' concept of the polycentric urban region: 'a system of mainly horizontal, non-hierarchical relationships and interactions among a collection of historically and administratively distinct smaller and larger cities located in more or less close proximity, providing externalities or economies of respectively specialisation and complementarity on the one hand and of synergy, co-operation and innovation on the other'. This definition does not present an existing reality. By focusing on both vertical (e.g. specialisation) and horizontal (e.g. co-operation) ways to add value to the regional level, its power is, however, that it may give a more clear direction to the ambitions of planners and other regional and local policymakers for polycentric regions than the 'thin' definition. This makes the definition normative as it describes the challenge for planning, rather than representing an existing reality. In addition to guiding planning, the definition may also guide, or at least inspire the future agenda of empirical research that should go hand in hand with planning and policy-making. The need for research that goes hand in hand with planning was recently expressed by Healey and Soja⁴⁶, who said 'how do we plan a world we can barely describe'.

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This volume is based on a series of field studies carried out within the framework of the research project EURBANET. This project focused on four polycentric urban regions in the North Western Metropolitan Area in Europe and has explored the practical value of this kind of region as a planning concept. Special emphasis was put on the possible contribution of this concept to the strengthening of the territorial competitiveness and quality of life in these regions. Besides, the project also focused on the role of polycentric urban regions in the transnational planning process. This volume deals with the questions of the value, the feasibility and the design of a regional perspective rather than separate local perspectives of spatial planning in polycentric urban configurations. These questions are explored in the Randstad, RheinRuhr, the Flemish Diamond and Central Scotland.

EURBANET was one of the almost fifty projects for transnational co-operation in spatial planning that were executed under the umbrella of the North Western Metropolitan Area Operational Programme. This Programme was part of INTERREG IIC, a Community Initiative to promote transnational co-operation among public bodies and private parties from different countries through projects on regional and local issues. INTERREG IIC was co-financed by the European Commission. EURBANET was carried out by a consortium of five academic research institutes from the four countries where the regions of research are located.

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