

POLYNET Action 3.1

Analysis of policy documents & policy focus groups

RhineRuhr



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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Report

The following report represents the key findings of an analysis of current national, State and regional policies regarding their implications of changing spatial relations associated with new developments of advanced producer service economy and the reactions to the challenge of building organising capacities in a polycentric MCR. Moreover, the paper focuses on policy developments and priorities at the European level (ESDP and NWE). The results are supplemented by the outcome of two policy focus group meetings organised in Dortmund (April 11, 2005) and Düsseldorf (May 9, 2005) entitled as 'RhineRuhr in North West Europe: Perception and Perspectives' and 'RhineRuhr – connected" respectively.

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1.2 Methodology

Our policy analysis is focused on documents dealing with the spatial structures, economic development and connectivity/accessibility of the MCR RhineRuhr or specific parts of that region. The analysis extends to policy documents drawn up by national, State, regional and some local authorities. National and State policies tend to provide long term goals and general strategies and may include views on the development of RhineRuhr in the respective contexts. Regional policies may disclose explicit and detailed policy views on the MCR or parts of it. Policy views of local players are crucial not only because of the insights in the ways main urban centres position themselves in their wider regional, national and international contexts, but also because the MCR as a planning and governance project stands a chance only if the local actors are willing to identify with the concept.

Key items of our first Policy Focus Group meeting have been the perception and perspectives of a RhineRuhr region in North West Europe. We have tried to put the region's role in NWE in the centre of the discussion. Within this context, a sharp discrepancy between an inferior insider image and a higher opinion of the region by outsiders has come to the fore. Other questions, which have been discussed, are: Is RhineRuhr a sleeping giant with high potential, but inadequate institutional structures? What is the perception of different sectors of the regional economy, what are RhineRuhr's profiles and fields of competences? A second important item in the cause of the workshop has been the specialisation of the different local economies and the understanding of the functional connectivity of the region's economy. How can we benefit from the fact that RhineRuhr is a complex and differentiated, but also a complementary location?

Subjects of polycentricity and connectivity were the focal points of our second Policy Focus Group meeting. We tried to make a distinction between 'polycentricity' as an objective and means of strategic planning and regional policy. Do regional actors show awareness of the region's polycentricity and/or urban networks? Does or should the region promote specialisation between cities and/or sub-regions (complementarities)? A further key item of the workshop was the role of inter-regional polycentricity in NWE. What are the challenges and opportunities for RhineRuhr in this respect? How to strengthen and sustain the transnational connectivity of different regional actors?

1.3 Structure of the Report

In drawing together the results of action 3.1 and 3.2, this report takes up the research questions addressed in

action 2.1/2.2 and represents the outcomes of the analysis of policy frameworks for our MCR (cf. section 2) and the outcomes of the Policy Focus Group meetings (cf. section 3). Looking across the documents that have been studied and the issues arising from the workshops, spatial and governance issues and policy deficiencies are in the centre of section 4. Finally, the report summarises the key findings and policy issues for future policy-making (cf. section 5).

2. Analysis of Policy Frameworks for the Mega-City Region

2.1 Spatial Planning and Development

The analysis of this specific policy framework for the MCR RhineRuhr has to start with the fundamental fact that RhineRuhr as one polynuclear city-region or as a complex and differentiated, but also as a connected complementary space does hardly exist in the mental map of public and private actors within and outside of RhineRuhr. The administrative and institutional landscape in RhineRuhr can be described as overlapping, with the juxtaposition of several authorities, institutions and organisations. Questions of regional government and governance (at the sub-State scale) have, therefore, not really been placed on the political agenda until today – even if some advances in regional co-operation in different areas of RhineRuhr were made and some actors seem to become more aware of a metropolitan region RhineRuhr which should compete with other big players in the world.

Spatial planning for RhineRuhr is conducted at three tiers of government. Whereas the competence to enact framework legislation in the field of spatial planning is assigned to the Federation, ‘Landesplanung’ (Comprehensive Spatial Planning at State Level) is that component of public administration which is responsible for producing spatial structure plans of a comprehensive and super ordinate nature and with the co-ordination of plans and measures with spatial impacts. ‘Landesplanung’ therefore performs both a planning function and securing spatial structure.

In contrast to other city regions in Europe, RhineRuhr was not given much attention by politicians and planners of North Rhine-Westphalia up until that moment when – against the background of growing inter-regional competition for locations – the Federal Government established so called ‘European Metropolitan Regions’ (EMR) in the framework of a new Federal Action Plan for National Spatial Development (Raumordnungspolitischer Handlungsrahmen) (cf. BmBau 1995). Within this and other official documents, seven metropolitan regions including RhineRuhr are earmarked as having the competitive edge in terms of their innovation, creativity and societal dynamics (reflecting the work of Porter).

North Rhine-Westphalia has been the first State, which have taken up the new spatial planning category in it's State Development Plan (Landesentwicklungsplan, LEP) in 1995. However, the new region is portrayed as a linearly bounded area, congruent with the physical agglomeration, but neglecting it's functional aspects which are only indirectly associated with it's structural density. The big question was and is until today how to implement this new instrument. It should still be an addition to the longstanding planning tradition based on the formation and conservation of hierarchic central places interconnected mainly by means of infrastructure axes (so called development corridors). However, this overlapping of the traditional geo-design of the LEP and an illustration of a bounded territory has been obviously insufficient so far to invite local and regional stakeholders to an advanced discourse on the Metropolitan Region RhineRuhr. The LEP does not contain a comprehensive description on the implementation of this new spatial construct. The description of the overall goal seems to rather of rhetorical nature than of paving the way for an advanced framework for transformation into concrete measures: “The greater significance of the European Metropolitan Region RhineRuhr 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 1995:16).

In order to make this general aim more understandable, a few explanations are added. Disappointingly, these clarifications are rather descriptive as they characterise only the existing (economic) metropolitan features (LEP 1995: 17):

- due to its central-European position, the EMR RhineRuhr is provided with a European-oriented 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 RhineRuhr with other European agglomerations like Paris and London;
- the EMR RhineRuhr 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 RhineRuhr, hold a leading position internationally;
- the EMR RhineRuhr is a political and economic decision-centre, as well as a location for international authorities, foreign trade representatives, globally operating large-scale enterprises and central associations.

The following list of tasks shows that this aims at a new representation of RhineRuhr as one region, at the co-ordination of regional stakeholders, and at the mobilisation and clustering of existing resources in order to enhance economic development (LEP 1995:16-18):

further improvement of inter-continental accessibility and linkages with the supra-regional and regional air-transport, railway and road network; elaboration and harmonization of several regional development concepts which have to lead to more intensive co-operation among regional stakeholders; 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; establishment of a network between the EMR RhineRuhr and other contiguous urban regions.

According to this, RhineRuhr seems above all to have shortcomings in physical infrastructures. However, the more important problem is the deficit concerning the 'soft' determinants for the regional coherence of the local economic, social and political relations, i.e. the deficit of governance structures.

The political and planning discourse about the new concept has been carried out so far in a modest way, particularly because the feared objection that it could be realised at the expenses of other areas and /or would result in a powerful state in the state North Rhine-Westphalia. Most of (not only political) stakeholders have not so far become sufficiently aware of the existence and the economic importance of the EMR concept. Spatial planners in North Rhine-Westphalia do not offer any imaginative "spatial Leitbilder" (visions) that can be communicated to the media, the public, or the potential political arena. Consequently, there is also no visible spatial Leitbild for RhineRuhr; neither does the lack of one seem to be noticed. More generally, the crucial question is what kind of contribution a more action-oriented form of strategic planning could offer in this polynuclear urban region and its fragmented institutional setting. Selectivity, dialogue, diversity, networking, contextually, the creation of ideas and frame of reference, mobilising, institution-building and action-orientation are key elements in such strategic planning. At present, however, we see no clear shift from traditional, more passive land use planning towards more strategic planning.

At the sub-State level, regional planning is carried out by the Regierungspräsidenten (District Commissioners) in co-operation with the Regionalräte (Regional Councils) formed by representatives of the cities and counties of a Regierungsbezirk (District Administration of the State Government), This regional tier of physical planning (= 'regional planning' in the German context) forms the link between the State planning function and the local planning function (i.e. urban land-use planning). As a component of State-level planning, regional planning is in both the legal and material terms a State function, in terms of actual organisation and planning policy, regional planning has to be regarded as a common task executed jointly by the State and local government. Regional Development Plans, produced in close co-operation with the local government authorities, assign development areas for the local authorities based on complicated demand estimates for residential and industrial land.

The MCR RhineRuhr falls under four different District Administrations. Moreover, the territory of each district extends beyond the boundaries of RhineRuhr, and the administration thus take responsibility first of all only for their part of RhineRuhr. With some remarkable exceptions of the District Administration of Düsseldorf, RhineRuhr as a

common object of development and as a space with multiplex opportunities have not been noticed so far, neither in the regional plans nor by the planning practices of the different District Administrations.

Until recently the former (before 1975) powerful regional authority in the Ruhr area, the Kommunalverband Ruhr (Ruhr District Association of Communities) has served mainly as a regional marketing institution with a few additional functional and information dissemination tasks. Since October 2004 the former association was not only renamed to Regionalverband Ruhr, i.e. Regional Association of the Ruhr Region (RVR), the new association will have to deal also with some newly defined tasks (development of master plans, regional landscape management). However, the new RVR will still have no real regional planning competence. Furthermore its representatives will not be directly elected by the inhabitants of the Ruhr area. Thus, the future will show whether the RVR is able to improve the co-operation among the local authorities of this section of RhineRuhr. At the moment, the participation of the 'Metropolitan Region Ruhr' in the international trade fair for the property market 'MIPIM' in Cannes or the application of the Ruhr area for the European Cultural Capital 2010 are seen as positive first steps in relation to this. Concerning the shaping of RhineRuhr, it is remarkable that there is a slightly growing body of opinions that calls for a similar organisation like the RVR for the cities along the river Rhine. It is also interesting that the Ruhr association takes "the creation of a far bigger region" (= a Metropolitan Region RhineRuhr) as an "interesting alternative" in consideration (KVR 2004:79).

The first tier of public authority from the 'bottom' up is the local level represented by metropolitan authorities (so called 'non county towns'/kreisfreie Städte), the counties (Kreise) and the smaller municipalities which are incorporated within a county. Municipalities and counties are territorially defined public-law corporations with legal personality and constitute the agents of local government in respect of their territories. As bodies of self-government, they have the right, within the bounds of the law and on their own responsibility, to regulate all matters of public authority (local government) concerning the local community. In addition to this, there are also voices claiming for to perform a number of delegated tasks for and on behalf of the Federation and the State. Among others, municipalities plan the development of their territories by performing the task of urban land-use planning. As the central instrument of municipal development planning, the role of urban land-use planning is to prepare and organise the use of plots located within the municipality for building and for other types of use in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Building Code.

The numerous autonomous, county-free cities (in particular, the 11 higher order centres) and the 10 counties and their constituent local government authorities that shape the MCR RhineRuhr usually subscribe to the principle of the priority of self-interest. The State Government's wish for more regional co-operation is thus met by the apprehension of local government authorities that they would have to give up their self-governing status. Although none of the relevant local stakeholders try to tackle planning and/or political issues beyond local interests at the scale of RhineRuhr, some kinds of regionalisation processes and institutionalisation has opened up the road for a new quality of supra-local co-operation (i.e. inter-municipal commercial spaces, regional retail concepts, common applications for contests or model projects). To be optimistic, these steps towards more (partly) regional behaviour and consciousness can be seen as platforms for the consolidation of co-operation at the scale of RhineRuhr.

2.2 Economic Development, Skills

Economic Development

Once again, the analysis of this specific policy framework for the MCR RhineRuhr has to start by mentioning that the MCR does not exist as any field of specific metropolitan economic policy. The State's economic policy is certainly been strongly influenced by the expected development of this big agglomeration and its role for the competitiveness of the State. However, the policy is either conceptualized for the whole State or for parts of the MCR like especially the Ruhr area, which is still suffering under the ongoing structural changes.

Besides the usual strengthening of innovation and learning, the attempts to improve entrepreneurships and increase the number of business start-ups, and besides a more sophisticated labour market and education policy, new varieties of regional-policy networks connected with new modes of structural and regional policies have been established in the last decades. In particular, the instrument of the Regional Conferences, introduced at the beginning

of the 1990s, can be considered as a new approach towards a more procedural understanding of the governance of structural change. Such Regional Conferences were to be established in newly constructed 'Handlungsregionen' (regions forming the object of concerted action; the demarcations of the regions following the districts of the Chambers of Industry and Commerce) in order to develop a medium-range development concept ('Regionales Entwicklungskonzept') for each individual area based on a consensus among the participating parties. RhineRuhr extends over 10 regions and thus 10 Regional Conferences. In general terms, Regional Conferences can be defined as minimally regulated bodies or proceedings aiming to bring about regional agreement on development strategies and on the projects to implement these strategies.

Compared with the ambitious expectations the results have been rather disappointing. The regionalised structural policy, the intra-regional co-operation – set to nought by inter-municipal rivalry – frequently failed to produce the expected distinctive location profiles. Instead, the regional development concepts were very similar to each other in their endeavours to support the establishment of new enterprises. Projects such as the further improvement of the transport infrastructure, or the supply of industrial areas were positioned in the foreground; the expected mobilisation of endogenous, regionally specific development potential had often come second to efforts to secure exogenous impulses. However, besides criticism, it was also concluded that the organisation of collective learning, the emergence of new forms of co-operation (which can be found in joint projects and in new institutions such as development or marketing agencies), as well as trust-forming measures and open negotiation were the main beneficial outputs of the Regional Conferences.

Recently, after some standstill and the development of new policy approaches like the promotion of fields of competence or clustering, a two-tier-model was developed which involves a revived and modernised regionalised structural policy and a strategy with the aim of developing a handful of 'fields of technological excellence'. Regional Agencies and Steering Committees were to be established in 16 (10 in RhineRuhr) newly constructed economic and labour market regions (following again the districts of the Chambers of Industry and Commerce) in order to integrate the implementation of the economic, labour market and technology policies of the State. The regions should be strengthened as strategic actors. The State government aims at a contest for the best regional agreed development concepts, the most innovative projects to implement the State's policies, the strongest co-operative attitudes between public and private actors, as well as for its development funds. This orientation towards regional fields of competence (based on a realistic SWOT analysis) should give a new technology policy room to concentrate on the development of future orientated technologies and markets. The idea is to lead enterprises, scientific organisations, universities and employees to an international outstanding performance in six identified 'fields of excellence': knowledge based producer services, IT based systems integration and Microsystems, logistics and transport systems, life sciences, new materials as technologies in fields of application like mechanical engineering, steel or chemicals industry, and, finally, energy and environmental technologies.

The big cities of RhineRuhr try all to implement more or less well elaborated economic development strategies. Dortmund, for instance, has been established as a skill centre in information technology, micro-systems technology and logistics. The dortmund-project - a unique initiative by the city, business and scientific institutions – is one of the architects of the 'New Dortmund' and is pushing this development ahead with clearly targeted projects like the so called PHOENIX Site – new space for business, living and working. Cologne, Düsseldorf or Duisburg are strengthening their reputation as media, design or logistics cities. In Düsseldorf, for instance, the reconstruction of the old Rhine harbour is the most important project in urban development and should offer the city the opportunity to develop Düsseldorf's position as a national and international outstanding location for creative sectors (media, advertising, design and art). In the one or other case (for instance in the field of logistics), this development involves the related hinterland and neighbouring cities. However, the MCR RhineRuhr as a whole is no frame of reference for the individual local politics. Attempts to support a more focussed and mutually agreed cluster development in the Ruhr area resulted in a doubling of the initial identified six cluster sectors and in a dilution of the planned advanced cluster strategy, because in the political bargaining processes a too strong focus was feared and each area politically wanted to find oneself.

Skills

In general, labour markets, skills and education in RhineRuhr were valued positively. Specific skills, for instance IT-, media- and logistics specialists, are trained in different places within the region and these opportunities for studying are often important factors companies consider when deciding where to locate their business. On the other side, disadvantages relating to higher education, research and development, and technology transfer are pointed out. With respect to higher education, the general crisis in the German education system and a particular lack of universities with a really international reputation were emphasised. The transfer between existing educational and research institutions and highly specialized firms in the service sector is sometimes weak. With the exception of Dortmund, this weakness applies to the Ruhr area in particular, even though the potential is there. There is some brain drain in this respect, since the number of highly educated people in principle exceeds the current demand. All in all, there is a need to improve the structures of higher education and to provide better connections between research and economic activity. A package of more or less appropriate measures against those deficiencies has been set off in the meantime.

Moreover, demographic trends raise a number of issues that need to be dealt with. The greying of the population and insufficient immigration (of both high- and low-skilled people) have strong influences on the social-cultural appearance of RhineRuhr 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. Besides a better integration and qualification of resident immigrants, a more sophisticated national immigration policy and a regional discourse on an 'open region' as an open-minded arena for new persons, cultures and ideas are, therefore, issues for further politics.

2.3 Transport, Accessibility, E- Connectivity

When comparing the MCR RhineRuhr with other European regions, it's relative good transport infrastructure comes to the fore – in spite of some minor weaknesses –. This becomes maybe most recognisable when analysing the internal and international accessibility. Nevertheless, there are a number of voices calling for a upgrading the existing regional public transport system. A further topic is to get rid of the bottlenecks in the current road network through infrastructural improvements. Moreover, the intercontinental flight connectivity is criticised and the enlargement of the Duesseldorf airport is a crucial question. Concerning the availability of high bandwidth, in particular Düsseldorf and Cologne are among the highly crucial nodes, both for the backbone providers who were keen for highly interconnected and widespread European network architecture and for diffusing high bandwidth internet accessibility throughout the European territory. The availability of IT-broadband is, therefore, the most positively valued location factor of RhineRuhr.

The issue of upgrading the existing public transport system is currently disputed in political and public circles, due to the policy of German Railways. The density 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 (in particular in the North Eastern Ruhr area and in the area between the axes Essen-Bochum-Dortmund and Düsseldorf-Wuppertal-Hagen). The investment policy is still concentrated on a few links between larger conurbations, in particular high-speed connections, whereas the system as a whole is being neglected. Although the train frequencies as well as the density of the network can be still seen as relatively good by comparison with other MCRs, the degree of quality and modernity needs to be improved. The tracks are quite old and need to be upgraded in order to allow trains running faster to attain their maximum potential speed. Even though the MCR is largely covered by two integrated public transport systems, the organisation and the co-operation between contiguous cities seem to be below standard. Besides investments in the current network and in upgrading the so called 'S-Bahn', the realisation of the 'Metro-Express' idea for RhineRuhr seems to be an attractive new backbone of the intra-regional public transport system. It would link together in a faster way the bigger cities of the Ruhr area and the cities on the river Rhine. Finally, new ways of transport management and of shifting more transport from the road to the rail might improve further the quality of the overall regional transport system.

The demand for the upgrading of certain motorways belonging to the polycentric MCR to reduce traffic jams seems to be another important issue – even though the most experts see inadequate transport management, insufficient co-operation between supply and demand (e.g. haulage contractors) as well as deficient collaboration between

transport and regional planning as the main reasons for the existing problems and point out that more roads just generate more traffic. In order to respond on some bottlenecks concerning the maintained insufficient number of motorways and available space for such infrastructures, from time to time several tunnel-projects are about to be discussed. This touches first and foremost the cities Cologne, Düsseldorf and Dortmund. Sometimes relative futuristic suggestions come up to build e.g. a tunnel trough the whole Ruhr area as an additional west-east link. Moreover, several projects are in the pipeline to upgrade further motorways from 4- to 6-lanes (e.g. the A 1, A 3, A 40) as well as to fill some gaps in this huge network (e.g. lengthening of the A 52 and A 44).

However, there is also a growing body of opinion that the complex and still increasing transport flows in RhineRuhr 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.

The two biggest airports of RhineRuhr, Düsseldorf and Cologne/Bonn, are strongly challenged by Frankfurt – Rhine Main and Amsterdam as they are no major European hubs. However, progressive decentralisation and liberalisation in the aviation sector cause even non-central hubs or regional airports like Dortmund (and the nearby RhineRuhr situated airports Münster/Osnabrück and Paderborn) to grow rapidly. Unsurprisingly, the 'Air Traffic Concept North Rhine-Westphalia' (1999) aims at the expansion of these airports. However, as to the fact Cologne/Bonn still offers opportunities for further increase in its capacity and the Dortmund airport has recently lengthened it's runways and built a new terminal, the call for an enlargement of the Düsseldorf airport is a controversial theme on the political agenda. Regulative restrictions, such as night-flight prohibitions, noise abatement and other environmental restrictions, limit the further expansion of this airport. The often demanded co-operation among the airports – especially between Düsseldorf and Cologne/Bonn – might lead to better results for competitiveness and quality of life in RhineRuhr than the expansion of the airport Mönchengladbach which is intended to relief the somehow congested airport in Düsseldorf. Moreover, the recently opened high-speed railway link between Cologne and Frankfurt/Rhine-Main airport, which connects both regions within less than one hour travel time, has led to a new time-space relation between RhineRuhr, or at least the southern part, and the intercontinental hub Rhine-Main.

2.4 Housing and Environment

Generally spoken, almost everyone inside the region emphasises that the quality of life (involving such issues as the environment, the housing situation and conditions, and the recreational and cultural facilities) in RhineRuhr were in fact better than public opinion outside the region (in particular regarding the situation in the Ruhr area) would suggest.

Environment

In comparison with other agglomerations, the quality of the living environment in RhineRuhr seems to be satisfactory. Strong assets in this respect are the regional green spaces and green belts and the good accessibility of rural areas and forests within and in the hinterland of the MCR. However, RhineRuhr and especially the Ruhr area are currently coping with a distinctive spatial differentiation, which overlaps and partly contradicts typical centre-periphery patterns. The disintegration of traditional urban and urban-fringe structures, which arises from intensive tertiary processes in the former suburbia, corresponds with the change towards the more regionalist lifestyles of the residents and subsequently the growing demand for higher quality housing, mostly in connection with open spaces. Hence, the region has to cope with this kind of urbanised landscapes as a result of the gradual dissolution of the cities into a very specific case of functional urban patchworks. Consequently, a specific spatial policy on a co-operative basis is urgently needed focussing on the question of how the region should shape and organize these functional patterns of post-suburbia.

Due to the fact that soft location factors are gaining importance, it has to be noted that particularly some places in the Ruhr area are still suffering from its industrial history and the current disorder of the remaining former industrial plants, brownfields, low quality settlements and industrial buildings of little aesthetic merit. Moreover, these places are embedded in a disorganised urban-rural patchwork that hampers the establishment of more attractive urban landscapes. Although a lot of initiatives to revitalise and upgrade these areas have improved the overall situation, policies like the development of open spaces with the Regionalpark concept are further needed.

Concerning the city-image, Cologne, for instance, has the image of a cosmopolitan city, with an attractive city-space and a cultural scene of international reputation. Whereas Düsseldorf is often considered as a more favoured location for young and high-skilled persons (Yuppies and DINKS) and is seen as an urban centre with high social and environmental quality. In contrast to this, the image of the Ruhr area still leaves much to be desired. In spite of far-reaching structural changes, high unemployment and spatial polarisation, there are no social fractures or slums but a positive climate of living together; the centres of the main cities are more or less renewed; the cultural life within the area provides many offers; the ecological deficits of the 1960s and 1970s have long been overcome. However, all the efforts are not sufficiently appreciated within and outside the region.

Housing

In the last decade, the provision with living space in the Ruhr area increased to a lesser extent than in other parts of RhineRuhr (and also in the State). There were also a different development at a lower scale, insofar the increase in cities was only 50 percent of that in smaller municipalities. More than 10 percent of the living space in North Rhine-Westphalia is still price-controlled (most rental flats) with a noticeable higher share in the Ruhr area. However, the stock of price-controlled living space is decreasing since years as a result of pay offs and early redemption of construction loans. Concerning new houses, we can also see a very uneven spatial distribution in RhineRuhr. As a result of high land values and development area shortages, there are relatively less new buildings not only in the core cities but also in areas close to the bigger cities, whereas the more rural structured and peripheral areas show much higher shares. The future demand for new flats depends first of all on the uneven spatial development of the amount of private households. Whereas a decrease or at least a stagnation of the amount of households and the related demand for newly built flats is expected in the Ruhr area, a stronger demand is predicted in Düsseldorf, Cologne and Bonn and their hinterlands, but also in the more peripheral counties of RhineRuhr. The management of the emerging regionalized housing markets calls for more city-regional co-operation how is it demonstrated in the 'Housing Market Region Bonn/Rhein-Sieg'.

The prices of residential buildings in RhineRuhr are different because of different population densities and economic structures. The highest prices for building land are achieved in the FURs Düsseldorf and Cologne, whereas the prices in the Eastern part of RhineRuhr and in the Ruhr area are much lower. The rents in RhineRuhr increase from Dortmund and Duisburg to Essen, Cologne/Bonn and Düsseldorf with the highest rents. The relatively low rent level in the Ruhr area comes, however, under pressure, because more and more cities try to solve their budget problems through privatizing of their residential building-stocks. With regard to the interests of big financial investors and real estate concerns, it is feared that in the long run not only rents are growing but also that many families with low income will lose their flats.

3. Outcomes of the Policy Focus Group Meetings

In the course of Action 3.1, we have organised two Workshops. The first one was held on the 11th of April in Dortmund in the "Harenberg conference building" in close co-operation with the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung, BBR). As the title suggests "RhineRuhr in North West Europe: Perception and Perspectives" it was rather focussed on fundamental issues when talking and finally framing in mind

the idea of the MCR RhineRuhr from different perspectives. The second took place on the 7th of May at the Ministry for Transport, Energy and State Planning in Duesseldorf and was entitled according to our intermediate reports "RheinRuhr – connected". The attendance to both workshops varies between 14 (the first) and 12 (the second), so that a familiar working atmosphere has been guaranteed. In the first workshops the participants were not merely stakeholders by their heart as even a few scientists have been attended from different regions or countries respectively (Switzerland, the Netherlands, Berlin, Bremen). The second was almost only dedicated to those being strongly involved in political issues at different levels and scopes (entrepreneurs, representatives from the ministries, cities and the organised economy). During both workshops we could enjoy a fruitful and partly controversial discussion. Apparently, the different stakeholders have been relatively keen on discussing such strategic and even though sometimes abstract issues, as it seems that their daily work do not allow them to do so. Moreover, especially after the second workshop, which was comparably closer linked to Action 3.1, we have received an amount of positive feedback by our participants. Without exception, all of them show highly interest in getting our presentations for their further work. They also asked for more information on POLYNET in general and our specific methods and research objectives in particular, as they want to bring all this as well in the discussions within their institutions. Additionally, and this is maybe most remarkable, they asked us to offer a steady platform in order to continue beating such items. Due to this and in order to expand the scope of such a potential platform, we have planned an international whole-day conference in close co-operation with the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning, which will take place on the 16th of November 2005 in Bonn. Here, as a first step to this, we will tackle again items like the position, perspectives and images of RhineRuhr in NWE from a broader perspective using the results and insights gained within POLYNET.

Coming back to the issues as picked out within these two workshops, the following list covers the most important items that have been discussed in greater detail:

- the role of the MCR RhineRuhr in NWE:
 - it is not any longer a central node in the European urban network, rather a fragmented urban landscape with undefined and fuzzy superior functions;
 - it is rather considered as a "sleeping giant" due to its size in terms of population and it's economic weight;
- the MCR RhineRuhr role in North Rhine-Westphalia:
 - no one wakes up the "sleeping giant" due to inadequate institutional structures;
 - non-existent interest by the State to take the initiative to frame a "substantial policy discourse" on the future of its by far biggest urban agglomeration;
 - RhineRuhr is not perceived as a heuristic or at least as a strategic spatial image (cf. chapter 2.1); it is only at best considered as an analytical spatial frame (an imaginative spatial Leitbild seems to be hardly communicable);
- the MCR RhineRuhr as a polycentric network-region:
 - distinct awareness of the different and highly specialised sectors of the regional economy, it's distinct profiles and areas of competence;
 - but: rather a disappointing understanding of the functional connectivity and "hidden labour division" of the regional economy;
 - the MCR RhineRuhr is neither perceived as a complex and differentiated nor as a complementary location;
 - only some elements of a functional identity, but little strategic and no regional/cultural identity is recognisable;
 - strong hesitation to think of the region as an "actor" and/or as an arena for common actions;
 - there is no frame of reference for marketing and business activities; interest for outward investments is mainly focussed at first on Duesseldorf (incoherent and diffuse image by outsiders), no distinctive image in comparison to other MCRs;
 - polycentricity (here: variety of urban profiles and landscapes; availability of space) is seen as an advantage of RhineRuhr; more often, however, polycentricity is seen as an obstacle for more co-operation among

stakeholders

- here in particular: strong criticism about the current chaotic and fragmented governance structures at the level of the MCR RheinRuhr; strong demand for new forms of political action setting, coordination of policies and finally trans-municipal co-operation in North Rhine-Westphalia in general (which becomes without doubt most obviously in the MCR RhineRuhr; cf. Action 1.1 report)

4. Conclusions of the Policy Response Analysis

As indicated within section 2.1 already as well as in line with the maybe most eye-catching result of our Policy Focus Group Meetings, the inconsistency, or better even contradiction, between the normative objective of the State's government by the incorporation of the EMR Concept in the State Development Plan in 1995 and the real discourse in politics and planning in relation to this is without doubt the most prominent challenge. Besides the fact that neither the Regional Plans (Gebietsentwicklungspläne, cf. list of analysed policy papers), which has been studied nor any of the urban land-use plans has taken up the idea of considering the RhineRuhr Region as a whole, there has been hardly any other efforts to introduce policies that are dedicated specifically to the level of the MCR RhineRuhr or for its "function" as such.

As indicated before, the fundamental problem is that spatial planning at the State level does not offer any imaginative spatial "visions" (Leitbilder) which can be communicated to the media, the public and to the political arenas (cf. Kunzmann 2001). Consequently, given the scattered institutional setting in this 12-million MCR, there is no visible spatial vision for Rhine-Ruhr, as would be indispensable if the state's policy of articulating the strategic importance of Rhine-Ruhr is to be taken seriously somehow. Hence, in the absence of a joint co-ordinating or networking body, no one has neither commissioned a vision nor pushed a comprehensive discourse on the pros and cons of such a "strategically united" Rhine-Ruhr urban agglomeration. There are no signs of movement towards a more action-oriented form of strategic planning recognisable in an inter-urban polycentric region with multiple stakeholders, goals, interests, identities and cultural differences. However, from the state government point of view, the potential weight of Rhine-Ruhr in comparison to the rest of North Rhine-Westphalia is still regarded as a threat. Support from within society on the part of those directly interested or involved hardly exists and politicians are not calling for it. From the point of view of metropolitan inhabitants, the distinctive construct of Rhine-Ruhr as a whole remains to this day an abstract spatial configuration (cf. Knapp et. al. 2004).

Moreover, besides some ineffective marketing campaigns in 1996 and 1997, there have been no efforts to develop new positive images of this new-born spatial construct called the Rhine-Ruhr metropolitan region or what we call in the framework of POLYNET as the MCR RhineRuhr, which could serve as a "frame for communication" as well as for an advanced discourse which goes beyond the circles of primarily academic debates. Hence it is hardly surprising that specific strategies and concrete objectives have thus far similarly not been developed. Indeed, it is patently obvious that the State government is satisfied with RhineRuhr ranking in the top class of city-systems; this means that North Rhine-Westphalia does possess a region of European importance in terms of infrastructure endowment and facilities. We still cannot see a clear shift from traditional land-use planning, with its limited problem-solving capacities concerning inter-municipal issues, towards a more strategic planning approach covering several sectoral challenges as discussed in section 2.2-2.4 which tries to give answers to its intended role as a European Metropolitan Region or its actual function as a Polycentric Mega City Region.

This is insofar surprising as the facts and figures that have been elaborated within POLYNET do indeed imply another governance-style encompassing the entire MCR RhineRuhr as a frame of reference for different challenges as elucidated within section 2.2-2.4. Additionally, growing political interest on questions related to metropolitan regions and their functions as such is clearly evident and can not be described as only a passing fancy. Although the

EMR-concept can be still regarded as a somehow fuzzy concept, which suits perfectly to political rhetoric and can be used as a »discursive frame« to claim for subsidies by the Federal State and even more important by the EU, the rising discourse that suggests that urban agglomerations are to be strengthened because of their underlying growth potentials is stronger than ever. The concepts and arguments in the German discussion are almost congruent with those debated at the European level. The »European Spatial Development Perspective« (ESDP) and even more clearer the spatial Vision for NWE send out relatively clear messages in this direction. Their basic elements include »balanced competitiveness« and »polycentric development«, which can easily be interpreted as enhancing the network of strong, competitive urban growth poles – consequently those urban configurations that are in principal identified as »metropolitan regions« (cf. Ache 2004). Inevitably, the »Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas«, for instance, a lobby group constituted by key stakeholders of the member cities and regions, does indeed interpret the ESDP message in this way. Hence, in their recent position paper, they demand financial aid for the next period of regional policy (2007-2012) through the EU structural funds (METREX 2004), which are at the moment only dedicated to what is called in EU terms »territorial cohesion« (cf. Faludi 2004). Moreover, they argue that metropolitan regions play a key role in achieving the targets of the Lisbon agenda, in which the EU's Council of Ministers strive to shape the European Union by 2010 into the most innovative and competitive powerhouse in the world. It now appears quite likely that these claims might be included to some extent in the strategic framework of the EU's new adjustment of structural policy, which is currently under debate. Not surprisingly, the German counterpart, the »Network of German Metropolitan Regions« (2003), argues in the same direction and also calls for more political attention to their needs as growth engines or motors for national as well as international spatial development. Behind this sketched background and in line with our POLYNET results, the relatively low response to spatial and governance challenges regarding the MCR RhineRuhr in the political arena becomes even more remarkable.

5. Key Policy Issues for the Mega-City Region

Nonetheless, it is widely assumed that the way to construct strategies and create visions is dependent on selected critical issues being tackled in order to mobilise the public and gain acceptance, and to invent tools and practices to carry strategies forward towards implementation. Selectivity, dialogue, diversity, networking, contextuality, creation of ideas and frames of reference, mobilising, institution-building and action-orientation are key elements of such a form of strategic planning. The hitherto narrow endeavours of the state government to create more than a designer region in order to establish an institutional and political practice, and thus to produce a territorial social practice, must therefore include more than upgrading the region's infrastructure facilities, the improvement of inter-continental accessibility and intra-regional mobility, the hope for more inter-municipal co-operation and urban networking or, as has recently happened, using the "hidden potentials" of this urban agglomeration apparently in North Rhine-Westphalia for election purposes (cf. MVEL 2005b). In addition to such measures, and instead of the further adoption of a "wait-and-see policy", the interrelation between the enhancing of also non-economic regional discourses, the shaping power of organising capacity and regional governance, as well as the formulation of strategic issues regarding some distinctive economic cluster should be regarded as central and fundamental tasks in the future. Therefore, we think that we need to give much more room not only for quite abstract academic discussion on the pros and cons of a European Metropolitan Region RhineRuhr as it is the case right now, but also for the consequences when bearing in mind its multi-level connectivity in the space of flows and places, which comes to the fore by its complex challenges as being an outstanding example of a polycentric network region (cf. the criss-cross outcome of Action 1.2). Due to this, in our view the following strategic approaches and key policy issues are inadequately addressed with regard to the MCR RhineRuhr as a polycentric network region as grouped in the following sections.

What are the spatial and functional issues?

A strategic Leitbild is missing that tackles a multi-level approach and shall take up at least the following until now still unanswered questions:

- Which role should play the MCR RhineRuhr in NWE Europe? What kind of multifaceted and integrated policy

approaches are necessary for this?

- How is such a role to be organised at the regional level? What kind of strategic functional labour divisions are indispensable to sharpen such a profile? Which places might incorporate the critical masses of potentials to do so? What kind of complementary functions are necessary?

Other issues in this respect are:

- To pool much more resources to develop advanced future oriented fields of competencies, which are strategically co-ordinated and balanced at the level of the MCR;
- To make available specific collective resources in order to secure the regional competitiveness through personal and material infrastructure.

What are the policy deficiencies?

- There is no established link between economic oriented regional policies and spatial development policies (as to the fact that particularly spatial planning in Germany does not enter those policy circles that deal with the strategic economic development and their spatial assets and necessities)
- There are no signs to proceed strategically the apparent “real regional division of labour” in a twofold way: internal (in view of the APS-structure within the MCR) plus external (in view of the international/transnational connectivity of the urban system within the MCR).
- None of the sectoral fields as discussed in section 2.2 to 2.4 are sufficiently fine-tuned behind the background of the functional nature of the MCR RhineRuhr as analysed within Action 1.2-2.2.

What new approaches are required and by whom?

- To establish an adequate governance-style to develop such an above-mentioned Leitbild at first and then later on, to bring it into life.
- Therefore a much more steady and stable sphere for more trans-municipal co-operation and coordination as well as at the sub-regional but also at the level of the MCR has to be generated.
- By doing so it would be critical to establish communication and learning alliances that go beyond traditional structures and routines in order to aim at mutual problem-solving, new trade-offs and new fields for trans-municipal co-operation at the level of the MCR.
- Not only economic, labour or technology policies are required, but also a policy-approach that incorporates this within a development-oriented spatial policy.

Why does it make sense to pursue the establishment of a transnational co-operative network between mega-city regions in North-West Europe?

As mentioned above and elsewhere several times (cf. exemplarily Knapp et. al. 2004), the strategic exposure with such spatial constructs like metropolitan regions or even MCRs is very poorly developed in the political arena in Germany in general and in North Rhine-Westphalia in particular. Therefore we would subscribe that the stakeholders in the MCR RhineRuhr could benefit from such a transnational co-operative network between mega-city regions in North-West Europe enormously and that would be in a threefold way. First, our stakeholders become more familiar with the international discourse on global cities and metropolitan regions, as to the fact that their awareness of such items and their relevance for future spatial policies is still at a very poor level. Only in this way they learn to understand and to appraise their home base when considering the developments and correlative policies in the other MCRs in North West Europe. Such a type of benchmarking would sharpen the view on the challenges to make use of the underlying opportunities and potentials the MCR concept might offer, even with regard to RhineRuhr. Second it could serve as a fantastic resource to collect ideas, best practices and examples for new trade-offs in view of the complex challenges such MCRs are confronted with nowadays. Third, in the mid-run, such a platform might offer a “think tank” to which those stakeholders are able to pool their capacities in order to find new strategic orientation how to handle the management of MCRs and to generate new ideas. Above all, and maybe most important, such a network offers a base where they can leave behind their daily routines, restrictions and trajectories.

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