

POLYNET Action 3.1

Analysis of policy documents & policy focus groups

Summary Report



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1. Introduction

1.0 Purpose of the Policy Analysis

The purpose of the Action 3 Policy Analysis has been to examine the policy context for the eight POLYNET mega-city regions (MCRs) in relation to the findings of the four preceding research actions and investigate the views of government and business stakeholders on the relevance of the empirical findings for practice.

In brief, the major findings from the empirical studies (Actions 1.1-2.2) across the POLYNET study regions demonstrate:

First, precise MCR boundaries are difficult to define and do not coincide with administrative boundaries.

Second, functional polycentricity, which describes knowledge-based flows in advanced business networks, is distinct from morphological polycentricity, which describes the geographical distribution of cities and towns of different sizes.

Third, in all MCRs, functional concentration is essential to global business connectivity and the 'knowledge gateway' role of First Cities.

Fourth, significantly, polycentricity – whether related to residentially-driven commuting or business travel - has negative environmental impacts across all MCRs. Virtual communications do not replace the need for mobility - commuting and business travel, that cross-cuts hub-and-spoke public transport networks, is heavily car reliant.

Fifth, South East England – by far the largest MCR, with predominant European global connectivity through the City of London – has strong functionally polycentric relationships at a sub-nodal level whereas morphological polycentricity is associated with weak regional advanced service linkages.

Sixth, polycentricism has not led to an even distribution of functions in any of the MCRs studied with implications for intra-regional economic sustainability and social cohesion.

The methodology used in the City of London study which preceded POLYNET (Taylor et al 2003) has been adopted for the policy analysis across the study regions. Major EU, national and regional policy documents have been studied by the teams to determine to what extent MCR policy frameworks have synergy with key issues identified in the research and a series of focus group meetings with practitioner stakeholders has been held in each region to determine the key issues for policy arising from the POLYNET study. This final report draws together the results of this important transnational policy review.

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2. Policy Frameworks for the NW European Mega-City Region

The Lisbon Agenda

The 'Lisbon Agenda', adopted by the European Council in the year 2000 (European Council 2000), emphasises the vital importance of Europe's global competitiveness in the knowledge economy. European demographic change, the pensions deficit, rising cost of health provision and enlargement, make achievement of the Lisbon strategy of vital importance. This aims to make the EU "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment by 2010". The rise of the Asian and particularly the Chinese economies and impact of global climate change also demonstrate the need to promote EU sustainable development. The focus on growth, innovation and employment announced in March 2005 reinforces the need to strengthen social cohesion and the mobilisation of national and community resources in economic, social and environmental dimensions. Guidelines for economic growth and jobs for the period 2005-2008, released in April, are currently being incorporated in national Action Plans by member states for completion by October 2005.

The Action 3 Policy Analysis has key relevance for this agenda. The POLYNET empirical research focuses on core knowledge production activities in the global service economy. International services are concentrated in London which is the European region centre and 'gateway city' in tripartite global markets. Knowledge-based flows between London, Paris, Frankfurt and other leading North West European business centres are therefore of crucial importance for the achievement of the Lisbon Agenda.

The ESPD

The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP 1999) provides the framework for sustainable development in relation to economic and social cohesion, the conservation of natural resources and natural heritage and the creation of a more balanced and competitive European territory. These objectives are closely linked to the development of a European polycentric urban system in which there is a concentration of urban functions and improved, sustainable, internal and external accessibility to promote flows between the economically dynamic 'gateway cities' and peripheral regions (Beaverstock et al 2003). The concentrations in global gateway cities must be supported – the ESPD does not propose a movement of activity: "Strategic EU spatial policy in relation to polycentricity does not ... appear to threaten the position of the London cluster but rather it seeks to spread the benefits of clustering to other parts of the EU through inter-city co-operation and improved transportation infrastructure." (Taylor et al 2003).

The ESPD makes a distinction between the core "Pentagon" and the rest of Europe (Fig. 1). The central principle is to promote polycentricity by diverting growth from the Euro-Core to Euro-Periphery, especially through Structural Funds, to encourage growth in less-developed regions, cities (European Commission 1999). Such a process has been hugely successful in cities like Madrid, Lisbon and Dublin in the 1990s; it promises to be equally successful in Eastern European capitals like Budapest, Prague, Warsaw in this decade. But the paradox is that if so, it may have the effect of promoting national monocentricity in these countries, as indeed it has earlier done in Spain, Portugal and Ireland.

The notion of territorial cohesion, embodied in the Amsterdam Treaty, is inherent in the ESPD (Faludi 2004a, 161), this seeks to promote spatial equity by maintaining key services even in remote areas (Faludi 2003b, 133). The concept stems from French planning traditions, specifically *aménagement du territoire*, reflecting the deep French influence inside DG XVI (DG Regio) (Faludi 2003b, 130-1; 2004a, 160); this aims to achieve a harmonious allocation of economic activities (Faludi 2004a, 159, quoting Chicoye 1992). Territorial cohesion appeared in Article 3 of the new EU Constitution on a par with economic and social cohesion, as a competence shared between the Commission and the Member States through the "community method" (Faludi 2004b, 1019; 2005a, 2).

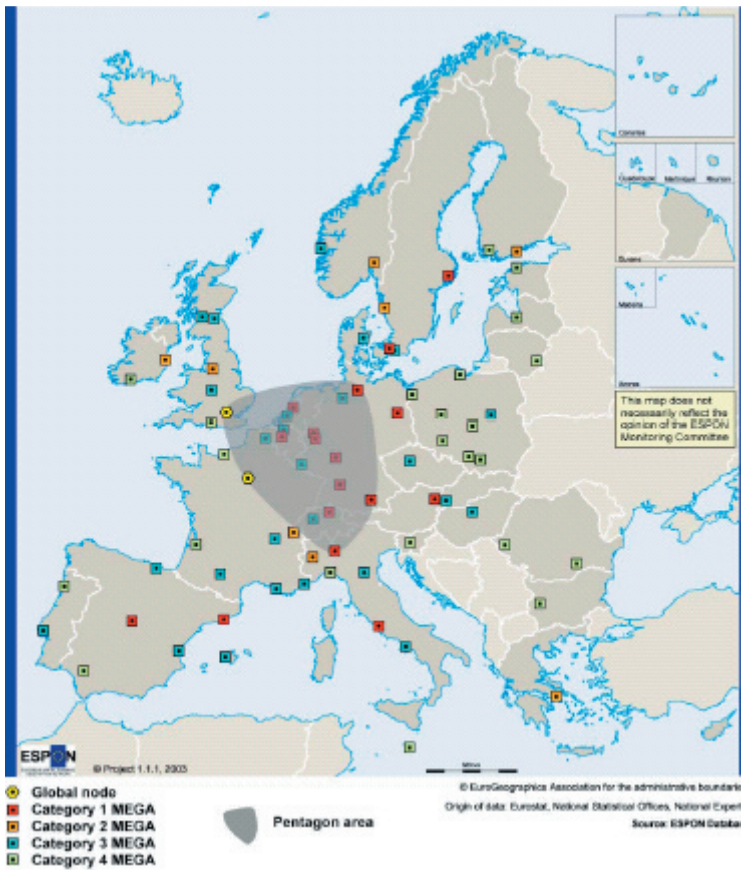


Figure 1: ESPON: The Pentagon versus the Rest Source: ESPON 1.1.1

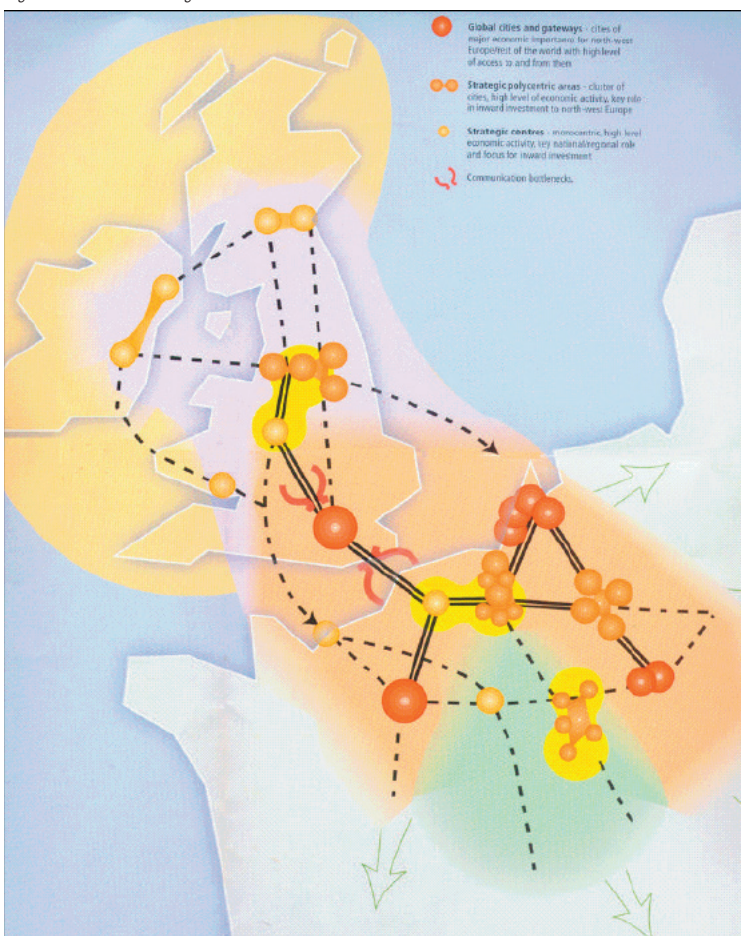


Figure 2: NWMA Spatial Vision 2000 Source: NWMA 2000

The North West Metropolitan Area Spatial Vision

The NWMA Spatial Vision (2000) develops priorities for national and regional implementation in the European economic core or 'Central Zone' around London and Paris - the focus of the POLYNET study - effectively seeking to operationalise ESDP objectives in the particular spatial context of this sub-region (the predecessor of today's North West Europe, albeit occupying a significantly smaller area). Here it emphasises the need to improve internal and external accessibility, to combat congestion and environmental degradation by the containment of urban development and promote co-operation between cities (NWMA 2000, 30). Central Belgium, RhineRuhr, the Randstad and Rhine-Main are described as "strategic polycentric areas" while London and Paris are depicted as (mono-centric) "global cities/gateways" (Fig. 2); the Randstad and Rhine-Main are included in both categories (NWMA 2000, 30-1). The Vision seeks to promote a more balanced distribution of fast-growing high-level urban services (NWMA 2000, 28). The international competitiveness of the global gateway cities must be maintained while controlling their spatial development (NWMA 2000, 30). Transport policy should promote flows from these key cities by sustainable modes, including the HST network, encouraging more balanced development at the EU scale (NWMA 2000, 29, 33).

Setting the Context : National and Regional Policies

By way of introducing the summary and comparison of the policy frameworks in the eight mega-city-regions, it is important to explain some specific key features of the policy-making-framework in each of them.

South East England

UK spatial planning policy has recently demonstrated a remarkable degree of consistency and coherence, both as between different spatial scales and also in engaging with the Europe-wide scale. Indeed, in some respects it can be interpreted as delivering key objectives of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), most notably the aim of developing a more polycentric urban system. This can be seen by tracing the common themes down through the spatial scales: European (the ESDP itself), North West Europe (the NWMA Spatial Vision), National (the UK Urban White Paper, Sustainable Communities), Regional: (ODPM Growth Corridors/Areas), Regional Divisions (Regional Spatial Strategies: South East, East of England, South Midlands, South-West), and finally Sub-Regional/Cross-Regional (Milton Keynes-South Midlands).

The European Scale

This has been considered above. In relation to the UK, it is important to notice that in terms of the ESDP, the South East England Mega-City-Region (strictly, London) is located on the extreme north-west edge of the "Pentagon"; part of it is inside it, but the larger part is outside. The NWMA Spatial Vision suggests that the role of the core area – in turn part of the "Pentagon" – as one of the world's foremost world command centres, super-connected internally and externally, is paradoxically producing an unbalanced pattern of development with congested links between South East England and the European mainland, threatening economic performance and environmental sustainability. The key therefore, the Vision document argues, is to develop "Counterweight global gateways and economic centres" in the Midlands and Northern England, and to strengthen alternative corridors, bypassing the core cities, such as Hull/Immingham-Rotterdam, or Southampton-Le Havre (Fig. 2).

The UK National Scale

UK National Policy, developed in the report of the Urban Task Force (G.B. Urban Task Force 1999) and the Urban White Paper (G.B. Department of the Environment 2000), sets a national objective that 60% of all new residential development should be on brownfield (previously developed land) and that a "sequential test" should be used to ensure that existing urban areas are developed first, followed by Urban Extensions and only then by New Communities; there is a built-in bias towards urban compaction. This in effect is a uniform national requirement, which somewhat ignores the fact that circumstances vary as between the UK regions.

The ODPM Sustainable Communities strategy was published in 2003 (GB Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003). It tries to address a geographical imbalance: in the north of England there is housing oversupply, in the south

a housing shortage. The UK government's answer for the north is nine "pathfinders" to develop a combination of regeneration and selective demolition; in the south, it is to concentrate additional housing in four Growth Areas forming corridors running out from London along high-speed rail lines: Thames Gateway, Milton Keynes/South Midlands, Ashford and London-Stansted-Cambridge. Together, these would provide for another 200,000 homes above previously planned levels. The government will provide £446 million for essential infrastructure in Thames Gateway and £164 million for other three areas.

For South East England, the 2003 strategy deliberately develops a series of key spatial objectives. It consciously aims to stress certain key growth directions at the expense of others. Thus the entire western and south-western sectors of the region, which have demonstrated the greatest dynamism over the last fifty years, are simply ignored: the strategy states that growth will be diverted eastwards into the two major northern growth corridors, the first through Luton, Milton Keynes and Bedford (with an outlier in Aylesbury), Northampton and the three Northamptonshire towns of Wellingborough, Kettering and Corby, the second via Stansted airport and Cambridge to Peterborough. This is associated with development of a so-called "science arc" between Oxford and Cambridge, and exploitation of three 200-kilometre per hour high-speed rail lines serving these corridors, one of which (the West Coast Main Line through Milton Keynes) has been recently upgraded. Likewise, south of London growth is effectively diverted into Thames Gateway and the expansion of Ashford, which in some ways can be regarded as a Thames Gateway outlier since in both growth is aligned along the new 300 kph high-speed Channel Tunnel Rail Link from London through Kent, due for completion in 2007.

The resulting growth in all three growth corridors is therefore strongly polycentric in character, with growth following the principles set out in the White Paper: development is to take place first on redeveloped brownfield land, secondly in urban extensions and only thirdly in the form of new communities. This pattern, commonly called beads-on-a-string, has been consistent from the launch of the strategy early in 2003 through all subsequent reiterations and refinements, and has been carried down into regional spatial strategies.

The proposal in the 2003 report, and subsequently, is driven by a perceived crisis of housing supply in southern England, triggered by the revelation that fewer new homes were being completed than in any peacetime year since 1924. Specifically, it is to build 200,000 more homes, above previously planned levels, in London and the growth areas over a twenty-year period:

	Homes	Jobs
• Milton Keynes-S Midlands	+370,000	+300,000
• London-Stansted-Cambridge	+250-500,000?	???
• Thames Gateway	+120,000?	+300,000
• Ashford	+31,000	+28,000

The Regional Scale

The national strategy, and specifically its southern England component, are being translated into new-style statutory plans being drafted in consequence of a major change in the English planning system. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduces a simpler, more flexible plan-making system at both regional and local levels. The Act abolishes the County Structure Plans, which have provided the strategic level of planning since the late 1960s, replacing them by statutory Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) produced by new Regional Planning Bodies, which also replace the former Regional Planning Guidance. These, inter alia, specify housing targets for each District/Borough. There is a much greater emphasis throughout on strategic allocation of housing and other land uses at regional and (where appropriate) sub-regional level.

The Mayor's London Plan, 2004

The first of these new strategies to appear, the Mayor of London's London Plan, was published in draft in 2002 and then, after Examination in Public, in final form in 2004 (Mayor of London 2004). It occupies a special place since it

was produced under separate legislation of 1999 which established a directly elected Mayor for Greater London in 2000.

The Plan follows national – and regional - priorities in seeking to correct the historic east-west imbalance in London and its wider region. The Docklands project began to reverse it; Thames Gateway builds on the momentum. To the east, concentrations of multiple deprivation coincide with large-scale opportunities for physical regeneration. Therefore, the plan shows a strong easterly bias in employment and housing. No less than 14,000 new homes, 60% of the London total, are to be built in Central and East London; 32,500 out of 42,400 new jobs are to be created here, 77% of the total. It might well be argued that these figures have the nature of a planner's fantasy, since there is no set of policy instruments that could deliver them. But the mayor could argue that the trends are strongly in this direction and that the conventional public wisdom, as so often in the last, will be proved wrong.

The Regional Spatial Strategies, 2004-5

Outside London, the indirect influence of the ESDP is clearly seen in a new generation of Regional Spatial Strategies produced by new Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) for each of the English standard regions, with separate strategies from the devolved bodies for Wales and Scotland, in anticipation of a major change in the UK Planning Law: the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act replaced the former system of Structure and Local Plans, for counties and districts respectively, by Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks.

There are two important general points about the new RSSs. First, with the conspicuous exception of London, they are produced by bodies that are not democratically directed; the intention of the UK government was that progressively, through referenda in each region, the RPBs should be directly elected, but in October 2004 this option was rejected in North East England and will not be pursued.

Second, and very importantly in South East England, their boundaries – which are those of the so-called Standard Regions used for statistical purposes – do not correspond at all well to the realities of economic and social geography. The Greater South East contains all or part of no less than five of the eight English standard regions: London, South East, East of England, East Midlands and South West. London is divided from the rest of the region since it has a directly elected Mayor responsible for the development of its RSS (the “London Plan”); this has a definite geographical logic, since it corresponds approximately to the built-up area of Greater London which since the 1940s has been constrained by the Metropolitan Green Belt, and the inner boundary of which is approximately marked by the 200-kilometre-long London Orbital Motorway, the M25. But other regional boundaries bisect two of the major growth corridors in the Sustainable Communities strategy: Thames Gateway is divided between the South East and East of England RPBs (and also London), though this has a certain logic in physical geography since it corresponds to the wide Thames Estuary between the counties of Kent and Essex; while the Milton Keynes-South Midlands strategic corridor is divided between the South East, East of England and East Midlands RPBs.

At the time of preparing this report, 2005, the five RPB strategies are at different states of production. London's, which was produced under separate legislation in advance of the others, is complete, having gone through a draft and an Examination in Public followed by revision. Those for the South East, East of England and East Midlands were produced in consultation and then draft stages from late 2004 through 2005 and are yet to go to public examination; the South West has not yet produced a draft so its strategy (affecting the western fringes of South East England, in the Bournemouth-Poole and Swindon areas) could not be considered in Action 3.

Randstad Holland

The Dutch administrative structure consists of three different tiers: the national, the provincial and the municipal. As regards spatial planning, national government provides the overall policy framework (long-term goals, general strategies) while executive planning powers tend to be in the hands of the municipalities. A key responsibility of the provinces (12 in total) is to ensure a minimum level of coordination between local development initiatives and to check whether they are consistent with going national policy directives. This structure has been in place for more than 150 years, with tasks and responsibilities (in the field of spatial planning) occasionally shifting back and forth between tiers. The latest trend is predominantly one towards (further) decentralisation of powers.

The appropriateness of this three-tier structure has been contested on several occasions during the past couple of decades, one of the key arguments being that it no longer fits today's 'regional world'. Time after time, however, the basics of the structure remained in place. Answers to the 'regional problem' instead were found in scaling-up at the local level (e.g. by way of yearly mergers the number of municipalities went down from 742 in 1985 to 467 in 2005) and in the promotion of inter-municipal and, albeit to a lesser extent, inter-provincial cooperation.

The Randstad Holland represents one of the regional constructs that fits uneasily in the three-tier structure (others are for instance the functional urban regions around the country's major cities). The region covers (large) parts of the territory of four provinces (North-Holland, South-Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland) and incorporates about 175 municipalities. It has never been represented by a real authority of its own, nor is this likely to happen in the near future.

Planning for the Randstad started at the end of the 1950s and has since then evolved as a national government's concern, with a consulting (and eventually executing) role for local and provincial authorities. More recently, however, local and regional actors in the Randstad have started to interfere in the 'Randstad debate' more actively. The past ten years or so have seen the appearance of multiple Randstad-wide studies, discussion papers and vision documents prepared by either the 'Deltametropolis Association' (a rather diverse Randstad-based 'think-tank' and interest group promoting a metropolitan development perspective for the Randstad area) or the 'Regio Randstad' (a more formal cooperation between the four provinces, the four largest cities and their respective city-regions). While these are by no means legally binding planning documents, they do to a certain extent manage to influence the debate and national government's policy views on the Randstad. In addition, they provide an interesting insight into the views and desires circulating at these levels as well.

So in the meantime, the only legally binding policy documents dealing with the Randstad as a whole (and more) are those issued by the national government. The Ministry of Housing, Planning and the Environment every ten years or so presents a new white paper setting out the main spatial policy guidelines for the decades to come. Usually these documents also contain a full chapter on the Randstad and the way it ought to develop. A recent development is that more ministries are involved in drafting this white paper on spatial planning, so promoting coherence between different policy fields. These ministries (i.e. those of Economic Affairs, Transport, and Agriculture) continue to issue their own policy papers as well. With the Randstad being home to almost 50 percent of the nation's economic functions, the country's most congested rail- and motorways and some extremely valuable (and economically viable) agricultural and nature areas, it is not surprising that these policy documents pay due attention to the region as well.

Next to these, there is a variety of legally binding planning documents drafted by the provinces and the municipalities as well. These, however, deal with (very) small parts of the Randstad only and in most cases make little reference to the wider Randstad perspectives outlined and discussed in the national white papers and the documents produced by the Deltametropolis Association and the Regio Randstad.

Central Belgium

The notion of polycentrism in territorial planning patterns

Territorial planning guidelines are now defined in Belgium exclusively at regional level. Regional cooperation in this field – as in many others – is extremely limited. Meanwhile, each of the general plans in each of the Regions is in line with the ESDP views.

The ESDP has been much debated, both at European and Benelux level. The first discussions took place as soon as the 1970s. The ESDP is strongly marked by the original objectives of the European construction, which aimed at improving integration, if possible also at territorial level, thanks to a balanced urban and regional development. The ESDP is a produce of the big interventionist policies in a "neo-Keynesian" perspective. Yet texts have evolved in time, and recent changes have been added in a "neo-liberal" direction, with the notion of "urban and territorial competitiveness". As it now stands, the ESDP intends to combine cross-urban cooperation with territorial competition and competitiveness through the regulating concept of polycentrism.

In the light of these objectives, we can examine how the concept of sustainable polycentric development is reflected in the regional development patterns, not only as a spatial planning concept but also as an operational tool.

The SDER (Schéma de Développement de l'Espace Régional wallon)

The preliminary SDER drafts in the 1980s still reflected a self-centred view, quite influenced by the sudden emergence, from the early 1960s, of a regionalist claim directly resulting from the dramatic effects of the old basins industrial crisis and from a strong mistrust of Brussels. Indeed, the capital, which housed the head offices of the holdings that had been dominating the Belgian industry for more than a century, was considered a bourgeois city, responsible for Wallonia's misfortunes. This opinion was expressed in a project aimed at basing Wallonia's redevelopment on a "polycity", a long east-west conurbation throughout Wallonia, badly structured for historical reasons, offering few services and whose two major poles, Liège and Charleroi, appeared as competing rather than complementing each other when in difficulties. In that project, Wallonia was seen as isolated and cut off from Brussels.

Fortunately, these views were abandoned in the 1998 version of the SDER. The new pattern places Wallonia back in its Western European context and takes into account the qualitative weakness of its urban frame. The Walloon territory is organised around two Eurocorridors, and the pattern aims at improving the cities' structuration by placing them into cross-regional cooperation networks, around or with external poles : Brussels, Lille, Luxembourg, and the polycentric Hasselt – Maastricht – Aix-la-Chapelle area including the city of Liège.

This project is still facing a lot of reluctance from a part of the Walloon policy makers, who keep in mind the Region's industrial and social past. Also the institutionalisation of the expected transregional cooperation seems to come across many difficulties. Nevertheless, the Walloon polycentric project principally appears as a – quite hard – attempt to answer the weakness of the Walloon urbanization and the expensive and sterile internal competition between Walloon poles, especially Liège and Charleroi.

Brussels-Capital Region's PRD (Plan Régional de Développement)

The notion of polycentrism is obviously senseless for a pattern that only concerns the central part of a metropolitan area, the more so as we have underlined the lack of true operational cooperation between Brussels and the other Regions, among which the surrounding Flemish Region. The basic concerns of the PRD creators are both preventing Brussels-Capital Region from losing middle-class wealthy inhabitants, and controlling, as much as possible, de-concentration of economic activities to the periphery's benefit, especially those in high added value services sectors. It is finally not long ago that a certain dialogue has been initiated between the Brussels-Capital Region, the other two Regions, and the federal authorities, accompanied by a cooperation agreement on the financing of a rapid-transit rail system (RER) around Brussels, whose impact on the evolution of Brussels' periurbanisation remains moreover uncertain. In addition, some reserves seem perceptible in the concrete implementation of cross-border cooperation agreements with other European metropolises, especially Lille.

The RSV (Ruimtelijke Structuurplan Vlaanderen)

Contrary to Wallonia, Flanders has from the start included Brussels in its territorial planning patterns. Indeed, Flanders considers Brussels as its capital, a historically Flemish city, even if outside the Region's boundaries and with a majority of French-speaking inhabitants.

The concept of a polycentric urban network is quite present in the RSV. On one hand, through the idea of "concentrated de-concentration", which means a redistribution of population and some activities onto existing cores so that the urban frame will be reinforced and densified in order to counter periurbanisation. In particular, the Flemish Diamond, which includes Brussels into a rhomb whose three other vertexes are Ghent, Antwerp and Leuven, is designed as a European level integrated urban network. The Flemish Diamond, structuring the central space of the Belgian economy, should provide Flanders with a competitive position toward other large mega-city regions of North-western Europe, such as the Delta metropolis, RhineRuhr, the British South-East and the Ile-de-France.

However, the polycentric view as developed in the RSV has to be interpreted at two different levels:

In terms of spatial planning, the concern is to structure the occupation of space between large, medium and small Flemish cities, quite close to each other, so as to preserve a maximum of open spaces between them.

In terms of international positioning, the notion of polycentrism, and especially that of the Flemish Diamond, is a powerful marketing tool. The purpose is to sell potential investors the image of a strongly urbanised Flemish Region, including the large Brussels metropolitan area with its multiplicity of services, transport network and international image they can take advantage of. On more micro-geographical scales, the RSV also insists on cross-border co-operation between Courtrai and Lille, Cologne-Liège-Hasselt-Genk, on the network of coastal urban centres, on the Hasselt-Genk dipole, etc.

RhineRuhr, Rhine-Main

Spatial planning in Germany relies not on hierarchical and centralised decision-making but on federalist and specialist co-operation. So a comprehensive spatial planning programme does not exist for the entire federal territory.

The Federal Regional Planning Act 1998 carried out a fundamental reorganisation of German spatial planning law. For the first time it established that the Federal Government is entitled to define models of spatial development as a basis for its plans and measures for the federal territory and the European Community. In co-operation with the federal Länder, it is also responsible for participating in spatial planning in the European Community and in the larger European area. The Act stipulates sustainable spatial development as a central model of spatial planning and emphasises the growing importance of the region, inter alia, as a planning and implementation level by introducing a new planning instrument: the regional land use plan. It focuses on the realisation of spatial plans. The planning authorities of the regions and the federal Länder are obliged to work towards the realisation of spatial planning goals through greater co-operation between all participants. The Act formulates the principles and goals of spatial planning as well as guidelines such as sustainable spatial development. It obliges the Länder to establish comprehensive planning programmes for their territory but mainly leaves the concrete design in terms of content up to them and to the regional planning authorities. On this basis the municipalities finally decide on concrete land use within the framework of their planning competence. Spatial planning in Germany therefore requires co-ordination between different planning levels: the Federal Government, the Länder, the municipalities and the different types of spatially effective sector planning. There is no single binding plan governing spatial development, but rather models and action concepts which are jointly prepared by the Federal Government and the Länder. Central emphasis is put on strengthening the regions and their specific potentials as well as on encouraging intra-regional cooperation. The conceptions and objectives of overriding importance must be implemented at the regional level. Often they can be first experienced concretely by the citizens at this level.

In the context of the 1998 Act, new activities and instruments have been introduced recently. Concepts which strengthen regional competitiveness and sustainable regional development (regional agenda) are increasing in importance. To support this process, the federal ministry responsible for spatial planning implements so-called demonstration projects of spatial planning. These range from innovative approaches to intra-regional co-operation, regional land management, integrated transportation and trade conceptions, the application of new information technologies and the regional protection of open spaces to new forms of cultural activities in the regions. In each case, an attempt is made to integrate the sustainability concept with its diverse dimensions (ecological, economical, social) into these demonstration projects and to design them as part of an open and transparent planning process.

During the 1990's, most Länder agreed on new spatial planning programmes for their territories. Their statements are supplemented and put into concrete terms by regional plans which usually cover the territories of several counties. In the old Länder, such as Nordrhein-Westfalen, there are legally binding plans for almost all regions. Plans of the Länder and regional plans contain the most important concepts and instruments of spatial planning:

- They designate central places. Central places have an important function in spatial planning. They constitute the basis for decisions about the location of public facilities and for spatially effective planning, such as the granting of planning permissions for extensive retail facilities, the design of municipal fiscal equalisation, the application of assistance funds and the planning of the transportation system. In sparsely populated rural regions, central places secure a minimum provision of public facilities, which helps to curb out-migration.
- They determine development axes, on which transportation and other infrastructure facilities as well as the growth of the settlement area are to be concentrated. Development axes structure agglomeration areas and

strengthen the development potentials of rural areas.

- They determine areas in which certain goals should have priority, for instance nature and landscape conservation, local recreation, agriculture and natural resource protection.

All plans and measures must be compatible with these priorities.

Since the region is becoming increasingly important for the realisation of spatial planning goals, new informal and voluntary instruments complement the regional plans, often rigid in character, which in many cases hinder a rapid and flexible reaction to changing conditions. Examples of these instruments are regional development concepts, in which special interest groups and public authorities agree on goals and concrete actions, or contractual agreements between municipalities and private companies, which determine the contents and measures of spatial plans, or urban networks, in which cities co-operate in certain sectors. These measures are expected to make planning more dynamic and flexible.

The new Federal Regional Planning Act stipulates the promotion of sustainable development as a model of spatial planning policy. Thematic focuses in spatial development as well as new instruments and procedures of spatial planning have, on the other hand, been introduced by the “Guidelines for Regional Planning” (Raumordnungspolitischer Orientierungsrahmen) and the “Framework of Action for Regional Planning” (Raumordnungspolitischer Handlungsrahmen). These strategic and instrumental approaches determine the perspectives of spatial planning.

Reduction of spatial disparities and the discourse on metropolitan development

Traditionally, spatial planning in Germany has focused chiefly on balancing economic development – rather than on supporting further concentrated accumulation – in order to ensure equivalent living conditions throughout the country. Here the central-place concept, has been developed into a directive instrument for spatial planning at the Land and regional levels in order, in times of prosperity, to implement social-welfare policies throughout the country capable of securing the provision of amenities to the population and their access to social infrastructure. As a consequence of this, the economic role of cities was restricted to their functions at the regional level. In other words, until the end of the 1980s there was no political will to think about the strategically superior role of some of these cities or urban regions in a national or even international context due to the fact that such policies, it was felt, might regional disparities and spatial injustice.

When considering spatial planning today, this paradigm sketched out above is still apparent as we carefully read strategic documents and plans. Particularly in eastern Germany, the central-place concept can still be seen as the essential guideline for spatial planning, focusing on the developmental and infrastructure-provision function of “cities”. But for that, since the beginning of the 1990s, one can easily detect a gradual, but crucial, adjustment of norms, objectives, methods and instruments. They are rooted in a somewhat different understanding of spatial planning, as well as a new rhetoric concerning spatial planning in general and some selected urban agglomerations in particular. Urban agglomerations are conceptualised not only as being congested areas which are to be protected from further aggregation, but also as constituting a critical mass for economic competitiveness in a national as well as an international context. Consequently, they are characterised as “driving forces” or “motors of spatial development” and are termed “metropolitan regions”.

In the “Guidelines for Spatial Planning” (1992), among other topics, the strategic importance of eleven urban agglomerations in an international context was set out for the very first time. In 1995, in a “Federal action Plan”, six out of these eleven urban agglomerations, among others, also RhineRuhr and Rhine-Main, are considered as being of superior strategic importance through their designation as European Metropolitan Regions.

Maintenance of urban functions

Germany’s decentralised settlement structure and the even distribution of big and medium-sized cities can be evaluated as a decisive locational advantage in international competition. The centres of economic growth and technological innovation are distributed evenly across the country, which makes the economy less susceptible to crises and helps to establish equivalent living conditions in all parts of the country. For these reasons, the maintenance of urban

functions is a central task of spatial planning. The traditional “European city”, with its small-scale mixture of living, working, shopping and recreation, is an important element in the attractiveness of German cities; strengthening it can counteract suburbanisation as well as economic and social erosion. Keeping the cities attractive for work, trade and living is therefore a central goal of spatial planning policy. Strategies and measures are focused on different fields:

Protecting the environment and using land efficiently

Environmental protection requires efficient use of land. Land-saving construction and forms of settlement, the subsequent increase of settlement density in the cities and the re-utilisation of wasteland is to be promoted also in the future.

Reduction of traffic strain

It is necessary to develop strategies and measures to prevent traffic and to shift traffic from the private car to public transportation modes. This requires, on the one hand, planning for “cities of short distances”, which promote walking and the use of bicycles as well as a small-scale mixture of living, working and supply. On the other hand, improvements in public transportation offers are necessary in agglomeration areas. Commuters must be offered alternatives to using the private car.

Stopping sprawl in areas around central cities

The cities’ quality of life and competitiveness is being threatened by suburbanisation. Infrastructure facilities in cities are no longer used to their capacity, and the desired internal development of central cities is being impeded. The growing distances between places of residence and workplaces result in an increase in traffic. Therefore, sprawl around central cities and suburbanisation must be stopped. This requires improved co-ordination between cities and municipalities of suburban areas, which can be efficiently supported by the new planning tool “regional land use plan” introduced by the new Federal Regional Planning Act. Additionally, it is becoming ever more important to concentrate settlement development in areas surrounding cities at local public transportation nodes and to realise an integrated settlement and transportation planning approach in this way.

Promotion of urban networks

Co-operation between cities is becoming increasingly important to maintain urban functions and to improve the cities’ competitiveness. “Urban networks” promote this cooperation and strengthen the decentralised spatial and settlement structure. Cities and municipalities voluntarily co-operate to become more efficient in areas such as the organisation of public administration, land use planning, business promotion, marketing and publicity, tourism, application for promotion funds and the improvement of cultural and social offerings. They have found their co-operation so successful that work is even continued after funding by the Federal Government has ended.

Strengthening the vitality of urban districts

Urban districts in which socially disadvantaged groups concentrate, which show undesirable urban developments and a lack of jobs need support in order to develop by mobilising their own strengths and resources. The programme of the federation and the Länder “The Social City” concentrates on financially supporting concepts, measures and initiatives dealing with these urban districts.

Developing infrastructure

The supply of infrastructure is the key to securing the international competitiveness of German locations. A mixture of “hard” economy-oriented infrastructures such as transportation systems, energy and communication connections and “soft” factors such as environmental quality, cultural offers, the provision with services and welfare facilities will be a decisive locational advantage. It is the task of spatial planning policy to co-ordinate the sector policies for transportation, the economy, the environment and social affairs in such a way that these locational prerequisites can develop. A good transportation infrastructure is of outstanding importance for Germany’s competitiveness.

Regional conferences

To achieve regional development goals, it becomes more important to focus local strengths and provide common project management. Regional development concepts and by spatial planning conferences play an important role in strengthening intra-regional cooperation, moderating between the different protagonists and co-ordinating their activities in projects. In recent years, the Federal Government has promoted several regional conferences as demonstration projects of spatial planning. They have proved effective in producing a broad regional consensus on development goals and measures.

Regional renewal and development areas

The renewal of areas in which the environment has been particularly strained by industry must be an important matter of concern for spatial planning policy. The elimination of the damage is a prerequisite to making these areas attractive for people and businesses. Therefore new integrated spatial planning methods and instruments are needed.

Metropolitan Regions

The regional level beyond the territorial scale of a Land or a county is not intended as an autonomous 'political subject' in the political system of Germany. Normally political authorities don't exist which as a regional representative look after a regions interest. An overlapping and juxtaposition of several authorities, institutions and organizations with different spheres of activity hamper the necessary emergence of a regional action level as a principle for the design of planning and development processes. Beyond inter-municipality co-operation and sub-regional organizations like the RVR and several development agencies, obstacles and resistance are particularly marked in the case of RhineRuhr. Other designated metropolitan regions, however, show slight signs of emerging institutional capacities on the regional scale.

In 2001 the Planungsverband Ballungsraum Frankfurt/Rhein-Main was established in 2001 according to the Ballungsraumgesetz (2000) as legal successor to the Umlandverband Frankfurt, the first association between the city of Frankfurt and surrounding local authorities to coordinate city-regional land-use planning. The Planungsverband has not yet completed a combined regional and land-use plan for 75 municipalities in central Hesse, although a Strategic Vision was published in 2005

Table 1: Institutional context for spatial planning in Rhine-Main		
Institutions involved in planning	Scope of planning	Policy documents analysed
1. Ministries of the federal states		
Hessian Ministry of Economics, Transportation, Urban and Regional Development	Spatial planning for a federal state	Landesentwicklungsplan Hessen 2000.
Office of the Minister President of Rhineland-Palatinate		Landesentwicklungsplan Rheinland-Pfalz (1995).
Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs, Infrastructure, Transport and Technology		Landesentwicklungsprogramm Bayern 2003
2. Regional planning associations		
Mittelrhein-Westerwald		
Mittelhessen		
Südhessen		Regionalplan Südhessen (2004)
Rheinhessen-Nahe		Regionaler Raumordnungsplan Rheinhessen-Nahe (2004)
Bayerischer Untermain		Regionalplan Region Bayerischer Untermain (1) (1983);
		Regionalplan Region Bayerischer Untermain (1), Zweite Änderung (2002)
Frankfurt/Rhine-Main Conurbation Planning Association (includes 75 municipalities)	Combined regional and land-use planning	Frankfurt/Rhein-Main 2020 – die europäische Metropolregion. Leitbild für den Regionalen Flächennutzungsplan und den Regionalplan Südhessen (2005)
3. Municipalities		
284 municipalities		Erläuterungsbericht zum Flächennutzungsplan der Stadt Mainz (2000);
		Erläuterungsbericht zum Flächennutzungsplan 2010 der Stadt Wiesbaden (2003)
Frankfurt/Rhine-Main Conurbation Planning Association (includes 75 municipalities)	Combined regional and land-use planning	Frankfurt/Rhein-Main 2020 – die europäische Metropolregion. Leitbild für den Regionalen Flächennutzungsplan und den Regionalplan Südhessen (2005)

EMR Northern Switzerland

The Political System and Planning Responsibilities in Switzerland

The “classical” Swiss political system consists of three tiers, the confederation, 26 cantons and about 2900 municipalities. Each of the three tiers of the confederation has its own spatial planning responsibility. The emphasis for spatial planning is at the cantons, whose task is to integrate spatial claims by means of structure plans. The communes are generally responsible for land use planning. Lastly, under the constitution, the confederation is responsible for the legislative framework, for formulating planning principles, for co-ordinating formal spatial policies both internally and with the cantons.

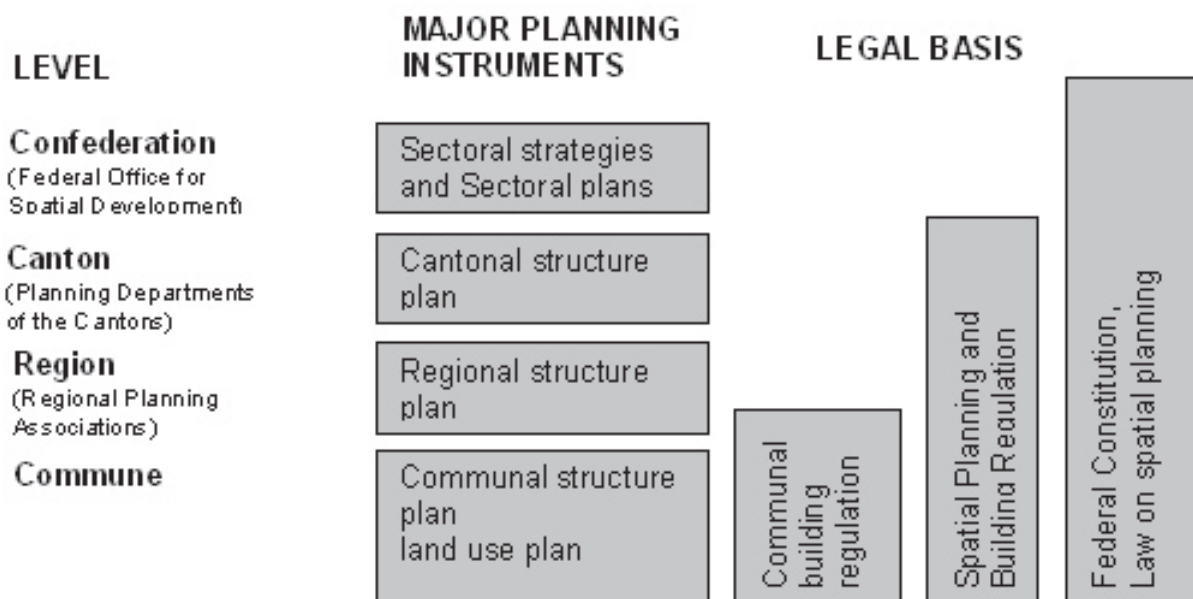


Figure 3: Overview of the planning instruments and the legal basis in Switzerland

Horizontal and vertical cooperation and the relation to the European scale

Fragmentation and variety is one of the most striking features of the Swiss federation. The territorial division of the country, the large number of federal states and their extended autonomy reflect cultural and socio-economic reality of the second half of the 19th century. The careful power balance between the different parts of the country and different levels of government has interfered with large territorial reforms. The politico-territorial structure has however come under strain. The former small scale disparities have gradually been replaced by a larger and coarser pattern, revealing that social and economic life is more and more organised in larger functional areas. The growth of urban areas across traditional institutional borders has left its mark on the urban structure of Switzerland. Economic and social activities no longer follow traditional borders but overlap them in various ways, creating a mismatch between institutional and functional regions (OECD 2002: 13). The principle of vertical and horizontal function fulfilment and competence distribution also characterises the efforts towards spatially-related steering which have been under way since the mid-1990s. The Swiss planning policy guidelines were an important step, which in 1996 helped to identify the significance of the agglomerations for the social and economic development of Switzerland. Given the significance of metropolitan areas for economic development, the Federal Constitution, revised in 1997, requires the Federation to take more account of the concerns of the agglomerations.

The extra-parliamentary federal committee for spatial development was put in place in June 1997 in order to support the government and administrative units in tasks and problems that come along with the fact, that spatial development is a matter that touches intersectoral political responsibilities. The committee advises the Federal Council and federal administrative units responsible for regional policies and spatial planning in principle questions of spatial development policies.

In 2001 the "Tripartite Agglomeration Conference" consisting of the three levels – federal, cantonal and municipal – was founded to promote vertical co-operation in policy fields relevant for the metropolitan areas.

In the field of spatial planning, large cantons often delegate supramunicipal spatial planning tasks to public-law regional planning associations. In the canton of Zurich, for example, these draw up regional structure plans, which develop spatial planning on the basis of the structure plan for the whole canton. In Geneva, a structure plan for the Swiss-French metropolitan area is available (Charte de l'agglomération Franco-Valdo-Genevoise) (ISoCaRP and ARE 2004: 7).

Over the last decades, an increasing number of single or multi purpose district bodies (special districts) have been founded on a regional level. On the downside, for instance each Zurich municipality belongs to an average of six dedicated organisations (Neue Zürcher Zeitung 11./ 12.05.02). The consequence is the jeopardising of controllability,

manageability and integral regional performance as well as the ability to find solutions to problems.

The vertical and horizontal function fulfilment does not only include the national, subnational and regional levels. The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) has been officially accepted and welcomed by the Swiss Federal Office of Spatial Development. Also, despite the status of a Non-EU member, there is a Swiss Commitment towards INTERREG and ESPON.

Taxes and instruments of the political system

The federal constitution endows the three levels of government with the right to levy taxes. Generally speaking, the federation relies on consumption (indirect) taxes, whereas cantons and municipalities rely more on income and wealth (direct) taxes. The cantons have fiscal sovereignty where it is not the domain of the federation (OECD 1999).

It is an outstanding feature of the Swiss political system, that the constitution and the political system provides a whole range of instruments and opportunities for cooperation, participation and constructive problem solving processes. Voters have a range of rights, which give them a direct influence on policies at every level. E.g., for any change in the constitution, a referendum is mandatory; for any change in a law, a referendum can be requested. In practice, the people have the last word in every change of law some interest group disagrees with.

Paris Region

If there are no special planning documents at the metropolitan region level, many schemes and plans deal with issues directly or indirectly related to the MCR or parts of it, especially in planning, economic development and other strongly-related sectors.

National schemes from the government agency for spatial planning and regional action (Datar - Délégation à l'Aménagement et à l'Action régionale) give some outlines of the Politique d'Aménagement du Territoire (PAT), the State led spatial planning policy that aims at developing a broad spatial approach by encompassing as many relevant sectors as possible. After the Datar scenarios of the 1990's, the more recent Schémas des Services Collectifs (Collective Services Schemes) propose maps and guidelines for state policies dealing with transport infrastructures, higher education and research, culture, environment, etc. In what has been depicted as a new culture of objectives and efficiency, the national government has recently launched new complimentary documents, the Plan d'Action Stratégique de l'Etat en Régions (PASER – State Strategic Action Plan in the Régions), which highlight four to five major objectives to be implemented in each administrative region. Both the Schémas des Services Collectifs and the PASER influence the Paris metropolitan space.

At a macro-regional level, mix national-regional documents have been developed, especially during the 1990's. A special inter-regional document was issued in 1994, the Contrat de Plan Interrégion du Bassin Parisien (CPIBP, Bassin Parisien Interregional Contract Plan) which gathered in one common project the national government and the 8 administrative regions involved in the Paris metropolitan region. This document was a major – and the only! – project ever achieved at a metropolitan level in our case study. However, strong differences between the State, the Ile-de-France and the seven other regions prevented its prolongation in 2000 when the new Contrats de Plan Etat-région were issued. Indeed the later generation of CPERs was in the Bassin Parisien perimeter returned to fit the regional administrative boundaries, that is to say one CPER for each Région.

Other important regional documents are to be found in the 8 administrative regions such as the Schémas Régionaux d'Aménagement et de Développement du Territoire (SRADT - Regional Spatial Planning and Territorial Development Schemes). They are the Régions' planning and economic development strategic plan which is adopted by the regional assemblies after the consultation of local bodies like the Départements, the communes (municipalities) and the Etablissements Publics de Coopération Intercommunale (EPCI - Intermunicipal Cooperation Public Bodies). In the Paris Ile-de-France region, this regional document is known as the Schéma Directeur de la Région Ile-de-France (SDRIF) and benefits a special statute. Similar to the SRADT in its content, it can legally be opposed to other planning documents. If in the former versions (1965, 1976, 1994) the national government was responsible for the Schéma Directeur, the current revision of the 1994 SDRIF is now under the competence of the Région Ile-de-France.

Many local planning documents come to address particular economic development and spatial planning policies

issues in some parts of the MCR, as for example in the FURs located outside the Ile-de-France which are consequently not part of the SDRIF's perimeter. The Schéma de Cohérence Territoriale (SCOT) for example sets the principles for all planning actions in an agglomeration.

One sees the complexity of spatial planning and economic development related documents in a MCR like Paris'. The many sectors involved directly or not, as well as the numerous intervening public bodies of various scales (national, trans-regional, regional and local) make it difficult at first to classify the documents regarding their importance. However, in the context of political deconcentration – known as “Décentralisation” – promoted first by the socialist governments in the 1980's and by the right-wing government more recently, the two main actors are the national government on one side and the regional bodies on the other. Therefore the Contrats de Plan Etat-Régions and the long term regional documents such as the SRADT and the SDRIF can be used as the two first documents on which to start the study.

Greater Dublin

The hierarchy of spatial policy documents in (the Republic of) Ireland is simple – basically, there are 3 levels:

- National (National Spatial Strategy)
- Regional (Regional Planning Guidelines)
- Local (County Development Plans)

Local plans are long established in Ireland, while national and regional instruments are relatively recent.

National Spatial Strategy

The National Spatial Strategy for Ireland, 2002 – 2020: People, Places and Potential is the key guiding document for the spatial planning framework for Ireland. Its overall aim for the country is to “set out how Ireland can be spatially structured and developed over the next twenty years in a way that is internationally competitive, socially cohesive and environmentally sustainable. The elements of policy and actions that need to be put in place to achieve this are now set out” (p.38). Thus, not only does it discuss policy areas, but it also makes specific actions for the regional development of Ireland.

The National Spatial Strategy believes in developing each Irish region independently responding to its own specific needs, and developing a pattern of Hubs and Gateways to develop these regions and link them. According to the NSS “by targeting strategic centres with the potential to be drivers of development at national level and within their own regions, and by including county towns, smaller towns, villages and rural areas in this process, a dynamic urban and rural structure can be achieved” (p.38). However, the proliferation of Hubs and Gateway designations epitomises a difficulty – the fact that, in a delicately balanced political system, overtly establishing spatial development priorities that in effect show ‘winners’ and ‘losers’, or at least creates an opportunity for this perception to take hold, is very difficult. Nevertheless, because key infrastructure budgets for transport, energy, health, IT and education, and promotion of inward investment, are all controlled by central government, as are all other fiscal and regulatory policy instruments except for zoning, the potential to implement a coherent national spatial strategy exists.

Regional Planning Guidelines – Greater Dublin Area

There is no doubt that Dublin is the driver of the nation's economy, and the unique place of Dublin within Irish spatial planning policy making is clear. Below and within the spatial planning framework for the region are the Regional Planning Guidelines. While the Greater Dublin Area falls into two Irish regions (Greater Dublin and the Mid-East), one set of Planning Guidelines apply. For POLYNET purposes, the Greater Dublin Region covers this Area plus County Louth, which is subject to the Border Area. Thus, for this report, the Greater Dublin Regional Planning Guidelines and the Border Area Regional Planning Guidelines are key. A table is given on page 3.

The Greater Dublin Regional Planning Guidelines are more specific about the nature of Dublin polycentricity. “The proposed strategy would be the most internationally competitive option, since it would do the most to create an integrated polycentric city region. It would create a basis for marketing the regional city rather than the Metropolitan Area”

(p.108). The Planning Guidelines go on: “It is further proposed that the GDA be marketed as an authentic city-region and a single integrated local market. The aim should be to alter the perception that it comprises a metropolis plus a collection of small, scarcely accessible towns. This paradigm or idea is the heart of the strategy” (p.110).

In terms of policy frameworks, these aims of greater co-ordination of spatial planning policy at the regional level have been hindered by the absence of control of infrastructural investment, which rests at national level, and institutional deficits at the level of the Greater Dublin Region. While the Region is spatially controlled by one set of Planning Guidelines, it falls into two regional authorities, neither of which is elected or has any legislative or fiscal control. In terms of spatial planning, the component local authorities control land-use management and have the greater number of policy instruments at their disposal than the regional authorities. It is up to these local authorities to implement the Regional Planning Guidelines as they see fit for the uniquenesses of their own constituency. Thus, the aspirations of the RPG to implement polycentric sustainable development for the area, are limited.

County Development Plans

Part II Chapter I of the Planning and Development Act 2000 requires a local authority, usually a city council or a county council to prepare a development plan for its functional area every six years.

In making the Development Plan the local authority must:

1. Have regard to Development Plans of adjoining planning authorities,
2. Take into account any significant likely effects the implementation of the plan may have on the area of any adjoining planning authority,
3. Have regard to national and regional plans, policies or strategies.

The purpose of a development plan is to set out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and consists of a written statement and plans indicating the development objectives for the County. This then becomes the basis on which decisions are made in regard to planning permission, and so is an important shaper of development on the ground. However, the scale and scope of the component local authorities is such that a polycentric development model is unlikely to be overtly stimulated by policy, albeit it may emerge gradually as a result of market forces.

3. Overview of Findings from the Policy Analysis

POLYNET sheds light on the linkages between eight major North West European gateway city-regions in the context of an emergent development pattern in which clusters of towns and cities form a global mega-city region that is highly connected by information flows. The quantitative and qualitative studies reveal important contradictions in the nested policy frameworks for the mega-city region. The key issues identified in each MCR through discussion with Focus Group practitioners are summarised here.

Is the Mega-City-Region a reality?

In Greater Dublin a holistic approach to the city and region was seen as necessary for the contemporary “environmental climate” (GD 35), but the concept of a polynuclear city-region hardly existed in the mental map of public and private actors in RhineRuhr, either within or outside the region (RR 2). Respondents neither perceived it as a complex and differentiated nor as a complementary location; they recognised some elements of a functional identity, but perceived little strategic and no regional/cultural identity (RR 12). Nor did planners or politicians take much notice until the Federal Government established so called ‘European Metropolitan Regions’ (EMR) in its Federal Action Plan for National Spatial Development in the 1990s (RR 2). Consequently, the State lacks interest in taking an initiative to

frame a “substantial policy discourse” on the future of its biggest agglomeration (RR 11). Functional interrelations of the MCR “European Metropolitan Region of Northern Switzerland” were similarly seen as “not yet sufficiently anchored in the awareness of most policy makers” (EMNS 16).

In Paris the Mega-City region is indirectly considered as a relevant spatial scale by various policy documents, even though the definition of its perimeter is not officially recognised. Yet there is no effective document focusing on the Mega-City Region scale, suggesting that there is insufficient concern to promote a truly metropolitan policy, crossing administrative boundaries as easily as inhabitants or firms do. An attempt to create a global trans-regional strategy for the metropolitan region in 1994: the Contrat de Plan Interrégion du Bassin Parisien, aimed to promote the economic development of the Bassin Parisien by developing functional complementarities with the Ile-de-France region. The logic was redistributive: in theory, development in the Paris region must be reduced in order that the rest of the Mega-City Region could benefit stronger economic growth (PR 7-8). Today, secondary networks in Champagne, Normandy and the Loire Valley do not seem to have reached enough momentum to be ranked among the European metropolitan regions, while central Paris concentrates strategic functions and advanced services through a pattern of flows which is more centre-periphery than polycentric.

In the Netherlands, the Randstad Holland is firmly anchored in the mental maps of people and policy makers alike. Since the introduction of the concept almost 50 years ago it has become one of the mainstays of the Dutch spatial planning discourse. Attitudes towards the ‘scattered metropolis’ have changed over time (see Lambregts & Zonneveld, 2004), and opinions still vary on whether the region can or should be seen as a coherent urban system, but it is nearly impossible to think of a Dutch national spatial planning strategy that would not take the Randstad as one of its key building blocks and seek to relate the future development of this region with that of the Netherlands as a whole (RS 15).

South East England regional agencies recognised “the vital role of London concentration and relationships with the mega-city region for the UK and European economies” (SEE 20). But Belgian respondents generally thought in terms of the scale on which they worked, which sometimes led to confusion: the phenomena, questions and solutions considered can be completely different (BE 6). In the Flemish Diamond the concept of the territorial planners is seen as a marketing concept rather than a tangible reality in terms of firms’ networks! Firms do not operate within a pre-defined urban network but they operate in terms of actors, not territories (BE 8).

Generally, then, the MCR is identified by the research teams as a valuable spatial entity for the consideration of policy, but physical boundaries cannot be rigidly specified. Interrelationships between ‘flows’ and ‘places’ are fluid and dynamic; however conceived, the MCR form does not generally fit well either with administrative boundaries or markets in the eight city-regions.

In Rhine-Main, the POLYNET functional delimitation actually corresponds well with the perceptions of senior business people – yet this proved irrelevant since their firms had their own spatial organisation. The main problem here as elsewhere proved to be political relationships across three federal states and over 350 municipalities, which in no way corresponded to functional realities of economic organisation in planning policies. A related problem was that the area was perceived as a centre for banking and finance, a place to do business and to work, but not as a favourable place to live other cities are seen as more fashionable and livelier places that attract creative minds and highly skilled people (RM 17-19).

In South East England information on spatial-economic relationships at the MCR scale was seen to be urgently needed to inform policy and investment. Regions have been identified in the Draft South East Plan that differ from real housing sub-markets and there are important implications for education, skills and major investment in infrastructure (SEE 21). Interdependencies between the Bassin Parisien and the Ile-de-France region were thought to be of such importance that participants “very quickly came to an agreement on the existence of the Mega-City Region”; however, its perimeter needed careful definition – the geomorphological Bassin Parisien was judged too large (PR 18).

Intra-regional functional linkages vary according to the role of First Cities in the global and European city network. London occupies a unique global-city role in the EU’s North West Europe region, which appears to spawn complex interdependencies between the city’s central business district and the South East England regional periphery. It is the only MCR to show notable cross-cutting functional relationships based on service network linkages between second-

ary centres – i.e. functional polycentricity that reflects knowledge-based interactions.

Other regions have emerged as more monocentric at the MCR scale. A delineated Greater Dublin MCR was largely a normative ideal that would allow upscaling to “create the basis for marketing the regional city rather than the metropolitan area” (GD 16). Despite MCR development patterns identified in Northern Switzerland, the “action fields” of agencies responsible for spatial development were largely determined by problems identified at the spatial scale of the local and smaller region or, at most, the canton. The functional relations operating at the level of the MCR “are not yet sufficiently anchored in the awareness of most policy makers” (NS 16).

In Germany both RhineRuhr and Rhine-Main form part of a polycentric national functional structure which it is German Federal Government policy to foster and develop, but Rhine-Main appears as a monocentric region at the level of the MCR. While on global and European scales the Frankfurt FUR serves as a gateway to the region and sometimes to Germany as a whole, national scale polycentricity leads to weak intra-regional functional polycentricity because advanced services then concentrate in just one or two key centres in each region (RM 18). So it is vital to understand that polycentricity can operate at different spatial scales, and that polycentricity at one scale can lead to monocentricity at another: further, all POLYNET First Cities form part of a functional global city network. Even MCRs that are more polycentric in terms of their built forms show a kind of functional polycentricity in the form of cross-cutting commuting flows.

Polycentricity – how economically successful, how sustainable?

The objective of sustainable development is widespread in policy frameworks and as an aim for practice. It is seen as “part of the rhetoric” (NS 15). Similarly, the principle of polycentricity is very widely accepted as a desirable norm to be achieved. But guidance on spatial development lacks the necessary coherence to allow these sustainability objectives to become operational. The possible conflict between more balanced polycentric economic development and environmental sustainability is not identified in policy documents, either at European or national scale. Davoudi (2003) demonstrates that the ESDP uses polycentricity normatively, as a desirable state to be achieved, as represented by the polycentric city region, exemplified by the Randstad Holland. But little empirical evidence is presented (Davoudi 2003, 991-5).

Polycentricity has implications for environmental sustainability. Polycentricity is seen as important in Greater Dublin national spatial policy to “concentrate development in strong towns with capacity for growth on well-served public transport corridors” (GD 21). This is necessary “to improve access to employment, education, services and amenities” (GD 21). But in South East England, in spite of developments in ICT, more balanced intra-regional development is leading to increasing cross-commuting and business travel which cannot be effectively supported by public transport (SE 18). Functional polycentricity in a wide arc to the west of London results in dense cross-cutting business travel as well as commuting. Focus groups saw functional polycentricity as beneficial to regional development while morphological polycentricity was seen as essentially unsustainable and to be restricted. The implications of residentially driven ‘commuting polycentricity’ and service market driven ‘clustering polycentricity’ were seen as having distinctive policy implications that require further consideration (SE 18).

In Northern Switzerland, though “polycentricity” has proved adequate as a descriptive model, utilizing it as a strategy has proved far more complex. MCR “polycentric morphology” on the one hand, and functional interrelations on the other, do not automatically lead to sustainable polycentric development. In practice, spatial development has not been sustainable over the last decades. Settlements have grown and spread, related to the building of transportation infrastructure: extending regional and national train services has proved the major driving forces for urban sprawl (sub/periurbanisation). In practice it is difficult to distinguish between polycentricity and urban sprawl. This also applies in the Paris case. Does polycentricity lead to a sustainable development or rather to dispersion? Where is the distinguishing line between the two? (NS 16).

Deconcentration during the past thirty years in the Paris MCR is also identified as questionable in terms of environmental sustainability and is “probably increasing social and spatial fragmentation” (PR 21). Urban sprawl cannot easily be canalised and suburbanisation is seen as a pervasive process. Polycentricity – seen as an environmentally friendly planning principle to reduce commuting distances – may have the reverse effect, failing to reduce commuter flows

and favouring the use of private cars rather than public transport. Most important, the efficiency of the information economy may not be increased by a spatially more deconcentrated urbanisation. Recent economic difficulties in the Ile-de-France and the role of major metropolitan areas in global competition may suggest a policy change towards greater concentration.

Morphological polycentricity may also generate criss-cross commuting flows, as identified in Rhine-Ruhr and the Randstad, and this form of development lacks the benefits associated with strong concentration and intra-regional service-based linkages. A recent comparative study of the Randstad, Rhine-Main and London questions “whether polycentric patterns of urban development can be successfully superimposed on existing spatial relationships through the policy process. ... Regional spatial polycentricity is shown to have advantages and disadvantages in relation to three measurement criteria associated with economic, social and environmental sustainability: cross-regional functional interdependencies, distributional patterns of economic growth and development, and environmental impacts.” (Beaverstock et al 2003). In addition, concentration of global functions in First Cities is identified in all the MCRs as essential to connectivity (both internal and external) in the global city network and the ‘knowledge gateway’ role.

In Central Belgium, the Flanders Regional Plan (RSV) develops a polycentric urban concept: through “concentrated deconcentration”, population and activities will be redeployed into existing nodes so as to reinforce the urban fabric, especially in the Flemish Diamond which is seen as an integrated urban network at European level competing with other major urban networks. It also recognises polycentric networks at a more microgeographical level in cross-border cooperation between Courtrai and Lille or between Cologne-Liège-Hasselt-Genk (BE 5). But according to P. Cabus the concept of polycentric urban network only makes sense if there is a complementarity between city functions, a sharing of assets/specializations of each city in the MCR (as is postulated in the polycentrism theory). Yet several empirical studies in Belgium and in the Randstad have shown a very high similarity in the economic structure of the cities and a reduction of their differences in the course of time (BE 9).

While Randstad authorities acknowledge the opportunities resulting from a diversified, polycentric structure, they observe that their scattered metropolis does not offer the same ‘points of excellence’ and ‘quality of place’ as ‘real’ metropolises such as London, Paris and Frankfurt (RS 5). They note that the scattered, polycentric layout inhibits the high levels of intra-regional interaction found in those cities, undermining the critical mass necessary for various types of facilities and limiting the spatial scope of markets. The local and regional authorities united in the Regio Randstad therefore believe that the best way to promote the region’s competitive qualities is by strengthening the relationships (interaction) between the hitherto relatively disconnected centres of the region so as to unlock the region’s latent ‘metropolitan potential’. To reduce travel times between the main centres by as much as 50 percent is seen as a key requirement for this (RS 9).

Thus concentration is a necessary component in regional economic sustainability as well as being less environmentally damaging. In any event, the results for South East England show that generation of intense knowledge flows do not necessitate a physical shift of firms and people: paradoxically, concentration spawns new development in patterns of “concentrated deconcentration” that meet the need for functional specialisation across space. Yet here there are difficult problems of environmentally unfriendly business travel and uneven development in the form of an east-west imbalance in development of advanced services. Similar imbalances, identified even in morphologically polycentric MCRs such as the Randstad, raise important questions: How do advanced services link to other economic sectors? How can social equity be balanced on different spatial scales – within First Cities and MCRs and also inter-regionally?

Polycentricity thus does not have a direct or axiomatic relevance for sustainable development. It might help achieve greater spatial equality, helping to overcome the trend to increasing hierarchical division of labour and social dualisation. But equally, this might be achieved in a monocentric region, by greater metropolitan integration through improved accessibility. Better links – both physically and in terms of information flows - from the centres of First cities to secondary cities, and from the latter to other EU metropolitan regions, prove important.

Is spatial planning useless?

In Paris the key planning documents neglect to put any emphasis on advanced producer services as a distinct type

of high order activity; they fail to differentiate between research and high-tech activities and advanced services, suggesting a deficiency in the understanding of the regional information economy (PR 11).

In RhineRuhr, there was awareness of the different and highly specialised sectors of the regional economy, its distinct profiles and areas of competence, but a disappointing lack of understanding of the functional connectivity and “hidden labour division” of the regional economy (RR 12). Meanwhile in Rhine-Main, planners and economic actors “have different perceptions of polycentricity” (RM 20). Planners view the issues as relating to territorial space whereas economic actors are mostly focused on trans-boundary matters.

In the Randstad it is felt that planning should be more aware of the strength of market forces. Such forces put pressure on space in the corridor between Rotterdam and Antwerp and also transformed the South-axis [Zuid-as] around the new Amsterdam South Station into Amsterdam’s major new office location rather than the banks of the IJ [IJ-oevers] behind the old Central Station. During the Focus Group meetings it was argued repeatedly that public actors should focus their attention on such ‘demand-driven’ cases (RS 15).

In Dublin a major issue was that of asymmetry in policy instruments: national government sets fiscal policy (finance), makes infrastructure decisions (Departments of Transport, National Roads Authority, Department of Communication, Marine, Natural Resources, Rail Procurement Agency), encourages enterprise (Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment) and establishes planning guidelines (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government), while local authorities (7 in the Greater Dublin region) make development plans for their area and administer planning decisions on development proposals in this context. These different functions and instruments have little spatial context, and the result is a lack of joined-up policy (DU 44).

The concept of spatial planning in South East England “has yet to reconcile functional relationships between ‘economic flows’ and ‘places’”; fine-grained strategic vision is needed (SE 25): “The complexity of relationships between economic and spatial processes urgently needs to be addressed in policy at all scales and an evidence base built to guide development and investment decisions” (SE 23).

In Northern Switzerland, likewise, virtual and physical connections and relationships between enterprises cause spatial patterns outside the framework of spatial planning objectives - a process of “hidden spatial development”. There is thus a mismatch between the objectives and strategies for a sustainable spatial development and actual development tendencies (NS 1). While planning principles rest on a normative, territorial logic, actual spatial development follows a functional logic, largely driven by market forces. So the action fields and strategies of the departments responsible for spatial planning and the departments responsible for economic development are not coordinated towards a mutual goal (NS 18).

Are administrative structures failing?

In South East England it was noted that the new RSSs (with the conspicuous exception of London) had been produced by bodies that are not democratically elected. And their boundaries – the so-called UK Standard Regions– do not correspond to the realities of economic and social geography: South East England as defined in POLYNET contains all or part of no less than five of the eight English standard regions; regional boundaries bisect two of the major growth corridors in the UK government’s Sustainable Communities strategy (SE 5-6).

Another question concerns implementation. First, the UK government has proposed and local authorities have accepted a great variety of Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) for local delivery: Urban Development Corporations, Urban Regeneration Companies, Local Strategic Partnerships, an unspecified “Local Delivery Vehicle”, a commercial consortium (Stratford City) and other arrangements (including a special mechanism for delivery of London’s 2012 Olympics). These have varying powers and resources, and some are highly dependent on goodwill and support from the local authorities. Second, though the government has allocated large sums for infrastructure and housing projects, both the South East and East of England Regional Planning Bodies have refused to support higher levels of house building unless considerably more is on offer. There remains a major doubt about whether the strategy can be implemented on the scale and at the speed envisaged (SE 8-9). POLYNET interviews strongly endorse the need for increased investment in transport, which is considered one of the two major threats to London clustering, alongside regulation, by business (SE 13). This is further complicated by the fact that rail investment is determined by a combination of

public bodies and private companies (SE 14).

The plans for South East England show a commendable enthusiasm for adopting ESDP-led policies. But they reflect a strongly land use planning approach; though the intention may be to implement a more far-reaching *aménagement du territoire* on the French model, the necessary structures and instruments for implementation appear to be lacking, especially in an apparent lack of integration between land use planning and transport planning. This is compounded by a lack of governance at the MCR scale (SE 24-25).

Likewise in Paris, Focus Group meetings insisted on the necessity for more horizontal and vertical governance to deal with metropolitan issues. A metropolitan project is needed, probably through a multi-scalar and global strategic approach that would propose common objectives and shared priorities for all partners. It would be pointless to create another administrative layer at the Mega-City Region scale; rather, the need was to open a political space where all institutions can discuss cross-cutting issues (PR 22). Parallel to this, there was a need to fill another gap: strategy for the Ile-de-France central area. Despite its major role as the regional and national gateway to the global economy, the dense central area of the first French metropolitan region has no specific planning document, no strategy and no political existence (PR 27).

The Dutch administrative structure consists of three different tiers: the national, the provincial and the municipal. As regards spatial planning, national government provides the overall policy framework (long-term goals, general strategies) while executive planning powers tend to be located at the local level. The Randstad Holland cuts across these layers and encompasses four provinces and about 175 municipalities. It is not represented by a real authority of its own. Yet the need for a form of regional governance in the Randstad is a recurrent issue. Calls for the establishment of a fully fledged Randstad metropolitan authority have been made on several occasions over the past couple of decades, but represent a mission impossible in the current political climate. Fragmentation is therefore still the key word, although local and regional actors lately have developed different forms of cooperation in order to get things done (or at least discussed) (RS 13). The best example is the cooperation between the four largest cities, their city-regions and the four Randstad provinces in a platform called Regio Randstad. Here the Randstad's key actors develop visions and strategies for the future spatial and economic development of the Randstad and coordinate their interests and position in the Dutch policy arena. Simultaneously, however, there exist several other cooperative arrangements at lower spatial scales. The national government at the moment seems to be willing to strengthen the role of these lower scale initiatives more than that of the Regio Randstad at large. Implementation of the latest national spatial strategy for the Randstad (*Nota Ruimte*) will predominantly be coordinated and managed at the level of the so-called 'wings' of the Randstad – i.e. the North-wing and the South-wing – and at the level of the Green Heart, and not so much at the level of the Randstad as a whole (RS 8 / 13).

In Belgium each Region is responsible for planning its own territory; there is no national structure for consultation, regulation or cooperation at national level, and Regions position themselves as rivals rather than as complementary in a win-win scenario (BE 3). The Walloon and Flemish regions relate strongly to Brussels but not much with each other. One consequence has been intense periurbanisation which has generated commuting movements and cross-subsidization problems between cities and their peripheries, especially in Brussels. The first draft of the Walloon territorial plan did not even include Brussels, despite the fact that large numbers of Walloons work in Brussels and spend their income in Wallonia (BE 3-4).

In the Greater Dublin Region greater co-ordination of spatial planning policy at the regional level has been hindered by institutional deficits. While the Region is spatially controlled by one set of Planning Guidelines, which promote "self-sufficient" towns in an attempt to curb some of the sprawl of the city, implementation falls to two regional authorities, neither of which is elected or has any legislative or fiscal control. In terms of spatial planning, the component local authorities control land-use management and have a greater number of policy instruments at their disposal than the regional authorities. It is up to these local authorities to implement the Regional Planning Guidelines as they see fit. Thus, any aspirations in Regional Planning Guidelines to implement polycentric sustainable development are limited (DU 17). Self-sufficiency has declined and many of these towns are little more than dormitory towns (DU 32). It was felt that polycentricity could not be attained without a more proactive approach. There were very many reports but little implementation. But central government would be reluctant to give spatial policy powers to a Dublin Region government. At the very least, the crucial section of the 2000 Planning and Development Act should compel local

authorities to respect or implement policies set at higher level (DU 36-37).

The MCR RhineRuhr falls under four different District Administrations whose territory extends beyond the RhineRuhr boundaries, and each administration thus takes responsibility first of all only for its particular part of RhineRuhr. There has been a welcome development since October 2004 with a new Regional Association of the Ruhr Region (Regionalverband Ruhr, RVR), with some newly-defined tasks (development of master plans, regional landscape management). However, it will still have no real regional planning competence (RR 4). The 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 priority of self-interest (RR 5). So “No one wakes up the ‘sleeping giant’ due to inadequate institutional structures” and “non-existent interest by the state to take the initiative to frame a ‘substantial policy discourse on the future of its by far the biggest urban agglomeration’” (RR 11).

In Rhine-Main functional linkages and administrative demarcations do not correspond. The POLYNET delimitation includes a large area of the Federal state of Hesse and also reaches into the Federal states of Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatinate. Consequently, Rhine-Main lacks a central spatial planning authority: every federal state has its own planning bodies for the respective parts of the region and adjacent areas. Three different ministries are responsible for planning at the Land level in the functionally defined Rhine-Main region. One level down, five spatial planning regions cover the region. There is a welcome new development in the Frankfurt/Rhine-Main Conurbation Planning Association (Planungsverband Ballungsraum Frankfurt/Rhein-Main), established in 2001 to integrate the two levels of regional planning and land-use planning for 75 municipalities in the centre of the Hessian part of the Rhine-Main region. The functionally defined Rhine-Main region includes 284 further municipalities, which are responsible for their own land-use planning (RM 3). The Planungsverband has yet to complete a combined regional and land-use plan, although a Strategic Vision was published in 2005 (RM 6). The problem is that the planning authorities do not have the political power to promote integrated regional economic development. Thus the regional plan for Bayerischer Untermain puts strong emphasis on the economic autonomy of the Bavarian part of the wider Rhine-Main region (RM 11-12). This is compounded by the institutionally guaranteed right of self-government of the municipalities, which are financed through business tax and a share of personal income tax, encouraging competition between municipalities and often running counter to an integrative development perspective (RM 13). Thus a major policy issue in the Rhine-Main region has to be how to promote effective exchange and cooperation between the multitude of political and economic actors in the region (and beyond the region) (RM 21).

In Switzerland the administrative system has three tiers of the government: the confederation, 26 cantons and about 2800 municipalities, each with its own spatial planning responsibilities. There is no governance body or level with responsibilities for agglomerations (which are merely a statistical category), functional urban areas, let alone the European Metropolitan Region of Northern Switzerland (NS 5). No fewer than twenty federal agencies have remit which touch upon spatial planning in many areas: agriculture, transportation, communication, energy, security policy and public buildings and installations. The budget for Spatial Development Policies is limited. The 2005 Report on spatial development concludes that spatial development has not been sustainable in terms of urban sprawl, social and functional segregation in agglomerations, disparities between rural and urban regions, rising number of buildings outside the building zone, and growing mobility. It proposes a polycentric network of urban centres connected to their hinterlands and profiting from each other in territorial solidarity (NS 6-7). The problem, as elsewhere, is that spatial planning has a relatively small impact on economic development and on managing the spatial impacts of economic decisions; more influential are sectoral policies concerning agriculture, transportation and a new financial equalization scheme (NS 10).

The municipalities in Switzerland play a dominant role in administering planning; regional planning associations are non-existent or weak. They compete for business developments to help strengthen their revenue base (NS 12). Parish-pump policies prevent cantons from cooperation, with the notable exception of the Association of the “Greater Zürich area” (NS 14). Individual cantons have the power to make decisions on issues of nation-wide concern. Further, federal departments do not coordinate spatial development policies: the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs responsible for regional policies act conversely to the Federal Office for Spatial Development’s spatial planning policies. Policy makers were well aware of these failings but shared a feeling of powerlessness (NS 14-15). There is a pressing need to enhance cooperation between the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs and Federal Office for Spatial De-

velopment, and to develop coordination between Spatial Development Policies in the narrow sense and other federal tasks for sectoral policies (Spatial Development Policies in a broader sense) such as agricultural, transportation and technology policies and location marketing, which may be highly effective for spatial development policies (NS 18).

Is the reality competition – or collaboration?

In South East England, London's concentration of advanced producer services, coupled with highly specialised skills and supporting services, is recognised as a unique asset that cannot be replicated elsewhere; even if this were possible, constructing similarly extensive transport links in other UK locations would be unsustainable. London's assets are distinct from those offered by other European cities and cannot be shifted, for example, to Paris or Frankfurt; London's importance must not be underplayed. It is important to consider what might "turn off the tap marked success" (SE 20).

In the Randstad, coordination between the local and the regional levels has improved considerably in the past five years or so. Many of the arrangements established are proving to be quite durable affairs now and they act as excellent vehicles for the building of trust and the development of a common understanding of regions' spatial development problems and challenges. This does not mean, however, that everything works smoothly now and that the cooperating authorities achieve one success after another. Certain problems remain. The (economic) development programmes of the Randstad's individual cities, for example, still give little evidence of close coordination and also in the relationships between the national authorities on the one hand and the local and regional Randstad authorities on the other there seems to be scope for improvement. After a two-year standstill (a result of the politically turbulent start of the new millennium in the Netherlands), meetings between the two have now been resumed, but given the fact that the years of upheaval have pushed to the forefront so many new faces, new views and new ways of communicating, it may take some time before routines and trust levels are back at their old standards again (RS 24).

In the highly monocentric Greater Dublin region, polycentricity is seen normatively as "combining the strengths of increasingly contiguous towns in the midlands of Ireland: "These towns do not have the critical mass to compete with the larger cities on an economic basis" (GD 21). But although Belgium is more spatially polycentric, problems with inter-city competition are reported. Thus, though it was declared that Aix-la-Chapelle, Liège (with the TGV station) and Maastricht (with the airport) should play complementary roles, Liège independently developed its airport of Bierset. Paradoxically, polycentrism may result in increased powers at lower levels of the urban hierarchy without a strong central power to organize the complementarity of different urban centres (BE 12). Nevertheless, alongside interurban competition, interurban cooperation can exist at another spatial scale: Lille competes with Brussels but, in the competition between London and Paris, Lille is eager to collaborate with Brussels (BE 14).

In Rhine-Main, though decentralized concentration and complementary polycentricity feature in planning documents, they remain largely descriptive concepts. While the need to act regionally has clearly been identified for a long time, the intersection of federal structures (i.e. three states share part of the region) with strong local government (i.e. relatively autonomous municipalities) has so far prevented the development of effective regional governance structures and institutions and fostered informal and voluntary forms of cooperation (RM 11).

In Greater Dublin, local links between policy-making institutions and development agencies "would facilitate a more rounded development of county spatial plans". "Rather than county competing with neighbouring county for economic development, regional powers could assist in spreading both the economic and quality of life benefits of a sustained economic growth more fairly" (GD 39). Greater cooperation is needed on issues of planning, economic development and competitiveness (GD 38).

Equally, in morphologically polycentric RhineRuhr, "polycentricity ... is seen as an obstacle for more co-operation among stakeholders" (RR 12). There is a need to move from a focus on a "designer region" to produce a "territorial social practice" (RR 14). Such a policy would start by defining what kinds of complementary functions could be played by each part of the MCR in a regional division of labour.

The concept of the MCR, defined by functional relationships, fits with policy-makers' perceptions: they see it as supporting the necessary degree of concentration and density of activity (and also, for Randstad planners, the quality of interaction) of core global functions, while permitting other activities to deconcentrate so as to produce a degree of

functional specialisation, vital for economic activity.

That said, however, there is virtually no support in the policy-making structures or in public finance for an integrated MCR administration: in all regions, decision-making is fragmented, competition between individual cities is rife (though felt to be counter-productive) and nowhere does a territorial definition of the MCR exist. There is a mismatch between the political pace (short- and sometimes medium-term) and the tangible results of any decision in the field of spatial planning (medium- and especially long-term). A determined opposition to local resistances is needed. If every place duplicates functions this “produces surpluses and diseconomies of scale” (Belgium). “Co-operation rarely comes spontaneously” (BE 13).

Generally, territorial boundaries do not accord with the reality of economic life. Thus, in Rhine-Main, there were tensions between “territory versus network”; “The economic perspective runs counter to a strictly bounded territorialization” (RM 20). And in practice, integration and co-operation fall short of the rhetoric in policy documents. Many regions reported that in varying degrees economic strategies were not clearly embedded into spatial planning strategies. There were inconsistencies in different fields of governance; a new relational thinking was needed. Cross-border issues and functional realities required joined-up governance.

In Northern Switzerland, there were “Mismatched between different levels and fields of action” (NS 17). Spatial planning is normative and focused on physical solutions, yet the space of places is governed by a space of flows in which market logic generates the functional relations. In RhineRuhr no clear shift from traditional land use planning, with its limited focus on inter-municipal issues, could be detected. A more strategic approach is needed to address cross-sectoral issues and the actual functions of the “Polycentric Mega City Region” (RR 13).

Investment, both public and private – but especially public, because this can be directly controlled – proved to be a crucial issue for many. One concerned investment in education, research and training. There was a balance to be struck here: what was the role of universities and research, when high level skills in advanced services are learnt “on the job”. Another issue was the precise role played by key economic “triggers” in the development of a city and its surrounding Functional Urban Region. Peripheral areas, it was suggested, would grow not merely through importing multinational corporations, but more through increasing sophistication of local service demand in intra-APS servicing/supplier relations. The image of a place or an area also mattered for inward investment: embedded perceptions and symbolic capital could play an important role (see also Pain 2002).

Thus, there was a need for spatial and sectoral policies – in fields like employment, taxation or transport - to be integrated. The spatial impact of other policy sectors, economic and social processes, needed to be incorporated into the spatial planning process: “Thus, spatial, financial and industrial development could be better combined in the development of Ireland’s urban centres” (GD 38).

Polycentricity needs to be understood as a normative spatial concept. Other policy fields might have unintentional consequences for the spatial strategies; a goal of achieving ‘simple polycentricity’ might not address priorities for economic growth which may require economic concentration and functional specialisation. All this requires a different form of territorial governance: “multi-level governance” (Thierstein et al 2003), inside a different culture of governance and a strengthening of territorial networks: in other words, “political polycentricity”, as the Paris team expressed it (PR 22) or “Trans-municipal co-operation and coordination at the level of the MCR” in the words of RhineRuhr (RR 15).

4.0 Key Policy Messages from POLYNET

There is a diversity of policy frameworks and development perspectives for the MCR beneath the EU level; but is co-ordination necessary or desirable at the level of the nation state? When it is taken into account by policy-makers, the ESDP is perceived as too abstract, dealing with a macro level that does not relate to the diversity of circumstances at the MCR scale. Yet this scale has great importance for the Lisbon Agenda and requires specific attention.

POLYNET identifies common issues and policy dilemmas for the NW European MCR as follows:

- Accessibility remains vitally important for all MCRs because of the need for face-to-face contact in knowledge-based advanced business services. Adequate investment in infrastructure and better management of transport networks to support major gateway cities is essential to support external and internal flows in all regions.
- Uneven development and lack of concentration at regional and national scales are simultaneously identified as issues for policy. There is a need for development of the ESDP to allow the operationalisation of Lisbon priorities for EU economic growth / competitiveness in the global knowledge economy, regional equity / territorial cohesion and sustainable development - social, economic and environmental.
- There is a lack of understanding of functional as opposed to morphological issues: spatial planning focuses on physical infrastructure but 'functional thinking' is needed.
- The interpretation of polycentricity is unclear: the issue – is polycentricity more competitive / sustainable? - needs to be addressed. There is a need to distinguish between morphological polycentricity (commuting) and functional polycentricity (business travel).
- The policy emphasis on self-containment and low travel is in contradiction with the needs of knowledge-based business service suppliers and their workers and acts as an obstacle to regional economic development. These objectives are assumed to be realistic goals alongside polycentricity but this is not the case.
- There is a need for further understanding of the impacts of functional polycentricity on social equality and environmental sustainability and associated tensions and choices. The policy paradox is that an even distribution of functions conflicts with environmental sustainability objectives; equally a failure to support functionally polycentric development appears to inhibit regional economic growth. Should the policy focus be on addressing problems of uneven economic and social equity as opposed to balancing the spatial distribution of development? Polycentric regional development does not necessarily enhance quality of life.
- The diversity between specific MCR situations and contexts requires the ESDP to be more scale sensitive to national, regional and urban levels. There are contrasts between national contexts that make one set of EU priorities inapplicable. The relationship of polycentricity to different spatial scales must be addressed, including the national scale (not currently prioritised in the ESDP), and the implications for investment and management of infrastructure.
- There is a need to engage the business community in policy debate to gain a better understanding of market drivers and conditions, inter-firm and inter-sectoral relationships, economic and spatial relationships.
- There is a need to understand functional specialisation across NWE MCRs and how this relates to the completion of the Single Market and the EU opening up to global flows. Morphological polycentricity is associated with a sectoral specialisation between similar size centres, apparently, to improve agglomeration economies whereas a greater concentration of services and sectors in one city boosts regional functional polycentricity but the most powerful agglomeration economies are associated with multi-sector clustering.
- Governance and policy instruments are lacking at the MCR scale. Within existing administrative structures some policy makers think they have powers but don't. Some have powers and don't realise it, thus there are direct and indirect influences that can have unintentional consequences.
- Inter-regional competition for inward investment and local 'nimbyism' need to be countered but there is a lack of governance structures for the MCR and a need to upgrade the MCR concept. A democratic input is

needed that addresses this scale.

- There is a need to think strategically and locally. To do this it will be necessary to promote co-operative relations in MCR governance that reflect the network connections between cities across policy and sectoral fields at all geographical scales. This requires co-operative MCR management networks – vertical and horizontal.
- The POLYNET MCRs are strongly interconnected through the global city network. Support for transnational co-operation through INTERREG is necessary because the MCRs are functionally linked and impact on each other. EU funding mechanisms need to reflect the network relations that span the European territory.
- In spite of the doubts expressed about its applicability to diverse national and regional circumstances, the POLYNET findings indicate that the ESDP in fact requires more prominence as a network for Member State and regional co-operation.

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