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## SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT AS A CHALLENGE FOR THE RESEARCH AFTER EU-ENLARGEMENT - WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON AGGLOMERATIONS

### Agglomerations in the wider European Union

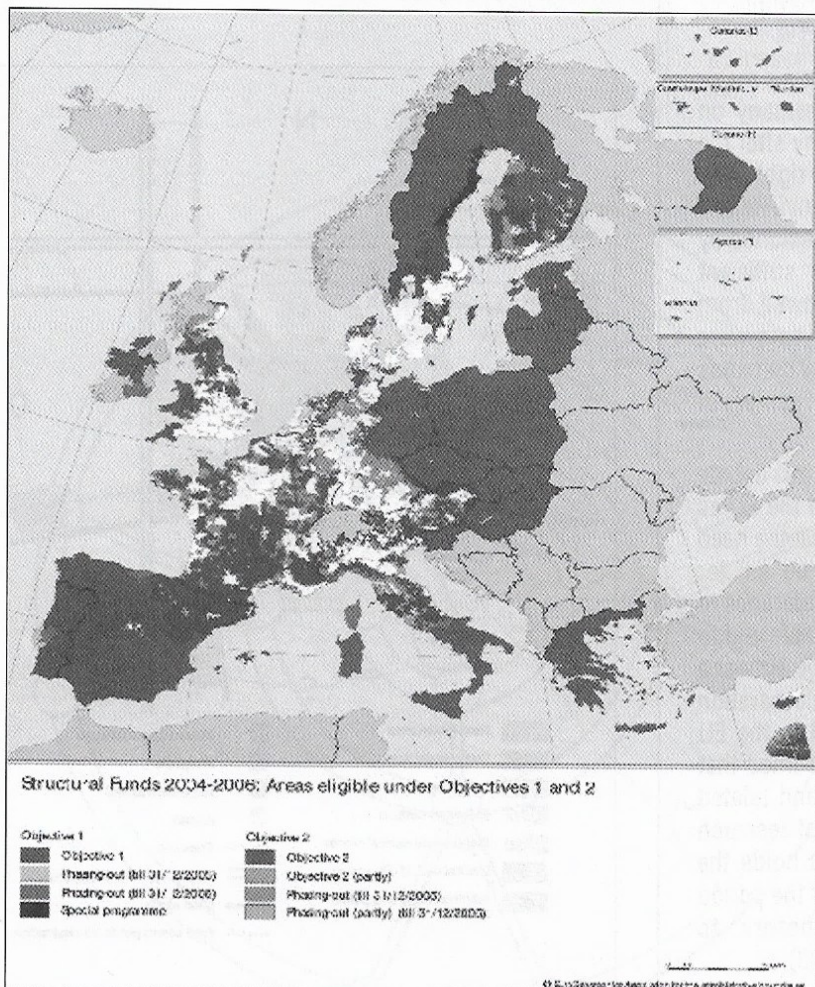
The wider European Union (EU) necessarily exposes a spatially expanded settlement pattern. Within this pattern several major agglomerations were added. None of them comes close to London or Paris, which in the ESPON terminology are global cities (ESPON 2004), and compared with them even the German large agglomerations remain relatively small. Also the economic centers of the European Union are still in the West and to a degree in the North and South, but for quite some time not yet in the East.

The performance of this new settlement pattern has to be confronted with the pattern of needy versus supportive regions in the EU. Figure 1 depicts the well-known

Objective-1-Regions versus the rest. What is important: The vast red area of needy regions (and most of the other colored regions) are supported mainly by the small and scattered white areas of this map. At a closer look these white areas concentrate around the modern agglomerations of Western Europe.

This leads to two questions, which form the substance of this paper. First, a look at the two types of European regions might recall that a major task of regional policy has always consisted in bridging this gap through an equalizing policy of some sorts. Regional policy is meant here to include spatial planning as well as for instance regional economic policy. The discussion which is reported in the first section of the paper points to an increasing role of modern large agglomerations for national economic growth. This leads to a conflict of objectives between national growth and regional equalization. Second, because of this apparent strong role of agglomerations within the supporting regions it is necessary to think about the proper organization of such a major agglomeration. The second part of the paper tries to contribute to this task.

**Figure 1: Area of the enlarged EU by "Objectives"**



Source: Received from Bundesamt fuer Bauwesen und Raumordnung, Bonn/Germany.

### National growth versus regional equalization: A German and a European tradeoff

It is my interpretation of the subject of this paper that the expanding activity in the agglomerations is to be seen in contrast to the other regions which fall back relatively, in economic activity and thus in public services. This conflict has pervaded the discussion on regional policies in Germany for the past 50 years, and therefore I would like to draw on this experience.

Traditionally German spatial planning and regional economic policy has concentrated on the problems in rural, more thinly populated and often peripheral areas. Therefore, regional policies made efforts to provide these areas with





sufficient access and other support like freight subsidies, firm-oriented subsidies, but also through founding public institutions like universities there, and last not least through regionally equalizing transfers in the public sector.

This attitude was supported by the neoclassical theory that regions would converge in the long run. Agglomeration regions were considered to be overflowing, because labor and land are scarce and expensive there, and economic activity would therefore shift to the less developed regions, where these factors of production are abundant and therefore inexpensive. A regional policy, which improved the infrastructure and supported enterprises in these poorer regions, accelerated that process and thereby helped national economic growth. Thus there was harmony between the objectives of national growth and of regional equity. Personally, I lived comfortably with this state of affairs in science and policy. The interpretation of the world by means of convergence theory coincided nicely with what, as a citizen, I wanted to be done, namely to help those (regions) which without their own fault were worse off than the average.

This harmony was disturbed from both sides, from the side of economics and through the economic reality in Germany. In regional economics and economic geography, following the work by Paul Krugman and the results of regional innovation theory, the major modern agglomerations are today considered to be the birthplaces of national growth.

From the perspective of today's regional policy, a major debate arose just over the past months in Germany on whether the regional policies in Eastern Germany after the fall of the "Iron Curtain" in 1989 had followed the right path. It was triggered by the so-called Dohnanyi-Report (Dohnanyi/Most 2004), which had been commissioned by the federal government. There seems to be sufficient evidence that the tremendous funds which flowed from Western to Eastern Germany over the past 13 years were dispersed too widely across the regions, and now demands are raised that the money should concentrate on centers of economic activity.

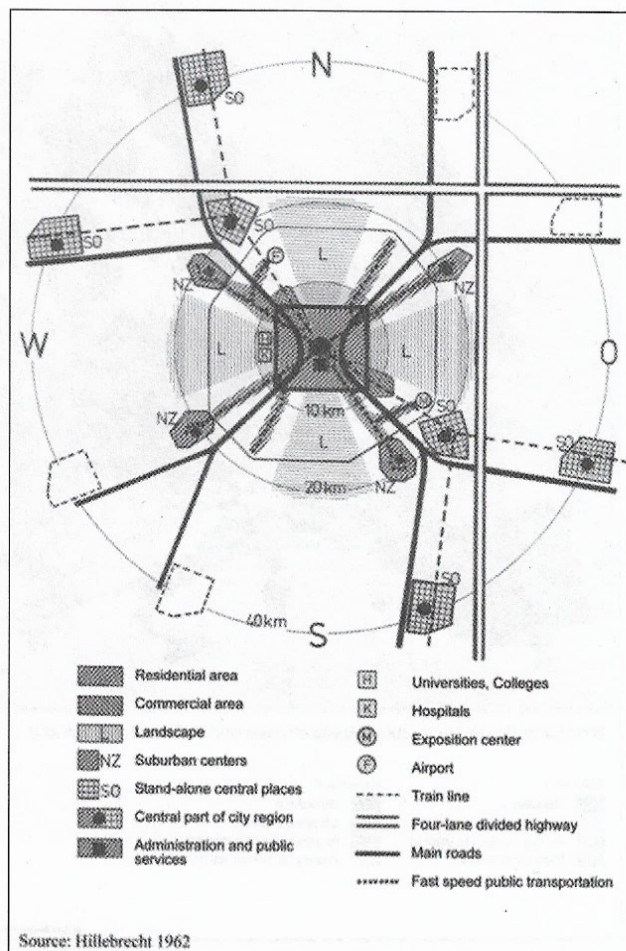
This paper cannot discuss in detail, whether this debate in Germany should be widened to the whole of the EU as well. But the results of recent economics point to the need for such an expanded discussion, the more so as, for instance, Krugman started his arguments with reference to international trade, and only later were they transferred to the regional level inside a country. So it would be almost a return to the scientific roots, if the agglomeration arguments would be carried from the national to the EU level. For the sake of this paper it is simply assumed that such a transfer is warranted. In my view this and related further questions constitute one of the fields of research where more investment could be fruitful. This holds the more as recent and proposed EU programs (for the period after 2006) pay more attention than before to agglomerations, also the modern ones (ARL 2003).

This has, of course, grave consequences for the way in which agglomerations are handled by spatial planning and regional economic policies within the member states. Agglomerations would become favorite objects of attention in these fields of policy. And the first question would be, how they should be organized. This by the way is a topic on the border-line between spatial planning and urban planning.

## A new challenge: Organizing a major agglomeration

### A POSSIBLE MODEL

For regional policy in Germany and possibly in the EU these results of modern science, if they stand up to further scrutiny, mean to concentrate on a new objective, which so far had been widely disregarded, at least in Germany: How can an agglomeration region (widely defined) of - say - 3 million inhabitants be organized properly in a way that economic activity can prevail and at the same time the living conditions can remain sufficiently good, so that the next generation will not be chiding present-day decision-makers for having ruined the region as a whole.





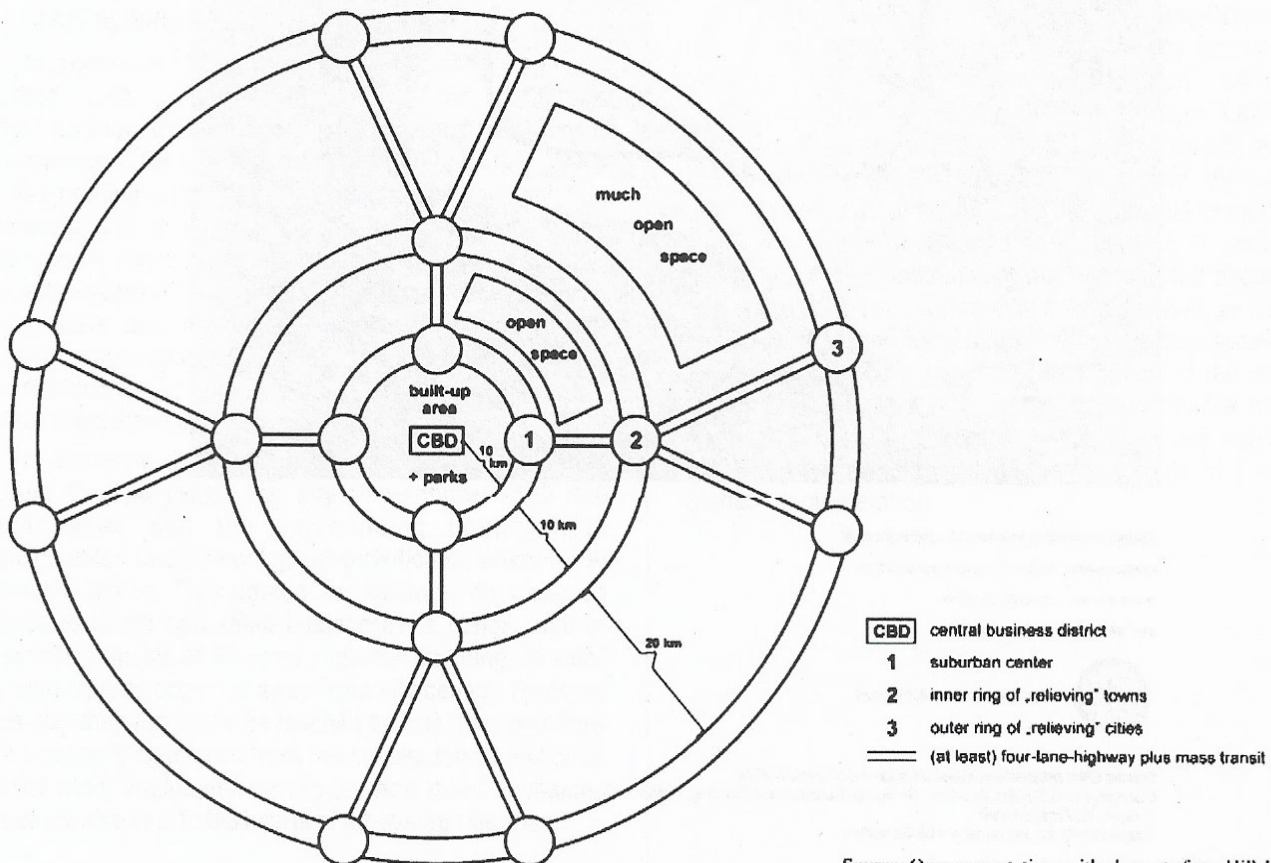


Apparently this is a challenge first of all for spatial planning. To achieve this, the basic idea had always been to concentrate commercial and residential activity in some places and to keep open space in others. As an old German academic with a planning background, Frido Wagener, once told me: "If regional planning has managed to retain open space, it has already proven its necessity". As to this basic idea, I personally prefer a rather old model of the 1960s, because I think that, if adjusted to more recent conditions, it still contains elements which should be helpful also for the future.

In his paper of 1962 (Figure 2) Hillebrecht drew up a model for a population of three million. The model comprised only one four-lane divided highway, and even that was not truly a part of the transportation system of the agglomeration itself, but rather constituted a long-distance connection touching the agglomeration in a tangential way. The second ring of towns is merely connected by a ring of secondary roads, and the outer ring of cities is not connected at all by any means of transportation. The model thus clearly focuses on the radial connections and is in this respect not adequate today. But there is an element in it which is of greater importance today than it was in 1962: the areas marked L (for Landschaft, equaling landscape), meaning open space of a larger dimension than the typical city park.

Not least because of this element L, I tried to develop the model further (Figure 3), and its essentials will not be new to many of you. Transportation corridors (multi-lane highways and mass transit) are concentrated radially as well as in concentric rings. In between are areas marked "open space". The innermost ring (1) might, as in Figure 2, be built at a radius of 10 km around the central business district (CBD). The nodal points may be considered suburban centers. The second ring would be another 10 km away, with an inner ring of "relieving towns". It is important to have open space already inside this second ring, because a built-up area of 40 km diameter with only city parks may not be what future generations might regard as a region worth living in. The outer ring (3) could then be another 20 km further outside, thus spanning an agglomeration region of about 80 kilometers in diameter (or even more, because these outer large "relieving cities" would have their own major diameter of own urban and suburban area).

The most important feature of such a model are again the areas of open space. This means that the main function of the transportation corridors in Figure 3 is not transportation - though, of course, they have to fulfil this function satisfactorily. Their main objective is to concentrate commercial and residential settlements near these corridors and nodal towns resp. cities! The purpose of this concentration of commercial and residential areas is to create in-between areas of less development pressure. These areas should be kept free by spatial planning for the purposes of agriculture, open air, leisure, ecological reserve etc.



Source: Own presentation, with elements from Hillebrecht



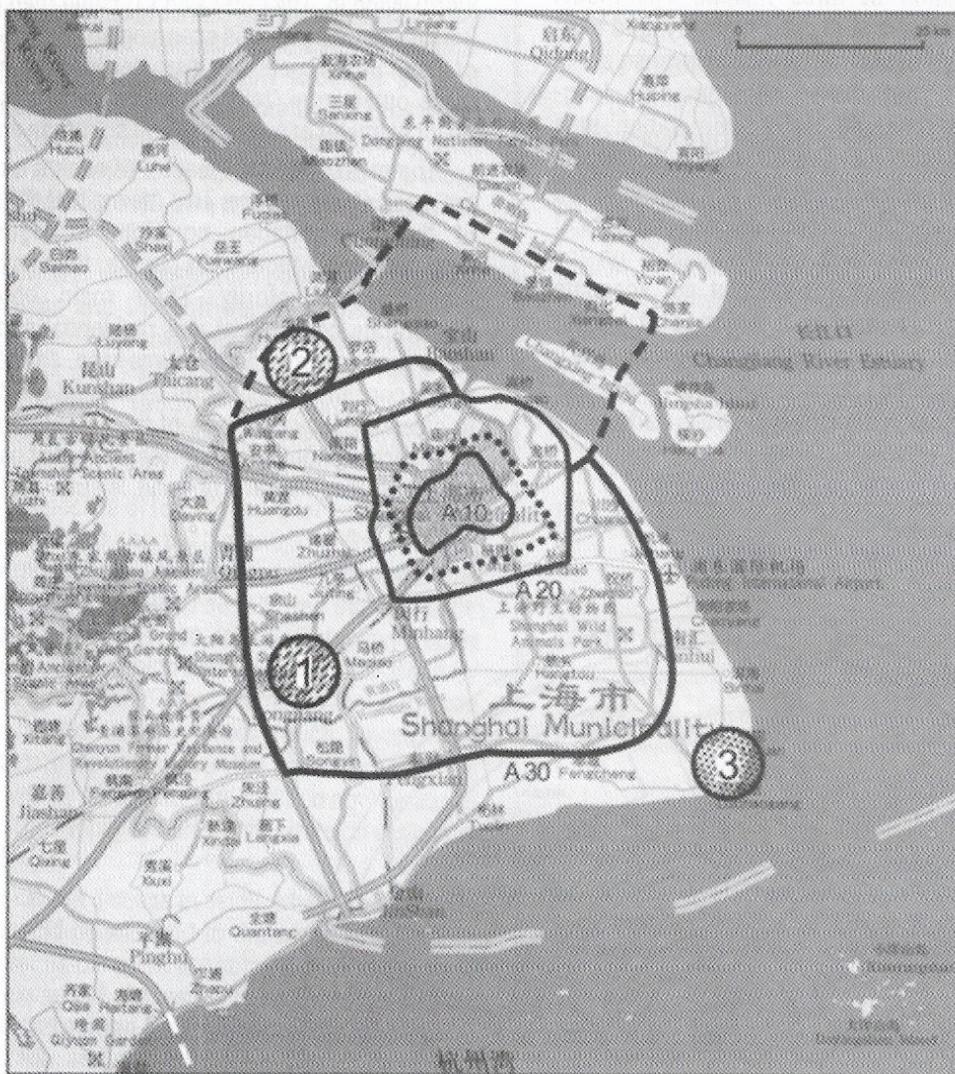


If such a model could be put into practice, it might be interpreted as a sustainable way of organizing a modern large agglomeration with strong economic development. Maybe, such a "concentric ring" system is able to move a modern agglomeration forward, also economically and also in the long run.

Of course such a model will never be brought to life in all its elements. But it is important to have a vision of what a large agglomeration should look like. From this vision one can then derive tangible objectives. They, in turn, can be aimed at by proper instruments. The vision of Figure 3 could lead to the objective of concentrating development

along transportation corridors. And this objective can then determine the right dimension and regional position of the next subway line or highway ring.

Figure 3 constituted the state of my thinking, when I flew to China for a UNESCO conference on land use planning. In the course of the later field trip to Shanghai I was introduced to a map of Shanghai municipality. It turned out that the built-up plus the planned "rings" there (Figure 4) fit almost exactly the proportions in Figure 3 (and thus the distances in Figure 2 as well, which was of 1962!) and in general proved the viability of the model. The outer ring is meant, above all, to connect three new towns, which also



System of (at least) four-lane divided highways:

———— built-up or under construction

..... recently decided

----- long-range plan



New Towns; No. 3 is planned

Source: Own presentation, based on information from Y. Zhan  
Cartography: G. Rojahn, Academy for Spatial Research and Planning, Hanover/Germany  
Content: H. Zimmermann  
Responsibility for any errors is with the author.



correspond to the Hillebrecht model. Each of them is planned for about 800 000 inhabitants. Large areas between the two outer rings are meant for agriculture, preservation etc.

There remained, of course, some questions related to Figure 4, which need further discussion. As opposed to Figure 3, there is no "open area" planned between the inner ring and the second ring. Instead, just recently an additional ring has been decided upon between the two (dotted line in Figure 4). In the end this means, as mentioned before, that there will be built-up area plus only city parks in a diameter of 40 kilometers. At present this is understandable under the pressure of economic development and the needs of a large segment of the population to improve their income. But the next or at least the second generation from now may not view this as an environment to live in - and in that sense it would prove then to not have been planned under the perspective of sustainability - in all three versions of economic, ecological and social.

A second open question concerns the new towns. They are envisaged as mostly self-contained in the sense that little commuting to the central business district occurs. But when Shanghai municipality will have transformed itself into a service-driven economy - and with the Chinese speed of development this may not take too long - this commuting will increase tremendously. Therefore, Shanghai should rather look to monocentric metropolises like London and Paris and should lay out its radial transportation corridors, especially for public transportation, large enough for their future widening.

#### **ESTABLISHING REGIONAL GOVERNANCE**

An additional element, which would be very helpful in putting such a large-scale strategy for a modern agglomeration into practice, is some kind of regional governance in the agglomeration region. To me this seems to be a problem which has not found the one good solution somewhere in this world, which one only has to copy. Everywhere new efforts are made to bring the different decision-makers inside an agglomeration region together: local, state and central governments, business, non-governmental organizations etc., and in an organizational form which allows them to make good decisions and to follow them through.

In Germany we have seen a very new development during the last years. The city of Hannover (500 000 inhabitants) and the surrounding county have amalgamated into a new type of jurisdiction, unknown in Germany before. They agreed, for instance, on a plan on where to locate new retail businesses, a major point of discussion in all of German regional planning. If retail establishments occur far away from city centers (because that way they can easily be reached by car), they withdraw the economic substance from the smaller towns and cities in the wider agglomeration region. And these towns and cities are also dear to the hearts of the average German.

#### **What might follow for the new member countries?**

The impression might have been gained that most of the discussion in this paper is only of importance for those old member countries of the EU where major modern agglomerations exist. Moreover, it might appear that the new countries are supposed to stay for an almost indefinite time in the recipient position, because they lack such „growth engines“.

But the new member countries are involved in this discussion in several ways. First of all, they should also be interested in the Western agglomerations fulfilling their role as motors of growth. As Figure 1 demonstrates, the equalization policy between member states can only be upheld, if the small white areas, i. e. mainly the agglomerations, function properly. It is like in a welfare state: Only what has been created through growth, can then be distributed to the needy.

Second, the new member states should think of their own agglomerations as their national engines of growth, and they should find their own answer in their national conflict with the regional equalization objective. As the ESPON results show, there are promising agglomerated centers in most of these countries (ESPON 2004, p. 26-27).

Third, for some of the new member states an additional role seems possible. I would like to indicate it for the example of our guest country, the Slovak Republic. Bratislava is only few kilometers - in direct distance - away from Vienna. The same is true for striving parts of Hungary, and Budapest itself is not far away. Vienna and Bratislava taken together even are, in ESPON terminology, among the "potential main nodes outside the pentagon", with the pentagon being formed by the five corners London, Hamburg, Munich, Milan and Paris. If one thinks of a major modern agglomeration springing up around Vienna, it might fit the vision of Figure 3 and the Shanghai example in Figure 4 of a well-organized area of this kind. It need not contain 18 million inhabitants, but it would, if it becomes attractive and is competitive over a longer period, be rather large. And it would clearly be a contributing, not a receiving region of the EU. To generalize this notion: If the major agglomeration of a new member country fits the larger adjacent high-income agglomeration of an old member country, they could reap together the profits of a large modern agglomeration.



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