

Medium-sized towns as motors for the South Baltic Arc Region

European perspectives and policy options

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Difficult times for medium-sized towns



→ European spatial policy discourses are very much focussed on **metropolitan regions**



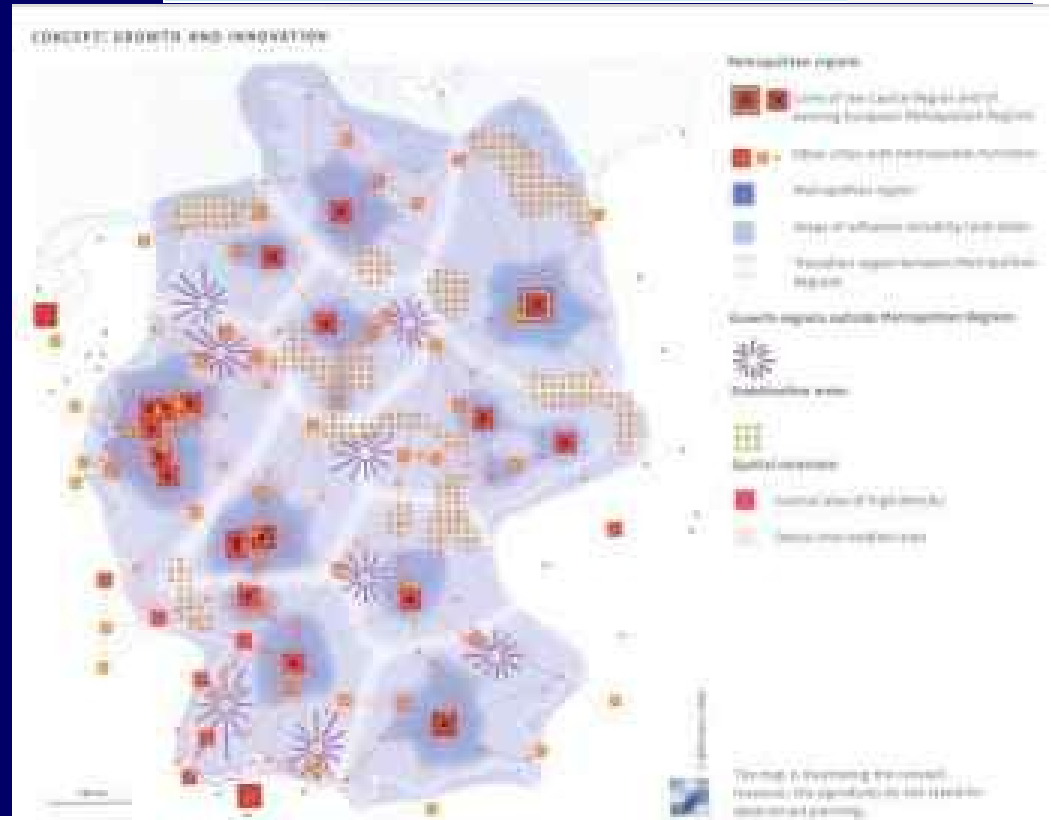
→ in normative concepts:

Metropolitan regions seem to be the most promising spatial configurations for growth, innovation, and transnational networking

Map 4 - FRAMEWORK FOR A POLYCENTRIC EUROPE



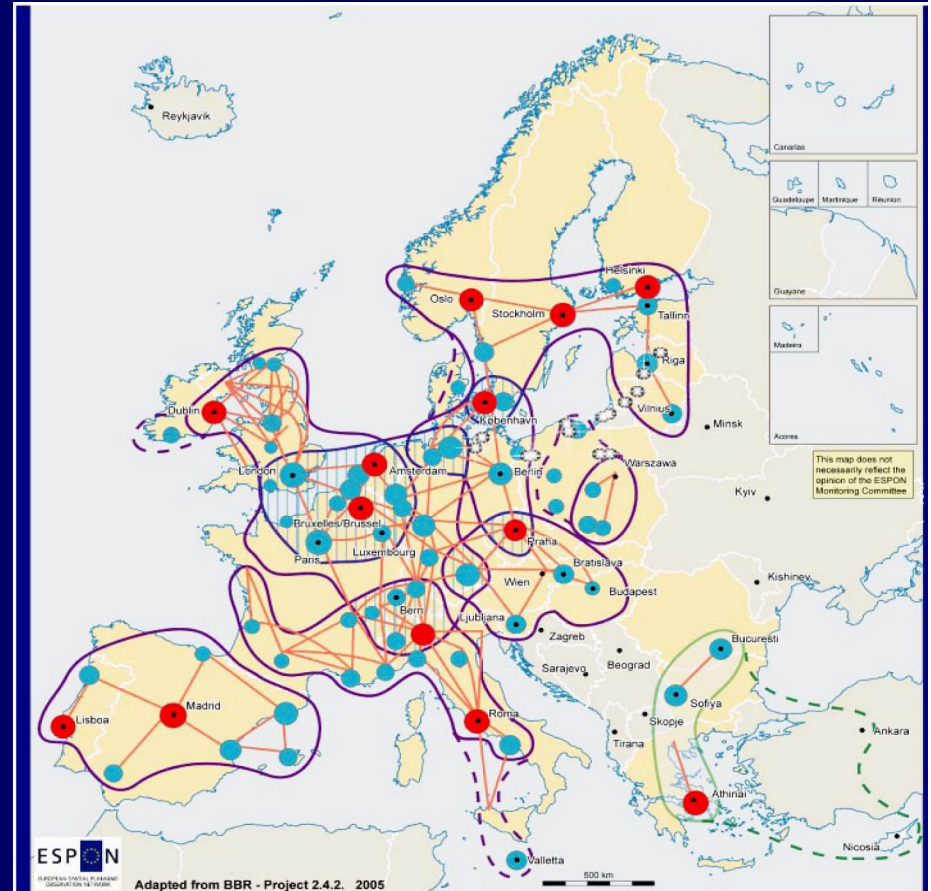
- What might better urban balance look like
1. A recognised inner core (GIZ) and related outer core bridging areas linking to the periphery
 2. Balance between the inner core (GIZ) on the Mediterranean and Danubian/Baltic transitional areas
 3. Improved East/West, North/South and peripheral connectivity
 4. Good connectivity from all areas to the core area
 5. Good connectivity to European gateways particularly from landlocked countries or countries with limited coastal access
 6. Recognition for Europe's metropolitan regions and areas (the main Functional Urban Areas) to foster effective metropolitan governance, economic development, social complementarity and environmental cooperation
 7. In consequence, strong polycentric relationships within recognised European inter regional areas and between them



→ mid-sized cities are reduced to sub-components of (so-called) Metropolitan European Growth Areas (MEGAs)



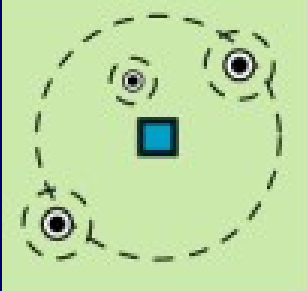
- Global node
 - Category 1 MEGA
 - Category 2 MEGA
 - Category 3 MEGA
 - Category 4 MEGA
- ▲ Pentagon area
- 500km area



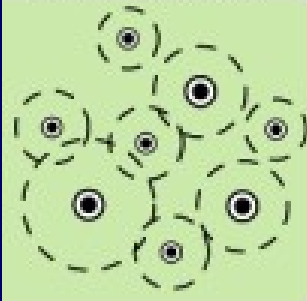
- Potential European Global Integration Zones (EGIZ)**
- Strong Potential European Integration Zone
 - Potential extension with improved accessibility
 - Future Potential European Integration Zone
 - Potential extension with improved accessibility
 - Global integration hinge region
- Main cities: Metropolitan European Growth Areas (MEGA)**
- MEGA covering all functions of European significance*
 - Other MEGAs
- * Transport, University, Decision-making, Administration, Tourism, Manufacturing
- Size according to average value of related significance of functions
- Connectivity**
- Travel times of one hour or less by air or rail between main cities in 2003

But: Medium sized Towns are diverse

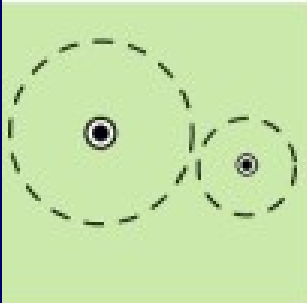
SMESTO at the fringe of a large agglomeration



Network of SMESTOs



Isolated SMESTOs



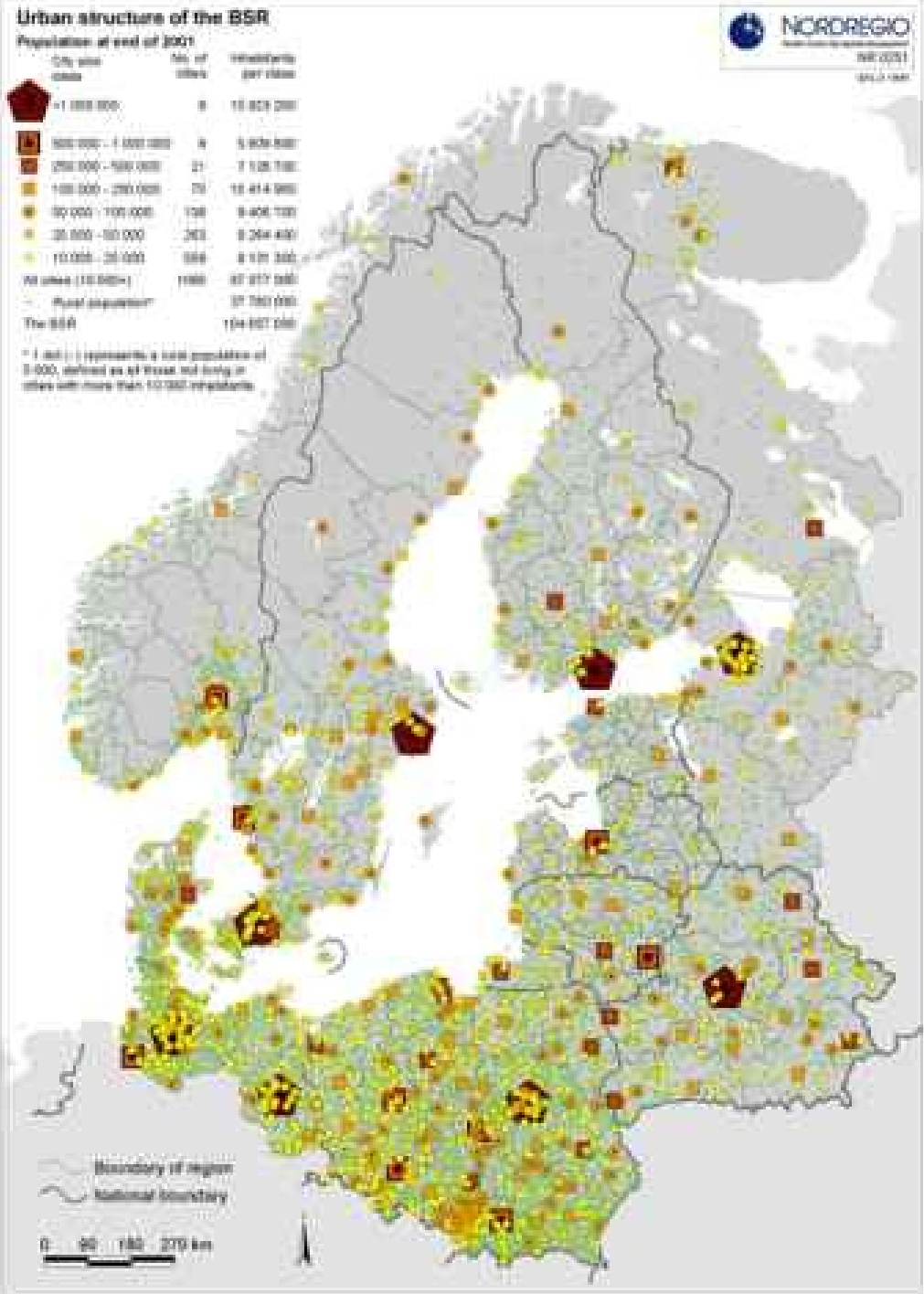
Major city and its functional area



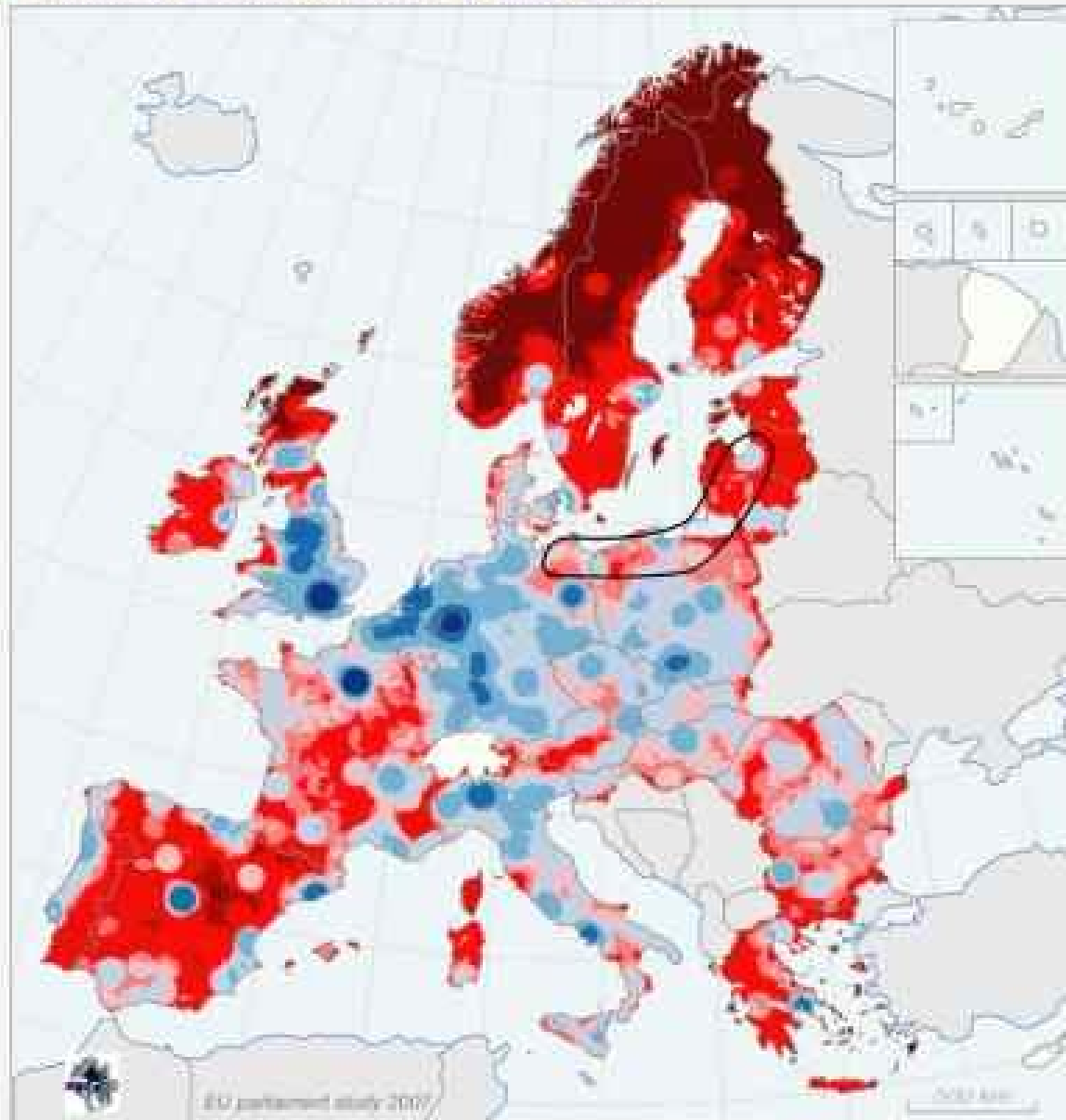
Medium-sized town and its functional area



Small town and its functional area



Population Potential in Europe (Raster Cells)



Standardised Population Potential (50 km radius)
(EU27+2 excl. CH and CY = 100 = 690,276)

Below average



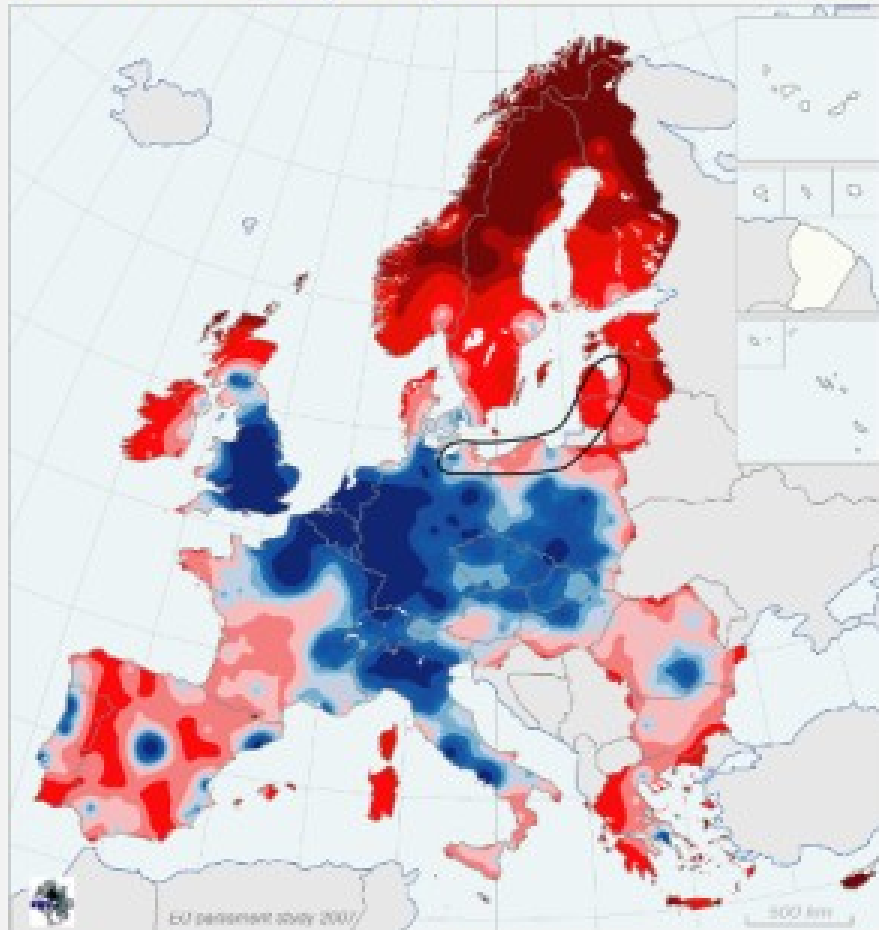
Above average



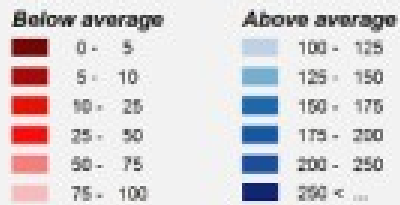
SEMco area

Data sources: FRG 2007
Raster population data: EEA (2006) except for
Norway, Sweden, and Finland (Nat. Statistical Offices)
Source for administrative boundaries: UMS 2414 RASTE

Potential Accessibility: Population (2004)

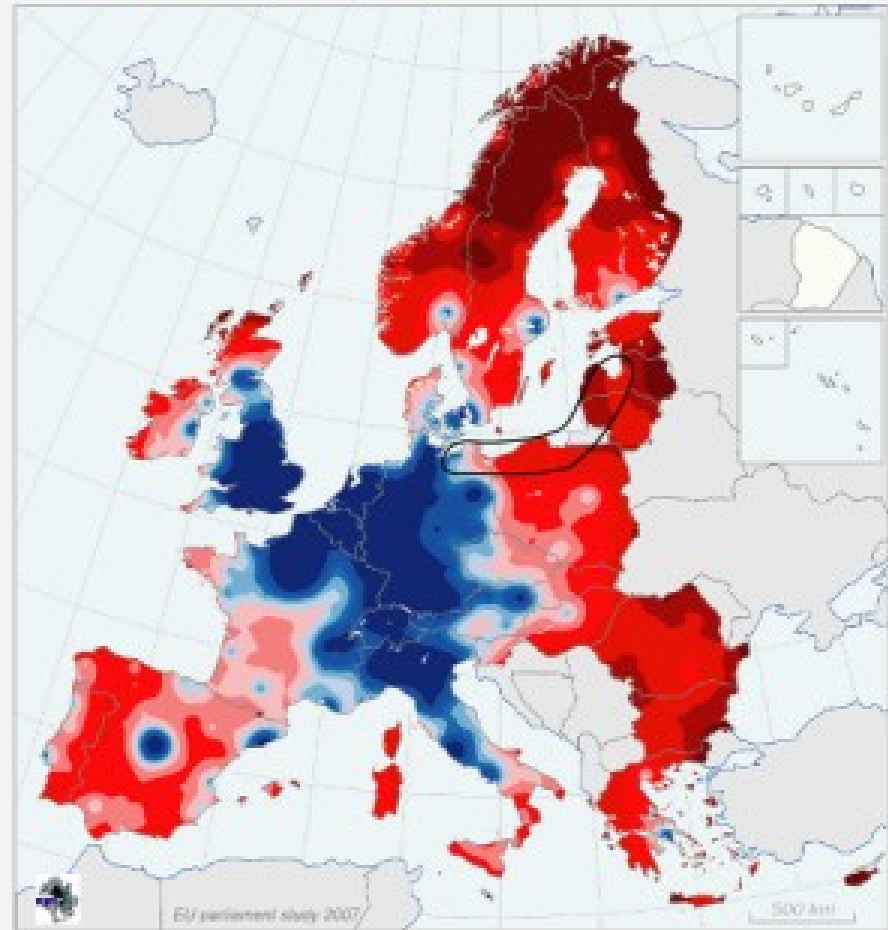


Potential Accessibility to Population (2004)
(EU27+2 excl. CH and CY = 100 = 1,386,445)



Data sources: PRD 2007,
Eurostat (2006)
Source for administrative boundaries: UMS 2414 RMTE

Potential Accessibility: GDP (2004)



Potential Accessibility to GDP (2004)
(EU27+2 excl. CH and CY = 100 = 30,624)



Data sources: PRD 2007,
Eurostat (2006)
Source for administrative boundaries: UMS 2414 RMTE

Some inputs to policy recommendations

1. Medium-sized towns and the prevailing European territorial discourse

- Medium Sized towns need to communicate more actively at the European scale on their concrete development opportunities and challenges.
- The objective is to contribute to form a European discourse that can change the perspective on where and how growth can be created.
- The discursive boom on Metropolitan regions show how it might impact strategies pursued at European, national and regional levels.





2. The under-estimation of medium-sized towns in statistics *(and in applied reseach)*

- It is necessary for policy makers and stakeholders to play an active role in the construction of the evidence-base which will be used to define development strategies. *This is a precondition for the recognition of their potentials at the national and European scales.*
- Policy design and implementation is not a linear process leading from evidence to action. *It is on the contrary a dynamic process in which the actors, the territory and the networks need to be defined in interaction with each other.*





3. Focus on processes rather than on trends

- Preserving the institutional balance between different interest groups. *Prerequisite for the constitution of efficient partnerships, especially when they include urban nodes from different levels in the urban hierarchy.*



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Structural logics of territorial co-operation (modes of governance)

firm interlinking	loose interlinking
hierarchical organizations (e.g. municipality, county)	Multi-scalar system (e.g. city-hinterland association)
Club (e.g. object-oriented community for water supply)	Negotiation system (e.g. general agreements)
Consensus-oriented Dialogue (e.g. regional conferences)	Discourses (e.g. transnational strategic alliances)
Coalition/Federation (e.g. marketing-agency)	Projects (e.g. lighthouse projects with a limited time-frame)

Blatter (2005:126)



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4. Understanding polycentricity as a motivating tool to strive for synergies

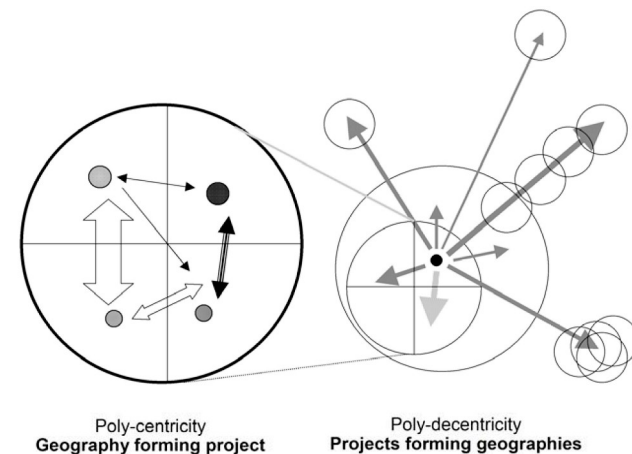
→ Polycentricity not only concerns relations between neighbouring towns and cities.

It can also imply the creation of networks of a much wider geographical range established on the basis of shared interest.

→ Both these dimensions help improving the performance of medium-sized towns.

The focus of polycentric strategies should therefore not be on geographical structures, but on the institutional, cultural and infrastructural factors of networking. This especially concerns the formation of business networks!

Figure 11: Polycentricity based on shared interests rather than on geographic constraints



Source: Thomas Sick Nielsen and Niels Boje Groth (2007)



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5. Alternative approaches of transport infrastructure projects

- An improved territorial balance presupposes a pro-active (as opposed to re-active) attitude to transport planning.
- It should rather orientate on flows between medium-sized cities and not merely adapt to the self-reinforcing cycle of flows in direction of Metropolitan regions.



Thank you very much for your attention!



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