

# THE EUROPEAN METROPOLITAN REGION NUREMBERG IN GERMANY – HISTORY OF ORIGINS, TASKS AND ACTIVITIES

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## Abstract

For about ten years now, European metropolitan regions have been regarded as new strategy of regional planning. These regions are geared to the principle “strengthening the strong regions” so that they then become driving forces for the rural areas. In the present contribution the history of origins of metropolitan regions as well as their assets and drawbacks will be presented and discussed. Furthermore, a detailed examination of the case study Nuremberg, which has been approved as European Metropolitan Region only in 2005, will follow.

**Key words:** European Metropolitan Regions, Nuremberg, function of universities, future prospects

## INTRODUCTION

On 25 April 2005, the Ministerial Conference on Spatial Planning officially approved Nuremberg as a European Metropolitan Region. Since, it forms one of 11 European metropolitan regions in Germany (Jurczek 2008a). The superordinate objective is to strengthen the urban centres of the country in order to establish them as driving forces and enabling them to compete with other regions in Europe and the world. However, these national strategies are based on international activities that, on a regional level, extend in principle the concept of the Global Cities.

Since the turn of the century a new concept of regional planning has evolved in Europe which is closely linked to the long-term development of metropolitan areas in post-industrial countries (DATAR 2003). Although the conceptual debate about such regions started rather late in the Federal Republic of Germany, it has meanwhile become a constant in spatial planning and research. While in the past areas of metropolitan character were described as ‘city regions’ or ‘agglomerations’, the term ‘European Metropolitan Regions’ first came up at the end of the 1990s. In the legal framework on regional planning of the German state they are defined as ‘motors of the societal, economic, social and cultural development’ that ought to preserve the achievement

potential and competitiveness of Germany and Europe and contribute to the acceleration of the European integration process (BMBau 1995).

On the basis of this superordinate objective, the Ministerial Conference on Spatial Planning (MKRO) assigned seven European Metropolitan Regions (Berlin/Brandenburg, Hamburg, Munich, Rhine-Ruhr, Rhine-Main, Stuttgart and Halle/Leipzig-Saxon Triangle) which were complemented in 2005 by four more regions: Nuremberg (including further cooperation partners in Franconia), Hanover (including Brunswick and Göttingen), Bremen (with Oldenburg) and the Rhine-Neckar Triangle (fig. 1).

## DEFINITIONS, BACKGROUNDS, OBJECTIVES

The term “metropolis” had been widely-used for a long time. It refers to a prominent major or capital city that represents a political, economic and societal centre within a country. On the other hand, the term ‘metropolitan region’ refers to a metropolis (in some cases to more than one) and its respective hinterland. It thus describes a ‘region’, or in other words, an area of medium spatial dimension within a larger territory, characterized by particular features, functional interdependence or a specific perception.

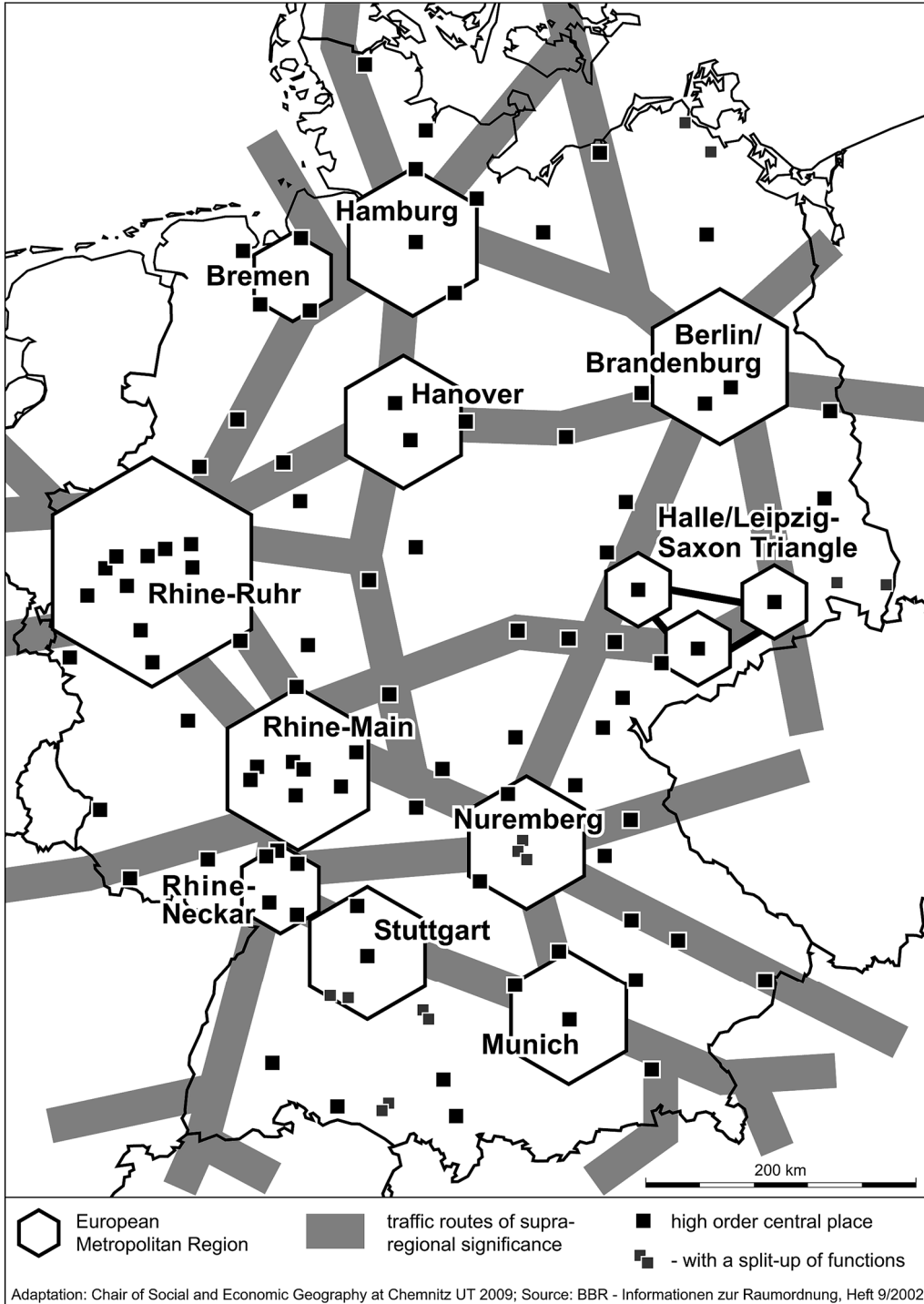


Figure 1 European Metropolitan Regions in Germany.

Similarly to other conceptual innovations, the term 'metropolitan region' had various forerunners; most of them are of Anglo-American origin. In this context, concepts such as 'World City' or 'Global City' were established that are synonyms for modern locations integrated into the network of the global economy. Both terms reflect a new understanding of the function of higher-ranking cities in the global urban system. The focus is now on the specific function of metropolises as outstanding locations for the international flow of trade and as nodes for financial and information transfers.

It can thus be stated that the economic function of metropolitan regions takes the centre in the current debate, both on the part of spatial research and practical planning. This becomes especially obvious in Kujath's definition. He points out the three following node functions determining such a region (Kujath 2005:20f):

- High-tech production location

Export quota, gross value added (in relation to the size of the labour force), and ranking order of economic sectors (size and proportion of labour force) (...). Within this first function, the branch structure, especially the significance of the second economic sector, economic power and the role the respective region plays as a (high-tech) export location for goods is of importance.

- Node of metropolitan services

Number of company headquarters, employees in company-related services (...). The indicators of the second node function represent the distribution of the power of decision-making and controlling expressed by the allocation of centres of decision-making as well as high-grade financial and company services (instrumentality and decision-making function).

- Communication and traffic node

Number of trade fairs (foreign exhibitors and visitors), air traffic (number of flights and passengers), air cargo (...). The nationally and internationally oriented infrastructure is the third function that represents the significance of a region as node of passenger and freight traffic as well as of communication and information exchange (...).

What are the reasons for and why has the debate about metropolitan regions in Germany received such a noticeable boost since the 1990s? Certainly, one of the reasons can be found in the vigorous discussions on the European level resulting in specific concepts. Those were initially inspired by worldwide considerations on the systematization and configuration of regions of metropolitan character. This, however, also implies that the moving power of this debate is not only an intra-European competition, but also an intercontinental one which influences the principles of regional planning and, above all, aims at a permanent strengthening of further economic developments. Against this background, it becomes apparent why at the turn of the century it was an absolute necessity that also Germany had to pay more attention to the concept of metropolitan regions and, moreover, to try to rapidly implement it.

### **CHARACTERISTICS, FUNCTIONS, FORMS OF ORGANISATION, NETWORK FORMATION**

As already mentioned in the introductory chapter, the Ministerial Conference on Spatial Planning in Germany has assigned 11 metropolitan regions so far: Berlin/Brandenburg, Hamburg, Munich, Rhine-Ruhr, Rhine-Main, Stuttgart and Halle/Leipzig-Saxon Triangle, Bremen, Hanover, Nuremberg and the Rhine-Neckar Triangle. Among those, there are larger as well as smaller metropolitan regions. With regard to spatial dimensions, the metropolitan region of Hamburg is the largest one, followed by the metropolitan regions Rhine-Main and Halle/Leipzig-Saxon Triangle. In contrast to this, the Rhine-Ruhr region is by far the largest one in terms of population with a number of 10 million inhabitants. Partly highly varying figures can also be found with respect to other population indicators.

As far as economic power is concerned, the metropolitan region of Munich has the highest gross domestic product, followed by the metropolitan regions Rhine-Main and Stuttgart. Compared to this, the Halle/Leipzig-Saxon Triangle performs less well with rates that are 50% below those of the above named regions. In general, it has to be stated that the data of the

economic indicators show higher variations than those of the population indicators.

Beyond certain basic structures concerning population and economy, metropolitan regions have to fulfil specific functions which are listed in the latest Report on Regional Planning (BBR 2005:177ff.):

- The decision-making and control function refers to the spatial concentration of political and economic centres, in which financial and information flows are being controlled.
- With regard to their innovation and competition function it can be stated that metropolitan regions are innovation centres as a rule.
- As far as the gateway function is concerned, 'good accessibility from international locations and multiple options for 'face-to-face contacts' (...) are essential factors for the exchange of knowledge and information (...)'.

Altogether, 17 indicators have been included into the analysis on the international level. Due to the better data records for national comparisons, further indicators were complementarily examined (currently 24 indicators). Apart from that, it can be expected that the research on the methodology for the definition and classification of metropolitan regions will be further pushed forward in the future on both the national and international level. Other significant characteristics refer to the form of organisation and assignment of tasks of metropolitan regions. Here, the most important principles are as follows (BBR 2005: 188f.):

- Metropolitan regions need a strong regional self-government: 'A political, legal and organisational re-arrangement of local and regional tasks and responsibilities is one of the essential elements of a metropolitan regional planning policy (...)
- Metropolitan regions can be understood as regional alliances with common responsibilities (...)
- Metropolitan regions require specific regional location policies (...)'.

Another aspect is the cooperation between metropolitan regions. On the national level, they joined in the initiative 'European Metropolitan Regions Germany' to represent their common interests, coordinate their activities, learn from each other etc. Lively communication processes also exist on the European level; in some areas cross-border alliances have been established or cooperation projects motivated by the aim of being able to compete with the growing number of globally significant metropolitan regions (with more than 10 million inhabitants) developed. This was also the background for the foundation of the METREX network, in which European Metropolitan Regions have become organised ([www.eurometrex.org](http://www.eurometrex.org)).

#### **THE CASE OF NUREMBERG – A EUROPEAN METROPOLITAN REGION**

On 28 April 2005, the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region with currently about 3.5 million inhabitants has been approved as a European Metropolitan Region by the Ministerial Conference on Spatial Planning (MKRO). This decision was preceded by intensive preparations and negotiations. With regard to the required structural features and functional aspects they are highly complied (European Metropolitan Region Nuremberg 2006 a). These aspects are compared with each other by Liebel (2005:147) in a Strength-Weakness-Analysis. Concerning the decision-making and control function the existence of branches of some renowned enterprises belongs definitely to the regional strengths and potentials.

According to empirical surveys, there are altogether about 150.000 companies in the whole research area whose export quota is about 40% and they have a GDP (2004) of about 103 billion Euros. These enterprises "are characterised by their wide diversity of industries and orientation to small to medium size. One fifth of all companies, with nearly 40% employees subject to social insurance contributions, belong to the producing sector. More than one third of these are active in the commercial, transport and gastronomy fields. 44% belong to the service sector, where ca. 1.1 million persons are employed." ([www.em-n.eu](http://www.em-n.eu))

The following technological core competences are especially important: Medicine and health care, Information and communications, Energy and environment, Transportation and logistics, new materials, Automation and production engineering, Automotive engineering. These core competences are complemented by the following interdisciplinary technologies: Mechatronics, Power electronics, Optics, Lasers and Photonics, Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, Biomedicine.

Nevertheless, Liebel (2005:147) names also several location weaknesses that might be impeding for the further development. These include the following aspects: “weak private sector with headquarters of global enterprises, only few important national and federal governmental organisations (ministries, agencies or authorities), lacking supranational organisations (EU, UN, NGOs).”

In contrast to this the innovativeness and competitiveness of the European Metropolitan Region Nuremberg is mainly positive according to the investigations by Liebel (2005: *ibid*). He identified the following strengths:

- “wide-ranging research landscape within the university and higher education sector,
- leading positions of knowledge-based services in certain areas,
- numerous inter-communal cooperation and networks,
- active foundation scene and high technological efficiency,
- highest engineer-density in the FRG,
- rich cultural equipment in the historic-cultural as well as in the modern field,
- location of significant events”

In contrast to this, he only identifies two weaknesses or obstacles: “networks and cooperation structures are partly insufficiently linked to the peripheral regions; relatively weak equipment of state R&D institutions in the extramural sector.”

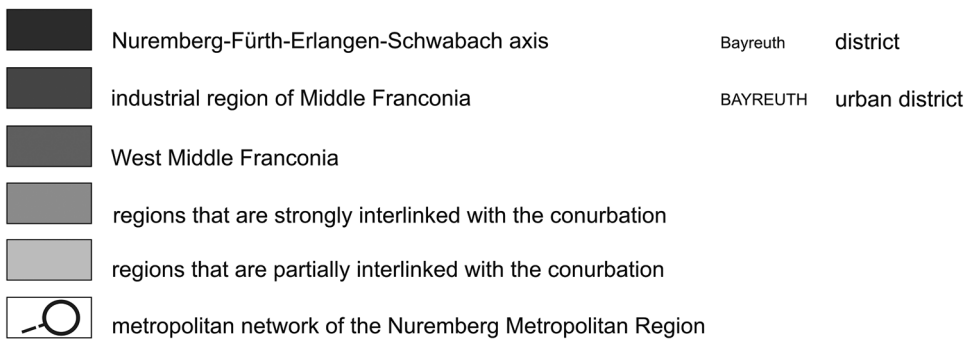
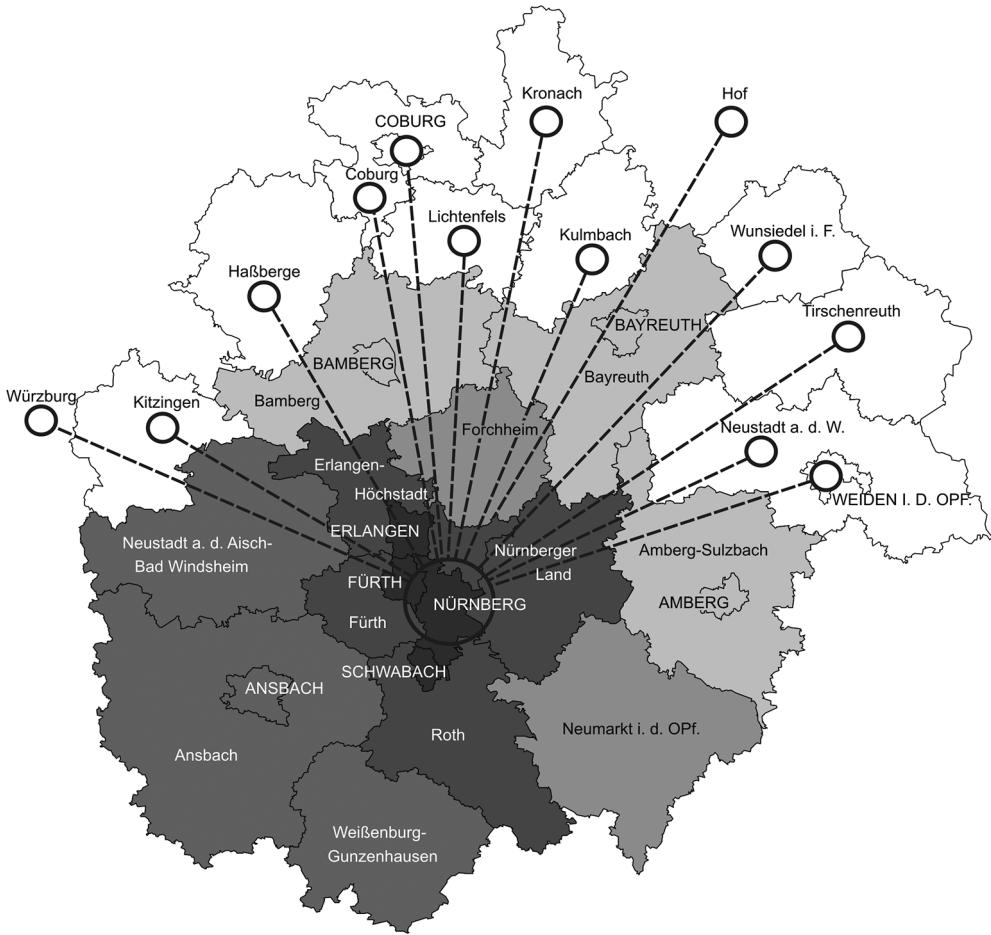
Concerning the gateway function the following strengths turn out:

- “gateway function to the CEECS and to China,
- excellent connection to the European rail, road, and water network,
- international airport,
- most important hub for logistics in the South of Germany,
- international top 10 location for the modern exhibition centre (Nürnberger Messe)”

Rather impeding might be the following weaknesses: “Numerous transport routes are still under construction; partly discussions concerning financing; plan of deviating some transport connections via other metropolitan regions are under consideration; wanting consideration in programmes and plans due to the lacking designation as a metropolitan region.”

Even when regarding atmospheric conditions many things speak in favour of the international positioning of Nuremberg and three other cities in Middle Franconia – together with the neighbouring districts and independent cities (Beck 2004) – so that there is broad consent concerning the approval of being a European metropolitan region. This region comprises territorially the axis of the cities Nuremberg-Fuerth-Erlangen-Schwabach, four districts of the industrial region Middle Franconia (Erlangen-Höchststadt, Fuerth, Nürnberger Land and Roth), four districts of the Western part of Middle Franconia (city of Ansbach and the districts of Ansbach, Neustadt/Aisch-Bad Windsheim, Weißenburg-Gunzenhausen), the two districts Forchheim and Neumarkt in the Upper Palatinate that are strongly interlaced with the metropolitan area, six districts partially interlaced with the metropolitan area (cities of Amberg, Bamberg and of Bayreuth, districts of Amberg-Sulzbach, Bamberg and of Bayreuth) as well as 13 cooperating partners (cities of Coburg, Hof, Würzburg and of Weiden in the Upper Palatinate, districts of Coburg, Haßberge, Kitzingen, Kronach, Kulmbach, Lichtenfels, Neustadt a.d. W., Tirschenreuth and Wunsiedel i. F.).

Concerning the territorial delimitation of the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region (see fig. 2) there are controversial opinions. Sceptics challenge among others the stretch of the territory which, in



Source: Metropolitan Region Nuremberg 2006  
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Figure 2 European Metropolitan Region Nuremberg.

their opinion, is too large and this may lead to confusion and inefficiency. Furthermore, unpopular measures – such as considering fusions, i.e. reducing higher education institutions – would become more feasible. In contrast to this backers argue that it is a voluntary and thus intended cooperation which needs to be accepted. Further, there is not only an above-average high economic power but also a high variety of ‘soft’ location factors that are contributing to a high quality of life (Region Nürnberg e.V. o.J): Infrastructure, Exhibitions and Trade Fairs, Research and Development, Education, Culture, Music and Festivals, Lifestyle and Events, Family.

On the basis of these positive location factors, the form of organisation and further work stages were eventually realised. The base for this is the “Charter of the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region”, which was submitted on 12 May 2005 in Erlangen and adopted by municipal decision-makers. In the preamble of the Charter of the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region (2005) “the actors aim at a sustainable development and increasing prosperity in this region. The Nuremberg Metropolitan Region acts according to the European model of polycentrality. Based on the spatial, structural, historical and geographical features this region disposes of outstanding preconditions. For the establishment of a Regional Governance it can draw on a successful tradition of regional cooperation.”

By the way, a complex form of organisation, which meets the complex structure of the European Metropolitan Region Nuremberg, has been established: “The organisation of the EMN is viewed as an innovative example of self-governing within a metropolitan region, in modern linguistic terms metropolitan governance. The core idea is that representatives from different social areas – industry, politics, administration, culture and sport – assume joint responsibility for the region. The council forms the democratic legitimating core of the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region, in which 54 lord mayors, mayors and rural administrators work together. Also included, as co-opted members, are two members of the Bavarian state government with residence in Franconia as well as one president each as representative of the four rural district parliaments and administrative districts

concerned. A board of directors is assigned to each forum, comprising a political speaker, a speaker for specialised areas, and a general manager. In the management group of the metropolitan region, the boards of directors of the forums prepare strategic recommendations for the council, together with the council chairman, coordinate projects, and discuss current topics.” (www.em-n.eu)

Parallel to activities in the fields of local politics and functional planning runs an intensive dealing within the tertiary sector. Supporting document is, for instance, the dissertation by Liebel (2005) whose research results concerning the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region were published. Further research work dealing with metropolitan regions is carried out at different national and international universities. Furthermore, the findings of this relatively new approach of spatial planning are entering university teachings and they are discussed in the frame of knowledge transfers (Institut für Entwicklungsforschung im Ländlichen Raum Ober- und Mittelfrankens e.V.). In 2005, there was introduced a corresponding masters programme at the Freie Universität Berlin labelled “Metropolitan Studies”. Although this is of great interest because of topicality, this research approach ought not to be overestimated. Detailed analyses of this topic seem to be desirable but they should not take inflationary dimensions.

It is a fact that there are altogether 18 universities (European Metropolitan Region Nuremberg 2006b): the universities Erlangen-Nuremberg, Bayreuth and Bamberg as well as ten colleges, one Protestant university (in Bayreuth), the College of Fine Arts (in Nuremberg) as well as two Schools of Music (Nuremberg-Augsburg, Würzburg). About 100.000 students are registered in these universities. In addition to that numerous research institutions proposing a wide range of core competences have to be mentioned. Besides, the higher education area is characterised by the following subject-specific focuses (www.em-n.eu):

- “Internationalisation,
- technological core competence and interdisciplinary technologies with functioning organisational structures and associated research institutions,

- high regional development potential thanks to outstanding educational opportunities for the next generation of scientists and engineers,
- spin-offs from universities,
- and events” (e.g. Long Nights of Sciences).

Not least, the high significance of scientific research and teaching can be easily seen when looking at the realisation of already two Days of Sciences (2007 in Nuremberg and 2008 in Bayreuth).

An interesting example for a so called “best-practice-project” in sciences forms the “Summer School for managers of today and tomorrow” which was organised by the Forum Zukunft Oberfranken e.V. und der Commerzbank AG with the topic “Franconia 2010 – High Potentials in the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region” (see [www.summerschool-zeitsprung.de](http://www.summerschool-zeitsprung.de)). To this project the author of this article contributed actively, amongst others by organising an excursion to Prague. The aim of the organisers was to “give another important impetus to safeguard the future of the region”. The 25 students mainly coming from Franconian universities had the opportunity to live and work together for nine days. Here, presentations, discussions and excursions were to the fore. Contentwise, a wide range of topics were touched – for instance Franconia as location for science, economy, culture and media as well as for families; the latter was treated under the headline “work-life-balance”. As an ostensible result a journal called “Zeitsprung” was designed and distributed in and outside Franconia. In this way the level of awareness of the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region – especially of the Upper Franconia region – is increased on the one hand. On the other hand, students being future multipliers may identify more with their referential region and may be more intensively committed – for instance in their working lives – as it would have been the case without such a motivating Summer School.

Additional activities include different projects where the efforts to effectively integrate rural areas present an important concern. There has been organised a symposium dealing with the topic “strengthening the strengths” focussing on rural

areas (European Metropolitan Region Nuremberg 2007). In the frame of the “Demonstration Projects of Spatial Planning” (MORO) should be displayed “how rural areas may profit from cooperating within the network of metropolitan regions. With the MORO project European metropolitan regions precise projects in the following fields of action: ‘regional circular flows’, ‘clusters in rural areas’ and ‘border-crossing cooperation’; these projects are touched and realised” ([www.em-n.eu](http://www.em-n.eu)). The latter means that border-crossing activities with Czech partners (preferably of the sectors higher education or health care) are intended. Similar considerations are taken in the Saxon-Bohemian borderlands where it is thought about the significance of metropolitan regions and its European or national effects (Jurczek 2008b).

Eventually, the Marketing Association that supports the work of the actors in the European Metropolitan Region Nuremberg in financial and non-material ways has to be pointed out. The concerns of this Marketing Association pursued since about ten years now are the following ([www.region.nuernberg.de](http://www.region.nuernberg.de)): “The Marketing Association of the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region has the function of communicating the strong points of the region in both a national and an international context, of portraying the attractiveness of the economic area and of emphasising the unique quality of life in the region (...). Local authorities as well as hundreds of companies and private individuals are involved in the forward-looking marketing of the metropolitan region. Chambers of Industry and Commerce, associations and local trade unions also participate in this task.” At the same time there are three main tasks to the fore: “Taking Action in a Regional and International Arena”, “A Network of Advertising” and “Shaping the Region Together”.

## **FUTURE PROSPECTS**

Recent evaluations suggest that the significance of metropolises and metropolitan regions is most probably going to increase in the future. Against this background Blotevogel (2001:164f.) raises the question whether it would be more efficient for Germany to have one single prominent but world-



wide operating metropolis like France (Paris), Great Britain (London) or Japan (Tokyo) instead of having a larger number of maybe less influential metropolitan regions. On the other hand, this would be in contradiction to the federal structure of the state – even though the principle of equivalent living conditions enshrined in the Regional Planning Act has lately been more and more challenged. However, in the light of the trend towards globalisation, the development function of the European metropolitan regions is continuously gaining priority in the regional planning policy in Germany.

In any case, it is of great importance to precisely identify both the advantages and the disadvantages of the metropolis approach and to compare them. Thus, a number of essential advantages that determine the way decision-makers of German metropolitan regions think and act are listed below:

- voluntary participation and cooperative collaboration,
- involvement of a large number of participants,
- involvement of the private sector, particularly large enterprises,
- introduction of fresh accents and new stimuli,
- intensification of the commitment of the decision-makers,
- extension and promotion of the innovative power,
- chance for tying together existing endogenous potentials,
- improvement of the co-operation ability,
- basis for the formulation of a strategic development concept on a national and, moreover, an international scale,
- ideal starting point for the formulation of a professional mission statement as basis for future-oriented provisions for continuity,
- improvement of the supra-regional degree of popularity as well as the inner and, more importantly, the outer image,
- good prerequisites for the setup and extension of a modern infrastructure,
- opportunity for the reduction of the disparities between cities and surrounding areas.

In contrast to this, there are also numerous disadvantages that can influence activities in the metropolitan regions negatively. The most significant ones are as follows:

- complex, complicated and thus poorly working organisational structures,
- danger of an only temporary instead of a permanent commitment of the participants,
- often no employment of additional staff for the management of the metropolitan region,
- potential overlapping of competences (e.g. business development, urban and regional planning),
- possible distraction from actual problems (e.g. remote location, insufficient transport connections, unfavourable economic development),
- a mere imitation of (inter-)national role models,
- partly only national importance with few chances of gaining international significance,
- often high pressure of competition between the metropolitan regions,
- danger of overrating their functions and effects,
- high expenditures for achieving the status as metropolitan region,
- no state subsidies as they are not (yet) granted for these purposes,
- permanent pressure for modernisation,
- possible predominance of one or more metropolises at the expense of suburban areas and/or rurally structured parts of the region.

In this respect, the ability of German metropolises and metropolitan regions to integrate into a correspondent European network is increasingly gaining significance. Nevertheless, it is widely agreed upon the fact that there is no notion as 'Global Cities' in Germany. Blotevogel (2002) regards the metropolitan regions Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Rhine-Main and Rhine-Ruhr as less significant within Europe than London, Paris, Brussels or Randstad/Netherlands (now called 'Delta-Metropolis'). DATAR, the office for regional development in France (2003), even ranks the metropolises Berlin and Hamburg in the third and Cologne/Düsseldorf and Frankfurt upon Main in the fourth category within Europe.

Other research questions focus on the problem whether metropolitan regions should, or even have to cooperate in order to be successful in the long run. This cannot be answered clearly since active cooperation can produce synergy effects, but it does not have to be an automatism. In certain fields metropolitan regions will remain competitors because one of their primary aims is the consolidation or improvement of their own position in competition.

Some issues, however, have not yet received sufficient attention, such as the role suburban and rural parts of the metropolitan regions play. Do they gain significance by participating in those regions or do they lose their specific character and endogenous potential? It is similarly difficult to say whether the proclamation of metropolises and metropolitan regions leads to more 'glory' or more 'misery' on the part of the citizens affected (Kaltenbrunner 2001). Long-established ways of life, such as urban life or urbanity with all their advantages are in danger of being restricted or might even vanish. These problems are also in the centre of the sceptics' critical debate on the currently (inter-)nationally propagated metropolitan regions. Time will show which spatial structures are able to prevail in the long term and how regional planning and policy will deal with them.

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## Résumé

Již deset let jsou evropské metropolitní regiony považovány za novou strategii regionálního plánování. Tyto regiony sledují princip „posílení silných regionů“ tak, aby se staly hnacími silami pro venkovské oblasti. Článek představuje a diskutuje historii původu metropolitních regionů včetně jejich výhod a nevýhod. Teoretické části jsou dokumentovány na podrobném výzkumu Norimberka, který byl schválen jako metropolitní region teprve v roce 2005.