VI Conclusions

1 Limitations of the study

The objective of this study has not been to resolve the complex problems and difficulties that arise from the planning task of integrating the HST. Rather, it has attempted to explore and expose the strategic orientations for spatial and urban development linked to this transport mode in order to provide a better understanding of both the particular plans and projects for HST integration and of how planning works in practice. For this reason, a discourse analytical approach has been developed, focusing on the arguments and concepts employed and their interrelation with the context and process of planning. Finally, this has led to the identification of new questions that could provide an incentive for further research work.

It should be emphasized that the analysis of the planning discourses in four European regions is confronted with numerous restrictions. Planning practice is by far richer in its exchange of arguments, concepts, threats and lures than the study of a limited number of documents and key actor interviews could ever capture. Furthermore, spatial planning is by nature a cross-section policy touching upon a wide array of sectoral practices that have not been — and cannot be — detailed here. This is, however, no reason to play down the relevance and representativeness of the sources used since the actors involved have issued them all.

Furthermore, the concentration on the grand strategic development axes should also not ignore the fact that in parallel there is a large number of policies and measures that differ substantially in the discursive construction of their topic, dealing with urban transformations at smaller scales and in smaller steps. Policies for e.g. public housing, urban rehabilitation or environmentally-sound construction form a substantial contribution to the design of future urban structures, certainly not stimulated by “internationalisation” or “accessibility profiles”. Yet, this complementarity along sectoral boundaries is precisely what makes the strategic and large-scale planning approaches an important research subject, and a disconcerting one as well.

2 HST and the metropolization discourse

The study of the four planning discourses indicates that, in spite of their different national contexts, the planning approaches for the integration of the HST show a high degree of correspondence in the argumentative patterns employed. The positions of most actors appear to be based on a number of key concepts that form a shared reference for the design of policies, practices and projects.

This circumstance might not be surprising since the chosen subject is inherently of a trans-national character and coincides in its historical development with the appearance of multiple trans-national policy practices: The process of European market integration and the successive creation of European guidelines that have increasingly regulated and orientated the different national planning approaches in respect to the HST and, vice versa, the decisive influence of particular national interests on European policy making. Furthermore, the emergence of numerous trans-national cooperations, associations and

“networks” between cities and regions (where Barcelona and Lyon even played an especially active role) has fostered the exchange of experience and expertise. It is obvious that this changing common context had to be reflected somehow in the national and regional planning discourses.

Nevertheless, the identified correspondences go considerably deeper. What draws attention is that the planning discourses are moving within the *same cognitive dimensions* and employ the *same concepts* for the shaping of strategic development policies. With the explicit view toward long term spatial and urban transformations, meaning is created using a limited “stock” of hypotheses, partial facts, interpretations, conclusions or images that communicate a certain development model, while they withhold others. Here, the problem does not consist in a lack of democratic legitimation of the planning process or an excessive top-down orientation in their implementation, but rather in the *lack of conceptual alternatives* as well as the corresponding debate over them:

> “Democracy is in peril not only when there is insufficient consensus and allegiance to the values it embodies, but also when its antagonistic dynamic is hindered by an apparent excess of consensus, which usually masks a disquieting apathy.” (Mouffe 1993, 6)

The point is also not that this would necessarily lead to the design of identical plans and projects. For this perspective the specific national and regional characteristics are too important and will leave their particular signature. The same argumentative pattern applied in different contexts may still lead to a different outcome since the discourse participants can always intervene through power acts based on other resources and particular motives. Such “interpellations” have been observed to a different degree in all cases, which supports a conception of discourse and power as complementary but interdependent factors of planning that mutually condition each other.[1]

However, as the concepts fulfil multiple functions that precede the definition of programmes and projects, they do maintain these within a certain scope. It is here that a critical consideration of the planning discourse should start. Through the reproduction of the concepts actors have achieved legitimation and support for their proposals and created the required consensus or coalitions for realization. They have accomplished the reduction of complex realities and provided themselves and others with the capacity to act. At the same time, the discursive references have allowed the conception of institutional arrangements and changes that influenced power constellations and enhanced implementation. Equally, they have modified the distribution of financial and technical resources for the realization of the plans.

It is also in this respect that structural similarities between the cases have been acknowledged, which represents the main concern of this study. Together, the common concepts and the related planning practices form a discourse that has been headed here with the concept of “*metropolization”.* This discourse has turned out to be the principle condition for the integration of the HST in the different national, regional and local planning processes. This hypothesis is underlined by the fact that the discourse fulfils the basic criteria for a *discursive hegemony* since it has become institutionalized through

[1] cf. Reuter 2000, 13

legislation, planning practices and new entities, and the credibility of actors now largely depends on their reproduction of the discourse.[2]

As a consequence of the deployment of the metropolization discourse, two primary effects on the planning approaches can be identified: A particular way of broadening the spectrum of actors and authorities involved, and of conceiving an increasingly multi-sectoral constitution of the programmes designed. These two effects require a closer look in order to highlight the limitations and fuzziness of the underlying concepts.

2.1 From national to multi-level

Three basic stages can be distinguished for the integration of the HST into public policy making. They characterize the changing discursive construction of the HST in the different national, regional and local contexts, although not in a stringent chronological order. The initial approach showed a primary transport concern, motivated by the urge to escape the crisis of the national railways and open new transport markets, but also by structural economic considerations. This phase is summarized in the programmatic analogy of a railway "renaissance" and corresponds to the key role of the national railway companies and governments.

In a second step, and as a consequence of the first HST operations in France, the "impact" of the HST on station areas was recognized and increasingly translated into development strategies that also incorporate economic promotion and urban transformation. Still, the focus on the local effects on delimited station areas prevailed (*"effet TGV"*). Furthermore, the relationship HST/ air transport has also been acknowledged and led to the strengthening of the environmental component represented in the "substitution" concept, even though the main interest is also here the extension of (airport) capacities. Consequently, we find a growing interest and implication of the municipal level in direct coordination or confrontation with the national actors.

The third phase then brought a deliberation of the different HST station locations placed in their wider (urban) regional contexts. It is here that the discourse of metropolization has taken over, articulating interdependencies between locations that are actively developed according to a "network" logic and extending the relevant scope towards the (urban) region and its space-functional structuration. The coordinated development of economic and transport patterns represents the principal incentive for this orientation. Yet, at the same time the environmental implications have also gained further weight, emphasizing the efficiency of the transport system, the concentration of settlement and preservation of open space. Both have been brought together under the heading of a "sustainable spatial development". The participation of all authority levels and a particular key role of regions, agglomerations, and urban regions (partially represented by newly created institutions) characterize this phase.

Nevertheless, the development of these phases in the course of the planning processes has followed different paths through the hierarchy of public authorities. Conceptually the phases do build on each

[2] Criteria as in: Hajer 1995, 60

other, reflecting the expanded sectoral scope of the discourse. Institutionally, however, this has been first performed either at the government level – as in the Dutch and German case – or at the local level — as in Lyon and Barcelona — even though at last all authority levels have approached their positions in this matter and merged the respective concepts into a common spatial development perspective. The Spanish government that still clings to the initial plans and maintains the rudimentary national framework for spatial planning represents the exception here. This makes the case especially interesting, since the regional and local levels do share the reproduction of the metropolization discourse.

In the other cases, the changing spatial planning approaches and policy frameworks characterize the position of the nation states. The governments have performed a shift from regulative overall structure plans towards project-oriented approaches. These implied more initiative and control of regional and local actors with the national plans as a guiding background. This shift concerns in particular the transport sector where competencies have been delegated through the regionalization of the railways or the creation of urban-regional transport planning authorities. It has also affected the planning procedures since the negotiation of projects with the regions becomes a general principle, best reflected in the French “contract plans”.

Yet, unlike the hypothesis of a universal “retreat of the state” that affects all sectors, the analyzed planning processes show multiple facets. Deregulation, privatization and regionalization are thus only a part of the picture and have been identified in all cases. But the nation states equally appear to maintain or even extend their influence in strategic planning issues, such as the integration of the HST, partly reinforced through new instruments. This is closely related to the identification of “metropolitan” territories and their significance for the national competitiveness, as in the case of the French *Directive Territorial d’Aménagement* (DTA) and the supervision of the “agglomeration projects” in France, or the “new key projects” in the Netherlands. This direct involvement results in being the weakest in Germany where the government only participates in project partnerships through regular infrastructure funds, although also here a similar orientation is provided by the concept of “EMR”. By contrast, in Spain the state maintains its control through planning competence and infrastructure finance without adopting the concepts of metropolization, which reflects the basic reasons for the emerging conflicts.

In parallel the influence of the regions appears to be considerably strengthened in France and Germany. They have increasingly assumed a leading role in the preparation of spatial and urban policies and promote their positioning in a future “Europe of regions”. With respect to the scale, this corresponds to the enhanced control of the government in the Netherlands. Here, the regions (*Provincie*) turn out to be rather questioned regarding their territorial delimitations as the emergent associations defend interests across regional boundaries (although under participation of the regions). The discourse of metropolization has thus contributed to the reinforcement of territorial policies at the regional scale, both of existing regions with a strong regional center (Lyon, Stuttgart) and of cooperations with a polycentric structure (Randstad).

However, the question remains how the regional actors use the gained elbowroom. The case of Baden-Württemberg shows that a new “pro-active” style of governance focused on competitiveness is also in danger of limiting its range of view concerning necessities in the traditionally “weaker” policy sectors. Similar tendencies have been observed in the case of Rhône-Alpes and the Randstad. In particular, the

growing responsibility of the regions or “metropoles” for social policies as a consequence of the deregulation of the national welfare systems is not reflected in the approaches, mainly focused on transport and infrastructures.[3]

A mounting focus of the planning approaches consists in the attribution of a “motor function” to the large agglomerations, which are therefore reinforced in their discursive position. National, regional and local policy objectives converge here, promoting their internationalisation and space-economic restructuration as well as a coordination of policies to tackle the problems of intermunicipal competition, congestion and environmental stress. The immediate expression of this common concern is the institutionalisation of the urban-regional level with different degrees of planning autonomy performed in all cases, except for Spain, with the support of all authority levels.

Considering the different constitutions, this institutionalisation of the urban regions has been accompanied by different forms of enhanced cooperation with social actors, in particular the economic interest representations (chambers of commerce), but also with public and private institutions. It has equally reinforced citizen participation e.g. through open consultation procedures or even direct election (Stuttgart). These processes have considerably broadened the legitimation of the respective delimitations, entities, and their proposals. However, the fact that these proposals largely reproduce the discourse of metropolization indicates that a close examination of what interests are actually represented would be required.[4] This subject certainly goes beyond the scope of this study but should be kept in mind when “metropolitan institutionalisation” is presented only as a progress.

Most importantly, the analysis of the discursive concepts in this respect has revealed an implicit dualism that affects the roles and identities of actors. While “internationalization”, “accessibility”, “specialization” or “polycentric networks” identify certain actors as relevant for successful realization (transport operator, infrastructure provider, foreign investors, developers, chambers of commerce, public authorities), others are important for legitimation (“competitiveness”, “quality of life”, “environmental protection”, “participation”) addressing the affected population as inhabitants, voters or (un-) employed.

Therefore, apart from public authorities, transport operators and infrastructure providers have exerted a crucial influence. Their position has become reinforced due to the discursive emphasis on the combination of *accessibility and competitiveness*. In the case of the railway companies, the different solutions for restructuration and privatization have diversified but also *focused* their interests through the creation of specialized (private) entities for real estate, station development or different operation units (HST, regional, freight). However the (private) airport management agencies and airlines (hub operators) also appear to have an important say. As a result, the interests of private actors have gained weight for the conceptualization and design of spatial and urban transformations at HST station locations. This circumstance is additionally aggravated by the high infrastructure costs that exceed the public budgets.

Against this background of multi-level and public-private interaction, the key interests of all actors involved are confronted in the conceptual definition of the major transport node locations. Here, a

[3] cf. Voelzkow 2001, 509

[4] cf. Jouve/ Lefévre 2003, *forthcoming*

fundamental discursive struggle emerges in which different interpretations are derived from the reference to *different scales* of space or transport networks. Whether the “metropolis” is a region, an urban region or a city, or whether it is part of a European or national spatial structure or network thus actually makes a difference that influences priorities and programmes for HST station area development. The consensus achieved about this definition largely conditions the subsequent material, functional, financial, and organizational project achievements.

In sum, the analysed planning approaches for the integration of the HST reflect this broadened spectrum of actors involved in the different partnership constructions that control the development of plans and projects. For the operationalization of the planning approach the discourse also provides a “tool box” that includes modifications of the (urban-) regional institutional context and implementation practices — a circumstance that points to a reinforced “meso-corporatism” in spatial planning.[5] However, the strong discourse coalition for metropolization does not prevent actors from conflicts, temporarily covered by the fuzziness of the concepts employed.

2.2 From sectoral to multi-sectoral

All planning approaches thus reflect an increasing *specification* of the projected interrelations between objectives for transport and economic development, spatial structures and environmental quality. Nevertheless, the particular combination of objectives, strategies and instruments that is accorded raises questions about the achieved mode of “policy integration”. The mere fact of touching upon multiple domains at various scales does not yet mean that diverging interests and spatial claims are taken into account, although this is precisely what is suggested.

Are the approaches for the integration of the HST the result of an intersectoral coordination or rather of sectoral domination? What objectives and values do the guiding concepts represent? The analysis of the planning discourses indicates that spatial strategies are guided by transport and economic development, based on the discursive affinities between their policies. Far from being “integrated” or circular as suggested, we rather see a *conditional chain* of concepts that underlies the plans and policies, following the order of transport accessibility, economic development, spatial and urban development and finally environmental protection.

2.2.1 Economic use of space - or space used for economy?

Transport networks have an increasing relevance in the conceptualization of spatial and urban development. It is an apparent coincidence that in all cases the “key projects” of the spatial development plans turn out to be the integration of the HST and the extension of the airports — not only in terms of scale, but also as *strategic* interventions with structural effects. The correspondence with the proclaimed “network economy” and “network society”[6] allows for the strategic importance attributed to the transport networks to go without saying. Yet, in adopting the “network” metaphor the difference between analysis

[5] Voelzkow 2001

[6] cf. Castells 2000

and objective has become blurred and transport or spatial networks seem to be a mere result of what socio-economic dynamics have already achieved.

In consequence, “mobility” also appears as a social achievement and aspiration. The envisaged “metropolitan” development model suggests a rational and efficient organization of space with a speed-optimized and “environmental friendly” transport system connecting centers in a polycentric structure. It claims to enable spatially extended activity patterns without exceeding time budgets or damaging the environment. But while the benefits of this model for the transport sector and business activities are obvious, the utility and benefits for the great majority of citizens would still need further explanation.

Therefore, transport growth forms a genuine component of the development model that supports the HST and the process of metropolization. Accessibility, especially international, is understood as the basis for economic development and is said to decide the growth or decline of a country, region or city. While other development models or sources are thereby categorically denigrated, a decoupling of transport and economic growth is not considered. Consequently, in ecological terms the “most environmental friendly way” has become the valid objective, instead of a reduction of transport.

This understanding is what has led to the identification of space with a “crossroads”, or of “mainports” as pillars of the national economy. It is equally the reason for the formulation of the “double objective” that combines the two possible “network” perspectives**:**

- *Connecting poles*: achieve cohesion and competitiveness, promote territorial equilibration (looking *inside*)
- *Getting connected*: realize a development opportunity, promote territorial differentiation (looking *outside*)

Connecting poles

The first perspective forms the starting point of a (grand) discourse coalition for “cohesion” and “competitiveness” in respect to a constitutive *outside*. It immediately leads to the question of the scale of reference: Europe, nation state, region or urban region. Here, the “network” concept does not provide useful orientations since any system with more than two connected elements represents a network, independent from the scale. “Networks” can therefore be identified and defined according to the respective interests at stake. For this reason and in spite of their fundamental importance in all examined planning processes, “cohesion” and “competitiveness” also result in being highly problematic concepts and objective dimensions as their definition changes with the spatial reference. For instance, the frictions between the Spanish government and the city of Barcelona, between the German government and Baden-Württemberg, or between the Région Urbaine de Lyon and the COURLY point precisely in this direction.

With the adoption of the metropolization discourse, particular emphasis is put on the connection between “poles”, “centers” or “nodes”. Linked to the objective of “scale enlargement” the envisaged connections mark a quantitative change in respect to the present situation, focused on the achievement of a “critical mass”. However, it should be questioned whether the demanded shift of scale means an adaptation to actual patterns of interaction that already show a significant level of disfunctionality (i.e. the urban regions

currently articulated: RUL, ROA, VRS, BMR), or an extension of these disfunctionalities towards new dimensions. Put differently, it has become necessary to evaluate if there is a *spatial threshold for facilitating mobility,* once the concept of a "resistance of space" has apparently lost its meaning. The "Deltametropolis" is certainly the most striking example here, but Rhône-Alpes, Baden-Württemberg and Catalonia are also considering similar conceptions of enlarged metropolitan regions.

This is where the railway "renaissance" also represents a questionable orientation as an answer to the problems of mobility, accessibility and environmental impacts of transport. The focus on the HST as the carrier of this "renaissance" (which in financial terms might in fact be true) omits the effects on regional passenger services and freight transport, where the railways should indeed play a crucial role. In these transport sectors more flexible answers could equally have been featuring a different kind of "railway renaissance". Instead, the process of rationalization has not only failed to resolve the extraordinary gap between offer and demand but also concentrated on the creation of *new* demand.

The discursive quandary is here that the envisaged development model is linked to tempting concepts that suggest solutions for certain concrete problems (e.g. "transport substitution", "environmental friendliness", "open space preservation") but deflects from the parallel production of *new* problems that show a more elusive character. Consequently, the consideration of the social and cultural transformation of space in respect to increasing travel distances, hypermobility and flexibilization has remained marginal and largely hypothetical throughout the examined planning processes ("approach people").

Getting connected

The second "network" perspective has generated a focus on "nodes" and "poles" and their development as urban places, embedded in polycentric spatial structures. "Specialization" and "complementarity" are the key features demanded for the envisaged centralities while their respective identity is derived from their position in the network ("CBD", "growth pole"). By contrast, in sustainable spatial development approaches the concept of "decentral concentration" underlines the *relative autonomy* and *functional mixture* of the centers as essential characteristics, while their identity is seen as a result of the quality of the place: The objectives seem to be juxtaposed.[7]

The development of HST station areas reflects this dilemma of a "network" orientation and the simultaneous condition of "place". New HST stations within the city areas are predicted to become the "central business districts" of their urban regions. At these locations maximal (office) density and maximal HST use condition each other, following the interests of operators and developers. Thus the urban environs of the stations are oriented at the specific needs of HST users, and (public) transport networks are adapted to allow optimum "feeder" service. Conversely, at the downtown locations the argumentation differs: Their centrality results in being affected by the relative decrease of accessibility, modifying their discursive development orientation towards touristic and cultural facilities as well as high-grade housing.[8]

[7] cf. Hilligardt 1998, 12

[8] This fact could be encouraging since the reduced development pressure at downtown locations would allow for the evaluation of different options (Lyon, Amsterdam). Still, it is also questionable since present developments point towards particular secondary

Consequently, the derived development proposals at both types of location tend to adapt the urban structure either to the *international aspirations* or to the *local requirements*, while combinations seem to be hard to achieve.[9] Symptomatic in this respect is the emerging division of tasks between the central stations in the downtown and the new HST stations in the city area. The case of Stuttgart demonstrates the remarkable conflict potential that results if both locations physically coincide.

The airports have become the common strategic focus of all actors. There is a broad consensus about the future economic importance of air accessibility and the need for infrastructure expansion made possible through the connection with the HST. Regional employment is the most important argument to defend this perspective, but the quantitative effects stand back against the assumed qualitative importance of "accessibility". Correspondingly, in France and Spain the question of development control at the airport has led to the most substantial interest conflicts concerning the integration of the HST.

Nevertheless, apart from the positioning of airports in international air transport networks, the growing accumulation of functions also increases their centrality on the ground. In the perspective of the cities, airports have developed from distant "terminus" locations to important nodes in the urban regional and local transport networks that excel every urban centre in terms of accessibility. Thus we observe how the objectives of transport-and economic growth are successively translated into urban structures and transport patterns that have no other explanation than following the flows. Accordingly the envisaged (infrastructure) plans can hardly meet the requirements of *efficiency* and *sufficiency* stated by sustainable urban development approaches.[10]

Finally, in the case of the HST stops at regional infrastructure nodes the particular forms of "policy integration" are especially apparent. Here, the connection to the HST has become the only real development perspective, which makes the stations principal interventions of economic promotion and regional distribution policies. This situation reflects the spatial imbalances created by the HST as it has approached certain urban centers but increased the relative remoteness of others. The attempt at Romans/ Valence/ Tain to develop a "theme park" at the HST station illustrates this difficulty of inventing a business enclave based on accessibility in order to maintain activity in the area.

Therefore, regarding the different station location types the spatial "impact" of the HST does not infer from the single urban projects that accompany its integration. Rather the whole picture has to be taken into account, ranging from the local to the European scale. This includes the differentiation of "metropolitan" and non-metropolitan territories in a trans-national perspective, the creation of new city centers and the transformation of the downtowns, the creation of new regional "growth poles" and of "airport cities", as well as the adaptation of the secondary transport networks, and the changes in space-functional structures and socio-economic patterns.

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effects of "revitalization", including gentrification and increasing functional conflicts between housing and the increasing concentration of leisure and touristic activities.

[9] cf. Jessen 1997, 502

[10] cf. Hübler et al. 1999, 482

From this angle, the particular mode of “integrating” sectoral policies becomes visible. The strategic focus of planning is the *pro-active qualification of spatial and urban development* according to an *anticipated economic development model* through strategic large-scale projects. In these strategies the HST occupies the most prominent place as an intersectoral trigger. Its integration therefore fulfils multiple tasks at different spatial scales, yet commonly oriented at the strategic maxims of (international) accessibility, competitiveness and specialization.

The resulting production and consumption of urban space at HST station locations appears to be caught in a process of acceleration that makes the required “in vitro” urbanization a questionable task. The high costs and complexity have favoured the increase of influence of particular economic and power interests and their development hypotheses on the formation of the new “key projects”. This circumstance poses a fundamental question of legitimation since the envisaged transformations imply long-term structural effects and societal impacts. It certainly demands the consideration of the *definition of transport node development as an essentially public domain*.

However, although the structural effects exceed the development of a “space-economic primary structure” by far, in none of the cases have the social, cultural or ecological constitution of the territory or the place played a significant role for the planning approaches, if any at all. The polarizing and exclusive character of the HST is thus *supported by* and *supports* the process of metropolization. In spatial terms, metropolization can thus be interpreted as the *concentration of the concentrated* and the *sprawl of the sprawled*.

2.2.2 Sustainable development - or sustained development?

Dealing with the issue of environmental implications in a separate paragraph does not correspond to the position of the related arguments in the planning processes, but reflects the conceptual orientation of the discourses. Environmental arguments have indeed played an important role for the support of the HST and take a prominent place in the metropolization discourse.

The starting point has been the positive environmental effects attributed to the HST as a transport mode (“substitution”, “reduced emission”, “safety”). Nevertheless, these are secondary effects of the design of a new railway product, but not the result of a quest for innovative solutions regarding the accumulating environmental impacts of the present transport system, which would have led to different proposals.[11] Even on the level of the transport system, the attribution of an “environmental bonus” to the HST is not as evident as usually suggested and would require a thorough reconsideration on a much broader analytical basis.

Nevertheless, the metropolization discourse places the HST in a wider context that has also expanded the scope of the attributed positive environmental effects. In reference to the interdependencies with spatial and urban development it conceptually links multiple sectoral objectives, among which the “protection” of the environment, the “preservation of open space” or vice-versa “urban concentration”.

[11] cf. the concept of ”area-wide railways” (Flächenbahn) suggested by Monheim (1996)

Apparently, these concepts reflect an orientation that attempts to *compensate* for the impacts of (necessary) infrastructure and urban development measures, independent from the obligatory realization of an environmental impact assessment.

Indeed, the problem consists in the implicit separation and hierarchy established by the different arguments. This has led to the formulation of another "double objective", pursuing in parallel transport and economic growth and the "protection of the (living) environment" or the improvement of the "quality of life". The relationship between both dimensions is thus narrowed down to the local impact of the projects, while the structural effects are only regarded in terms of transport and economic parameters.

Similarly, we find that environmental concerns are addressed by using the "network" metaphor to (geo-) graphically relate relevant and "protected" areas. However, at the same time these "green" networks appear as independent "layers", fully detached from the transport and urban "networks". With this conceptualization the mutual influences and interdependencies become discursively reduced and the perspective is limited to the beneficial effects of the "networks".

Other arguments reflect a selective presentation of facts that omit tangible secondary effects. For instance, the re-development of conversion areas and urban densification at transport nodes are defended as contributions to limit suburban sprawl. Yet, at the same time the space-functional specialization of these concentrations is demanded, which actually sustains the trend of suburbanization. Similarly, the envisaged "scale enlargements" are supported claiming an efficiency increase for the transport system. Yet, they are equally justified in attaining a "critical mass" and the establishment of complementary urban centres, which in fact enhances transport growth.

These types of dualisms between economic growth and environmental protection, between internationalization and the" every-day-life environs", or between transport accessibility and local rootedness are characteristic for the metropolization discourse. It achieves the discursive resolution of the conflicts between the "global" and the "local" spheres by incorporating them into the same development model, claiming their principal compatibility or even "mutual reinforcement".

In many cases, the concept that bridges the gaps between growth orientations and the social, cultural and especially ecological objectives is the "sustainable development". Over the course of the1990s this concept "descended" from a sublime and abstract high-level goal to ordinary every-day policy. In France and Germany it has become laid down in the national spatial planning acts as an overall objective, but it equally appears in almost every planning document issued.

In the planning discourses analysed, however, "sustainable development" is not reflected as a guiding principle but rather as a tactical distinction of the latest policy drafts that provides these with supplementary legitimation. Unlike the theoretical requirements, aspects concerning the value systems or the organizational and political-administrative structures that frame the planning processes are never addressed.[12] The focus remains on the catchy "triptych" of an economic, social and environmental balance, yet with the economy in the center. In practice the metropolization discourse has therefore

[12] cf. Lamprecht/ Thierstein 1998

brought a considerable reduction of the dimensions of the “sustainability” concept. The integration of the HST, however, has profited from this limited interpretation through broader support and enhanced realization.

3 Notes for the agenda of urban research

The insight obtained and the lessons learned through this study draw to equal parts on the theoretical approach for analysis and the empirical facts supplied by the cases. Together, both components have opened various paths for further urban research work addressing theoretical and empirical questions. The principal orientations that can be derived point towards three interrelated fields of investigation: 1) HST and actual transformations of spatial structures 2) “metropolization” and the transformation of planning practice, and 3) discourse and the distribution of power in planning.

Transformations of spatial structures and the HST

In spite of the diverse strategic implications attributed to the HST for the structuration of space at the (urban-) regional level, only limited empirical knowledge is available concerning the interrelation with *regional urbanization dynamics*. However, the present development stage of the European HST network would already allow one to narrow this question, especially regarding the situation in France and Germany. The establishment of new transport- and urban patterns, spatial economies or social structures at a regional scale and the role of the HST therein would thus be worth a dedicated analysis.

In this, the *spatial implications of time* required for large-scale transport network modifications would demand particular attention, since priorities for infrastructure developments equally set priorities for spatial developments that cannot be reversed. Furthermore, the *interaction between multiple HST station locations* developed within large agglomerations appears to be of specific importance regarding their differences and similarities and the changes they introduce into the spatial structure. Through these steps, the ground for a more *systemic evaluation of the actual environmental impacts* of the HST would also be prepared.

Transformations of “metropolitan” institutional structures and practices

The strategic development model of “metropolization” that frames the integration of the HST demands the focus implications in *other fields of planning* as well (e.g. housing, supply and disposal structures, landscape and environment, public facilites, etc.), but also for the *activity of “planning”* as such.

Considering the implicit bias of the metropolization discourse towards large-scale infrastructure projects and economic development policies, multiple questions concerning the legitimation and rationality of planning need to be raised: Which interests and sectors (institutional and individual) are actually represented in current planning processes, how does this happen, and what kind of policies are designed as a result? What are the modes of “integration” between different sectoral policies under the umbrella of “sustainable development”? How has metropolization affected these parameters of planning practice over time? Which new forms of cooperation have become established in consequence of a “metropolitan” development orientation, and what are the potentials and threats for subsidiarity and citizen participation?

Transformations of discourse and power positions

The use of discourse analysis has proved to be particularly helpful for the identification of the key concepts that actually guide planning, but also for the interpretation of the effects these concepts have on planning processes and programmes. The discourse of “metropolization” has been identified on this basis and could form the starting point for a targeted critical analysis and debate of its conceptual commitments.

By addressing the “blind spots” and fuzziness of the discourse, more transparency could be obtained regarding these crucial issues of spatial and urban transformation. Concepts such as “cohesion”, “network”, “accessibility”, “node”, or “scale enlargement” require a second and third look at their different constitutions and actual implications for power positions, coalition forming, conflict resolution, and the resulting plans and projects. Thus, the contingent rationality of planning can be explored and explained following the discursive affinities between concepts and actors.

This perspective clarifies that there is a need to *challenge the established concepts* through detailed analysis, the development of alternative concepts, and an active transformation of the discourse. In particular the *social dimensions of metropolization* have to be examined, asking for new social responsibilities of metropoles related to a changing understanding of public services, extended activity patterns, diversifying lifestyles and the multi-cultural constitution of the urban (“network”) society. It should equally be considered how these changes affect the role and function of transport node locations.[13]

Furthermore, if actors seriously consider the possibility of achieving a “sustainable spatial development” there is an urgent need to link planning practice to the corresponding theoretical debate. Beyond the demonstration and implementation of “Good Practice” at small scales, this concerns in particular the *strategic level of planning*. For instance, the development of “Strategic Environmental Assessment” (SEA) as a European planning tool indicates that this path has already been occupied discursively, which raises important questions regarding the conceptualization of this tool, its relation to other instruments and policies (Transeuropean networks — TEN, European Spatial Development Perspective — ESDP) and the effects on power and actor positions.[14]

However, a criticism of concepts and the development of new ones cannot be expected from the “actors of power”. For that reason it is necessary to *support discursive opposition in planning*. There is a need for knowledge about successful alternative practices and a detailed understanding of *what makes a difference* in European urban development regarding the overall trend towards (metropolitan) conformity. This could be addressed in a common ”European Urban Forum of Difference“ for the publication, debate and exchange of experiences, which may in turn lead to discursively influence planning practice.

[13] cf. Graham/ Marvin 2001

[14] cf. Richardson 2000