Shrinking cities and growing regions

Emerging trends of new rural-urban relationships in the UK and Germany

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Outline of presentation

• Introduction to the two cases Ruhrgebiet and Manchester/Liverpool
• Shrinking Cities – and old phenomenon and a new debate
• Rural areas – conflicts between counter-urbanisation and protection of countryside character, a brief look at the housing market
• Commuting structures – increasing inter-dependence or independence of rural areas
• Conclusion
Manchester/Liverpool conurbation and the North-West region

- New ONS urban/rural classification
- Categories: Urban; Fringe and town; Village, hamlet and dispersed households
- North-West 6.9 mio inhabitants
- Liverpool 440,000
- Manchester 432,000
- Merseyside 1.36 mio
- Greater Manchester 2.53 mio
- Cheshire 678,0000
- Lancashire 1.147 mio
The Ruhrgebiet and the land North Rhine - Westphalia

- Polycentric conurbation
- About 3 mio inhabitants in the core, another 2 mio in the wider conurbation
- Surrounded by the rural districts of the Münsterland, the Sauerland and the Niederrhein
- No official definition of rural and urban areas available
- The map shows the unitary authorities and the KVR boundaries
Shrinking cities and old phenomenon and a new debate

- Increasingly discussed in recent years especially in Germany
- Liverpool/ Manchester region often chosen as an early historic example
- Several recent publications and studies comparing mainly shrinking eastern German cities with Liverpool or Manchester
  - Decline and sprawl (Couch et al 2005) comparing Liverpool and Leipzig
  - Shrinking to grow? (Mace et al 2004) comparing Manchester and Leipzig
  - Shrinking cities competition by ArchPlus and the German National Cultural foundation looking at Ivanovo, Detroit, Manchester/Liverpool and Leipzig
- Many of these project have a distinctive urban perspective and barely look beyond the boundaries of the city region
- Core cities of Liverpool managed to stop the population decrease, different picture in the rest of the conurbation
- For many cities in the Ruhr a further population decrease is predicted, mainly for demographic reasons (Jeschke 2004)
population change
local authority district 1991-2001

Average price per postcode sector for a semi-detached property 2003

Rural areas - conflicts between urbanisation and protection of the countryside character

- Restrictive policy for new residential development in rural areas
- Impact on housing market leading to much higher prices in some rural areas than in many urban areas
- “band” of low value in the north of the conurbation and along the less accessible coast in Cumbria
- Spots of high values in the Lake District, parts of Cheshire and some coastal locations

Source: property information team, land registry
Average price of semi-detached property/ end of row terrace in 2004

Buying and building a house is mostly much cheaper or equally priced in rural compared to urban areas

Exception in some northern districts of the Ruhrgebiet

Strong local and weak regional planning

Low local resistance against new developments

Economic development more decentralised, such as business parks even small villages
• Long distance commuting based on Census 2001
  – High shares in parts of Allerdale, the southern wards of Lancaster and parts of Cheshire/ Vale Royal
  – Not surprisingly generally low rates in all urban areas
  – Relatively low rates in rural parts of Lancashire and South Lakeland compared to the rest of England
  – In comparison with the rest of England generally low rate of long distance commuting.
Long distance commuting in Germany

- share of economically active population commuting more than 25 km in 1996
- Some higher shares in the districts north of the Ruhr
- Generally much lower shares than in other parts of Germany

Source: Raumordnungsbericht 2000
Conclusion

- Increasing population growth in rural areas might have led to an increasing independence and detachment of rural areas from shrinking urban cores.
- Rural areas might have increasingly developed “quasi-urban qualities” for many residents.
- A redefinition of the role of shrinking conurbations is necessary, beyond the mere role as an economic hub for the region.
- Comparative advantage for the cores of the conurbation, more difficult for the wider hinterland.
- Rural districts have to consider in how far they also benefit in the long run from larger cities losing importance.