

MAPPING THE UNKNOWN: DEEP SPACES OF A LATENT SUPERCITY

0_Introduction

The work on «Deep Spaces» and their impact on a postindustrial urbanism partly originates in the research project «Städteregion Ruhr 2030» funded by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research («bmbf») in Germany. «Städteregion Ruhr» was one of about twenty parallel research projects of «Stadt 2030», a national research programme to explore the future of cities and city regions in Germany. In the Ruhrgebiet eight cities between Dortmund and Duisburg and the Faculty of Spatial Planning at the University of Dortmund worked together in «Städteregion Ruhr 2030». The nine project partners developed long-term visions for the core area of the Ruhrgebiet, especially for its regional spaces and a «regional design», and looked for new forms of urban (and regional) governance in the Ruhrgebiet (Davy 2002).

«Städteregion Ruhr 2030» and «Deep Spaces» also contribute to the general debate about post- or transurban landscapes. In addition to the increasing number of research programmes and studies, which deal with urbanistic phenomena that e.g. Thomas Sieverts describes as «Zwischenstadt» (Sieverts 1999), Lars Lerup as «Suburban Metropolis» (Lerup 2001) or Edward Soja as «Exopolis» (Soja 2000), «Deep Spaces» tries to find out, what kind of «transfigurations» of traditional ideals of urbanity and metropolism could take place in a region like the Ruhrgebiet (with five million people but almost no serious urbanistic tradition).

1_Weltstadt

In 1987 the Ruhrlandmuseum in Essen published a book containing essays and photographs about the contemporary Ruhrgebiet (Eskilden 1987). The title of this book is «Endlich so wie überall?» («Finally like everywhere?»). The booktitle should express an unignorable desire in the Ruhrgebiet to (finally) live in an «ordinary» city, an «ordinary» region with an «ordinary» image – and without any extravaganzas, which are caused by the heavy industries and their unique way of colonising and urbanising a landscape. It was the time *after* the definite decline of coal and steel industries and *before* the rise of postindustrial transformations of old industrial areas into transurban spaces for culture and recreation. «Endlich so wie überall?» is still a very good example for the ongoing search for «everyday urbanity» in the Ruhrgebiet and reveals this special kind of cautious relief not to be too exceptional anymore.

At the same time one can find serious endeavours to transform (or at least transcend) the pure bigness of the Ruhrgebiet into an adequate, competitive metropolitan prestige. The «lust for metropolism» (Ganser 2000) is nothing new in the Ruhrgebiet, but for many decades a more or less constant state of mind, especially for the ruling elites in the region. Scientific conferences like «Mit dem Ruhrprogramm zur Weltstadt?» («With the Ruhr Programme towards a World City?»), which took place in 1968 in Mülheim an der Ruhr, are no exception at all. Nowadays these kind of conferences deal with the «metropolitan region Rhein-Ruhr» (Blotevogel 1998).

«Das Ruhrgebiet ist wie New York. Es weiss es bloss noch nicht.» («*The Ruhrgebiet is like New York. But so far it does not know it.*»)

_Claus Peymann, former director of the Schauspielhaus Bochum

Peymanns bonmot had been meant as a smart provocation to his new bohemian audience at the Burgtheater in Vienna. The new director of the Burgtheater wanted to make clear that Bochum and the Ruhrgebiet are not

as unimportant and provincial as it may look like from the Viennese point of view. But the success of his statement shows at the same time, that the combination of «Ruhrgebiet» and «Weltstadt» is still able to provoke total disbelief inside and outside of the Ruhrgebiet.

According to the topics of «Städteregion Ruhr 2030» Peymanns words may have at least two more meanings. New Yorks «Weltstadt» image depends for the most part on the shape and the global importance of Manhattan: the dense pattern of skyscrapers and the numerous world-leading institutions and enterprises build up this ultimate image of power and prestige. But only five minutes away from this bustling part of the city you step into peripheries, brownfields, wastelands and other similar spaces you would hardly expect in the inner districts of a «Weltstadt». The presence and the strong visibility of peripherality and «waiting lands» within the central urban fabric of New York City has some parallels with the heterogeneous and fragmented spatial structure in the Ruhrgebiet, where the traditional dichotomy of «centre» and «periphery» is more or less an exception.

A second parallel may be called «non-intentional beauty» or «beauty by mistake». In his novel «Die unerträgliche Leichtigkeit des Seins» («The unbearable Lightness of Being») the author Milan Kundera deals with the specific beauty of New York. Different from Europe where «beauty» is usually the result of a long-termed plan or a conscious designing process – e.g. Baroque or Renaissance Cities are results of strong aesthetic intentions – the beauty of New York seems for him and his novel characters to have another origin. Its beauty is characterized as a non-intentional one (without the meaning to be designed) – like e.g. a stalactite cave:

«Formen, die für sich betrachtet häßlich sind, geraten zufällig und ohne jeden Plan in so unvorstellbare Nachbarschaften, daß sie plötzlich in rätselhafter Schönheit erstrahlen».

_Milan Kundera, Die unerträgliche Leichtigkeit des Seins

In the traditional sense of a beautiful European City the Ruhrgebiet is quite rich in ugly places, non-sites, unbearable neighbourhoods and monstrous architectures. Their spatial arrangements do not follow the traditional models of land uses, functions or urban design, but describe an erratic thicket. This bricolage-like thicket is a non-intentional «design» of a city region and – like the International Building Exhibition «IBA Emscher Park» in the Nineties showed – bares unimaginable beauty. The ability to see this beauty and not to miss the aesthetics of a «proper» European City is still quite new in the Ruhrgebiet.

Comparing the Ruhrgebiet with a «Weltstadt» like New York in such a way points at some surprising characteristics of a «supercity», which are quite different to the well-known images of power and prestige. The traditional city images are still virulent in the current search for e.g. a «Ruhrstadt» (mainly a campaign by the biggest regional publishing company WAZ) or a «Rhein-Ruhr-City» (a big exhibition sponsored by the government of Northrhine-Westphalia). Yet it becomes more and more obvious, that the Ruhrgebiet may have other qualities and characteristics to be understood as a «supercity». «Städteregion Ruhr 2030» was looking for these characteristics and is hopefully in the future working on it.

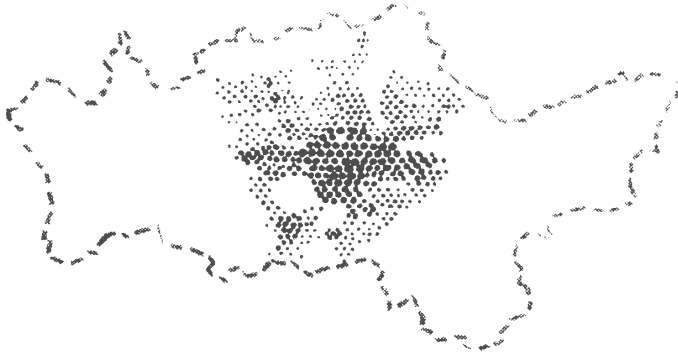
2_Supercity

The idea of a supercity between Rhine, Ruhr and Emscher is not new and partly derives from a conceptual idea by the architect Martin Einsele in the «Heroic Sixties» of the last century (Einsele 1964). In this decade of emphatic planning visions («Mit dem Ruhrprogramm zur Weltstadt?») Einsele designed a «Superstadt an Ruhr und Emscher», a spatial vision for the whole Ruhrgebiet. In 1963 he came from London to start his job as the leading urban planner of the city of Gladbeck, a small city in the northern part of this region. After his

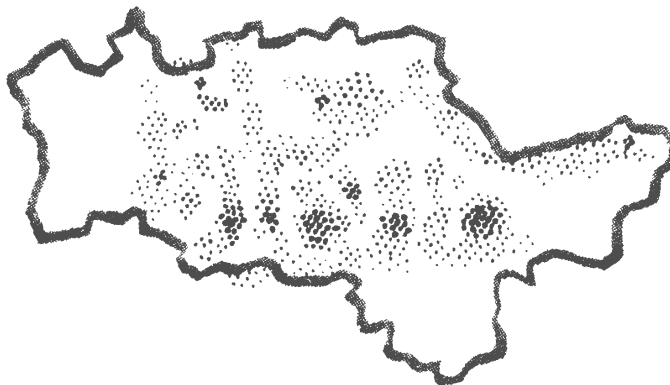
arrival, he started to look at the «datascares» of the Ruhrgebiet and got real euphoric: 4.5 million inhabitants, the densest network of motorways in Europe and a truly remarkable cultural landscape – one should be able to transform this into a true metropolis!

The way he approached this task is shown in some emphatic illustrations. The first illustration is a kind of capacity study: How and how many times does London and its settlement density fit into the Ruhrgebiet (inside the boundaries of the Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk)? The diagram impressively shows Einsele's thesis, that even a Ruhrgebiet with a population of 9 million, that is more than twice as much as at that time, would have no capacity problems like in London. The second illustration shows the density of settlements at that time in the Ruhrgebiet: The polycentric character is obvious. Yet in the context of the 1960s this was more seen as a «ballast» and therefore not as a «bonus» for the Ruhrgebiet. The third diagram illustrates the potential settlement densities of Einseles Ruhrstadt-vision that he contrasts with the official concepts for regional planning of the SVR.

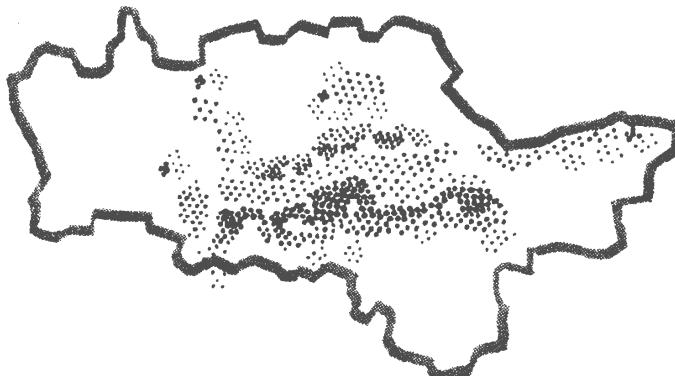
1_London in the Ruhrgebiet (9.0 mill.)



2_Polycentric Ruhrgebiet (4.5 mill.)

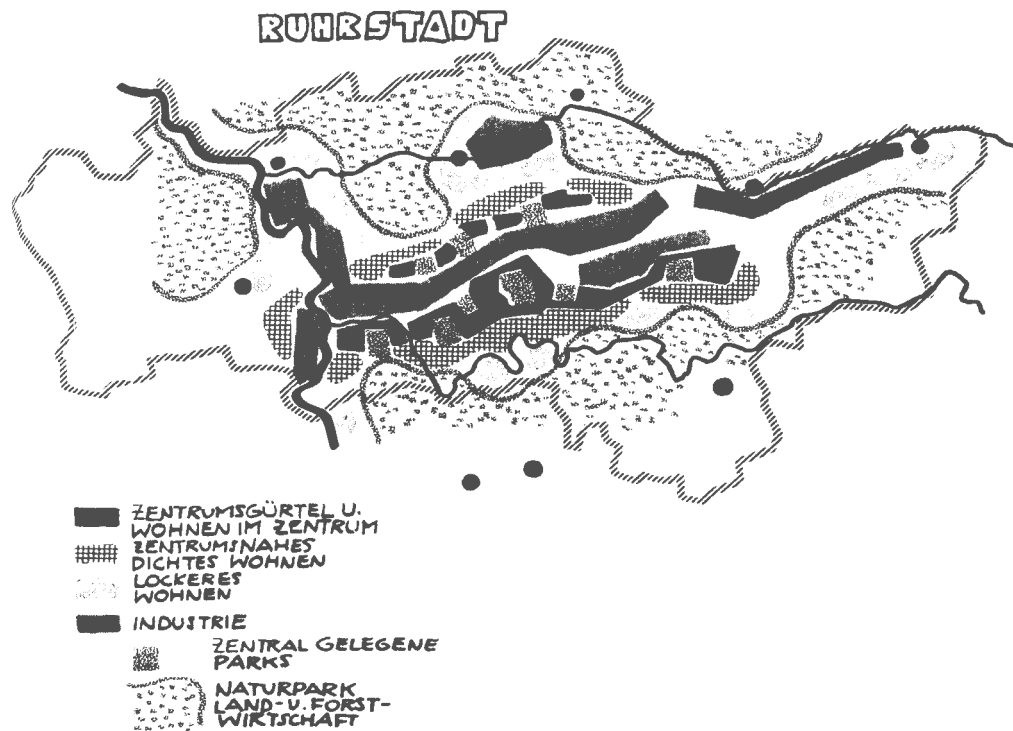


3_Ruhrstadt-Vision (6.5 mill.)



source: Einsele (1964): *Superstadt an Ruhr und Emscher*

The «Superstadt an Ruhr und Emscher» could easily have accommodated 6.5 million inhabitants. Such a size would still be far less than a size of 9 million people that would, following Einsele's opinion, also be able to live in this region. The polycentric character would be for the most part transformed into a centre in the form of a band between the cities of Dortmund and Duisburg. Pocket Parks or Central Parks would have substituted the regional green corridors in-between the cities.



source: Einsele (1964): *Superstadt an Ruhr und Emscher*

Concerning the urban design ideas in his Ruhrstadt-vision, two aspects are remarkable from today's perspective. With the help of «Superstadt» Einsele rebuilds the old dichotomy of centre and periphery on a regional level (the numerous centres of the Ruhr cities become a «super-centre»; the countless peripheries of the region turn into a «super-periphery»). Although the will and motivation to design and shape this conurbation is expressive, the design-repertoire does not reach other contemporary ideas of urbanism.

Very innovative – or at least very new – was the proposed way of dealing with the regional green corridors, that were meant to be nearly unimpeachable since the Twenties of the last century. Einsele pointed out that these green corridors fortify the border-lines between the cities. Therefore these corridors do at least in some cases work as a line of demarcation and hinder the integration of the Ruhr cities into one «Ruhrstadt». So Einsele wanted to change or transform these green corridors into urban parks surrounded by the urban fabric of a supercity.

Since the Sixties the Ruhrgebiet changed enormously, but it is still no supercity – in the sense of Martin Einsele. The Ruhrgebiet is full of administrative, physical, social, economical and psychogeographical spheres, which are hardly considered as one big «superstructure» or supercity. The current image campaign describes therefore the Ruhrgebiet as «Mehr als eine Stadt» («More than one city» but also «more than a city»). How could a late modern spatial vision for this Ruhrgebiet and its morphology look like today? Would could the term «supercity» mean nowadays considering the contemporary discussions about an urbanism beyond centre and periphery, beyond city and landscape, beyond globality and locality?

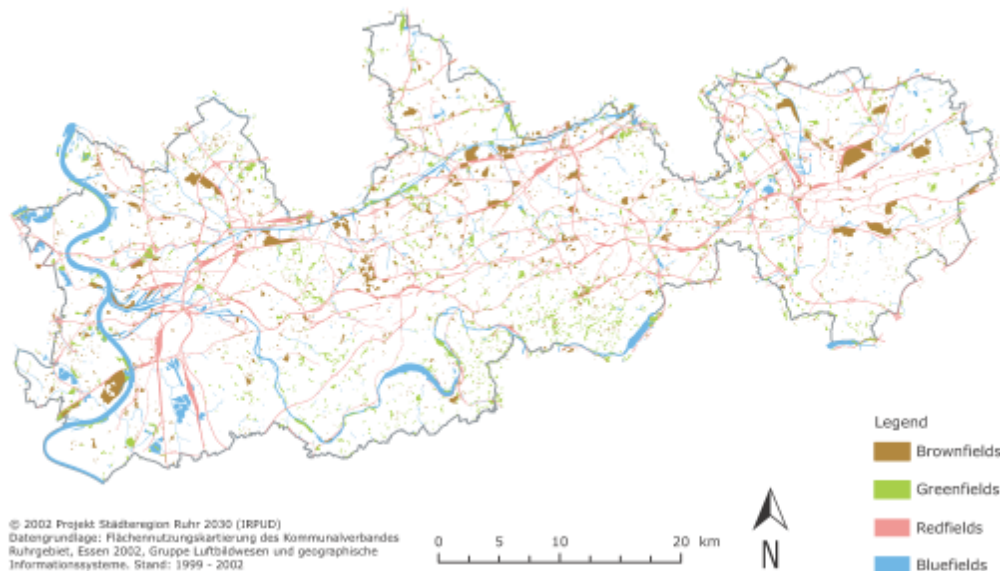
3_Mapping the Unknown

Mapping is searching – and as well designing. To answer these questions for a spatial vision and its urbanistic impacts, the research project «Städtereion Ruhr 2030» tried to analyze the spatial structure and to create new emblematic perspectives *on* and images *for* this region.

3_1 Neunte Stadt

Derived from Robert Musils «Möglichkeitssinn» the research project tried to identify «Möglichkeitsräume» («*spaces of chances*») in the Ruhrgebiet. Hence one approach to do this is to examine the physical space of the participating eight cities. To perceive this physical spaces of chances it is necessary to look at the whole region instead of just the separate cities. The whole territory of the eight cities contains, like in a picture puzzle, the area of another city: The «Neunte Stadt» (*the «Ninth City»*)!

Neunte Stadt



The map above is a first approach towards the idea of the «Neunte Stadt». First of all one can observe a multitude of larger and smaller pieces of derelict land, the so called «Brownfields». Among these there are well known places, such as the area of the Westfalenhütte in Dortmund or the Kruppsche Gürtel in Essen. Larger brownfields mainly exist in the middle and northern part of the region, because there the structural change started relatively late. The mapping of land uses of the Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet, which is the basis for this analysis, also includes sites where ambitious concepts and ideas for follow up uses may exist in the individual cities. This is due to the fact, that the analysis is based on an aerial view of the region. Hence these sites are not «ownerless» or «Terra Nullius». Rather the proposed projects, with ambitious brands such as Logport, O-Vision, Phoenix or WestWard, have nearly all a regional importance that reaches beyond their direct urban context. These projects could form a new «metacity» (not megacity!).

And if one looks at an historic map of the Ruhrgebiet before industrialization started, the possible role of these sites, beyond their individual marketing, becomes clear. The location and distribution of the brownfields is comparable to the location and distribution of the «1000 villages», from which the cities in the Ruhrgebiet emerged. This is a «network of chances», a formative spatial element of the Ruhrgebiet, that could be used like new found land – if the eight cities discover this «Newfoundland» and develop common visions.

Other elements of the «Neunte Stadt» are the undeveloped areas and green spaces with regional importance, the «greenfields». The concepts of green areas on a regional level, the so called «Regionale Grünzüge» exist already since the Twenties of the 20th century. These are important elements of this part of the «Neunte Stadt» – a kind of green metacity. The map contains exemplarily the agricultural area that is currently fallow land. These and similar small scale parts of open space can play an important role in a green urban landscape, in addition to the large scale open space of the green corridors that already exists and that is protected.

Other spatial structures with regional importance are the large scale traffic routes of the region, the «Redfields», which are also part of the «Neunte Stadt». Here it is not that much important, that the future usage of these elements is unsure and open, like for the Brownfields and Greenfields. In particular the infrastructure of regional railways, S-Bahn-trains and the motorways form a «regional public space» for all cities that already exists today. The Redfields are not just part of a «transfere space» that solely serves for travelling inside and through the region. Furthermore they are a kind of public space which people use every day. If more attention would be paid to this space, the quality of experience of the Ruhrgebiet and the attractiveness of its public space would be improved.

The «Bluefields», the regional surfaces of the water, mainly consisting of channels and the rivers Ruhr and Emscher, loose importance as routes of transport, because of the structural change in the economy. One reason for that is a change in the structure of industrial production, less bulk articles and bulk solids, more specialised products. Especially in the Ruhrgebiet the decline in heavy industries plays an important role. Furthermore the Emscher and some smaller former natural streams are transformed from a system of open sewers to a new river system. All these elements open chances of designing, of integrating water as an element in a diversified landscape.

Brownfields + Greenfields + Redfields + Bluefields cover an area more than 130 km² in the eight cities. (for comparison: the area covered by the city of Bochum is 145 km²). Covering about 11% of «Städtereion Ruhr», decisions about the future usage, protection and design of this area can not just be a municipal concern.

Neunte Stadt (detail)



Certainly in each city the derelict land, the transport infrastructure or the waters play an important role in the urban development. The remarkable potential for development of these individual sites in the eight cities can be recognized if one sees them in a big picture as a whole. Then the potential to

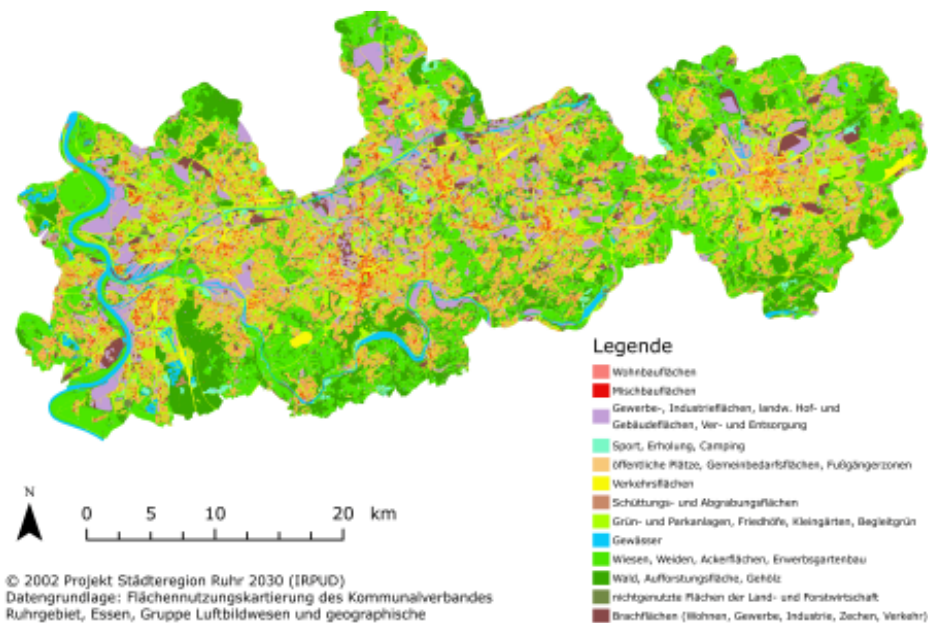
found and develop a «Neunte Stadt» commonly by the eight cities is unveiled – provided that the cities see the coherence of their «Neunte Stadt» and accept responsibility for a common development.

If one observes this chance, the «Neunte Stadt» emerges as a Pentimento of the region among the centres, quarters and housing areas of the eight cities. A network of autonomy and variegated uses on derelict land, a green network, a net of public transport spaces with a character of great experience and good accessibility and a networked water landscape.

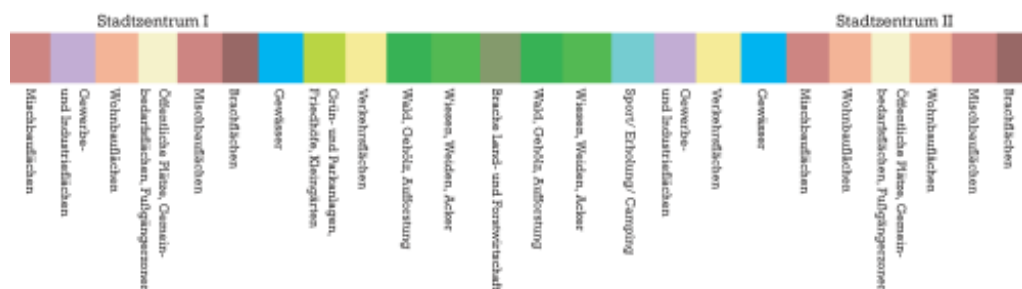
3_2 Spectral Fields

Mapping is designing. How an abstract way of mapping helps in finding new images and new designs for the region is shown in this part. An analysis of the detailed GIS-mapping of land uses by the Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet helps to understand the spatial structure of this post-industrial region. The next map shows the spatial structure of the eight cities that form the core of the Ruhrgebiet, aggregated to 12 land use categories. It is difficult to find a core or several cores in this illustration and it is even more difficult to identify the administrative borders of the single cities.

Structure of Land Uses



The following section shows a prototypic and fictive structure of land uses inside and between two cities. This image reflects typical settlement structures of an ideal European city and serves at the same time as a legend for the following figures.



This virtual section through the space between two «classic» cities with distinct centres and periphery shows the sequence of uses that one would expect between two concentric cities. The city centre with public spaces is surrounded by general residential building areas and commercial areas. In-between there are some watercourses.

In the outskirts area there are green fields and parks, but as well large spaces for transport infrastructure. Beyond that the open land starts with farming fields and forests. At some point the next city starts with large scale roads and general residential building areas.

The structures of these two fictitious cities differ from each other just in detail and there is a clear-cut differentiation between city and open countryside. However the Städteregion Ruhr is structured in a different way. One can discover the structure by observing the following spectral-fields. The following illustrations are based on an analysis of a mapping of uses by the Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet.



The bands show the structure and the change of uses between two city centres at a time. The exact location of these cuts is shown on the overview map.

from Duisburg



towards Oberhausen

from Oberhausen



towards Mülheim

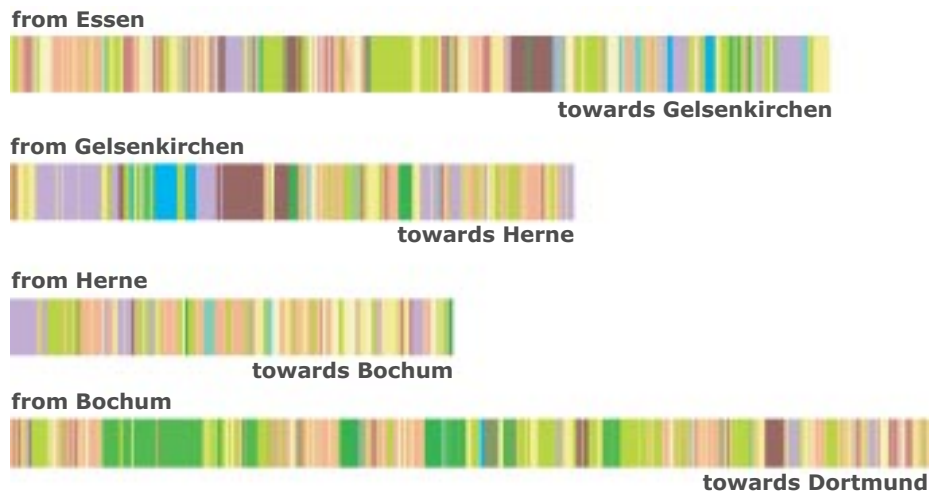
from Mülheim



towards Essen

More than 150 categories of the original mapping have been aggregated to 12 categories for these figures, to allow a concise illustration. The generalisation also points out that the differentiation of the pattern of uses is in reality much more detailed. Of course this form of spatial analysis is merely a random sample. Nevertheless in this abstract form these bands show the unique character of the pattern of uses in the Städteregion Ruhr.

At first glance the change of uses seems to be erratic. The composite of uses does not follow any classical pattern of theories of spatial development. The structure of a classical, solitaire city looks different. Especially the spectral fields DU-OB, E-GE, GE-HER and HER-BO are characterized by a small scale and frequent change of different uses. The settlement area does not stop at the city boundary. Furthermore in the bands DU-OB and OB-MH one can find large barriers, such as large scale transport networks or industrial areas. Whereas the broad green zones in the spectra MH-E and BO-DO indicate the regional green corridors, one of the IBA-projects.



When observing the spectral fields in more detail, one impression is verified which many visitors often point out – the fact, that inside the Ruhrgebiet there is an astonishing amount of open and green space, as well in small scale pieces remote from the green corridors mentioned above.

4_Deep Spaces

Where the «Neunte Stadt» comprises all spatial elements with a region-wide importance, the spectral analysis shows that there are as well potentials hidden inside the varied structure of the single cities. The dense side by side structure of habitation, transport, industry, trade and open space, which is illustrated in the spectral fields, leads in many other large cities and conurbations much more frequently to deep conflicts. Yet in the core of the Ruhrgebiet people have learned to deal with this multifaceted spatial structure during the rapid urbanisation process initiated by industrial growth. Especially for those people that move into the region the quality of life is despite or even because of the distinctiveness of the spatial structure surprisingly high.

The spectral fields do not merely show a new spatial image. Rather the countless number of small-scale barriers and borders often creates spatial situations with an open and undefined character.

Therefore important theoretical approaches to understand the structure of the region are the so called «border studies». These are theories and models about borders and their effect on people and institutions. Border studies derive their content from disciplines such as spatial planning, regional science, social and economical geography, new institutional economies, political science, gender studies, sociology or cultural theory.

One important observation of the border studies is the desiderative compliance of different spaces and borders. A city boundary does not hinder people to commute and move inside the whole region. Hence the overlay of different kinds of space of action with administrative space results in political boundaries that are no sharp dividing line in this region. And so such ambiguous, blurred and diffuse borders generate «frontier situations». The term frontier describes – according to Frederick Jackson Turner – conditions, where borders have become unclear or where borders have not yet been drawn (Turner 1894). The traditional European border is usually a distinct «line» that separates different plots, whereas the American frontier describes an open and endless «space» stretching to the horizon. At the frontier the known meets the unknown and chances emerge. There the sense of reality is not yet dominating and it is unclear, which borders will be drawn.

The scientific approach border studies is not just a mere observance of these new chances, of this frontier. Rather the qualification and design of the potentials in these spaces, of these places with uncertain borders, is an important task for the future for the core of the Ruhrgebiet (Davy 2002).

Many other cities and regions will experience similar developments that can be observed in the Ruhrgebiet. In that the development of this region can as well be prototypic for other conurbations – not merely in handling very differentiated and multifaceted spatial structures, but also in designing such an urban landscape.

Apart from the aforementioned book «Endlich so wie überall?», describing the yearning of the Ruhrgebiet for being a real proper city, other publications such as «Peripherie ist überall» («periphery is everywhere») by the Bauhaus-Kolleg focus on the specific structure of regions like the Ruhrgebiet (Prigge 1998). As shown before the spectral fields do not merely show that the region contains many borders, but that it has maybe as many internal peripheries and frontier situations.

Therefore costs and benefits of peripherality are a «central» topic in the Ruhrgebiet. Consequently in the Ruhrgebiet conventional spatial categories such as inside/ outside, fixed/ flexible, city/ landscape etc. have to be read and applied in a different way.

«inside/outside»: The inside of the region is full of uses and zones, that are usually considered as non-, pre- or suburban; one can find small scale, partly hidden niches, but as well large scale structures. On the other hand the

fringes of the conurbation show in some cases urban or metropolitan facilities that one would usually expect to be located in a CBD.

«fixed/flexible»: Not always city centres, inner city quarters or the historic village centres are fixed and overdetermined parts of the region and not always the periphery is indefinite, «fluent» and therefore flexible. Examples for that are brownfields and waiting lands near the inner city or otherwise the regional green corridors as a kind of fixed «personal spaces» for the single Ruhr cities.

«city/landscape»: Therefore it is not merely the urban character of a region that can be regarded as «inside» and «fixed». One can observe a renaissance of terms like «Stadtlandschaft» («urban landscape» or «cityscape»). In recent years new expressions such as «Zwischenstadt» (Sieverts 1999) but as well the L.A.-born term «Exopolis» (Soja 2000) are attempts to describe a new approach and perspective towards the structure of contemporary urban landscapes. Furthermore the importance of landscape architecture as one means to develop «spaces of identity» is growing. These discussions and developments show, that the traditional antipode of city and countryside and the resulting ideas of urbanity loose importance.

«Urbanity» in these new cityscapes is different. And the Ruhrgebiet may be an avant-garde region in that sense even without being aware of it. The abstract promises of urbanity such as the sense and readability of spatial structures, identity, freedom and appreciation for the individuals are realized in a different way and appear in different images compared to a traditional city.

Germ cells of a new urbanity «beyond urbanity» may be the «Deep Spaces». This term derives from the «Star Trek Universe», where it describes space stations located on the edge or the frontier of the known federation space. In one of the Star Trek Series, called «Deep Space Nine», the dangerous and adventurous life on such a remote space station is shown.

Bashir: «Major, ich konnte mir meinen Arbeitsbereich selbst aussuchen. Ich wollte keinen gemütlichen Job oder ein Forschungsstipendium. Genau dies hier schwebte mir vor. Die entlegendste Gegend der Galaxis. Einen der abgelegensten Außenposten der frei war. Hier gibt es noch Abenteuer - hier werden noch Helden geboren. Genau hier. In der Wildnis.»

Kira: «Diese Wildnis ist meine Heimat.»

Bashir: «I wanted *this*. The farthest reaches of the galaxy. One of the most remote outposts available, this is where the adventures are, this is where heroes are made. Right...here. In the wilderness.»

Kira: „This wilderness...is my home.»

In the context of the Ruhrgebiet «deep spaces» are like interfaces – between «inside» and «outside», between «fixed» and «flexible» and of course between «city» and «landscape». On the one hand they keep a certain, sometimes secure distance to the mechanisms and familiar images of the traditional city, on the other hand they are physically right in-between the urban fabric of the cityscape – as hidden places and hardly known spaces between motorways, railroads, brownfields and artificial slag heaps. And often they combine old images or shapes with new functions or social constructions and offer – like «Deep Space Nine» – «wilderness», «freedom», «Heimat» and «identity». Three examples of possible deep spaces in the Ruhrgebiet may show some of their main characters and potentials to create this new kind of urbanity in a posturban landscape.

4_1 New Unités

The core of the Ruhrgebiet does not only contain a remarkable reservoir of derelict land and in-between spaces, that can be rediscovered and recolonised. The region is also full of large scale structural works that have lost or will lose their original functions: machine shops, water towers, power stations, gasometers, but as well office towers, churches, indoor swimming pools and department stores.

Partly these large scale buildings from the First or the Second «Moderne» («modernity») may serve as landmarks or symbols for at least some classic urbanity in this region, partly they are just big, «monstrous».



source: Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet, Essen (2000)

In the recent decades many of these large scale buildings have been transformed into cultural factories, museums, concert halls, technology- and founders centres – yet there are a great many buildings left. These buildings are not «fixed» (in terms of their programmes) and especially in the Ruhrgebiet they are not always «inside», that means not part of traditional urban cores. But they offer a fixed, remarkable shape, a symbolic potential as well as a frame for new contents, which is very attractive for all kinds of postindustrial users. They can be turned into new «urban villages»: big scale, urban settings for village-like communities. Like in re-used office towers as apartment blocks the re-programming of such shapes may create a new type of «unité» as a form of housing on a very big scale. Lavish apartments, using for example a whole 300 m² floor of a former office tower, could be used as flexible spaces for a mix of working and dwelling. Demands concerning the space in the respective apartments and the whole building are basically equitable and negotiable, and the whole building offers, because of many similar ground

plots, nearly everywhere the same conditions for combining and bargaining of requirements and interests. This could work well, because the amount of space available is such tremendous. On many floors collaborative and public facilities such as a convenience store, a restaurant, a sports club or a music school could develop. In the medium term the whole building becomes a kind of small urban village – not a «Wohnmaschine» (housing machinery), but rather a «unité» in the sense of Le Corbusier.

Of course the transformation of «monstrous» buildings into new unités is not limited to old sky scrapers; former store houses, abandoned churches or derelict department stores could as well serve as a shell for such communitarian urban villages. Before the industrial age the Ruhrgebiet was a rural region of «1000 villages»; now – in the post-industrial age – these transformations of large-scale buildings may change the Ruhrgebiet (again) into a region of «1000 new urban villages».

4_2 Flach wohnen und lang leben

With his utopian «Broadacre City» the american architect Frank Lloyd Wright had postulated the conceptual end of the Big Compact City in the Thirties of the last century; in his eyes «Großstadt» or «Metropolis» could not be modern anymore. In this sense, but in a different and to a great extent non-intentional way, the region between Dortmund and Duisburg must be a very modern one. Here, surrounded by motorways, underground-lines and high-speed-railways one can live an extraordinary pre-urban (or post-urban) way of life. Here you can find huge and still well isolated areas for future large-scale cottages with spacious gardens and the potential for keeping horses, sheep and turkeys, which allow a genuin modern combination of rural self-sufficiency with an «urbanite» life-style. Such urban country houses could as well contribute to the cultivation of the network of regional green corridors by «urban farming».



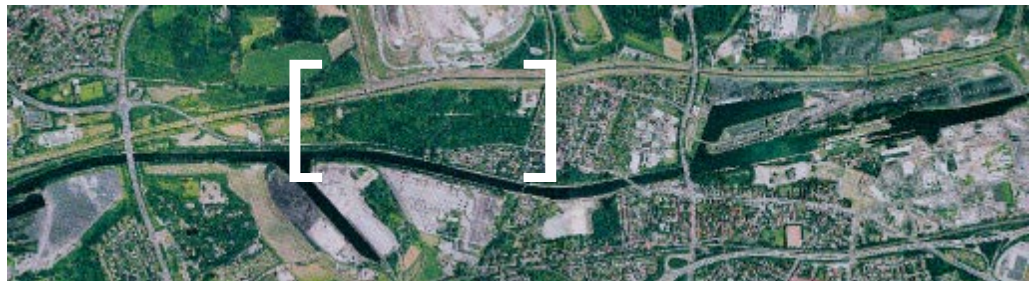
source: Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet, Essen (2000)

In addition to these splendid country houses for the upper middleclass a renaissance of the «Kleinsiedlung» («small housing estate») could be an interesting alternative for low income households. Here the cottages would be less splendid, the gardens less extensive. The Ruhrgebiet contains many examples for such small housing estates e.g. allotment gardens and miners settlements that were brought from «outside» into the region by immigrants from rural areas of Poland. Also the mainly turkish «Gabeländer» are an example for a combination of agriculture and cityscape. Although these

structures already exist in the region, the dogma of a compact and space-saving settlement development prevents the cities from using and developing this hidden potential for a post-urban way of living and housing. At the same time the core area tends to imitate the suburbanisation processes at the fringe of the region that attracts many people to leave the region by developing areas for single-family houses. Rather the region can develop own visions for low density housing and a short range country life «inside» the region.

4_3 Island of insularity

The Ruhrgebiet contains spaces that one just sees from a new perspective. This new way of seeing requires to leave the perspective of the separate cities behind (like Gelsenkirchen, Herne, Oberhausen, Castrop-Rauxel etc.). On a regional dimension the area between Emscher and Rhein-Herne-Kanal forms an island, a «Long Island». This embodies nearly the ideal type of a deep space (as an interface between «inside»/ «outside», «fixed»/ «flexible», «urban»/ «rural»). Yet one has to see the two waters not merely as a linear waterway but as a frame for this space.



source: Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet, Essen (2000)

The unique quality of many places on this island could be its exclusive insularity, remoteness and inaccessibility, which makes this island an interesting place and a new home for hedonists, posturban artists or «merely» the increasing number of hobby constructors in the Ruhrgebiet – willing to explore this frontier space. Today the existing use of the Emscher as an open sewage channel may hinder some of these possible uses. Yet the ongoing transformation of this sewer into a renewed river stream opens up opportunities to discover, preserve and develop the somehow surrealistic island character of this regional space in the future.

These and similar deep spaces and their hypothetical programmes may realize the abstract promises of urbanity in a new way, promises that can not be kept by the old city-models in the Ruhrgebiet anymore. These deep spaces are parts, precursors and harbingers of a new, a different «supercity». The Ruhrgebiet, especially the «Neunte Stadt» turns into a «Post-Metropolis» (Soja 2000), without ever having the need to be a Metropolis before.

There are a few ways to illustrate this character – like the archipelago-like system of regional spaces shown in the maps of a «Neunte Stadt» or the «Spectral Fields» and their richness of borders and non-intentional neighbourhoods of urban and rural land uses.

To see not only the structural but also the poetic qualities of such a supercity, a – final – look into the «other supercity» (Peymanns «New York») may help. The transitory garden of the homeless Anna in New York City is a metaphor for new, yet unknown compositions of space and relationships: The garden is hard to find and to get in. Its forest seems populated by small beings;

animals and dolls are arranged along the fence, hanging from branches or set in furniture dispersed throughout the garden. In the first place the garden looks chaotic and coincidental, but this garden has an order, a purpose. *This* way of composing a garden you cannot learn from textbooks about landscape architecture.

Annas garden in New York City may be a very good expression for the erratic beauty of the posturban landscape in the Ruhrgebiet – and makes clear, that one needs to work with new «design strategies» and transfigurations of «urbanity» in a promising post-metropolis.



source: Balmori / Morton (1994)

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