Abstract:
The presented paper has been elaborated in the context of the Interreg IIIB Study Project „POLYNET: Sustainable Management of European Polycentric Mega-City Regions“. The overall project, with partners from eight European regions, focuses on how to enhance complementarity between polycentric city regions in North West Europe and promote cross-border sustainable management. The focus of the Swiss project partner is the European Metropolitan Region of Northern Switzerland, a polycentric urbanized landscape that comprises the largest part of Switzerland with Zurich as an important economic and cultural centre. Spatial development in Switzerland is subject to major changes. Driving forces of growing importance are „knowledge intensive business activities“ that comprise high-tech branches, higher education institutions and advanced producer services, which are of increasing relevance in Swiss economy. The effects of location decisions and policies of those businesses have become important agents for spatial organization, their impact many times exceeding „official“ spatial development policies of the federal government system. „Knowledge intensive business activities“ cause the development of areas of functional specification; the workforce is becoming more mobile which results in increasing numbers of commuters and growing commuting distances, growth of built-up areas in the outer belts of the agglomerations as well as problems of a lack of efficient infrastructure for private and public transportation. Despite these problems, political discourse and actions towards developing governance bodies for functional regions and strategies to tackle spatial problems is not keeping up with current development trends. The paper outlines the current spatial development
tendencies in Switzerland, focused on the branches of “knowledge intensive business activities”. Further, recommendations to Swiss policy makers on territorial governance issues and spatial strategies towards the sustainable management of urbanised landscapes are presented. The recommendation will evolve around three hypotheses: 1. Over the last decades, Switzerland has experienced the reorganization of functional-territorial division of labor in the knowledge intensive sectors. The opportunity of flexible spatial organization of firm locations has influenced business strategies and location decision making. The growing relevance of the knowledge intensive sector is a driving force, which is slowly altering spatial development. 2. Existing policy responses to spatial development show a gap between the functional logic of enterprise decision making on the one hand and the political-territorial logic of spatial planning policies on the other. In terms of governance, bridging this gap is a political negotiation process between policy makers from the sectors of economic affairs/ location marketing and spatial development. (Raum- und Standortentwicklung) 3. Existing institutional levels and forms of cooperation do not provide adequate frameworks and perimeters for spatial problems that develop “unnoticed”, outside the scope of existing responsibilities. Sustainable Management of the European Metropolitan Region of Northern Switzerland inevitably involves experimenting towards the creation of adequate levels of action with a flexible geometry and problem solving capacity.

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