

**LSE-CITIES SEMINAR – A TALE OF TWO REGIONS
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**COMPARING DUTCH CONURBATIONS WITH SIMILAR CONURBATIONS IN
EUROPE AS A HELP IN FORMULATING A NEW DUTCH SPATIAL POLICY.**

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1. As was confirmed by the press (Volkskrant 1 Sept.), Holland is engaged in a governance debate between a model of territorial development directed top-down by the four “Randstad” PROVINCES and a model of metropolitan development around the two largest CITIES: Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The model of a national development plan around Amsterdam and its airport was supported by Jaap Modder.
2. Learning from models abroad is fine, but learning from Las Vegas or from London might usefully be complemented by learning from the next-door Rhein-Ruhr conurbation and - even closer - the Central Belgian metropolis.
3. The CENTRAL BELGIAN METROPOLIS includes the North Belgian “Diamond”, the Brussels-capital Region and the South Belgian “Triangle”. Confirming the findings of Raymond Riley’s Economic Geography of Belgium, Peter Hall considers Antwerp and Brussels as one single urban continuum, by looking at travel diaries, telecommunication flows and business transactions.
4. There is neither national nor provincial compulsory land-use planning, the strongest planning authorities being cities and their elected mayors. An example of this strength is the successful opposition of Antwerp against an unwanted regional infrastructure megaproject (“Oosterweel” fly-over).
5. The municipalities are fiercely competing with each other, but cooperating on specific issues, what has been called “coopetition”. The arbitration between competing projects is most often done by the market. Several shopping malls are presently projected close to each other in the Brussels periphery, but only one will be selected by the market.
6. Within the Central Belgian metropolis some clusters have clearly emerged, such as the surroundings of the airport, the Canal City of Vilvoorde and the successful development cluster around the private initiative pedestrian new university town of Louvain-la-Neuve (New Louvain).
7. The federal government effectively supports the Central Belgian metropolis through its centralised rail infrastructure projects:
 - a 9 line S-Bahn linking the existing and new clusters with Brussels
 - a new direct link between the European Quarter and the airport,
 - a new tilting train connection between Brussels, Strasbourg and Zurich.
8. European developments are playing an increasing role, such as new high-speed links between the Northern UK and the German cities, through Brussels. Environmental EU directives are imposing policies directly to cities.
9. The international development of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague (“World Legal Capital”) need good connections with Brussels. It might be wise for the Dutch government to reconsider its decision to cancel the existing hourly direct IC train link between Amsterdam, The Hague and Brussels.