The Southern Agglomeration Zone of the GDR — Regional Structure and Development

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Abstract: Agglomeration areas in the GDR are those regions, which are characterized by an above average level of regional concentration of productive forces and their conditions of reproduction. The economic potential concentrated in these regions represents a large part of the national economy. It is possible to describe the territorial structure of these agglomeration areas by general indices (agglomeration core — agglomeration field — agglomeration fringe; polycentric node-band-structure), but also the individual features of each one of these regions are to be attended. They are expressed for the first time by several forms of localization of plants and by the structure of settlements and settlement networks.

The present main tendencies in the development of the agglomeration regions are:
- They succeeded in minimizing the regional disparities of productivity between different agglomeration regions and within them, and in stabilizing the economic position of these regions by systematic measures for investment and rationalization and the hereby influenced structural changes.
- At present and up to 1990 the completion of housing programme is of foremost importance by which the main activities will shift from the urban fringe to the centres of the cities; provincial towns and smaller settlements will also participate in this programme.

The main target of these activities is to remove imperfect structures and other burning problems of the agglomeration regions step by step. Geographical Institutes are dealing with the management of these tasks too.

Introduction: Agglomerations in the GDR

Agglomerations in the GDR are defined as those regions which, exhibit an above average degree of regional concentration of the forces of production and of the conditions for reproduction. These areas are characterized by an above average concentration of industry, population, installations and networks of the infrastructure as well as of settlements (Tab 1).

The regional economic structure and the genesis of the agglomerations in the GDR are determined by industry and are therefore often referred to as “industrial agglomerations”.

The agglomerations in the GDR were formed from the mid-19th century as a product of the process of industrialization and urbanization as the degree of localized concentration of the productive forces based on individual towns was exceeded with proportionally above average degrees of regional industrialization and urbanization, Fig 1. Numerous medium- and small-sized industrial towns as well as urbanized villages in the widely spread-out “fields of agglomeration” therefore play a major role within the settlement structure for the agglomerations besides the large cities, the so called “agglomerations cores”. Agriculture plays an ever-decreasing role in the overall picture of the economic structure of the agglomerations. Where there are suitable natural
Fig 1  Distribution of towns within the agglomeration area Halle-Leipzig-Dessau

Tab 1  Comparison of selected degrees of concentration (1981)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indices</th>
<th>Agglomerations</th>
<th>Other areas (rest of GDR)</th>
<th>GDR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population density (Inh./km²)</td>
<td>405 (261 %) a)</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working population density (Wkr./km²)</td>
<td>203 (278 %)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density of workers employed in industry (Ind. Wkr./km²)</td>
<td>82 (283 %)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of industrial production (Mark/km²/a)</td>
<td>9,317 (294 %)</td>
<td>2,163</td>
<td>3,171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated by the authors from information published in the GDR Statistical Yearbook and District Yearbooks

a) Figures in brackets are percentages based on average GDR values (= 100)