The Role of Cities and Regions in a Globalised Setting, and the Political and Policy Implications of that

Tassilo Herrschel, University of Westminster and VUB

Globalised Competitiveness: Cities as Gateways to Economic Opportunities – Fragmentation of the Conventional Territorial Region. Policy Implications?

Metropolitanised European Space:
- Urban Nodes as ‘Growth Poles’ and ‘Beacons of Competitiveness’
- No more cohesive state space?
- What are the options in a fragmenting economic space?

It is the cities that matter – what about the rest of the state/region?

Main Arguments
1. Globalisation-based competitiveness drives urban-centric competitiveness through stronger individualisation
2. Self-selective metropolitan agency defines spaces of competitive opportunity and dis-opportunity
3. Growing focus on urban (metropolitan) success fragments the territorial state (winners – losers, cities – ‘rest’)
4. Result: marginalisation through the resulting ‘gap’ between selective metropolitan ‘network spaces’ and actually existing fixed (cohesive?) state territories as of democratic representation
5. Fragmenting cohesive state territoriality undermines notion of collective ‘us’ as ‘glue’ of state-building and sense of shared commons

Example: The Metropolitanised Region of Øresund - differences in economic participation

The Perforated Region: Metropolitan Regionalism (Hubs) – and the Rest?
The Challenges: Growing gap between city(-region) and beyond

Connectivity is 'king' to interact, raise awareness and allow engagement

The Challenge of Competitiveness:
Perforation of State Territories through Opportunity-seeking (Urban-)Network Regionalism

- fragmentation of cohesive cities and states (societies) through elitist selective inclusion/exclusion
- Works at two levels:
  - Growing urban-centric reconfiguration of the territorial/social state (metropolitan network regions)
  - Reconfiguring and re-representing cities in the image of 'trendy' elite visions and imaginations to raise profile ('Cities of Culture')
  - imaging of cities/places as attractive choices for living/working
- Tension between structure and process of political voice/representation: state hierarchy versus collective policy networks between places and actors

'Metropolitan Fortresses'? Division between the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of cities

Trans-border Connectivity and its Region-Defining Effects

Challenge: Connecting Fixed Territories to Self-Selecting Collaborative Opportunity Spaces – Who Is In and Who Out?
**‘Mind the Gap’: City Networks and State Territory**

- Conventional model of public policy
  - State shapes political and policy framework and ‘conditions’
  - States ‘build’ fixed framework for local/regional action and governance
  - State secures state-wide quality of public service and living conditions
- ‘New’ urban-centric concept of state space
  - Places (especially larger cities) are no longer mere locales, but active shapers of political & economic processes and development opportunities
  - New hierarchy of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ around self-selecting collaborative, opportunistic networks of key urban places
  - Resulting patchwork of ‘ins’ and ‘outs’ requires new strategies through collaborative action (local networks) – also across borders

---

**The Challenge: International Metropolisation and State-territorial Peripheralisation in the Øresund**

**Spaces of concentrating activity and ‘white spots’**

---

**The Issue: How to Reconcile Individual Metropolitan/Local Ambition and State Structure and Political Representation**

**Formation of State Territory May Follow Two Alternative Scenarios**

- (1) State territory as cohesive, institutionally organised entities with set boundaries
  - either as containers of central policies
  - or as collective ‘bottom-up’ expression of local clusters of interest,
- (2) State space as weakly institutionalised, self-organising ‘virtual’ entities, defined through collaborative networks of shared interest
  - non-contiguous
  - increasingly localised – inclusive/exclusive,
  - opportunity based and fragmented
  - network (communication) based, connectivity matters
  - variable scale and ‘reach’ (fuzzy boundedness)

---

**Growing Challenge to Democratic Representation through Metropolisation and Fragmentation of the Territorial State**

1. growing visibility of sub-national regionalisation as collective clusters of metropolitan-centric spaces
2. result: selective (variable, uneven) democratic representation & participation (= ‘voice’)
3. likely re-production of marginality and inequality in opportunity to participate in decisions and developments?
4. emerging gaps in governance practices between state (representational) structure and economic relevance and promise of opportunity (= discursive and imagined power)
5. need for novel, more innovative/entrepreneurial and multiple forms of governance and actorness to retain/boost state-territorial (city-regional) cohesion.

---

**Example: Øresund as self-selecting part of institutionalised Skåne Region – generating (perceived) exclusion of places and people**

Figure 2: The virtual space of the urban-centric Øresund Region intersects with the state territoriality of Skåne Region, effectively peripheralising those parts outside virtual boundary.
Connectivity (Actual and/or Imagined) as Vehicle for Inclusion in Economic Opportunities

Overcoming marginality among cities: Landskrona seeks centrality by becoming hub on new Øresund rail-link reaching to Oslo, Copenhagen and Hamburg.

In the shadow of the Øresund Regon: Countering marginalisation through Europeanisation (EU).

Metropolitanised international cooperation and connectivity for greater (selective?) competitiveness: from Hamburg via Øresund to Oslo – and beyond!?

Bridge the Gap? Or Create New Ones?

Or is this the next scenario Greater Hamburg-Copenhagen (Skåne)

Source: City of Hamburg: Vision for a Meta-Regional Cooperation with the Øresund Region

So, Metropolitan-defined Space and/or State Territory

Globalisation marks out distinction between space and territory

Space as expression of virtual, imagined characteristics

Territory as actual manifestation ‘on the ground’ in state-territorial, institutionalised and empowered geographic entities.

Both co-exist, but don’t always match, intersecting, overlapping – even competing

How can they be linked to allow competitiveness and cohesiveness, i.e. individuality and collective?

Strategic Option: Linking Multiplicity of Interests and Voice through Novel Forms of Co-produced governance

– Activism: direct citizen engagement in governance processes
  • technology-based community (social media)
  • ‘alternative scenarios’ (narratives of opportunity)
  • put all options and challenges ‘on the table’

– Co-production of knowledge
  • anticipatory governance: responds to uncertainty, rather than follows structure and convention
  • mobilise variety of viewpoints
  • examine the value and power systems (goals, ambitions, capacities) that shape public policies and institutions
Strategic Options: Urban Competitive Activity at Increasingly International Level – Next to the State

Strategic Options:

1. Do little and wait for the hierarchical state to take care as part of political responsibility

2. Take initiative based on local strategic vision and (publicly) agreed agenda, e.g. through
   a. Expanding reach and visibility through (selective) network building
   b. Re-imagining cities as international/global actors with selected ‘features’ (‘trendification’?)

Strategic Option 1:

Doing Little, waiting for the state to redistribute: Being passive recipient of ‘political social security’.

Problem:
- giving up scope to change and develop,
- dependency on choices and priorities set elsewhere.
- loss of scope

Strategic Option 2a:

Cities/localities ‘going it alone’ as political-strategic actors to raise profile through collaborative engagement and connectivity to gain/exploit scope for themselves:
And what about ‘their’ regions/state?

Challenge of the ‘Bubble’?
City-Centric Spatialisation defines who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’ varies

Metropolitan-centric Spatialisation in the Baltic Sea Area: Overcoming ‘Old’ Border – Creating New Divisions?

Euro-Cities Network: Internationality and Visibility and Voice
‘Localised’ Network Regions – Self-selecting Elitism versus (?) Sense of Collective State

- city-network regions
  - are ‘virtual’ spaces of preferred interaction
  - ‘underpin’ flows of interests and perceived opportunities by diverse policy makers
  - overcome divisions by administrative boundaries and localist parochialism
  - mirror the ‘economic footprint’(*) of a city, i.e. its economic spatial ‘reach’.
- BUT creates divisions: How is the not selected ‘rest’ kept engaged to retain collective sense of society and state?

*after Llewelyn Davies Yeang (2007); Northern Way, Final Report,

Strategic Option 2b:

Cities as ‘Designed’ and ‘Airbrushed’ Places (of International Competition) to Become ‘Visible’ and Desirable

International activities by individual cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple city initiatives post Year start</th>
<th>Simple city initiatives 2016 can</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(2014)</td>
<td>2016:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main features:</td>
<td>Main features:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- bridging borders to ‘heal’ division (especially in former state divided countries)</td>
<td>- overcoming borders to pursue new opportunities on bigger scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- enhancing local and national economic competitiveness and opportunities</td>
<td>- enhancing local (and national) economic competitiveness and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- fostering flows of interests and perceived opportunities by diverse policy makers</td>
<td>- re-creating regional economic footprint and pursuing greater opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- acting as ‘ambassadors’ of cities</td>
<td>- re-creating state boundaries by joining city networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- cities seen as integral to state territory</td>
<td>- removing state territorial ties (e.g. fiscal autonomy) and pursuing greater opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- cities represented through cities</td>
<td>- promoting and (later) boosting individual (urban) competitiveness in neo-liberal setting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples:
- European City of Culture
- United Cities Organization (UCO)
- Eurocities (Cities’ Forum)
- Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

- European Capital of Culture
- Eurocities International Office
- United Cities and Local Government (UCLG)

Source: authors’ own compilation

The Challenge: Boosting International Competitiveness through Metropolitanisation – what about the State?

Conflict or Commonality: Capitals of Culture to highlight local individuality but also European connectivity and togetherness

ECoC - Conflicting Purpose: Urban Places as Expression of Collective Europeanisation and Neo-liberal Competitiveness

European Capital of Culture Project

Europeanism – fostering collective identity & sense of a European common

Promoting and (later) boosting individual (urban) competitiveness in neo-liberal setting

ECoC – from Flagship Projects and ‘Grands Projets’ to Democratic Local Participation, Ownership, Aspiration?

National politics shapes conditions and need for local entrepreneurialism urban politics:EU funds offered way to ‘bypass’ London at project level
But neo-liberal market pressure for property-led regeneration set by Government
Hull 2017: Escaping stagnation, poor image & peripherality – multiscalar approach with focus on education and selective market engagement

Umeå 2014 – transparency and democratisation through participation (self-empowerment?)

European Capitals of Culture 2014: City and/or Region? Community and/or Administration?

Puget Sound – Produced Policy Region Based on Geographic Belonging

‘Making’ Economic Competitiveness AND Sustainability

Achieving Sustainability – Public transport as the high visibility option – and required norm?
Sustainability as vague regional agenda
GVRD: Livable Centres Plan: Sprawl as the enemy no. 1 (but ‘growth’ remains unquestioned)

Contrasting values: Vancouver Region: Sprawl in suburban City of Surrey versus Vancouver’s (livable) densities

Portland: Metropolitanisation, and the Promotion of Equitable Growth

Portland: Liveability, Competitiveness and Growth – as Strategic ‘Norm’?

Danger of Maintaining a Metropolitan ‘Bubble’ – What about the Rest?

So, in conclusion...

- Growing challenge through restless ‘elitist’ urbanism driven globalised competitiveness
- Co-produced local agenda to shape and legitimise policy choices & strategies (encourage political actors)
- Visibility needed beyond being part of state context/ hierarchy and allocated resources (collaborative networks to boost political scope)
So, in conclusion...

- **Challenges:**
  - Uneven representation and political-democratic ‘voice’
  - Retain collectivity and role of the state, including sense of belonging and nation
  - Connect different mechanisms and agendas of pursuing individual versus collective interests at different scales (external-internal, top-down-bottom up, intra-/inter-national)

---

So, cities and/or the state?
How much ‘city’ and ‘state’

How to balance urban opportunity, need for (global) competitiveness and societal and territorial cohesiveness

There is a lot to discuss

Thank You