GOVERNING THE NEW METROPOLIS

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Abstract

The expansion of globalising cities into global city-regions poses fundamental questions about how best to govern the new metropolis. Partly because of the relentless pace of change, these newly emerging metropolitan spaces are often reliant on inadequate urban-economic infrastructure and fragmented urban-regional planning and governance arrangements. Moreover, as the demand for more 'appropriate', widely understood to mean more flexible, networked and smart, forms of planning and governance increases, new expressions of territorial cooperation and conflict are emerging around issues of increased competitiveness, infrastructure development, the collective provision of services, and further governmentalised remapping(s) of state space. We identify four central tenets of the metropolitan region/governance debate and discuss their relevance for future research on city-regions: (1) periodisation and trajectories, (2) democracy and accountability, (3) form and function, and (4) fragility and mobilisation. These, we argue, pose key challenges for rethinking city-region governance within the emerging new metropolitan paradigm.

Keywords

City-region, governance, metropolitan, globalisation, urban form

INTRODUCTION: 'CITY-REGION GOVERNANCE, TEN YEARS ON'[1]

Allen Scott's (2001a) edited collection *Global City-Regions: Trends, Theory, Policy* is rightly considered by many to be the modern progenitor of critical research into the study of city-regions and the merits of city-region governance. Scott and his acolytes thrust city-regions to the forefront of critical urban studies when positioning a new regional social formation – the 'global city-region' – as competitive territories par excellence amid the globalisation of capital accumulation. Hardly surprising then that the focus of attention was immediately drawn toward the grand championing of city-regions as having a "special locational affinity" with the new dominant leading-edge sectors of the global economy (Scott, 2001a, p. 4). Equally important was the accompanying belief that these dense nodes of human, social and economic capital were emerging as foci for new experiments to tackle entrenched inequalities, encourage smart sustainable planning, and enable piecemeal democratic rights. But behind the headline grabbing claims lay a pointed question, central not only to Scott's collection of essays on global city-regions but the decade of research thereafter on the geopolitics of city-regionalism. The question was simply this: "What main governance tasks do global city-regions face as they seek to preserve and enhance their wealth and well-being?" (Scott, 2001a, p. 12).

Notwithstanding the significance attached to this question at the time, nor the corpus of critical urban studies published in response to it, it is our contention that the issue of city-region governance is more important today than ever before. In the first instance, city-regions have become more, rather than less, important. Albeit the geo-economic logic for these super-sized agglomerations assuming a priori status has been rebuked by some scholars for its assumption that these functional economic spaces are increasingly independent from political and regulatory authority of the nation-state (see Harrison, 2007; Jonas and Ward, 2007), a continued deepening of the effects of globalisation is further strengthening the chief argument that positive externalities are accrued by agglomeration economies at the urban-regional scale. In view of this, city-

regions are perceived to be the “ideal scale for policy intervention in a globalized world” (Rodríguez-Pose, 2008, p. 1029). For sure, the scramble by policy elites to build institutional capacity at the city-region scale over the last ten years has certainly added much impetus to the growing academic and policy orthodoxy surrounding city-regions (cf. Lovering, 1999). And with this, in a thinly-veiled rebuke to those critics who have questioned some of the underlying logic for attaching a priori status to global city-regions, Scott himself has taken to reaffirming his belief, ten years on, that:

> City-regions […] are functioning more and more as assertive systemic units of the global economic and political system … With globalization forging rapidly ahead […] major city-regions are now materializing as more forceful stakeholders in their own right. In a nutshell, they are powerful and increasingly self-affirming configurations of social, economic, and political activity within a multifaceted, multitiered system of global emergence.
>
> Scott (2011, p. 862)

Crucially, and this is the second point, this belies much that has changed over the intervening period. Not least is how accelerated processes of global economic integration, matched by global differentiation and rapid urbanisation are producing new metropolitan landscapes. Synonymous with this new metropolis is the rise of the mega-region; a recognition that in certain spatial contexts the expansion of large cities into larger city-regions is being superseded by trans-metropolitan landscapes comprising two or more city-regions (Florida et al., 2008; Goldfeld, 2007; Harrison and Hoyler, 2014; Ross, 2009; Ross et al., 2014). Viewed through the classical lens of North America and Western Europe we are made aware of this new metropolitan landscape in a series of accounts documenting the emergence of Megapolitan America (Nelson and Lang, 2011), the new metropolis being part of a network of ‘megapolitan’ areas (Lang and Knox, 2009), and new networked polycentric ‘mega-city regions’ in Europe (Hall and Pain, 2006; Hoyler et al., 2008b). Part

and parcel of the emerging city-region discourse then is the empirical and conceptual gravitation toward an increasingly select number of even larger urban-economic units. Bound up with this is a broadening of the research horizon. For sure, the research agenda and empirical focus for urban and regional scholars is increasingly shaped by developments in Pacific Asia, and no more so than by the unprecedented urban expansion currently underway in China (Hall, 1999; Li and Wu, 2012; Vogel, 2010; Xu and Yeh, 2011).

Often overlooked is how city-regionalism is also having profound effects on non-global cities, that is, those smaller regional or provincial cities which appear excluded from, or on the fringes of, international circuits of capital accumulation. For these second-tier urban agglomerations, the discourse of city-regionalism has presented both opportunities and threats to economic competitiveness. Nevertheless their inclusion in the city-region discourse over the past ten years owes much to the geopolitics of city-regionalism – what Jonas (2013, p. 289) has taken to calling "internationally orchestrated city-regionalism". That city-regionalism quickly assumed the status of officially institutionalised task in part reflects the geo-economic argument that city-regions were assumed to be competitive territories *par excellence*, but more substantively, it reflects the coordinated response of the neoliberal competition state to politically orchestrate the institutionalisation of new urban-economic infrastructure and urban-regional governance and planning arrangements at the scale of city-regions. The result has been a whole series of nationally coordinated city-region strategies aimed at creating the conditions necessary to attract transnational capital and boost international competitiveness. National forms of city-regionalism include areas that we would not instantly recognise as city-regions but which nevertheless become captured within the umbrella of city-region policy discourse because they demonstrate some functional economic linkages and/or are included in response to internal political geographies dictating commitments to spatial/territorial inclusivity and the rebalancing of national economies (see, for example, Harrison and Growe, 2012). Similarly, attention is increasingly drawn towards those cross-border metropolitan regions which

albeit not metropolitan areas in their own national space economy do exhibit some metropolitan functionality with urban settlements across national borders (Nelles and Durand, 2012; Sohn, 2013; Sohn et al., 2009; Weith and Gustedt, 2012).

The past ten years have also seen a marked shift in how the spatiality of cities and regions should be best captured conceptually. Initially conceptualised as competitive and strategic territories in a complex system of multi-level governance, city-regions have become empirical referents for advocates of non-territorial, non-scalar, networked relational perspectives. Defined by their concomitant external global and internal regional linkages, the rise of global/city-regions – alongside the emergence of 'unusual'/'non-standard' regions (Deas and Lord, 2006) and new 'soft spaces' of regional planning (Haughton et al., 2010) – provide a rich empirical and policy context for understanding the deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of capital and politics in globalisation, and the character of today's *new* 'regional world' (Harrison, 2013a). For sure the decade-long exchange between scholars as to the merits of relational vis-à-vis territorial approaches to regions and regionalism has had significant implications for our approaches to, and understandings of, urban-regional governance (Jonas, 2012).

It is in this spirit of on-going debate that this Special Issue revisits the question of city-region governance. In this opening paper, we take up the challenge of rethinking city-region governance by identifying four central tenets of the metropolitan region/governance debate that can inject fresh impetus to this established topic area. These are: (1) periodisation and trajectories, (2) democracy and accountability, (3) form and function, and (4) fragility and mobilisation.

RETHINKING METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

Periodisation and Different Trajectories of City-Regionalism

The question of periodisation is one that is being brought to life in the recent writings of Neil Brenner, perhaps the past decade's single-most consistently insightful scholar on the spatial construction/transformation of state power. For Brenner (2009, p. 134) periodisation is "one of the most challenging and exciting frontiers for current research" because it can extend our understandings of temporally defined *scaled* moments of capitalist growth ('scalar fixes') and state scalar organisation to assist in developing accounts which can successfully narrate the divergence and concrete-complexity of capitalist processes which are all too often presented as if they are internally-coherent and consistent across space and time. Periodisation then alerts us to the need to recognise how spatial forms vary in different geographical contexts.

The work of Brenner and others on questions of periodisation is important not only for the way it captures our attention to reflect and acknowledge those pioneering accounts that laid theoretical foundations for establishing city-regionalism as a distinct period of spatial development in the post-Fordist era of global city-centric capitalism, but also for the way it encourages us to determine how pervasive city-regionalism is in different contexts. In particular it focuses attention toward two key questions: first, who is pursuing city-regionalism and to what end, and second, through what mechanisms is city-regionalism being enabled/blocked? A key aspect to the next stage of research on city-regions is therefore to investigate whether city-regionalism is, in fact, unfolding and, if so, to what degree in different contexts. More substantially we argue this requires researchers to determine the trajectories of city-regionalism in different spatial contexts and to compare these over the same time period. Indeed it is our contention that furthering our understanding of city-region governance can, and indeed should, be central to such endeavour.

In framing this Special Issue around the notion of ‘ten years on’ we recognise the tremendous contribution made by Allen Scott as the intellectual forefather to our resurgent interest in city-regions. With the help of other leading urbanists Scott reignited interest in the city-region concept through his animation of the theoretical foundations for global city-regions emerging as *the* pivotal societal and political-economic formations in globalisation (Scott, 2001a). Elevating the status of the city-region concept within critical urban studies, Scott’s ability to capture the dynamic changes affecting major urban regions continues to endure, sustaining, enlightening and shaping a new generation of international urban and regional research. Yet in recognising Scott’s contribution to this research topic we are equally guilty of falling into Brenner’s periodisation trap – namely presenting city-regionalism as a temporally defined scaled moment of capitalist growth demarcated with clear parameters. Nonetheless, it is our strong contention that framing the special issue in this way serves to challenge any assumption that city-regionalism *is* an internally-coherent capitalist process consistent across space and time.

As signalled earlier, Brenner’s revisitation and reflection on developments in the literature on state rescaling provides a more than useful starting point to account for the continuities and discontinuities in establishing city-regionalism as a distinct period of spatial development in rescaled urban-regional governance strategies. One methodological approach offered to us is to examine policy trajectories within a particular geographical context to reveal if the city-region is a spatial/scalar referent for intervention during a given period. Another strategy is to focus on institutional reorganisation and governmentalised remappings of state space to determine whether entirely new structures are being created at the scale of the city-region or existing structures are being modified to align them with transformations to the character and dynamics of urban-regional space. So to be clear, although framing the issue around the notion of ‘ten years on’ relates to the temporally defined period when the torch has once again shone brightly on the city-region concept – what Davoudi (2008, p. 51) has called the “reincarnation” of the city-region as an

analytical construct – and on questions of city-region governance over this period, in their endeavours to open up city-regionalism to critical scrutiny the papers in this issue directly take up the issue of periodisation.

The whole question of periodisation is brought into sharp focus by Proinnsias Breathnach (2013). Providing a critical commentary on the 'dysfunctional polity' of Ireland's 2002 National Spatial Strategy, it is shown how clear disconnects can easily exist between policy trajectory and institutional reorganisation within particular geographical contexts. Amid what is a far-reaching reshaping of how Ireland's space economy is to be configured, Ireland's National Spatial Strategy exhibits all the features we have come to readily associate with the unfolding of city-regionalism to be the spatial/scalar referent for intervention in public policy discourse over the past ten years. Yet, as is all too often the case, this apparently new policy trajectory was accompanied by a spatial focus on 'existing' urban centres in the main, while the failure to provide new structures and/or mechanisms to facilitate cooperation and collective action across neighbouring local administrative units ensured forging effective city-region governance structures became 'unamenable'.[2]

In stark contrast, Iain Deas (2013) showcases Manchester's invention and reinvention as a long-standing space for city-region governance. Regarded by many as a model of best practice, a point emphasised by reference to 'the Manchester miracle' in many urban and regional strategies worldwide (Harding et al., 2010), what emerges from the Manchester case is the importance of a scalar referent in any periodisation of city-regionalism. Unlike the national context in which it is situated – city-regionalism as a geopolitical project did not emerge in England until the early-2000s (see Harrison, 2010) – a 'uniquely Mancunian' form of city-region governance has emerged to oversee the economic and social revitalisation of the Manchester metropolitan region (Harding et al., 2010). Responding to the fragmenting of metropolitan decision-making and increasing territorial politics and conflict caused by the abolition of the Greater Manchester Metropolitan Council in 1986, local policy elites have

successfully consolidated institutional arrangements at the scale of the city-region to coordinate economic development, regeneration and transport functions. In the embryonic stages of city-regionalism as a national and international political project the spotlight shone brightly on Manchester as policy elites elsewhere cast envious eyes on the relative economic success believed to be attributed to the city-region governance structures established there. In turn this placed Manchester in the vanguard of further advancements to the institutionalisation of activity at the city-region scale.

We would argue the importance of the scalar referent to questions of periodisation lies in the recognition that Manchester's 'success' as a space of city-region governance relies not on a governmentalised remapping of state space, which has at its core the always urgent need to switch the spatial/scalar referent for policy intervention through large-scale programmes of formalised restructuring, but in a locally-rooted response to a local problem. In the case of Manchester this response centred on the construction of a 'loose development coalition' between Manchester City Council, neighbouring local authorities, national government and non-departmental public bodies, only to become the more formalised set of arrangements we observe today when it was captured and brought under the umbrella of the state spatial programme of city-regionalism a decade ago (Deas, 2013; Harding et al., 2010). For this reason we suggest it is necessary in debates over periodisation to distinguish between coalitions of the willing vis-à-vis coalitions of the obliged. The former identifies those urban-regional spaces where actors, recognising the need to consolidate fragmented planning and governance arrangements, set about forming a loose development coalition without prescription. By contrast the latter refers to those spaces where actors have never sought, or previously failed to consolidate fragmented planning and governance arrangements at the city-region scale but who have been compelled to act as a direct response to the growing orthodoxy surrounding city-region governance, itself manifest in more formalised policy prescription and new state spatial strategies. Assuming periodisation of city-regionalism as a coherent geopolitical project, with origins in the first decade of

twenty-first century capitalism, is leading us to overlook those coalitions of the willing which preceded this purported phase of new city-regionalism – alongside the longer history of city-regionalism (see Davoudi, 2008; Hall, 2009; Harrison, 2014) – in favour of new spaces, strategies and projects which emerge from state orchestrated programmes for reorienting policy, building institutions and remapping state space (cf. Lovering, 1999).

It is with these issues in mind that Harrison (2013b) asks us to look beyond city-regionalism as a state spatial strategy to consider the degree to which city-regionalism might be concerned with the production of 'new *non*-state spatial strategies'. He argues in an era of much reduced investment in urban economic infrastructure and state subsidy – analogous to the Fordist-Keynesian state – powerful and well-resourced private investment groups controlling strategic assets (most notably land) and facilities for economic development (e.g. airports, ports, rail networks) will fulfil a more prominent role in the spatial development of the future metropolis. Revealed in an empirical study of Peel Holdings' Atlantic Gateway Strategy, he contends that there is a convincing case to suggest this non-state spatial project amounts to a radical alternative to the prevailing orthodoxy of neoliberal state spatial restructuring which characterises city-region initiatives in the UK and elsewhere. Offering a window onto possible near-future city-region scenarios, where institutions of the state are increasingly dependent on private investment groups for the jobs, growth, and regeneration, Harrison encourages us to think beyond the scope of this Special Issue to the key role of asset ownership in metropolitan regions and the privatisation of local democracy and the democratic state (cf. MacLeod, 2011; Raco, 2013).

Governance, Democracy and the Post-Political Metropolis

Over the past two decades rapid urbanisation and accelerated global integration matched by greater global differentiation have seen the classic new urban politics of the 1980s transform into what many now consider being the new

metropolitan politics (Cox, 2010, 2011). Expansion of globalising cities into globalised city-regions is leading researchers to focus on new loci, and to engage with new forms, of intra-regional disparities and dispute often located in new and emergent metropolitan spaces, inter alia, ‘edge cities’ (Phelps and Wood, 2011), ‘in-between cities’ (Young and Keil, 2009), or the *Zwischenstadt* (Sieverts, 2003). Nevertheless, punctuating accounts proclaiming a new metropolitan politics is theorising on a consensual post-political and post-democratic metropolis. Erik Swyngedouw (2009, 2011), for one, has written at length on what he and others see as an entrenched technocratic blueprint for what signifies ‘good governance’ in the post-political city.

Evidence for a depoliticised metropolitan condition comes through strongly in contributions to this Special Issue. Focusing on metropolitan governance in South Hampshire (UK), Buser (2013) adopts an interpretive approach to emphasise how applying traditional concepts of political representation across fragmented governance spaces opens the way to “unfortunate consequences for democratic engagement and ‘proper’ urban politics” (2013). His exploration uncovers clear evidence that Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) is embarking on a pre-determined pro-growth agenda with significantly reduced legibility and transparency of decision-making procedures. Deas (2013) goes a step further to argue that, despite Manchester’s status as an exemplary model of city-region governance, what has been conveniently overlooked in many commentaries is the fact there has been almost complete absence of debate, challenge, or dispute over the form and function of those institutions purportedly providing formal democratic oversight. This theme of transparency in decision-making is also picked up by Pemberton and Morphet (2013) in their analysis of the EU’s role in framing, shaping, and informing the construction of new urban-regional spaces in England. Revealing a hitherto untold story of how policy elites are creating new governance structures in full awareness of their legal obligations to implement EU policy on subsidiarity, Pemberton and Morphet argue that the mechanics of EU-UK relations have been internalised by a lack

of transparency in the implementation of, and compliance with, EU agreements and the ideological rhetoric dominant in the national political discourse.

Examples of citizens being unceremoniously disconnected from the policy process and the unobstructed progress of pro-growth neoliberal ideals in metropolitan regions are one thing, but as Levelt and Metze (2013) reveal there is an even more concerning development which might have the potential to trigger a stronger reaction against this depoliticised or post-political metropolitan condition. They contend that in the case of the Netherlands, the task of consolidating fragmented planning and governance arrangements into new city-region institutions has inexcusably distracted policy elites. Searching out positive solutions to urban and regional problems – surely the fundamental goal of any form of urban and regional governance – appears to be being lost in the search for credibility. What this moves us towards is significant. For the important question is surely not if, but when and where the tipping-point will be reached to challenge the assumed consensus? Of course, indication is already being provided on this in other contexts, not least by Morgan and Sonnino (2010). Worthy of quoting at length, their remarkably persuasive account of the urban foodscape suggests the city is a tinderbox just waiting for the spark that will ignite its political flames:

> Cities find themselves at the forefront of the NFE ['New Food Equation'] for both ecological and political reasons. As a majority of the world's population is now thought to be 'urban', cities have acquired a new role: namely, to drive the ecological survival of the human species by showing that large concentrations of people can find more sustainable ways of co-evolving with nature. The agri-food system is at the sharp end of this challenge because of its unique role in sustaining human life and because of its intensive use of climate-sensitive resources, especially land, water and fossil fuels. Cities are also the *crucibles of political protest* because large and rapidly growing concentrations of people are

> *highly combustible places*, especially when deprived of the basic essentials of food and water.
>
> Morgan and Sonnino (2010, p. 210, our emphasis)

We are also made aware of the city as a hot-bed of politics in the work of Juan Miguel Kanai. Weaving post-colonial urban studies into Western accounts of state-theoretical neoliberal urbanism, Kanai (2013) takes us to the Amazonas State to uncover the simmering tensions between elitist plans for pursuing globally oriented entrepreneur-led city-regionalism rooted in the extraction and manufacture of climate-sensitive resources, punitive conservation policies to protect the peri-urban rainforests financially valued in global carbon-offset markets, and an ambience of societal disenchantment as a pro-growth agenda displaces, segregates, and excludes to accentuate geographical patterns of uneven spatial/social development. The main thrust of his argument provides further affirmation, were it needed, of the emerging post-political consensus in a whole variety of neoliberal urban contexts, but what Kanai reveals thereafter is an undercurrent of resistance which is "spearhead[ing] political reactions, social mobilisation and localised territorial conflicts" (2013) to elitist plans for expansionism through city-region formation. Marginalised worker groups are becoming better organised, but most crucially, the middle-class is mobilising, becoming increasingly politically active, and ensuring all large-scale development projects are subject to increased civic scrutiny. Illuminating the potential for a resurgent metropolitan politics, mobilisation and resistance is one thing, but a credible alternative to the pro-growth neoliberal ideals of globalised urbanism, as Kanai himself suggests, remains another.

Such issues are thrown into sharper focus by Sophie Van Neste and Laurence Bherer (2013) when highlighting the difficulty of mobilising politically in a moment of consensual metropolitan politics. Investigating the mobilisation for car alternatives in the Greater Montreal Area, they reveal the rather complex conundrum of how social movements navigate multiple geographical scales. Across the Montreal city-region there is an emerging social movement to

develop alternative forms of mobility at the scale of the household or even in some cases the local neighbourhood, yet a critical juncture has arrived as these actors begin to mobilise as a collective in an attempt to shift transport investment in the metropolis toward mass transit (see Jonas et al., 2013) and slow modes of transport (e.g. walking, cycling), and even more ambitiously, reconfigure metropolitan land-use patterns to make these car-alternative mobilities possible. This exhibits the hallmarks of constructing a metropolitan 'space of engagement' to engage other centres of social power to determine what is possible and what is not (Cox, 2010; cf. Harrison, 2013b). In the case of this particular social movement it is quickly apparent the underlying territorial politics at the metropolitan scale, not least concentrated on the segmentation between central city and suburbs on certain key aspects of the case for car alternatives, is blocking the path to any genuine challenge to car dependency in Montreal.

(Re-)Imagining the Metropolis

The expansion of globalising cities into global city-regions is making it increasingly difficult to distinguish where one metropolis ends and another one begins. This became particularly acute some time ago as the acceleration of processes of global economic integration and rapid urbanisation in globalisation saw the new metropolis extend far beyond the traditional 'city-limits' to begin comprising multiple functionally interlinked urban settlements. Yet we want to suggest here how this has been somewhat overtaken of late by a growing consensus centred on the belief that "bigger and more competitive economic units … have superseded cities as the real engines of the global economy" (Florida, 2008, p. 38). In particular, in this section we wish to argue how there is an urgent need to differentiate between arguments extolling the pivotal role played by global cities/city-regions in globalisation and using these arguments as a catalyst to construct even larger urban configurations which we contend, may or may not exist.

For the past ten years the trend has been one of aggregating urban units to construct even larger metropolises. Indeed, one only has to look at the opening pages of *Global City-Regions* to see the beginnings of this trend. Albeit quick to acknowledge his 'admittedly inadequate' way of identifying the emerging system of global city-regions, Scott's (2001a) starting point was to assimilate the rising number of cities with populations of more than 1 million (83 in 1950, 165 in 1970, 272 in 1990) – the majority of which appeared in the Global South – to the spatial formation of a "global mosaic of city-regions" (Scott, 2001b, p. 820) and functioning of a new worldwide system of large metropolitan areas. This thinking it still evident today with much being made of the fact that if current trends hold, China alone will have 219 cities with more than 1 million inhabitants by 2025 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2008). But emerging alongside this is a trend whereby actors are increasingly engaged in the active construction of new metropolitan spaces and hierarchies.

On a global scale, we have witnessed a refining of Scott's original concept of the global city-region with first the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2007) identifying 78 metro-regions – populations ranging from 1.5 million to 35 million – as the 'competitive cities' in the global economy, Richard Florida and colleagues constructing 40 megaregions – populations between 3.7 million and 121.6 million – as the 'real engines' of the global economy (Florida et al., 2008), and most recently UN-HABITAT (2010a) in their *State of the World's Cities 2010/2011* report identifying a small number of mega-regions and mega-city urban corridors – populations in excess of 20 million – as the 'new engines' of global and regional economies. Put simply, the rhetoric remains the same but the spatial selectivity of actors is seeing the metropolitan focus channelled to an ever smaller number of metropolitan areas of ever increasing size in the early part of this century. Alongside this, and despite a marked shift away from national urban systems and hierarchies to policy elites seeking to position major urban regions within international circuits of capital accumulation, we see a similar story within many national contexts. In

Germany, for instance, the Federal State has spent the past two decades constructing a new discourse around the superior strategic importance of 11 European Metropolitan Regions (Blotevogel and Schmitt, 2006; Harrison and Growe, 2012). Similarly in the USA the Regional Plan Association (RPA) has been embarking on a campaign to promote a national framework of 11 megaregions as the 'proper scale' to intervene and invest in the major economic development, sustainability and infrastructure issues impacting America's growth in the period up to 2050 (Dewar and Epstein, 2007; RPA, 2006). What we have, then, in these and other cases is a new metropolitan elite being politically constructed, dutifully positioned at the apex of national *and* global urban systems, and where inclusion is limited to a select number of increasingly large urban economic units. While it is not difficult to see where, how, and why this trend has been developing – one only need look at the hegemonic status of the 'new economic geography' discourse over this period, not least the permeation of its central argument that economies of scale accrue in agglomeration economies into all forms of economic and political activity – what is less clear is if these large urban economic units actually exist or are simply being (re-)imagined.

The basis for our argument is our belief that there is a noticeable disconnect in how these larger urban economic units are being actively constructed depending on whether you take rapid urbanisation or global economic integration as the starting point. Those taking rapid urbanisation as their starting point generally approach defining, delimiting, and designating their selection of urban regions by observing what is visible to them in the physical landscape (see Florida et al., 2012). Spatial form becomes the determining factor of the urban-regional constructs produced, with the major weakness often being the inference and assumption thereafter regarding the functional economic coherence of these spaces. In contrast, taking global economic integration as a starting point often relies on tracing that which is invisible, or certainly less visible (e.g. networks of knowledge, information, capital flows). Evident in accounts which show how large urban regions are comprised of polycentric

structures (Hall and Pain, 2006; Hoyler et al., 2008b) economic function becomes the key determinant in identifying emergent, newly dominant and formerly dominant metropolitan spaces (Taylor et al., 2009, 2010, 2013). What often emerges is the identification of spaces which may function as a major urban region but which do not appear as such in the physical landscape or, for that matter, map onto politico-administrative territorial units.

Habitually presented as two sides of the same globalisation coin, recognising how spatial form and economic function are not always easily reconciled raises important issues for governing the new metropolis. We certainly concur with Förster and Thierstein's assessment that 'invisible' regions continue to present a major governance challenge:

> As there is little concern for the crucial connection between the changing requirements of knowledge-intensive firms and urban change, the ability to use this knowledge for local and regional development and spatial planning purposes is still weak.
>
> Förster and Thierstein (2008a, p. 19; see also Halbert et al., 2006)

Förster and Thierstein (2008b, p. 142) go on to argue that the task of making these regions 'visible' is "a prerequisite to establishing large-scale metropolitan governance" owing to the fact that *pace* Paasi (2009) securing the image and identity of a region in the social consciousness of actors is seen to be a key enabler of collective socio-economic and socio-political action. Indeed, this issue of recognition is no more evident than in the emergent discourse advocating the strategic role enacted by cross-border metropolitan regions, that is, metropolitan regions which do not feature prominently in national political discourse but in an integrationist transnational context such as Europe are being afforded a stronger political voice owing to their undoubted functional economic strength and importance. As Nelles (2012) underlines, these cross-border spaces represent Europe's 'imagined metropolis'.

Picking up on many of these points, Mike Coombes (2013) provides an important extension to work seeking to define functional economic areas, emphasising the need to always consider these 'robust' definitions against what actors recognise as 'plausible' policy-relevant boundaries. He argues this connection has been missing in many earlier mapping exercises, highlighting how previous failings in the case of England not only yielded some questionable boundaries but had significant, and by implication problematic, knock-on effects for how the city-region concept was then operationalised in public policy discourse. Revisiting an earlier point, for us there is clear evidence of exactly this problem in the way urban-regional spaces are being identified, constructed, and captured by policy elites; no more apparent than in the case of UN-HABITAT (2010b) and the identification of transnational urban corridors connecting up mega-cities and their regional hinterlands to form linear development axes. One of four exemplars showcased is the purported Beijing-Pyongyang-Seoul-Tokyo urban corridor which, in the words of UN-HABITAT (2010b, p. 1), "effectively merges them into one" urban configuration with a population approaching 100 million. Offered up as reflecting new patterns of economic activity, UN-HABITAT are using these urban-regional concepts to serve a particular political agenda – in the case of UN-HABITAT this is as a development tool, reflected in the fact that somewhat amazingly no large-scale urban configurations appear to exist in North America or Europe. Yet, perhaps best illustrated in the Beijing-Pyongyang-Seoul-Tokyo example, nowhere is there any evidence to suggest these urban configurations actually function as large-scale urban economic entities, let alone any recognition of the complex geopolitical and trading relationships that exist across borders.

Such regard for territorial politics is a theme picked up by Jonas et al. (2013) in their account of city-regionalism in Denver, Colorado. Connecting to broader theoretical as well as more concrete-complex empirical debates on the merits of relational approaches to city-regions vis-à-vis knowledge of their underlying territorial politics, Jonas et al. explore the tensions arising from major investment in retrofitting metropolitan Denver for integrated mass transit and

viable alternative to the region's automobile dependency (cf. Van Neste and Bherer, 2013). One of the most visible ways large-scale metropolitan planning and governance is being exercised, constructing regionalised spaces for collective provision of transportation infrastructure, housing, and shared services reflects the new demands for collaboration across metropolitan regions. There is no doubt this and other collective endeavours are instilling "powerful regional imaginary" of city-regionalism in action (Jonas et al., 2013). Indeed John Hickenlooper, the former Mayor of Denver and now Governor of Colorado, is fond of proclaiming "collaboration the new competition" in what is fast becoming the modern-day maxim for 'good governance' across metropolitan areas (Ford Foundation, 2011). Yet through all this the inherently complex territorial structures and politics manifest across a city-region present a perpetual challenge for metropolitan leaders to assimilate and embrace distinct spaces (city/cities, suburbs, counties, metropolitan areas), dissenting voices, and opposed local interest groups into the governance fold. The Denver case is also useful because it shows just how fragile city-region governance arrangements can be, even those widely deemed as successful.

Governing the Future Metropolis: A Case of Pushing Water Uphill?

The fragility of city-region governance is thrown into even sharper focus when we look at examples of city-region failure (see Breathnach, 2013). Voets and De Rynck (2008, p. 465) for instance, talk of a "paralysis of city-regional policy-making" in Flanders, Belgium, because of administrative centralism, political localisation of regional policy, and negative attitudes towards urbanity. Allied to this is the institutional complexity – some might argue institutional mess – resulting from new metropolitan spaces of planning and governance emerging alongside, rather than necessarily replacing, often territorially-embedded institutional geographies, structures, and frameworks. For sure, the literature on city-region governance abounds with accounts documenting how metropolitan fragmentation provides the major headache for those charged with

implementing policy interventions at the scale of the city-region. Territorial politics from local government fragmentation has always been central to urban and regional governance but what marks city-regionalism out for particular attention is the increased number of incorporated local areas in a multinodal metropolis. This increases the number of deeply embedded local territorial bases of political power which a single city-region planning or governance arrangement has to routinely negotiate to establish, then maintain city-regional alliances (see Jonas et al., 2013). A fear of more powerful neighbouring local areas, strong anti-urban lobbies, and most especially where local governments have fiscal dependence to set local tax rates and statutory planning competencies, all serve to exacerbate the fragility of city-region governance and planning arrangements.

All of which could lead one to think that the notion of city-region governance is not far removed from the old maxim of trying to push water uphill. Yet there are plenty of examples to suggest city-region governance can provide notable successes. Manchester, for instance, is commonly placed on a pedestal as an exemplar for how metropolitan fragmentation can, with time, be successfully managed and city-region alliances formed, maintained and developed – in Manchester's case to coordinate service delivery for economic development and skills, transport, planning and housing, crime, health, and the environment (Deas, 2013; Harding et al., 2010). Alongside this, metropolitan fragmentation can be seen to signal strength not weakness. Frankfurt is one such example where perceptions of metropolitan fragmentation being somehow intrinsically problematic are being replaced by the marketing of Frankfurt Rhine-Main as a large multinodal polycentric region where regional cooperation, not competition, is claimed to be the dominant force in regional development (Hoyler et al., 2006; 2008a; Keil, 2011).

Another deep-rooted problem accentuated by the hegemonic discourse surrounding city-regions is the normative assumption that 'come hell or high water' the requirements of transnational capital compel policy elites to establish

the conditions necessary for capital accumulation to flourish in major metropolitan regions. The knock-on effect is to exacerbate income inequality between those dense groupings of extraordinarily wealthy people and the large groups of people living below the poverty line, all of whom live and work in close proximity to one another across metropolitan regions (Fainstein, 2001; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008). In his recent book, *Triumph of the City*, Ed Glaeser (2011, p. 2) argues that:

> The city has triumphed. But as many of us know from personal experience, sometimes the city roads are paved to hell. The city may win, but too often its citizens seem to lose.

Glaeser proceeds to eulogise about how "not all urban poverty is bad", indeed, that cities attract poor people "demonstrates urban strength, not weakness … a fact of urban life that should be celebrated" (2011, pp. 9-10). This does not suggest there is no problem with urban poverty in cities; rather it presupposes that while "cities don't make poor people" (p. 9) they do have to deal with the influx of poor people that success attracts. One city which is central to Glaeser's analysis is Mumbai, which he argues has seen governance failure in urban planning. Pointing to the arbitrary height restrictions imposed on developments in Mumbai to just an average of one-and-a-third stories per building, Glaeser condemns Mumbai officials for "pushing people out" (p. 259).

It is in this context that we can appreciate Aparna Phadke's portrayal (2013) of the 'massive breakdowns' in socio-economic and politico-cultural structures which have resulted from Mumbai's programme for dispersing the vast influx of poor people into peri-urban areas and the simultaneous clearance of indigenous groups to not only accommodate these in-migrants but enable the construction of major infrastructural developments to facilitate connection between Mumbai's commercial centre and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Mumbai's status as a globalising city gives the place its undoubted economic energy and buzz, yet for all the private successes and entrepreneurial achievements enabled by

wholeheartedly adopting pro-growth neoliberal ideals, the public failure to provide the necessary urban infrastructure to ease congestion, deliver affordable housing and healthcare, tackle pollution, and perhaps most serious of all, basic services to its citizens, brings to the fore an absolutely fundamental question when considering city-region governance: by whom and for whom are city-region governance arrangements being constructed?

What the papers in this Special Issue highlight is how those who benefit the most from city-region governance are often those private interest groups who stand to make the largest commercial gains, if what they perceive to be obstructions to pro-growth neoliberal ideals are lessened, better still removed. In these instances, city-region governance is increasingly a mechanism which is mobilised by powerful interest groups – both private and public – to overcome the bureaucratic barriers (e.g. the planning permission process) that are particularly acute in the new metropolis given the political fragmentation that exists. It is exactly this situation occurring across the world's major urban regions that is adding further fuel to the fire of those who today are minded to theorise a consensual post-political and post-democratic metropolis. Nonetheless we are able to identify examples – Montreal, Manaus – where citizens are mobilising locally to resist the unabated pro-growth neoliberal ideals of much that goes under the auspices of city-region governance. Indeed what the papers by Kanai (2013) and Van Neste and Bherer (2013) really serve to highlight is how we are at a critical juncture as these locally-rooted mobilisations seek to form their own city-regional alliances to provide a meaningful challenge to pre-determined pro-growth agendas.

METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE IN QUESTION

Some ten years on from Allen Scott's (2001a) original treatise on the rise of city-regions in globalisation, what we hope to achieve with this Special Issue is a furthering of our understanding of what main governance tasks face

metropolitan regions in enabling economic and social revitalisation. For our part we have identified four central tenets of the metropolitan region/governance debate which we argue pose a series of key challenges and as yet unanswered questions where current and near-future research can proffer important insights, bring about advances to our understandings of city-regions and their governance, and ultimately contribute to a healthy programme of city-region research for the next decade. We finish with three broad points relating to the current state of city-region research.

First, the past decade has been an exciting time for those of us with an interest in urban and regional development. Globalisation and the rise of city-regions has provided a real focal point for research. It has thrown up numerous issues and debates to fuel our inquisitive inclinations as researchers. The question of city-region governance has also captured the imagination of policy elites the world over; a group who have become increasingly interested in the academic research which is being generated. But as we observe the landscape of research on city-regions and metropolitan regions more generally, what we see is a multitude of single city-region case studies, national studies and international comparative contextual studies which have spawned an abundance of concepts, ideas, theories, arguments and opinions. In planning and executing this Special Issue we were keen to take a step back, to return and consider some of the fundamental questions which of late appear to have been lost from sight in the quest for those new lines of argument, new concepts, and new examples. It is precisely this reason why we started with Scott's question "What main governance tasks do global city-regions face as they seek to preserve and enhance their wealth and well-being?" (Scott, 2001a, p. 12). But it is also why, ten years on, we finish with a new set of questions that are required to bring into closer conceptual focus some of the issues to emerge from this Special Issue:

- At what pace is city-regionalism – as a geopolitical project – unfolding/retracting in different space-times?

- Through what mechanisms do actors (seek to) shape and influence city-region development?
- How does the current trend towards bigger and bigger urban economic units impact our ability to govern the new metropolis?
- Will incipient grassroots movements be able to form their own city-regional alliances to mount a meaningful challenge to entrenched neoliberal pro-growth agendas?
- What can ultimately be achieved through city-region governance?

Related to this, our second point is that city-regionalism is undeniably a very strong paradigm but this does not reduce our need to constantly challenge the underlying assumptions which have become 'naturalised' over the past decade as city-regionalism has become embedded and city-region governance accepted as a necessary response to the contemporary urban condition. We would argue that city-regionalism itself needs to be an object of inquiry. In the quest for those new lines of argument it could be said that city-regionalism has become too readily assumed in many analyses, something to be recognised and acknowledged, but all too often skipped over to get to the analysis of a specific, national, or international case.

We have been struck, third, by the limited engagement between some of the different research groupings who work on city-regionalism. Partly owing to our own personal journeys we feel there has been too little cross-fertilisation of ideas between those working from a global cities perspective, generally focused on the commercial centre of the new metropolis but increasingly considering the polycentric nature of economic functions across (mega-)city regions, and those focused on issues of urban and regional governance whose typical entry point is more broader than this with analyses of the state to the fore. Implicit in much of our argumentation is recognition that in recent years there are increasing degrees of overlap between those predominantly researching the economic functions of city-regions and those investigating primarily the political institutions

of city-region governance. For us, this type of shared endeavour is a much needed strategy to advance the global geographies of city-regionalism.

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[1] Some notes on terminology. We have deliberately chosen not to use the term 'city-region' in the title. The term 'city-region' can at times be limiting, inappropriate, or unhelpful. For this reason we prefer to use the term 'metropolis' and/or 'metropolitan' at various points in our introduction to the issue as this gives us scope to discuss the full breadth of issues and challenges for governing urban-regional spatial configurations – of which city-regions are a major aspect. It is important to note we do not see city-region/city-regional and metropolis/metropolitan as interchangeable. Rather we see the city-region as an often ill-defined concept within the literature, often used to frame certain arguments, examples, ideas, yet bearing little or no resemblance to what many would recognise as offering something distinctly city-regional.

[2] Notably, the Irish government has recently announced the scrapping of the National Spatial Strategy (Kitchin, 2013).