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John Harrison

Towards the new ´Regional World´?

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Aus:

Anna Growe, Katharina Heider, Christian Lamker, Sandra Paßlick, Thomas Terfrüchte (Hrsg.)

**Polyzentrale Stadtregionen –
Die Region als planerischer Handlungsraum**

14. Junges Forum der ARL
22. bis 24. Juni 2011 in Dortmund

Arbeitsberichte der ARL 3

Hannover 2012

AKADEMIE
FÜR RAUMFORSCHUNG
UND LANDESPLANUNG
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John Harrison

Towards the new 'Regional World'?

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Zusammenfassung

Unbestreitbar erfährt die Diskussion von Regionen in der Globalisierung eine Neubelebung. Dennoch muss die Annahme hinterfragt werden, dass das Wiedererstarken von Regionen in der Globalisierung mit der Umwandlung von einer „alten Welt", die territorial in politisch-administrative Regionen eingebettet ist, in eine schöne „neue Welt", die aus eher relational vernetzten Stadt- (oder Metropol-)Regionen besteht, umfassend erklärt werden kann. Mit besonderem Bezug auf den Diskurs zu Europäischen Metropolregionen in Deutschland wird in diesem Beitrag die angeblich vorliegende Umwandlung umrissen. Dabei wird argumentiert, dass neue regionale Räume tatsächlich an Bedeutung zunehmen, aber dass diese Bedeutungszunahme viel mehr aus einem Nebeneinander und einer gegenseitigen Ergänzung der beiden oben genannten Welten resultiert als aus einem Ersetzen einer Organisationsform durch eine andere. Abschließend werden Konsequenzen für zukünftige Forschungen diskutiert, die neue Perspektiven auf die zeitgenössische, metropolregionale Herausforderung bieten.

Schlüsselwörter

Region – Regionalisierung – Metropolregion – Deutschland – politics of scale – Territorium

Abstract

There is no denying the resurgence of regions in globalisation. Nonetheless, accounts professing to explain the resurgence of regions in globalization have been inferring transition from 'old world' territorially embedded politico-administrative regions to a brave 'new world' of more relationally networked city (or metropolitan) region. With particular reference to the discursive frame of European Metropolitan Region in Germany, this article briefly outlines the purported transition at hand, explores the argument that new regional spaces are, in fact, emerging to sit alongside and complement, more than replace, inherited forms of state scalar organisation, before looking at the implications for future research offering perspectives on the contemporary metropolitan regional challenge.

Keywords

Region – new regional world – metropoltian region – Germany – politics of scale – territory

1 Introduction: from regions to city-regions

There is no denying the resurgence of regions in globalization. A defining feature of globalization is how regional production complexes have capitalized on localised agglomeration economies fostering and harbouring the conditions, assets, and capacities upon which transnational capital depends to emerge as key spaces for globalized capital accumulation. Fuelling claims regions are drivers of national and international competitiveness, with this has come expectations of affluence, alongside a growing appreciation that regions are central to tackling entrenched inequalities, encouraging progressive planning, and enabling piecemeal democratic rights in today's globally interconnected modern world. Synonymous with academic and policy discourses pertaining to a 'new regionalism' in economic development and territorial representation, proponents suggest how a new phase in capitalist territorial development is now upon us. Clearly indicative of this was business guru and former senior partner with McKinsey and Company management consultants, Kenichi Ohmae, famously pronouncing "the end of the nation state" in recognition of how nation-states had forfeited their role as engines of wealth creation to regional economies (Ohmae 1995). Alongside this, the economic vitality of regional economies in the global space economy was sufficient for Michael Storper, a leading economic geographer, to claim we all lived in a "regional world", where regions, not nation-states, are *the* fundamental units of economic, social, and political life at the end of the 20thcentury (Storper 1997).

Signalling the zenith of new regionalist orthodoxy, Storper's claim to a "regional world" dominated academic and policy discourse at the close of the 20th century. Nonetheless, widely critiqued for bending the stick too far in the direction of autonomous regional action, and thereby overplaying the decline/demise of the nation-state, the early years of the 21stcentury were marked by widespread critique of the orthodoxy surrounding the new regionalism in general (see Lovering 1999; MacLeod 2001; Hadjimichalis 2006; Harrison 2006), and Storper's axiom of the "regional world" in particular.[1] But this is not the end to this particular story. For rising out of the ashes came a *new* regional orthodoxy. Or perhaps more accurately key proponents of the new regionalism side-stepped the critique which was to befall their initial tender as to the primary spatial scale for organising life after Fordism, hotfooting as they did to proffer major urban regions as the new critically important societal and political-economic formation on the world stage (Scott 2001a; Scott 2001b; Scott/Storper 2003). From this later perspective, it is not regions *per se* which function as catalysts for the post-Fordist growth dynamic, are fundamental to economic and social revitalization, and vital for establishing effective planning and governance arrangements, but a particular type of region – the "global city region" (Scott 2001b).

[1] This is not a critique of Storper's arguments relating to the rise of regional economies, which is rightly regarded as one of the key contributions to regional geography/regional economics. What is at issue is the causality implied from his arguments relating to the role of regional economies in driving the post-Fordist growth dynamic and this being tantamount to regions being *the* pivotal sociospatial formation in our globally interconnected modern world.

Professing to explain the resurgence of regions in globalization the importance attached to these accounts is that they imply often transition from 'old world' territorially embedded politico-administrative regions, to a brave 'new world' of more networked (city) regions. One only has to look at the academic and policy literature for evidence of how this has percolated through regional studies over the past ten years. The self-evident starting point is purporting transition from 'new regionalism' to 'new city regionalism' as city regions replace regions as competitive territorial *par excellence* (see Harrison 2007). But derived from this premise are then a whole raft of further characterisations, variously purporting transitions from a 'new regionalism' to an 'unusual regionalism' (Deas/Lord 2006); 'new regionalism' to a 'new regionalism version 2.0' (Harrison/Growe 2012); more formal regional planning spaces to new 'soft' planning spaces (Allmendinger/Haughton 2009); 'regional world' to a 'new regional world' (Harrison 2012) and/or 'regional worlds' (Paasi/Jones 2012); 'spaces of places' to 'spaces of flows' (Castells 1996); and 'territorially embedded' to 'relational and unbound' conception of regions (Amin 2004).

Maintaining regions as a hot topic in the 21st century what we can distil from this is threefold. First, major processes of regional change are clearly underway in the first part of this century, fuelled by deepening globalization, and characterised by accelerating processes of global economic integration with differentiation, rapid urbanisation, and the emergence of new regional spaces. Second, substantive expressions of regional change increasingly challenge our existing conceptions of regions, as well as existing regional economic infrastructure, planning, and governance arrangements. And third, many commentators are coming to view this transformation of regions and regional space as heralding the emergence of, and transition to, a *new* 'regional world'. Nonetheless, where near consensus has been reached on the points one and two the final point is the source of much contention. With this in mind, the aim of this article is, first, to briefly outline the purported transition at hand; second, explore the argument that new regional spaces emerge to sit alongside and complement, more than replace, inherited forms of state scalar organisation; and third, look at the implications for future research offering perspectives on the contemporary urban-regional challenge.

2 Out with the old, in with the new: the new city-regionalism as a new phase in capitalist territorial development

Casting out the old to make way for a new in vogue approach to studying regions was a dominant characteristic of regional studies throughout the 20th century. It is perhaps only natural then that the latest orthodoxy in regional studies sought to cast out the old (the region) to make way for the new (city region) at the beginning of this century (see Harrison 2008). What makes this later case more remarkable though is it is many of the same scholars who are casting out the old as brought it to our attention only a few years previous. In this case, Allen Scott, a leading proponent of the new regionalism, eschewed his promotion of a "global mosaic of regional economies" (Scott 1998: 47) to actively champion how, as globalization proceeds, it is a "mosaic of large city-regions" (Scott 2001a: 813) which has evidently come to function as the spatial foundations of the modern world system. Part and parcel of this discourse are observations recording how city regions are thriving in globalizing conditions.

For Scott and his followers, the starting point for understanding the inexorable rise of city regions is the propensity for transnational economic activity to crystallise out in place-specific production complexes. Since the 1970s, major urban-regional industrial

production complexes (that is, metropolitan clusters of economic, social, and political activity) have been exercising increased command and control over global circuits of capital accumulation such that geoeconomic power was being localised in an increasingly select number of place-specific, wealth generating locations. In parallel with these developments, the identification of globalizing cities as drivers of national and international competitiveness, and with it expected affluence, resulted in a major process of city expansion into large scale global city regions comprising multiple functionally interlinked urban settlements. No more evident than in the exceptional rate of city expansion into larger city regions underway in China, accelerating processes of global economic integration, which see networks of social relations increasingly stretch across and beyond the boundaries of traditional forms of state scalar organisation, and rapid urbanisation, which see metropolitan landscapes stretch far beyond their traditional city limits, have produced a new spatial geography of cities and regions in the early part of the 21st century.

In this way, the plethora of neologisms minted over the past ten years to account for how city expansion into global city region has, for many, provided clear evidence of how these geographic entities have emerged to be the critically important spatial scale in advanced globalization. These include, most notably, the 'global city region'; the concept developed by Scott to emphasise the importance of globalizing cities external *and* internal relations.[2] Yet, while no one denies the validity of accounts documenting the reappearance, resurgence, and inexorable rise of global city regions, engaged critics have, over the past ten years, pointed out that key proponents and advocates of city regions appear guilty of overplaying their capacity to secure meaningful economic prosperity, tackle entrenched inequalities, encourage progressive planning and enable piecemeal democratic rights (see Ward/Jonas 2004; Harrison 2007; Jonas/Ward 2007;). Not least of these concerns is that with city regions perceived to be "increasingly central to the conduct and coordination of modern life" (Scott 2001a: 814), those advocating this inculcate others into believing city regions represent a new scale of urbanisation and city regionalism a new phase in capitalist territorial development. Nowhere is this inculcation more evident than among policy elites.

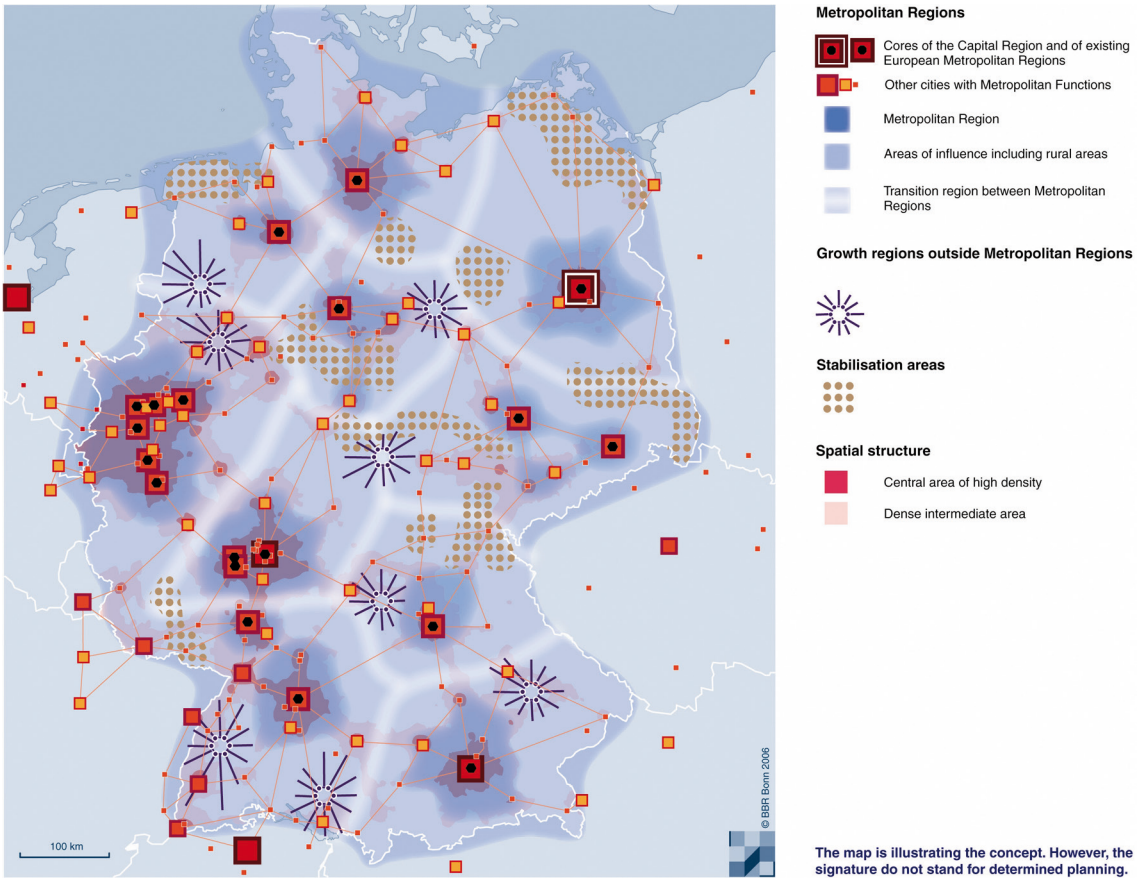
City regions represent the in vogue spatial scale among policy elites. Lured in by normative claims relating to how city regions "function as territorial platforms for much of the post-Fordist economy", constitute the "dominant leading edge of contemporary capitalist development", represent "basic motors of the global economy", are an "emerging political-economic unit with increasing autonomy of action on the national and world stages", and the "most effective bases from which to deal with both the threats and the opportunities of globalization" (Scott 2001a: 813 f.; Scott 2001b: 4), has precipitated calls to consolidate fragmenting urban and regional planning and governance arrangements at the scale of city regions. Assuming the status of 'officially institutionalised task' among policy elites, the dominant policy discourse in the early part of the 21st century has centred on the need to construct more 'appropriate', generally accepted to mean more flexible, networked, and smart forms of metropolitan economic infrastructures, planning and governance arrangements. Germany has been no different.

For much of the 20th century the German space economy was defined by its regional *Länder*. Nevertheless, the latter years of the 20th century witnessed the emergence of a new discursive frame of metropolitan regions. First articulated in the 1993 'Guidelines for Spatial Planning' (*Raumordnungspolitischer Orientierungsrahmen*), the Federal Govern-

[2] This is an important extension of the dominant 'global city' discourse of the 1990s which centred on the important external linkages of cities in globalization.

ment began identifying areas it deemed to be of superior strategic importance to national and international competitiveness (BMBau 1993). A direct response to the growing orthodoxy which suggested cities at the heart of major urban regions are synonymous with globalized capital accumulation, in the period up to 2005 eleven areas were selected by the Federal State and branded European Metropolitan Region (EMR). Leading to the formation of a new urban hierarchy, the importance attached to European Metropolitan Regions is although they did not receive formal powers (only a greater lobbying voice) these eleven regions significantly expanded their functional role in national and international circuits of capital accumulation during this period (see Blotevogel/Schmitt 2006). Perhaps unsurprising given what we know about the rise of city regions in late 20th century and early 21st century capitalism, the developing metropolitan region discourse added further fuel to the political-economic flames suggesting how cities at the heart of major urban regions are – *pace* Scott – functioning as basic motors of the national economies in which they are located.

Fig. 1: Concept Growth and Innovation



Quelle: BMVBS (2006: 13)

Further illustration of this point came in 2006 with the publication of the 'Concepts and Strategies for Spatial Development in Germany' (*Leitbilder und Handlungsstrategien für die Raumentwicklung in Deutschland*, hereafter *Leitbilder*) as Germany's new national spatial plan for the development of cities and regions (BMVBS 2006). Contained within the *Leitbilder* was a new map of the German space economy (Figure 1), one which exhibited all the tendencies necessary toward belief city regions represented a new scale of urbanisation and city regionalism a new phase in capitalist territorial development. Exhibiting all the hallmarks of a national spatial plan constructed around the need for more

flexible and networked regional spaces – *inter alia* cities and city regions are clearly afforded a priori status, the most important lines on the map reflect important flows, the metropolitan discourse is now territorially inclusive[3], and regions are conceptualised as 'relational and unbound' – it is not difficult to observe how this could be seen adding further fuel to flames indicating the emergence of what many would argue amounts to a new, relationally networks, regional world. That territorial forms of regional space – the *Länder* – had magically disappeared from this map gave further credence to the *Leitbilder* presenting this conceptualisation of the space economy as an alternative vision to the previously dominant model of state scalar organisation. In short, it appeared the German space economy was transitioning towards the new 'regional world'.

3 To replace, or not to replace: that is the *new* regional question

Take a look at many accounts theorizing the new city regionalism as a new phase of postnational capitalist territorial development and what you will see is twofold: economic boosterism, embodied in claims city regions are competitive territories *par excellence*, and political autonomy, a belief that city regions increasingly act as autonomous political agents in the global economy, and are thereby less subservient to the dictates of the central state than older regionalisms. Nevertheless, critics have been quick to argue that those who theorize city regions in this way are overplaying the capacity of city regions to draw down regulatory authority and territorial control from the nation-state and the smooth transition to a postnational era of capitalist territoriality (Ward/Jonas 2004). For despite the bravado of economic boosterism in many accounts pertaining to a new city regionalism it has been shown that only in a select number of truly 'global' city regions can it be said that the emergent power structures of city regions have resulted *vis-à-vis* in relative decline in the power of the nation-state (Jonas/Ward 2007). To the contrary, the state remains orchestrator-in-chief of much that constitutes the new city regionalism.

As a number of critics have argued, the enthusiastic endeavours by which policy elites went about constructing new planning and governance arrangements, and used by advocates of the new city regionalism to further support their claim of city regions acting as autonomous political agents free from regulatory control by a central state[4], were in fact governmentalized remapping of state space (see Harrison 2007). What we see is actually central states responding directly to the new regionalist consensus around the importance of positioning major urban regions within national and international circuits of capital accumulation by intervening to, first, create the conditions necessary for capital accumulation, and second, make their major urban regions more attractive to transnational capital than their international competitors. But at the same time we have seen particular brands of city regionalism emerge in different national contexts.

In Germany, for instance, the brand of city regionalism which has emerged over the past 15 years reflects, in part, this broad consensus on the need to create the conditions

[3] It is worth noting that the metropolitan discourse had, to this point, been spatially selective. Since 1993, as each new area was afforded EMR status the population included within the discursive frame of metropolitan regions increased, reaching a highpoint in 2005 when the eleven European Metropolitan Regions covered approximately two-thirds of the population.

[4] Derived from Lovering's (1999) critique of the new regionalism, we can once more identify how theory is led by policy. For sure, a self perpetuating orthodoxy arises from the construction of tiers of city-regional governance being used as further advance claims of city-regions acting as autonomous political and economic spaces. This occurs when policy elites become captivated by a new discourse, capture the basic premise, design and implement policies to put this in action, for academics to use these policy interventions as further evidence of the importance of their new discourse, attracts and captivates more people, fuels another round of policy intervention, and so the cycle continues.

upon which the post-Fordist growth dynamic relies, but perhaps more specifically it has to do with the fact Germany operates a 'horizontal' urban system. This is in stark contrast to the United Kingdom, which has London, the world's most globally connected city, and France, which has Paris, the fourth most globally connected city (see Taylor/Ni/Derudder et al. 2010). Nevertheless, where the UK and France only have the one city in the top 100 globally connected cities, making them the exemplars of a primate city system, Germany contains six (Frankfurt = 32, Berlin = 55, Hamburg = 60, Munich = 67, Dusseldorf = 76, Stuttgart = 91) (Hoyler 2010: 225).

What we can distil from this is how Germany's brand of city regionalism, the metropolitan region discourse, is a reflection on the lack of an *a priori* global city à la London or Paris. For this reason the metropolitan region discourse has its origins in promoting the six metropolitan regions which while not at the apex of global circuits, are at the apex of national, and well positioned within European, circuits of capital accumulation. Moreover, it also has its origins in the Federal State's longstanding and principled commitment to promote balanced economic growth and territorial equilibrium in all economic and social policy. Now if we compare this to the brand of city regionalism which has emerged in the UK (especially England), London is generally considered to be a special case and not part of city region policy *per se*. England's own brand of city regionalism is being designed to provide growth in cities and regions beyond London and the south east megacity region with the explicit aim of providing an economic counterbalance. This reflects, in large part, the pressure respective Governments and Ministers face to mitigate the perception they adopt London-centric growth strategies (Harrison 2011). When put like this, the different brands of city regionalism which appear in specific national contexts clearly suggest the need to reconsider the political construction of city region discourse and policy according to both its economic and political logic. Moreover, it unquestionably reinforces how the state is not passive in the new city regionalism, but an active agent in shaping its form and function.

Three further points are worth emphasising in the context of this discussion. The first relates to what we might usefully consider as the 'wishing away' or 'airbrushing' of extant structures of state scalar organisation so as to promote a new approach to conceptualising the space economy and/or state space as an entirely 'new world', and thereby progressive because it is somehow different to that which is now projected as being 'old world' and regressive. This can be seen most clearly in the policy discourse around Germany's metropolitan regions and the construction of the map of the space economy in the *Leitbilder*, where extant structures of state scalar organisation – in this case the *Länder* – are airbrushed out. Here it is worth quoting at length the observations of Neil Brenner, a leading authority on the emergence of new forms of urban-regional governance in globalization, and who argues thus:

"The rescaling of state power never entails the creation of a 'blank slate' on which totally new scalar arrangements could be established, but occurs through a conflictual 'layering' process in which emergent rescaling strategies collide with, and only partially rework inherited landscapes of state scalar organization" (Brenner 2009: 134).[5]

Accounts purporting transition to a new 'regional world' risk being guilty of overplaying the extent to which the emerging new urban-regional spaces is replacing traditional, territorially embedded, regional spaces. Indeed, empirical research is doing much to

[5] See Brenner (2004) for a masterful account of governmentalized remappings of state space in globalization.

suggest 'new' urban-regional governance and planning arrangements are emerging to sit alongside, rather than replace, inherited landscapes of state scalar organization.[6] This is particularly so in Germany, where as we have already noted the new regional world of metropolitan regions remains a purely discursive frame. Despite magically airbrushing the *Länder* from the *Leitbilder*, the reality is financial and planning competencies remain with the regional *Länder*. Only in metropolitan regions which are coterminous with one or more *Länder* conjoined (for example, the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan region is coterminous with two *Länder*) do these new urban-regional spaces wield some genuine political power. Nevertheless, this power is only by inference given the *Länder* remain under direct supervision by the central state. In short, these new urban-regional developments do not constitute "life after regions, but life with, or alongside, regions" (Harrison 2011: 1) and run contrary to Scott's (2001b: 4) contention that "the geographic nature of these networks tends more and more to override purely political boundaries so that they are increasingly free from regulatory supervision on the part of national states".

What this leads to then is the second point, namely if new urban-regional spaces are not replacing territorially embedded regions how do they fit into what is already a congested landscape of urban-regional institutional structures, infrastructures, territorialities, statutory frameworks and supports. What we have seen, with Germany being no different, is although initial attempts to designate, define, and delimit these new urban-regional spaces were done very much in accordance with the economic logic for city regions, the task of making these more networked spaces, and in particular their planning and governance arrangements, compatible with inherited landscapes of territorially-embedded state scalar organisation has seen the central state mobilise different constructions of the 'city region' concept. More specifically, city regions are no longer simply being defined as large scale agglomerations which transcend purely political boundaries, but to mark them out as spaces for action they become defined as coalitions of local municipalities and therefore bound by known political boundaries.

The third and final point is although the Federal State explores the capacity for conceptualising growth outside the confines of subnational territorial units in the *Leitbilder* it appears somewhat reluctant to consider new urban-regional spaces overriding the national border – even within a purely discursive frame. Indeed, despite some moves of late to entertain the possibility of cross-border metropolitan regions (see Harrison/Growe 2012), this is clearly indicative of a central state active in the construction of city region policy and orchestrating it in such a way as to protect its own legitimacy for maintaining regulatory control and management of the economy.

4 Moving on: perspectives on the metropolitan regional challenge

"[F]or many planners, urban analysts and metropolitan citizens, the contours that denote where the early 21st century city begins and ends are becoming increasing fuzzy. Insofar as we may or may not wish to map and encapsulate the imminent metropolitan landscape ... there is little denying that the quicksilver economy of 21st-century capitalism and its associated settlement patterns are disturbing conventional mappings and long-held assumptions concerning the whereabouts of urban, suburban, rural and hinterland. It is a geography that arouses confusion" (MacLeod/Jones 2011: 2461).

[6] In other accounts it has been shown how many 'new' urban-regional governance arrangements actually represent a 'scalar amplification or contraction' of previous entities and are therefore not as new as is often suggested/implied (see Lord 2009).

This excerpt usefully encapsulates the very issues which are currently at the forefront of urban-regional debate and requiring further critical interrogation by researchers. Each relates to points made in my comments already and it is with these that I wish to offer some brief concluding thoughts.

[F]or many planners, urban analysts and metropolitan citizens, the contours that denote where the early 21st century city begins and ends are becoming increasing fuzzy. Predictions suggest how denoting where the 21st century city begins and ends will become increasingly fuzzy. This is because while the percentage of the world population who currently reside in cities reached 50 % for the first time in 2007, UN-Habitat (2011: 5) predicts this to increase to 70 % by 2050 when world population will reach an estimated 9 billion. Accelerated urbanization is not just the defining feature of the second-half of the 20th century but will remain the defining feature of the 21st century – what many have been referring to as the 'urban century'. At one level, this can be seen to produce more overlaps as globalizing cities expand into global city regions comprising multiple functionally interlinked urban settlements, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish where one metropolitan landscape ends and another one starts. At another level, recognition of these very processes is acting as a catalyst to those striving to construct even larger urban configurations in the belief that "bigger and more competitive economic units ... [are] the real engines of the global economy" (Florida 2008: 42). The open question is the degree to which these new urban-regional spaces exist, or are they simply being imagined?

Insofar as we may or may not wish to map and encapsulate the imminent metropolitan landscape. The question of mapping is particularly pertinent to this present discussion, for as we have seen in the example of Germany spatial maps are a very powerful discursive tool. Spatial maps such as these can prove a particularly useful tool in understanding how urban-regional configurations are being constructed politically. More specifically, it can prove a useful starting point in uncovering the political processes underpinning attempts to make more networked forms of urban-regional governance compatible with existing forms of 'territorially embedded' state spatial organisation. For as Thrift (2002: 42) usefully reminds us "to govern it is necessary to render the visible space over which government is to be exercised. This is not simply a matter of looking: space has to be represented, marked out". Spatial planning and planners are therefore clearly well positioned to provide key insights into what remains a hot-topic in urban and regional studies.

There is little denying that the quicksilver economy of 21st-century capitalism and its associated settlement patterns are disturbing conventional mappings and long-held assumptions. What we have seen over the past decade in the back-and-forth exchange between advocates and engaged critics is how those advocating transition to what might amount to a *new* 'regional world' overontologize the significance of this new spatial dimension by presenting it as the essential feature of present and future sociospatial landscapes. In short, while the emergence of these new spatial dimensions are clearly 'disturbing' conventional mappings of cities and regions, they are not, as some would have us believe, replacing conventional mappings. From this perspective, and as illustrated by the example of Germany, there is no zero-sum game whereby a new networked regional world is emerging to replace regions which are territorially-embedded. What we are witness to is the emergence of new urban-regional spaces, with the critical task being to understand, first, in what ways and contexts territorial and more networked urban-regional spaces appear complementary, overlapping, competing or contradictory, and second, how these more networked urban-regional spaces are being made to 'fit' inherited landscapes of state scalar organisation.

...the whereabouts of urban, suburban, rural and hinterland. The point to make here is in respect of how city region or metropolitan region discourses actually (re)construct the whereabouts of urban, suburban, rural and hinterland. Let us take the example of Germany once again to illustrate this. In the first instance, between 1993 and 2005 the evolving metropolitan region discourse constructed a clear division between those urban areas to be included, and those non-urban areas which were clearly seen to fall outside, this emergent discourse. In 2006, the *Leitbilder* took this one stage further by identifying three main types of area: (1) *European Metropolitan Regions*; (2) *Growth Regions outside Metropolitan Regions*, dynamic clusters, cities and locations outside the immediate metropolitan spheres of influence, but which exhibit signs of independent, sustainable profiles based on endogenous growth; and (3) *Areas with need for Stabilization*, often rural and old industrial areas in peripheral locations, located close to borders, and which fall in-between growth areas. Though not wholly coterminous, it is nevertheless possible to observe how these new discursive frames are, in part, (re)constructing the whereabouts of the urban, suburban, rural and hinterland at the beginning of the 21st century.

It is a geography that arouses confusion. Writing ten years after Allen Scott's (2001c) edited collection became the antecedent to a resurgence of academic and political interest in city regions and fuelled, in part, belief in transition to the *new* 'regional world', it is clear that these debates remain the source of much topical debate. A decade of insightful interventions have provided us with much new knowledge, but in so doing it has generated a new set of questions for researchers to ponder. Suffice to say, more research is needed, with ongoing developments in places such as Germany providing a rich empirical setting and lens through which to observe, conceptualise, and understand the dynamic processes which are resulting in such dramatic changes to urban and regional landscapes.

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