Competitiveness AND Sustainability – Can 'Smart City Regionalism' Square the Circle?

Tassilo Herrschel, University of Westminster

Abstract:

Increasingly, the widely established, globalisation-driven agenda of economic competitiveness meets a growing concern with sustainability. Yet, the practical and conceptual coexistence – or fusion - of these two agendas is not always easy. This includes finding and operationalising the 'right' scale of governance, an important question for the pursuit of the distinctly trans-scalar nature of these two policy fields. 'New regionalism' has increasingly been discussed as a pragmatic way of tackling the variable spatialities associated with these policy fields and their changing articulation. This paper introduces 'smart (new) city-regionalism', derived from the principles of Smart Growth and New Regionalism, as a policy-shaping mechanism and analytical framework. In so doing, it brings together the rationales, agreed principles, and legitimacies of publicly negotiated polity with collaborative, network-based and policy-driven spatiality. The notion of 'smartness', as suggested here as central feature, goes beyond the implicit meaning of 'smart' as in 'Smart Growth', as introduced in the mid to late 1990s (Miller and Hoel 2002) vis-à-vis the specifically North American phenomenon of suburban 'sprawl', and with its planning and transport-focused orientation. Since then, the adjective 'smart' has become used ever more widely, albeit in varying contexts, and advocates innovativeness, participation, collaboration and co-ordination of, and between, policy fields, actors and (their) territories (EC, 2010). A resulting 'smart city regionalism' is circumscribed by the interface between sectorality and territoriality of policy-making processes. Using the examples of Vancouver and Seattle with their similar geographical-functional, yet different historic-developmental and governmental characteristics, the paper then looks at the effects of the resulting specific local conditions on adopting 'smartness' in the scalar positioning of policy making.

Introduction:

Increasingly, in economic development, the established dominant neo liberalism-driven agenda of competitiveness (Boschma, 2005; Camagni et al, 1998; Bristow, 2005), set against the paradigm of globalization (Gordon, 1999), meets a growing concern with sustainability (Campbell, 1997). Yet, the practical and conceptual coexistence, or fusion, of these two agendas is not always easy, as they allow differing interpretations, weightings and forms of implementation. They thus require negotiations, debates and contestations across both spatial scales and policy fields. This complexity, even possible contradiction, between the two, potentially conflicting, agendas, and its effects on policy-making, is the subject of a recent article in *Regional Studies* (vol 42, no 9, pp 1223-1236, 2008), in which Haughton *et al* observe that sustainable development illustrates well the inherent contradictions of meta-governance as a means and mechanism for defining and implementing collaborative policy. The two policy fields produce their own agendas, are advocated by *'their'* respective actors and established ways of making policies and building networks in response to policy opportunities, and produce their separate associated (new regionalist) territorialities. And it is this multi-

faceted process of negotiated co-ordination and collaboration that is central to the concept of 'smartness' as discussed here.

The 1987 Brundtland Report first drew attention to the importance of cities in both challenging - through their growing size and number and associated environmental costs (Gibbs and Jonas, 2000; Gibbs et al, 2002) - and, eventually, helping to address, sustainable development as a global task. Subsequently, the 1992 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro explicitly placed *local* (especially urban) government in a leading role to seek and develop partnerships with local stakeholders and communities in the search for more sustainable ways and forms of development (Freeman et al, 1996; Portney, 2003). This reflected the realisation that the quest for sustainability requires acknowledgement of, and thus responsiveness to, the interconnectedness of local and wider (global) processes. Local policies thus need to fuse wider strategic perspectives with specific local interests by the electorate. It was thus from the late 1980s/early 1990s onwards, that such debates were moving into mainstream politics, such as in the form of the Local Agenda 21 which, in the UK, has since translated into a framework for developing 'sustainable communities'" (Bulkeley and Betsill, 2005, p 42).

As part of this shift in the public policy realm, Local Agenda 21 triggered a growing and increasingly more visible local government engagement in policies on sustainability.This included the accepted need to reach beyond, and across, divisions between actors, their strategic scalar perspectives, policy agendas and associated spatialities, using negotiated collaborative approaches. While sitting within their respective national frameworks, municipalities began to become more pro-active in sustainability policy making which, especially in metropolitan areas, brought together new political and strategic agendas, alliances, but also divisions. These were based on the particular interpretations of 'sustainability' between a narrower focus on 'greenness' and a more holistic notion of 'quality of life' and civic engagement (Selman, 1998). There was thus emphasis not merely on technocratically oriented policy instrumentation, but rather an encouragement of broader debate and consensus building, starting at the local level and reaching 'upwards' in scale. This involved innovativeness and entrepreneurialism in identifying, shaping and implementing sustainability-focused policies – all key characteristics of 'smartness' in spatial governance, as discussed below.

In that process, city regions have emerged as the most prominent scale of negotiating and implementing conflictual agendas of those pursuing sustainability and competitiveness respectively (Camagni et al, 1998; Portney, 2003): (1) neo liberalism-inspired and globalisation-driven place-based competitive economic policies and (2) critical reflections about the immediate and longer-term ecological costs of growth, including for 'quality of life' (Begg 1999). Both policy agendas come with their respective own internal policy-making dynamics, their particular range, roles and relevance of actors and actor networks, their varying public acceptances, and their particular forms of institutionalisation and territoriality. By their very nature, these policy agendas transgress institutional, jurisdictional and spatial boundaries and divisions, as they seek continued relevance and effectiveness. And policy efficacy is a further key feature of 'smartness' in spatial governance.

There are thus two dimensions which are addressed here, and which are intrinsically interconnected by the proposed concept of 'smart (new) city regionalism': Territoriality and sectorality (agenda) (see Figure 1). The former revolves around the variable territorial 'reach' of policies, i.e. their variable scalar perspectives which are adopted and negotiated, or defended, by the participating actors. This is achieved through re-scaling governance and policy-making arrangements either through modifying existing governmental-administrative territory or territorialising the identified (necessary) 'reach' of politics as starting points. Two routes to this may be taken: Superimposing a *new* (higher) spatial level of governance altogether, or rescaling competencies – both existing and new ones - by shifting them 'upwards' between *existing* levels of

government. Consequently, spatial scale shapes policy perspectives and thus detail: A wider spatial dimension often goes along with a broader, more strategic, rather than detailed project-specific policy perspective. This matters when local competencies are affected by a regionally co-ordinative agenda, such as advocated by 'smart growth', for instance. The latter, political *'sectorality'*, refers to equally scalarly variable policy negotiations and topical constellations, sitting within, or reaching across, institutional and/or governmental-administrative structures in the pursuit of greater policy efficacy. Such is expected by participating actors to benefit them all, and that brings them 'round the table' (Feiock, 2012). This includes those representing different policy sectors with their 'own' specific agendas, and thus helps overcoming 'silo mentalities'. It is here that the notion of 'smartness', as implicit in 'smart city-regionalism', can offer an operational framework for linking the spatial and policy-specific perspective to the more strategic-conceptual 'bigger picture' with its lesser implementational detail and thus perceived reduced 'threat' to individual interests and policy-making autonomy. 'Smartness' can do this by facilitating inter-actor communication, collaboration and political negotiations - and thus inter-actor trust - through a combination of both spatial scale (e.g. regionalisation) as driver of policy negotiation and co-ordination, and political agenda as lead agent of co-operation. Smart city regionalism thus brings together the rationales, principles and legitimacies of publicly negotiated, collaborative sectoral polity with network-based and policy-described spatiality (see Figure 1). In both instances, reaching across boundaries and divisions is intrinsic to the notion of 'smartness'.

Figure 1 near here: Smart City Regionalism as product of variably co-ordinated and co-operative spatiality and sectorality

Figure 1 shows the intersection between of the two variables 'sectorality' (political agenda) and 'territoriality' (spatial dimension) 'in their respective varying roles in shaping degrees of policy co-ordination and cooperation. Both variables are also illustrated for their relative 'extreme' positions of 'narrow focus' (e.g. localism, focus on technocratic projects) versus 'broader perspective' ('bigger picture'). This matters for the likelihood of collaborative engagement. The different scenarios shown may serve as conceptual framework for future case study analyses to investigate the varying factor combinations in the interaction and negotiation between two (or even more) policy fields and narratives such as 'sustainability' and 'competitiveness' respectively, and the corresponding territorial outcomes. Each policy sector may be expected to seek staking out its own, most effective territory to underpin its specific policy agendas. The resulting spaces may intersect to a lesser or greater degree, including near-complete separateness or almost complete congruence. Scope to achieve such territorialisation will vary in response to local conditions, including political capacity and capability among key actors, and acceptance of such moves among the local electorate. Any such political capital may change over time in response to learning experiences – a further feature of 'smartness' - and shifting public debates. And the degree of complexity of negotiated shared agendas may well change, too.

'Smartness' as policy conflict resolution through collaborative engagement between policy sectors and spaces

The notion of 'smartness' in managing urban growth emerged in the U.S. in the 1990s as a central feature of the new Smart Growth concept. In its essential rationale – and

1 there are many variations in its definition (Knaap and Talen, 2005), it is an inherently
2 North American, specifically US-based, concept, and needs to be understood in its
3 specific neo-liberal, locality-centric and 'home rule' context with its strong sense of local
4 self-government. 'Smart growth' emerged as a concern about the environmental, social
5 and economic costs of continuous suburban sprawl (Alexander and Tomalty, 2001;
6 Dierwechter, 2008). The concept is inherently political. Following Scott (2007, p 20),
7 "what smart growth advocates have done is to weave together various strands of anti-
8 sprawl discourse into a coherent polemic of sustainable development that integrates
9 economic, environmental and social equity issues". From a more partisan, anti-
10 regulation angle, some view Smart Growth strategies as a "folly" (O'Toole, 2001) and
11 even inherently counterproductive in making housing increasingly unaffordable. This, so
12 the claim, turns a 'planner's dream' into a 'middle class nightmare' (O'Toole, 2001, p
13 20). It is a problem generally associated with planning control and protecting open land,
14 such as urban green belt policies (Jones, 2007). A critical blog from 26 June 2011 on
15 Smart Growth policies in the Seattle city-region put the choice like this: "Do You Want 5
16 Acres, or 5 Feet?", referring to the contrast in size – for the same price - between the
17 building plots inside and outside the set regional Growth Boundary
18 (http://smartgrowthusa.wordpress.com/2011/03/22/seattle-smart-growth-urban-growth-
19 boundary-vision-2040-puget-sound-regional-council-psrc-rural-residential/, accessed 5
20 Apr 2012).
21
22 This interpretation is in stark contrast to the praise heaped on Portland's (Oregon) smart
23 growth strategies, as illustrated by the comments of.a reporter from one of Vancouver's
24 (British Columbia, Canada) main newspapers, the Vancouver Sun. He is entirely taken
25 by the success of Portland's Urban Growth Boundaries as fixed demarcation line for
26 permitted development, accompanied by investment in 'green' transport and living,
27 which also produce economic dividends. This, he labels 'progressive' policy making
28 (Tammemagi, 2008). Yet, it is far from clear, as Downs (2005) points out, that such a
29 visibly and formally restrictive policy could be applied and replicated at will, given
30 differing local political and societal milieux. By contrast, the concept of 'smartness' per
31 se is less place-specific, and thus more widely applicable, while 'Smart growth' is
32 inherently more pragmatic, task-specific and technical-instrumental in its outlook
33 (Bulkeley and Betsill, 2005). This is draws on an underlying techno-rationalist notion
34 that technical fixes may be possible (Guy & Shove, 2000) to allow squaring the circle of
35 continueing with a growth agenda, while also responding to quests for sustainability.
36
37 This may facilitate engagements among policy makers to negotiate and, eventually,
38 implement more co-ordinated and co-operative policies across both institutional and
39 territorial boundaries, e.j at city-regional level. And such may go beyond the immediate
40 focus on Smart Growth as a planning-based policy tool, as it was advocated by the
41 American Planning Association in the early 1990s (Downs, 2005; Burchell et al, 2000).
42 One of its main, rather conventional, policy tools is the drawing up of urban growth
43 boundaries as spatial 'demarcation lines' for suburban sprawl (see *inter alia* Katz, 2002;
44 Downs, 2005, Brain, 2005; Dierwechter, 2008).Yet, "Smart Growth is NOT NO
45 GROWTH; rather it seeks to …….foster efficient development at the edges of the
46 regions, in the process creating more livable communities" (website of the Association
47 of Bay Area Governments (capital letter emphasis added,
48 http://www.abag.ca.gov/planning/smartgrowth/whatisSG.html, accessed 20 Nov 2011).
49
50 Now, what is 'smartness' in 'Smart Growth', which also, it is argued here, sits at the
51 centre of 'smart (new) city regionalism'? This distinction between 'smartness' and 'smart
52 growth' matters, as the argument here is about the very nature of the idea of
53 'smartness' as a vehicle for reconciling conflicting policies and their associated
54 territorialities, rather than an instrumentalised mechanism of development control. Thus,
55 for instance, Ramirez de la Cruz (2009) associates 'smartness' with greater democratic
56 input and a search for broader legitimacy of development goals, in housing policies. Yet,
57 there is a growing range of applications of the adjective 'smart'. Taking its very meaning
58 of 'intelligent' and 'shrewd', and contrasting it with 'unintelligent' or 'dumb', makes it ,

unsurprisingly, a favoured quality for a wide range of spaces and policy agendas. The result has been a degree of 'trendiness' in using the adjective 'smart' in policy discourses; e.g. 'smart cities' or 'smart state', 'smart energy region', or 'smart defence'. There is thus a clear spatial (scalar) and sectoral (policy agenda) dimension to being 'smart'. This revolves around the efficacy of policies through a best effective use of resources to produce the desired policy outcomes. Accordingly, particular emphasis rests on the negotiating, compromising nature of finding policy solutions which are publicly accepted and politically supported. Predictably, co-ordination, co-operation, innovativeness and learning are key adjectives found in the notion of 'smartness' across its varying applications. And this includes pursuing such seemingly conflictual policy fields as 'competitiveness' and 'sustainability' concurrently (Portney, 2003). 'Smartness' is thus essentially about finding a policy-making formula that reaches across institutional and territorial boundaries. External factors may add important stimuli to 'kick start' a change in local policy agenda and policy making, or may be obstructive to such. If the former, the outcome is a product of local conditions, political leadership and external 'stimuli'. Spatially, this translates into 'new regionalist'-style forms of collaborative policy making, based on variable spatial networks of cooperation and collaboration, with their associated ('virtual') policy spaces (Herrschel, 2007). There, functional networks (Ernst and Kim, 2002; Coe et al., 2004) circumscribe such space, rather than administrative boundaries, expressing a 'new spatial logic' (Castells, 1989). And it is the underlying "*interactive effects* that contribute to regional development" (Coe *et al*, 2004, p 469), or, just as well, the development of regions as space-political entities.

Smart city-regionalism is one particular scalar application of 'smartness' as outcome of the interloping of two key dimensions: Policy sector and territoriality. For once, it focuses on the regional level as the negotiated collaborative territoriality, and, secondly, it flows out of a perceived need to find a more effective scale for representing, negotiatng and implementing two (or more) sectoral policy agendas, as negotiated between municipalities, for instance. By the same token, the negotiated spatiality, here 'virtual regions', also feeds back into the co-ordinative policy-making process per se, ideally enhancing it. There is thus some form of feed-back loop between identifying a collaborative policy agenda and the willingness to engage with, in the case of smart city-regionalism, a regionalisation process/agenda, however 'virtual' or 'real' in the end. As part of that, policy networks and relations between actors with shared objectives and priorities have become increasingly important. They transgress established institutional and associated territorial structures as they renegotiate and re-allocate responsibilities and powers in the pursuit of collaborative policy making. In some instances, as Healey (2003) points out, this "may have the potential to be transformative, to change the practices, cultures and outcomes of 'place governance' "(p 107), and this draws on the 'political calibre' of relevant actors (Healey, 1997).

These may include new interest and pressure groups and political groupings with their respective networks, as they seek to gain access to the main policy-making platforms. The inherent conceptual broadness of 'smartness' permits a variety of interpretations and implementations, with conflict resolution and policy efficacy as defning qualities. Yet, while such networks and informal linkages may be more responsive and problem-solving than their more bureaucratised, formalised counterparts, they are also less predictable. Chisholm (1989), based on insights from the San Francisco Bay Area, identified informal networks as more capable of solving policy conflicts, than formal mechanisms and procedures. Their relative 'messiness' may add, as well as reflect, the varied searches for compromise and mutual accommodation of differences in policy objectives, as subsumed under 'new regionalism' in all its fuzzy, yet dynamic, variable and 'virtual' spatiality (Keating, 1998; Söderbaum and Shaw, 2002; Tomaney and Ward, 2000; MacLeod, 2001; Herrschel 2007).

'Smart (new) city regionalism' as the fusion of the two concepts – new regionalism and smart growth - may thus offer a way forward to bridging divisions in associated governance – both spatial and sectoral, and between the public and governmental

spheres - and locating individual city regions in that framework on the basis of the relative importance of 'smartness' in relation to either – or both - cross-sectoral policy making and cross-border spatial policies as proposed under 'new regionalism'. This highlights the link between new regionalist virtual, policy-based territoriality, and an innovative, learning-based framing of policies, as suggested here as underpinning 'smart city regionalism'. Smart city regionalism thus offers flexibility in formulating negotiated inter-sectoral policies, together with associated variably scaled policy spaces. Just as importantly, the notion of 'smartness' also offers a more visible 'rallying point' for public debate on the balancing between competing policy agendas – be that based on topicality, political conviction, or position inside or outside of public administration, and the mplications of such for rescaling and/or re-bordering policy spaces.

'Smart City-Regionalism' in the American Pacific North West: Adopting spatial and sectoral 'smartness' in Vancouver and Seattle

The two North American examples dicussed here, Vancouver and Seattle, were chosen because they (a) exemplify North American 'smart growth' conditions; (b) possess quite similar geographical characteristics and functionality to allow comparisons; (c) show different historic-developmental and governmental arrangements and national circumstances; and (d) illustrate different local historic-cultural circumstances as determinants of local policy-making characteristics. Both cities are renowned for their livability and 'trendy' urbanity and thus offer interesting cases to explore processes of adopting and operationalising the concept of 'smart (new) city regionalism' as a fusion of inter-sectoral policy co-ordination with inter-local co-operation at the regional scale. The two cities illustrate differing city-regional 'milieux' with their specific local and external characteristics which circumscribe scope for, and practice of, smart city-regionalism.The two policy fields of seeking greater economic competitiveness and sustainability exemplify frequently conflictual policy agendas. By the same token, Seattle and Vancouver possess similar qualitative economic and environmental features to serve as common ground for a comparative appraisal of their negotiation under 'smart city-regionalisation'. External differences include a greater acceptance of state regulation and state presence in society in Canada than the US, where 'home rule' is a defining ideology. While both share a strong sense of local democracy, they differ in the degree to which central government (Province, State) may get directly involvement in Canadian compared with U.S. cities' affairs, including planning regulation.

Among internal factors, there are variations in the recognition and political cudos of 'quality of life' as a general policy agenda, subsequent acceptance of the value of inter-municipal cooperation, the need for a regional perspective, including guidance for local policy making, a politically active urban-based (as against suburban) citizenry and its values, and the political skill and shared values among local government and interest groups. It is here that Vancouver scores particularly strongly, helped by a city-centred active citizenry going back to the early 1970s (Donald, 2005). This reinforced Vancouver's position as the primary focus of the city region, whereas in Seattle urban flight has left a politically much weakened core city vis-a-vis strengthening suburbs and a strong sense of independence (e.g. Renton with a Boeing production site, and Redmond with Microsoft).

The analysis broadly follows the conceptualisation and criteria shown in Figure 1, with Vancouver showing characteristics of relatively advanced smart city regionalism (Scenario 2), and Seattle showing features of smart city regionalism 'in progress' (Scenario 1). Here, a city-region-wide, territorially based and technocratically focused ('narrow') institutionalization, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), gained in policy contents and responsibility as a result of shifting political discourse towards broader, more strategic, agendas. This shift became evident from information gained over a 10-year period since 2002 through personal interviews with key local and

6

regional organizations in the two city regions. They include local economic development units and planning departments, business representations and advocacy groups (Chambers of Commerce). These embrace both the core cities and, as suburban cities (exurbs), Surrey (Greater Vancouver region), and Renton and Tacoma respectively in the Puget Sound region. In addition, the respective primary region-wide governmental planning organisations PSRC and Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) were included. These interviews were essential for obtaining insights into the local political 'climates' and debates, as well as challenges. This information was supplemented by documentary analysis of strategy papers and plans from different points of the last decade, with a particular focus on economic development as strategic context for addressing both competitiveness (of course) and (increasingly so) sustainability. Key factors looked out for concerned evidence of spatial collaboration between municipalities, a sense of regionality in the two city regions, the nature of leaders in shaping policies (citizenry, the Vancouver mayor) and business interests (chambers of commerce). Evidence thus gained suggests a positioning of Vancouver's 'smart city regionalisation' under Scenario 2, owing to its stronger reflection of Smart Growth principles at a more fundamental, holistic level, while Seattle emerges as nearer Scenario 1. This reflects a greater influence of the relatively 'soft' – and thus perceived as less 'threatening' for local autonomy - 'new regional' governance arrangements. Yet, their limited, technocratically-centred policy brief broadened over time under the auspices of 'smartness' as it gained recognition in public policy discourse.

Both cities show distinct differences in their adoption of a city-regional perspective, including readiness to engage in topical and spatial collaborations across municipal and institutional boundaries, although with different timing and at different pace. Differences emerged in particular between core city and respective suburbs. Sharing comparable geographic-environmental settings, economic qualities and polycentric functional structures, Seattle and Vancouver differ in their awareness and adoption of 'smartness', exemplified by 'smart growth', as a conduit for collaborative policy making across spatial and institutional boundaries, and thus as a vehicle to seemingly 'square the circle' between the quests for economic competitiveness and more sustainability. Both cities, irrespective of their somewhat different national contexts for governance, share elements of a distinct Pacific Northwestern mentality (interview with PSRC, 14 Nov 2002) shaped by a not always easy fusion of elements of a strong sense of individuality and independence vis-à-vis an attractive 'great outdoors' as highly valued (common) good, and equally valued metropolitan characteristics of livability and urban life-style. Still, there are distinct variations based on respective degrees of urbanization (Dierwechter, 2008). Both cities have acquired an internationally well established visibility and image as 'trendy' and desirable, urbane places to live (and work), such as associated with Richard Florida's (2005) 'creative class', and are key ingredients in the two cities' respective public (economic) policy discourses. Yet, national differences in the relationship between state, society and the individual, as between local and central government in the scalar allocation of responsibilities, manifest themselves nevertheless (Fox, 2010).

Differing planning and legal arrangements for identifying sprawl as a potential problem that needs a regional response, and to act upon this insight, is one of the key differences; the other one is the extent to which there is a public perception – in urban and suburban environments - that such regulative policies are required and, indeed, desirable, While in Vancouver development planning control (that is 'zoning') goes back to the city's first development plan of 1929 courtesy of the Provincial government of British Columbia to protect land resources from urban expansion (Donald, 2005), no such thing existed in Seattle until the early 1990s. And when it tentatively began, this was only in response to 'high impact' external intervention: the Washington State government's 1992 requirement of a regional development plan, and, as a second warning, the 2001 pullout of Boeing's headquarters and transfer to Chicago. This was intended as a deliberate 'shot across the bow' of local policy makers in the Seattle city region for them to 'get a grip' on the economically costly, and thus uncompetitive,

continuous traffic congestion problem through a region-wide (collaborative) approach (Seattle Chamber of Commerce, interview, 20 June 2004).

By comparison, in Vancouver, and not just in the city itself, but also the surrounding suburbs/exurbs, public debate expressed, and reinforced, a preparedness to accept the principles of development control per se, and do so at the regional scale. And this was begun much earlier, in the early 1970s, in a bid to enhance urban living and quality of life. The then liberal political middle-class movement, TEAM (The Electors' Action Movement) gained control of Vanoucver city council in strongly contested elections. The backdrop to this was a perceived assault on 'urban living', and social equity and inclusion, by rapid urban expansion and associated extensive new road building, driven, so it was seen, by the self-serving interests of a narrow local elite of remote, "inaccessible politicians" (Ley et al, 1992, p 281). This had produced a receptive mood for 'smart growth' principles per se (the terminology emerged only later), including more strategic, longer-term perspectives as guidance to local policy decisions, and a pursuit of co-operative policy co-ordination with neighbouring municipalities. The election results showed that such agendas had gained sufficient political currency for delivering votes, and this produced a readiness among local policiticians to engage in policies that go beyond short-term, locality-centric goals. The comparatively early start in debating and formulating such concerns publicly and visibly gave the city-region a policy innovator's edge, and also time for building a broader coalition to develop and manifest such 'smart' policies as an integral part of local political discourse which, in itself, has become a competitive advantage. The current mayor's decision to use 'greenness' as an obvious boosterist (Short, 1999) and urban entrepreneurial (Hall and Hubbard, 1996; While et al, 2000) policy tool to promote the city's competitiveness is an extension of this expertise. Launching the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan in 2009 (available from http://vancouver.ca/greenestcity/, accessed 5 April 2012), just ahead of the 2010 Winter Olympics as the then touted 'most sustainable' Games, is a clear statement of that. It is also an attempt to further strengthen the perception of Vancouver as innovative and creative - appealing to, and representing, the 'creative class' Florida's (2005) - ,and even *avant-garde* in fusing often conflictual policy fields and pursuing an economically successful sustainability agenda. The new slogan of 'Vancouver 2020 – a bright green future', is intended to propagate just this, and suggests sufficient political capital (in terms of voter acceptance) for such a policy agenda as expression of being embedded in societal values in the city region (interview GVRD, 3 Nov 2003). And these accept and support a shared vision as guide to co-operative local policy making (Healey 2002).

The primary actor in Vancouver city region's governance system to deal with sustainability in a Smart Growth, planning-oriented sense across the city region, is the Greater Vancouver Regional District.. Formally established in 1967 through the merger of several single task special bodies (interview GVRD, 3 Nov 2003) by the then British Columbia government, i.e. 25 years earlier than a similar organisation, PSRC, was put in place in Seattle, GVRD was part of a Province-wide "network of regional districts" to "provide(s) a mechanism for metropolitan government" (Sancton, 2005, p 324) for British Columbia's two dominant city regions, Vancouver and Victoria. GVRD is to act on behalf of the participating municipalities and is indirectly legitimated through councillors delegated to its board by those municipalities. GVRD was thus top-down implemented and then bottom-up legitimated, albeit solely as a strategic body to offer a regional perspective as *guidance* for local policies (Sancton, 2005). Renamed Metro Vancouver a few years ago to raise the city-region's profile and reflect a competitive image consciousness of the value of the label 'metropolitan' for the Vancouver city region's urban attractiveness as a place, its latest strategic development document, 'Metro Vancouver: 2040 strategy', seeks an explicit fusion of both competitiveness and sustainability. The Strategy thus is in the mould of 'smart city regionalism'. Its sustainability agenda, so it is pointed out, is not a fashionable ad hoc add-on, but goes back to the 2002 'Sustainable Region Initiative'. That was followed shortly afterwards (2008) by a more explicitly growth-oriented 'Sustainability Framework' for a Regional

1 Growth Strategy (p 1). It was approved by all municipalities in the city region as joint
2 'shareholders' in Metro Vancouver, including the two main suburban cities of Surrey and
3 Richmond which, in terms of population, are themselves the size of Vancouver, and
4 strongly in favour of 'growth' (interview, Surrey EDU,, 4 Nov 2003). And on 29 July
5 2011, the latest regional plan was adopted by all municipalities covered by the GVRD,
6 explicitly referred to as 'Regional Growth Strategy'
7 (http://www.metrovancouver.org/planning/development/strategy/Pages/default.aspx,
8 accessed 13 July 2012).
9
10 The main 'voice' for *economic development* is the small organisation Vancouver
11 Economic Committee (VEC), an advocacy group well connected to both the business
12 community and the city council (the city mayor is the VEC chairman). Its primary
13 mission is to promote Vancouver as a place to invest and act as a platform to
14 communicate business interests and concerns to the administration (VEC interview, 4
15 Nov 2003). VEC thus sees itself as a key player among the 'context people' focusing
16 on strategy, rather than detailed implementation of policy (interview with VEC, 23 Oct
17 2006). Its recent Economic Development Strategy document, (available from:
18 vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20120131/documents/rr1.pdf, accessed 5 April 2012*)*
19 shows sustainability clearly presented as an integral economic quality, inherent in the
20 city as a 'smart', economically successful location. And this squaring the seeming circle
21 is confirmed by observations made by Smart Growth British Columbia (SGBC), a
22 lobbying and research organisation advocating 'Smart Growth' for B.C. (Alexander, et
23 al, 2004). The key characteristics of 'smartness', as understood here, have thus entered
24 Vancouver's policymaking on the back of long-established popular concerns about
25 maintaining the city's competitive edge, including environmental values as presumed
26 'appeal' to the 'creative class' as perceived bedrock of the city region's economic
27 capacity.
28
29 In Seattle, regionalisation of the political, (rather than the technocratic) arena has been
30 slower to evolve than in Vancouver. Only since the late 1990s (interviews at the
31 Tacoma Economic Development Unit (EDU), 6 Oct 2002 and Seattle Corporate
32 Planning Dept, 5 Oct 2002), has the regional scale entered the wider political realm
33 within the city region as a debated potentially useful device in economic policy and
34 urban development generally, rather than as a mere tool for the technically-driven
35 provision of public transport. Yet, it was the latter that established a city-regional
36 approach in the shape of the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), established in
37 1990 by the State of Washington. Similar to Vancouver and the GVRD, formal regional
38 agency was thus installed from the top down. Otherwise, localist competition prevailed
39 in this polycentric city region around the two main poles of Seattle and Tacoma
40 (interview at Tacoma EDU, 6 Oct 2002). This public recognition of a regional policy-
41 making dimension, became, shortly after the passing of Agenda 21 at the Rio Summit,
42 manifested by the 1994 statutory requirement by Washington State for the city to adopt
43 an area-wide comprehensive development plan to address rapid sprawl, road
44 congestion and the insufficient provision with public transport outside the central city
45 area. Up to then, no spatially contiguous strategic plan existed for the municipalities in
46 the city region. Seattle's new plan followed the then newly articulated basic principles of
47 'Smart Growth' as a then politically debated and less contentious 'face' of more
48 restrictive development control policies in conjunction with a regional perspective.
49 Adopting elements of Vancouver's plan as exemplary allowed policy makers to
50 advocate the city-regional agenda on the back of Vancouver's recognised positive and
51 successful livable' image as a strategy to follow.
52
53 Institutionally 'soft' (MacLeod, 2001), and thus perceived by municipalities and the
54 electorate as less of a potentially irrevocable surrender of local autonomy, PSRC has
55 since the mid 1990s continued to raise its profile beyond its original public transport
56 focus, and established itself as a regionally operating agency with a wider development
57 strategy remit. Its current "mission is to ensure a thriving central Puget Sound now and
58 into the future through planning for regional transportation, growth management and

economic development" (psrc.org, accessed 5 April 2012)). This is not dissimilar to GVRD's goal in Vancouver, the example it was modelled on. The region's somewhat anodyne name, Puget Sound, based simply on a geographic feature, rather than place, reflects its attempt to not upset local sensitivities among the smaller municipalities – but also the 'second city', Tacoma, about Seattle's dominance (Fox, 2010). For marketing, Greater Seattle would be a more effective name, as indeed used by the Trade Development Alliance of Greater Seattle. In addition, the two port authorities of Seattle and Tacoma jointly sought to raise the city-region's international profile (interview, Tacoma EDU, 6 Oct 2002) through co-ordinated marketing. But this was about external visibility, rather than addressing internal city-regional divisions which were strongest between the urban centres and their suburbs – and also embraced transport strategies (interview, Renton Mayor's Office, 5 Nov 2003).

The low key, locally 'non threatening' nature of 'region' is also reflected in PSRC's web address extension '.org': It is clearly an organization outside the governmental hierarchy and thus without statutorily established powers that could cut across, and challenge, local interests. Instead, it operates akin to "a regional UN [United Nations]", as a leading PSRC planner commented (interview PSRC, 14 Nov 2002), with much debating and slow decision making. Yet, the PSRC offers a publicly visible political arena for debating conflicting interest and policy priorities across municipalities and between policy fields, including conflicting agendas, and formulating compromise policies. And it is this capacity as a catalyst of a wider, more integrated, regional policy-making dimension that sits at the heart of the notion of 'smartness' in city-regional governance, rather than the search for a ready-made agenda and planning mechanism as under seemingly offered by 'Smart Growth'.

With no public preparation for a regional agenda in development policy prior to the 1990s, it was business interests that first engaged with the idea of collaborative, more policy-oriented 'smart new city regionalism', rather than governments or the electorate. In contrast to developments in Vancouver as early as the 1970s, in greater Seattle, adoption has been relatively slow of a city-regional dimension in policy making, in tye pursuit of a win-win solution for all actors involved – across spatial and topical divides. The many boundaries and divisions – mental and administrative - criss-crossing the Puget Sound region - manifest established individualism, self-interest, localism and socio-economic differences, especially between city cores and suburbs. Finding and adopting a shared and generally accepted collaborative way forward faces many obstacles, especially concern about losing local financial control (taxation) and, politically important, popular local support. "Cities are like little kingdoms", as an official in the Mayor's Office of the suburban city or Renton observed (interview, 5 Nov 2003). Yet, to promote their interests, they are willing to co-operate with like-minded municipalities as a pragmatic vehicle to pursue their own interest, such as in the Suburban Cities Association in King County (interviews PSRC, 14 Nov 2002). The PSRC's office location in central Seattle, unlike GVRD's suburban location outside Vancouver, however, will have done little to alleviate concerns about Seattle seeking to 'run' the region by proxy.

 A change in public perception, and thus acceptance of the also *local* merits of pursuing regionally collaborative political agendas, is required for accepting as useful 'smart new city regionalism'. Yet, innovative policies may emerge from that, such as currently developed in one of the counties in Puget Sound. There, individual municipalities can agree a partnership deal with the county about transferring (for a fee) development rights (TDRs) for a piece of green space to the County, effectively taking it out of municipal control and thus removing it from direct local political contestations about its development potential.

The political-conceptual underpinnings for adopting the principles of smart city-regionalism differ between the Vancouver and Seattle city-regions, as in the latter, 'soft' administrative structures came first as part of a technocratic agenda, to then tentatively

1   move onto the broader, political-ideological ground of sustainable development planning
2   and policy as a regional, rather than local, agenda, while faced by a skeptical local
3   government and public. In the Vancouver region, such a policy perspective has existed
4   much longer as part of public discourse than in Seattle, allowing the GVRD to base its
5   policies on their latent acceptance by the electorate. In Seattle, by contrast, public and
6   political opinion needed to be convinced of the virtues of regionalization first – in
7   principle requiring such symbolic actions as by Boeing to kickstart debate. Thus,
8   PSRC's current 2040 Vision strategy claims to focus on "people, property, planet" as
9   guidance of the Growth Management, Environmental, Economic and Transportation
10 Strategy for the Central Puget Sound Region (document available from:
11 http://psrc.org/growth/vision2040/pub/vision2040-document/, accessed 5 April 2012).
12 This reflects an attempt to publicly reconcile competing (individual) economic interests,
13 expressed in property ownership and its value, and global sustainability (Freilich et al,
14 2010).
15
16

Conclusions and Outlook: 'Smart city-regionalism' as framework for collaborative and negotiative policy making.

19
20 Drawing on the core rationale of the North American-based concept of Smart Growth as
21 a planning vehicle, this paper has sought to extricate and develop the notion of
22 'smartness' as a mechanism for reconciling conflicting policy ideals and trajectories in
23 local policy making. Smart Growth seeks to facilitate a shift in values, priorities and
24 perspectives from a narrow, short-term and often monetary, perspective, to a broader,
25 more holistic and longer-term view embracing both collaborative political processes and
26 spatial perspective. City regions provide a particularly potent and interesting scalar
27 arena for such discussions, as they bring together varying political-economic, social and
28 governmental-administrative arrangements and agendas, with some being more
29 congenial than others. Contestations, negotiations and objections are thus an integral
30 characteristic of city-regional governance.
31
32 'Smartness' has been distilled as the central concept out of Smart Growth, taking it out
33 of its particular planning-focused, technocratic context, and discussing it as an analytical
34 framework for exploring the intersection between territoriality (spatial scale) and
35 sectorality (political agenda). Discussions may be broad and inherently complex,
36 contested and diffuse as both growth-oriented 'competitiveness' and 'sustainability' are
37 being pursued. One of the key features of 'smartness' is a preponderance for the
38 regional scale as mediating platform between local and international considerations for
39 'competitiveness' and 'sustainability' policies. It is regionalism, in its 'new', i.e. less
40 structure- and more relationally and topically-driven nature, with variable governance
41 territoriality organisation, that has been connected here with the notion of 'smartness' as
42 effective organising rationale and principle. 'Smart (new) city regionalism', offers a
43 conceptual strategic scalar platform and spatial reference – including a temporal
44 perspective - for potential policy negotiations and compromises, as well as analytical
45 comparisons of collaborative arrangements and agendas between territories and policy
46 sectors, such as also found in Healey's (1997, 2003) notion of 'collaborative planning' –
47 or 'collaborative governance' respectively.
48
49 Two examples, Vancouver and Seattle, have been used to illustrate different trajectories
50 of engaging with 'smart (new) city regionalism', discussed here as a means of 'squaring
51 the circle' in the pursuit of the two policy fields of 'competitiveness' and 'sustainability'.
52 Developments in the two cities point to the respective roles played by territory and
53 politics in framing collaborative arrangements for 'smart city regionalism' as a vehicle for
54 negotiating between the conflicting and competing goals of 'competitiveness' and
55 'sustainability'. In Vancouver, an existing civic acceptance of the benefits of placing the
56 individual and local into a wider spatial and value context had provided a receptive and
57 supportive political ground for accepting 'smartness' as a guiding principle. This was
58 also shaped by a national appreciation of the positive roles of state and regulation, and

of society as a context for the individual,.And this included a city-regional scale of governance, values, actors, public discourse and agency-shaped structure. In Seattle, by contrast, a nationally more critical, pro- individualism and localist view, often coupled with a short-term perspective, made the framing of city-regional governance more challenging, needing to 'grow' from a limited technocratic agenda. Installing an 'unthreatening', low key regional structure first seems to have sown the seeds for accepting broader- defined collaborative city regional governance.

References:

Alexander, D and Tomalty, R (2001): The BC Sprawl Report 2001. Helping to Build More Livable Communities in British Columbia. Unpublished report. Available as download under: http://smartgrowth.bc.ca/Portals/0/Downloads/SprawlReport.pdf, accessed 20 Oct 2011.

Alexander, D; Tomalty, R and Anielsky, M (2004):, Economic Vitality and Livable Communities. Unpublished report. Available from: www.smartgrowth.bc.ca

Begg, I (1999): Cities and Competitiveness. In: *Urban Studies, vol. 36, nos 5-6, pp 795-809,*

Boschma, R (2005): Competitiveness of Regions from an Evolutionary Perspective. In: Regional Studies, vol 38, no 9, pp 1001 — 1014

Brain, D (2005): From Good Neighbourhoods to Sustainable Cities: Social Science and the Social Agenda of the New Urbanism. *In: International Regional Science Review, vol 28, no 2, pp 217-238*

Bristow, G (2005): Everyone's a 'winner': problematising the discourse of regional competitiveness. In: Journal of Economic Geography, vol 5 (2005) pp. 285–304

Bulkeley, H & Betsill, M (2005): Rethinking Sustainable Cities: Multilevel Governance and the 'Urban' Politics of Climate Change. In: Environmental Politics, Vol. 14, No. 1, 42 – 63,

Burchell, R; Listokin, D and Galley, C (2000): Smart Growth: More Than a Ghost of Urban Policy Past, Less Than a Bold New Horizon. In: Housing Policy Debate, VOL 11; PART 4, pages 821-880

Camagni, R; Capello, R and Nijcamp, P (1998): Towards sustainable city policy: an economy-environment technology nexus. In: Ecological Economics 24 (1998) 103–118

Chisholm, D (1989): Coordination Without Hierarchy. Informal Structures in Multiorganizational Systems. Oxford: University of California Press.

Coe, N; Hess, M; Yeung, H; Dicken, P and Henderson, J (2004): 'Globalizing' Regional Development: A Global Production Networks Perspective. In: Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,vol 29, no 4, pp 468–484

Dierwechter, Y (2008): Urban Growth Management and Its Discontents: Promises, Practices, and Geopolitics in U.S. City-Regions. Houndsmill-Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan

Donald, B (2005): The Politics of Local Economic Development in Canada's City-regions: New Dependencies, New Deals and a New Politics of Scale. In: Space and Polity, vol 9; no 3, pp 261-282

12

Downs, A (2005): Smart Growth. Why We Discuss It More than We Do It. In: Journal of the American Planning Association, Autumn, vol. 71, no. 4, pp 367-380

Ernst, D and Kim, L (2002): Introduction: Global Production Networks, Information Technology and Knowledge Diffusion. In: Industry and Innovation, vol 9; no 3, pp 147-154

Florida, R (2005): Cities and the Creative Class. Abingdon: Routledge
Fox, D, *Halting Urban Sprawl: Smart Growth in Vancouver and Seattle*, 33 B.C. Int'l & Comp. L. Rev. 43 (2010), http://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/iclr/vol33/iss1/3

Freeman, C; Littlewood, S and Whitney, D (1996): Local Government and Emerging Models of Participation in the Local Agenda 21 Process. In: Journal of Environmental Planning and Management, vol 3, no 1, pp 65- 78,

Freilich, R; Sitkowski, R and Menillo, S (2010): From Sprawl to Sustainability. Smart Growth, New Urbanism, Green Development and Renewable Energy. Chicago: American Bar Association, 2nd ed.

Gibbs, D and Jonas, A (2000): Governance and Regulation in Local Environmental Policy: The Utility of a Regime Approach. In: Geoforum, vol 31, no 3, pp 299-313

Gibbs, D; Jonas, A and While, *A (2002):* Changing Governance Structures and the Environment: Economy–Environment Relations at the Local and Regional Scales. In: *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning, vol* 4, no 2, pp 123–138

Greater Vancouver Regional District (1999): Livable Region Strategic Plan. Unpublished brochure.

Guy, S and Shove, E (2000): A Sociology of Energy, Buildings and the Environment: Constructing Knowledge, Designing Practice", Routledge, London

Hall, T and Hubbard, P (1996): The entrepreneurial city: new urban politics, new urban geographies?. In: Progress in Human Geography, vol 20, no 2, pp 153-174

Hansen, C (2006): Urban Transport, the Environment and Deliberative Governance: the Role of Interdependence and Trust. In: *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning,* Vol. 8, No. 2, pp159–179

Healey, P (1999): Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies. Vancouver: UBC Press

Healey, P (2003): Collaborative Planning in Perspective. In: Planning Theory, vol 2, no 2, pp 101–123

Herrschel, T (2005): Competing Regionalisation through Territory and Cluster Networks: Experiences form Post-socialist Eastern Germany. In: Geojournal, vol 62, pp 59-70

Herrschel, T (2007): Regions between imposed structure and internally developed response. Experiences with twin track regionalisation in post-socialist eastern Germany. In: Geoforum, Volume 38, Issue 3, Pages 469-484.

Herrschel, T (2009): Regionalisation, 'virtual' spaces and 'real' territories. A view from Europe and North America. In International Journal of Public Sector Management, vol 22, no 3, pp 261-272

Herrschel, T and Newman, P (2002): Governance of Europe's City Regions. London: Routledge

Jessop. B and Sum, N-L (2000): An Entrepreneurial City in Action: Hong Kong's Emerging Strategies in and for Inter)Urban Competition. In: *Urban Studies, Vol. 37, No. 12, 2287– 2313,*

Jiang, Y and Shen, J (2010): Measuring the urban competitiveness of Chinese cities in 2000. In: Cities 27 (2010) 307–314

Jones, S (2007): Threat to Surrender Green Belt for Homes. In: The Guardian, 10 Oct 2007, accessible under http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2007/oct/10/greenbelt

Kantor, P (2008): Varieties of city regionalism and the quest for political cooperation: a comparative perspective. In: *Urban Research & Practice* Vol. 1, No. 2, July 2008, 111– 129

Katz, B (2002): *Smart Growth: The Future of the American. Metropolis. CASE paper no 58, London School of Economics, available as download under* http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1158949*, accessed 20 Nov 2011*

Keating, M (1998): The New Regionalism in Western Europe. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

Knaap, G and Talen, E (2005): New urbanism and Smart Growth: A Few Words from the Academy. In: International Regional Science Review, vol 28, no 2, pp 107-118

Ley, D; Hiebert, D and Pratt, G (1992): Time to grow up? From urban village to world city, 1966-91. In: G Wynn and T Oke (eds): Vancouver and Its Region. Vancouver: UBC Press, pp 234-267

Lafleur, S (2010): Vancouver: Planner's Dream, Middle Class Nightmare. New Geography on-line discussion board, 19 Aug 2010. Available under: http://www.newgeography.com/content/001729-vancouver-planner%E2%80%99s-dream-middle-class-nightmare, accessed 2 April 2012.

MacLeod, G. (2001): New Regionalism Reconsidered: Globalization and the Remaking of Political Economic Space. In: International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, vol 25; part 4, pp 804-829

MacLeod, G (2001):, "Beyond soft institutionalism: accumulation, regulation, and their geographical fixes" *Environment and Planning A, vol* **33, no** 7 pp1145 – 1167

Miller, J and Hoel, L (2002): The 'Smart Growth' Debate: Best Practices for Urban Transportation Planning. In: Socio-Economic Planning Sciences, vol 36, no 1, pp 24-

O'Toole, R (2001): The Folly of "Smart Growth". In: Regulation, autumn ed.,pp 20-25. Available as download from: www.cato.org/pubs/regulation/regv24n3/otoole.pdf, accessed 2 April 2012

Puget Sound Regional Council (1995): Vision 2020 – 1995 Update. Growth Management, Economic and Transportation Strategy for the Central Puget Sound Region. Unpublished brochure.

14

Ramirez de la Cruz, E (2009): Local Political Institutions and Smart Growth. An Empirical Study of the Politics of Compact Development. In: *Urban Affairs Review* November 2009 vol. 45 no. 2, pp 218-246

Sancton, A (2005): The Governance of Metropolitan Areas in Canada. In Public Administration and Development, vol 25, no 3,, pp 317-327

Scott, J (2007): Smart Growth as Urban Reform: A Pragmatic 'Recoding' of the New Regionalism. In: *Urba*n Studies, vol 44 no. 1, pp 15-35

Selman, P (1998): Local Agenda 21: Substance or Spin? In: Journal of Environmental Planning and Management, vol 41, no 55, 533- 553

***Sh**ort, J (1999): Urban imaginers: Boosterism and the representation of cities. In: A. Jonas and D Wilson (eds):* [The urban growth machine: Critical perspectives two decades later](#) *Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press., pp 37-54*

Söderbaum, F and Shaw, T (eds 2002): Theories of new regionalism: a Palgrave reader. Houndsmill-Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Storper, M (1997): Territories, Flows and Hierarchies in the Global Economy. In: K Cox (ed): Spaces of Globalization. New York: Guilford Press. Ch 1, pp 19-44

Tammemagi, H (2008): Progressive Portland – A Model for Smart Growth with many Lessons. In: *Vancouver Sun*, 21 Oct 2008. Available under http://www2.canada.com/vancouversun/features/going_green/story.html, accessed 2 April 2012

Tomaney, J and Ward, K (2000): England and the `New Regionalism'. In: Regional Studies, vol 34, no 5, pp 471-478

Trade Development Alliance of Greater Seattle (c 2001): Greater Seattle. An Innovation Region in the Global Economy. Unpublished booklet

While, A; Jonas, A and Gibbs, D (2004): The Environment and the Entrepreneurial City: Searching for the Urban `Sustainability Fix' in Manchester and Leeds. In: International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, vol 28, no 3, pp 549-569

Whitehead, M (2007): Spaces of Sustainability, London: Routledge

1
2

1