City Regions, Polycentricity and the Construction of Peripheralities Through Governance

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Abstract:

City regions have become a key paradigm in current academic debates and with them the notion of network—based, polycentric spaces. They have moved to the foreground of national (and EU) policies of creating economic 'champions' for successful national economies. No longer is such success perceived as being equal everywhere across a territory. Instead, economic and policy spaces are being subdivided into 'corridors of connectivity' and city-regional 'nodes' as key elements of a network-defined space. The nodes are loci of bundled, variably 'thick' connectivities. This paper argues that instead of contiguous economic territories as spatial 'containers', these are now becoming increasingly subdivided into bundles of separate linear territories, leaving 'in between' much less well connected, effectively marginalised spaces and actors, whose access to power and policy-making capacity is much more limited. The result is a reinforced, perpetuated inequality in opportunities, with regionalisation in danger of creating more divisions and boundaries, rather than less.

Key Words:

City regions, polycentric, network, marginalisation, peripherality

Introduction: City regions, network corridors and marginality through exclusion.

Increasingly today, a competitiveness-driven growing focus on cities and city regions is propagated as the most effective approach to spatial development policies, as reflected in a lively debate (Porter, 2000; Raco, 1999; Cox, 1997; Porter, 2000; Swyngedouw, 2000, 2004; MacLeod, 2002). As part of that, cooperation between local actors is argued by those advocating a new regionalist agenda (Cox 1997; Paroled 2003; Whitehead 2003) to be the necessary answer to globalisation-induced pressures for greater competitiveness. By the same token, more recent comments have challenged the salience of linking cooperation with competitiveness in such a normative way (Kantor, 2008). Conventionally, higher tier governments tended to establish 'regions' as part of their own managerial (top-down) agendas, not necessarily listening to the regions affected, especially when part of hierarchical planning regimes. There are, however, important implications of such a selectively localising approach to spatial economic development. Variations in connectivity of places and actors circumscribe the scope for participating in a network of competitors, as they shape and reflect variations in comparative attractiveness. Different degrees of connectivity also shape the scope for having access to, and participating in, policy-making networks and their impact on formulating policy agendas. This difference creates new, and manifests old, hierarchies of connectivity and access to, and relevance in, decision-making processes. What we are seeing, therefore, is the emergence of networks constructed of variably intense connections and thus differing reach and economic and political relevance. They may be overlapping and overlaying, with some 'nodes', that is end points of connections - be they localities, organisations or personalities - attracting and/or maintaining

access to more networks than others. The density of such connections defines a node's centrality and thus its scope and relevance in shaping agendas and outcomes.

The current emphasis on cities as economic nodes reinforces the view of networks stretching through space, where space is perceived as largely represented by these networks, with all else being 'in between'. There is little concern, it seems, about the connectivity of those 'in between spaces', and thus, their likely economic opportunities. Instead, they are presumed to benefit from secondary 'trickle down' effects, irrespective of whether they are inside or outside of urban (metropolitan) spaces. The whole process seems essentially pro-cyclical, creating stronger cores and weaker spaces in between them. The result can be compared to an 'inverse Swiss cheese', that is a perforation of territory by nodes, acting as centres of policy making and decision making, which are connected by thin, even invisible relationships, leaving the unconnected spaces 'in between' with no obvious access to policy-making and communication networks. This manifests and perpetuates the status quo of who is 'in' and who is 'out' of the competition for achieving better economic opportunity and development. And this again sets the parameters for the nature of local agendas, the composition and relevance of actors, the quality, reach and effectiveness of alliances, and the types and creativity of networks. Given such unevenness in likely scope and opportunity, even within the same socio-political and economic system, questions arise about potential response strategies of those finding themselves marginalised by belonging to an 'in between space'. How do theses response strategies compare to those developed in the centres?

The question now is whether this dual process of separation (potentially disintegration) and coordination and (re-)integration can be brought together and, indeed, co-exist as the basis of economically and socio-politically sustainable regional development: localised centrality with marginality 'in between'? Can city regions as the currently 'fashionable' focus of spatial development policies, as exemplified by the European Spatial Development Perspective, provide an answer to that conundrum between the localising - atomising effects of pursuing competitiveness, and maintaining regional and local cohesion across territories? Does its favoured concept of the polycentric city region offer a compromise between the conflicting agendas of heightened competitiveness through localised 'excellence' on the one hand, and broader spatial harmonisation and counteracting of inequalities as a social agenda, on the other? Can a polycentric system offer a more egalitarian, or, at least, less imbalanced, and thus more sustainable framework for economic development policy than is likely when concentrating growth on a few big metropolitan centres and leaving all else waiting for any 'trickle down'? The signs are, as Faludi (2003) observes, that primary attention is being given to the building of city regions as champions of national economic competitiveness, and the role of associational responses by individual neighbouring municipalities in aiding that process (Herrschel and Newman, 2002, Salet et al, 2003). However, much less interest is shown in the effects these concentrations of interest and political resources and ambitions have on wider spatial development and the scope for maintaining a more balanced and thus ultimately more sustainable development of contiguous territories - including nodes, networks and 'in between' areas.

Competitiveness – inserting local agendas into the regional scale: City Regions as the new 'champions'

Paasi (2006) observes that globalisation of corporate economic activity has resulted in a continued concentration of economic activities on fewer, bigger metropolitan areas, with a growing discrepancy between those that benefit, and those that don't. This is because those

that benefit from this concentration process gain further advantage and extend their centrality. This pro-cyclical process operates at the local, but also intra- and inter-local scale - that is neighbourhood and regional levels. Thus, while much of the current debate on regionalisation is pitted against the background of inter-local collaboration to produce 'strategic geographies' (see also Kantor, 2008) in the attempt to match governance spaces to economic territorial dynamics (Herrschel 2009), much less attention is given to the wider implications of such a selective, localised agenda. Yet there may be fundamental negative side-effects through exclusions from the advocated new form of network-based governance,, with their implicit varying geographies of centres and marginalised peripheries in between.

Networks and their characteristics and functioning have attracted attention from both sociologists and economists, although both approach the topic from quite different starting points. While economists have focused on networks from a strategic, managerial business perspective, driven by an economic rationality, sociologists have focused more on the personality factor and the circumstance within which actors are situated and, subsequently, make their decisions (see e.g. Burger and Buskens, 2009). As Couldry (2004) points out, "entities (whether human or institutional) within those networks acquire power through the number, extensiveness and stability of the connections routed through them and through not much else. Paraphrasing Amin and Thrift's (1995) term of 'institutional thickness', perhaps we could refer to a 'communicative thickness'. Communication links - physical and informational - are contingent and emerge historically, and in case of leading to a successful network, this becomes a force of 'nature' itself, shaping actors and agencies in their objectives and behaviours. The result, as it is viewed by Actor Network Theory, is a symbiotic relationship between network and the composite actors as nodes. The network depends on the power, influence and effectiveness of the participants and, in return, shapes (that is strengthens or inhibits) an actor's scope for effective policy making. There has been some discussion about the essence of an ANT, focusing on its on the one hand integrated, systemic, organising/organised nature (Silverstone 1994) and, on the other, its more open, ad hoc and personality-based sociological characteristics as a 'network' (Law, 1999). This reflects a difference in emphasis on the underlying impromptu nature of networks, which changes with the characteristics, *modi operandi* and objectives of the participating members. Their agendas, at a particular time, are thus expected to shape the network which, in turn, will circumscribe the scope and likely agendas for the actors. The question then is, how responsive to changing conditions and circumstance a network is, and what scope there is for actors to join and leave as objectives and conditions change. Will those shaping the network allow newcomers to join and, potentially, 'upset' the established balance of power and ways of doing things within it?

With attention directed to the virtues of informal (network-based) relationships in metropolitanised governance (Kantor 2008), it is the societal-political dimension of accepting and reinforcing 'core' and 'margin' that needs to be considered as well, not merely geographic distance and accessibility. Communicative 'distance' between agencies and other actors matter, and these are not necessarily a function of geographic distance, but also of organisational arrangements, political affinities and personal and institutional connections. These emerging and changing "geographies of centrality and marginality" (Paasi, 2006, p 194) will inevitably create new boundaries and borders, inclusions and exclusions between those who are 'inside' and those who are 'outside' the relevant networks - be they whole localities or individual neighbourhoods, organisations or personalities. Network communication-defined spaces thus go beyond physical connectivities (infrastructure) and include linkages between and within institutions and other actors.

In an idealised world, urban-rural connectivities would be based on complimentary interests (Johansson, 2002) - and the recognition of those - but in reality, this may not necessarily be the case. In those instances, where areas and places are outside the primary network between the urban centres, they will find themselves with a weaker bargaining position, potentially being ignored, 'shut out' or marginalised. And this can also happen even within metropolitan regions - if actors and their agendas are deemed of little interest or benefit to the goals and agendas of the key policy makers who are part of, and shape, the dominant policy-making network. Not all actors - be they places, organisations or individuals - will therefore possess the same opportunities of access to political networks and decision making. Nevertheless, the polycentric model, given its usually larger number of 'cores', is seen by policy makers as less likely to be exclusive, because of it reduces imbalances between dominant cities 'and the rest'. Polycentricity may thus be more likely to produce a better balance between the conventional social task of a more egalitarian form of regional development and an inherently more selective economic competitiveness (Meijers, 2008).

City regions, 'new regionalism' and 'spaces of flows'

The current financial and economic crisis is reconfiguring the relationship between state and capital, seemingly questioning some of the assumptions made about the nature and processes of globalisation, especially those of a weakening of the state *vis-à-vis* other actors (Jessop, 1997), and, as part of that, its territoriality (also referred to as 'territorial trap', see Agnew 1994; Paasi 2003). Furthermore, these often rather uncritical assumptions may now be questioned in their presumption of a seemingly near automatic continual shift towards a form of governance that involves a growing number of players at the expense of the role of government (Kettl, 2002). Yet, as has recently become evident, the state is more than *primus inter pares* (Goodwin and Painter, 1996; Jessop, 1995 and, 1998; MacLeod and Goodwin 1999; Herrschel and Newman 2002; Reynaert, 2008).

Conventionally, regions have been part of a hierarchy of bounded territories (Leitner, 1997; Leitner et al, 2002 ; Paasi, 2002), although more recently, they have increasingly included loose alliances around actor networks (Clegg, 1997) which were brought together by shared policy objectives (Herrschel 2005, 2009). In this 'new' sub-national regionalism, economic pressures are considered to be the main drivers of these changes, pushing for cooperation between localities across jurisdictional and administration- internal departmental borders, especially in city-regions (see Barnes and Ledebur, 1998). Yet it still does not seem entirely clear whether, following actor network thinking (Lagendijk and Cornford, 2000), actors are shaped by their own action(s) in their ways of doing things. This could mean both a further (defensive) entrenchment in set ways *vis-à-vis* emerging new actors in the policy-making arena, in a bid to preserve influence, or, alternatively, positive engagement with new players in the search for new ways of defining and implementing specific policy agendas.

Castells (1989) argues that city regions have become the main points of reference in a globalisation and knowledge-driven 'new spatial logic'. This involves dynamic, continuous change, reduced importance of administrative spatial entities, variable collaborative arrangements as drivers of economic and political (and social) spatialities and a growing reliance on communicative social-political networks and connections. As in much of this debate, the economy was seen as 'natural' driver of spatial organisation and related challenges to find 'matching' governance (despite all the 'fluidity'). Shortly afterwards, Sassen (1991) further emphasised the dominant, crucial role of cities by pointing to their 'new strategic role' in economic development and policy. But how are these 'nodes' related to the remaining spaces in between? Can these be more than mere 'background noise'?

This notion was implied by Castells (1996), when he refers to the contrast between the new concept of regions and city regions as 'spaces of flows', rather than the conventional (geographic) perception of territory as contiguous 'space of places'. There is thus a shift from understanding territory as a (fixed, permanent) localisation of places to the (new) idea of spaces being defined and held together by networked linearity with 3-dimensional 'bits' left in between. There is thus the suggestion of linear spaces that matter, and 'the rest' in between, that matters much less so. A few years later, adding to that notion of an effectively discriminatory, elitist spatial development, Taylor (2004) (similar to Sassen's (2007) concept of Mega City Regions), argued that the proclaimed World City Network as top level international 'aspatial' network *explicitly* focuses on a few big metropolitan nodes. There seems little evident concern for the many spaces away from those elite networks' corridors of communication.

With global city regions (Sassen, 2006; Sassen ed 2002;   Scott, 2001) seen as beacons of the greatest city-regional capacity and potential economic success, there is growing evidence of changing *economic* geographies with continued discriminatory localised differentiation between 'winners' and 'losers' in the "flexibly networked production systems" (Scott 1999) that define economic and, in response to that, governance spatialities (Herrschel, 2009). These new spatialities, fragmented by a multitude of linear spaces (i.e. 'corridors of communication') reflect a growing trend towards '*regionalised localisation*' and increasingly virtual and non-contiguous policy-making spaces (Herrschel, 2009; Allen et al 1998; Heeg et al 2003). These constructs operate at the regional scale and function as a dynamic, continuously re-adjusting, framework for the location and connection of these locally-rooted nodes of political interaction and communication. The underlying (actual or perceived) pressure to seek maximum competitiveness thus essentially reinforces 'atomised' variabilities and inequalities in opportunities. These can be found in a multitude of intersecting and overlaying networks, nodes and linkages between actors and decision makers - be they localities, agencies or individuals. Yet this fragmentation undermines the coherence and contiguity of regional spaces. And this may well contradict (see Kantor 2008) the perception of 'new regionalism' **(**Keating, 1998; MacLeod, 2002**)** as a mechanism to connect individual spaces to a larger, and thus more powerful and convincing, spatial economic and policy-making entity.

Such an inherently cooperative arrangement allows a combination of both - maintaining existing governmental structures with their associated clearly defined portfolios of power, responsibilities and, crucially for effective policy making, finances, while simultaneously engaging in varying, goal-driven, informal arrangements which define a region through the territories represented by the participating actors. Such, in effect, virtual spaces of governance (Herrschel, 2007, 2009) permit actors to join and leave without having to surrender powers or being tied in institutionally by high exit barriers. Instead, networks and linkages between actors, whether institutions, organisations or individuals, define hierarchies of relevance and influence in terms of defining and setting a policy agenda. Kantor (2008) refers to such more open and, importantly, not permanently binding, arrangements as 'coordination'. Their main feature is an absence of "formalized alliances and programs" (ibid p 114), and the underlying driver is, essentially, local self-interest, the pursuit of which makes collaborative policy coordination seem opportune at the time. The regional dimension such collaboration takes is then more an incidental 'side-effect' than specific policy objective. It is the "tacit recognition [by actors] of mutual governmental interests that become institutionalized to sustain patterns of policy convergence" (ibid p115), without, so Kantor (2008) continues, the costliness of forging formalised political arrangements which may, of course, be overtaken by the dynamism of economic development. Such 'virtual region building' is entirely pragmatic and goal driven, without any need for institutional

rearrangements which are often too cumbersome in their development to be adequately responsive and may well lead to the emergence of new entrenchments and thus loss of responsiveness and, ultimately, relevance.

Kantor (2008) distinguishes between three types of political coordination at the regional level in a liberal market democracy, based on the diversity of actor interests and the macro-political (primarily national) context (ibid p 116). The degree to which shared and agreed policy agendas can bundle otherwise diverse actor interests, and to which macro-political (that is primarily national) contexts allow policy responses to be formulated, coordinated and collaboratively implemented, are affirmed as key factors in regionalisation at the metropolitan scale. Is there scope for such ad hoc 'competitive networks' to be built in response to the spatial scale of tasks found purely on a collaborative understanding? And what is the role for the wider policy-making framework? Could a more coercive, centralised system be more effective in cases where there are too many players or diverse interests to allow a shared agenda as 'rallying point' to emerge? Within the European Union, the varying arrangements among EU member states for sub-national governance provide differing operational scope for the development of, and effective policy making by, city-regional networks. And this, again, shapes the scope for implementing the wider, harmonising yet also competitiveness-oriented goals of the ESDP. While it advocates a polycentric city network across Europe (Trans European Network) in the interest of seeking more balanced spatial development prospects, it also seeks to foster dynamic and competitive cities and city regions.

The increasingly variable, essentially modular, yet also localised nature of economic and socio-political spaces becomes particularly evident in global city regions (Hall, 2001), as they represent the highest order of centrality which is expressed in their greatest 'communicative thickness' and thus connectedness. This, in turn leads to the greatest variety and density of potential layers of intra-regional and inter-regional networks and 'corridors of communication'. Depending on the number of policy agendas acting as foci of networks, there may be layers of different networks, each with its own scalar dimension and degree of centrality. As Sassen (2007) points out, it is the Mega City Regions that possess the scale and capacity to include several agglomeration economies as sub-regional specialised clusters. Contrasting with such concentration of economic localisation and communicative control, does polycentricity, that is a 'grid of nodes' (Sassen, 2001), offer a more mediated, even egalitarian' alternative? Could they be more accessible to new actors who may want to participate as a means of overcoming exclusion and marginalisation? Given their less narrowly concentrated clustering of network access points (nodes), could polycentric city regions offer a more balanced and less divisive framework for regional economic policy than more concentrated and unequal mono-centric network strictures? In any case, however, as pointed out by Florida et al (2008), it is human capital externalities (face-to-face contacts) that continue to shape and underpin agglomerations, despite technologically feasible dispersal and spread of economic activity. Whether it is the creative class, as he postulates, or generally inter-personal connections, that shape network building and operation, the vagaries of such connectivities make networked policy making much more unpredictable than a firmly structured and bureaucratised arrangement.

Polycentricity – Duality of Internal and External Connectivities and Separateness

The main argument of this paper focuses on the urban 'cores' and their connectivity through 'corridors of communication' which create, and cut through, marginalised surrounding 'peripheralities'. This understanding borrows from the concern with firms and their production and supply networks and strategies, and their functioning as the backbones of polycentric

city regions. But there is more to the shaping of polycentric city regions and their diversity than strategic business networks alone, because other actor networks in the political sphere, for instance, contribute their own patchwork of 'corridors of connectivity'. Two main scalar perspectives of polycentric city regions may be distinguished: (1) the external, regional perspective, focusing on the inter-regional scale of connectivity, and (2) the internal perspective and its concern with uneven development, divisions and marginalities within a region and, especially, locality. This scalar duality reflects the somewhat vague nature and conceptualisation of polycentricity, leading to a situation where "polycentricity means different things to different people (Davoudi 2003). And Eskelinen and Fritsch (2009), also point to the conceptual challenges the extension of the, at first local (intra-urban), concept to higher spatial scales brings. There is also an urban and non-urban dimension to it, with the former referred to as Polycentric Urban Regions (PURs, see Bailey and Turok, 2001), possessing a clear inter-metropolitan perspective (Dieleman and Faludi, 2001), while the latter refers to rural and peripheral areas. PURs may be understood as a region with at least two urban centres with good connections through which they share the provision of key urban functions. Both types of polycentric regions may reach across spatial scales, from the sub-local (intra-urban) scale to the international (European, global) level. Nevertheless, irrespective of the particular scale, there is a clear locally-centred perspective, acknowledging (and seemingly accepting) that there are spaces 'outside' the PURs that will not be addressed. This is because they are not connected to the various nodes or centres - either directly, or indirectly, through secondary links to the main network connecting the urban centres in a region. The weaker these links, the more disconnected and thus marginalised in terms of policy making capacity and economic competitiveness these 'outside' spaces will be. The more urban centres there are, the denser the network of connections and thus the better the prospects for non-urban areas to find access to the policy-making inter-urban network. By the same token, a greater number of urban centres may mean a lower degree of overall centrality and connectivity to other regions and beyond. A larger number of urban centres may thus mean a compromise between on the one hand striving for highest connectivity in the pursuit of greatest competitiveness, reachable only to a small number of cities seeking to operate at the national and international arenas of political-economic developments and sources of capital, while leaving behind in the process 'their' regions as little more than 'background containers' of 'lesser' networks. On the other hand, in contrast, polycentricity may avoid the stark discrepancies between a few well connected and competitive urban centres and a big 'rest' that remains marginalised and excluded from access to policy-making avenues.

The city-focused network perspective finds one example in the concept of C2C , that is city-to-city, cooperation, an acronym introduced by Nigel Ringrose (UNDP 2000 - in: Tjandradrewi, Habitat international, 33, 2009, 165-172). This refers to political linkages and relationships between cities at different spatial scales, trans-national to sub-national, "based on mutuality and equity" for "mutual benefit". And this includes links between the developed and developing world (as stated by UN-HABITAT in 2002), reflecting the view that only cities really matter even at this global scale of the space economy. All else is presumed largely invisible and irrelevant, because it is "networking between cities [that] is generally seen as the most effective way to strengthen cities' capacity to solve major environmental and social problems, deliver urban services to its residents and develop effective urban governance and management structures" (Tjandradrewi, 2009, p 166). So. it is not surprising to find urban networks increasingly dominating the policy agenda and debate, such as the UK's core cities network, the Europe-wide urban network, or CITYNET, an Asian regional urban network established to address shared challenges of rapid urbanisation.

In Britain, the Core Cities Initiative suggests an ongoing belief in rather more elitist structures

with few but highly competitive, internationally connected urban nodes. Being widely *connected*, and being seen to be so, has become an expression of 'success' and relevance in shaping the path for future development. And this includes EU policy agendas which seem to accept localised inequalities in development potentials as a price worth paying for improved economic prospects. This seems to abandon conventional regional development goals with their inherent notion of contiguous territories and a concern with improving their economic development as a whole in the pursuit of 'balanced' development prospects and opportunities. For instance, the EUs URBACT II urban network tries to negotiate between urban and non-urban spaces by pursuing both 'old' and 'new' objectives. While on the one hand there is a continued concern with working towards greater cohesion, on the other, the strategy seeks to enhance urban competitiveness. This approach is illustrated by the cover to the brochure 'Regions for Economic Change - Networking for Results (EC, Brussels 16-17 Feb 09). As part of that, city-to-city networking is actively encouraged as the best way forward to achieve greater economic competitiveness in a global setting and for specified competitive industries. Not directly involved spaces are expected to benefit for some 'trickle down'. This strategy seems a bit like trying to 'square the circle' by advocating two agendas that seem essentially mutually exclusive: balancing social, economic and environmental development (Eskelinen and Fritsch, 2009), while also accepting, albeit implicitly, competitive differences and uneven prospects for urban and non-urban spaces.

Following the urban competitiveness agenda, the search for new forms of collaborative, flexible and network-based (non-institutionalised) regionalisation may well entrench old, and create new, exclusions and marginalisations. While on the one hand such a 'new regionalist' (Keating, 1998; MacLeod, 2002) perspective helps enhance economic competitiveness through improved international visibility of economic spaces, it does not necessarily do so for all places and actors 'contained' within it. With such 'spaces' defined by networks and connections between actors, rather than boundaries drawn around territories as complete, integral entities, the existence and quality of connectivities will define the degree to which individual actors (places, organisations, individuals) are able to 'attach themselves' to such a 'virtual region' (Herrschel, 2009), and participate in its policies. This is inherently unpredictable in scope and outcome and makes planning and policy objectives much more difficult to put into practice, especially at a geographically broader, less highly localised level.

Conclusions: Network regions, polycentricity and the creation of marginalities

Concern about economic (global) competitiveness drives an increasingly localised city-focused policy agenda at national and EU levels, threatening a dissolution of wider policy spaces, such as regions, in favour of more narrowly defined network constructs. The nature of networks places emphasis on narrow, inherently linear operating linkages between nodes (actors), rather encompassing two-dimensional territories. The scope to belong to a *network* as a strategic objective is quite different from the so far much more spatially driven territorially-based approach, where the location of an individual actor in an area also means automatically belonging to it. In contrast, by their very nature, `networks cannot cover a space in an even manner. Instead, they subdivide a space into separate 'corridors of connectivity', separated by 'left out' areas in between. These in-between spaces, their size and number depending on the density of actor nodes (organisations, localities) network connections, reflect new, or reinforced old, divisions between the 'included' and 'excluded'. And this, again, creates new marginalities on the basis of access to power structures, policy-making processes and agenda-setting possibilities. Geography, of course, continues to matter, as it circumscribes developmental prospects *per se,* whether economy or environment, for instance. But there are further, more detailed, sharper differentiations that

operate through socio-political relationships and linkages, and create variable and potentially volatile and unpredictable inclusions and exclusions based on actor-related (based) communication links. While physical infrastructure in its varying presence immediately translates into a public perception of difference in accessibility -usually expressed as distance costs (Copus 2001) -, social-political connectivities are much less obvious. They are thus more difficult to gauge and predict in their likely impact. They are also much less easy to alter or, indeed, utilise.

While physical infrastructure can be modified through investment, thereby altering perceptions of distance and thus marginality, connectivities between political and economic actors are much more difficult to influence and observe. In contrast to physical infrastructure, they may also seek to actively protect the status quo with all its inclusions and exclusions, as they may suit the incumbents' agendas. Other actors - places, organisations, individuals - may thus find it difficult to join, so as not to upset the existing relationships and balances of power negotiated between those actors who are already part of the network and functioning as nodes. Different strategies may thus be required for new entrants to join existing networks and thus overcome their exclusion from, and marginality to, them. A more polycentric arrangement, may offer a greater variety of 'corridors of communication', with correspondingly more access points, than a more localised structure where the respective city's interests and perspectives may well go 'its' region, living it and its actors disconnected and 'left behind'. These differences require further, detailed study to gain a better understanding of response strategies, mechanisms and roles, and the capabilities of different types of actors to move between, and join/establish new, networks to pursue their goals both in polycentric and monocentric (urban) regions. What type of actors are more likely to lead, what to follow by seeking to join (and fit in with) existing actor networks? Who tends to be more cooperative and who more competitive? And does the scale of operation and ambition matter?

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