

# **Cities, Suburbs and Metropolitan Areas - Governing the Regionalised City**

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Published in: Mark Clapson and Ray Hutchison (eds): *Suburbanisation in Global Society*. Series: Research in Urban Sociology, Volume 10. London:Emerald

Keywords: Fragmenting territory; agenda-based linkages; networks between city, suburb and region; Europe

Cities, especially of the metropolitan scale, have increasingly gained in importance as foci and drivers of economic development and competitiveness at national and international level. Using a somewhat broad and generalised understanding of 'city', such an urban focus is propagated as the most effective approach to economic development policies (Porter, 2000; Cox, 1997; Raco, 1999; Swyngedouw, 2004; MacLeod, 2002). Implicitly, from their external perspective, such arguments concentrate on the central cities as visible foci of their respective urban areas, with their town halls and other cultural and institutional places of policy-making. The suburban areas, by contrast, and, certainly, those spaces between the cities, fade into the background. They are merely included as 'natural' extensions of the core cities, rather than actors in their own right, and as such are deemed to benefit from their belonging to, functional integration with, or merely geographic proximity to, an urban region. From that perspective, the spaces outside the urban cores fade into the background, and their policy makers with them. Yet, their interests, agendas and priorities may differ from those of the central city, including the benefits of involvement in a regional agenda. Their perspectives may differ not just from those of other suburban areas within a metropolitan area, but also, and in particular, from those of the core city (in monocentric city regions) or several core cities in the case of polycentric city regions. They may also differ from those areas on the edges of, or in-between, such urban regions.

In addition, for some interests, there may be more common ground with local areas beyond any one metropolitan area. Suburbs may look beyond 'their' central cities to other suburban localities elsewhere, with which they share common problems, ambitions and agendas. The picture thus, as discussed here, is more complex than the term 'metropolitan area' may suggest at first: it goes beyond a mere geographic understanding and includes a range of varying, topic-specific, policy-driven, linkages within and across the spatial scales of sub-local to regional. Territory clearly matters (Healey, 2000), even if the boundaries of such regionally 'scaled-up' (Herrschel, 2005) urban areas remain somewhat fuzzy. They vary with the internal dynamics of a city regions and its changing position (role) in the wider economic landscape.

Rather than hierarchical governmental arrangements, debates on city regions revolve around their dynamic aspects, that is functional relationships and policy networks between actors at local and city-regional level. Such networks, as discussed below, create a different spatiality than that of the conventional notion of space as a contiguous territory defined by a surrounding boundary: linear, spatially selective and policy defined. This translates into clear distinctions between those that are part of the system and those that are not - be they localities, organisations or individual personalities. The result is a sharp and varying distinction between 'core' and 'periphery' through the lens of specific policy agendas. This follows the distribution of social and communicative connections. As agendas are achieved, or change, so do once established policy networks and thus the inclusion or exclusion of actors. Some suburban areas may play a more visible and influential role in a metropolitan area than others for some policy issue, while others move to the foreground of policy making for other agendas. The picture is thus one of flux in the role and engagement of different elements of urban regions - city, suburb, semi-rural periphery.

This paper contains three main sections: the first discusses suburbanisation as the underlying process of city regionalisation in Europe, and the shifting balances between urban core and suburban areas in terms of 'weight' in a city region. The second looks at the concept of city regions as spatial and functional construct, as well as policy-making entity (governance). The third section examines the implications of new forms and mechanisms of city-regional governance, especially the shift from a territorially to an agenda-driven, network-based rationale of 'city region', using illustrative examples. This includes a shifting inclusion and exclusion of actors and localities, with varying degrees of marginalisation and the creation of 'in between' spaces.

### **Suburbs and the extension of the city into the city-region.**

Since the 1950s, and the steadily growing mobility of people and production (economic activity) as a result of the shift to road traffic, especially in North America, suburban areas have grown rapidly as residential areas and places of (post-industrial) economic activity (Hoffmann-Axthelm, 1998). People moved from 'the country' and, especially, the established central cities to the more spacious and cheaply to develop peripheral locations. In Europe, differences have emerged on the basis of established planning law and thus availability of land for development, and of historic legacies in the relationship between 'city' and 'country'. Thus, for instance while in Germany cities were distinctly separate from their surrounding areas in legal terms and land ownership, in Italy, cities have been viewed as 'owning' or controlling the surrounding areas to the extent that these are subservient to the cities' developmental needs (Heitkamp, 1998).

Conditions are different again in post-communist eastern Europe. There, the legacy of state authoritarianism and developmentalist communist party-controlled planned economies, created an environment that provided very specific conditions for market-led western-style urban development. Especially, under the initial

uncertainties and vacuum in legislation, the only gradually emerging formulation of new paradigms and political agendas and priorities in the early years of post-communist transition, a weak development control system provided more 'North American' than western European conditions for neo-liberal, speculatively driven development. This resulted in extensive out-of-town developments for retail and distribution, especially along the main arterial roads between urban areas. Western developers and retail chains knew how to exploit the absence of clear planning rules and the initial, perhaps somewhat naive, euphoria about any form of influx of expressions of western ways of life. At the same time, the legacy of run-down, dilapidated old city cores with unclear property ownership, and a concentration of large sections of the urban population in massive high-rise, prefabricated concrete housing estates built under communism in the peripheries of cities, surrounded by sections of 'in between open land', attracted rapid and expansive, architecturally unimaginative developments among and between the existing socialist era suburban fabric of high-rise estates (Christ, 1998).

The result has been North American-style strip development on the edges of existing cities and towns, geared to the car-based customer. This diverts such central functions from the gradually regenerated, often rather Disneyfied, historic built environment in the city centres. This, then, limits the scope for the established cities and towns to re-establish a sufficient functional relevance to act as a sustainable economic base for their competitive standing, let alone expansion. In addition, a growing number of residents living on the housing estates move to the sprawling new developments of detached dwellings on the edges of villages in the urban peripheries. This adds to a further dispersion of urban life and function, leading to a clear shift in the power balance between city core and suburbanising periphery. This creates a growing mismatch between a traditional perception, certainly in Europe, of the city centres being the hubs of an urban area's functionality and centrality, and the surrounding hinterland being the 'supplement', providing auxiliary roles. This shift, exacerbated by fiscal regimes that reward *local* 'success' in attracting business activity and/or dwellers, such as in the Berlin metropolis (Hauswirth et al, 2004), raises questions about the internal dynamics in city regions (metropolitan areas). What is the role of policy making when considering the balance between local agendas and those of the functional urban region as a whole?

Such shifting balances in fiscal capacity, and thus the scope to define and, most importantly, implement local policies, have become widespread in western cities, being particularly stark in North America. De-industrialising, economically declining and socially selectively depopulating older city centres with ageing infrastructure face increasingly stiff competition from younger, more affluent and economically growing suburbs. Not surprisingly, these are increasingly reluctant to play 'second fiddle' to the established old city cores in urban regions, even though those cities provide the name and, important for an external audience (Herrschel, 2005), recognition factor for the whole region. This may provide cause for resentment and envy, and undermine scope for developing a more comprehensive, less localist perspective as pre-condition for more concerted efforts in adopting a city-regional perspective with associated tailor-made, supportive policies. Localism is never far away, and the aspiring suburbs want their newly gained economic power and status recognised

and translated into political influence within 'their' wider city region. Effectively, they ask for a new hand of cards in the allocated local roles and positions within a metropolitan area, challenging the historic pre-eminence of the old urban core. In some instances, especially in North America, such as in the greater Vancouver region in western Canada, the former suburbs, such as Surrey, have overtaken the city Vancouver's population of around half a million, with steadily growing numbers and an equally growing economy. There is thus fierce competition for political influence within the city region, with the 'new kid on the block' referring to its population size and underlying growth rates as justification for challenging established power relationships in the region.

Inevitably, and unsurprisingly, these dynamics and shifts in economic relevance and perceived democratic legitimacy through a broadened voter base, shape the framework for, and dynamics of, city region-wide governance. Such shifts include the roles and of actors and the 'reach' of their influence within the city region, and here especially the role, visibility and assertiveness of the suburban 'hinterland'. New alliances may be drawn up, established ones terminated, and actors gain or lose in influence. The result is a shifting balance between being included in, excluded from, or simply ignored by, policy networks and their actors, creating new peripheralities and exclusions, or abandoning established ones. This leads to the creation of 'in-between spaces and actors' - such as manifested in the concept of 'in-between cities' ('Zwischenstadt', see Sieverts 1998), or 'edge cities' (see Garreau, 1991), or exopolis (after Soja, 1992). These new, emerging spaces gain in relevance within city regions and seek to join the main actor networks - at least for day-to-day business. This corresponds to the shifting balance in social, economic and functional terms between the different elements of a city region and, subsequently shapes their inter-relationships and policy agendas. These follow specific, distinctly local interests and objectives, and may, as part of that, lead to the by-passing or exclusion of municipalities with which there are fewer common interests, irrespective of a shared spatial proximity. Separateness and divisions can also be found at the sub-local level, such as illustrated by gated communities which seek to build fortress-like housing blocks as protected enclaves of higher social status within areas of rather less well-to-do residents established in the wider neighbourhood.

Suburbs may thus no longer be presumed - from an outside perspective - to be almost automatically subsumed under the spatial and functional umbrella of the central city. Thus, while those advocating new (city-) regionalism (Cox 1997; Whitehead 2003) to provide part of the answer to globalisation-induced pressures for greater competitiveness, more recent comments have challenged the salience of linking cooperation with competitiveness in such a normative way (Kantor, 2008). In fact, spatially defined city regions may in fact not want to be viewed as one entity, nor would they seek to become one, but rather maintain distinct differences and separateness.

### **Governance, city regions and suburbs: Part of territory or policy-networks**

The beginnings of a more urban-focused perspective can be seen in the late 1980s

when the EU undertook a series of studies of European cities. This work located cities in regional contexts but also sought to analyse specifically urban factors that made some cities more successful than others (Parkinson et al 1991). Urban analysis drew on different academic traditions to regional studies and in particular sought explanation of relationships between government and other actors as part of 'urban governance' and the attempt, for example, to build 'growth coalitions' to maximise local development potential and opportunities, including 'boosterist' urban policy (Short et al, 1993). Understanding changing European space and governance includes both an urban and a regional dimension. Cities are now seen as the motors of regional economies (Hall, 1998) driven by new forms of governance which seek to respond to the competitive pressures generated by globalisation.

An important part of this argument is the proposition that cities and regions have increasingly become economic spaces and actors in their own right, with some commentators seeing their disconnection from their national contexts (Scott, 2001, and Barnes and Ledebur, 1998). This has sharpened the focus on cities not merely as localities, but as locations that reach out into the region in a symbiotic, yet also contested and competitive relationship. The significant impact of global economic change is therefore at the regional scale with core cities as economic drivers situated in functionally related regional clusters which, again, are part of national and international economic and political networks. The notion is thus not so much one of fixed, bounded and clearly defined territories surrounding a core city as 'hinterland', but rather a fuzzy, variable and network-defined spatial back cloth that merely locates agenda-driven collaborative relationship between actors.

Keating (1997) emphasizes the importance of understanding relations between actors at varying scales, including city regions in all their scalar vagueness. A weakness in the network approach is a tendency to identify and map network connections between governmental levels or between public and private sectors, while paying less attention to the varying 'weight' of different interests and their abilities to gain influence, or resist the danger of losing influence and becoming marginalised and peripheralised. Some networks and some network members will be more powerful than others, and this can change over time and with shifting policy agendas. Institutional hierarchies are being supplanted by network forms of governance and negotiations between interests of different actors - be these localities, organisations or social groups and personalities. It is this broadening out of actors that marks out the concept of governance. While the concept of government concentrates on governing hierarchies and formal decision making, governance points to horizontal networks of influence, intergovernmental negotiation and cooperation, and the blurring of public and private boundaries in negotiating and defining policies. Governance can be seen not as a means of control but as an "attempt to manage and regulate difference" (Kearns and Paddison 2000, p 847). There is thus a distinct managerial undertone. The concept is applied at both city and regional levels, and the focus is on the challenges of identifying and negotiating shared interests as the basis of - temporary - cooperation. And governance covering a territory is the sum of such negotiated collaboration and the underlying linkages between actors.

Governance with such an inherently cooperative arrangement allows a combination of both - maintaining existing governmental structures with their associated clearly defined portfolios of power, responsibility 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. They may join or leave without having to surrender powers or being tied in institutionally with high exit barriers. Instead, networks and linkages between actors, whether institutions, organisations or individual persons, 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" (p 114), and the underlying driver is, essentially, a 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. Kantor (2008) distinguishes between three types of political coordination at the regional level in a liberal market democracy, based on the range of actor interests and the macro-political (primarily national) context. 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.

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). Such 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' may thus essentially reinforce '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 as a city region.

The concept of city region-wide policy making across municipal boundaries and associated governance arrangements arose *vis-à-vis* a perceived growing pressure for increased (but offensive and defensive) globalisation-driven competitiveness. It was becoming increasingly evident that these challenges could no longer be appropriately addressed in a compartmentalised, locality-based approach to policy making within metropolitan areas. Yet nature and scale of city regions are not at all clearly defined, sitting somewhere between the local and regional level. The concern with city regions reflects the realisation that the local scale is too limited in its extent, needing to reach 'up' the scalar ladder to the regional scale. This raises wider

questions of the relationship between scales in a vertical, yet also horizontal direction, with the latter referring to inter-municipal collaboration. 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, lesser 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.

Increasingly, governance is moving away from territorially-based relationships between places to less formalised, more topically selective and temporal arrangements, based on networks between actors and 'their' localities (Provan and Kenis, 2007). Variations in such connectivity of, and between, 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. The outcome is the emergence of networks constructed of variably dense and relevant connections and thus differing reach and political weight.

Networks and their characteristics and functioning have attracted attention from both sociologists and economists, although both approach the topic from quite different ends. 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). Communication links - physical, informational and social - emerge historically, and, if leading to a successful network, they may develop their own dynamics, shaping actors and agencies in their objectives and behaviours. The result may mean greater cooperation and a sense of shared purpose, or the opposite, abandoning existing links because they served their purpose, and interests 'have moved on'. A network thus shows two dimensions: it 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. The main drivers of such linkages are on the one hand integrated, systemic conditions and, on the other, more ad hoc and personality-based social characteristics as an inter-personal network (Law, 1999). 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. Agenda-based proximity (propinquity) between actors and localities matters, not merely geographic distance. 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.

For some commentators, networked forms of governance open up new progressive possibilities for urban and regional governance. Amin and Graham (1999) for example see progressive aspects of 'reflexive' networks, that is those that consciously adapt to external challenges. Rather than following hierarchically imposed rules and policies, new strategic directions for cities and regions could emerge from within. Such new political capacities may compensate for the widespread disaffection from traditional politics ( see Clark and Hoffman-Martino, 1998). Citizens may become more attached to governing regimes that can deliver, especially the 'non material' public goods sought by the new middle class. New networked forms of urban and regional governance may be better at competing with other cities and regions and at delivering some types of local services. This kind of normative claims has much in common with the ideas of the 'new regionalism'.

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### **Suburbs in Polycentric City Regions**

The main interest in urban governance focuses on the urban 'cores' as the presumed representatives of metropolitan (urban) areas, without much further analysis of the internal variations of such areas - especially the shifting roles and relevance between core cities and 'their' suburban (urbanising) areas. 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. All localities situated within a region's boundaries were part of it and subject to related policies. From such an external, generalising perspective, cities, their suburbs and surrounding wider hinterland may, from an external perspective, all be viewed as part of the bigger territorial 'package' of regions as contiguous spaces. From an internal (inside) perspective, however, there may be other, stronger linkages to like-minded actors and localities within and also between spatially-functionally defined city regions when it comes to campaigning for specific policy issues.

Two main scalar perspectives of city regions may be distinguished:

- (1) the **external**, region-wide perspective, focusing on the city-region's outside visibility as one entity in a competitive national and international setting, and
- (2) the **internal**, intra-regional perspective and its concern with uneven developments, divisions and differences in role and influence within an urban (metropolitan) area.

This scalar duality reflects the somewhat vague nature and conceptualisation of 'metropolis' and 'urban' respectively, appearing, and being projected for competitive reasons to the outside world, as one entity. At the same time, it offers a much more differentiated, possibly even divided and localist-competitive picture 'inside'. Acknowledgement of the possible internal variations is offered by the concept of Polycentric Urban Regions (PURs, see Bailey and Turok, 2001), addressing the internal variations within metropolitan areas as 'core' and 'non-core', that is suburban in between spaces. PURs may be understood as regions with at least two urban centres with good connections through which they share into providing key urban functions, whereby the quality and characteristic of 'urban' is not so clear. Is it based on physiognomy, functional diversity and quality, or the sheer size of population?

Relationships - functional, political, spatial - vary between urban and suburban areas, shaped by their respective agendas and occurring commonalities among them. This may include specific *suburban* agendas which underpin alliances and collaborative governance arrangements between suburban areas, just as the same may work for the core urban areas for specific *urban* (central city) concerns. But then there are also linkages across categories, that is between urban and suburban actors and interests where interests collide and complement each others, as illustrated in Figure 1. Several layers of governance relationships, arrangements and practices may overlap and intersect, reaching from sub-local, neighbourhood-based concerns and policy objectives, such as new retail developments versus residential interests within a suburb, to inter-locality competition (or alliances), such as between suburbs or between individual suburbs and the central city. Or, there may be city-region-wide collaborations, involving all suburbs and the core city in the pursuit of increased competitiveness and its marketing to a wider national or international audience. In polycentric urban regions, there may even be more layers, involving two or more old established urban centres and 'their' respective policy networks, and inclusions and exclusions of parts of a city region.

**Figure 1: Intersection of policy agendas and alliances between types of actors in mono- and polycentric city regions.**

	Poly-centric (2+ core cities) City Region		Suburb 1	Suburb 2
	Mono-centric CR			
	Core City 1	Core City 2		

Core City 1	Alliances between core cities in a poly-centric city region to: a) control and counteract suburbanisation (esp. retail) to protect city centres, b) portray urban qualities and aggregate centrality (functional standing) for the whole city region to outside investors in a competitive setting. Suburbs are subsumed as 'complementary' to core cities.		City 1: Urban area projected as one functionally complementary space in competitive city marketing
Core City 2			City 2: Urban area projected as one functionally complementary space in competitive city marketing
Suburb 1	As scenario City 1	As scenario City 2	<i>Inter-suburban</i> alliances to pursue a joint 'front' against the core city in policy agendas across a city region
Suburb 2			

Connectivity - physically and socially, matters, because the weaker these links, the more disconnected and thus invisible as distinct, separate entities these suburban spaces will be within their urban (city-regional) context. 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 (2009)). 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". This reflects the view that even at this global scale only cities - and that implies first and foremost the core cities as visible beacons of their respective city regions - really matter. 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 the capacity of cities to solve major environmental and social problems, deliver urban services to their residents and develop effective urban governance and management structures" (Tjandradrewi, 2009, p 166). Consequently, 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,

This of course is inevitably a rather generalised perspective, reducing distinctions largely to the two categories of 'urban' and 'non urban' or, a slightly more selectively in terms of size, 'metropolitan' and 'non-metropolitan' characteristics interests. There is thus an implicit dual categorisation, quite simplistically based on an urban-rural dichotomy. The picture, however, is much more complex, especially in metropolitan areas, with varying degrees of urbanisation affecting surrounding hinterlands, underpinned by ongoing changes and, unless strictly imposed, rather fuzzy boundaries between localities of different degrees of urban influence. And suburbs sit somewhere within these fuzzy spaces of varying degrees of urbanisation - or metropolitanisation, their interests, needs and agendas in danger of being overlooked because of their lower public profile and recognition factor. There are important implications of such a selectively localising, core-urban, suburban or city-regionally focused approach to policy measures and governance arrangements.

In an idealised world, urban-rural connectivities would be based on complimentary interests - and the recognition of those - but in reality, such 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 well 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. Still, the polycentric model, given its usually larger number of 'cores', is seen by policy makers as less likely to be exclusive, because of its lesser imbalance between dominant cities 'and the rest'.

### **Suburbs as emerging 'in between spaces' and aspiring peripheries**

The current emphasis on cities - in a generalization comprising both central city and suburbs - as economic nodes reinforces an understanding of space as defined by a sum of networks, with all else being 'in between' and little more than 'background'. There is little concern, it seems, about the actual roles and relevance of those 'in between spaces'. Suburban areas represent such 'in between spaces' also in their functional-physiognomic characteristics. They sit on the edge of - or between- established urban centres, with much lesser distinctiveness and thus recognizability, and a primarily function-driven role. Yet, increasingly, they are growing in importance, even overshadowing their respective metropolitan cores as the identifier of the whole metropolitan region. Especially in North America, but also in the only recently developed market-driven functional landscapes of post communist eastern Europe, it is the 'edges', the in between suburban spaces that become the main foci of economic activity and connectivity. Yet the old cores possess the name, the recognition factor for 'their' metropolitan areas, irrespective of de factor functional-economic relevance. There is thus a mismatch between functional importance and political recognition and visibility as place.

Instead, they are presumed to benefit from secondary 'trickle down' effects purely by being implicitly inside urban (metropolitan) spaces - however defined. 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 less visible and effectively marginalised in the new focus on the urban variety of regions (areas). 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 to the role of associational responses by individual neighbouring municipalities in aiding that process (Herschel and Newman, 2002, Salet et al, eds , 2003). Much less interest, however, is shown in the effects these concentrations of interest and political resources and ambitions are having on the wider spatial development and the scope for maintaining a more balanced and thus ultimately more sustainable development of contiguous territories.

And this includes nodes, networks as well as 'in between' areas and, in particular, the suburban spaces with their growing functional economic relevance (new balance of importance?)

Cities expand into the region no longer in a concentric, but, increasingly, polycentric way, with new functional centres emerging within and between suburban areas of varying quality and socio-economic composition. This questions the notion of suburbanisation as some indistinguishable, essentially homogenous sprawl from the monocentric (old urban) core into the periphery. The (growing) internal functional, physiognomic and social and economic differentiation (see gated communities, edge cities, exurbs, etc) reflects, but also generates, variations in ambitions and agendas, with some suburban areas sharing more commonality, at least for a set of policy topics and for a particular time period, than others. But they all feel (and are perceived and conceived) as being 'outside' the old established urban centre. The result is competing, overlapping and intersecting commonalities which translate into corresponding relationships and alliances in the policy-making field between and across suburban communities within functional city regions. When it comes to larger scale agendas, such as economic competition at the national or international scale, however, the suburbs and 'their' respective urban centres may discover common interests in a sense of region-based, rather than locally-based, allegiance and sense of shared purpose.

Each of these alliances and policy networks revolve around a single or set of distinct policy agendas which provide the *raison d'être* for these very alliances. These are thus time limited and may well end with the achievement of the set agendas. The whole system of city-regional governance may thus be imagined as three dimensional, with networks developing within and across the spatial scales of policy agendas. The key ingredient for the formation of these alliances and policy networks is the sense of shared purpose and interest, however temporary it may be. These may be complimentary, or contradicting, with some actors participating in different networks which may embrace varying spatial scales and objectives. There is thus a fragmented political landscape in metropolitan areas (city regions) with varying and continuous reconfigurations which cannot be neatly distinguished into local and supra-local, that is city-region-wide matters. The answer thus is not simply installing different levels of government to 'manage' urban-suburban competition and variation, as these are two inflexible and lack sufficient variability and responsiveness to changing agendas. Responding governance arrangements need to be more imaginative and variable. This points in the direction of the concept of 'new regionalism' as a much less formalised, and instead more ad hoc and 'bottom-up, agenda-driven form of supra-local (but not necessarily region-wide) collaborative form of policy making. And this includes a wide range of actors both inside and outside of government as part of city-regional governance 'regimes' (Mossberger and Stoker, 2001), with business leaders being particularly important within the group of policy-making actors. This applies in particular to economic policies which have, as part of the suburbanisation process, increasingly also taken a regional perspective (see Cox, 1997).

These debates about city-regional cooperation revive long-standing concerns about

the interdependence of cities and suburbs. Proponents of the new regionalism seek to prove the mutual economic benefits of cooperation on infrastructure investment, environmental planning and service management. Swanstrom (2001) argues for a regional approach, emphasising cooperation on economic, equity and other grounds. Arguments for city - suburban cooperation stress the economic costs of separation between city and suburb and the mutual benefits of cooperation. Cooperation is essential for the containment of sprawl and promotion of 'smart growth' (Levine, 2001, p 319). The economic argument which emphasizes effective relations between businesses and between business and communities at regional scale are thus joined to arguments about equity and environmental performance across regional economies.

In Britain, the Core Cities Initiative suggests an ongoing belief in rather more elitist urban 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 overall 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 EU's 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', and this seems to include suburbs, which are not mentioned explicitly as separate entities - either as an integral part of an urban municipality, nor as a separate locality on the edge (outside of) or between identified urban municipalities.

The new informal policy-oriented responses by territorially 'virtual' organisations challenge well established, strongly formalised and technocratically implemented regionalism as a form of inter-municipal coordination of development strategies. The recent statutory acknowledgement and manifestation of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) is one example of such bottom-up, locality-based regionalisation that tries to capture suburban 'in between spaces' in a poly-centric functional urban region. The AGMA is the 'light' version of the former Greater Manchester Metropolitan County, abolished in 1986, with a mere coordinating, rather than governmental role in its own right.

The Manchester metropolitan area has developed an increasingly energetic city regional agenda, supported and facilitated by Manchester's developed 'trendy' and 'creative' reputation, especially when set in its northern English context. Its origin as birthplace of the Industrial Revolution underpins its claim to being at the forefront of

change and new developments and innovation. These characteristics have been promoted and used as a way to identify and frame response strategies to the challenges of economic competitiveness away from the UK economic hub of London and the South East. Using initiatives and policy projects to promote the city as 'world class' clearly sought to challenge London's pre-eminence, and this strategy was supported by national policies of supporting the competitive position of the main metropolitan areas outside London as part of its new, city-focused regional strategy (see also the Northern Way project as 'virtual' region underpinning a group of cities across northern England (Liddle, 2009).

Perhaps not surprisingly, given its regional pre-eminence, in the late 1990s, Manchester suggested an extension to its administrative boundaries to achieve a better match with its functional economic and social area. It was a rather conventional approach to 'regionalise' through expansive administrative re-territorialisation. Such a move would have taken Manchester officially, in statistical terms, beyond the one million threshold as a single local authority, and thus allowed it to move up the hierarchy in the league of European cities, providing more recognition and a louder voice. The proposal set off alarm bells among the other, smaller municipalities adjacent to Manchester, fearing a 'take over' by the 'big fish in the pond'. Historically entrenched localism and related rivalries rebelled against such a 'threat'. In addition, very much illustrating a suburban perspective, there was anxiety about having to subsidise Manchester's large bill for social services and benefits, a reflection of deep-seated views of socio-economic divisions between old core city and suburbs. There were also memories of the former Manchester-centric Greater Manchester Metropolitan County (GMMC) of 1974, abolished in 1986, which consisted of ten metropolitan boroughs. However, such Manchester-dominated 'Super City' proposal caused a suburban and 'hinterland' backlash and reinvigorated a somewhat dormant, loose umbrella organisation, the AGMA (Association of Greater Manchester Authorities) which had succeeded the GMMC to provide a platform for co-ordinating some services for the city region. Its members agreed in the summer of 1998 to review their operation and strengthen their cooperation in the interest of a more integrated city-regional approach to some aspects of governance, driven by concern about competitiveness vis-à-vis other metropolitan regions in the UK and beyond. An agreement was signed at the end of 2009 with the then Government about a new statutory status for the Manchester City Region. Yet it works through the existing municipalities which also provide democratic legitimacy.

This change in the concept of 'regions' and 'regionalisation' towards a more collaborative, 'loose' arrangement with no high hurdles to changing membership, is also illustrated by the changing appreciation of the role of the 'regional extension' to the core city in Leeds over the last decade. While its economic development strategy of the late 1990s (Leeds City Council, c 1997) made no reference to the surrounding region of Yorkshire, because, so one officer in the economic development unit pronounced at the time, 'there is nothing in it for us engaging with them', there is now an explicit reference to other participants in a Leeds urban region. The Leeds City Region Partnership is a collaborative arrangement comprising the city of Leeds as leading actors, and the surrounding municipalities. And this is, as part of city-regional marketing, advocated in form of the new slogan 'intelligence driving growth'. This is

a bottom-up arrangement, similar to that established last year for the Greater Manchester city region, and represents a much more inclusive view of the city region than the conventional 'core-periphery' perspective. How this translates into power relationships and networks between and across the different 'types' of localities within the city region, is, however, another question. 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' (Herschel, 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 clearly localised level.

The current plans for the Madrid city regions use such a network-based nature of a city region, based on communication links, and is intended not as a top-down model of imposed city regionalisation, but rather a bottom-up defined model which involves a wide range of governmental and non-governmental actors with city-regional interests (Heitkamp, 1998). This is a response to the rapid, property development-driven suburbanisation and thus expansion of Madrid, with some of the affected towns and villages around Madrid city experiencing a 3-fold increase in their population within a few years (Heitkamp, 1998). This development occurred in individual localities, based on perceived speculative opportunities, without functional integration and connection to the city region. The question, as in other expanding (suburbanising) city regions, is thus one about how to address the growing regional scale of urban development: through a new, formal layer of regional governance, or through collaborative inter-local policy making when addressing agendas that possess a supra-local (regional) dimension (Heitkamp, 1998 (in Periferie ist überall) nsion (Heitkamp, 1998). The transport strategy for the Madrid region (Guerra, 2000) is one step in the direction of a wider regional perspective, but it is rather more following speculation-driven suburbanisation and provide a connective framework, than setting the agenda.

Just as fundamental for meaningful city-regionalism as connectivity are fiscal arrangements. Do they support regional perspectives and agendas by individual municipalities? The example of the metropolitan region of Berlin-Brandenburg in eastern Germany illustrates time lag in the adjustment of city regional governance to changing functional imperatives in an ever more metropolis-focused developmental competitiveness. Overcoming long-established and deep-seated city-suburb antagonisms and mistrust, especially under the conditions of a stark asymmetry between the function-rich inner metropolitan area, and the much less developed, fundamentally rural, outer area with small municipalities, has proved challenging. Engaging in co-operation can be a long-term political process and has proved more likely to develop where controversial issues are avoided and 'win-win' opportunities are perceived. Flexible, 'open' cooperation with varying partners and low entry and exit thresholds thus seems to be the format most favoured. In a federal system with strong local traditions and quite autonomous municipalities, adopting a regional perspective needs to yield local advantages. It is locally, where electoral approval needs to be achieved, and there may well be considerable differences in views and

expectations between the urban centre and the suburban and semi-rural periphery.

The fiscal system of population-based and business tax-generated local revenues sets the parameters for inter-local competition rather than collaboration. The Joint Planning Authority Berlin-Brandenburg as 'bridge' between the two federal states, sees itself as a source of new regional visions. The planners claim some success in promoting regional consciousness and argue that, in the face of proposed regional development frameworks in which not all communes win, initially strong localist opposition is lessening. Throughout the 1990s, incentives to greater intergovernmental cooperation were not strong enough to encourage *Land* and local governments to break out of self interested and localist habits.

The detail of the Berlin-Brandenburg case points to the uneven nature 'variety of new regionalisms' in response to different circumstances (Jonas and Ward 2002, p 397). Choices between local and regional perspectives are structured by the institutional frameworks of regional and local government and by the economic circumstances surrounding a city region. Depending on relative economic prospects, this shapes a sense of shared grief or shared success, whereby the former is likely to be a stronger 'glue' for city regionalist thinking than the latter.

### **Conclusions: Governance, Aspiring Suburbs and Policy Networks in City Regions**

Concern about global competitiveness drives an increasingly localised city-focused policy agenda at national and EU levels. This projects urban areas in a rather general light as cohesive entities attached to a leading core city as the centre of an urban region. This follows an underlying notion of the conventional, territorial image of a core city surrounded by an expanse of complimentary, functionally dependent and increasingly peripheral suburban areas. Reality, however, is much more complex, with a patchwork of different types of 'suburbs' surrounding one or more urban cores. They are connected in varying constellations by a network of differing collaborative relationships. These stretch between different suburbs and their actors, as well as between the core cities and a varying number and range of suburbs. There is thus no longer an underlying, clearly defined urban territory that *contains* the various suburban places and actors, but rather a clustering of different - and changing - collaborative relationships and networks. This reflects a growing status of suburbs as actors in their own right next to, or even *vis-à-vis*, the main core city. They seek to formulate their own policy objectives and priorities, and subsequently set out to build their own alliances, or join or leave existing ones in line with their set agendas. Ultimately, this may reduce the urban core to just one player among several. Urban regions are thus much more dynamic and variable than conventional dichotomy between urban and suburban models

The nature of networks places emphasis on narrow inherently linear operating linkages between nodes (actors), rather than 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 contiguously. 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 uneven access to power structures, policy-making processes and agenda-setting possibilities. 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, utilize.

While 'territory', 'boundary' and 'structure' continue to be the key elements of governance, globalisation demands a broader perspective with a greater variety of forms of governance across city regions, embracing urban, suburban and 'in between' places. Some authors refer to 'soft institutionalism' (MacLeod, 2001, 2004) to denote the inherent variability, even 'fluffiness' of 'new' city regionalism. With its emphasis on informal alliances and policy-defining arrangements, processes and their rationales are more difficult to follow, the role of different actors more difficult to identify and follow, and legitimacy more difficult to secure. While physical infrastructure can be modified through investment, thus altering perceptions of distance and thus marginality, connectivities between political and economic actors are much more difficult to influence and observe. 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.

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