



**7<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of ICRPol.Net on  
'Regionalisation in Metropolitan Areas',  
and First Meeting of the RSA Research Network on**

**Regionalisation and marginalisation:  
Bridging old and new divisions in  
regional governance**

**Malmö/Øresund, 23 – 25 April 2009**

**Final Report**

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## **Organisation:**

The Symposium in Malmö was the seventh workshop on 'regionalisation' in economic policy organised by The International City-Regional Policy Network (ICRPol.Net), the Centre for Urban and Regional Governance at the University of Westminster (CURG, Tassilo Herrschel) and Region Skåne (Cecilia Gyllenkrok) and hosted by the Region Skåne in Malmö. The symposium was made possible through generous financial support by the Regional Studies Association, the University of Westminster and the Region Skåne, and support in kind from the City of Malmö. Without this, it would not have been possible to 'run' the Symposium, and the Network is grateful for this support.

The RSA's support was through a grant (including travel bursaries for delegates) as part of its support for establishing and expanding theme-specific Research Network Groups. The Symposium thus also served as the first of three workshops (one as part of the forthcoming RSA annual conference in ecs, 2010) of the RSA Research Network Group '*Bridging old and new divisions in regional governance between 'core' and 'periphery' in Europe's 'east' and west*' (chaired by Tassilo Herrschel and Iwona Sagan (Univ. Of Gdansk)). The second one will be held later this year - in Gdansk - to reflect the new research network's inclusion of eastern Europe as a 'marginalised space'. The idea is to use the existing ICRPol.Net network of economic policy makers and scholars as platform for the new RSA research network group. And this includes the involvement of both academics and practitioners, with the latter as sources of 'hands-on' information as well as potential user group.

The workshop with 16 attendees used a combination of shared and parallel sessions for the introduction and discussion of varying examples of marginalisation from Europe and North America. The discussions proved again very instructive and made for fascinating *ad hoc* exchanges of ideas and experiences. It proved an advantage that all participants had relevant expertise in the field of economic development.

The key themes raised during the round-table discussions were:

- What is the role of infrastructure in shaping 'connectivity'?
- The role of shared goals/purposes in responding to marginalisation/marginality
- The importance of powers and scope in dealing with 'marginalisation'
- How far is marginalisation a process?
- What are the implications of marginalisation (actual and/or perceived) for policy?

## **B. Objectives and Purpose of the Symposium:**

The theme of this symposium, as outlined by Tassilo Herrschel, was about the potential creation of exclusions and effective boundaries - whether real or imagined - through the ways in which network-based governance can work. This may include collaborative regionalisation through 'virtual regions', where some may find themselves within, and others outside those arrangements. A resulting marginalisation of places, actors or, organisations, is thus not so much referring to

'conventional' notions of geographic peripheries and margins - often understood as rural spaces away from cities or economic centres. Instead, it is about the making of new peripheries and exclusions through the selective development of political networks and foci of economic activity. Those within a network may have a vested interest to 'protect' the network from yet more players, so as to secure their roles and influence within them. In other words: Making regions and building policy alliances may create new exclusions and divisions within and between old and new regions. And these exclusions may be real as 'protective walls' put up by those already within the system, or they may be perceived by those outside, who may lack the political clout or confidence or ability to join. In response, how do policy-making actors perceive or identify a sense of being marginalised/ peripheralised? What are they trying to do about being marginalised, and what scope do they have?

### **C. Examples of marginalisation (presentations)**

The nature and political 'weight' of actors emerged as one of the main factors circumscribing the capacity and effectiveness (efficacy) of collaborative policy networks. It is through them, as Anette Vedel pointed out, rather than structures and prescribed ways of doing things, that policy networks achieve their objectives. This, of course, makes them also vulnerable and 'hostage to fortune'. The emergence and departure of individual actors can take place quite suddenly (as the situation in Portland illustrated) and change the balance of power within, and capacity of, such networks and their policies. This, again, makes them somewhat unpredictable. But this can also be an advantage, as it is more likely to accommodate new actors, and allows them to 'make an impact', than fixed structures may do. Structure and organisation of network *per se* is not so important for its likely effectiveness.

Yet any such more volatile arrangements are dependent on, and shaped in their capacity by, 'real' structures and variations in economic opportunities. And that includes infrastructure and inequalities in investment patterns by national and international government bodies. They circumscribe (and reinforce or counteract) economic opportunities (whether perceived or real). For instance, traffic bottlenecks are *de facto* creators of marginality through adding time and cost to connections. In addition, as Pontus Tallberg pointed out, structures continue to shape marginalisation, for instance, by the ways of how conventional regional policy works - with its distinction between, and definition of, 'core' and 'periphery'. Establishing a particular regional structure is seen as a means to counteract (plan away) marginalisation and difference in opportunities. Structure as framework of marginalisation is shaped on the one hand by the territorial economy and, on the other, by the administrative scope to effect policies. In all this, the mandate to act continues to be a key factor in the link between the population and its political representation, and that frames the policy-making agendas and practices of public policy makers among the actors. Yet they are merely one, even if important part, of governance. There are other, non-democratically elected actors as well (interest representations, business leaders, etc), and the balance of power between them all will circumscribe the nature of policies and agendas.

Peter de Souza questioned the contents of 'periphery'. What does it actually encompass. Any definition would need to contrast 'periphery' to 'core', because only if there is a 'core', can by definition there be a periphery. This then raises the question about the qualifying criteria, and for those, of course, agendas, perceptions, values and public discourse matter. Should such assessment of marginality be made purely on the grounds of economic competitiveness - usually viewed from the core's perspective? What about quality of life and peripherality as something positive - as an advantage, rather than deficiency? It is these criteria and assessments that shape public discourse on the nature and value of 'peripherality', and thus sets the agenda for networks and public discourse on 'what to do about it', how to 'alleviate' peripherality as a presumed negative feature. Yet marginalisation is a dynamic process and not a static condition. This may entail changes in the values associated with 'marginality' and 'peripherality' as opposites to 'core'. But labels have a tendency to stick and it takes time and effort to change images, perceptions (and prejudices). Geography and urban structure matter as both underpin established notions of what defines peripherality and marginality. But these things are in constant flow and the question then is about finding appropriate policy answers to avoid them becoming out of date and thus ineffective and, ultimately, irrelevant.

Marginality may therefore be understood as a shadow effect created by the cores, as Mike Danson pointed out, thus casting them in the context of a negative omen. But by definition, there can only be a limited number of cores or centres, as otherwise they wouldn't stand out. This, in turn, means that margins are inevitably 'non-cores'. Yet, this needs not necessarily be seen as a deficiency - to be alleviated by trying to emulate the cores as closely as possible. Indeed, there seems to be evidence from the Scottish 'margins' that peripheries take a more positive view of their marginality: They want to build networks among themselves as equal partners, rather than being 'allowed' to attach themselves to cores in order to then, as junior partners, be given the opportunity to be 'dragged along forward'. But the structure of established public sector economic policies, such as by the EU, doesn't provide for this. Instead, there is a continued focus on connecting peripheries to cores as a means of 'inclusion' into the (presumed as desired) standard 'quality' of cores.

In the UK, there is the notion and related policy of 'core cities' which, of course, also means that there are towns, cities and non-urban localities that don't 'make the grade'. This distinction and labelling does, as Derek Walker argued, create and reaffirm exclusions as political fact. But cores need peripheries as 'background' in front of which they can stand out and become visible as the envisaged 'beacons' of successful national development policies. In addition, peripherality is not a mere binary quality, nor is it static. It is dynamic and needs to be seen as on a variable scale. Politics, however, paints an 'either - or' contrast - a locality is either 'inside' or 'outside' the relevant 'elite group'. Such simplistic dichotomic distinction makes it easier, of course, to define areas and/or places as targets for specific policies. High peripherality qualifies for state support (the 'desperate cases'). But what about those not quite so 'desperate', yet still peripheral places that are now stigmatised as less

relevant through the exclusion from the 'elite club'? Is the border between 'core' and 'periphery' not fluid and the application of criteria not subject to interpretation?

This differentiation between 'core' and 'the rest' thus creates notions of boundaries and separateness which goes against the arguments for open and flexible cooperation between municipalities and actors across administrative and jurisdictional boundaries in the search for more effective and task-specific responses. As shown by Gary Paget for peripheral British Columbia, there is regional cooperation for 1) defining and implementing policy (driven by strategy, imagination, 'dreams') and 2) for service delivery (shaped by technocrats and concerns for efficiency). The question is whether there are conflicts between those, whether they are cooperative or competitive, and how these relationships are negotiated. And in this, how important is the role of funding in shaping the notion of 'need' and related policy agendas. In this inevitable somewhat variable and 'fluid' negotiation process between actors and their particular agendas and perceptions, the role of 'soft power' matters as mechanism for reconciling different views and goals. It's not so much about structure, as about individuals developing, possessing and using 'soft power' to avoid marginalisation of their interests. Yet this may be made more difficult by a seemingly clear discriminatory distinction as that between 'core' and 'non-core' cities.

Under such conditions, leadership becomes a crucial mechanism and driver of policy making. Yet the reliance in city-regional governance on individuals as leaders, that is the role of leadership to 'hold all together' has also some pitfalls, as Janet Young pointed out for the Portland region. Because of this dependency, such arrangements are inevitably fragile, volatile and unpredictable, as a sudden removal and/or weakening of existing leaders, in conjunction with the joining of new leaders, will alter established power structures, relationships and ways of doing things, and thus the dynamics and workings of such network-based non-bureaucratised form of governance. The other main factor shaping the dynamics in collaborative governance is funding. Uneven and/or changing access to resources fundamentally shapes the scope for actors to be effective and thus influential. Higher tier government decisions to allocate resources selectively to an elite group of players has thus major implications for the scope of actors to access networks and decision-making processes, and make an impact. Funding structures can thus pre-empt and 'cement' network structures between policy makers, thus facilitating the emergence of powerful elitism, which then makes it very difficult for new actors to join or, indeed, for existing actors to leave without financial and/or political 'penalty'. Power structure therefore consists of network plus the underlying systemic arrangements for implementational and fiscal capacity, and this may lead to discrepancies between established elitism and the task-specific (here economic) relevance and efficacy of actors and relationships.

Marginalisation also needs to consider civil society and how this is divided between included and excluded groups, as reported by Sharon Carney for the Detroit region. This includes questions of democratic representation and scope for engagement. Some age groups may feel (or *de facto* are) excluded or marginalised from political processes or expressions of interest and will. Particularly in relation to younger age

groups (18-24) this means an exclusion of new ideas and potential ways of doing things, held back by an exclusionary established 'older' structure that wants to preserve its prerogatives and power. Old, established structures are, it seems, inherently defensive to prevent newcomers from 'disturbing' established political *modi vivendi*. But these conservative interests may create a detachment between the actual (economic) developments 'on the ground' and the related policy debates and agendas. New ideas and actors, with their emerging own networks within the economic sphere may thus not be able to find 'matching' counterparts in policy making with its continued dominance by 'old hands'. One example is the banning of the use of Facebook in public administration (desktops), while today's young communicate first and foremost by this means. There are different cultures and practices, and gaps arise between them. This affects the efficiency and efficacy of policies and the notion of who is 'in' and 'out' of relevant networks, be they places, organisations or individuals. Disconnected policies become ineffectual and technocratic, more concerned with 'maintaining the status quo', than be visionary, imaginative and bold. While some (cities, localities, organisations) look forward to embracing change and new networks and players, others look back and seek to preserve the status quo (that serves the established networks and elites). Only a major crisis and thus volatile, dynamic condition, may be able to 'shake things up a bit' and create a more accessible, open and thus less defensive, 'preservationist' and marginalising effect of established policy networks.

The difficulty for new organisational/institutional actors to join established networks and power structures was highlighted by Karen Hanson for the Philadelphia region. Again, it became evident, that those already 'in the system' try to keep others out to maintain the 'cosy' (?) status quo arrangements and allocation of privileges. In Philadelphia, policy making has traditionally been conducted in small, elitist groups, that are at the centre of networks. While willing to compromise, adding new players may mean a change of practices and thus dilute established corridors of communication, while also potentially weakening the effectiveness of established policy-making connections. In this context, it proves important that actors possess a physical presence and aren't merely 'virtual'. Only then, they can expect to be considered serious, 'real' players with equally real policies.

Metropolitanisation as a network-based, city core-focused process of regionalisation means different things at different scales. Indeed, as Anna Geppert argued, it spans different scales - from global to sub-regional networks, with their respective nodes occupied by metropolitan areas of differing 'thickness'. For those of 'lesser thickness', that is lesser connectivity and density of networks linkages, the challenge is to work out a strategy for getting (better) connected, to get onto existing political-economic networks. Otherwise, there is a danger of falling further behind, held back by a stigmatising labelling as 'periphery'. The inherent imbalance between an all-dominant capital region and the many small municipalities at the opposite ends of the 'scale of marginality' (or 'centrality', depending on the view taken) means that existing gaps may widen further. In France, the state has thus attempted in the 1990s, to create an intermediate scale of regional capitals to connect the largely detached smaller (and thus peripheralised) municipalities to the big centre of Paris. The regional capitals are 'the bracket', and it is connections that matter. And

these are more likely to develop and remain between more equal partners, as otherwise it becomes a one-sided dependency. Informal collaborative arrangements based on partnership, which have become the main vehicle of metropolitan regionalisation in France, require a mutual appreciation of the relevant partners as 'useful'. Otherwise, there will be little interest in pursuing such an arrangement. The big question is whether such pragmatism can overcome long established local rivalries.

#### **D. Summary of Round Table Workshops Discussions**

Five workshops were held and revolved around the topics of defining marginality, the role of physical infrastructure in potentially manifesting and/or creating marginality, the importance of powers and scope, and the policy implications of marginalisation.

##### **1) Role of infrastructure in connecting and excluding:**

When using such terms, it is necessary to be aware of the various meanings of 'infrastructure' and 'connectivity'. For instance, there is a clear difference between virtual and real infrastructure, such as personal networks or transport networks respectively. Both may be competing (based on different rationales and ways of doing things), reinforcing each other (both having simultaneously a positive or negative impact), or counteracting each other (one positive, the other negative). In any case, infrastructure provision can only be a 'necessary but not sufficient' condition for connectivity, and other factors need to be taken into account, too. For instance, as was pointed out, face to face contact continues to be very important in certain sectors/activities. In those situations, physical accessibility matters and may draw a line between 'being an acceptable or no longer acceptable 'peripheral' place. In any case, there is a need to define what we mean by connectivity, as there are quite different associations attached to this term, reflecting established ways of life, doing business and making policies. In the US, for instance, any notion of connectivity immediately revolves around the car. Then, of course, there is the 'user group' of such 'connectivity': What are the expectations and the criteria used? Connectivity for who? High speed rail links, for instance, have few stops and are therefore highly selective in where they provide enhanced accessibility. For some places, however, this may be paid for by a loss of traditional train connections, thus effectively worsening their accessibility. Such different qualities also differentiate between user groups, (affordability of travel), creating new divisions between those benefiting and those that do not. Use of such links primarily by professional/business class – whether other low income groups can benefit depends on pricing structures.

But physical infrastructure has also a symbolic meaning, as it visibly demonstrates the quality of connectivity. Connection to high speed rail link, for instance, suggests something of an elite group of places. In fact, symbolism may be more important than the actual service provided.

Another term with complex meanings is 'rurality', varying depending on context and position of an actor. It is important to understand how things belong and work together, so that strategies and objectives can be defined (realistically). To what extent do (can) strategies incorporate marginalised areas? Are they, as a strategic choice, merely referring to, and relying on, a trickle-down effect? Or is there expectation of a more robust involvement through intervention? And how do they respond to persistent marginality as creator (and preserver) of social inequality. These questions point to the variability in meanings attached to 'marginality'. Does it need to be seen as negative per se? Could there be 'happy margins'? Would they be allowed to exist and be happy? Both peripheries and centralities include

adapted to core and periphery. One size fits all will not work. If both spheres and their actors and agendas are to connect, at least some of the underlying notions and values need to straddle the 'core' - 'periphery' dichotomy.

There is a need for realising that it need not be automatic that all peripheries seek to follow the core and connect to it in their attempt to emulate their characteristics. Indeed, peripherality may be discovered (or appreciated, even if only more recently) as a valuable, legitimate quality in its own right. It needn't be perceived as inferior, 'underdeveloped', backward, etc. Consequently, different strategies, aims and objectives may be opportune to pursue those goals. In fact, maintaining a clear difference may be seen as a strength, pitching one quality against the (opposite?) other. Being separate and different may be wanted/desired and may, in fact, be a strength. Peripherality needn't be automatically 'bad', nor 'centrality always 'good'.

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The clarity of goals and purposes depends on the diversity and thus complexity of ambitions, agendas and concerns, and translates into a multitude of relationships (networks) driven by a variety of actors, objectives and perceived urgencies of tackling exclusion/peripheralisation. Both the number of actors, the degree of their diversity and the perceived urgency of taking action and changing conditions determine the readiness to seek access to existing networks, establish new ones or permit 'outsiders' to join existing networks (as strategic 'reinforcement'). Proximity of goals and objectives defines scope and prospect for cooperation. In cases of perceived (or actual) stark contrasts in urban and rural characteristics, for instance, shared challenges and thus interests may not always be so evident. Yet most places will sit somewhere in between these 'extremes' of 'all urban' and 'all rural' as proxies for 'central' and 'peripheral' respectively.

The role of shared circumstances in developing networks and a sense of connectedness is illustrated by the case of the Øresund region between Danes and Swedes in terms of labour and housing supply/demand. At the same time, the new found connectedness has also highlighted (or even created) areas of (relative) marginality, where linkages haven't developed as visibly. 'Marginality' may thus be more perceived than actual. The process of creating and/or joining networks and thus connectivities may create a momentum towards expanding such networks, as

those outside fear losing out if they don't get involved and co-operate. There may ultimately different underlying goals or understandings, reflecting varying cultures and ways of doing things, especially in international collaborations such as between Danes and Swedes. A crisis moment and thus heightened sense of needing to do something can be important, or even crucial, in facilitating approximation between actors and their goals, but also can be negative and lead to all-competitive 'beggar thy neighbour' policies.

### 3) Importance of Powers and Scope:

Building networks and formulating shared agendas and policies very much depend on the capacity and capability actors to act as network leaders and be able to channel forces generated towards a shared, common agenda (at least shared in part). The key dimensions include:

- 1) leadership, although there is a need to recognise that there may be different leadership styles with associated differing different ways of developing and pursuing shared goals as part of network building and connections (it's not just about heroic individuals);
- 2) tactics by the various actors, based on their agendas (politics/economics), with their different ways of achieving goals through particular terms of dealing with other stakeholders (e.g. the decision to find alternative ways of raising money than the central state to fund the construction of the Øresund bridge);
- 3) the role of the central state as the main provider of the conditions under which the actors shape and pursue their strategies (e.g. large infrastructure projects). Universal provision can be important here in establishing a more level playing field.
- 4) the importance of economic processes as 'operating environment', with regional powers and scope for action often rather limited in relation to the scale of economic circumstances. Often, the nature of powers is path dependent, meaning that processes of devolving powers/developing new governance arrangements lead to further developments which again set the conditions for subsequent responses.

### 4) Marginalisation as a Process

Marginalisation is not merely a static condition, but also changes as part of processes. There is thus a need to distinguish 'margins' as an adjective *vis-a-vis* 'marginalisation' as a process. Inevitably, there are always likely to be processes of marginalisation (as will be processes of concentration) as a result of changing circumstances and associated preferences and priorities. The key question then, perhaps, is about the degree to which processes of marginalisation sit within various 'vicious cycles' which are often reinforcing themselves (e.g. unemployment, poor housing, discrimination etc.) and thus making an 'escape' very difficult. This includes the ability to devise and pursue relevant strategies to 'break the cycle'. Marginalisation thus relates to positions relative to sources of power (e.g. economic, social, political, cultural etc) and thus scope of effecting change and direct development. Power relations are therefore central to the notion of marginality both as seen from within and outside a 'condition of marginality'.

### 5) Policy implications of marginalisation

The last workshop looked into likely implications for policies of being marginalised. Thus, there may be a necessity to be more aware of unintended consequences of actions that are likely to alter accessibility and thus, in its wake, marginality (e.g. new rail/road links) for others. This, in turn, requires a need to understand process and how they are interrelated. From an urban-centric perspective, for instance, should there be a notion of 'rural proofing' of initiatives, that is assessing any core-defined activities in their likely impact upon marginalised groups and areas? But this entails the danger that such an approach might slow down responses and impede action. Local/regional problems of deprivation often reflect deep seated social problems related to inequality, multiple deprivation, discrimination which require responses beyond the local/regional level. What is the scope for connecting up areas of growth and winners of new investments with disconnected areas, actors and social groups?

### **E. Outlook:**

Relying on trickle-down effects may not be sufficient. Furthermore, marginalisation need not always be 'bad' by definition. Being on the margins can be attractive, providing spaces and scope for alternative lifestyles and values; places of liberation and creativity. But perhaps such a situation should be from choice not as an imposed condition. And then there is the question over the possibility of embracing 'being on the margins' as a strategic possibility - either as a 'source of competitive advantage' (e.g. better quality of life), or, more radically, as a place where alternative sustainable socio-economic development paths can be pursued. But, again, such conditions ought to include scope for active engagement and responses, including engaging with 'cores' where and when desired/needed, in order to overcome aspects of marginality that are/have become less attractive. And it is here that further questions need to follow. Are there specific strategies or ways of doing things that would suit actors based in marginality better than a mere attempt at copying those strategies and policies adopted by 'core actors'? And these issues will be explored further, at different spatial scales, in the next workshop of this RSA Research Network Group in the autumn of this year.

TH, June 2009