

Call for Papers

Governing the Metropolis: Powers and Territories. New Directions for Research

International Conference¹

Paris, November 28-30, 2012
Hôtel de Ville de Paris
Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, 75004 Paris

Organized by

City of Paris

Laboratoire Techniques, Territoires et Sociétés (LATTTS, University Paris-Est)

Centre d'Etudes Européennes (CEE, Sciences Po)

Today, large metropolises face a governance challenge, since their political, social, economic and cultural fabrics are embedded in the two major trends of decentralization and globalization. Decentralization, beginning in Europe in the early 1980s and at later points in many other countries of the world, has given more legitimacy and access to local players, local authorities and urban residents, opening up access for actors from the bottom. Globalization has introduced new players such as international or supranational organizations and associations, global firms and multi-national companies, opening up access for actors from the top.

The questions surrounding the construction of metropolises – defined as new political, economic, social and cultural territories, – is the central theme of this call for papers. The construction of the metropolis refers to the many obstacles of various kinds which must be overcome in this process, notably political, financial and fiscal, social and cultural barriers. The construction of the metropolis also relates to the projects and policies that need to be elaborated and implemented in order to give it substance: housing and services, transport and mobility, economic development, immigration, planning and design, etc. And these policies are strictly connected with the production, or the contrasting of social inequalities at the metropolitan level. To address these topics, the perspective is clearly metropolitan rather than urban or local, as the issues to be tackled at the metropolitan scale differ from the urban or local as they take place in ill-defined human settlements, unlike those more clearly encompassed by institutional perimeters.

The construction of metropolises has given rise to controversies in academic debate as well as in society as a whole. The “Governing the Metropolis: Powers and Territories. New Directions for

¹ This conference is the second event in the framework of a 3 year program on “the challenge of governance” initiated by the City of Paris. It follows an international seminar which took place in Paris on December 2011.

Research” conference which will take place in Paris in November 2012 aims to discuss these controversies, particularly – but not exclusively – the four detailed below.

Can metropolitan regions cope with classic regulation?

While States still play a significant role in metropolitan governance, the literature points to the fact that the processes of globalization and decentralization have downgraded the importance of the State. It is no longer the major player at the local level. While neo-Marxists consider that it remains important, since it is the State that allows a neo-liberal type of globalization (Brenner, 2004), others posit that the State remains important through the instruments it defines and that provide frames and indirect rules for local political actions (Lascoumes and Le Galès, 2007).

In the meantime, newcomers emerge at the metropolitan-regional level. Since the early works of Harvey (1985), it has become clear that large companies and global investors have enough money and knowledge to act as major players at the metropolitan level. Through mega projects (Fainstein, 2009) or through the control of major infrastructure (railways, water systems, electricity, etc.) these firms play a key role in metropolitan integration and regional governance.

The role of public or private institutions investing at the regional level is emphasized by the emergence of conflicts specific to the metropolitan-regional level. The rise of governance questions that differ from those raised in smaller places, more urban than metropolitan, is to be linked with the fragmentation of the regional space. Metropolitan construction deal with issue of social and ethnic segregation, with serious outcomes in terms of exclusion and alienation. Polarization and segregation lead to the appearance of strong hierarchies within metropolitan areas, which have in turn led to secessions and which question the nature and the strength of metropolitan solidarity.

A significant part of the academic literature deals with the fact that the new equilibrium between State, local governments and private firms is much more unstable and idiosyncratic than in previous times. As far as major investments, local and regional public services, or home prices and land use regulation are concerned, it is a question of whether the metropolitan region can manage without State intervention. Above all, the types and consequences of alternative regulations (more local, more private or more mixed) remain a matter of scientific importance. Also, while metropolitan-regions raise specific governance questions, there is no evidence, nor conclusions, as to whether they need specific answers as far as government organization, rules and tools are concerned.

Does the spatial governance of metropolitan areas require perimeters?

Another key issue raised by contemporary metropolitan areas relates to the perimeters that city governance is supposed to influence. Indeed, the metropolis displays diverse and superimposed forms, constantly on the move, which defy the usual categories of representation, and evolve faster than the spatial perimeters embodied by the institutions supposed to govern them. Megalopolis (Gottmann, 1961), Metapolis (Ascher, 1995), Postmetropolis (Soja, 2000): debates among scholars on the appropriate terms for designating current metropolitan phenomena show the great difficulties involved in grasping their limits.

This question concerns the delimitation of metropolitan areas and their exteriority, as well as their internal limits. In addition, the numerous representations displayed by inhabitants remain a factor, along with the search for diverse resources and places within the metropolis, not to mention the polysemous discourses and images which form part of their historical construction. Increasing inequalities are part of this picture. As a result, to deal with contemporary issues of urban space practices, metropolitan governing systems must constantly confront the instability of perimeters, and they have to favour new scale configurations while taking into account existing strata.

This issue is closely related to the modes of designing and implementing metropolitan scale projects. Throughout recent decades, spectacular urban transformations have been achieved thanks to important

projects: the organization of large-scale events, such as international exhibitions or the Olympic games, or the construction of flagship monuments initiating urban renewal, or the reclaiming of wastelands... At the same time, resources and investments for social policies at the metropolitan level has been neglected, or not considered as a priority. Carried out via close partnerships between public authorities and private stakeholders, often attentive to the quality of the spaces in question, this mode of conceiving urban spatial transformation through projects has consolidated the roles and powers of the urban leaderships that initiated it (Pinson 2009 ; Salet et Gualini, 2007), but it has often diminished, even sometimes erased the roles of planning.

However, on the scale of large metropolises, are these practices the only way of contributing to the urban fabric? For example, how can they deal with the planning and design of the suburban city, more and more prevalent within developing metropolises, while in direct conflict with the centres (attraction-polarization versus relegation-marginalization)? Within this framework, this call for papers aims to explore the possible ways of governing the urban space within metropolises: in particular, the request for new definitions and articulations between planning and design, between programmes and projects.

Is the development of local democracy compatible with the emergence of a metropolitan democracy?

Local democracy, understood as the direct intervention of people in local public affairs, is a leitmotiv in most democratic countries today. It has been attributed many virtues, such as the production of more efficient policies since more informed about the issues they are to tackle; the potential to establish stronger local politics and civil society, since it helps to produce 'better' citizens; and a contribution to the fight against the so-called democratic deficit, since it may bring elected officials and local populations closer together. Participatory devices and experiments of communicative arena has been implemented to promote spaces of discussion about major problems, inequalities and conflicts.

In recent decades, as metropolitan areas have become crucial spaces for economic globalization and at the same time the locus of social and environmental problems which affect their futures, the question of the territorial dimension of local democracy must be posed (Kuebler, 2005). While metropolitan areas meet with difficulties in becoming legitimate spaces of public debate, that is in becoming democratic territories (Booth and Jouve, 2005), one question may be asked: are the forms of local democracy that are developing in cities putting into question the legitimacy of the metropolis to become a relevant place for debate and political action because of their territorial scope? Indeed, local democracy, because it is usually based on a restricted conception of citizenship and because it matches the perimeters of local authorities, mainly municipalities and neighbourhoods, plays a crucial role in shaping infra-metropolitan identities. In short, because developing forms of local democracy do not take the metropolitan "factor" into consideration, they may contribute to a process of de-legitimizing the metropolis.

Should the informal sector be institutionalized to reduce metropolitan governance failures?

Large metropolises are growing, and the informal sector is increasing within them. Scholars do not agree on a common definition of the informal sector for the global South and North. Informal city, informal activities, informal sector: in urban literature, these labels refer to slums and illegal housing and construction, as well as to several forms of economic exchange in the neighbourhood, from street vendors to forgers. Yet references to the informal sector are also present in the literature on 'under the table' jobs. Scholars do not agree on a definition, but tend to settle on the fact that these phenomena are not a pre-modern residue, but strictly connected with the actual dynamics of urban development (Hernandez, Kellett, Allen, 2009).

If some of these dynamics have been explored, literature has not to date paid enough attention to the political dimension of informality, especially regarding how local governments deal with informality,

and how it affects urban policy, urban management and political choices (Al Sayyad, Roy, 2004). A large debate has in fact developed on the housing sector and the problem of slum expansion, or on the complementarity between formality and informality, showing the importance of informality as a source of resilience and adaptability. The debate has been highly polarized by the work of the economist Hernando de Soto, who supports a policy to sustain access to private property (De Soto, 2000). Reducing informal housing and promoting its institutionalization has been discussed in depth to understand local economic development, the struggle against poverty and policies for wellbeing, with both tenants and critics.

But empirical research has not focused on how these policy dilemmas concern not only the simple urban level, but more and more the metropolitan level. Informality is governed and regulated, resources are allocated, and conflicts are mediated. In a large metropolis this has a very spatial dimension. Informality is governed in space, and informal activities (or places) are moved and displaced in a dynamic of conflict among local authorities within the metropolitan region. Informality can be a lever or an obstacle for metropolitan construction. This call for papers is concerned with the relationship between governance and informality, and how it affects processes of metropolitanization, and with which outcomes in terms of inequalities. In a broader sense what is at stake is what is governed and what is not governed, and who governs when it seems that no-one is governing. These points have recently been discussed by Patrick Le Galès (2011) who re-introduces some long-ignored questions on urban governance failures and adaptability to the debate, more specifically: Do governments always govern? Who governs when governments do not govern? What kind of social impacts are seen in metropolitan construction? These questions open a wide field of empirical research on undefined issues between territories in metropolitan governance. In the same sense, upheavals may have very different effects in the different territories of a single metropolitan region due to the deep asymmetries that characterize what is weakly governed and what is left out entirely. Informality and other sources of uncertainty among territories should be explored in the papers to show what parts, sectors, groups of the metropolis are actually governed, and which groups or sectors escape from government in the metropolitanization of urban societies.

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Expected papers may be of a theoretical nature or draw from empirical studies. Comparative papers from different national contexts/continents will be particularly appreciated. Proposals (title and abstract of no more than 3,000 characters/400 words) should be submitted by March 30th, 2012 along with a short curriculum vitae, home and work addresses, e-mail address, telephone numbers, to the following address: governingthemetropolis@paris.fr.

Paper proposals are expected to be around 3.000 characters. Each abstract will be evaluated looking at its:

- quality and clarity of the research question;
- methodological precision;
- theoretical original contribution and discussion of available knowledge.
- relevance and pertinence with the conference's themes.

Final Papers can not exceed 50.000 characters (spaces, notes and references included). To allow maximum time for discussion, we intend that all papers should be circulated by e-mail and put on the Conference website.

- Paper-proposals should be sent by March 30th, 2012
- Acceptance will be communicated by May 15th, 2012
- Papers have to be completed and circulated by September 30th, 2012

This call for papers and information about the conference can also be found on the conference

website : www.paris.fr/gouvernerlesmetropoles.

International Scientific Committee

Julie-Anne Boudreau (Institut national de la recherche scientifique, Centre Urbanisation Culture Société in Montreal, Canada), Jill Simone Gross (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College, USA), Enrico Gualini (Department of Urban and Regional Planning ISR at the Technische Universität Berlin, Germany), Daniel Kübler (Department for Political Science, University of Zurich, Switzerland), Amitabh Kundu (Centre for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India), Patrick Le Galès (Centre d'études européennes, Sciences Po, France), Alan Mabin (School of Architecture and Planning, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa), Eduardo Marques (Center for Metropolitan Studies, University of São Paulo, Brazil), Edmond Préteceille (Observatoire Sociologique du Changement, Sciences Po, France), Mike Raco (The Bartlett School of Planning, University College of London, United Kingdom), Willem Salet (Institute for Metropolitan Studies, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands), Erik Swyngedouw (School of Environment and Development, Manchester University, United Kingdom), Lin Ye (Institute of Urban Governance and Urban Development, Sun Yat-sen University, China)

Scientific Organization Committee:

Frédéric Gilli (CEE, Sciences Po), Christian Lefèvre (LATTTS, University Paris-Est), Nathalie Roseau (LATTTS, Ecole des Ponts ParisTech), Tommaso Vitale (CEE, Sciences Po).

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