

Rescaling Europe, Rebounding Territory: a political approach

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Abstract

Social science long identified modernization with territorial integration and functional differentiation, but within territorially-bounded states. Globalization theories at the end of the Cold War projected this to the world level, with the 'borderless world'. This is better conceptualized as a rescaling and selective rebounding of social systems at multiple levels, above, below and across the state system. This has posed again an old question about the relationship of function, community and territory. It is an essentially contested matter and can only be appreciated if we accept that all three elements are constructed and mutually constituted. There can be no neutral and uncontested spatial fix, since the definition of territory and the drawing of boundaries has huge implications for the distribution of wealth and power. Rescaling is above all a political matter.

The Modernization Paradigm

For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mainstream social science was gripped by a vision of modernization as a process of territorial integration and functional differentiation (Parsons 1971; Finer 1997; Durkheim 1964). Economic progress and markets would break down traditional systems of production; old status patterns would break down. Diffusion of norms from central places would incorporate peripheral societies (Deutsch, 1972). Successive meta-theories in social science, from behaviourism to public choice, sought to eliminate territory or to reduce it to the uneven incidence in space of universal variables.

There was one glaring exception to this, which was the territorially-bounded nation state, encompassing economics, politics and society. Scholars of state formation emphasized the role of power and strategies of power-holders for containing or caging social and economic systems, power and legitimacy within national boundaries (Tilly 1975, 1990; Mann 1993). The end result, however, was the elimination of territory within those boundaries and an entrenched methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Schiller, 2002). The division between the separate disciplines of political science and sociology on the one hand and international relations on the other allowed the former to ignore territory and borders while the latter (at least in the 'realist' school) reified the bounded territorial state. It was this deep-seated difference of approach that made it so hard to conceptualise the emerging European order from the 1950s and created a debate that, in its essentials, has not changed much since then.

The ideal-type nation state is characterized by fixed spatial boundaries, enclosing a number of co-terminous social, economic and political systems. The nation provides the unitary *demos* underpinning systems of representation, participation and, eventually, democracy, as argued by JS Mill (1972) and many others since. The representation of social and economic interests turned inwards. Shared identity allowed for a politics based on economic interests, with an underlying assumption of trust. National societies were the frame for examining and understanding social structures and associational activities; indeed that was usually the only way in which statistics were compiled. Regulation of markets was organized on a national basis and the concept of the 'national economy' was constructed, whether this was then used as a basis for mercantilist or for free-trading policies. In due course, national welfare states were built on the twin bases of the affective solidarity coming from shared identity, and social compromises emerging from the fact that neither capital nor labour could exit from the national arena and so were forced into various forms of collaboration.

For my purposes, it is largely immaterial whether states were constructed from above or below. It may be that rulers were primarily interested in territorial expansion and then generated surpluses available for other purposes. They may have cynically used nationalism and welfare as a strategy of control. Welfare may, on the other hand, have emerged from

class struggle, or enlightened self-interest or democratization. The national economy may have been the product of capitalist accumulation strategies, or of the effort to regulate capitalism. The end result was still the territorially-bounded, integrated polity.

Approaches to European integration from the 1950s drew heavily on many of these assumptions and ideas. For some, the reified nation-state remained the fundamental unit of analysis, with domestic politics largely sealed off from the European stage, which was itself a place to defend 'national interests'. Neo-functionalists, for their part, emphasized the inter-relationship among economic, political and social dimensions just as had modernist theories of the nation-state. Europe is now increasingly seen as neither an intergovernmental order nor as a (federal) state in the making but as a contested project, which can be analysed from multiple perspectives. This has coincided with a reappraisal of teleological accounts of state formation and a realization that the stability of European states in the mid-twentieth century may have been the result of a specific historical juncture. Developments in social geography, meanwhile, have questioned the whole modernist distinction between function and territory as principles of social organization and allowed the reintegration of territory into social analysis.

Rescaling

The termination of the Cold War saw a brief resurgence of modernist triumphalism. The end of history was announced as the US model of liberal capitalism was proclaimed to be the apotheosis of modernization itself (Fukuyama 1992). The old argument about function overcoming territory was revived but this time without the awkward fact of its stopping at the territorial boundaries of the state. Instead, the context was that of 'globalization'; territorial integration and functional differentiation would now be truly universal. The end of history was accompanied by the 'end of territory' (Badie 1995). It is significant that this thesis was propounded by international relations scholars because what was often really meant was the end of the nation-state, itself a contentious proposition. In other senses, what we have been witnessing is both de-territorialization and re-territorialization.

Rescaling refers to the migration of various systems to new levels, above, below and across the bounded state (Brenner 2004, 2009; Brenner et al. 2003; Keating 2013). The best documented case concerns economic change and development, which are ever less framed by the nation-state. There are global production chains, and transnational markets and financial flows. At the same time, a body of literature emphasizes the importance of local and regional conditions for development (Scott 1998). These are no longer the old factor endowments such as proximity to raw materials, seaways and markets but include human capital and sociological factors that permit innovation and that combination of competition and cooperation that facilitates it. Demographics and the spatial division of labour imposed by global capitalism draw people to migrate even as nation states seek to stop them at their borders.

Higher education, to take another example, is seeing a similar pattern of re-territorialization. Universities are tied into local societies, where they are seen as an essential underpinning for development and cultural reproduction, but at the same time seek to compete in a global market. Minority languages and cultures find new means of sustenance from global communications technology but rely on local societies for their daily reproduction and face-to-face communication. Welfare is also rescaling as older patterns of risk give way to new social risks and passive welfare gives way to active labour market policies, linked to local labour markets, creating territorially complex patterns of provision (Ferrera 2005).

Political identities, usually conceptualized as pertaining to the 'national' (that is the state) level, are reconfiguring as the mystique of the nation-state is weakening. It is not that

identities are shifting from the state to supra-state, global or sub-state levels, but that they are becoming more pluralist. New and revived territorial movements are challenging the hegemony of the nation-state and territory is increasingly used as an element in political competition. New territorial scales are being institutionalized at the supra-national, regional and local level.

Of course, the model of the integrated, territorially-bounded nation-state was only ever an ideal-type. As Stein Rokkan (1999) showed, other territorial cleavages persisted within states and across Europe. The literature from the 1970s showed how they were not mere legacies of the past or evidence of retarded modernization, but could be reproduced in modern, industrial societies (Tarrow et al. 1978; Keating 1988). By the end of the twentieth century, territory, far from disappearing, seemed to be becoming more important.

Understanding Rescaling

There is a longstanding tradition of interpreting the political and institutional consequences of changes of scale according to two distinct logics: that of identity or community, and that of functional logic.¹ The first approach often relies on the concept of ethnicity, nationality or national minority, seen as reified and unchanging entities seeking recognition and autonomy. Kymlicka (2007) identifies groups with particular cultures and credits them with interests in defending these. Writing of 'national minorities', he claims that 'Slovaks view ethnic Hungarians not just as a potentially irredentist group that is loyal to their kin state, but as a historically powerful and privileged group that collaborated with a hegemonic imperial power to oppress the Slovak language and culture' (Kymlicka 2007: 186). Kymlicka (2007: 215) further asks whether 'national minorities in Catalonia, Flanders, Quebec, Berne, South Tyrol, Aland Islands, or Puerto Rico would be satisfied with minority elementary schools but not mother-tongue universities, or bilingual street signs but not official language status, or local administration not regional autonomy.'² This kind of cultural reductionism ignores the fact that mobilization around territorialized identity claims is a complex process and may cover a whole range of issues beyond culture, including social welfare, the environment and economic development. For Alesina and Spoloare (2003), the key factor is ethnic 'homogeneity', which they then link to territory without explaining what it actually is.

Yet sociologists nowadays are almost unanimous that national and ethnic groups like these are socially constructed and reconstructed.³ As Brubaker (1996) has noted, the nation is a category of practice, rather than a shared sociological reality. It is also a claim, with two dimensions. The first is an ontological claim, that the nation (or people or ethnic group) exists as a collectivity. The second is the teleological and normative claim that it is destined for self-government and has a right to self-determination. History matters but is also contested and selectively remembered. Since no Slovaks currently alive could remember life in Austro-Hungarian times, the memory itself must have been constructed and transmitted over time, and adapted to different purposes. Identities are neither objective, dependent on fixed and knowable characteristics, nor purely subjective and individual. They are, rather, intersubjective, a set of meanings shared by members of a community, often in a 'family resemblance' manner such that there is no one item that is both necessary and sufficient for membership. In the absence of fixed and agreed territorial boundaries for sub-state spaces, there is frequently debate about who belongs and a number of pathways to membership.

¹ A recent example is Hooghe and Marks (2016).

² If we replaced the list in the sentence quoted with 'French Basques, Occitans, Scottish Gaelic speakers' and even (until recently) 'Welsh', then the answer would be Yes.

³ Hooghe and Marks (2016) do make this point but do also write about homogeneous societies.

Identity is not so much a static characteristic of individuals as a mode of collective meaning and of action. First it serves to define the relevant group and affirming its existence as a social reality. Second, it gives meaning to the group, depending on what content is chosen for it. This could be anything from tradition, language, cultural symbols, landscape to more explicitly political items. This makes comparing the strength of identity difficult, given that we may be measuring different things in different places. Efforts to explore the extent of European identity have similarly run into the difficulty that its meaning and content are unclear and often contested. Identities, so constructed, are as much the dependent as the independent variable in the analysis of territorial politics.

There are equally problems with the functional approach, deriving political territories and boundaries from functional considerations. The idea that there is an optimal territorial for any function can be traced back to the managerial revolution at the end of the nineteenth century, notably in the United States and France, and has recurred regularly since then. In the era of globalization it has been invoked not just as a recommendation but as an explanation of spatial rescaling. Ohmae (1995) argues that, in the context of globalization, nation-states are giving way to functionally-determined 'regions', which constitute the building blocks of the international economy. From this it follows that these regions will displace states as the basis of political order. Alesina and Spoloare (2003) assume that nation-states exist because of their functional capacity under given conditions of trade. In a global free-trading order, the advantages of scale in providing large internal markets no longer exist. Consequently, large states fragment into smaller units which, having fewer people, are more 'homogeneous' and thus can meet citizens' preferences better.

There are three principal problems with such functionalist interpretations. First, the idea that a given scale is optimal for any specific services is always a political choice, depending on what one wants to unit to do. In the debates about local government reform, those on the left favouring redistribution have often argued for larger units, while those not favouring redistribution have defended small units. Advocates of planning favour large units, those inclined to laissez-faire have preferred small ones. Those who see democracy as a way of realizing individual preferences (as in public choice theories) may favour small, homogeneous units. Those who see democracy as the construction of deliberative spaces encompassing a plurality of interests and cultures, where the public good emerges from exchange and compromise among social interests, may prefer larger and more heterogeneous units.

Second, there is a strong element of fashion in ideas about the size of units, similar to the waves of fashion sweeping economics.

Third, whatever the *reasons* are for taking a given task at a particular territorial level, these are not the same as *causes*. For reasons of functional efficacy to become explanatory factors, there would need to be some mechanism, based for example on natural selection or systems theory. Otherwise the argument is teleological, reasoning back from effects to causes. Even if Alesina and Spoloare (2003) were right with the abstract argument that small states work better in times of free trade, that would not prove it so be a cause. In fact, they are empirically wrong in their claim that eras of global free trade have actually produced a fragmentation of the state system.

Identity and function thus provide weak ontological foundations on which to explain or to construct the territorial distribution of power and boundaries. There is no determinate relationship between identity or function and territory; it is misleading even to see them as independent variables conditioning social systems. Both are in fact constructed socially and politically and are contested. So is territory itself.

Reconceptualizing Territory and Borders

One reason for the urge to eliminate territory as a factor is that it is difficult to conceptualize and operationalize. There is a constant dilemma in the study of territorial social and political systems between context and comparison, and between parsimony and complexity (Storper 2011). Context is essential, yet contextual analysis risks ending up with a series of parallel stories without the explanatory force of comparison. There is always a danger that the names of places will be credited with causal significance and that territories will be reified. There is a particular difficulty with large-n quantitative studies, unless territories are unhelpfully reduced to a set of dummy variables. Results are also subject to the choice of unit of analysis and there is no agreement on what these should be, once the nation-state assumption is relaxed.

The constructivist turn in the social sciences has touched sociology, law, politics, economics and geography offers a way out. Traditional conceptions of territory are linked closely to boundaries, so that a fixed line encloses the relevant physical space. Modern understandings of territory see it not as a purely topological concept – about lines of maps – but also as a sociological one (Keating 2013). The alternative to the bounded conception of territory is the relational one, in which what matters is the temporal and spatial connection among social processes. Borders, in the old sense, give way to less well-defined boundaries, in which territories fade into each other. Non-contiguous territories may be connected in production chains and migration flows. The meaning of territory in turn is given by the social, economic and political uses made of it, which are multiple and contested. They may be to with landscape, economics, climate, culture, identity or history. For scholars, there is not one, scientific way of conceptualizing territory but different ones, depending on the question being asked.

There is no opposition between function and territory as organizing principles. Any functional system has a territorial reach and is moulded by spatial contexts. The same applies to class interests and relations identities, which are constructed and refracted in space and time.

Fernand Braudel (1986), in his last book, discusses the case of Gascony, which is undoubtedly a place but which has a multiplicity of territorial expressions and possible boundaries. The Basque Country is a social and political reality, but has multiple spatial definitions, invested with difference forms and degrees of cultural, social and political meaning. Catalonia may be defined as the autonomous community recognized in Spanish law, or as the broader, historical and cultural space of the *Països Catalans*. Northern Ireland has been a jurisdictional unit since 1922 but contested as to its meaning; until recently nationalists would always refer to it as ‘the north of Ireland’. Europe is a notoriously difficult place to define. Macro-regions like Mitteleuropa or Scandinavia are easily deconstructed but to have some political resonance. None of these conceptions space is ‘correct’ but they provide the bases for the discursive construction of territories for different political purposes.

Contesting Territories

Arguments about the nature of the European project go back to its inception. For some, it is a way of rescuing the nation state, while others see it as a federation in the making. Neo-functionalists are informed by the same kind of functionalist arguments reviewed above, while intergovernmentalists emphasize the ‘interests’ of states. For some, it is an instance of globalization while for others it is an instrument for taming globalization. Some it is an essentially capitalist project while for others it is the means of sustaining social democracy in the face of international capital. It is an essentially contested notion and these deeper arguments about aims and interests underlie the arguments about its institutionalization and boundaries.

The same is true of emerging sub-state territories. One conception of the region is a conservative one, a basis for traditional order faced with the disruptive tendencies of modernization. This goes back to the nineteenth century and resistance to both the market and the interventionist state. It survived in France until the 1980s and is present in areas of Germany and Austria. Such conservative regionalism is not necessarily antagonistic to the nation-state but represents a distinct way of constructing it, in contrast to the French Jacobin model. Such movements may also be Eurosceptic.

A different, modernist, conception of the region or city, derived from one reading the new economic regionalism, sees the region as essentially a space for economic growth and competition (as in Ohmae 1995). New regionalist perspectives on economic development have drawn attention to the importance of territory in explaining economic outcomes. In some versions, this is just an update of spatial location theory. Others place more emphasis on spatial interdependencies, arguing that regions and localities can be conceptualized not just as locations of production but as production systems, not in an autarkic sense, but linked into national, European and global production chains (Crouch et al. 2001). The global cities literature shows how specific locations are drawn into global production chains, shaping social and economic relations within them (Sassen 2000; Scott et al. 2001). These analyses go beyond economic exchange into sociology and even culture.

A further, and more contentious, move is to present the sub-state territory as an entity with its own interests (as in Ohmae 1995). From there it is a short move to the idea that regions have to compete against each other for advantage in European and world markets. This is a reification which has come in for considerable criticism (Bristow 2005, 2010) but has become extremely influential among governments and European and international agencies. It has often led them to the policy conclusion that all regions must become more competitive, a logical absurdity since competition is a zero-sum game.⁴ This in turn has inspired regional politicians to pose as defenders of a postulated common territorial interest; it is not obvious or given that citizens should define their interests territorially as opposed to any other way.

Competitive regionalism, whatever governments and international agencies say, necessarily entails winners and losers – that is what competition means. This can lead to neo-mercantilist forms of politics, in which regional leaders seek support by postulating a shared territorial interest, in opposition to the outside. The work of Michael Porter and of consultants has been influential here, although Porter (2001) himself is very ambivalent about whether regions actually do compete. Competitive regionalism invariably places the region beyond national space and boundaries, the reference point being global and European markets and relationships. Neo-mercantilist themes are often combined with neo-liberal arguments about the primacy of markets (however contradictory this is in theory) to justify a competitive model based on low taxes and social overheads (Ohmae 1995; Alesina and Spoloare 2003). Since investment capital is free to relocate, it must be accommodated. Critics have argued that this can lead to a ‘race to the bottom’ in social provision and an increase in inequalities not only between, but within regions. This idea, of the city as an unbounded space at the mercy of footloose capital, has long been a staple of urban political economy in the United States and underlies arguments in fiscal federalism that redistributive policies should be kept at the higher level (Oates 1999).

Socially regressive development policies, however, do provoke a reaction and new forms of politics. Plant closures and population displacement stimulate social and political movements focused on place. The result has been new forms of place-based resistance and a conception of territory as a space of social solidarity. Urban movements may combat the

⁴ All could become more productive but that is a different argument.

commodification of space and its redefinition as basis for community. The construction of Europe as a market-based order has stimulated movements for a social Europe.

Political movements and leaders can use these meanings in new ways to construct and reproduce political communities in different historical periods. While it is not axiomatic that small territories are functionally more efficient in the context of free trade and transnational integration, nationalist movements can and do use the themes of the new regionalism to provide an economic underpinning to their demands for autonomy or independence. They can combine economic, cultural and political themes to reinvest their territories with meaning or even create wholly new territorial imaginaries (Keating et al. 2003). The same is true of the European project, its boundaries and its economic, social and cultural meaning.

It is from these varied and sometimes discordant elements that territories are constructed. When building regions in the current era, a favourite trope is that of the entrepreneurial people, with a European and international vocation, in line with new regionalist economics (Keating et al. 2003). The literature on the advantages of small-scale units in a global trading order (Alesina and Spoloare 2003; Skilling 2012) is pressed into service by secessionist movements, often with a selective interpretation of the data and of cases. Alesina and Spoloare have sometimes been invoked in Catalonia (Colomer 2006) but have not found favour in Scotland because of their neo-liberal and ethnicist politics, which contradict the social democratic thrust of Scottish demands. The old Lega Nord used neo-liberal and globalist arguments to project the concept of Padania, but this was accompanied by protectionist discourse and practices at local level (Keating 2013). Most territorial movements stress social solidarity as a unifying theme. Some are anti-immigration in the interest of preserving local culture while others welcome immigration as a means of rebuilding the political community in the face of demographic challenges (as in Scotland).

History is, of course, important but not in the way it is often understood. It is easy to survey the map of European regions in the twenty-first century and note that those that are most highly institutionalized have a long lineage but this is case of selecting on the dependent variable. If we were to look at a map of the continent in the fifteenth century, we would be hard put to predict which boundaries would still be there six hundred years later. It is not ancient roots that explain the current map, but distinct paths to modernization and reconstruction, especially in the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. History then becomes a source of collective images and interpretations used to bolster present demands. Similarly, there are contested arguments about the historical lineage of Europe and, indeed, whether to build it on the basis of past commonalities or to use European wars as the argument for transcending nationalism.

This discursive construction of territories draws on collective myths images and stereotypes, as nationalism always has. Research (Keating et al. 2003) has found two pervasive stereotypes at the regional level. One is of the dynamic, progressive region or nation, combining economic success with social solidarity. Such progressive narratives usually have a strong European referent, emphasizing the complementarity of Europeanism and regionalism. A countervailing story is that of the backward region, unable to grasp the new opportunities and in need of renewal. Interestingly, the components of the two stereotypes are often the same. So individualism can be presented as entrepreneurial or as a lack of social capital. Collectivism can be seen as productive social cooperation or as lack of initiative. Once again, we are reminded that it is not some objective condition that explains the construction of territory, but the work of political and social actors. Cultural icons and practices are also reinterpreted and reshaped around the project. Where tradition in conservative regionalism can bolster order and hierarchy, neo-traditional culture elsewhere is

associated with popular struggles and modernization.⁵ In the present state of research, we lack good comparative data on these things; different surveys ask different questions. The French OIP has asked a range of questions about regional identity, going from cuisine and landscape to politics. The Spanish Centre for Sociological Research ran a set exploring regional stereotypes and auto-stereotypes, finding often that the collective territorial auto-stereotype differed from the sum of individual auto-stereotypes, highlighting the way in which the latter is a political construction (Sangador García, 1996). One comparative survey has explored the way in which regional identities are constructed and deployed around social solidarity (Henderson et al. 2013).

Territorial, class and sectoral imaginations are thus mutually constituted and given meaning. Function is not a neutral category, nor is space merely a location where other social processes are worked out. Boundaries are multiple and penetrable. Yet there are given a degree of solidity and fixity when territories are constituted as levels of government and institutionalized.

Institutionalizing Territory

Regions and Europe are thus constructed as loosely defined spaces. Both their territorial boundaries and the social, economic and political systems within them are ill-defined and contested. If governance is defined as and networks of actors linked within spaces and sectors, then this may be a space of governance.⁶ Yet this is not all that is happening. Rescaling has winners and losers. Some actors are more mobile and able to exit from local constraints. Spatial development strategies may benefit some residents and displace others. Competitive regionalism may provoke inter-regional inequality and intra-regional inequality as some actors within territories are better connected. Power may disappear into opaque networks. The general territorial interest may be defined in ways that include some and exclude others. The European project has winners and losers, whether these are defined by class, location, gender or other characteristics. The response is usually politicization of the new spaces and demands for more control and more new syntheses of economic, social, environmental and cultural considerations. This, historically, has led movements for multifunctional, representative government, as a means of brokering social interests and allowing access to decision-making by excluded interests.

From above, states have sought to regain mastery of systems which seems to have escaped their purview. This is one impulse behind the development of the European Union. At the sub-state level, there is a search for better management and integration at the urban or regional level. Asking whether this is about weakening and even dismantling the state or strengthening it is beside the point. Rather it is a means by which state managers can regain influence, while at the same time having to share their sovereignty and autonomy. Power may be shared but at the same time enhanced.

One strategy for management is to redefine the issues as a technical one and to construct depoliticized institutions for resolving them. Hence, at the European level, competences have been both rescaled to Europe and depoliticized – the most obvious example is monetary policy. At the sub-state level, European governments from the 1950s to the 1970s, sought depoliticize regional development policies. They were presented as positive-sum since diversionary investment policies helped lagging regions while relieving congestion in booming ones and enhancing national productive capacity. In what is known as functional

⁵ Colleagues in southern Germany and Austria are often surprised when I explain that neo-traditionalist folk culture in Scotland is predominantly associated with the political left.

⁶ This, of course is only one of the myriad meanings of the term.

regionalism, they were very often entrusted to special-purpose agencies in order to insulate the economic development function from distributivist pressures.

Politics, however, will out and separating development matters from their social consequences is never uncontroversial. This, combined with the pressures from below around the reconstruction of territory ensured a demand for repoliticization and institutionalization. The combination of pressures from below and considerations from above about effective management and steering have led to the constitution of responsible government as a way of re-legitimizing public action. There have been steps towards European government or federation, albeit halting and incomplete. At the urban and regional level, there are new forms of elected authority (Hooghe et al. 2010). Since this represents a political choice and not a functional imperative, it is incomplete and highly contested. Political and social movements do not work within the functional boundaries imposed by government and administration but often challenge them. This challenges the definition of issues imposed by functional regionalism, broadens the political agenda, and provides an impulse towards multifunctional territorial government in place of functionally-driven 'governance'.

At the same time government defines or 'fixes' territories and boundaries at the supranational and sub-state level. This is not because boundaries correspond to any determinate functional logic or encompass clearly delineated identity-based groups. That would be impossible, since these are contested matters and, even if there were clear criteria, they do not all point in the same direction. Jurisdictional boundaries are always an instrument of power. They include some citizens and exclude others, so affecting the balance of social forces within them. Boundaries also affect the degree to which social and economic interests can engage in exit or 'partial exit' (Bartolini 2005). Europe is contained within a global trading system, with regular arguments about how far it can impose burdens on capital, regulate sectors or sustain European 'champions' in global competition. Compared with nation-states, regions are loosely-bounded spaces without the capacity to 'cage' social relations but some interests are more effectively caged, while others have the ability to exit. Arguments about metropolitan government illustrate the point. The left and representatives of the poor will often favour amalgamation of local governments to bring in wealthier taxpayers and land, but fear the effects for their own electoral prospects. Wealthy suburbanites, on the other hand, will resist incorporation. In more recent times, the politics of inner cities has often been transformed by the influx of wealthy and socially liberal residents who vote for the centre-left.

Both regions and Europe have consequently emerged as political spaces. Alesina and Spoloare (2003) argue that, because smaller territories are ethnically homogeneous, they will better reflect citizens' preferences. Yet ethnicity is defined, some of the smallest territories are divided societies (Northern Ireland has less than two million people). Nor is there any reason to think that co-ethnics should have the same views on public policy issues.⁷ A political space, rather, is an arena in which different conceptions of the public good can be debated and in which interests can be brokered. Regions thus become spaces for political competition, which may or may not take on different contours from that at the state level. Territory itself can become a resource in competition as political actors pose as defenders of the putative common territorial interest even as they work to construct that interest.

There is also a rescaling of the definition, organization and articulation of social and economic interests at new levels and variations across classes, sectors and territories (Keating 2018; Keating and Wilson 2014). Large businesses operate at a national and global scale but

⁷ Alesina and Spoloare (2003) make the extraordinary suggestion that Black, Latino and White communities in the USA may properly want separate schools – sixty years after Brown vs. Board of Education!

are acutely aware of the importance of territory to their investment strategies, so to that degree are territorial. On the other hand, they seek to avoid capture by local and regional networks and prefer functional regionalism to regional devolution and ad hoc agencies to multifunctional government. Their European strategy is similar. Small business, on the other hand, is more dependent on locally produced public goods and closer to popular local identities and is often favourably disposed to regional government. Trades unions favour strong national welfare provisions and defend national-level avenues into government. Yet they are drawn into local struggles around plant closures and development and often favour participative regional and local structures to compensate for the loss of influence through national corporatist mechanisms. They have moved generally towards regional government, as opposed to functional regionalism, in order to secure a stronger social dimension in policies and more social inclusion generally. They are also caught between temptations to national protectionism and playing the European game to obtain stronger social provisions. Agri-businesses look to European and global regulators, while small farmers depend more on local and regional access and are often allied to local environmental and neo-traditionalist cultural movements. Environmental bodies are deeply concerned with territory and local conditions but rely on regulation from the supranational level. Regional devolution has encouraged a degree of institutional isomorphism, as interest groups re-organize, strengthen their territorial structures and seek to influence regional governments. Yet the better-resourced are able to maintain multiple points of contact at all levels, so avoiding being trapped within regional boundaries and being able to venue-shop at regional, national and local levels.

The policy agenda is altered by rescaling as issues are refracted at new levels and the balance of forces shifts. Capital and labour may forge development coalitions in favour of growth, against ecologists on the other side. The relationship between passive welfare policies and active labour market policy may be cast differently. Education may be seen linked to economic development. Migration may be defined as a threat or an opportunity. Experience varies. At one end, we have 'regions without regionalism' (Pastori 1981) or the 'paradox of the regions' (Le Galès 1997), in which regions exist but policy making and interest brokerage passes them by, continuing in national mode. At the other, are new territorial policy communities (Keating 2013) in which issues are redefined, interests brokered, new social alliances formed and distinctive policies emerge at the regional level. In between are more, or less, loosely bounded territories, imposing a spatial frame on interest articulation and intermediation.

Territorial autonomy and post-sovereignty

Territorial political movements may (but not necessarily) be committed to territorial autonomy. This does not follow from any determinist logic linked to globalization or Europeanization. Rescaling, however, has provided opportunities for self-determination movements to frame their demands in new forms, seeking modes of self-government different from the traditional, tightly bordered nation-state in a Europe characterized by challenges to state authority and interdependency. In this sense, far from representing retarded modernity, they are adaptations to the latest phase in modernity, while drawing on historical materials refashioned (as always) to suit the purpose.

In some ways, European integration has lowered the threshold for secession. Since the late 1980s, Scottish and some Catalan nationalists have favoured independence-in-Europe, a position that has now extended to encompass the entire Catalan nationalist movement. This has been in full knowledge that such independence is limited by the European framework.

More widespread, however, has been the idea that Europe provides a post-sovereign space in which issues of self-determination, sovereignty and borders can be transformed from

a zero-sum game into a form of politics amenable to negotiation and compromise. Post-sovereignty does not mean that sovereignty has disappeared but that it is no longer the sole principle of political order and that it can be divided and shared (MacCormick, 1999; Keating, 2001). Such ideas have had particular resonance in places where state sovereignty has long been challenged by rival doctrines based on contractualism and the notion of union rather than the nation-state. Scotland and the Basque Country are examples. In the case of Northern Ireland, ideas of shared sovereignty, multiple identities and open borders are the essence of the settlement. Brexit has highlighted the way in which both European ideas of shared sovereignty and overarching European systems for market and social regulation provided an external framework for managing the national question across the United Kingdom. Post-sovereignist ideas have informed the strategy of the former Catalan *Convergència i Unió* and *Plaid Cymru* (Party of Wales), the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (Basque Nationalist Party) and various Flemish parties. There have been movements for a Europe of the Peoples, displacing the states but these are utopian, given the powerful status of states in the European constitutional order. There was a rather diffuse Europe of the Regions movement and a coalition of Regions with Legislative (RegLeg), which sought a special status for the stronger regions.

Post-sovereign ideas, however, have had a chequered history. The European Union has assumed a role in the protection of national minorities but this is applied only to states wanting to become members and lapsed upon entry. The Council of Europe has a Framework Convention on National Minorities but it is voluntary and states are allowed to designate their own national minorities. The Maastricht Treaty set up the Committee of the Regions, but its failure to become an important part of the EU institutional architecture is due at least partly to its failure to recognize the different status and claims of different forms of territorial unit and to try and assimilate them into a simple hierarchy. It is a stark reminder that the EU is an association of member states which are jealous of their sovereignty, however attenuated that might be in practice.

Spanish governments vigorously defend the declarations about the unitary Spanish nation in the constitution and have refused to entertain ideas about shared sovereignty. The UK Government, while recognizing in various ways the permanence of the Scottish Parliament, has refused to give up the doctrine that the Westminster Parliament can ultimately prevail in any conflict. Unlike the Spanish state, it has conceded secession referendums (in Scotland and Northern Ireland). Staunchly unionist UK Prime Ministers have agreed that Scotland could ultimately become independent if it so willed. No UK government, however, has accepted the idea that sovereignty might be shared.

For their part, sub-state self-determination movements have gone through phases of post-sovereignty, only to return to the sovereignty claim as the core element. One reason is the reluctance of states and Europe to recognize shared sovereignty. Another is that the core claim of the movements is ontological, that their political community actually exists and, consequently deserves recognition. Given that territorial political communities are constructed, weakly bounded and contested, it is hard to credit them with rights.⁸ Recognition as territorially bounded sovereign entities, however, endows them with the same ontological status as existing states, however they may choose to share their sovereignty in practice. A similar role is played by self-describing themselves as ‘nations’ rather than regions or anything else. It postulates that the community exists across time, linking past, present and future. While the language of nationality is rather banal in Scotland, elsewhere (notably in Spain) it carries strong a normative charge, implying that they are the subject of self-determination. At the end of the nineteenth century, the shift of the Catalanist movement

⁸ This is no doubt one reason why political theorists tend to reify them.

from ‘regionalism’⁹ to ‘nationalism’ was thus significant. At present, these apparently symbolic issues of sovereignty and nationhood lie at the heart of the conflict between the Spanish state and Catalan government.

Yet there is a further turn. Having asserted national independence as their aim, territorial political movements in practice come back to formulas based on shared authority and interdependence. After failing to win a referendum on the formula of sovereignty-association in 1980, the Parti Québécois opted for full independence, only to return to sovereignty with partnership in the second referendum in 1995. Plaid Cymru has played with variations on the theme of full national status while Flemish nationalists have talked of confederation, at least as a staging post to an undefined future state. The Scottish National Party’s offering at the independence referendum of 2014 included retaining five of the six ‘unions they shared with the United Kingdom (political; monetary; defence; monarchical; European; and social) (Keating and McEwen 2017). Walker (2019) makes a distinction between teleological nationalism, which has a clear end goal, typically the constitution of an independent state, and reflexive nationalism, where the focus is the maintenance of the national community and responding to opportunities. Territorial nationalisms in an evolving European order tend to the reflexive, withholding clarity on the final goal as long as the finality of Europe, the international order and the bounded nation-state is unknown.

The Persistence of Space and Time

Modernization theory from the late nineteenth century owed a great deal to notions of functional rationality and the gradual erosion of pre-modern conceptions of territory and identity in the face of functional requirements. In recent years, there has been a widespread rediscovery of identity, prompted by developments in politics in what were considered to be ultra-modern, if not post-modern societies. Yet these have never operated as separate or distinct logics for the organization of space. Any social system exists in space and time and has a territorial and functional scope. Functional rationality only ever makes sense in relation to some transcendent objective or power relationship. Identity is not a property only of individuals or an objective feature but is essentially a set of relationships and mutual understandings.

The argument about the construction of territories and boundaries applies equally to the construction of Europe, which is also a contested project whose boundaries cannot be explained either by reference to shared identity or to functional logic, although those are indeed part of the argument. The Brexit debacle shows how difficult it is to re-establish meaningful boundaries and borders in the name of an illusory sovereignty. It is not just the borders between the United Kingdom and the European Union that are at issue but the relationship to the UK’s component territories to the wider union and the world. Yet this does not stop politicians from calling for the return of sovereignty and its associated sense of identity.

There have been regular efforts to fix territory and boundaries and define scales. These include Europe, the sub-state, ‘meso’ level, the metropolitan level, the neighbourhood, inter-state levels and all things in between. Unlike the old nation-state, these cannot effectively cage social processes, but they can reshape social relations, redefine the political agenda and affect social and economic outcomes. The old nation-state model may have allowed political scientists to edit out territory from their conceptual tool-kit while giving international relations scholars a (misleading) sense of ontological security, but it was always rather misleading. It is now under strain but is not being replaced by a new spatial fix, whether in the form of globalization or a world of ‘regional states’.

⁹ As in *the Lliga Regionalista*.

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