

Cultural Political Economy, Spatial Imaginaries, Regional Economic Dynamics

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The world market provides the ultimate horizon of economic analysis just as 'world society' is the ultimate horizon of social analysis. In neither case does this mean that the world scale is the primary (let alone sole) locus of globally significant causal mechanisms or social forces. One should not mistake the field on which economic or social processes unfold with their causal dynamics. For example, the global financial crisis did not originate at some global scale above or beyond specific circuits of capital anchored in particular places and networks. It was made in the USA, broke out there, and has spread unevenly through a mix of contagion and endogenous vulnerabilities around the globe. Even in the midst of the most severe global economic crisis since the 1930s, some locales, regions, and national economies have expanded and, indeed, the origins and effects of the crisis have contributed to the shift in the economic centre of gravity of the global economy after some five centuries back to what Europeans and Yankees call 'the East'. This poses the question of whether there are other spatial dynamics at work too and, if so, how they interact. One locus of such dynamics is the region and this contribution aims to provide some useful concepts and guidelines from the perspective of cultural political for the analysis of regional dynamics within the bigger picture of the world market.¹

Although there is wide interest nowadays in post-national *political* constellations, the following reflections will focus on *economic* dynamics at the sub-national and cross-national regional levels. The chapter has five main parts: (1) a brief introduction to cultural political economy; (2) a discussion of lived experience and imaginaries that addresses economic and regional imaginaries and the conditions for their translation into stable economic and/or regional orders; (3) remarks on the problems of locating regions in the tangled hierarchy of local-regional-national-triad-global dynamics; (4) comments on the relativization of scale, regional strategies, and the challenges of governing the logics of territory and the space of flows; (5) some observations on multi-level governance and network governance in regard to regions. The sequence of arguments and the examples given to illustrate them reflect the concerns of the

present volume. In other contexts it would be more appropriate to address their implications and provide examples for quasi-continental regional blocs (such as the European Union), larger triad regions, or even bilateral or trilateral cooperation among triad regions. I nonetheless hope to indicate how this can be done through the general remarks in the first two parts of the contribution.

1. Cultural Political Economy

Cultural political economy (hereafter CPE) is an emerging post-disciplinary approach that integrates the cultural turn (defined in this context as a concern with semiosis considered from the viewpoint of meaning-making) into the study of the relations between the economic and the political as well as their embedding in wider sets of social relations at different spatial scales up to and including world society. The present approach has six features that *together* distinguish it from other versions of CPE that address similar topics: (1) the grounding of its version of the cultural turn, i.e., its interest in semiosis or *Sinnmachung*, in the existential necessity of complexity reduction; (2) its interest in the mechanisms that shape the movement from social *construal* to social *construction* and their implications for the production and contestation of domination and hegemony; (3) its concern with the interdependence and co-evolution of the semiotic and extra-semiotic; (4) its integration of individual, organizational, and societal learning into the dialectic of semiosis and structuration and, by extension, of path-shaping and path-dependency; (5) its analysis of the role of technologies, in a broadly Foucauldian sense, in shaping domination and hegemony; and (6) its de-naturalization of social imaginaries as part of a broader *Ideologie-* and *Hegemoniekritik*. Not all of these features can be developed here but they do help to locate the following less comprehensive remarks.

It is useful to distinguish four types of cultural turn: thematic, methodological, ontological, and reflexive. In brief, a cultural turn could address previously neglected themes, propose a new entry point into social analysis, discover that 'culture' is actually foundational to the social world, or, lastly, apply one or more of the preceding turns to reflect upon the development of, or resistance to, the making of cultural turns. Examples of all four turns can be found in the humanities and social sciences but the present version of CPE privileges the ontological turn. Thus CPE is

not confined to the study of 'cultural' topics in political economy (e.g., the economics of art markets, the creative industries, professional culture, the cultural influence of the mass media, the culturalization of the economy or economization of culture); nor does it argue that social scientific investigation should begin with meaning-making (e.g., by starting with the analysis of discourse and discursive practices) as opposed to another entry point (such as social structure or individual or collective agency). Rather CPE argues that, whether one starts with meaning-making or another analytical entry point, an adequate explanation of political economy dynamics must *sooner or later* integrate semiosis into the analysis because intersubjective meaning-making is foundational to social practice. Later sections will introduce some key concepts for the study of semiosis (e.g., lived experience, imaginaries, horizons of action, learning, projects, and hegemony) and their implications for the critique of political economy. In this sense, CPE does not seek to add 'culture' to economics and politics as if each comprised a distinct area of social life and, *a fortiori*, entailed distinct objects for theoretical and empirical analysis that might then be explored in terms of their external interactions or mutual conditioning in specific situations. Instead, arguing that all social phenomena have *both* semiotic *and* material properties, it studies their interconnections and co-evolution in structuring as well as construing social relations. It adds that semiosis is causally efficacious as well as meaningful and, in this sense, in line with Max Weber's *verstehende Soziologie*, its analysis not only serves to *interpret* events and processes but also to *explain* them.

There are two important mechanisms of complexity reduction in social relations: semiosis and structuration. For the present version of CPE, semiosis is an umbrella concept for all forms of the production of meaning that is oriented to communication among social agents, individual or collective. As such it covers a wide range of *methodological* cultural turns with their distinctive knowledge interests – interpretive, performative, reflexive, literary or post-colonial, translational, iconic, argumentative, discursive, ideational, linguistic, narrative, rhetorical, visual, iconic, etc. (on the first five of these turns, see Bachman-Medick 2006). Regardless of the specific methodological approach adopted, with its particular sets of research questions, CPE also insists on an ontological turn. It regards semiosis as a necessary feature of the social world – and hence as foundational to that world – because it cannot be grasped in all its complexity in real time. This obliges actors (and observers) to focus

selectively on some aspects of the world as the basis for becoming active participants therein and/or for describing and interpreting it as disinterested observers. Thus actors and observers alike are forced to attend to some 'aspects' of the world rather than others. These 'aspects' are not objectively pre-given in the real world nor are they subjectively pre-scripted by hard-wired cognitive capacities. Instead they depend for their selective apperception (recognition and misrecognition) in large part on the currently prevailing meaning systems of relevant actors and observers as these have been modified over time. In turn, meaning-making helps to shape the overall constitution of the natural and social world insofar as it guides a critical mass of self-confirming, path-shaping actions that more or less correctly diagnose the scope for the world to be different. Competing regional imaginaries and their contribution, in favourable circumstances, to constructing regions illustrate this point. It is the foundational character of semiosis to the construal and construction of the social world that justifies, indeed requires, an ontological cultural turn. This is especially important where meaning systems have become so sedimented (taken-for-granted or naturalized) that their socially contingent nature goes unremarked. It is in revealing these features that CPE contributes to *Ideologie-* and *Hegemoniekritik*.

Structuration establishes possible connections and sequences of social interaction (including interaction with the natural world) so that they facilitate routine actions and set limits to path-shaping strategic actions. Whereas structuration refers to a complex, contingent, tendential process that is mediated through action but produces results that no actors can be said to have willed, structure refers to the contingently necessary outcome of diverse structuration efforts (for an influential sociological account of structuration, see Giddens 1994; for a regulation-theoretical analysis highlighting the structuring role of institutions, see Esser, Görg, and Hirsch 1994; for a critical realist, strategic-relational interpretation, Jessop 2009a; for a communications-theoretical perspective that emphasizes the limits on understanding and social action imposed by the requirements of compossibility, Rustemeyer 2006; and for a useful temporality-sensitive, systems-theoretical approach, Tang 2007). Social reproduction never involves mere self-identical repetition – which would entail stasis; conversely, chaos would result if social relations were wholly random. It is structuration, with its mix of constrained opportunities, recursivity, redundancy, and flexibility, that facilitates social reproduction somewhere between an impossible

stasis and the edge of chaos. Reproduction is not automatic but is mediated through situated social action that occurs in more or less structured contexts. In this sense, structuration creates a complex assemblage of asymmetrical opportunities for social action, privileging some actors over others, some identities over others, some ideal and material interests over others, some spatio-temporal horizons of action over others, some coalition possibilities over others, some strategies over others and so on (Jessop 2009). Structural constraints always operate selectively: they are not absolute and unconditional but always temporally, spatially, agency-, and strategy-specific. Conversely, to the extent that agents are reflexive, capable of reformulating within limits their own identities and interests, and able to engage in strategic calculation about their current situation, there is scope for strategic action to alter the strategic selectivity of current structural configurations. It is in revealing these features of structuration and the scope for strategic action through a strategic-relational analysis that CPE contributes to *Herrschaftskritik*.

Where these two forms of complexity reduction are complementary, they transform meaningless and unstructured complexity into meaningful and structured complexity. The social and natural world becomes relatively meaningful and orderly for actors (and observers) insofar as not all *possible* social interactions are *compossible* in a given spatio-temporal matrix of time-space envelope. Many other meanings are thereby excluded and so are many other possible social worlds. This does not exclude competing imaginaries concerning different scales and fields of social action or, indeed, rival principles of societalization (*Vergesellschaftung*) more generally. For, in a social world characterized by exploitation, oppression, and exclusion, there are many possible standpoints for construing the world and sources of social disruption. Thus students of CPE regard stable social order as improbable and aim to explain how such an order, to the extent that it occurs, is enabled by hegemonic meaning systems, institutional fixes, and spatio-temporal fixes in shaping an unstable equilibrium of forces and displacing social problems elsewhere and/or into the future. One hypothesis in this regard is that certain territories, places, scales, or networks provide *zones of relative stability* that are typically tied to *zones of relative instability* that absorb crisis-tendencies and conflicts that would otherwise disturb the more stable time-space envelopes. This holds for regions as well as other socio-spatial configurations (see below).'

All actors are obliged to construe the world selectively as a condition of going on within it. But, while all social *construals* are equal before complexity, some are more equal than others in their impact on social *construction*. The role of semiosis in this respect cannot be understood or explained without identifying and exploring the extra-semiotic conditions that enable semiosis and make it more or less effective. This highlights the role of variation, selection, and retention in the development and consolidation of some construals rather than others and their embedding in practices that transform the natural and social world. It follows that a thorough CPE analysis would extend to the role of extra-semiotic (material) as well as semiotic factors in the contingent emergence (variation), subsequent privileging (selection), and ongoing realization (retention) of specific discursive and material practices (see Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer 2004). As one moves from variation through selection to retention, extra-semiotic factors play an increasing role in determining which discourses or imaginaries are translated into durable social constructions and get embodied in actors' habitus, hexis, and identities, enacted in organizational routines, or institutionalized in various ways. There are many sites and scales on which variation, selection, and retention of semiosis and structuration operate and, for present purposes, what matters is how smaller sites and scales come to be articulated to form more encompassing sites and scales and how the latter in turn frame, constrain, and enable local possibilities. This poses intriguing questions about the articulation of micro-social diversity to produce relatively stable macro-social configurations (Jessop 2005).

2. Lived Experience and Imaginaries – Some Regional Economic Implications

The sum of all social activities (including interactions with nature) is hypercomplex and often verges on, or tips into, chaos. Thus 'society' cannot be an object of effective calculation, management, governance, or guidance. The same point holds for subsets of all activities concerned with material provisioning, say, or that bear on the making of decisions that are collectively-binding on the residents of a specific territory. This forces actors to engage in selective meaning-making and efforts at structuration to reduce the complexity that they must handle in these respects. In the spirit of simplification, I suggest that these semiotic and structuring practices can be

classified in terms of: (1) their system relevance; (2) their relation to spheres of life; (3) their spatio-temporal location and horizons of action; and (4) their associated types of social agency. Although they are presented sequentially, these features are intertwined. Because I cannot consider all aspects of meaning-making as a basis for 'going on' in the world, shaping lived experience, and structuring social relations, I focus on the CPE of regions and regionalization with special reference to economic aspects. In other contexts one might discuss other socially construed and/or constructed fields of social practice, such as technology, economics, law, politics, education, science, or religion, and other aspects of the 'lifeworld', such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national identity, or generation.

An imaginary is a semiotic ensemble (or meaning system) that frames individual subjects' lived experience of an inordinately complex world and/or guides collective calculation about that world. There are many imaginaries and most are loosely-bounded and have links to other imaginaries within the broad field of semiotic practices. They exist at different sites and scales of action – from individual agents to world society (Althusser 1977; Taylor 2004). Without them, individuals cannot 'go on' in the world and collective actors (such as organizations) could not relate to their environments, make decisions, or engage in strategic action. In this sense, imaginaries are an important semiotic moment of the network of social practices in a given social field, institutional order, or wider social formation (Fairclough 2003). Let me now address the four above-mentioned aspects of imaginaries.

First, system relevance concerns features of the social world grasped in terms of the emergent, tendential structured coherence of their instituted properties. This can be illustrated from economic imaginaries and their relation to imagined economies. Economic imaginaries identify, privilege, and seek to stabilize some economic activities from the totality of economic relations. This could concern the governance of a defined 'space economy' (defined in terms of geography, political territory, a place or propinquitous places, a scale of activities – such as framing regional planning, or networks among places – as in the Hanseatic League) or the governance of a space of flows and, perhaps, their nodal points (e.g., the governance of commodity chains, international commerce, or derivatives markets). Through selective definition, economic imaginaries give meaning and shape to the

'economic' field or aspects of that field and, as such, typically exclude elements – usually unintentionally – vital to the overall performance of the subset of economic (and extra-economic) relations that have been thereby identified.

When an imaginary is operationalized and institutionalized, it transforms and naturalizes the included elements as parts (moments) of a specific, instituted economy. An instituted economy comprises subsets of economic relations that have been organizationally and institutionally fixed as appropriate objects of observation, calculation, management, governance, or guidance. This process of institution (or structuration) sets limits to compossible combinations of social relations and thereby renders them more predictable and manageable as objects of social action. However, there are always interstitial, residual, marginal, irrelevant, recalcitrant and plain contradictory semiotic and extra-semiotic elements that escape any attempt to identify, govern, and stabilize a given 'economic arrangement' or broader 'economic order'. These can disrupt the smooth performance of instituted economies. But, they also provide a reservoir of semiotic and material resources – sources of redundancy and flexibility – to be mobilized in the face of instability or crisis.

The recursive selection of semiotic practices and extra-semiotic processes tends to secure the 'requisite variety' (constrained heterogeneity rather than simple uniformity) behind the structural coherence of economic activities. Indeed, if they are to prove more than 'arbitrary, rationalistic, and willed' (Gramsci 1971: 376-7), economic imaginaries must have some significant, albeit necessarily partial, fit with real material interdependencies in the actually existing economy and/or in the relations among economic and extra-economic activities. We will see later how these arguments can be transposed to the question of regional imaginaries, imagined regions, and actually instituted regions.

Second, while many social activities are appropriately observed in terms of instituted systems and, indeed, some, such as the payment of taxes, could be ascribed to several systems, other social activities lack direct system relevance. This holds especially for activities that are not anchored in particular system logics but relate to other identities and interests that are transversal to these logics. Examples include the national and/or regional identity of an imagined community (Anderson 1993),

gender and sexual orientation, socially constructed 'racial' identities, or the formation of political generations rooted in shared experiences. By virtue of this lack of direct system relevance, these could be referred to various spheres of life, the 'lifeworld' (broadly interpreted) or, again, to 'civil society' (as long as this is not equated with 'bourgeois' society). They may nonetheless acquire system-relevance through their articulation into the operation of system logics (e.g., the use of gender to segment the labour force, the mobilization of 'racial' identities to justify educational exclusion). System-relevant and lifeworld imaginaries provide the basis for agential identities and interests, whether individual, group, movement, or organizational. Agents normally have multiple identities, privileging some over others in different contexts. This is the basis for social scientific interest in 'intersectionalism', i.e., the analysis of the effects of different combinations of system-relevant and 'lifeworld' identities.

Given this multiplicity of identities, their differential intersection, and the problems that this poses for social mobilization, effective social agency often depends on strategic essentialism (Spivak 1987). This involves the discursive and practical privileging of one identity over others for the purposes of collective action in particular conjunctures even though this temporarily ignores or suppresses real differences within a movement. Examples include the appeal to nationalism in inter-imperialist wars, successive waves of feminism, or the mobilization of regional identities to create the social as well as economic bases of regional competitiveness.

Third, imagined economies (or their equivalents for other systems) are discursively constituted and materially reproduced on many sites and scales, in different spatio-temporal contexts, and over various spatio-temporal horizons. Elsewhere I have identified, with two colleagues, four primary axes of spatial organization (territory, place, scale, and network) and we have shown how these axes can be combined to produce more or less complicated grids for identifying spatialized social relations. These axes also form the reference point for spatial imaginaries. Thus, just as there are many social imaginaries and lifeworld identities and interests, there are multiple spatial imaginaries. These can be one-dimensional, privileging one axis of spatial organization, or involve two or more axes. In regard to regions, one-dimensional imaginaries and related practices include: the territorialization of political power in terms of sub-national or supra-national regions, the propinquity of places as settings

for action (e.g., city-regions), the regional scaling of instituted social systems (e.g., regional wage-bargaining, regional planning, and regional health or education systems), and the building of networks to reinforce spaces of flows in ‘virtual regions’ (e.g., Europe’s ‘Four Motors Region’ or the BRIC economies²). Two-dimensional examples include multi-level governance arrangements that combine territory and scale, core-periphery relations based on asymmetrical relations among places in a given territory, polynucleated cities based on networked places, and cross-border regions based on networked territories (Jessop, Brenner, and Jones 2008a).

Fields of operation Structuring principles	TERRITORY	PLACE	SCALE	NETWORKS
TERRITORY	NOMADISM	Secession Separatism Irredentism	Dual Power Anti-Imperialism	Wars of position
PLACE	Peasant wars, Migration, Asylum	RED BASES REDNECK AREAS	Council communism, Soviets Communes	Militant Particularism
SCALE	Subsidiarity	Countryside surrounds towns Siege warfare	SCALE-JUMPING	World Social Forum, international solidarity movements
NETWORKS	Mobile Tactics	Movements of homeless and dispossessed	Localism Factory egoism Anarchism	MULTITUDE

Table 1: The Territory, Place, Scale, Network Matrix and Contentious Politics

(Source: Jessop, Brenner, and Jones 2008b)

The same analytical distinctions can be applied to socio-spatial strategies in the field of contentious politics (or, in more radical terms, the politics of resistance). Certain types of regional imaginary and practices premised on regional identity can be located here too. Examples include secession, red bases, and calls for subsidiarity (see Table 1). By referring to these different moments of socio-spatiality (and exploring the ways in which they can be combined to produce complex forms of socio-spatial organization), we can see that a region can be imagined and

constructed in many ways and that there is considerable scope for competing regional imaginaries and different kinds of region-building – ranging from tightly sealed territories to porous nodes in a networked space of flows (see next section).

Fourth, the relation between semiotic and structuring practices can be classified in terms of their associated types of social agency. Everyone is involved in semiosis because meaning-making is the basis of lived experience. However, just as Gramsci observed that, while everyone is an intellectual, not everyone performs the function of an intellectual, I suggest there is no equality in individual contributions to meaning-making. Each system and the different spheres of the 'lifeworld' have their own semiotic divisions of labour that overlay, differentially draw on, and feed into lived experience. There are individuals and/or collective intellectuals (such as political parties and old and new social movements) who are particularly active in bridging these different systems and spheres of life and attempting to create hegemonic meaning systems or develop sub- or counter-hegemonic meaning systems. And, of course, increasingly, semiosis is heavily 'mediatized', i.e., influenced by the mass media and social media. Given the diversity of systems and the plurality of identities in the 'lifeworld', one should not privilege *a priori* one type of social actor as the leading force in semiosis in general or in the making of hegemonies in particular. Similar points hold for structuring practices to the extent that there are competing societalization principles and no *a priori* guarantee that one principle will dominate the others. Nonetheless, as a working hypothesis at the level of world society, a case can be made that the profit-oriented, market-mediated logic of differential capital accumulation is becoming more dominant as the world market has been increasingly integrated under the logic of neo-liberalism and, in particular, of finance-dominated accumulation (Jessop 2011). But this general observation at the level of world society has no necessary implications (other than contextual ones) for the analysis of particular regions, however these might be defined.

3. Putting Regions in their Place

In depicting a region we encounter a definitional problem that not only concerns observers but also affects those directly involved in construing, constructing, reproducing, and transforming regions. This is how to demarcate a region as a

meaningful and feasible spatio-temporal matrix of social action and institutional order within a broader nexus of social relations. Only on this basis would it be possible, for example, to formulate a regional strategy concerned with regional economic development. This entails studying how the region comes to be constituted as an object of economic *and extra-economic* regulation or governance and therefore points to the importance of two interlinked distinctions: (1) the regional economy versus its sub-, trans-, and supra-regional economic environment; and (2) the regional economy versus its extra-economic regional environment (community, the political system, welfare state, education system, religious institutions, etc.). The first distinction rests on the idea that, whatever the vagaries and contingencies of economic development on a global scale, it might be possible to endogenize and control at least some conditions bearing upon regional economic development. At stake here is how the boundaries of the regional economy are discursively constructed and materialized. The second distinction refers to the means-ends relations involved in attempts to develop regional strategies from a comprehensive economic perspective and concerns the range of activities that need to be coordinated to realize a given economic development strategy (cf. Jessop 1997).

This rules out the search for an elusive objective economic criterion for defining a region (for example, in terms of 'natural economic territories') or the temptation to conflate regions with administrative units below, transversal to, or above national boundaries that are defined from time to time by political authorities or military powers. Indeed, the variable geometries of economic and political boundaries pose major problems concerning the juridico-political capacities of social forces to imagine, construct, and govern a regional economy. This is a common problem. Any solution depends as much on the spatial imaginary and the links between state and civil society the (lifeworld or spheres of life), however, as it does on formal territorial demarcations and the re-allocation of formal legal and political powers. In this sense, regions are better defined in terms of their co-constitution by discursive as well as material factors that give them a more or less coherent imagined identity and social structuration. And this typically depends in turn on specific coalitions of social forces able to combine semiotic and material capacities to shape region formation.

Regions are not pre-given but subject to discursive struggles over mapping and naming (Jenson 1995; Paasi 2001, 2012) that are analogous to earlier struggles over imagined national communities (Anderson 1993); and by more substantive struggles over their social, material, and spatio-temporal institutionalization. This in turn rules out a view of regions as bounded containers of social relations and points instead to a more complex relational geography of regions in which different regional imaginaries and different principles of regional *Vergesellschaftung* are in play and in which, moreover, regions operate not only as containers but also as connectors through a range of cross-regional networks. In this sense regions exist in a space characterized by the tension between containment and connection, fixity and flow, imagined identity and actual connectivity. Or, as Massey has recently put it:

[t]erritories are constituted and are to be conceptualized, relationally. Thus, interdependence and identity, difference and connectedness, uneven development and the character of place, are in each pairing two sides of the same coin. They exist in constant tension with each other, each contributing to the formation, and the explanation, of the other (Massey 2011: 4, cited by Jones and Wood 2012).

Seen in these terms, regions can have multiple boundaries and will be distinguished (or 'imagined'³ or simply 'imaged') in different discourses for different purposes and effects. For example, Neumann (1993: 53) noted that the Nordic region

is constantly being defined and redefined by its members in a permanent discourse with each member attempting to identify itself at the core of the region. The core is defined in both territorial and functional terms and this definition necessarily involves a manipulation of knowledge and power.

The feasibility of this co-constitution will vary with historical legacies and the manner of their embedding in different kinds of economic, political, and social context (e.g., regions in centrally planned economies differ from regions in decentralised, especially liberal market, economies). Discursive struggles are especially important in economic and political upheavals that create opportunities for new regional projects and programmes (cf. Sidaway 2002). This is evident in the aftermath of the

Asian Crisis (1997-1998) and, more recently, the global financial crisis (2007-2012 and beyond). Moreover, region formation may involve not only potential members and immediate neighbours but also outside forces. An interesting case concerns the labelling by non-domestic agents of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) economies as future economic motors and regional powers that could deepen their division of labour through cooperation and, more recently, become key players in managing the global financial crisis. Only later did the governments of the BRIC economies internalize this virtual regional identity and begin to realize it in practice. The rise of the BRIC summit is one expression of this emerging identity, and, more recently, we see proposals for a BRIC clearing union and eventual currency bloc.

This example illustrates the complex and tangled hierarchy of regions in world society. At its summit we find two broad geo-strategic realms (the Maritime realm comprising Western Europe, North America, Maritime East Asia, Australia, and the Mediterranean littoral and the Eurasian Continental realm comprising in particular the former Soviet Union and China); next come subordinate geo-political regions (e.g., Europe, Japan, North America) and independent geo-political regions outside the two main geo-strategic realms (e.g., South Asia); below these we find individual national states; and, below these, sub-national economic regions and cross-border regions (cf. Cohen 2003). These types of region involve different and changing degrees of hegemony and hierarchy, overlapping spheres of influence, national components and transnational influences, interdependences and pockets of self-containment, embryonic and dying regions, marginal spheres and areas of confrontation. After the breakup of the Soviet bloc, space opened for new forms of rivalry in Europe and the wider world. The accelerating decline of US hegemony and the opening of China have reinforced this process as has the development of new forms of world market fragmentation, differentiation, and integration.

This indicates that globalization is a hypercomplex process. It emerges from interaction among activities in many sites and at many scales, including peripheral and semi-peripheral locations as well as central places. Indeed, what some describe as globalization may also be viewed, perhaps more fruitfully, in terms of a complex dialectic between changes in the organization of the space of flows and the organization of territory reflected variously in the rise of multinational companies and

transnational banks, the internationalization of national economic spaces through growing penetration (inward flows) and extraversion (outward flows, global city network-building, the integration and competition among triad, cross-border region formation, international localization, glocalization, and so on. This reorders economic, political, and socio-cultural differences and complementarities across territories, scales, places, and networks and also produces new forms of uneven development. They also offer new opportunities for rescaling, jumping scales, and so on as well as for supra-national, national, and local states to shape these differences and complementarities. But it remains a hierarchically ordered world too: some 'spaces of flows', some territorial states (e.g., USA, the People's Republic of China, Germany), some places (e.g., global cities), some scales of economic and political action (e.g., the EU scale), are more important than others. Rather than a 'flat world', we have an uneven terrain with uneven flows, differential frictions, and uneven power with varying capacities for time-space compression and distantiation.

In this geo-political and geo-economic context, regions are marked by different and changing degrees of hegemony and hierarchy, overlapping spheres of influence, national components and transnational influences, interdependencies and pockets of self-containment, embryonic and dying regions, marginal spheres and areas of confrontation. This is reflected not only in shifts among 'national economies' but also in the rise and fall of regions, new forms of 'north-south' divide, and so on. There is a complex re-articulation of global-regional-national-local economies with differential effects in different contexts. Thus, in addition to the ensemble of regional spaces, we find a mosaic of cross-border alliances organized within and across regions and continents, sometimes based on inter-governmental cooperation, sometimes on the pooling of sovereignty, and sometimes on more or less hidden forms of imperial or neo-imperial domination. This vastly complicates the analysis of regional dynamics as well as the prospects for success of any particular regional economic strategy. Indeed, it would be more apt, if somewhat convoluted, to talk about pluri-spatial, multi-temporal, and poly-contextual modes of imagining, constituting, and governing regional economies and their always relative, provisional, and unstable integration into more encompassing economic spaces, up to and including the world market.

Adopting a regional perspective for the moment, this suggests that the supra-regional economic environment and the extra-economic regional environment are more complex than regional economic actors – assuming they exist – can understand (especially in real time) and both will always involve a more complex web of causality than they could ever control. Moreover, as economic and economically relevant activities increasingly extend over larger spatial scales thanks to growing world market integration, it gets harder to demarcate a relatively autonomous economic space at less than global scale. To the extent that such spaces exist, they reflect the frictions and unevenness of world market integration and/or specific projects oriented to resisting or channelling world market integration in the name of specific social imaginaries with a strong spatial dimension. Thus we should study the role of the spatial imaginary and economic narratives and/or discourses in demarcating a regional economic space with an imagined community of economic interests from the seamless web of a changing global-regional-national-local nexus.

Given these complexities, the effort to imagine and institute regional accumulation strategies requires key players to undertake two interrelated tasks. These are: (1) to model the factors relevant to regional economic development based on the analytical distinction between the regional economy and its two supra-regional and extra-economic environments; and (2) to develop 'requisite variety' in policy instruments and/or resources to be deployed in the pursuit of regional accumulation strategies oriented to an imagined, but potentially realizable, regional economy. This puts considerable demands on the monitoring and self-reflexive capacities of regional actors and their allies outside the region. The greater the capacities of a specific group or network to learn, the greater the chances of its becoming hegemonic in defining the regional accumulation strategy; and, in addition, that the latter will be organic rather than 'arbitrary, rationalistic, and willed'. Crucial in this regard is acceptance of the strategy by other key players whose cooperation is needed to deliver the extra-economic conditions to realize an accumulation strategy.

More generally, imagined regions, instituted regions, and regional economies can be fruitfully analyzed in neo-Gramscian terms as strategically selective combinations of political society and civil society, of government and governance, and of 'hegemony armoured by coercion'. In many cases relatively stable regional economies will be

linked to the formation of a regional hegemonic bloc (or 'power bloc') with a coherent regional identity and an historical bloc (or accumulation regime and its mode of regulation) that provides a stable economic core around which a relatively autonomous economic and extra-economic strategy can be pursued (Gramsci 1971; Jessop 1997). Conversely, coherent regional strategies are harder to pursue where the most powerful economic interests are fragmented, have contradictory interests and spatio-temporal horizons, or are located beyond the (more or less porous or ill-defined) boundaries of the region; and, likewise, where economic activities are balkanized rather than complementary and/or subject to external control and where key extra-economic conditions for their continued competitiveness are located outside the region. A final point to note is the extent to which regional economic and political forces can draw on wider sources of knowledge about the economic and extra-economic conditions that bear on the competitiveness of regional economies. For stable modes of growth typically involve building a structured complementarity (or coherence) between the regional economy and broader national, cross-border, triadic, or supranational accumulation regimes.

With growing world market integration, the concentration and centralization of capital, and the rise of finance-dominated accumulation in some regions, these conditions are becoming harder to achieve. Since capitalism is always marked by uneven development and tendencies towards polarization, the success of some economic spaces (and the success of spaces whose growth dynamic complements theirs) will inevitably be associated with the marginalization of other economic spaces. This is seen in the changing hierarchy of economic spaces as capitalist growth dynamics are affected by the relative exhaustion of some accumulation strategies and modes of growth and/or the dynamic potential of innovations in materials, processes, products, organization, or markets. Hence regional growth coalitions should consider regional specificities in the world market and the scope for advancing a region in the global economic hierarchy. Otherwise they may fall into the sort of nonsense criticized by Lovering regarding the adoption of regional economic policies based on selective empirical trends and fashionable public policy initiatives. More specifically, he criticized the fad for regional economic policy as based on 'a set of stories about how *parts* of a regional economy *might* work, placed next to a set of policy ideas which *might* just be useful in *some* cases' (Lovering 1999: 384,

emphasis in original). However, as one set of fashionable initiatives fails, there are always economic gurus and policy entrepreneurs around to propose another patent recipe for regional competitiveness (see Peck 2010; Sum 2010).

4. Regions and the Relativization of Scale

One aspect of the (still limited) resurgence of regions is the diminished importance of the national scale of economic, political, and social organization in Atlantic Fordism, East Asia, and Latin America relative to the first three decades of post-WW2 economic expansion as internationalization and globalization has proceeded. However, no other scale of economic and political organization (whether 'local' or 'global', 'urban' or 'triadic', 'regional' or 'supra-regional') has yet won a primacy comparable to that of the national economy, national state, or national society in Fordism, developmental states, or import-substitution models of industrialization.

This phenomenon is often referred to as the relativization of scale. It is associated with intense competition among different economic and political spaces to become the new anchorage point of accumulation around which the remaining scale levels (however many, however identified) can be organized in order to produce a suitable degree of structured coherence. This involves economic and political projects oriented to different scales and has not yet produced consensus on how these are to be reconciled. Thus we can observe a general (indeed, 'global') problem today about the relative importance to be accorded to global, national, and so-called 'regional' sites and spaces of economic action. This is evident in the continuing (if often transformed) significance of smaller scales (notably the urban, the cross-border, the national, and macro-regional) as substantive sites of real economic activities; and in economic strategies oriented to the articulation of other scales into the global (see below). Matters are further complicated by the emergence of cyberspace as a virtual arena of action that once appeared to be everywhere and nowhere.⁴ For cyberspace provides both a means to escape from the fetters and frictions of territorial borders into a functional space and a means to connect territories and localities in new ways. Yet the potentially anarchic nature of cyber-space has produced a series of reactions that aim to territorialize, colonize, stratify, and control it in the interests of different system logics (e.g., profitability, police-military security, intellectual property rights) or

the advance of specific life sphere identities and values (e.g., moral censorship, blasphemy, national purity).

Moreover, as new scales emerge and/or existing scales gain in institutional thickness, social forces also tend to develop new mechanisms to link or co-ordinate them. This generates increasing complexity as different scales of action come to be linked in various combinations of vertical, horizontal, diagonal, centripetal, centrifugal, and vortical ways. This complexity cannot be captured in terms of simple contrasts, such as global-national or global-local, or catchall hybrid concepts such as 'glocalization' or the 'transversal'. Instead we now see a proliferation of discursively constituted and institutionally materialized and embedded spatial scales (whether terrestrial, territorial, or cybernetic), that are related in increasingly complex tangled hierarchies rather than being simply nested one within the other, with different temporalities as well as spatialities.

Of particular interest for present purposes is how the relativization of scale enables new kinds of regional strategy. Four main types can be distinguished:

- Seeking to locate a given place or region within a vertical hierarchy to maximize the advantages accruing from its relations to each point in the scale.
- Developing horizontal linkages among places or regions of similar type, ignoring the vertical dimension in favour of network building (global city networks are one example, cross-border regions another).
- Building 'transversal' linkages, i.e., bypassing one or more immediately neighbouring scale(s) to engage with processes on other scales. Examples include growth triangles, export processing zones, free ports, and regional gateways.
- Trying to escape from scalar or place-bound constraints by locating one's activities in a borderless space of flows or moving into 'cyberspace'.

These options can be combined to produce more complex strategies, which can be explored from three viewpoints: (1) the nature of the interscalar articulation involved – vertical (up and/or down), lateral (extraversion or introversion), transversal, etc.; (2)

their primary carriers – private economic agents (e.g., firms, banks, chambers of commerce, private equity funds), public bodies (e.g., different tiers of government, local or regional associations, quangos), or social movements of various kinds (e.g., diasporas, civic associations, ethnic communities, nationalist movements, movements mobilized behind the right to the city or assertion of cultural identity, etc); and (3) the relative primacy of the logics of the de- and re-territorialization of political power – usually associated with state actors or forces dependent on the state – and the re-scaling and reorganization of the space of flows – usually associated with economic actors seeking to optimize profits without regard to territorial boundaries (on the tensions between the logics of territory and space of flows, see Arrighi 1994; Harvey 2003).

The logic of territory is a state logic oriented to the territorialization of political power through its instantiation in states considered as power containers and the use of state power to control territory to promote geo-political interests. In contrast, the logic of the space of flows is a capitalist oriented to the management of a logic of spatial fixity and motion within a space of flows across and through continuous space and time to enhance the opportunities for profit-oriented, market-mediated activities. In these terms, regional imaginaries can be oriented to strengthening regional political institutions and capacities to more effectively govern regional economic space and/or to finding ways to capture flows through specific spatial fixes (e.g., infrastructure provision) or reducing frictions (e.g., deregulation, liberalization, flexibilization). These strategies are not mutually exclusive and can be combined in different ways. Indeed, Harvey suggests that each of the two logics generates contradictions that must be contained by the other and that this results in a spiral movement as contradictions are displaced from one logic to the other in a continuing process of mutual adjustment and reaction. This is reflected in different forms and dynamics of uneven geographical development, geopolitical struggles, and imperialist politics and there is significant scope for tensions, disjunctions, contradictions, or even antagonisms between these logics. If the territorial logic blocks the logic of capital, there is a risk of economic crisis; if capitalist logic undermines territorial logic, there is a risk of political crisis (Harvey 2003: 140).

This raises an interesting question about how the logics of territorialization and flows are combined in specific cases of regionalization and how, if at all, these sometimes complementary, sometimes antagonistic, logics can be governed. The choice of spatial scale at which regional economic development should be pursued is inherently strategic. It depends on various political, economic, and social specificities of a particular urban and regional context at a particular moment in time. The temporal and spatial are closely connected here. The choice of time horizon will in part dictate the appropriate spatial scale at which development is sought. In turn, the choice of spatial scale will in part determine the time horizon within which local economic growth can be anticipated. Thus the discursive constitution of the boundaries and nature of the (regional) economy affects the temporal dimension of strategy-making as well as its spatial scale. This is quite explicit in many economic strategy documents – with powerful players seeking to shape both the spatial and temporal horizons to which economic and political decisions are oriented so that the economic and political benefits are 'optimized'. Regional economic strategies are no exception. When space and time horizons complement each other, it is possible for economic development to occur in relatively stable 'time-space envelopes' (cf. Massey 1994; and Sum 1995).

5. Governing Territories and Flow-Spaces – With Reference to Regions

These competing logics can be linked to two sets of literature on government and governance in a post-national age, i.e., one characterized by the relativization of scale. The first set starts from the logic of territorialization and poses the problem of *multi-level government*, the second set starts from the logic of flows and poses the problem of *network governance*.

Multi-level government is a political regime characterized by imperative coordination through a territorial state (a multi-level but unified hierarchy of command) that is charged with (or claims responsibility for) managing the relations among bounded areas that are under the exclusive control of that state. This state can be a large national territorial state (with at least two tiers of government) or a confederation of national territorial states that has delegated at least some competences to one or more supranational levels of political authority. The former is less problematic and

has long been analysed through the study of public administration and federalism. The latter has re-emerged as a problem in the last few decades in two contexts: (1) the break-up of the Soviet Union – *a multi-state imperial regime dominated by Russia that underwent decomposition* – and its reorganization into a Commonwealth of Independent States that has had to find a new equilibrium of powers and competencies across economic spaces and states that had previously been integrated under central command; and (2) the expansion of the European Union as *a multi-state federal state in the process of formation*, in which the relationship among different tiers of political organization (cities, regions, national states, and European institutions) must be settled and has evolved to date through a mixture of incremental innovation in stable periods and crisis-induced radical integration in periods of turbulence. Thus, whereas the Europe of Cities and the Europe of Regions are more incremental developments, the current proposals for tighter financial integration and centralized budgetary oversight are responses to the current Eurozone crisis. The overall process of integration is a complex, hybrid process with different forms of government and governance in different policy fields and in different periods.

Theoretical and policy debates about multi-level government in the European Union range between two polar positions. At one pole of the political argument, we find an affirmation of multi-level government based on a commitment to subsidiarity, i.e., maximum possible devolution of powers and competences to the lowest tier of government with higher tiers responsible for policy problems that cannot be settled at lower levels; at the other pole, we find arguments for a United States of Europe with power concentrated in European level institutions and lower tiers acting as relays for decisions made at the European level. In between these extremes is a wide range of competing proposals and, more importantly, competing tendencies or trends in development. A key part of European experience in this regard is that crises that affect European economic development tend to generate greater political integration to generate more effective crisis-management. The current crisis in the Eurozone area illustrates this well, with mounting pressure for fiscal integration, EU-level monitoring of national budgets and credit policies, and greater monetary powers for the European Central Bank. A further feature of crisis-management is the consolidation of centre-periphery relations, dividing Southern Europe and Eastern

Europe as peripheral economic spaces from a Continental European centre organized under German hegemony.

Network governance relies on a mix of well-ordered market relations (economic exchange), commitment to negotiation (consensus-oriented deliberation), and solidarity (credible commitments to cooperation). It can emerge spontaneously, in response to particular initiatives by a key stakeholder or stakeholders, or through state initiatives to reduce the burdens of government by pooling sovereignty and/or sharing responsibilities for governing complex problems with a range of public, private, and third-sector partners. Network governance is oriented to securing the conditions for the flow of goods, services, technologies, capital, and people across different territories, for connecting different places in different territories in new divisions of labour (e.g., networks of cities, interdependent centres of production, different forms of centre-periphery relation), over different scales of social organization (that may not coincide with territorial boundaries), and different sets of social bonds based on mutual trust. This pattern is less concerned with the integration of government in an emerging supra-national or federal state system and more concerned with creating the conditions for integrated markets with agreed governance arrangements but no overall coordination. It is closer to the model of open regionalism that has been suggested for East Asia and the Pacific Region more generally. In the European Union, this pattern of governance is most often associated with the officially recognized Open Method of Coordination (OMC).

Reflecting the tendency for the logics of territorialization and space of flows to generate contradictions and crises that are handled in part by putting more emphasis on its alternative, we find that multi-level government and network governance are also prone to specific tensions and crisis-tendencies. This is reflected in the hybrid character of government-cum-governance in the European Union. This combines elements of these both forms plus other transversal arrangements – made more complicated in the last couple of years by the development of a new political axis based on Franco-German interest in keeping the Eurozone intact with decisions being imposed on weaker member states (notably Greece but with Portugal and Italy also subject to Franco-German dictates). In this sense, the EU can be seen as a major and, indeed, increasingly important, supranational instance of *multi-spatial*

metagovernance in relation to a wide range of complex and interrelated problems. Indeed, because the sources and reach of these problems go well beyond the territorial space occupied by its member states, the EU is an important, if complex, point of intersection (or node) in the emerging, hypercomplex, and chaotic system of global governance (or, better, global meta-governance). It is still one node among several within this emerging system of global meta-governance and cannot be fully understood without taking account of its complex relations with other nodes located above, below, and transversal to the European Union. Indeed, while one might well hypothesize that the European scale is becoming increasingly dominant within the multi-spatial metagovernance regime of the European Union, it is merely nodal in the emerging multi-scalar metagovernance regimes that are developing on a global scale under the (increasingly crisis-prone) dominance of the United States.

Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the distinctive features of the cultural political economy approach developed by the present author and his colleagues and collaborators. To remind readers of an opening remark, CPE's cultural turn does not involve the mechanical addition of the study of culture to studies of politics and economics to produce cultural political economy through simple aggregation. Instead it stresses the crucial role of semiosis (*Sinnmachung*) in complexity reduction to enable social actors to 'go on' in the world. In this sense, the view that there is a distinctive 'cultural sphere' is itself the product of cultural (and other) imaginaries and, *a fortiori*, the view that there is a culturalization of the economy and/or economization of the cultural depends on specific accounts of different fields of social action (that includes distinctions between the cultural and economic) that draw in all cases on semiotic resources and practices and that may be more or less adequate in particular historical contexts and conjunctures. The analysis presented above provides the conceptual resources to evaluate such substantive claims but is more general in ambition and scope insofar as it rests on ontological arguments about the foundational importance of semiosis to all forms, fields, and sites of social action.

It is within this broader set of claims that I have illustrated the relevance of some of the distinctive features of CPE to regional imaginaries, the construction of regions as

objects of strategic calculation and intervention, the location of regions at the intersection of the logics of territorial organization and the space of flows, the effects of the relativization of scale and world market integration on the scope for relatively autonomous regional economic strategies, and the problems of multi-spatial governance that includes regions as well as other spatial configurations. Given the complexities of spatiality, with its territorial, place-based, scalar, and networked moments, there is broad scope for competing regional imaginaries and different kinds of region-building. A region can be imagined and constructed in many ways, ranging from tightly sealed territories to porous nodes in a networked space of flows. Which of many competing regional imaginaries are selected and instituted, which fail to attract or lose their attraction and therefore get marginalized, depends on a complex dialectic of path-dependency and path-shaping in which 'the circumstances not of actors' own choosing' include inherited discourses and available social technologies as well as structures and in which 'actors make their own history' through the re-articulation of structural constraints on compossible social relations as well as the elaboration of new imaginaries and innovative social technologies.

The overall configuration of regions within the world market cannot be planned with any certainty of success. On the contrary, given that there are many competing regional imaginaries (as well as other spatial or spatially-attuned imaginaries), the configuration is the unintended, unanticipated, and, indeed, 'messy' result of the pursuit of numerous regional projects in conjunctures that cannot be grasped in all their complexity in real time. As noted above, regions are marked by different and changing degrees of hegemony and hierarchy, overlapping spheres of influence, national components and transnational influences, interdependencies and pockets of self-containment, embryonic and dying regions, marginal spheres and areas of confrontation. This vastly complicates the analysis of regional dynamics as well as the prospects for success of any particular regional economic strategy. Indeed, to repeat another argument above, it would be more apt, if somewhat convoluted, to talk about pluri-spatial, multi-temporal, and poly-contextual modes of imagining, constituting, and governing regional economies and their always relative, provisional, and unstable integration into more encompassing economic spaces, up to and including the world market. This is the real as well as theoretical space within which

studies of regional imaginaries, regional strategies, and actually existing regions must be located.

Endnotes

1 This chapter is based on my presentation at the conference on regions in Marburg an der Lahn in December 2010 and draws in part on work for my ESRC-funded Professorial Fellowship on the Cultural Political Economy of Crises of Crisis-Management (RES-051-27-0303). It has also benefitted from discussion at different times with Neil Brenner, Martin Jones, Gordon MacLeod, and Ngai-Ling Sum; and from probing and helpful comments from Steffen Dörhöfer and Patrick Eser.

2 The Four Motors are Baden-Württemberg, Rhône-Alpes, Lombardy, and Catalonia; the BRIC acronym refers to Brazil, Russia, India, and China – with South Africa a recent addition to form the BRICS.

3 Cf. Benedict Anderson's work on the nation as an 'imagined' community (1991). The region is also an 'imagined' entity.

4 Cyberspace is not evenly distributed or accessible and is rooted in specific places.

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