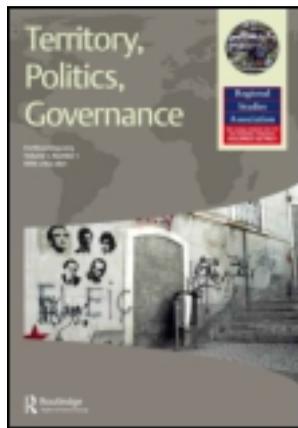


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EDITORIAL

Territory, Politics, Governance

JOHN A. AGNEW

Welcome to the first issue of this new journal from the Regional Studies Association. The intersection between the three words in the journal's name defines the central purpose of the journal: to publish and encourage research on territorial politics, spaces of governance, and the political organization of space. The editors intend that the journal will be a platform for writing in a wide range of genres: theoretical, methodological, and substantive with a preference for theoretically informed empirical research that challenges conventional nostrums about the links between territory, politics, and governance.

Two ideas lie at the heart of the enterprise. The first is that territory and related spatial terms (place, space, and territoriality) offer a profitable theoretical lens through which to analyze the workings of governance and politics. Governance, in this construction, extends beyond formal government into the realm of various forms of authority exercised by agents other than states at and across a variety of geographical scales. Politics likewise is not simply the machinations of national politics, elections, and so on, but also the operation of local politics, various forms of supranational political organization, and the nexus between private power and public authority. The second is that pursuing the first idea entails using various methodological approaches. We intend on giving equal weight to two general approaches. One is that developmental historicism which locates governance and politics in relation to changing geographical logics of authority and rule that must be interpreted in terms of discourses and practices. The other is the modernist empiricism that uses formal classifications, correlation analysis, and comparative studies and which currently dominates much writing in political studies (BEVIR, 2010).

The past 20 years or so has seen a reframing of political thought away from the totally state-centered narratives that tended to prevail previously. Much of this has had to do with the rise of thinking about globalization that puts in question the modern territorial state as the sole unit of contemporary political account (LARNER, 2011). But some has also arisen from questioning the extent to which the world has ever been organized completely in terms of the territorial 'nation-states' upon which so much political debate has long been focused (ALLEN, 2003; AGNEW, 2009). The term 'territory' provides a plausible basis for extending political analysis beyond the state. Only in one relatively modern meaning does it relate exclusively to the state (ELDEN, 2011). This is when it is used to signify the areal extent and limits of state sovereignty. So, this journal sees the word in a more pluralist vein as signifying an important type of spatial arrangement

through which power is deployed and experienced but which is not limited to the state as such. Part of what we hope to do is to situate this framing in relation to a richer spatial vocabulary (networks, places, territories, etc.) in which to try to better understand the historic and present-day workings of politics and governance (LÉVY, 2011). For us, therefore, ‘territory’ stands in for the more general geographical or spatial analysis of politics and governance. So far, this approach has tended to privilege textual analysis of political theorists and philosophers (PAQUOT and YOUNÈS, 2009, 2012) but there have also been some useful efforts to combine conceptual with empirical analysis (VANIER, 2009; LÉVY, 2011).

Studies of the following sorts of topics will be important to the journal: contemporary institutional arrangements and new regionalisms (SALONE, 2010), the spread of neoliberal economic policies and their differential impacts in different regions and localities (BRENNER, 2004); sub-state governments and devolution (HENDERSON, 2010), the pressures on local governments from national-level austerity budgets (GREER, 2010), and the crises of federal and supranational governmental arrangements (such as the Eurozone) due to either unequal distributions of central funds or the mismatch between monetary policy set at one level and fiscal policy set at another. But beyond them lie a set of more fundamental questions about the spatial organization of politics that we also hope to address. These include the increasing contradiction between what can be called effective sovereignty (exercised by a range of agents), on the one hand, and claims to legal territorial sovereignty (exercised by a singular central state authority), on the other (SHAH, 2012; MURPHY, 2013); the destabilization and reorientation of states in the face of globalization (SASSEN, 2006); the importance of informal modes of governance in rapidly changing cities and regions (ROY, 2005); the historic rise of territorial states, their basis in type of funding of government, and how this has affected forms of political representation (STASAVAGE, 2011); the economic logic of the nation-state as a regulatory enterprise and whether this has been or should be eclipsed (RODRIK, 2013); the ways in which empires have been organized spatially and do or do not manage to mutate into nation-states (PERDUE, 2009; BURBANK and COOPER, 2012); geographies of political mobilization and resistance (NICHOLLS *et al.*, 2013); and the role of regions and ‘provinces’ in national-state formation and disintegration (SMITH-PETER, 2011).

In this first issue we are pleased to introduce a set of articles that both review and push forward debate about the relationships between territory, politics, and governance as we define them, in both primarily theoretical and more empirical registers. ELDEN (2013a) provides a précis of his conceptual history of territory that he excavates at greater length in his forthcoming book on *The Birth of Territory* (2013b). SASSEN (2013) revisits her argument in *Territory, Authority, Rights* (2006) about how various forms and meanings of territory are central to the organizing logics of different assemblages of authority and rights by showing in this article the ways in which territoriality (strategic usage of space) involving a range of agents reworks territory. COX (2013) calls into question those accounts of contemporary modes of government that see spatial scales in their territorial form as eclipsed by relational networks of power. STRUNK and LEITNER (2013) make a strong case for the localization of US immigration enforcement away from the country’s borders. In so doing, they also provide a useful survey of the recent research literature on shifting territorial forms to immigration regulation and enforcement away from the historic obsession with national-state level ‘border controls’. Finally, OBYDENKOVA and SWENDEN (2013) compare federalism in Russia with that in Western European countries showing how much in the former case the shell of federalism exists without much democratic content. Judging the performance of federalist systems entirely on

the basis of their presumed devolution of powers, therefore, should be tempered by paying close attention to what actually happens ‘on the ground’.

Taken together, these articles highlight some of the central themes of the journal. They are the first of what we hope will be many more provocative explorations of the intersections between territory, politics, and governance. We are hoping in particular to extend the empirical scope of articles beyond the European and North American settings that tend to dominate in the current literature. Of considerable importance, we also intend to extend the theoretical scope of the journal to legal analysis (of jurisdiction and extraterritoriality, in particular), historical studies of governance, literary, and artistic representations of politicized territories, the politics of resistance to state and neoliberal policies, territorial identities, historical cartographies of territories, and textual analysis of the spatial vocabularies of important political theorists. We welcome submissions across this entire range.

On a pessimistic day, Claude Raffestin once wrote: ‘Space is the original prison, territory is the prison that people give themselves.’ (quoted in BONNEMAISON, 1995, p. 4) This is too one-sided. Certainly, territories can have that aspect to them. But people have invented territories (and other spatial forms of political organization) to also fulfill their more positive projects from changing society to administering public goods. Territories are also fundamental elements in many political identities and the ‘rites’ (as BONNEMAISON (1995) termed everyday cultural practices and routines, after quoting Raffestin) that bind societies together. This journal will be devoted to studying how territory, politics, and governance are jointly implicated in all sorts of political outcomes.

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