



Governing metropolitan regions: Copenhagen

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Metropolisation, the rise of the big cities

- ▶ Until the 1970s urban growth and size of cities was seen as an indicator of social and economic success
- ▶ The sudden and fast decline of million cities in Western Europe and North America appeared as a chock
- ▶ De-industrialisation, depopulation, social depression, physical decline were signs of the end of western postwar growth
- ▶ Million cities was considered as 'dinosaurs' – outdated, too big to fit in an era of economic restructuring
- ▶ The future was smaller, but more flexible – firms and cities



New conditions and reurbanisation

- Globalisation, Single market of the EU, WTO – all reduced or removed existing barriers for free trade
- The permeable border made national states unable to control national territory
- The outcome was a big pressure on nation states to adjust their strategies to avoid decline
- The Keynesian welfare state strived for equality by inclusion of all inhabitants and all regions through general regulation and public investments



New conditions and reurbanisation

- Fiscal scarcity, declining return on public investments and growing social and economic problems forced nation states to reduce welfare in favour of economic efficiency
- The competitive state prioritized winners, supported growth sectors and successful cities and regions
- The big cities were suddenly national assets in a global competition
- One way to increase national competitiveness is to reterritorialise national space
- A key is to create sufficient local capacity, to tailor made regulations and investments to local conditions – no more ‘one size fits all’





Hollowing out of the state – or state restructuring?

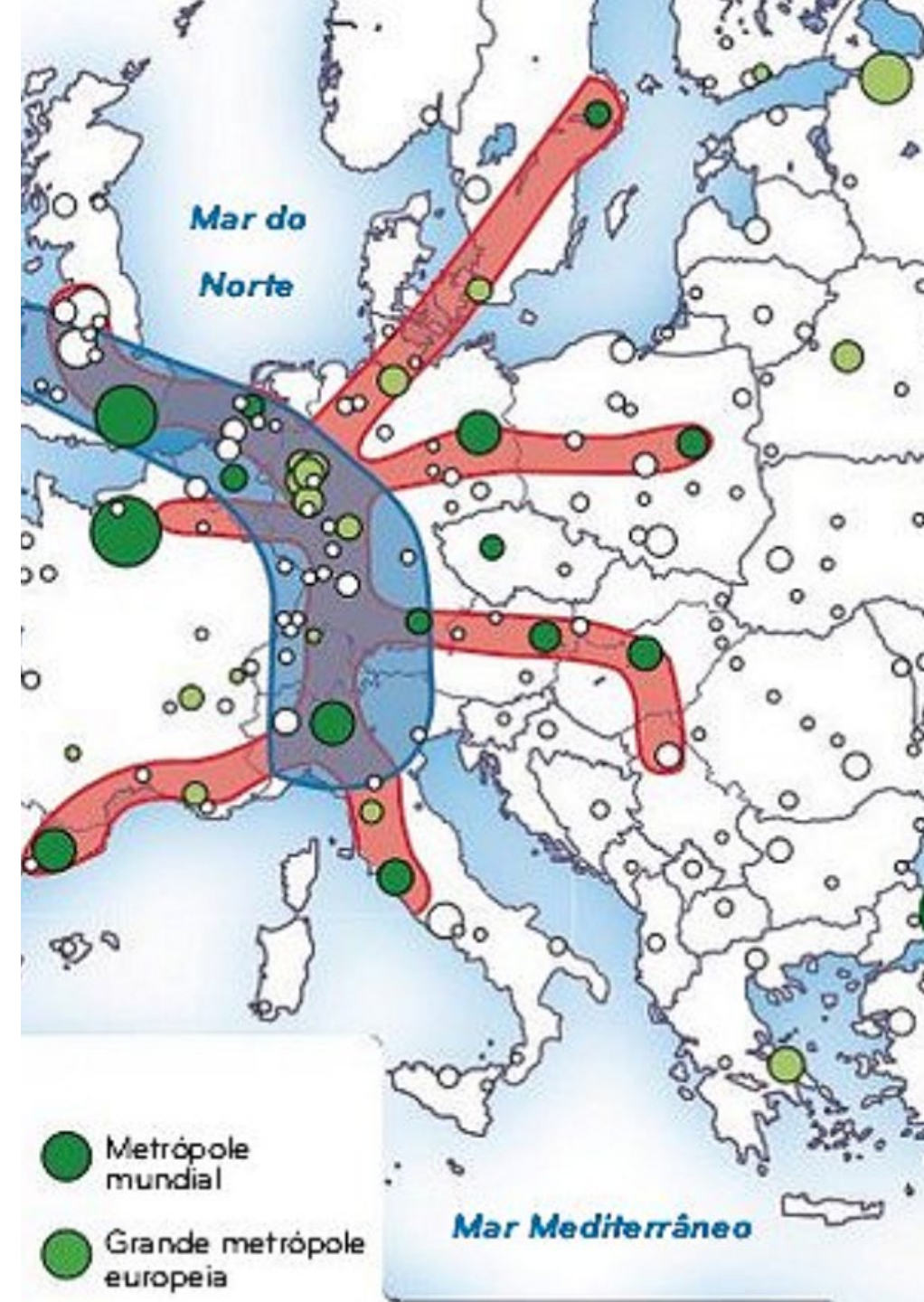
- ▶ While the new policy was launched as state retreat – less public, more private – realities seem different: The state has penetrated the former marked line between public and private.
- ▶ Consequently, the state is now both partner and initiator to major national and strategic schemes and plans
- ▶ The state has not diminished but rather reshaped its performances; from reactive regulator to proactive initiator, cf. changing state intervention in research and higher education.
- ▶ The administrative organization – municipalities, regions etc. – is an instrument to promote state strategy for achievement of competitiveness

Neoliberal strategies in praxis

- Neoliberal policy making has prioritized special schemes and individual contracts as means to promote particular interests
- This is reflected in selection of localities for various investments such as major infrastructure, institutions, services or targeted investments
- This strategy also implies a general trend for ‘depolitisation’ – the removal of the political character of decision-making (bureaucratic governance qua “the politics of necessity”) and privileging certain groups and interests in public policy making
- It is however, important to recall that state restructuring takes place on existing structures and relations → thus, each case have to be examined in its own context



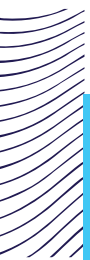
- Cities have become important test grounds for neoliberal policies – place-marketing, branding, enterprise zones, public-private partnerships, various forms of quangos, privatisation, control and management
- Large scale, urban projects act as vehicles for the construction of unusual circumstances, which in turn claim extraordinary procedures to decide and implement
- The strength of such projects is their ability to shortcut normal procedures



Copenhagen and the new urban policy

- Copenhagen is a national capital with a large number of international and national functions. It is the home of a third of the Danish population. Half of national GDP is produced in Metropolitan Copenhagen.
- During the 1970s and 1980s the City of Copenhagen went into a negative spiral and internal political battles prevented any strategic reorientation.
- In this period, the city experienced a great loss of inhabitants and employment, and the social and economic conditions worsened.
- At the end of the 1980s the city was almost bankrupt because of its growing financial deficit.
- Then, in March 1990, central government and parliament decided to initiate a series of improvements (e.g. infrastructure, public institutions, refurbishment of housing and so on) in order to help the city recover.





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Resurgence of Copenhagen

Once a leading port in the Baltic region, with half of all jobs in Danish manufacturing industry, the 1960s produced a structural shift – depopulation due to suburbanisation, outmigration of new industries (primarily service industry) and lack of new initiatives: The city became a poor city in decline.

The 1990-decision fuelled state investments in public transport, research and education, general improvement of infrastructure (e.g. a new metro system, a rail and road link to south Sweden, expansion of the airport, upgrading of existing rail system), accelerated improvement of the old housing stock and more.

Yet, the support had a price – the State became partner in urban development projects, much activity was displaced from elected assemblies to special organisations (quangos, appointed councils, partnerships with private business).

The new Royal Library (in the picture) symbolises the shift in urban governance in the late 1980s/early 1990s.





Resurgence of Copenhagen

- Creative Copenhagen: Creative cities need knowledge institutions, accept of diversity and cultural mix, innovative industries structure, quality of life and social equality in order to attract the attractive knowledge workers.
- This is reflected in a rearrangement of the built environment: Abandoned rail and harbour land is converted into new and exclusive neighbourhoods.
- Municipal owned housing is privatised.
- Private investors focus on housing and foreign investment grows remarkably.
- Municipal administration goes through a major transformation in order to learn to work **with** the market
- Urban planning aims at promoting investment.
- Institutional reconfiguration: From local governments to quangos and partnerships, no coordination at regional level.

Governing a metropole?

- ▶ Until 1950s: No official attempt to regulate or plan for the Greater Copenhagen Region.
- ▶ 1956: A volunteer body for consultations among municipalities in Greater Copenhagen is established.
- ▶ 1974: A new body, the Greater Copenhagen Council (GCC), is established. Its primary tasks are to run public transport and do urban planning at the regional level. The GCC is a compromise between the then two leading political parties – the social democrats and the conservatives; the former wanted a super county for the whole metropolitan area, the latter a three tier form of local governance with the municipalities, the counties and the GCC.
- ▶ 1987: The conservative coalition government decides to abolish the GCC (inspired by Thatcher's abolition of the British metropolitan councils).
- ▶ 1990: The GCC is closed down, quangos and the State take over most of its functions.
- ▶ 2000: A new council, the Copenhagen Development Council, is established. Its primary tasks are to coordinate and run public transport as well as participate in the Øresund-cooperation.
- ▶ 2007: A municipal reform abolishes the counties and a new regional council gets the responsibility for health services. Planning is solely a municipal task, except in Metropolitan Copenhagen where the State takes control.



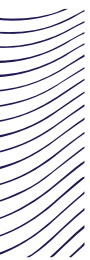
Period	Metropolitan competences
1920s – 1974	Volunteer attempts to coordinate and plan
1974 – 1989	Official government with legal basis; public transport, urban and environmental planning
1990 – 2000	Planning & coordination at minimum
2000 – 2007	Residual competences for coordination and planning
2007 – present	Hospital services





Period	Metropolitan governance
1920s – 1989	Technocratic governed
1990 – 2000	Politicised bureaucracy
2000– 2007	Residualistic, governed by appointed politicians
2007 – present	Directly elected politicians, limited competences





Former type of governance	Present form of governance
Formal, legal basis	Partly formal, partly informal
Indirectly elected	Appointed
Transparance, openness	Partly closed process, confidentiality
Equality	Privileged
Public engagement	Networking
Open debate	Refer to the politics of neccesity





Reflections on the concept *city regions* I

- ▶ The concept 'city-region' begins to gain momentum in the literature during the 1990s as it became increasingly clear how cities/urban regions cannot be understood as administratively delimited units but must be understood in relation to their surroundings.
- ▶ There is not one general definition of the concept – neither in the way it is used analytically nor in the way it is defined empirically as a political/geographical unit. But the concept is clear on how any analysis and political/geographic definition should include the relational interplay between both internal and external dynamics. For instance, the actual interplay between employment, land value, housing market, transport infrastructures and patterns of social segregation instead of administrative borders.



Reflections on the concept *city regions* II

- ▶ During the 2000s much discussion of city regions concerned the way urban centres was set to work as *regional drivers of growth*. This became widespread in the Copenhagen region.
- ▶ This understanding has made many political choices of favouring the capital legitimate – because the capital is the economic driver – of its region and even of the nation.
- ▶ An example of this understanding is visible in Scott & Storper (2003) who writes:

City-regions are locomotives of the national economies within which they are situated, in that they are the sites of dense masses of interrelated economic activities that also typically have high levels of productivity by reason of their jointly-generated agglomeration economies and their innovative potentials (Scott & Storper, 2003: 581).





Reflections on the concept *city regions* III

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- ▶ However, as discussed, we need to be critical of this development and what it has amounted to. In the case of the Copenhagen city region the capital is the richest city in the country while its neighbouring region is the poorest.
- ▶ As demonstrated above, the concern for overall planning has diminished substantially and left it an open question how such regional inequalities should be tackled. Therefore, some two decades after the initial enthusiasm with city regions as drivers of growth, we argue how it would be nice to see more empirical evidence in support of this.
- ▶ In the literature, it has been highlighted how the "trickle down" and economic spill-over effects from cities and their regions are highly context-dependent and difficult to generalise and reproduce other where.
- ▶ Accordingly, there is a need to understand the emergence of city-regions as producer and product of very particular economic, cultural, political and environmental projects and contexts, with equally particular norms and logics.





Conclusions

- In general, in many western cities, the two past decades have demonstrated the neoliberal visions of economic development, and has resulted in a centralisation of urban governance and a de-politisation of the regional governance level.
- Through this type of urban governance, spatial planning is becoming still more *precarious* as initiatives resemble a jumping from case to case' rather than past-times longer-term, comprehensive and overall planning.
- In the urban region of Copenhagen, the new drivers of strategic spatial planning are *soft spaces* without democratic influence.
- While much research has addressed the growth of urban regions, there is a lack of knowledge about their actual effects as regional drivers of growth.