
Authoritarian governance, power, and the politics of rescaling

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Abstract. In this paper I critically assess the alleged process of globalisation of the world economy. Five interrelated themes are addressed. First, I argue that the ‘real’ myth of the globalisation discourse is part of an intensifying ideological, political, socioeconomic, and cultural struggle over the organisation of society and the position of the citizen therein. Second, the ‘mythical’ resurrection of the ‘local’ or ‘regional’ scale—both in theory and in practice—is an integral part of the ‘myth’ of globalisation. Third, the preeminence of the ‘global’ in much of the literature and political rhetoric obfuscates, marginalises, and silences an intense and ongoing sociospatial struggle in which the reconfiguration of spatial scales of governance takes a central position. Fourth, the ‘rhetoric’ of globalisation is paralleled by and facilitates the emergence of more authoritarian or at least autocratic forms of governance. Fifth, the proliferation of new modes and forms of resistance to the restless process of deterritorialisation–reterritorialisation of capital requires greater attention to ‘spatial scale’ in order to assess how the emerging new ‘gestalt of scale’ could be turned into an emancipatory and empowering process.

Beyond ‘globalisation’

“The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country ... All old established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature”.

Marx and Engels (1952, page 72)

The recent debate over the alleged increasing globalisation of the world economy, however intellectually stimulating it might be, appears to be increasingly a discussion over the sex of the angels (Rayp, 1995). Internationalisation, mundialisation, delocalisation, international competitiveness, cultural hybridisation, and other fashionable metaphors are marshalled into a variety of increasingly dominant discourses (Scholte, 1996). The inherent slipperiness of meaning of these concepts is used and abused to produce a Babylonian confusion that seems to serve specific interests and power positions (Hout, 1996). I shall argue in this paper that (1) the ‘real’ myth of the globalisation discourse is part of an intensifying ideological, political, socioeconomic, and cultural struggle over the organisation of society and the position of the citizen therein; (2) the ‘mythical’ resurrection of the ‘local’ or ‘regional’ scale—both in theory

and practice—is an integral part of the ‘myth’ of globalisation; (3) the preeminence of the ‘global’ in much of the literature and political rhetoric obfuscates, marginalises, and silences an intense and ongoing sociospatial struggle in which the reconfiguration of spatial scales of governance takes a central position; (4) the ‘rhetoric’ of globalisation is paralleled by and facilitates the emergence of more authoritarian or at least autocratic forms of governance; and (5) the proliferation of new modes and forms of resistance to the restless process of deterritorialisation–reterritorialisation of capital requires greater attention to ‘spatial scale’ in order to assess how the emerging new ‘gestalt of scale’ could be turned into an emancipatory and empowering process.

The ‘real’ myth of globalisation

Globalisation as a historical-geographical process.

As the quote from Marx and Engels suggests, capitalism has been a decidedly geographical project and globalisation has been part of the capitalist enterprise for a long time, and arguable already since at least 1492 (Harvey, 1995). In fact, in many ways, the late 19th and early 20th century world economy and culture were as globally interconnected, and in some ways more so, as that of the present time (Weiss, 1997). In the current phase of profound shake-up of geographical processes, ‘globalisation’ is often invoked as a shorthand to summarise processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, but in a way that renders them a-spatial or a-geographical and, as such, profoundly disempowering (Kofman and Youngs, 1996; O’Brien, 1992). As Hirst and Thompson (1996), among others, have pointed out, the process of globalisation is indeed not as pervasive and total as many make it out to be. They show how—at least until 1913—international interdependence in terms of global trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) was significantly higher compared with the subsequent period of national ‘Fordist’ development (1925–73) (see also figures 1 and 2). It is only in recent years that we begin to approach again (at least in relative terms) the conditions of integration that characterised the world economy at the turn of the present century. This is, of course, not to say that nothing new has happened. The essence of capitalism is, as Schumpeter showed a long time ago, about perpetual creative destruction in which ‘everything that is solid melts into air’, but this always happens through geographical change and geographical restructuring. As Harvey (1995, page 5) pointed out recently, “the adoption of the term ‘globalization’ signals a profound geographical reorganisation of capitalism, making many of the presumptions about the ‘natural’ geographical units within which capitalism’s historical trajectory develops less and less meaningful (if they ever were).” If anything the deterritorialisation–reterritorialisation of financial markets

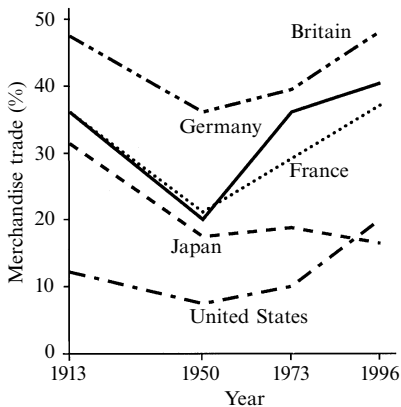


Figure 1. Merchandise trade (exports and imports) as a percentage of GDP (source: OECD statistical yearbooks, various years).

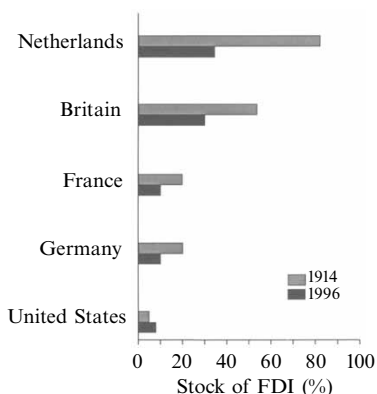


Figure 2. Stocks of outward foreign direct investment (FDI), as a percentage of GDP (source: OECD statistical yearbooks, various years).

has been by far the most significant economic-regulatory change. ‘Real’ capital flows (that is, those associated with international trade and FDI) dwarf in comparison with flows of financial capital. Where total world trade in 1994 amounted to circa US \$4.3 trillion (on an annualised basis), total average *daily* turnover in the financial markets in 1996 skyrocketed to a gigantic US \$1.4 trillion, 90% of which is broadly moving around the earth in search of speculative gain (Swyngedouw, 1996a). This profound internationalisation and denationalisation of money in the aftermath of the breakdown of the Bretton-Woods systems and the subsequent monetary disorder has become, as it were, a *pars pro toto* to stand for the globalisation of the whole economy.

Furthermore, the technological and information revolution has increased and intensified cultural globalisation (Castells, 1998). Although global media flows have become more dense, the actual direct interchange in economic terms with many of the remote places that fill our television screens on a daily basis have actually disintegrated. The image of the global village may have become a standard cultural icon of the time, but many places have in fact suffered from a diminished interdependence. Of course, the speed of commodity flows has accelerated and this in itself propelled the process of deterritorialisation – reterritorialisation to new heights. Undoubtedly, this acceleration of the ease by which people and commodities overcome the barrier of space is unprecedented. Arguably the most profound geographical restructuring that has taken place lies in the combined process of acceleration of working-class formation in many parts of the world, the hyperurbanisation process that still continues at an accelerating pace and the mass movement of people (and mainly workers) across space. Of course, this brings with it growing cultural, ethnic, gender, and other forms of differentiation among the working class, but also intensifies the geographical processes that are so central to the current restructuring (see Harvey, 1995).

It is, in this context, not surprising to find a great number of geographical tensions, conflicts, and struggles arising in many parts of the world, and many of them are certainly not even remotely emancipatory, liberating, or empowering. The labour unrest in South Korea, the emergence of the first European-wide strike and workers’ action against the closure of the Brussels Renault factory (a closure which had of course everything to do with overproduction in the sector and little with globalisation), the genocide in Central Africa, the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo, the resistance against Juppé’s austerity programme in France, the rise of anti-internationalist and deeply regionalist struggles (exemplified by the rise of the extreme right in Europe, the success of Newt Gingrich and the localist militia in the USA, or the regionalist struggles that

are dotted on the world map), in addition to the recent waves of plant closures, company restructuring, bank collapses, and turmoil in the financial markets bring out the profound spatial tensions and contradictions that arise out of the maelstrom of spatial transformations wrought from recent changes in the organisation of capital circulation processes.

'La pensée unitaire'

During the 1980s, a rather dramatic discursive shift took place in much of the literature and political rhetoric (Group of Lisbon, 1994; O'Brien, 1992; Ohmae, 1995). 'Globalisation' emerged as the rhetorical vehicle and analytical device to indicate allegedly important shifts in the economic and political organisation of the world economy (Youngs, 1996), soon to be followed by extensions of the concept into the cultural domain (Featherstone et al, 1995). The world economy had moved—or so it seemed—from basically a nation-state system to fundamental and irrevocably new forms of organisation that transcended the traditional state-based and state-dominated world system. The propagation of this globalisation ideology has become like an act of faith. Virtually each government, at every conceivable scale of governance, has taken measures to align its social and economic policy to the 'exigencies' and 'requirements' of this new competitive world (dis)order (see Peck and Tickell, 1994; 1995) and the forces of a new 'truly' free-market-based world economy. In the light of the real or imagined threat of owners of presumed (hyper)mobile capital that they might relocate their activities, regional and national states feel increasingly under pressure to assure the restoration of a fertile entrepreneurial culture. Fiscal constraint has to be exercised, social expenditures kept in check, labour markets made more flexible, environmental and social regulation minimised, etc. This, then, is heralded as the golden path that would lead regional and national economies to the desired heaven of global competitiveness and sustained growth.

This is quite an impressive discursive shift and one that deserves close scrutiny in terms of its ideological content and its relationship to the 'real' economy. 'La pensée unitaire' has become the monolithic academic canon and standard political recipe of an international elite of economists and policy analysts. This combines with a cosmopolitan cultural-economic elite of corporate managers, financial fund managers, consultancy businesses, service providers, and the like. A national political elite, both left and right, finds in these arguments an excuse to explain away their inadequacy to link political programmes with an increasingly disenfranchised and disempowered civil society.

Of course, this ideology of globalisation is a decidedly Western construct with Japan as its reluctantly adopted stepchild. The catastrophe around the great lakes in Central Africa, which global communication media projected on Western television screens, just confirms how the image of a global village is but a simulacrum of a reality which indicates a reduced global interdependency and the total disintegration of a region which, until fairly recently (mid-1970s), was connected to other parts of the world in a myriad of ways. Sub-Saharan Africa would no doubt benefit from some form of greater global integration. To put it in the 'old' language, much of Africa today does not even have the luxury anymore of being exploited by global capital. Globalisation is, in fact, a *triadisation* that leaves out much of the world and more so than has been the case in the 19th century or, especially, the early parts of the 20th century.

Globalisation as a political strategy

In light of the above, the invoking of globalisation has become part of a powerful political-economic ideology through which capital-labour relationships and relative class power positions are shifted in profound ways. Gramsci's war of manoeuvre (1971) is today decisively in the camp of capital, usually with strong state support, and centres

around social wage issues such as direct and indirect labour cost, labour-market rigidities, public debt and public spending, deregulation, etc. In fact, the parallels between the economic conditions of the late 19th and early 20th century that are often made by critics of the globalisation thesis can easily be extended to the domain of political-economic ideology as well. The hegemony of the globalisation 'thesis' extends from the conservative right to even those who claim to pursue a more inclusive, democratic, and socially progressive agenda [such as, for example, the Group of Lisbon's *Limits to Competition* (1994) or Tony Blair's vision of the 'New' Britain (see Giddens, 1998)]. This ideology becomes a vehicle for suppressing possibilities of resistance and the formulation of alternative trajectories. As any good historical geographical analysis would easily point out, resistance and the construction of alternative visions and strategies have always been profoundly geographical affairs. It is not surprising that the most radical contemporary movements that attempt to confront this hegemony of vision often feed off a distinctly geographical ferment in which the reclamation of territorial identity and homogeneity finds fertile ground with those who feel deeply and bitterly disempowered by the disabling strategies pursued by those occupying the loci of power. The top score of the National Front in the recent elections in France is a worrying illustration of this.

The 'mythical' reality of the local

Whereas the verbal pyrotechnics of globalisation insist on the pervasive penetration of a global logic of market Stalinism and money power (which at times is profoundly shaken, as the recent turmoil in the financial markets signalled), locally or regionally embedded strategies are heralded as the harbinger of possible forms of resistance and empowerment in an environment of allegedly reduced state power and of the 'death of state governance'. (Multi)cultural rerooting is hailed as a promising strategy to construct 'competitive spaces' and 'entrepreneurial' cities that can be slotted successfully into the new global spaces of competition. Institutional deregulation becomes the standard recipe for a revived local, regional, or national economy. Devolution and even bioregionalism (for the deep ecologists) become simple strategies that could apparently give a greater voice to those currently excluded.

As Žižek (1996; 1997) pointed out recently, the 'politically correct' emphasis on difference, multiculturalism, and identity politics is but the other face of the globalisation process. The ruthless colonisation of the everyday by the logic of the commodity (however diversified and desirable it may be) parallels a fragmentation and differentiation that permits those whose privileged status is associated with maintaining the current dynamics of capitalist restructuring to revel in a politics of difference as an apparently progressive-liberal and noncommitted politics. While their pension funds keep on ballooning via a spatially rapidly shifting ransacking of the world's key accumulation spaces, they continue to speak from the cocooned and splendid isolation of a marginal space of resistance that provides an illusionary reel of resistance. Speaking from the margin may at times be an enthralling and liberating experience for a 'progressive(?)' elite, but fails totally and dismally to transgress power, let alone divert the bullets that kill. On 6 November 1997, the Brussels' national police fired 14 bullets at 24-year old Said Charqi, a young alleged drug dealer, a second-generation immigrant of Moroccan origin. He was hit in the back of his head (self-defence the police insisted) and died. Over the following days, the immigrant neighbourhoods of Europe's capital city were rioting while the white, middle-class PC advocates of multiculturalism were marshalled in front of the cameras to once again insist on the need for a politics of difference and identity. Surely, a politics of identity persists (the police have no difficulty identifying the 'enemy'), the extreme-right-wing nationalist party (12% of

the votes) congratulated the policeman in several newspapers on their heroic behaviour and announced fighting for national identity from the ‘maquis’ if need be, and the ‘progressives’ returned to their twin PCs (politically correct, personal computer writing). The killing of Said—who had no citizenship rights, no job, and a nonwhite skin—by the legal monopoly of violence the state still holds suggests that the often-announced death of the state is, at best, premature. Worse, decrying the end of the state takes away attention from the increasingly authoritarian face of many a state apparatus. This is particularly ironic in a city where just a mile or two from where Said was shot the hermetic bastions and building sites of the new state-apparatus-in-construction are erected to house the elite bureaucrats of what is arguably the most radical reconstitution of scales of governance undertaken this century, the making of the European Union.

The local or the regional is invoked either as the site where a possible alternative politics (of resistance) resides or as an arena from where a successful insertion into or adaptation to the ‘requirements’ of global capitalism can be staged. Both the PC version of a localised politics of identity and the ‘modernist’ version of revived local competitiveness reveal nothing but the ‘mythical’ reality of the local as the locus from where globalisation is experienced *and* enacted. The crystallisation of revamped economic, social, cultural, and political geographical scales that become expressed in the geographical proximity and differentiated collages that produce legal killings and authoritarian supranational institutional formation in a city like Brussels attest to both the failure of a localist form of resistance and to the pervasive disempowerment that the rearticulation of the geographical dynamics of the choreographies of power bring along.

The politics of rescaling⁽¹⁾

“Today the question of scale inserts itself at the outset—at the foundation, as it were—of the analysis of texts and the interpretation of events. The results depends on the scale chosen as primary or essential.”

Lefebvre (1976, cited in Brenner, 1997, page 137)

It has always been the terrain of the political where sociospatial tensions were fought over, mediated, and negotiated, resulting in ever-changing forms of territorial or geographical organisation and in territorially shifting forms of governance. For a long time, and still today, the national state has been singled out as the preeminent locus for the crystallisation and working through of these tensions and conflicts. By all means, this has been and still is an important scale for the regulation and negotiation of social, economic, and cultural life and for the articulation of the above-mentioned processes of deterritorialisation–reterritorialisation. Yet the historical geography of capitalism and its restless wrestling with the more enduring characteristics of social and political space have always made existing forms of territorial organisation porous, unstable, and prone to transgressions and transformations. I want to argue that the production of space through the perpetual reworking of the geographies of capital circulation and accumulation junks existing spatial configurations and scales of governance, and produces new ones in the process (see also Brenner, 1998a; 1998b). This deconstruction and reconstruction of spatial scales which are often taken for granted as almost ‘natural’ units for social existence (much of which is perpetuated in some of the geographical literature which often unproblematically singles out particular scalar forms—as the pivotal terrain for analysis) reshuffles social power relationships in important ways. This century, it has undoubtedly been the national state that became iconised as the preeminent expression of political forms of territorial organisation.

⁽¹⁾ The following is based on a reworked version of Swyngedouw (1997a; 1997b).

In the context of a significant process of rescaling in which not only the scale of the national state but also other scales of governance and of regulation of social conflict and social reproduction are reshuffled, the ideology of an ungovernable and largely abstract process of global reorganisation takes hold easily (Brenner, 1997; Lefebvre, 1976). As pointed out above, this ideology has become a powerful weapon in the struggle over the content, democratic accountability, and forms of representation and of power that emerges in the new scalar configurations that are in the process of construction. It is exactly this revamping of spatial scales and their nested articulation that I believe is central to the current process of geographical reorganisation and may provide a more fertile terrain for coming to grips with the political economy of contemporary change (see also Smith, 1984, 1993; Swyngedouw, 1997a; 1997b).

The new authoritarianism

Although the national state was the pivotal scale for the regulation and contestation of a series of socioeconomic and class practices in the postwar period, the relative position and importance of the state is shifting in decisive ways. In a context in which the capital–labour nexus was nationally regulated but the circulation of capital spiralled out to encompass ever-larger spatial scales, there was a concerted attempt to make the ‘market imperative’ the ideologically and politically hegemonic legitimisation of institutional reform. This took shape through a variety of processes which combined (1) the ‘hollowing out’ of the national state with (2) more authoritarian and often softly but sometimes openly repressive political regimes. The state itself was pivotal in driving these changes. International differences in the extent to which these processes have become expressed signal the enduring significance of governance and regulation. Let us consider just a few of these key rescaling processes and identify the shifting power geometry associated with this ‘glocalisation’ (Swyngedouw, 1992) of the state or other institutional or regulatory forms.

First, the regulation of capital–labour tended to devolve from some kind of national collective bargaining to highly localised forms of negotiating wages and working conditions. Second, the ‘Schumpeterian workfare state’ (see Jessop, 1993; 1994a; 1994b; Peck and Jones, 1994) has either abolished a series of institutionalised regulatory procedures to leave them organised by the market (Christopherson, 1992) and, consequently, by the power of money, or has replaced these procedures by more local [‘local can take a variety of spatial-scale forms from local constituencies, cities, or entire regions (or a combination of them)] institutional and regulatory forms. Third, the restructuring of and often outright attack on national welfare regimes leads to a downscaling (in size and space) of public-money transfers, whereas privatisation permits a socially highly exclusive form of protection. Fourth, the interventionism of the state in the economy is equally rescaled, either downwards to the level of the city or to the region where public–private partnerships shape an entrepreneurial practice and ideology needed to successfully engage in an intensified process of interurban competition (Harvey, 1989) or upwards. When the French state-owned car manufacturer Renault closed its Brussels plant (with 3200 direct job losses), it announced that it would invest in a new assembly unit in Moscow. The deal had been brokered between Renault, the French state, and the *municipal* government of Moscow. The contested and still rather limited attempt to create a supernational Keynesian interventionist state at the level of the European Union and institutions such as NAFTA, GATT, and others are testimony to processes of upscaling of governance. In addition, a host of informal global or quasi-global political arenas have been formed, such as the G-8 meetings, the Group of 77, the Club of Paris, and others. Fifth, in addition to the socially deeply uneven, sociospatially polarising, and selectively disempowering effects

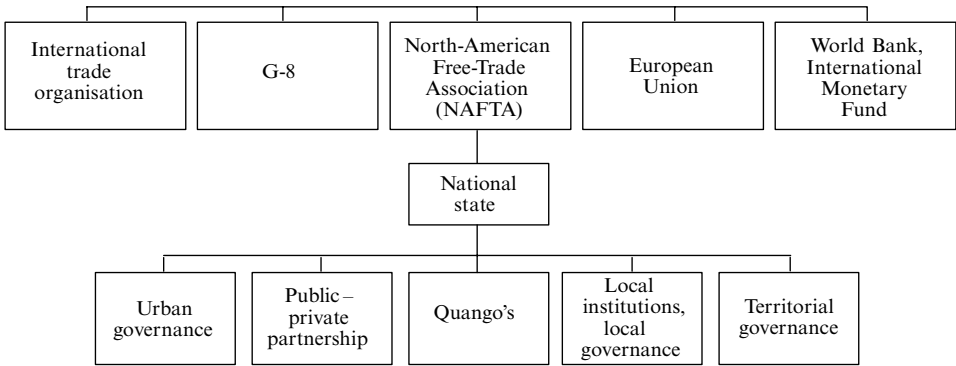


Figure 3. The 'glocalisation' of governance.

of the 'jumping of scales' that exemplifies this glocalisation of the state or of other forms of governance, this rescaling of governance often takes place through disturbingly undemocratic procedures by an increasingly authoritarian state apparatus. The double rearticulation of political scales (downward to the regional or local level; upward to the EU, NAFTA, GATT, etc; and outwards to private capital) leads to political exclusion, a narrowing of democratic control, and, consequently, a redefinition (or rather a limitation) of citizenship rights and power. In short, the glocalisation or rescaling of institutional forms leads to a more autocratic, undemocratic, and authoritarian (quasi-)state apparatuses (Morgan and Roberts, 1993; Swyngedouw, 1996b; 1998) (see figure 3). This double movement requires a new theoretical and practical engagement with issues of governance, regulation, and control (Cerny, 1996). Traditional 'state theory' is no longer adequate to deal with the formation of such new scaled forms of relationships between governance and civil society (Hirst, 1997).

In the following sections, I shall briefly explore the importance of a consideration of scale and suggest how the rescaling of governance through the contested formation of the European Union implies mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion and operates through the reconfiguration of the 'gestalt of scale'.

Scale transformations

Spatial scale has to be understood as something that is produced historically; a process that is always deeply heterogeneous and contested. If the capacity to appropriate place is predicated upon controlling space, then the scale over which command lines extend will strongly influence the capacity to appropriate place. More importantly, as the power to appropriate place is always contested and struggled over, then the alliances social groups or classes forge over a certain spatial scale will shape the conditions of appropriation and control over place and have a decisive influence over relative socio-spatial power positions. The continuous reshuffling and reorganisations of spatial scales are an integral part of social strategies and struggles for control and empowerment. In a context of heterogeneous social and ecological regulations, organised at the corporeal, local, regional, national, or international level, mobile people, goods, capital, and hypermobile information flows permeate and transgress these scales in ways that can be deeply exclusive and disempowering for those operating at other scale levels (see Smith 1988a; 1988b). Geographic configurations as a set of interacting and nested scales (the 'gestalt of scale') become produced as temporary stand-offs in a perpetual transformative, and on occasion, transgressive, sociospatial power struggle (Smith, 1984; Smith and Dennis, 1987). These struggles change the importance and role of certain geographical scales, reassert the importance of others, and occasionally create entirely new significant scales, but—most importantly—these scale redefinitions alter

and express changes in the geometry of social power by strengthening power and control of some while disempowering others. This is the process that Smith (1984; 1993) refers to as the 'jumping of scales', a process that signals how politics are spatialised by mechanisms of stretching and contracting objects across space. This stretching process is driven by class, ethnic, gender, and cultural struggles (Jonas, 1994). As Smith (1984) insists, scale as an actively produced configuration mediates between cooperation and competition, between homogenisation and differentiation, between empowerment and disempowerment. As power shifts, scale configurations change both in terms of their nesting and interrelations and in terms of their spatial extent. Below, we shall argue how over the past few decades the articulation of and relative importance of various institutional scales have altered or, in Smith's words, how scales were jumped, how a new gestalt of scale (Smith, 1987) is being wrought in ways that has profound and often disturbing consequences for the 'geometries' of sociospatial power.

An example: rescaling Europe

In a European context, the process of jumping scales, the stretching of scales and the contested nature of the new gestalt of scale is most vividly expressed in the debate over European integration and the unquestionable rearticulation of scales that accompanies this process, which is arguably the most radical political-economic and cultural transformation of space in Western Europe since the French Revolution.

There is of course an intense discursive invocation of the politics of scale in most national ideological and political debates in which the European scale is staged as the scapegoat to cover up internal conflict and struggle. For example, when the conservative prime minister Juppé in France attempted to introduce a radical austerity national programme in December 1995, the Maastricht treaty and the provisional agreement to reduce annual state deficits to less than 3% was invoked as the 'external' legitimisation to push through a major overhaul of the social security system in France. The French workers pierced through this veil, mounted the greatest mobilisation in France since 1968, and successfully resisted the state. In addition to the rhetoric of the politics of scale, there is an important substantive process of rescaling of authority taking place. Such politics of scale are central to almost all issues associated with European integration.

Monetary regulation. The contested introduction of a single currency transcends very much the debate on national sovereignty and control. Under conditions in which global financial speculation and mass transfers of currencies amount to well over a trillion dollars a day, the room to manoeuvre in monetary matters for national governments is rather limited anyway. The conflict over the introduction of a single currency leads to the formation of a strange new set of alliances which cut through all manner of traditional cleavages and fractures. The British financial sector, worried about maintaining the eminent position of the City of London (where US banks have become the dominant players anyway), British nationalists who see the currency as the ultimate expression of national identity and difference, speculators that welcome currency and interest-rate fluctuations (on which most of the speculative derivative markets are based), and a conservative ideological bloc that has traditionally pursued aggressive devaluatory policies to maintain competitiveness by transferring the failure of domestic capital to maintain a competitive edge onto both domestic and foreign workers, join ranks in pursuing a politics of scale that revolves around maintaining a national currency in the face of the demands by industrialists, international merchants, and some factions of the working class that see a common currency as a tool to break with the infernal cycle of competitive devaluation, speculative financial movements, and to align monetary policy more closely to the interests of the 'real' economy. Tony Blair's

agenda attempts the creation of a new and more pro-Euro (the new currency) alliance in order to regain some of the terrain lost in the European power theatre as a result of the long phase of conservative opt-outs.

The newly created 'Eurofed', the European Central Bank (ECB), has been given extreme 'independence'. The latter, of course, "is meant to reassure financial and business elites that price stability will trump other economic goals and that Europe's economic policy will be appropriately insulated from the demands of labor and other domestic interest groups" (Berman and McNamara, 1999, page 6). Duisenberg, the appointed head of the ECB, recently argued that although "it was 'normal' for politicians to voice their thoughts about monetary policy, it would be 'abnormal if they were listened to'" (Berman and McNamara, 1999, page 6). The notoriously opaque structure of the ECB, combined with a hollowing-out of the power of national monetary institutions, has produced a regulatory body of prime importance at the scale of the European Union. At the same time, this new regulatory scale has also signalled a profound shift of power away from the political domain and democratic control and has reinforced the hold of the new global Euro-elites over monetary matters.

Social issues are perhaps the most visible and problematic aspect of the European integration process and its associated redefinition of scale. Whereas the British opt-out under Mrs Thatcher represented the most radical and regressive position, the Danish or Norwegian scepticism about European integration revolve rather around the fear of the potential dismantling of the social welfare network that has characterised the 'Scandinavian model' for almost a century now. From the Treaty of Rome of 1958 onwards, the production of a new 'European' scale of regulation and governance was inspired by predominantly economic considerations and centred on the introduction of a free-trade zone that would allow the smooth movement of capital, commodities, and labour. However, this liberalisation of European economic space took place under conditions of different national social regimes existing side by side. In order to maintain a level playing field, social and other forms of rules and regulations needed to be streamlined at the new scale of the economic free zone. With a virtually absentee welfare state at the level of the European Union, the tendency has been to align national institutional frameworks on the basis of the lowest common denominator. This in turn, threatens the cohesion and continuation of the welfare regimes built up over decades of intense working-class struggle and hard-won victories. For example, while Tony Blair's election commitment to sign the social chapter of the Maastricht Treaty necessitated the introduction of a national minimum wage in the United Kingdom, the level at which it was set in early 1999 (£3.60 per hour for adults) is still 40% below that of, among others, Belgium or the Netherlands.

Perhaps the most important change associated with this rescaling process is the absence of structural redistribution programmes at the European scale (with the possible exception of agriculture and, to a far lesser extent, the structural funds). During the postwar period, national welfare regimes were undoubtedly the most important structural redistribution mechanisms, which alleviated sociospatial differences by means of long-term interregional transfer payments. The disappearance of inner-city slums and the relatively small interregional differences within states is largely the result of systematic sociospatial redistribution schemes. With the withdrawal or slimming-down of these social security transfer payments, sociospatial differentiation is again accentuated. The European geographical project has only the bare bones of such spatial redistribution mechanism, and growing economic homogenisation and international competitive pressures fed the call for a reduction in national regulatory systems. The upscaling of the economy in a context of trimmed-down national redistributive

mechanisms intensified interplace and interregional competition, contributed to an acceleration of processes of exclusion and marginalisation, and deepened social polarisation in ways that ties down a growing part of the European population in unemployment, poverty, and reduced citizenship rights. The two-speed and three-speed Europe is not one linked to a geographical core and periphery in terms of their determination to accelerate integration, but is rather an internal differentiation between those who revel in and benefit from greater command over space and those who remained trapped in the doldrums of persistent marginalisation and exclusion.

Gender relations equally revolve around an intense politics of scale, from rights to abortion, more egalitarian divorce laws, the regulation of nonheterosexual relations, social security rights to workplace discrimination, etc. Each of these extends from the scale of the body to the regulation of these corporeal rights at higher scales. These scales are the arenas of conflict and struggle in which different groups pursue scale strategically to maintain or alter existing power relations. Again, the decision of the United Kingdom under the Conservative government to opt-out of the social charter undermined women's already precarious legal and other rights. Although many of the persistent discriminatory practices have been successfully brought to the European Court (notably on the equal treatment of part-time workers), these had to be fought for through lengthy, time-consuming, and expensive legal procedures only available to the rich or to those who have sufficient backing from grassroots organisations.

Work. In addition to the themes already mentioned above, the most important other work-related arena is the struggle around workers' participation, consultation, and involvement in corporate decisions and negotiations. Collective consultation, which is part of many national regulatory frameworks (although power is firmly maintained by capital), is hotly contested at the European level. In an environment in which competitive relocations (the Hoover relocation from Dijon to Scotland is a notorious case) are taking place, worker's involvement and co-decisionmaking at the same scale as the economic space is central to a more democratic participation of the workers in economic processes. The struggle over the implementation of company consultation and collective bargaining at the European level is a case in point.

Migration and citizenship. The most problematic area of the new gestalt of scale in Europe is the political (as well as economic) exclusion of immigrants. Whereas Procedures to be allowed into the European Union are being tightened and a new 'European Wall' is being built to keep the undesired Others out, the growing immigrant community remains without basic political rights in the most EU member states in terms of their participation in the political process. Their exclusion in the construction of the new hierarchy of scales of governance intensifies their cultural and political-economic marginalisation and feeds an already acute tension between different ethnic communities.

While the power of the (sometimes new) elites become consolidated and is often re-enforced, new social movements (sometimes in alliance with the politically and socioeconomically excluded) challenge the new elite programmes and questions the legitimacy of the institutional framework from which they are excluded (Mayer, 1994). Such strategies of resistance can take a variety of forms, ranging from the rise of deeply antistatist forms of antipolitics which feed the electoral support for extreme right-wing political parties to active contestation of the development vision by all sorts of groups, from discontented—since excluded—local business people to the green movement and immigrant groups. In addition, as the state or other forms of governance become increasingly authoritarian, the excluded target extra-state objectives to voice their discontent or to launch (often direct) actions and strategies of contestation

(Mayer, 1989). Those strategies have become one of the few avenues open to contest and express citizenship rights. In sum, the rise of the 'glocal' state is accompanied by new forms of social movements and new sorts of voicing and mediating social conflict.

Scaling politics

"Today's global capitalism is thus again a kind of 'negation of negation', after national capitalism and its internationalist/colonialist phase. At the beginning ... , there is a capitalism within the confines of a Nation-State, with the accompanying international trade ... , what follows is the relationship of colonization in which the colonizing country subordinates and exploits (economically, politically, culturally) the colonized country; the final moment of this process is the paradox of colonization in which there are only colonies, no colonizing countries—the colonizing power is no longer the Nation-State but directly the global company. In the long term, we shall not only wear Banana Republic shirts but also live in banana republics."

Zizek (1997, page 44)

An inclusionary politics of scale necessitates a vision and strategy in which the current one-sided obsession with a politics of identity in which the body has become a central site is replaced by a rescripting and reconstruction of groups affinities. To resist the totalising and globalising force of money and capital accumulation demands the forging of 'scalar' alliances that are sensitive to geographical differences and uniqueness. The successful struggle of the South-Korean labour movement to contest the imposition of more flexible labour regulations (necessary—so the autocratic state insisted—to maintain South Korea's international competitive stance) during the first months of 1997 and their success in producing a national alliance of opposition forces suggests how a politics that is sensitive to issues of scale can bring a substantial leverage to contest socially regressive regulatory reforms. The sprawling proletarianisation in South-East Asia and elsewhere that is increasingly difficult to control by the market-Stalinist regimes, which often deny even basic citizenship rights in these places, begins to produce a set of alliances that might transcend the idiosyncrasies of local resistances through a 'jumping of scales' that could begin to undermine the power of capital to command space. In Europe, the closures of the Brussels Renault plant saw the first successful supranational labour mobilisation. In the wake of the shockwaves that the unexpected closure of the plant sent through European civil society, the first European-wide strike was organised as well as the first European labour march in Paris to protest Renault's strategies. The recognition of how scalar strategies can be utilised and how alliances across space can be built will affect the balance of power and prompt a re-visioning of entrepreneurial strategies. The Renault fight may have been lost, but neither Renault nor any other multilocation company will contemplate enacting the scenario of the Brussels closure again. These politics of scale can often forge highly unique and often unlikely alliances. Sales of Renault cars plummeted in the aftermath of the closure. The German consumer boycott of Shell in the wake of its double socio-ecological disaster [The Brent Spar and the alleged genocide of the Ogoni people in Nigeria(<http://www.mosopcamada.org>)] equally suggests how mobilising scale politics proves to be a potential successful strategy to force different social, political, or ecological configurations. Of course, forging alliances across space is often a tortuous, problematic, and undeniably contested process that is rife with all sorts of real or constructed antagonisms and conflicts. The historical geography of capitalism is littered with examples of how sociospatial conflicts prevent the formation of 'scaled' alliances, particularly by those that are already disempowered. Nevertheless, a 'politics of scale' is of prime importance to resist the totalising forces of an untrammelled market-Stalinism.

This is squarely where the challenge in Europe resides as well. The fight for representation in key European decisionmaking forums, increased power for the European parliament, a more inclusive voting system that defines rights of citizenship even for those without a European legal nationality, the construction of tripartite forms of negotiation at the level of Europe, international worker's representation on the board of international companies, and a Europe-wide redistributive fiscal system are, among others, small pointers in the direction of an empowering politics of scale that can reshuffle power relationships and produce a gestalt of scale that promotes inclusion and cooperation.

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