Mobilising regions: territorial strategies for growth

Regional Studies Association Winter Conference
Friday 22nd November 2013, London, UK

CALL FOR PAPERS
Abstract submission deadline Friday 12th July 2013 – Registration opens 24th May 2013

One of the major impacts of the current economic crisis is the increased pressure to find new solutions to often deep-seated societal and political-economic problems, particularly at the scale of cities and regions. What is being demanded are new territorial development strategies capable of arresting economic decline and providing new measures in support of economic growth, whilst at the same time managing territorial inequality and responding to concerns over the democratic legitimacy of existing decision-making structures and public policy interventions. Making this an even more demanding set of challenges is the requirement that all this be delivered within a package that affords a more balanced and environmentally sustainable model for the future, and at a time when the scope for public intervention is being diminished as a result of widespread austerity measures.

Unable to rely solely on state intervention, regions and localities are today faced with the challenge of finding new ways of managing their own territorial development. Success increasingly depends on an ability to mobilise a broad range of public and private actors in support of particular territorial development strategies, models, and interventions. This is leading to the emergence of new territorial alliances and new loci and/or expressions of territorial cooperation aimed at mobilising regions in pursuit of particular political and economic goals. Yet this is only part of the story. For regions and localities are also where competing political and economic agendas increasingly collide, meaning new sites and forms of territorial conflict are emerging as other actors mobilise to resist particular territorial development strategies, models, and interventions.

What this is giving rise to are new forms and expressions of territorial cooperation *and* conflict around questions to do with economic restructuring, new economic developments, infrastructure, the collective provision of services, and governmentalised remapping's of state space. This is particularly evident, for instance, in debates for and against Scottish and Catalan independence, the need for austerity driven welfare reforms, and investment in major infrastructure development (e.g. High Speed 2 in the UK, metropolitan transit oriented development in North America).

In this context it is timely to ask some searching questions as to *how* regions are being mobilised in support of, or opposition to, particular territorial development models and strategies. The Regional Studies Association Winter Conference 2013 on *Mobilising Regions* presents a timely opportunity to discuss these important issues, to establish the need and nature of future research imperatives, and to address the concerns and challenges confronting policymakers and practitioners. Contributions are therefore invited which focus primarily, although not necessarily exclusively, on one or more of the following themes:

- New sites and forms of territorial cooperation and/or conflict at the scale of regions and localities
- Cooperation, disputes and resistance around particular territorial development strategies, models, and interventions
- Empirical and conceptual understandings of how regions are mobilised
- The (im)mobility of territorial development models
- The role of leadership in mobilising regions

The conference organisers are keen to attract papers and sessions which address a broad research and policy agenda, including contributions from any discipline which can offer relevant insights at local and regional levels. Papers which are collaborative, international or multi-disciplinary are especially welcome.