

## **CALL FOR PAPERS: Network Approaches to Polycentric Urban Development**

**14-15 December 2019**

**South China University of Technology, Guangzhou, China**

This workshop aims to explore the intersections between two related bodies of literature: polycentric urban regions (PURs) and network approaches to the analysis of regional urban systems. A key rationale for the RSA Research Network is that PURs have become a key concept in regional studies, both as an analytical framework to capture empirical realities as well as part of normative visions in regional development policies. In its most basic guise, the PUR notion applies to regions characterised by the presence of multiple, more-or-less proximate urban centres without pronounced hierarchical differentiation among these centres (e.g., Kloosterman and Musterd, 2001; Parr, 2004; Meijers 2005; van Meeteren et al., 2016). PURs have now been identified well beyond the intuitive and well-worn examples of the Dutch Randstad and the Rhein-Ruhr Area, and the concept has become widespread for framing regional studies research (e.g., Hoyler et al., 2008; Veneri and Burgalassi, 2012; Vasanen, 2013; Hanssens et al., 2014; Meijers et al, 2018). For example, PURs are recognised as being an important empirical reality throughout Europe, North America, and more recently in China. Meanwhile, network metaphors are increasingly employed to study regional urban systems or city-regional development, often found in or captured through the lens of PURs. To paraphrase Berry's (1964) seminal contribution, "cities" can increasingly be seen as "networks within networks of cities".

The workshop will be held in Guangzhou, whose recent histories epitomise polycentric urban development and the significance of urban networks (e.g., Zhao et al., 2017). On the one hand, the Pearl River Delta (PRD), in which Guangzhou is situated, is an archetypical PUR anchored by multiple cities with a population of at least five million. On the other hand, many insightful writings have suggested that the economic take-off of the PRD since the 1980s can be tied to the well-known development model 'Front Shop, Back Factory', within which the socioeconomic networks between producer services industries in Hong Kong (i.e., 'Front Shop') and manufacturing sectors in the rest of the PRD (i.e., 'Back Factory') are vital.

We therefore welcome submissions that invoke network thinking, models, and techniques to study city-regional development in general, and network approaches to polycentric urban development in particular. Possible topics of the workshop include, but are not limited to the tentative list below. Submissions related to network approach to city-regional development/regional urban systems will also be considered.

- Conceptualizing city-regional development through urban networks
- Polycentric urban development at multiple spatial scales
- Polycentric urban development through different social, economic, and political networks
- Emerging urban network data and analytics
- City networks and urban performance
- Integration/comparison of qualitative and quantitative network approaches
- Planning and coordinating urban networks within city-regions

### **Keynote speakers**

- Cliff Hague – Heriot-Watt University
- Richard Shearmur – McGill University
- Anthony Yeh – University of Hong Kong

**Workshop format:** In addition to the keynote speakers, all participants will present their work in plenary sessions and the workshop will be organized in such a way that there is ample time for discussion, feedback and creative thinking on future research steps.

**Contact:** For enquiries, please contact Miaoxi Zhao (South China University of Technology; [arzhao@scut.edu.cn](mailto:arzhao@scut.edu.cn)) and Xingjian Liu (The University of Hong Kong; [xliu6@hku.hk](mailto:xliu6@hku.hk)).

### **Deadlines**

- August 15 2019 – abstract submission deadline
- September 1 2019 – notification of acceptance

Please send abstracts (maximum 500 words) to [arzhao@scut.edu.cn](mailto:arzhao@scut.edu.cn) and [xliu6@hku.hk](mailto:xliu6@hku.hk). Abstracts submitted will be reviewed by the organisers of the Regional Studies Association Network on Polycentric Urban Regions, as there is a maximum number of participants we can accommodate.

**Travel bursary available for PhD student:** We have a small budget to financially support travel and accommodation for PhD students that are willing to join the workshop and that do not have (sufficient) resources themselves in their project budget. If this is the case, please indicate in your submission email that you would like to be considered for this travel bursary.

**Registration fee:** Thanks to generous support by the Regional Studies Association and South China University of Technology, workshop participation is free of charge and meals are included (including a workshop dinner).

**Travel and accommodation:** We will provide an overview of travel and accommodation options after the acceptance of abstracts.

### **RSA Research Network on Polycentric Urban Regions**

The RSA Research Network on Polycentric Urban Regions was launched at the Regional Studies Association Annual conference in Lugano, Switzerland (June 2018). The aim of the network is (1) to set a renewed agenda for PUR research within urban and regional studies, (2) to inform cutting-edge theoretical, methodological, and policy insights, (3) to cultivate synergies between researchers with different backgrounds and at different stages of their career, as well as (4) to contribute to policy debates through impactful research and engagement. The first two workshops were held in Delft (January 2019) and Loughborough (August 2019). The initiators of the network are Ben Derudder, John Harrison, Michael Hoyler, Xingjian Liu and Evert Meijers. The network is open to all scholars with an interest in PURs.