Cities, regulation and boundaries
What role for the English state?

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Abolition of the English regions

- At least a decade of scholarly debate surrounding the meaning and relevance of ‘the region’ (and scale).

- Evolving urban functional relationships and their implications for the definition of ‘functional urban areas’ (FUAs) > ‘functional economic areas’.

- Fuelled the redrawning of the (political) administrative map for English sub-national governance.
### A world of cities

**ESPON (European Spatial Observation Network) Tiger, 2012**

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Global APS ‘primate’ European strategy

ESPON Tiger, 2012
Global APS ‘British’ strategy

ESPON Tiger, 2012
The relevance (or not) of scale

“City-Regions are not defined by natural boundaries, because they are wholly the artefacts of the cities at their nuclei: the boundaries move outward – or halt – only as city economic energy dictates”

Jacobs 1984: Cities and the Wealth of Nations: Principles of Economic Life
The relevance (or not) of scale

An “urgent need for new conceptualizations of scale to obtain an analytical - and political - fix on current processes of reterritorialisation and their implications for the geographical organisation of social relations in an era of neoliberal globalisation”

Brenner 1999, 448.
‘Mega-city regions’ The *Polynet* study, 2003-06

ERDF funded Interreg IIIB NW Europe study
Metropolitan regions deeply integrated in global economic networks

“Mega-city regions are a series of anything between 10 and 50 cities and towns physically separated but functionally networked, clustered around one or more larger central cities, and drawing enormous economic strength from a new functional division of labour“

(Hall and Pain, 2006)
The ‘polycentric’ mega-city region

Morphologically mono-centric
BUT
Functionally poly-centric! (Pain, 2008)

Local firms joining larger cross-border networks / global firms with local strategies
The scale of the sustainability challenge
The governance challenge

• In all the cases studied, policy and democratic engagement was found lacking in the most intense interactional spaces where multiple functional scales overlap.

• The definition of sub-national territorial-administrative structures and boundaries was concluded to be largely irrelevant because functional relations in dynamic globalizing spaces are agile.
The relevance (or not) of scale

“scales evolve relationally within tangled hierarchies and dispersed interscalar networks ... [and] ... cannot be construed adequately as a system of territorial containers defined by absolute geographic size (a ‘Russian dolls’ model of scales)”

The ‘meta-city region’ challenge

**Place:** The ‘Pan-Yellow Sea Region’ (PYSR):
Japan, S. Korea, China.

**Process:** ‘Flying geese’, reversing.

- The established division of labour has been disrupted.
- Horizontal intra-industry trade.
- Governments are increasingly confronted with intertwined economic, social and ecological challenges.
- Need to deal with complex cross boundary, inter-scale processes involving multiple actors and institutions.
- Requires non-territorialist cooperation.
ESPON Tiger, 2010-12

- Increasingly interwoven multi-scale flows of goods, people and knowledge, accompanied by geographical rebalancing articulated through global value chains involving Europe.

- Functional integration at a European *macro-regional* level, (the ‘global macro-region’) however, the macro-regional and global levels of interaction are not discrete scalar processes, but are shown to be deeply intertwined.

The region – how appropriate?

- The ‘regionalist-fix’ of EU territorial policy since the political construction of a ‘Europe of Regions’ (The ‘Committee of the Regions’) (1994), fails to engage with Europe’s contemporary inter-scale relations / the role of cities.

- Alongside the construction of the European Union (EU) as an advanced world territorial assemblage through successive waves of political upscaling, the region has until recently retained its prominence as a focus for EU policy and funding.

Merit?
Regional trade in textile and clothing industry, 2007-2009 (Van Hamme, Tiger WP7)
Regional trade in automotive and others means of transport industry, 2007-2009 (Van Hamme, **Tiger WP7**)
What role for the English state?

- *Tiger* shows how local specificities and differences are actively constitutive of diverse scalar relations.

- But in England a strategic perspective, looking outwards from the local (and across spatial and economic spheres), is missing.

- The place-fixing of local politics has been reassembled.
Governance and planning must be “reflexive and agile, reflecting on / incorporating new knowledge / understandings”

(Harrison and Pain, 2012, p.8)
Empirical evidence from Europe suggests that governance modes must focus on processes as opposed to territorial boundaries to engage with the fluid spaces of diversity.