

## *Introduction*

### **The Emergence of New Regional Spaces: Connections between Transnational Metropolitan Networking and Local Transsectoral Partnership**

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Guest Editor

The current economic crisis is making itself felt in various ways: a marked decline in growth worldwide after 30 years of postwar prosperity and even a decline in real salary levels in some places. At the same time, however, newly industrialized countries are expanding and networks of technopolises are dominating in the developed world. The painful reconversion of old industrial zones specializing in sectors seen as modern or even dynamic just yesterday is continuing, but there is a multiplication of research parks and other forms of "technological districts"<sup>1</sup> resulting from the "tertiarization of industry."<sup>2</sup> Small and medium-sized production firms are creating the most jobs and at the same time are establishing for themselves multiple networks of diversified companies. Thus, they enjoy the advantages of large businesses, particularly conditions favouring creativity, with the added benefit of flexibility. The impact of innovations on the information field is not yet clear as structural transformations are taking place at an incredible speed.

#### **The Challenge of Theoretical Synthesis...**

As for theory, most specialists in regional science are trying to consolidate the theoretical frameworks that have been viewed as

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1. For more on technopolises, research parks, and the like, see G. B. Benko. 1991. *Géographie des technopôles*. Paris: Masson.
  2. "Tertiarization of industry" refers to the transfer by industrial establishments of numerous functions that were formerly an integral part of the production process of manufacturing companies to production units belonging to the tertiary sector.

important over the last 30 years. With the exception of Keynesian theory, whose significance has declined with the end of the welfare state and breakdown of national boundaries in the economic sphere (and which in any case had brought little to the study of regional development), each of the dominant lines of thinking makes a contribution that must be recognized.

The neoclassicists' contribution is to be found in their explanation of the mechanics of exchange in a market economy (a system of production that is increasing) and in their analysis of the mechanisms for adjusting production factors operating on a world scale. The minimization of production costs, which is the principal motive prompting decisions by economic players and is the basis of the spatial division of labour, accommodates the behavioural hypotheses in this kind of framework. Nevertheless, when one studies the spread of innovation and the effects of technological change, the Marxist contribution seems essential, particularly the ideas of theorists on unequal exchange when the effects of domination and power based on technological mastery and capital accumulation are being examined. The thesis of the spatial division of labour also requires this explanatory clarification of the operating modes of various social formations.

Theory on the development of industrial clusters, whose most valuable contribution is the theory of growth poles, continues to raise interest in developing countries and may be revived in developed countries as well, where metropolization, networking, feedback, and synergy are becoming increasingly important features. Many prefer, however, to look at endogenous development theory to measure these interrelationships correctly and judge the influence of new values. The milieu has played such a large role that it is held responsible for innovation by such researchers as those from GREMI (*Groupe de recherche européen sur les milieux innovateurs*).

### ... or the Creation of a New Paradigm?

Nevertheless, many—in particular those seeking new action routes—feel that the creation of a new paradigm is essential. They emphasize what is local and what is collective. Local, however, includes an openness to the world, and collective does not ignore individual behaviour mechanisms. On action strategies, Manzagol indicated that what is needed is no longer a matter of bonuses or one-time initiatives but of slow preparatory work (training, networking) to which transfer technology bodies contribute.<sup>3</sup>

3. C. Manzagol, "La localisation des activités spécifiques". In *Encyclopédie de géographie*, ed. A. Bally, R. Ferras, and D. Pumain. Paris: Economica, 1992.

In the midst of these varied upheavals, the Association de science régionale de langue française (ASRDLF) has served since its founding as a rallying point for field observers too often looked down on by the coterie of learned societies, for theorists caught up in the difficulties of creating a new paradigm, and for active players, who are inevitably involved in developing strategies and designing regional development programmes. At its annual conference in 1991 in Montreal, ASRDLF continued to play this role. Since this event produced many valuable papers and raised a great deal of interest among Canadian specialists in regional science, it was agreed that the *Revue d'économie régionale et urbaine* (RERU), which is associated with ASRDLF, would publish a special issue on technological districts, and that the *Canadian Journal of Regional Science* (CJRS) would devote an issue to analyses with a regional viewpoint. Nevertheless, one can still see that a local perspective, which gives local players an essential role in industrial restructuring, is of equal significance here.

The articles that follow cover two major themes: new metropolitan networking and local partnership. Two articles attempt to link these themes by discussing the socio-spatial transformation of old industrial zones in metropolitan settings.

## Transnational Metropolitan Networking

Antoine Bally and Louis Boulianne recall some of the theoretical bases for remodeling urban systems. At the core of their analysis is a new classification according to four functions: fabrication, circulation, distribution, and regulation. Bally and Boulianne touch on factors contributing to the originality of production systems at the supra-national level and explain in detail the phenomena of multiple localization, subcontracting, and interconnection. Thus, the substitution of external economies for economies of scale becomes more apparent as a primary location factor and the development of solidarity networks as key mechanisms. International comparisons (including Canadian cities) are presented as well; the authors examine the transformation of the industrial structure of chosen cities using the above-mentioned four functions and three urban types: metropolises, medium-sized cities, and industrial cities. Geneva, which plays a central part in this analysis, seems marked by relatively strong growth in the circulation function and a countervailing decline in the fabrication function.

Antonio Cunha and Jean-Bernard Racine have limited their study to the Swiss urban system, but they use a more extensive set of variables and broader coverage of the urban framework. This has enabled them to compare the impact of transformations of metropolitan milieus on the

relationship with their hinterlands. Using data for 1975-1985, they demonstrate the effects of selective tertiarization of large centres and of the diffused industrialization of small cities. For the former, they observe how the tertiary activities involving decision making and management capacity establish themselves in a small number of cities with a range of highly qualified professions. For the latter, they show how the delocalization policy of major firms, at least in a developed country such as Switzerland, causes skilled labour to become a decisive factor in the innovation process and a regulator of spatial mobility of production functions. Overall, the authors insist that even as regions restructure themselves, they are continuing to reinforce the roles of old metropolises.

Finally, Bernard Guesnier addresses the complex question of an emerging macroregion, the Atlantic Arc, formed by the coastal regions from Ireland to Portugal by way of Great Britain, France, and Spain. The transformation of production facilities, combined with the restructuring of regions, is again at the centre of his analysis. One factor—the voluntarism of population groups—takes on much more importance than in the previous texts. In fact, this is expressed on a transnational scale; first, regional similarities (coastal location, peripherality, rurality) are emphasized; then differences appear. Stress is placed on the will to cooperate because of the potential arising from this mixture of common and distinctive traits. Thus, the relatively small size of each of these regions is compensated for by rebirth of the “Atlantic River” concept, greater enhancement of the coast, and networking of research parks.

A number of macroregions and new urban networks that transcend national boundaries are currently forming: the Lyon-Geneva-Torino triangle, the Mediterranean arc, the “blue banana”<sup>4</sup>, etc. Therefore, it is rather surprising that similar instances of solidarity have not appeared on the North American continent on an interprovincial or even an international scale. Certainly many attempts have been made in recent years to reinforce the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River complex, but the approaches have been somewhat restrained and almost exclusively bureaucratic. In the past, the megalopolis concept had been applied to the Atlantic facade and to the Great Lakes region, and later the “Main Street” concept was used to refer to the Windsor-Quebec City corridor, but the two notions did not last. Canadian researchers could therefore profit from the experience of the Atlantic Arc in order to take a new approach to macroregional relations.

4. This name is given to the megalopolis that extends from the London region to Lombardy in northern Italy, taking in Belgium, central Germany, and Switzerland. See the *Atlas de l'aménagement du territoire* published by DATAR (Paris: La Documentation française, 1988: 348).

## Socio-spatial Transformation of Old Industrial Zones

Metropolitan industrial zones in developed countries are continuing to undergo profound changes. Some are being revived, and others are being reassigned to different urban functions and replaced by new spaces, called technology poles in France and technological districts elsewhere.

Michel Boisvert offers as an example of economic revival strategy the concept of a business zone based on three major elements: a free trade area, a combination of financial assistance emanating from all levels of public administration, and an effort to deregulate in a zone where housing renovation is being undertaken simultaneously with encouragement of industrial investment. Boisvert first recalls the origin and spread of this concept, especially in Great Britain and the United States. Then he examines those measures aiming to coordinate actions and concerns about the decaying urban fabric which are being used in Montreal to boost economic activity in two deteriorating zones. Thus, he comes to note the similarity of the approach underlying these measures with that underlying the concept of enterprise zones. In contrast, Canada's federal government continues to refuse to grant free trade area status, and no significant action has been taken with respect to deregulation. According to the author, since the measures that have been adopted are of fundamental importance, it would be unwise to radically revise at this time the strategy adopted, all the more so because results with enterprise zones have been limited up until now.

One issue is the attractiveness of rehabilitated zones to research and development activities and to the manufacturing sector that has converted to new technologies. In fact, new spaces have been conceived for these activities (see the special issue of *RERU* just mentioned, which deals exclusively with this topic). The article by Bernard Pecqueur and Nicole Roussier illustrates this approach, a key concept of which is networking. Networking implies less a group of production units with market links (merchandise and payment flows) than a group of individuals and organizations maintaining links forged in the course of market operations but focused on information flows often more important than production itself. The starting point for this discussion is the Italian “industrial district”, whose success for Becattini<sup>5</sup> depends on the interpenetration of the resident population and businesses. Nevertheless, in this case residential zones do not necessarily need restructuring since the challenge is not to gather large amounts of capital as investment aid but to bring together future partners for

5. G. Becattini. 1992. “Le district marshallien: une notion socio-économique.” In G. B. Benko et al. *Les régions qui gagnent*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.

technological renewal. The choice of specialized industries is therefore less important than the ability of these establishments to mould themselves to external economies. This is expressed primarily through a common interest in training and the enhancement of work—hence the importance of university-business partnership.

This article also provides a working definition of the technological district based on criteria which when applied to France not only highlight well-known poles such as Toulouse and Grenoble but also identify a number of poles in the Parisian region. The authors conclude that technological districts present an original link between the policies of large corporations and the local innovative production system. They emphasize the importance of mastering three essential functions for networking of technological cities: spread of information, production and sharing of knowledge, and creativity.

### Transsectoral Social Partnership

Four articles contribute to elucidating the new social partnership at the local level. Caroline Andrew and her collaborators take a double perspective: microsocial for understanding the internal functioning of organizations involved in economic stimulation and technological renewal, and macrosocial for determining the controls imposed on these organizations. Two metropolitan regions serve as examples: Hull-Ottawa and the Waterloo-Kitchener-Guelph region in southwestern Ontario, also known as the Technology Triangle. In both cases control is flexible, weak rather than hierarchical, participatory rather than authoritarian, guided by clients rather than imposed by bureaucrats. Openness toward the local area seems limited because attachment to the region pales in comparison to attachment to the socio-professional milieu, and the leadership of local administrations plays a lesser role than government services. The dynamics of the organizations that were studied and the ways in which they participate in their milieus are similar; the authors see in this an indication of the disappearance of the local in favour of the global.

Colette Fourcade replies to this questioning by showing that the local is built on exactly these multifunctional, nonhierarchical networks which are open to their milieus because they are based on their labour resources. She suggests two approaches. First, adaptation strategies, feasible for rural areas and small to medium-sized cities, mean recycling traditional know-how through subcontracting and a dense meshing of small and medium-sized businesses and industries. Second, attraction strategies, mostly used in metropolitan areas, give to superior, business-oriented services a determining role as does the emergence of technolo-

gy poles. According to Fourcade, these are a creative catalyst because they encourage the interlinking of small to medium-sized businesses and industries, manifesting themselves as internal networks (like Montpellier) or external ones (Sophia-Antipolis). Such a fundamental (re)orientation of regional development must involve (re)building what is local since it is conceived within the context of a specific area, both in terms of the combination of activities available there and the social mechanisms to be put to work.

Partnership as a path to local development is also studied by Juan-Luis Klein, whose contribution, both theoretical and empirical, deals with the Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean region. Klein suggests a definition of partnership: an association of public and private players within development organizations that are structured socially yet limited locally, in which the participation of players is voluntary and negotiated, and whose costs are shared. He also puts forward a typology involving the four most common types of partnership: intergovernmental, technoproductive, corporate (privately based), and community (public). Once defined and narrowed down, partnership is related to local development theory so that a twin perspective emerges, territorial and entrepreneurial. According to Klein, adopting a partnership viewpoint facilitates local development socially and economically. Such an approach seems just as applicable in rural and outlying areas as in a metropolitan milieu. For such a strategy to succeed, the region (often an area threatened by economic restructuring) must encompass necessary although not sufficient conditions: an original approach to production, local regulatory interactions, coordinating structures, a strong feeling of belonging, territorial closeness (which overrides social distance), and developed information networks.

Didier Taverne writes with considerable scepticism about the resurgence of local solidarity. He feels innovation does not occur without a preexisting principle of unity. Because numerous quality relationships enable a productive micro-system to exist, political structures have to play a major role. Even though many view decentralization as the road to failure of the state—"an invasive social construct"—it has more often been suggested, as Crozier<sup>6</sup> does, that the municipality is taking over as an essential mechanism for self-organization. The author feels that decentralization must be supported by socio-political structures, especially by political parties, which, until the eighties, were able to escape domination by local elites to maintain intraterritorial and extraterritorial cohesion. For example, since the French Socialist Party is very powerful in the 48 communes of the Aude

6. M. Crozier. 1970. *La société bloquée*. Paris: Le Seuil.

département, the search for local solidarity was begun on this premise. In this regard, three important points should be emphasized. First, it is the General Council of the département, not the political parties, which is emerging as the new partner being sought by the communes because of its more technicist approach. Second, intercommunality is occurring on an ad hoc basis as situations require; the author sees this more as pragmatism in action than as an expression of true solidarity. Third, when mayors are questioned on stakes in local development, a diversity of attitudes is revealed; only communes whose populations are stable or increasing are optimistic, and wherever agriculture is still viable no one is willing to take risks with economic strategy. The author concludes that, at least in this milieu, territorial forces have proved to be negligible as a mobilizing factor.

### Conclusion

This special issue concludes with a contribution by Jean-Marie Huriot, Claude Lacour, and Alain Sallez summarizing the lessons of the ASDRLF conference that was the source of the papers presented here. Originally drafted rather quickly but since reworked by the authors, this contribution gives some indication of the outcome of the conference (and of this issue) with respect to understanding and formalizing emerging new regional spaces.<sup>7</sup>

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7. Note that the preceding issue of the *Canadian Journal of Regional Science* (XV:2, Summer 1992) was devoted to a related topic: the creation of innovative milieus.