

Commentaries: Debating (de)territorial governance

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Introduction

'Deterritorialization' has become one of the central themes of our time. Some academics are trying to understand its mechanisms, others are offering deterritorialization as a political aspiration; many are increasingly doing both (Konrad 1984; Michnik 1985; Lipschutz 1992; Connolly 1995; Hardt and Negri 2000; Kaldor 2003a). This shift reflects an increasing lack of faith in peoples' abilities to form territorial institutions for collective representation that can actually help themselves and others. The state in particular has come increasingly under attack, as the spatialization of politics throws up new issues for forms of democratic governance (Pugh 2005). And so a new politics which privileges deterritorialized expression over collective territorial political governance is being advocated in many quarters. The number of alternatives to representative state governance – from 'anti-polities' to 'cosmopolitanism', the idea of a 'smooth world' and certain forms of 'global civil society' – increasingly dominates academic debate (Chandler 2004).

The development of 'anti-politics' by Gyorgy Konrad in 1984 was one of the earliest systemizations of an alternative school of thought, stemming from a direct critique of collective political representation in Eastern Europe. Anti-political activists in this region refused political confrontation with the state. They focused instead upon individual dissidence and self-expression as a means to change. The approach is also reflected in Adam Michnik's (1985) concept of 'autonomous spaces' and the

World Social Forum (see <http://www.all4all.org/2004/10/1181.shtml>). And following this line of not subordinating individual expression to collective responsibility, Mary Kaldor (2003a) also describes the development of a new form of global civil society, where self-expression is considered 'primary, overriding claims to political authority' (Kaldor 2003b, 56). Kaldor's (2003b, 57) justification for this approach is that citizens become 'incapable of defending their concerns about their own identity' under collectively-representative territorial systems of governance. Lipschutz (1992) criticizes publicly elected states for 'colonizing' and Connolly (1995) for 'imprisoning' and creating 'suffering' in the people they govern.

And cosmopolitan democrats argue that democracy and rights can no longer be equated with territorially restricted 'state-based' politics, but rather that: 'democracy must transcend the borders of single states and assert itself on a global level' (Held 1995; Archibugi *et al.* 1998; Archibugi 2000). They thereby propose replacing the territorially-bounded political community of the state as the subject of international decision-making by new flexible frameworks based on the rights of the global citizen, freed from territorial restrictions. While few of its proponents suggest that any future cosmopolitan order could be more than a remote possibility, many see calls for its emergence as highlighting widespread recognition of the problems with the territorial constraints of the political sphere as it is currently constituted. What the discussion does reveal is the limited theoretical possibilities for working through the alternatives to

territorialized forms of political community. Either political rights are constituted territorially or they are de-territorialized and therefore have the non-divisive prefix of 'global', 'cosmopolitan', 'universal', 'human' etc., whereby it is assumed that the political community is the non-exclusionary sphere of humanity itself. The problem with positing the existence of such an inclusive political community, constitutive of political rights and freedoms, is that it begs the question of 'who decides' in the absence of a formally accountable world government? Once this question is posed, it is clear that the answer is a divisive one. The claim for political legitimacy in a deterritorialized world, not based on representational political forms of accountability can only ever be a moral and contested one. And one of the most extreme expressions of the rejection of territorial governance is Hardt and Negri's (2000, 411) support for a 'Smooth World'. Following deterritorialization to what they see as an 'inevitable' conclusion, Hardt and Negri reject any forms of representation whatsoever on a global scale. For Hardt and Negri, representation only 'means a further step of abstraction and control' (2000, 134).

In the wake of a broader critique of representative institutions of governance, some important questions are now beginning to be raised. The proponents of a 'smooth world' in particular suggest that political subjectivity emerges, and accountability and legitimacy is strengthened, when collective institutions of political representation are taken out of the equation. What does a new normative belief in the deterritorialized world order of Hardt and Negri, or the anti-politics of Konrad, or the civil society of Kaldor or the cosmopolitanism of Held reveal about society today; about how we understand the complexities of political agency, accountability and legitimacy?

In the interests of exploring these questions and others, two brief debate forums will be published in *Area* over the next 12 months. Both forums were initiated by Jonathan Pugh. The first explicitly focuses upon the issue of (de)territorialization very briefly sketched out above. This is the outcome of a series of debates held at the University of Newcastle, United Kingdom, in 2006. It also included Frank Furedi speaking on the politics of fear, which he sees as dominating territorial governance. The debates were supported by The Great Debate (<http://www.thegreatdebate.org.uk>). The Great Debate is a national organization and umbrella title for a series of courses, day schools, public discussions and workshops organized by Caspar Hewett, Dave

O'Toole, Jonathan Pugh, Mo Lovatt and Jon Bryan. It also operates through the national Debating Matters forum for school students.

The second forum, to be published in a forthcoming edition of *Area*, reflects upon the publication of Chantal Mouffe's latest book, *On the Political* (Mouffe 2005). This also encourages us to re-think the importance of territorial governance, emphasizing the problems of the normative thrust to deterritorialize. However, as will be seen in that future edition, Mouffe takes a different perspective from those involved in the present debate. We hope that both forums – the first including authors as diverse as David Chandler, Hartmut Behr and Gideon Baker, the second including David Featherstone, Noortje Marres and Wolfgang Natter – further stimulate discussion on what we see as one of the central issues of our time.¹

Note

- Such debates are but a broader reflection of how the meaning of 'the space of democracy' is being seriously questioned in the present era. With funding from the Economic and Social Research Council, 'The Space of Democracy and the Democracy of Space' network has recently been established (RES-45 1-25-4226). This network will focus upon how both territorial and material spaces of democracy are presently understood, initially through a series of debates in the United States, United Kingdom and China. These workshops, co-directed by Jonathan Pugh, Chantal Mouffe, Doreen Massey and Françoise Verges, will be linked through a new website interface, developed with Noortje Marres, to relevant publications, art and political events. Other academics that are so far involved include Tim Ignold, David Howarth, Uma Kothari, Nina Laurie, Scott Lash, John Forester, Patsy Healey, Susan Owens, Susan Fainstein, Susan Christopherson, Deborah Thien, Maarten Hajer and Jean Hillier. Conversations are being organised over the next two years at Harvard, Cornell, California, Newcastle, The Centre for the Study of Democracy, Goldsmiths, the Institute of British Geographers/Royal Geographical Society, Beijing and the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. For more information, contact Jonathan Pugh (Jonathan.Pugh@ncl.ac.uk).

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Post-territorial politics and the politics of difference

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Introduction

Why the current enthusiasm for deterritorialized global civil society over territorialized states? Above all else, because states are understood, at best, to pursue partial justice – justice with borders – while civil society is identified with universal, or global, justice. On matters such as the promotion of human rights, the cross-border activism of global civil society appears suitably universal; states, meanwhile, appear mired in the attempt to arbitrarily reduce the global scope of the claims of justice – suggesting, perversely, that these claims apply only between citizens and thus implying that they stop at borders defined (again, at best) by historical contingency. Put like this, it is not surprising that the politics of global justice and the politics of global civil society are today frequently identified as one and the same thing. But how secure is this claim? Drawing on Hedley Bull's longer-standing insights into the problem of justice in world politics, insights which largely pre-dated the phenomena of global civil society, it will be argued that the justice of global civil society is not as universal as its advocates like to think.

There is a particular aspect of the putative relationship between the politics of global civil society and global justice which I will focus on here. It is

the claim made by cosmopolitans that only the transnational movements of global civil society can do justice to difference or diversity in world politics. The argument that particularity in global politics can no longer be defined territorially, or at least not easily, or at least not by the weak, is a powerful one. And nationalism and self-determination can be imagined beyond the life of the nation state – it is 'possible to offer an alternative account of the plurality of peoples than is associated with the restricted pluralism of state sovereignty' (Walker 1993, 77). Global civil society is this alternative account of the 'plurality of peoples' par excellence – seeking to do justice to difference and diversity where states have sought to limit or repress its expression in defence of their sovereignty. But is global civil society quite such a universal structure of particularity? Does it really give a voice to the peoples of the world in all their multiplicity? Let us look now at two sets of objections to these claims.

The justice of global civil society

That the cosmopolitan or borderless justice advanced by global civil society fails to be universal justice can be seen by adopting the perspective of another partial reading of global justice – international justice,