"Application Fulbright 2014 - Postdoctoral Fellowship"

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ABSTRACT

Territories called ‘cities’ cannot be regarded as neutral descriptions. They are tools that, in themselves, establish a spatial demarcation – which is also a socio-cultural situation that acts as a reference in the different areas of knowledge (i.e. an act of production). It's thus necessary to consider their objectification and their production in the light of the actor network that underlies them. It's precisely due to this network that some territories are instituted and acquire a normative value (e.g. the capital or the world metropolis) while others become marginalized, irrelevant. In that vein, if American cities are traditionally described in opposition with respect to European ones, it could be useful to consider them in a cross-border context. Their historical thicknesses are certainly hardly comparable. However, what may unite them is that they are no longer singular, autonomous territories but administered ones, at the bidding of administrative circumscriptions that do not correspond to their physical boundaries. In other words, the differences between them lie perhaps not so much in their morphology than in the state model itself, i.e. in its capacity to exercise physical and symbolic ‘violence’ while shaping forms in situ.

CITE THIS VERSION

ROLAND Lee Christopher, Belgium
Manufactured territories: Western culture through the lens of land administration
A cartography US-EU of the opposition between physical and administered territories

In addition to this written proposal, readers are urged to examine the attached graphics. These graphics are detailed below and can be downloaded in the next 10 days via the following links:

Annex 1 - Background / a high-resolution version of the public presentation of the Ph.D. thesis
http://tinyurl.com/A1-Roland (or via ‘we transfer’: http://we.lt/1kBdMaMdYK)

Annex 2 – Project / a high-resolution version of the graphics that support the proposal (divided into 6 sections)
http://tinyurl.com/A2-Roland (or via ‘we transfer’: http://we.lt/1kBdMaMdYK)

Background:

The second half of the 20th century saw an increasing impact of mapping and computational geography on the comprehension of spatiality. These tools underlie a promising field of knowledge. However, in planning, they often reinforce borders and processes of circumscription, omitting to consider the performative utterances of data themselves, to the detriment of an appropriate reading of factual realities (water, soils and uses). This is particularly true in the field of environmental design, where projects sometimes seem valid within pre-established geospatial frameworks (e.g. an administrative border or the circumscription of an urban area), while they are proving to be counterproductive at other scales and in other cultural environments. In a context of struggle for resources, an assessment of the territorial dynamics is therefore an essential precondition for laying the foundations for a new social contract (i.e. sustainable development). This means, for example, that processes of territorial circumscription inherent in the politicization and the institutionalization of land administration need to be weighted against forms *in situ*, i.e. against their empirical observation and their collective (physical and symbolic) representation.

According to this account, territories called ‘cities’ cannot be regarded as neutral descriptions, but as tools that, in themselves, establish a spatial demarcation – which is also a socio-cultural situation that acts as a reference in the different areas of knowledge (i.e. an act of production). It’s thus necessary to consider their objectification and their production in the light of the actor network that underlies them. It’s precisely due to this network that some territories are instituted and acquire a normative value (e.g. the capital or the world metropolis) while others become marginalized, irrelevant. In that vein, if American cities are traditionally described in opposition with respect to European ones, it could be useful to consider them in a cross-border context. Their historical thicknesses are certainly hardly comparable. However, what may unite them is that they are no longer singular, autonomous territories but administered ones, at the bidding of administrative circumscriptions that do not correspond to their physical boundaries. In other words, the differences between them lie perhaps not so much in their morphology than in the state model itself, i.e. in its capacity to exercise physical and symbolic ‘violence’ while shaping forms *in situ*.

An important example is the symmetry between the imposition of the Jeffersonian grid onto the US territory and the generalization of a regime of *communes*, *arrondissement*, *départements*, etc. in Western Europe. Another more recent example is the Fordist vision of the Tennessee Valley during New Deal that echoes the provision with infrastructures of the Rhone River after World War II – and, to a lesser extent, with the artificial linkages between the Scheldt and the Meuse in Belgium. Although these territorial relationships are scarcely ever mentioned, their investigation could provide objective criteria for assessing the impacts of planning in both the USA and in Europe. In that vein, when considering the mutual influences between prominent figures of the US-EU planning history, a set of common issues – but sometimes also vested interests – is already visible. Readers are invited to leaf through the section 6 of the Annex 2. The Selected Iconography contained in this section offers insight into the way the existing literature could be treated, with the objective to build bridges between the two systems of knowledge.

1 If the above-mentioned links expire, please request new links at the following email address: roland.lee.christopher@outlook.com
2 [Dienert & Hagen, 2012; Secchi & Viganò, 2011; Mostafavi & Doherty, 2010; McHarg,1969]
3 [Bourdieu, 2012; Lussault, 2007; Roncayolo, 2001 (1985); Habermas, 1985 (1976); Hilberseimer, 1955]
4 As suggests by André Corboz through his brilliant essay – *Non-City Revisited* –, European descriptions of the US territory suffer from three critical defects: they are drawn up from presumed objects; they are based on inappropriate criteria of comparison; they are apologetic [Corboz et al., 2001; Roncayolo, 2001 (1985); Reps, 1992; Morris, 1979 (1974); Choay, 1965; Mumford, 1961; Hilberseimer, 1944 & 1955].
5 [Bourdieu, 2012; Conzen, 1994; Scott et al., 1971 (1969); White, 1926]
6 In this respect, André Corboz has not only highlighted the impacts of the gridiron pattern proposed by Mathias Robert de Hesseln when shaping the borders of the French *départements* during the *Constituante*, but he has also emphasized the importance of the relationship between de Hesseln’s grid of 1780 and the very contents of the *Land Ordinance of 1785* [Maumi, 2007; Corboz & Marot, 2001; Lipsky, 1999].
7 We could mention: the *Declaration of Geneva* (1950), the *Road Fund* (1955-1959, 1964), the *de Taye Law* (1948), the *Economic expansion Law* (1959), the *Organic Law* (1962), etc.
8 [Mostafavi & Doherty, 2010; Hilberseimer, 1944, 1949 & 1955; Abercrombie et al., 1922 (1; 2) & 1943; Moore, 1921 (1; 2); Waterhouse, 1912; Burnham & Benett, 1905 & 1909; Hénard et al., 2012 (2009); Unwin, 1909 & 1912]
Objectives:

The issue of the postdoctoral research is to reinforce the empirical knowledge of processes of urbanization to adequately address environmental risks. It consists therefore of a graphic and cartographic investigation of the articulations between physical territories (structures) and administered territories (acts of production) through a cartographic comparison between the U.S. and the E.U. planning practices. To this end, the candidate suggests a four-site research work (refer to the diagram below). On this basis, the proposed research project sets out two objectives:

- At an operational level, it questions the concept of (centralized) metropolis from the point of view of landscape design and sustainable development. It’s a critical review of the normative (spatial and epistemological) frameworks that rule planning theories to better understand the specificities of US-EU contemporary physical configurations. To this end, the proposal focuses on the close relationships between borders, population distributions and the representation of manufactured (urban/natural) territories. To reconsider the mapping of these different factors in a comparative context should help to elucidate the role of spatial demarcations (e.g. city/country) in a context of struggle for resources.

- From a theoretical perspective, the opposition physical/administered aims to shed light on a part of Modern space that has not always been sufficiently considered in planning and urban design practice: its political dimension, the sociological project inherent in its definition, in intimate comparison with graphic representations and their use. In this respect, the project should shed new light on the ongoing anthropological implications and contradictions of Modernity: the reduction of the human condition to universal principles and the capacity of institutions to embody them.

On balance, the project will provide a detailed mapping of urbanization processes, with a focus on the causal relationship between administrative circumscriptions, planning policies and physical realities. This mapping will serve to objectify guiding lines related to soils, water and population distribution. Somehow, it guarantees an ecological knowledge of the support on the basis of a graphical synthesis of environmentally sensitive areas (infiltration areas, groundwater flows, surface water flows, fresh water extraction sites). The project is thus a prerequisite to planning: it assesses the risks associated with urban growth, land use and infrastructure development. Implicitly, it proposes a critical analysis of existing planning instruments. It also opens up new prospects for landscape and infrastructure planning within frameworks that bridge the gap between practical and theoretical knowledge of cities and territories.

Methodology:

The Ph.D. thesis – on the border line between applied and social sciences – has laid the epistemological foundations for this project. It should be seen as an empirical demonstration of performative utterances inherent in the very definition of Belgian territories, and as a way to deal with these utterances given population distributions and artificial realities that cannot be framed in modern terms (city/country, center/periphery, man-made/natural). The Annex 1 provides an overview of concrete results obtained during the doctoral research. The 835-page thesis can also be downloaded from the UCL-DIAL website via the following link: http://tinyurl.com/RLC-PhD (click on “Tiré à part” and complete the application form in order to download a pdf version).

Amongst these results, particular stress should be laid on the comparison made between two paradigmatic urban configurations: the Paris Basin and the scattered metropolis. Given that this comparison is based on two geographic frameworks that have the same area (45 000 sq km) and population (approximately 16 million people), it can be

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9 This term refers to territories determined by soils (e.g. topographical and pedological conditions), fluxes (e.g. water and mobility networks) and populations (e.g. uses and identities).
10 This term refers to territories defined by borders as geographically situated representations of a social contract (e.g. organization into communes or districts and their influence on geographical descriptions and models).
12 In this regard, one need only consider the institution of geography – a field of knowledge intimately linked with the genesis of states –, or the fact that most utopian projects are linked to a spatial figure. But more recent concepts closely involved with mapping are also concerned, such as ‘ecosystem services’, ‘landscape urbanism’ and ‘environmental engineering’. [Dieners & Hagen, 2012; Mostafavi & Doherty, 2010; Arnaud, 2008; Levy et al., 2008; Wood & Fels, 2008; Lussault, 2007; Corboz et al., 2001; Eaton, 2001; LATOUR & Hermant, 1998; Macchi, 1980; Burgess et al., 2004 (1979); Popper et al., 1998 (1972)].
14 This term refers to the elliptical configuration formed by major Belgian cities, plus the Lille conurbation and the South Netherlands [Kesteloot et al., 2003 & 2012; De Meulder et al., 1999; Beyeert et al., 2006; Secchi & Viganò, 2011; Grosjean, 2010; Van Hecke et al., 2009].
regarded as a means to quantitatively evaluate the qualitative impacts of planning systems\(^{15}\). It notably shows that, in contrast to the situation of Paris, the future of the 16,7 million inhabitants of the scattered metropolis does not depend on one urban center, but on political decisions related to various networks and scales of power, with very concrete implications. For example, other things being equal, the total building footprint of the Paris Basin covers 486 km\(^2\) (i.e. 31.476 inhab/km\(^2\)) within built-up areas while that of former ‘Low Countries’ covers 1.264 km\(^2\) (i.e. 13.251 inhab/km\(^2\)) within built-up areas. Due to these high rates of land surface impermeabilization, not only the socio-economic consequences of planning decisions related to the built environment are difficult to tackle, but agricultural systems, open spaces and water supplies call also for increased attention. Indeed, within the scattered metropolis, the forest cover is almost one-third less than in the Paris Basin (7,085 sq km vs. 9,794 sq km). While, for 1 sq km of agricultural land, its level of agricultural production needs to be 1,4 times higher to feed the same population (see Annex 1).

General framework | centralized/scattered

In line with this factual background and in accordance with the proposed fellowships, the postdoctoral research will mainly investigate two paradigmatic U.S. case studies: New York, the centralized metropolis of over 20 million inhabitants; Philadelphia-Washington-Baltimore, a U.S. example of multi-scale urbanization (see Annex 2 – section 4: 4a, 4d, 4e). This general framework is actually the field of the proposed research. Nevertheless, it doesn’t preclude that other configurations might be considered (4b, 4c, 4f, 4g, 4h). On this account, the concept of American Megaregions\(^{16}\) (MR) – which refers to Hilberseimer’s and McHarg’s theories and designs\(^{17}\) – offers a useful alternative model to the well-established oppositions city/country, urban/rural, natural/manufactured. It’s also a new way to deal with landscape and environmental issues – which are too often reduced to spatial and epistemological frameworks determined from radio-concentric approaches of cities. Readers are invited to leaf through the Annex 2 (section 2) for a more detailed view.

This annex identifies key spatial frameworks\(^{18}\) by using maps presented at the same scales. It suggests also a

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\(^{15}\) Such a comparison could then be considered as a way of resolving the contradictions inherent in the modern demarcation of space.

\(^{16}\) [Todorovich et al. 2009 & 2011]

\(^{17}\) [McHarg, 1969; Hilberseimer, 1944, 1949 & 1955; Wright, 1932]

\(^{18}\) As regards scattered processes of urbanization, identified frameworks are: the Randstad and the CBSA Boston-Worcester-Manchester (Northeast MR); the Flemish Diamond and the CBSA Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia (Northeast MR); the Eastern part of the Città Diffusa and the CBSA Charlotte-Gastoniasalbris (Piedmont Atlantic MR); the cross-border conurbation between Paris and Brussels and the triangle Cleveland-Columbus-Pittsburgh (see Annex 2 – section 4). As regards centralized processes of urbanization, identified frameworks are: New York, London, Philadelphia, the Rhine-Rhur region, Paris, Detroit (see Annex 2 – section 4).
classification of cities and landscapes according to their morphologies and population distribution, in accordance with the method developed during the doctoral research. It is important here to underline that, in many case, scattered configurations compete with highly centralized processes of urbanization, especially in terms of population distribution and environmental issues. However, few of them are theorized, represented and assessed as such. To reconsider the mapping of these specific combinations of nature and culture in a comparative context should therefore help to elucidate the anthropological implications and contradictions of planning and sustainable development strategies.

**Specific framework | wild/manufactured**

At the present stage, the proposed approach suggests a series of environmental issues (see Annex 2 – section 1, 2 & 3): How to conserve and improve the ecosystem of the Great Lakes and the North Sea in view as their role as freight corridors? How to deal with the climate change and the threat of higher sea levels in river deltas on densely populated coasts? How to manage flooding events and water supply in hinterlands since waterways and infrastructure facilities (notably those dedicated to the generation of power) modify and connect the water catchment areas at transnational level?

Amongst these issues, the Tennessee Valley is a paradigmatic case study (see Annex 2 – section 5). Its central location – between the Northeast MR, the Great Lakes MR and the Piedmont Atlantic MR, its major role in energy production, the ongoing increase of competition for fresh water between TVA and the Piedmont Atlantic cities, and the strategic importance of the Ten-Tom maritime corridor are aspects that will be covered by the postdoctoral research. From a theoretical perspective, these aspects echo the principles of Hilberseimer's thoughts about the decentralization of activities in the Eastern U.S. – whether it is justifiable or not, this could help to understand U.S. and E.U. planning contexts. From a practical point of view, there is much to gain from regarding the East coast (NY, PA, MD, DC, VA) from its hinterland, more specifically from the maritime corridors between Chicago and Mobile that connect the navigation in the Gulf of Mexico (Panama canal) with the Northwest Passages.

More importantly, a parallel can be drawn between this U.S. example and the E.U. Rhone River Basin, both because of the way in which the hydroelectric role of this watershed has been planned (notably by EDF), and because it’s a possible connection between two main maritime corridors: the artery North Sea-Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. Both examples allow therefore an historic mapping of planning practices and scattered processes of urbanization (in accordance with the 'palimpsestic' methodology developed during the Ph.D. thesis). They also provide new insights into the role of physical structures in contemporary U.S./E.U. planning theories.

Web Link for high-resolution graphics: http://tinyurl.com/Fulbright-Roland

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19 [Hilberseimer, 1949 & 1955; Wright, 1932]
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