Rescaling the suburban: new directions in the relationship between governance and infrastructure

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Abstract

This paper explores the emerging changes in the relationships between cities and their suburbs driven by international institutional This paper discusses these trends within the new tropes of integration and multi-level governance that are serving to redefine and implement new city-suburban relationships with an emphasis on the role of functional economic areas (FEAs). This shift suggests a fundamental re-conceptualisation of the power relationships with city dominance dependent on suburban success not serendipity. The underlying reconceptualization of this relationship is explored through a discussion of international institutional drivers as they are being implemented throughout states that are OECD members and then considers how these changes are being nudged into effect using statecraft and scalecraft practices. It further examines practices in the UK and concludes with a discussion of these new negotiated relationships between cities and suburbs.

Keywords: suburbs; scalecraft; statecraft; infrastructure; governance

Introduction

The disruption inherent in the separate governance arrangements between cities and their suburbs is at the heart of their spatial differentiation. Cities and the suburbs are the 'other' to each other. Yet their prosperity and social existence are co-dependent. This mutuality allows for operational solutions and 'work arounds' but their differentiation has remained central to their identity – until now. Governments are challenging city/suburban separation and directing public policy to reframe these longstanding differences in national interests. Cities are sustainable and, despite their existing densities, can accommodate more people, business and services. Cities survive on coping with change. The financial crisis means that the sunk costs of infrastructure investment in cities cannot be abandoned for new investment on green field sites at the urban periphery. Infrastructure investment is important where it provides additionality to what is already there and countries are ranked on their ability to create the governance and operational climate that supports infrastructure investment within and between cities (WEF, 2015).

After years of disruptive decline, cities are also returning to their role in generating dynamic economic clusters, agglomerations, specialisations and hubs that are again promoting growth and networks. Cities concerned to attract investment and jobs are anxious to compare their offer with their competitors (GLA 2015). In western countries, the economic pull of cities, that initially stimulated their growth, is being exerted again. The flight to the suburbs was supported by unequal economic and culturally differentiated roles in the household. Now, two career households are time poor and do not want to waste time commuting. They and active retirees want edgy rather than edge lifestyles. Some suburbs and out of town businesses are no longer viable. What happens when the suburbs are the location of choice for the economically marginalised, who travel long distances to work and have no time or money for community focussed lives?

Governments, cities and suburbs all have the impetus to encourage change in their relationships. Government policies are being propelled by international organizations including the UN, the OECD and the EU. Despite the urgency of coping

with changes in locational choices towards cities, the culture of longstanding suburban separation is harder to shift. Top down reforms in administrative boundaries can be mired in campaigns to resist change by those whose identity is defined by the existing separation. Changes are the result of independent evaluations or nudged through incentives to create outwardly cooperative forms of governance that can hold and retain the differences within them. Cities and suburbs working together can frame a political agenda from the mutual benefits of improved access, infrastructure investment and create a common cause to promote mega-projects or tackle 'not-spots'. In this transition, the role of infrastructure is critical to the arguments for and the acceptability of change

This paper examines the changing relationships between cities and their suburbs that is contextualised within policy frameworks adopted by international economic institutions and then how these have been applied within states that are members of the OECD including the EU. The paper continues by examining how these policies for creating FEAs through nudged alliances between local authorities, resulting in an overarching or strategic democratically accountable government with a strong leadership model. In particular it examines the use of statecraft and scalecraft by states in achieving these new government spaces, creating, what the article suggests, is a negotiated settlement between cities and their peripheries which reinforces their mutual interests in recognising their changing but different roles.

Changing relationships between the cities and their suburbs

The examination of the relationships between the urban core and its suburban periphery demonstrates that these are frequently beset by political conflict and opposing objectives (Phelps et al 2015). Cities are concerned with growth, not least as they demand more space for both wealth generating activities and the needs of the people employed to support the economic system. In all parts of the world, successful cities are magnets for people and frequently the ability to house them lags the pressures of in-migration (Accetturo et al 2014). In contrast, suburban areas are characterised as areas that are in conflict with city objectives (Matthews et al 2015). The suburban has emerged as a traditional escape from the city, where lower residential density equates to a perception of higher standards of living. People have been willing to commute longer distances to achieve the benefits of suburban living

whilst continuing to work in the city (Headicar, 2015). The opposition between the city and its suburbs is frequently compounded by different governance regimes. Cities develop to the edge of their administrative boundaries and then rely on the suburban populations for their economic survival. Suburban political regimes survive only through their oppositional stances to the city's outward pressures.

However, these patterns of city and suburban relationships are now coming under threat for a variety of reasons. The first is that many younger people no longer find cars to be as culturally acceptable as their parents. Fewer young people are obtaining driving licences and retain their early reliance on public transport or cycles into adulthood (Goodwin, 2012). As Filion (2013) points out, this may not reduce car ownership and the suburbs will, in the short to medium term, rely on car-based access but may change in the future, as successive generations make different locational choices for long-term living.

Secondly, suburban patterns of commuting survive best where there is an unequal economic income relationship between partners in households, where the highest paid household member bears a longer commute and the lowest paid partner is more likely to find part time or local work in order to support the domestic demands of the household and children (Wheatley, 2011). The emergence of dual-career households with more equal incomes and status in jobs means that neither can fully perform this domestic role at a distance with ease. As income levels in dual-career families equalise, journey to work reduces for both partners (Pickup, 1978). The mechanism for finding more time to manage job and home has been through a reduction of commuting.

Households with more equal jobs are likely to be found working nearer the city centre and remaining there if there are children. Couples who minimise their travelling time have led to a revival of inner city housing, services and jobs (Karsten, 2003; Hjorthol and Vågane, 2014). This reversal of travel and living patterns has also been accommodated through the gentrification of the original inner suburbs that were abandoned earlier for suburban flight (Rerat, 2012, Boterman and Karsten, 2014; Rerat and Lees, 2011; Goodsell, 2013; Skaburskis, 2012). Land formerly used for employment has been repurposed to build more houses and apartments. These

new city centre apartments are not only for the young. In cities such as Liverpool and Toronto, these apartments are purchased by retirees returning from suburban living, at least for part of the week.

These changing household and domestic patterns have also meant that the suburbs may no longer be so attractive. Lower densities, the development of 'edgetown' (Garreau 2011) and even longer car commutes to the city are changing their roles. Suburbs are under pressure to change through intensification, an increase in economic development and new service hubs to make them more attractive to the provision of public transport. However, many suburbs have concerns about their role. In San Francisco, the Silicon Valley workers live in the city and are bussed out to their work campuses each day on the suburban periphery and, elsewhere, abandoned retail malls are being used for education (Stabiner 2011).

Thus, the suburbs are in transition (Grant, 2013). The certainties of their role are now being undermined by changes that are out of their control. While Nelson (2013) argues that these changes are apparent in the American suburbs, that are less densely developed than those in other countries, the factors that are introducing these changes are shared elsewhere. The suburbs, once defined by their recognisable economic homogeneity, are now likely to be characterised by extremes of poverty and wealth and, as Forsyth (2013) points out, there are now more poor people living in the US suburbs than in core cities.

Rescaling the suburban – policy provenance

These relative changes between the city and its suburbs have also been the focus of wider public policy changes that can be located in three shifts in the understanding of the relationship between place governance and economic growth (HMT 2003; DCLG 2008c). The first is the adoption of more sustainable principles and their application through world treaties and agreements. This has resulted in pressures to reduce the use of energy, transport and material consumption. The principles of producing and consuming locally, as agreed in the UN Rio Earth Summit in 1992, have privileged cities over other spatial forms. Before this, many large cities were in population and economic decline, with both businesses and people migrating to the

lower density suburbs for out of town retailing and campus companies. Now, cities have re-established their economic advantages of agglomeration and reinforced cultural changes in households. Cities have densified, promoting their growth through new transport oriented development, supported by improvements in public transport and reduced use of private cars (Metz 2013; Goodwin 2012). However, the sometimes complex governance of the supply and management of public transport can prevent these new economies from thriving and reduce city advantages of efficiency as found in the wider Chicago Tri-State metropolitan area (Merk 2014).

The second driver is a concern by countries about their economic growth and GDP. In the past, economic growth has been primarily the focus of governments through external trade between nations. Whilst the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been set up to negotiate trade terms between countries, regional organizations such as the EU, ASEAN, NAFTA and MERCOSUR have also been formed to promote trade between geographic groups of states at advantageous terms. However, Krugman (1991, 2011) found that whilst trade between countries remains important to their economies, internal trade within countries contributes equally to the creation of GDP. He states that governments that focus only on external trade are likely to underperform. Further, Krugman argues, that this internal trade is most successfully supported through major urban areas and cities that can offer the most efficient economies through the benefits of agglomeration. Cities which are most successful are those that have a critical economic mass and the efficiencies of infrastructure, particularly public transport that can link the city with its labour market in the city and beyond to its suburbs (WEF 2016).

There are critics of this approach (Brenner 1999; 2004) who have suggested that to realign the state to support the needs of the economy is placing the interests of business above the people. Secondly, there are arguments that these newly created larger substate spaces are managed through non-democratic governance such as partnerships or stakeholder boards that again favour the needs of business. Thirdly there are criticisms that these fuzzy governance arrangements have been the means through which central government can centralise control over local spaces and decisions that should be taken locally (Porter and de Roo 2012; Allmendinger and Haughton 2010). Jessop (1997) has also argued that these are spatiotemporal fixes

although Pemberton and Morphet (2014) have categorised this as a process of transitional territorialism rather than an end state.

Despite these criticisms, the realignment of internal administrative boundaries to mirror economic spaces has taken hold of the policy agenda of the international economic organizations (Sassen 2011) including the OECD (Merk 2014; OECD 2015), World Bank (Kaufman et al 2005; World Bank 2009a, 2009b) and the World Economic Forum (WEF 2016). The policy has been developed to focus on the role of cities and their areas of economic activity within the country's economy. Rather than defining a city by its administrative boundary, there is now a move to redefine cities by their journey to work areas and the relationship of cities with others within polycentric clusters (Dijkstra and Poelman 2012; OECD 2013) and these commuting boundaries are proxies for labour market areas (DCLG 2008a and b). Including the wider city commuting area into a consideration of the city immediately starts a new relationship between the cities and their suburbs. These may be termed Functional Economic Areas (FEAs) (Berry 1966) or sometimes Functional Urban Areas (FUAs) or Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMAs). Consideration and evaluation of these wider FEAs suggest that rather than being in opposition, cities and their peripheries would be better managed if their administrative boundaries were aligned to their economic boundaries. This enables issues such as transport and housing to be managed in a more sustainable and efficient way. This policy agenda is framed to combine the cities and their suburbs in new formal democratic relationships. However, this approach also attempts to retain some of the territorial integrity and character of both in these new entities.

Although there may be a plethora of objections to the neo-liberal focus of this rescaling policy, that creates new administrative spaces that align with functional economic areas, this approach has been adopted across the OECD (Gurria, 2014) including within the EU (Dijkstra and Poelman 2012). The OECD has promoted the integration of territory and governance through FEAs in two specific ways. The first is where the OECD has found that the productivity of functional economic areas is enhanced where there is an alignment in the administrative boundaries and those of the FEA (Ahrend et al, 2014). A study of five OECD countries (Germany, Mexico, Spain, United Kingdon, United States) found that productivity increased with city size

and that cities with more fragmented governance within their FEAs had lower productivity than those with government for the FEA. Further, the study found that cities benefitted where they had access to other agglomerations. In another study, it was found that decreasing travel time for populations within FEAs gave a net gain in productivity for the area as a whole and that halving travel time gave the equivalent of 0.2-0.4 percentage points increase in annual per capita growth (Ahrend and Schumann, 2014).

In the second approach, an OECD study of economic leadership in Amsterdam, Hamburg, Manchester and Stockholm (OECD, 2015) found that the fragmented nature of cities and their multiplicity of stakeholder interests has become more complex and require greater clarity in leadership styles and messages for the cities to be successful. The plethora of public sector organizations that manage the wider city area are regarded as difficult to comprehend by investors and businesses and their fractured governance reduces the scale of their impact on central government. The OECD concluded that in streamlining and aligning governance across an FEA brought a leadership dividend that was greater than the existing forms of governance.

Finally, since 2001, the OECD has undertaken nearly 100 territorial reviews of specific urban areas in their member countries including – Chicago Tri-State metropolitan area (2012), Toronto (2009) and Newcastle (2004). Each of these studies demonstrate why the governance of the FEA is hampering its economic growth and its contribution to the country's economy. These reviews also reinforce the models of FEA-wide governance by providing examples of areas that have integrated governance. In the most recent study of Rotterdam-The Hague (OECD 2016), the Dutch government is directed towards governance models for integrating the city and its suburbs as in Manchester, Barcelona and Singapore and towards the strategic planning approach used in London.

This use of comparisons within the OECD member countries to exemplify policy messages and practices is also reinforced through benchmarking between FEAs. The OECD benchmark criteria are not confined to size of population and economy but also other factors including FEA governance models. The scale of independence and devolution from central government control and the degree to which there is

vertical and horizontal alignment in the objectives for the area, as agreed by governance bodies and stakeholders, is also shown as being a contributory factor to their economic success (Charbit, 2011). The OECD has also worked with the EU to identify a new definition of functional economic areas (Dijkstra and Poelman 2012) that it is now used to examine and compare cities across its membership. By 2014, 50% of the OECD's population lived in 275 FEAs and these contributed more than 50% of the OECD's GDP and employment (Brezzi and Veneri 2014). The role of FEAs in developing polycentric groups with multiple cities included is also exemplified as a way of maximising economic growth and GDP. By 2014, over 50% of OECD's member countries were reforming sub-state governance in this direction (Gurria, 2014).

However, this focus on developing further the role of cities is constrained by the limits to agglomeration created by transport congestion for people and goods (Hamza et al, 2014). The potential for economic growth in cities also depends on both access to a widening labour market and supporting this through other infrastructure including utilities. This suggests increased investment in improving existing infrastructure within the whole of the city's economic area including for those living within the suburban labour market area. Where cities are now bounded by areas on social exclusion on their suburban peripheries, this investment becomes more pressing.

The third driver for city redefinition also reflects a concern of western countries about the relative scale and growth of cities within the BRICS countries, where the economic challenge is of growing concern. The redefinition of cities in the OECD member countries, to include both city FEAs and polycentric urban groupings, will increase the number of cities that can be defined in comparable ways to those in the BRICs countries. Also, where city boundaries include the suburbs this may also encourage filling-in and growth in ways that support more infrastructure investment and a growing labour market. In Europe, there are only two cities in the global mega city definition – London and Paris and the role of cities has been prioritised through a new urban agenda that is being developed to respond to these perceived challenges (CEC, 2015). This will include a system of urban benchmarking using social, sustainable and economic criteria.

Statecraft and scalecraft

Thus, the international pressures to reform and rescale internal sub-state administrative government and its boundaries are considerable although each government will approach these external pressures in differently. An understanding of the approaches of central governments in achieving these changes is informed by the literature on statecraft together with its emerging alliance with 'scalecraft' as a means of analysing the rescaling sub-state governance (Fraser, 2010; Pemberton and Searle, 2016).This rescaling is located in different cultural contexts, with its intermediate slippery stages or transitional territorialism (Pemberton and Morphet 2014) to realignment.

Statecraft is referred to as the way in which the state implements international agreements (Bulpitt 1986). Its characteristics have been described as a conscious gaming strategy where the application of international agreements is used to achieve domestic objectives (Buller and James 2012). Statecraft also frames and narrates the way in which policies are implemented. The dominant national culture can also be characterised by singularity i.e. any state differs from other states. Statecraft suggests that while central governments are considering the implementation of sub-state rescaling, they will also be considering harnessing other political or government objectives to the policies in a process of 'gold-plating'. At the least, central governments will be incorporating the international policy into a domestic agenda that aligns with objectives, cultural norms and practices within the state.

While statecraft offers one dimension to consider the application of international policy agendas and their implementation (Kingdon, 2004) the more recent focus on functional economic areas and their contribution to GDP suggests that there is also a need to consider scalecraft as part of this approach (Ahrend et al 2014). Scalecraft may not be determined by the geographies it employs but rather that the geographies are political constructs in support of wider state purposes. As Fraser (2010) points out, scalecraft is concerned with the creation of new spatial entities which are used to achieve wider state objectives. While they may be constructed to create greater citizen involvement and meet considerations of democratic

engagement, in this case considered here, they are being implemented to meet wider economic objectives in an opaque way consistent with statecraft. While, new scales may be chosen as disruptors, this is not the case in the redefinition of democratic sub-state areas because strong democratic government is a prerequisite of economic success.

Power at sub-state level is dependent on the integration of relationships between the cities and the suburbs. Their relationships, reinforced through increased infrastructure investment as an outward manifestation of the benefits of combining, may be used to justify rescaling. However, in the long run, rescaling may mean that the relative power relations between the central and sub-state areas may change. In the short term, there are likely to be a range of scalecraft/statecraft intersections where policies meet unevenly and may result in differing outcomes.

Rescaling the suburban – applying an international policy

The development of a new international policy for rescaling the state and the way that governments respond through the application of statecraft /scalecraft suggests a variety of modes in practice. The application of new city/suburban governance institutions can be evidenced across the OECD area. As Gurria (2014) noted, over 50% of OECD member states have started to implement these changes. Particularly, it is possible to identify these changes in Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, the UK and Denmark.

These reforms focus particularly on those areas that are a new administrative recognition of existing economically related but democratically independent spaces. In the creation of a new strategic authority for Auckland, the proposed soft measures of partnership and joint working were set aside by the Government for a more formal structure, with a directly elected mayor and driven specifically by the need to create a pan-FEA infrastructure and transport body (McFarlane et al 2015). In another area of New Zealand, Hawkes Bay, the framing arguments used were also based on efficiency, but this time focused on the organizational rather than the territorial benefits, although the outcomes were the same (Kortt et al 2016). This suggests that central governments are using a range of policy arguments that are tailored to each locality to achieve the same ends. Similar amalgamations across city

and suburban areas are being undertaken in Australia including the governance reforms in New South Wales 'Fit for the Future' review where new Joint Organisations of councils that have statutory recognition and provide a forum for councils and the State Government to work together to deliver regional priorities, including infrastructure.

In Europe, there are numerous examples of sub-state rescaling. In Paris, the first overarching governing body, the Métropole du Grand Paris was implemented on 1st January 2016. The new institution brings together all of Paris' metropolitan areas, municipalities to make joint decisions affecting the entire city. The city's governance had been criticised as being fragmented with the city's core separated from its suburbs and the suburbs from each other. These new government arrangements have been promoted to help Paris compete with London, where integrated governance under a directly elected mayor has been viewed as an essential component of its economic success. The new government arrangements were also preceded by a transport plan for the area and its boundaries were specifically drawn to include the suburban areas and major city airports to define the boundaries of the FEA.

In Gothenburg, 13 municipalities have come together to work on climate change although the new grouping has also been given responsibility for infrastructure planning (Lundqvist, 2016). Other European examples include combining local authorities in Switzerland (Pluss, 2015) and a new single urban and suburban authority for Cork (2015) with associated infrastructure and planning responsibilities. The OECD (2015) has also pointed to the FEA government reforms in Amsterdam, Hamburg, Manchester and Stockholm. It argues that these reforms have added economic and social value through more unified leadership of wider and integrated urban and suburban areas, all of which have been defined by single approaches to infrastructure planning and investment (Katz and Noring, 2015).

In the United States, these new sub-state government arrangements are driven through the metro regions approach although they may be less formally constructed than elsewhere. Carbonell and Yaro (2005) identified an absence of spatial strategy and a lack of preparedness for population growth in the US when comparing it with

the EU. By invoking the territorial plans of former Presidents Thomas Jefferson (1809) and Theodore Roosevelt (1909), they argue that the future for the US will rely on filling-in the suburbs, making them part of the cities and improving infrastructure in these new metro city areas. They recommended 8 'megalopolis' regions that together would make an American spatial plan, similar to the European Spatial Development Perspective (CEC 1999) and that could take on the expected city competiton emerging from Europe and the BRICS countries. These new megaregions are defined by the use of a new geography (Lang and Nelson 2009) and promoted through infrastructure investment (Ross and Woo 2009).

The implementation of these new areas reflects the variations in government models and the differences that occur across state boundaries. The definition of the new US Megaregions was undertaken by Hagler (2009) for the Regional Plan Association who identified infrastructure as a means of enhancing economic competitiveness and reducing social inequality. Katz and Bradley (2013) describe this new approach as collaborative federalism, where both the state and the FEAs move away from hierarchical to mutual relationships.

Hence, policies for rescaling the suburbs are manifest in different ways but they all have some common features. The first is that they are new models of government and include democratic accountability. The second is that they all have strong political leaderships with directly elected or of a new combined local authority. Thirdly, in creating these new state spaces, particular care has been taken to retain the integrity of the differences between the urban and suburban and to find ways to respect these differences in practice. Both are joined by mutual necessity and this creates a different set of relationships in comparison with the past when either the city or the suburb was dominant.

Strategies for applying the new urban/suburban policy doctrine

The application of sub-state administrative rescaling in each country is complex and will need to align with constitutional models and prevailing cultures. In considering government approaches to the creation of these new FEAs, that join cities with their hinterlands, it is possible to identify three models that governments have used to implement these changes. The first is a formal model, through the use of legislation.

The second model is quasi-independent, where the government appoints external and independent experts to provide advice on government reform. The third model is the nudged or incentivised approach that encourages local authorities to create larger units of common working. Whilst each of these is considered in turn below, it is noticeable that a common feature in all three approaches to creating new government models is the role of infrastructure in linking the cities to their hinterlands and to other cities. The focus on infrastructure includes attention to the benefits of a larger geographical scale, the need for sub-state government stability to create confidence in investment and the efficiencies that are underpinning the narratives of state rescaling in FEAs.

In considering these models in more detail, the formal or legislative reform approach is overtly led by government and is top-down in its implementation. The new scales of government are implemented by changes in state or federal legislation. This approach been applied in France, Spain, Italy (Bezes and Parrado 2013) and Denmark (Blom-Hansen 2010) in direct forms although in some cases the definition of areas may also include some local choice. Another version of this top-down approach has been applied in Scotland where legislation has created strategic planning areas that require new forms of governance (Lloyd and Purves, 2009; Morphet, 2011). Although the new governance model appears to be focussed on the specific strategic planning outcomes, the inclusion of major infrastructure, environmental capital and social issues such as poverty in the FEA make the strategic plan governance a de facto new form of sub-state governance.

The second model is that where independent commissions have been established by state governments to review the most effective government forms for the area. These have been used in Ireland for the governance reforms in Cork and Dublin for example. In Australia, the reform of FEA governance in Sydney has been cloaked in the reforms reviews for the whole of New South Wales. The same approach has been used in Wales (Pemberton 2015). In this approach, independent commissions are appointed to review the current arrangements for local government within a given area. Their remit is set by central government so this offers an arms length centralist approach. Although there may be some degree of flexibility on the boundaries for the new authorities, their functions and role set in the terms of

reference of the independent commissions leave the likely outcomes to be as predetermined as model 1. As in all approaches, the use of comparators in other countries, the concerns about competitiveness and its expressions through scale are employed to justify the outcomes. However, the use of an independent commission allows government to deflect criticism and provides both time and mechanisms for the proposed changes to be accepted.

The third approach is the use of nudged or incentivised approaches to create new FEA governance institutions. This is the approach that has been applied in England, through a layered and developed approach to forming FEA governance alliances through Multi Area Agreements (2007-2010), local enterprise partnerships (from 2010), and finally combined authorities from 2012, implemented in 2017. LEPs have no legal underpinning or democratic accountability but have served to incentivize the bringing together of quasi-FEAs across England. The local authority involvement in the LEPs has varied from leading to marginal roles, although it is local authorities that that have been encouraged to apply for governance change through 'devodeals' that are negotiated with the government. In return for joining new FEA government institutions with directly elected, executive mayors for their whole Combined Authority area, local authorities have been offered a range of powers and funding to encourage their compliance (Sandford 2016; Morphet 2017). There is also an intention to absorb the LEPs within these new democratic arrangements where they exist although this has not been a smooth transition and transfer of power in all combined authorities.

The UK Government, operating in England, has used scalecraft as a component or tool of statecraft to mask the policy drivers that are changing the city and suburban relationships. While there is some indication that central government civil servants will be expecting direct roles within these devolved arrangements (Randall and Casebourne 2016) this may be through crossover appointments of staff rather than transfers from government departments into Combined Authority administrations. Further, while focussing on their own individual agendas, there is also some expectation that these mayors will act together in a caucus that will start to redistribute power relations within the state as much as devolution has achieved in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Richards 2015).

Another version of this incentivised approach to work together in FEAs has been used by the EU in the creation of cross-border networks. Here using the specific INTERREG programme, funds have been made available to support cross-border working within the FEA. These approaches that started in 1991 have also now grown to a greater and more institutionalised scale through the mega region cohesion partnerships that are now being adopted across the EU (Stead 2014). These started in the Baltic Sea and have been extended to the Danube, the Adriatic and most recently for the Alpine region. Here the governance scales beyond the FEA are creating a context for their operation and the strategic plans and programmes for the mega regions are being agreed and adopted by the EU as a whole. This wider contextual government level at meso regional level is also being used in France and in England – the latter through the 'powerhouse' and 'engine' brands, with their specific focus on infrastructure delivery (Midlands Engine 2017; TfN 2017).

A negotiated settlement…

The development of new governance models that stretch across cities into the suburbs have been encouraged by their contributions to economic growth and realised through improved infrastructure investment. They represent a re-balancing of the relationships between the city and the suburbs, with a shift in the relative power relationships between them. They offer a form of governance that allows both the cities and the suburbs to benefit and also addresses their respective fears of growth and decline. These new aligned FEA relationships provide more funding, more investment and ultimately more power that could bring more self-determination.

The advantages for cities in these new alliances with the suburbs include additional capacity and less conflict although successful relationships may depend on an overt form of mutual respect for their complementary roles. In England, smaller peripheral local authorities have been willing to join their city FEAs in preference to remaining with their rural neighbours as in the West Midlands Combined Authority. Past poor hierarchical governance relationships can act as push factors whilst the cities'

welcome and promises of investment can pull willingness for reform. Where there are more formal government reforms in FEAs, the creation of directly elected mayors or new institutions can overcome the uncertainties of governance and the lack of democratic mandate.

These new institutional arrangements can also provide the suburbs with a more stable relationship with their city. Rather than being in opposition, the suburbs can confer benefits of the cities and gain investment as a result. The cities can also act as a shield against loss of population and, through infrastructure investment, give new life to the suburbs. This will bring suburban densification around public transport hubs but enables a transition to new lifestyles and household patterns. Just as the cities have been able to reinvent their roles, these new arrangements can afford the same opportunities to the suburbs.

Conclusions: What are the implications of this state rescaling for suburban infrastructure?

Although the case for creating FEAs is based on the role of cities and their contribution to national GDP, the suburbs can also potentially benefit from these new partnerships. The cities have seen the suburbs draining away the economically active leaving behind a more dependent population. Cities have been anxious about this and seen their power to negotiate working arrangements with suburbs decline. The international focus on the role of cities has given them power and confidence but they have also needed to work with their suburbs in a more equal way.

As we have noted, the suburbs are now also facing change. Their lower densities are under attack as localities need to respond to climate change. They need more public transport and a more densified development to succeed. They need to positively attract city dwellers rather than rely on past suburbanizing practices. As cities grow in attractiveness their role is undermined. The investment in infrastructure that links the suburbs with the city provides more access to jobs for all members of the household and new transport hubs provide locations for the kinds of support services that households need including child care, services and retail.

While critics of this new economic geography have been concerned that these changes in governance patterns have been at the behest of neo-liberal priorities, cities have always been organized on economic practices and specialisations. Whilst the intentions of the state have primarily been concerns with economic sectors, the use of scalecraft has potentially created some institutional structures that, in time, may reduce the power of the central state. As Coughlan (2016) asks, 'Are cities the new countries?' It is also important to recognise that these power shifts are being manifest through infrastructure investment and its effects on locations. The suburbs are densifying and changing their role but there are no new city economic spaces without them.

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