

DUBLIN – BUZZING ISLAND WITH GLOBAL LINKS AMONG MEGAREGIONS

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The mid 1990s until 2007 was a period of unprecedented economic growth, during which time Ireland became internationally known as the 'Celtic Tiger'. Over the period 1993-2003, Ireland was the largest net recipient of Foreign Direct Investment in the OECD with some of the world's largest corporations choosing Dublin as the location for their European headquarters. Also, in 2007, Ireland recorded the second highest level of Gross Domestic Product per capita among the European Union nations. A key characteristic of this period of rapid development was the significant expansion of both the commuting hinterland and urban footprint of the Dublin region, with the national housing stock growing by some 60% in the 15 year period from 1992 to 2007.

Despite these unprecedented levels of economic growth and development, the Dublin region is not a megaregion per se (Florida et al. 2008), but rather a mono-centric urban centre, which does not meet the minimum criteria in terms of physical area, economic output, or population size set out in various existing definitions. Although of falling short to qualify as a megaregion, Dublin is certainly an internationally recognised high growth city region, which draws and builds upon established local innovation and creativity that has developed strong economic and socio-demographic linkages to other megaregions within Europe and beyond. While the importance of geography and location matter for economic development is acknowledge in the present investigation, we also argue that the size of urban units is perhaps less important than espoused by proponents of the megaregion thesis. Governance structures, population and workforce characteristics, as well as physical and virtual connectivity are considered equally vital when it comes to the creation of economically successful and sustainable places.

The analysis of the Dublin region in the context of the megaregion thesis provides an overview of the region's economic and spatial development over the past decades, with particular focus on socio-economic characteristics, including culture, demographics, education, and structures of governance. This is followed by an examination of the country's transforming transport infrastructure, with emphasis on air transport links, and technological connections, and an investigation of the region's

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labour market, which is directly linked into European and international networks, as well as being the main economic hub of Ireland.

The results of this evaluation not only highlight the region's dominant position within the country, but also demonstrate that Dublin's strongly interconnected market to some extent acts as a virtual megaregion beyond just physical considerations. Clearly, the recent economic downturn poses challenges for continued balanced economic development in the region, but perhaps this provides the opportunity to further develop and test the megaregion thesis in future investigations, not only in Dublin.

Keywords:

Megaregion, Dublin, Ireland, Economic Development, Governance, Transportation Networks, Demographic Change, Urban Capital Markets;

THE CASCADIA MEGA-REGION: AN ANALYSIS

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Vancouver, British Columbia, is Canada's largest city in the Pacific Northwest, a region often characterized by abundant natural resources, pristine wilderness, and a culture of sustainability. This 'imagined' regional identity, built on shared assets and attitudes, has constructed the Pacific Northwest as a cultural symbol of environmentalism and easy living. Early attempts to describe and define this region often focused on shared geographic features and cultural attitudes, while emerging regional discourses have begun to reconfigure the definitional process favouring economic and political measures. Recent literature in urban systems theory has examined the emergence of city-regions as a dominant spatial form (Ross 2009, Hull and Neuman 2009, Florida et al 2007). Mega-regions, defined as "networks of metropolitan centres and their surrounding areas", have been identified as the particular form of city-region development most applicable to the North American context (Ross, 2009, p.1). Within this literature the City of Vancouver is identified as a metropolitan node in the Cascadia mega-region: "a bi-national mega-region consisting of the Portland, Seattle and Vancouver metro areas and the farms and forests in between" (Abbott, 2010). Despite a relatively long symbolic history the extent to which the Cascadia mega-region constitutes a definitive unit of spatial analysis is still debated. Further debate surrounds the rationale for defining mega-regions in purely economic terms for the purpose of enhancing global competitiveness. Some scholars, notably John Friedmann, have offered an asset based approach to economic development as a compliment to the discourse of global competitiveness (Friedmann 2005). Building on these debates this study will provide an overview of current research on 'Cascadia' in order to assess how the region is being constructed, the opportunities it presents in terms of leveraging investment in local assets, as well as the potential drawbacks of this approach to spatial planning. Particular areas of analysis include the roles of cultural and natural capital in Cascadia and the potential of bioregional governance for mega-regions. Finally, areas for further research will be highlighted with a particular emphasis on situating localized regional discourses within the global political and economic landscape.

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THE MEDITERRANEAN ARCH: A MEGA REGION UNDER CONSTRUCTION

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The comprehension of the present capitalist societies has a range of complexity without precedents. These new realities are multidimensional and defined by the constant change and the multiplicity of interrelations, which have entailed a new paradigm related to the territory and the reconceptualization of urbanity. City regions are the result of the growing cities, acting as poles of attraction for population and the concentration of most of the economic activities. Even so, the spread of urbanity is not just a matter of shape and space, but of relations and flows, what Neuman and Hull (2009) have called "the integrators of the *spaces of flows*" (Castells; 1989)

The Mediterranean Arch, the subject of the following paper, is an emerging megaregion in process of consolidation. In 1973, the concept of the Arch as an axe of development was formulated for the first time in the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions. However, is not until 1992⁷ when the European Commission defined the functional field of the Mediterranean Arch. Previous to the European Territorial Strategy (Potsdam, 1999), there were documents suggesting new potential spaces to counterbalance Center-Europe's urban and economic dorsal.

In this context, the most important task in this paper is to identify the role of the major players such and public and private agents, their interests and their capability to influence the new model of relations between cities and regions. As Carbonell and Báguena (2007) related, it organized itself with straight forward connections, horizontal or network, between the existent different elements

This project has the economic dimension as the main focus. Boira (2002) establishes that the bases of the new European territorial dimensions are transactions, relationships and flows, which conform this economic perspective. Despite the dominance of the economic criteria, it is has been considered essential to include topics related to politics, and specifically to governance, as well as social and environmental issues, dimensions which sometimes have been ignored (Turok; 2009). The economic perspective is sometimes too limited to capture the complexity of the processes developing in city regions, and most of the times is lead to the central point of the discussions because of the eagerness of economical development of the regions. Consequently, the aim of the paper is not to set aside the economic point of view, but establish ties with other relevant issues.

Finally, from the data obtained in the analysis of the Mediterranean Arch, the paper identifies some of the strenghts and weaknesses in the process of construction of this megaregion.

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In this analysis has carried out for a bibliographical emptying, analyzing global cases to reach the aspects more distinctive of the Mediterranean Arch. Other consulted sources are official statistical references, as well as different studies about this topics, press releases, research teams and specialized magazines.

Key words: megaregion, Mediterranean Arch, Governance, flows, economic development.

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THE "MEGAPOLITAN" IN TERMS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF QUEBEC CITY REGION

Authors: Frédéric Blouin-Michaud, Marie-France Jacques, Myriam Martel, Carole-Anne Tanguay.⁸

The new concept of megaregional planning started to appear in the United States during the 20th century. Responding to the sudden increase of suburbs outside the traditional cities, the changes concerned not only the scale of the city but also new spatial governance system and fundings that exceed the boundaries of the cities. In this context, Megapolitan research is about studying this new planning environment according to Quebec City economics.

The research started with a theoretical review of some literature that was produced about the subject. Among all the concepts that were linked together we emphasis our own definition of the megaregion that are an increase of connectivity among the regions, an increase of the centers and differentiation of the density and transportation scales (Neuman and Hull). We also merged to this definition the ideas of multiple governance (Neuman and Hull) and leading industries (Sassen) to have a general idea of the different approaches of the concept.

The next part of the research was about making an overview of Quebec City's socio-economic profile and its region. Then some interesting characteristics were highlighted with the statistics that were available, as demography, employment and industrial organization among the region. To valid how these mechanisms interact within Quebec City's economic structure on-site interviews were made among nineteen private businesses and three organizations that take an important part in knowledge economics.

We came to identify strengths and weaknesses of the Quebec City region along with these concepts and the efforts that are made by different organisms to assure cohesion within the region. Finally we expressed modestly few advices to improve the development of the linkages, according to theoretical concepts, to make it more powerful in terms in its economic. Even though this research was restricted to a small section of Quebec City's economy the concept of megaregion and its principles as an analytical tool offers an original theoretical framework and high range for the study of spatial phenomena related to the economic development of modern cities.

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