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ARTICLE

Real existing regionalism: The region between talk, territory and technology

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Abstract

In this paper, we propose the notion of real existing “lived” regionalism as a rejoinder to the normative and ideological debates around new regionalism. Regional forms have shown little convergence in this age of globalized regionalization. Instead of an ideational construct or set of predictable practices, we argue regionalism is a contested product of discourses (talk), territorial relationships (territory) and technologies (material and of power). The concept of real existing regionalism confronts the tensions between the discursive constructions and normative interventions that characterize much current regionalist debate and the territorial politics and technologies which reflect, generate and direct new state spatial strategic choices. The paper demonstrates the utility of the real existing regionalism framework through an analysis of the greenbelt, transportation planning and post-suburbanization in Southern Ontario. We argue regulatory institutions capture the Toronto region in a mix of rhetorical and technological change that complies to neither pre-conceived notions of regionalization nor with the pessimism of total regional dysfunctionality. Rather, the lived experience of regionalization illuminates the emergent assemblages, multiplicity of everyday flows, and on-going, multiscale negotiations of diverse communities that produce the real existing region.

Keywords: Regions; regionalism; territory; technologies; post-suburbs; Toronto; Southern Ontario; Canada

Regionalism and its offshoot the “new regionalism” have been in debate for more than a decade now. That debate has shifted recently since the initial promises of the new regionalist euphoria seem to have been broken. The realities of splintered and segregated regions belie the heady assumptions about regional cooperation and intra-regional distribution of wealth and resources that underlay the early conversation (for a spectrum see Amin 2004; Dreier, et al, 2001). But the critical debate around regionalism has also hit a certain hiatus. While we now know that regions (and regionalism) are better thought of as part of an overall rescaling of global capitalism (Brenner, 2002), political constructs (Jonas and Ward, 2007), critical social constructs (Paasi, 2010), and of “struggles both of exclusion and of economic development” (Jonas, 2011: 99), we are also keenly aware that (particularly) after disaster struck many areas affected by the 2008-2009 Financial Crisis, much of the academic and policy talk positing regions as the engine of global economic activity has quieted down or undergone a discursive shift to forward urban regions as sites of post-crisis recovery (Raco and Street, 2012; Soureli and Youn, 2009).

Although a substantial literature attests to the competitiveness and resiliency of urban regions (see Jonas, 2012), the regionalist debate and pragmatic discussions of metropolitics, continue to hover between the old dichotomies of Chicago and Los Angeles (and to some degree New York) ‘schools’ of urban and regional thought; most prominently regarding the spatial organization of regional sociology and land use (Conzen and Greene, 2008; Judd and Simpson, 2011). Such debates reinforce binary thinking between the respective roles of the central city and suburbs but further overlook emerging empirical and conceptual development occurring beyond established narratives abstracted from the American urban experience (for an emerging alternative project see Ekers et. al, 2013; the Global Suburbanisms project www.yorku.ca/suburbs and **PAPER 3**, this volume). As **PAPER 1** (this volume) outlines, contemporary metropolitan growth dynamics have blurred the traditional boundaries – material and imagined – between the city and the suburbs; destabilizing conventional, territorial definitions of urban regions which do not adequately account for the fluid, multiscalar nature of the urban process. While the dialectics of centre and periphery, invoked by Lefebvre among others, continues to exert its power over the structuring of regions around the world (Schmid, 2012; Walks 2013), theoretically, the question as to how bounded or unbounded a region is persists (Allen and Cochrane, 2007; Amin, 2004; MacLeod and Jones, 2007; McCann and Ward, 2010). The resurgent influence of relational thinking on the region is politically significant in that it fundamentally problematizes the nature of local actors shaping the physical and social geographies of urban regions, and the very essence of what constitutes the local itself (Purcell, 2006). Yet what *relationality* and *territoriality* mean in the context of regionalism is often defined relative to particular ontological positions and a priori assumptions. Consequently, we respond to the call made by Harrison (2010), MacLeod and Jones (2007), McCann and Ward (2010) amongst others for studies of regionalization grounded in concrete actions, spaces and strategies, while paying critical attention to the role of the state and territorial politics in the process of regionalization (Heinelt and Kübler, 2005; Jonas, 2012).

Regional forms have shown little convergence in this age of globalized regionalization and in each region internal differentiation abounds. Clearly, we are pushing beyond the binary Chicago and Los Angeles readings of the urban region. Flying out of Toronto into Los Angeles will offer all the possible forms of urban regions on display below. Sure, leaving Toronto one sees the classically receding density lines moving west from Pearson Airport into the agricultural expanse of Southern Ontario. But the monocentrality of Toronto is challenged by a number of urban and regional forms that have inscribed themselves on the concentric landscape: the competing suburban downtowns, first among them Mississauga; the strips, most notably Yonge Street; the airport economy itself (which has colonized the western suburbs with its ancillary warehousing wonderland); the centrality of the variously scaled transportation infrastructures in their own right; and the decentralized educational mass institutions from University of Toronto Scarborough and Mississauga to York University. With a bit of imagination (and knowledge of their existence), it is also possible to see the regional greenbelt and the emerging growth centres that illustrate compliance, more or less, with the Province of Ontario’s planning framework and make for a regulated pattern of “captured sprawl” which reflects, as we see below, a new spatial and scalar compromise that redefines the region.

Flying into Los Angeles, on the other hand also offers some surprises. Touted as one of the archetypes of a chaotic, dissembled and sprawling regionalism in a 60 mile circle (Soja, 1989), the region appears to be more segmented and ordered than one would usually imagine. Especially in the older parts of this “post-metropolis” (Soja, 2000), a densely (re)structured regional pattern has overgrown the Tieboutian patchwork of the Lakewood Plan of the post WWII years (Keil, 1998). What one sees below is the dictatorship of the subdivision as an empire of the private market, and the powerful hand of the federal state, especially the giant flood control and freeway ecologies in the flatlands and the foothills of the region (Banham 1971; Desfor and Keil, 2004). While the urban region’s polycentrality is

easy to discern, the visitor will also acknowledge the significance of the downtown whose built form has never been more impressive and more visible as the citadel around which the city flattens out.

In this paper, we depart from the normative and ideological debates around new regionalism and propose the notion of real existing “lived” regionalism. Much recent critical geographic research attests regions (and city-regions) are not solely the territorial construct de jour for economic competitiveness and urban resilience (Jonas, 2012). The politics and technologies of regionalism do not occur in isolation from other social and political arenas (Ward and Jonas, 2004) but are fundamentally co-constituted through spatial practices and social processes (McCann, 2007). Following Lefebvre’s (1996) understanding of urban society as one of multiple and differential space times, we can consequently see processes of everyday life, social reproduction, work and play as ever-emergent and politically contested over a multitude of scales. Further, heeding the calls of feminist scholars who suggest regional spatial politics needs to consider how people manage and live their daily lives (Jarvis, 2007; McGuirk and Dowling, 2011), we hold that the lived experience of regionalism clearly illuminates the assemblages and multiplicity of everyday flows that construct the real existing region. Regional space, as such, is embodied in an amalgam of dialectics – centres and peripheries, fixity and fluidity, past and present – which are structured, and spatially expressed by evolving modalities of political and economic power (Young and Keil, 2010; Walks, 2013). Using the lenses of the greenbelt, transportation planning and post-suburbanization in Southern Ontario, we will argue that regulatory institutions capture the region in a mix of rhetoric and technological change that complies neither with pre-conceived notions of regionalization nor with the pessimism of total regional dysfunctionality but instead reflects the ongoing, multiscalar negotiation of diverse communities, interests and space times. Rather than serving as a paradigmatic national exemplar, we approach the Toronto region as an expression of the processes underpinning an era of globalized regionalization. Therefore, we intend for the conceptual framework of real existing regionalism to inform future relational comparative urban-regional analysis.

Real existing regionalism

The concept of real existing regionalism acknowledges the fact that regionalism is neither a mere normative, ideational construct nor a set of predictable practices but a contested product of discourses (talk), territorial relationships (territory) and technologies (both material and of power). As a concept, it attempts to confront the tensions between the discursive constructions and normative interventions that characterize much regionalist conversation today and the territorial politics (local competition) and technologies that are deployed to give these tensions strategic direction. The technologies are both material, for example in the sense of transportation modal choice (subways, light rail transit, rapid busways) and of power (e.g. negotiating the modalities of state, market and private authoritarian intervention that are employed in governing institutions at the regional scale; see Ekers et al, 2012).

The real existing regionalism of a particular area will be reflective of, and in turn generate new, state spatial strategic choices. At the current juncture those are primarily embedded in and express neoliberal values and objectives. We expect, therefore, no fundamental conflict over the region’s strategic direction, yet divergences in kind during a climate of “roll-with-it” neoliberalization (Keil, 2009). While actors at the regional scale are far from powerless in shaping the direction of institutional innovation, they are bound, at this point, by the overall constraints imposed by the discipline of a neoliberal (or post-neoliberal) policy environment where the chief regulatory discourse pushes for a post-crisis developmental consensus. While operating fully in the overall governmentalist framework of a roll-with-it reconstruction of post-crisis neoliberalism, the region has not ceded to be the space of vivid and outspoken contestations about radically different futures. The fact that real existing regionalism operates in the confines of the roll-with-it straightjacket, its technological,

ecological and social dimensions at times imply a sense of more fundamental change. In a recent manifesto-style intervention, Richard Florida pleaded (in exasperation):

I'm not advocating a top-down, neo-liberal, business-run Toronto. Too many urban centres had the very life sucked out of them by a self-serving business elite hellbent on remaking once-thriving neighborhoods as homogenized complexes for corporate headquarters. What we need instead is a new set of mechanisms that can garner the full commitment and active engagement of the very top leadership. (...) Toronto needs to act in harmony as one region, not a city versus its suburbs. Joint economic development would enable municipalities to grow together. It makes no sense for separate towns to compete for businesses that are going to locate in a shared region. (...) By working together as a single region, we can stretch our boundaries, leveraging the broader capabilities that can enable greater Toronto to compete with much larger cities around the world" (Florida, 2012).

It must be added that the re-scaling of the region and the revamping of growth and mobility management in Southern Ontario occurs at a time of dramatic demographic and socio-economic change. Most predominantly, perhaps, the region has seen a reversal of its social ecology over the recent years as the outer suburban 905 belt around the core city has seen an influx of both endogenous non-European populations as well as increasingly new immigrants, mostly from South and East Asia. The suburbs surrounding Toronto, most notably Mississauga, Brampton and Markham, have acquired ethnoburban qualities over the past 20 years. The cultural logic that might have undergirded the conservationist, and often neo-rural, middle class sensitivities of the exurban polities in previous years (see Abbruzzese and Wekerle, 2011 for a related discussion) has now once again been trumped by a more unpredictable mix of internally cohesive cultural identity politics, automobilist growth policies, single family home orientation, ostensive consumerism and even authoritarian privatism (Ekers et al, 2012). Yet suburban governments have also begun to push towards alternative growth management policies and regional integration from the outside in that have sometimes challenged and superseded the ostensibly more progressive orientation of the metropolitan core (Keenan, 2012).

Greenbelt

For almost a decade, since 2003, the Ontario provincial government has sent clear messages about the necessity of regional integration through a set of strong regional land use and environmental policies, especially in its central economic heartland region around the *Greater Golden Horseshoe* (GGH) in Southern Ontario. This region ranges from the American border at the Niagara Peninsula in the South, along the Niagara escarpment and beyond to the high tech boom and agricultural regions around Waterloo-Kitchener-Cambridge in the West, beyond the Oak Ridges Moraine into the Muskoka region to the North, to the industrial municipality of Oshawa in the East. Naturally cohesive through the features of lake, escarpment and moraine, the region is really a construction of political and jurisdictional upscaling that challenges the existing territorial arrangements between the central, and dominant, municipality of Toronto and the burgeoning suburbs and exurbs around it. Often caricatured as a conflict between the 416 and 905 telephone areas, that older territorial logic had some grounding in the realities of distinctly different ideological, political and cultural preferences of its inhabitants and political decision-making apparatuses. In short, the contrast was between the dense, urbanity of the metropolitan core and the sprawling suburbanity that lay beyond (Sewell, 2009). The differences between those territorial realities were stark and real but they also tended to lead to ungovernable and unproductive oppositions between regional actors. While the former conservative government of Ontario under Mike Harris had used and abused those differences in a partisan manner by supporting the political preferences of the 905 and ignoring or even punishing those of the 416, the new Liberal government after 2003 saw those differences as being increasingly counterproductive not just to their own reign in the provincial Queen's

Park government but also to the necessary integration of the region's buzzing economic engine around Toronto. The Ontario government meant to support growth and accumulation on the one hand by giving industry and real estate development clear demarcations for their activities (Wekerle, et al., 2007; 2008) and to reinstate reliable and long term sustainability guidelines aimed at curbing sprawl and the ensuing cost to state and private actors in the province (Macdonald and Keil, 2012). The rhetoric introduced by the mutually reinforcing Places to Grow and Greenbelt legislations brought in during 2005-6 established a discursive construction and legal framework through which the region could ultimately be established in the fields, orchards and vineyards of the area as well as the urbanizing, transit oriented town centres and edge cities that dot Southern Ontario's expanse of 31,562 square kilometres with its close to 9 million people. The rhetorical integration provided by these measures is no small feat in a region with such strongly diverse and often contradictory social interests. Not just Southern Ontario's aggressive and powerful development industry had to be brought on board. The regional farmers who occupy some of the richest soil in all of Canada yet eye development as an ultimately more lucrative use for their land, emerging environmentalist groups and territorial alliances of all kind had to be convinced or neutralized in the process of charting the path laid out by the Greenbelt and Places to Grow legislations.

Of course, the double measure of protection and intensification has not been all talk. It came with a new territorial concept for the region. While previous legislation had provided some of the logic for the new framework – especially existing protection for the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment – the new set of rules went way beyond the status quo. In particular, a new territorial hierarchy was introduced through the principle that each local jurisdiction was now held by law to make their Official Plans comply with higher order guidelines brought in by those acts. This meant strong powers for unilateral compliance of cities with provincial policy and left much less room for negotiation in the domain of planning. This had fundamentally two effects on the territorial structure of Southern Ontario. In one sense, it created a tendency towards territorial convergence in the region as individual municipalities scrambled to comply if not with the letter but at least with the spirit of the new regulatory framework. In another sense, though, it also allowed territorial actors in the region a margin of intraregional competition for resources inside the GGH. While the overall planning goals for the region were clearly stated – protection of the greenbelt and intensification of growth centres – there was a considerable space in which municipalities could pursue distinct and differentiated strategies towards achieving those policy objectives. Again, there was now less room to negotiate *vertically* with the Province as the government was clear on wanting to enforce its regional planning framework but the territorial actors were empowered to act *horizontally* both through competition and sometimes in cooperation to accomplish stated growth goals and objectives of social integration.

Lastly, in the area of technologies, the real existing regionalism of the Places to Grow and Greenbelt legislations introduces a dialectics of unity and diversity instead of the previous duality between the 416 and 905. In the material sense, technology here refers to the massive increase in significance allotted to planning as an instrument of government. In stark contrast with the previous government's almost total reliance on the market as a regulator in land use and conservation, the liberal version of neoliberal governance uses the strong powers of the territorial (provincial) state to subject the region to powerful and accountable forms of land regulation in the interest of both accumulation and sustainability. This new regional sustainability fix works through the technological powers of a bureaucratic apparatus at arms-length from the government. Its main institution is the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) that monitors and sanctions the compliance of lower level jurisdictions with the provincial plans. Like the networked mobility infrastructure we discuss below, this new mode of conducting planning in Ontario creates a strong socio-technological structured coherence of accumulation objectives, state action and neoliberal governmentalities at the level of societal actors.

Transportation and Mobility

The Government of Ontario is not only the primary political actor shaping state spatial strategic choices and action at the regional scale, but also the key funder of major infrastructure projects. Following decades of underinvestment in infrastructure and a lack of comprehensive transportation planning dating from the 1980s, the Liberal government extended the upscaled regional thinking embodied in the Places to Grow and Greenbelt legislations by institutionalizing a regional transportation agenda for Southern Ontario. In a move viscerally disclosing its role as a regionalizing state, Queen's Park established *Metrolinx* as a Crown Agency charged with managing and coordinating transportation throughout the *Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area* (GTHA) in June 2006. The GTHA presented an alternative, yet broadly complementary territorial construction of the region to the GGH; one founded upon the political jurisdictions of Toronto and Hamilton and municipal regions of Durham, Halton, Peel and York. The underlying logics and development vision forwarded by Metrolinx established a program of infrastructural investments that reinforced the socio-technological structured coherence at the heart of Southern Ontario's post-crisis development fix. As a means to infrastructurally support the Province's growth management strategies, the new agency's regional transportation plan, *The Big Move* (Metrolinx, 2008), prominently incorporated discourses of livability, environmental sustainability and economic competitiveness, but did so in a manner clearly reflective of the normative rhetoric characteristic of "roll-with-it" neoliberalization. In the heightened climate of economic uncertainty catalyzed by the 2008-2009 Financial Crisis, the scalar selectivity and policy frameworks forwarded by Metrolinx remained strongly codified as a strategy of competitive regionalism conditioned by the primary imperatives of globalization and regional resilience. The 25-year, \$50 billion Big Move plan intended to address the lack of capital investment, poorly integrated transportation networks and limited intergovernmental collaboration curtailing regional productivity and competitiveness (OECD, 2010; Soberman et al., 2006) by catalyzing intensified urban growth around a strategically significant network of "mobility hubs" which integrate and balance multimodal transportation technologies (from high-speed rail to walking) (Metrolinx, 2008). In doing so, the rhetoric of The Big Move not only highlighted transportation infrastructure as a primary policy sector and technology interconnecting the GTHA's urban fabric across increasingly blurred jurisdictional borders but presented an infrastructural fix stimulating both investments in the built environment surrounding proposed growth hubs and introducing new notions of urbanity and densification in Toronto's rapidly evolving suburbs.

During the planning phase of The Big Move, Metrolinx operated with a Board primarily comprised of sitting politicians and acted as an institutional space facilitating intra-regional cooperation and marshaling new investments and revenue sources made available by the provincial and federal governments. Galvanizing a strong regional consensus regarding the importance of investment in regional networked mobility infrastructure across the 416 and 905, the regulatory frameworks established by Places to Grow ensured a broad cohesion among municipal transportation plans which, as with their Official Plans, are required (with a degree of flexibility) to conform to provincial guidelines. Whereas previous attempts at region-wide transportation coordination had succumbed to weak mandates and limited institutional powers, the significant authority assigned to Metrolinx by Queen's Park decisively positioned the city-region as the crucial spatial frame for Toronto's transportation planning future. Indeed, by proposing a regional mobility network utilizing multiple transportation technologies to connect regional growth hubs – including subway extensions, increased regional bus and commuter rail service, bus- and light rapid transit along key arterial roads and an express diesel rail link between Pearson Airport and downtown – Metrolinx has approached regional transportation planning in a way which both responds to, and actively encourages, the emerging geography of the Toronto region. Yet while Metrolinx pursues a development strategy aimed at establishing the GTHA as a functional territory premised upon multiple regional centralities, the scalar selectivity embodied in the elevation of the region as the scale at which to construct a post-crisis infrastructural fix invokes

contestation at other scales. As with the rhetorical integration presented through the Province's land use and environmental programs, the normative discursive evocation of the region as privileged scale of global urban competitiveness ensured consensus among the region's diverse social and political actors regarding a vision for transportation planning in the GTHA. However, as Metrolinx moved to the implementation phase of The Big Move, the territorial interests of politicians sitting on the Board presented a conflict of interest between local and regional development. Most notably, the view of local mobility espoused by the City of Toronto's *Transit City* light rail plan put forward by former Mayor David Miller, which would have provided rapid transit access across the city for marginalized, transit-deficient "priority neighbourhoods" clashed with Metrolinx's desire for high-speed, limited stop regional movement (Addie, 2013). In order to avoid a prolonged "war of attrition" between the City of Toronto and Queen's Park (Young and Keil, 2010: 93), the Province replaced Metrolinx's "political" Board with "corporate" representatives and asserted their authority and ownership over regional transportation development, including Transit City. In an ongoing political saga that has involved the power politics of inner suburban politicians such as current Mayor Rob Ford, the technocratic nature and weak authority of Metrolinx has recently shown to be a politically vulnerable to incursions both by the ever volatile Toronto City Council and the Liberal minority provincial government hell bent on securing electoral support in those regions of inner suburbia that have not yet been served by rapid rail transportation.

The GTHA's urban morphology and existing technologies of mobility compel the implementation of more individualized movement through and between the emergent polycentricism of regional space. Beyond the centrality and densities of the urban core, dispersed industrial, commercial and institutional regional growth centres with established access premised upon auto-mobility result in lengthy commutes (in terms of time and distance); especially for transit riders (Turcotte, 2011) and new immigrants who increasingly make Toronto's suburbs home (Axisa, Newbold and Scott, 2012; Lo, Shalaby and Alshalafah, 2011). Carpooling and workplace shuttle programs – financed by Metrolinx and regional employers through *Smart Commute*, a collection of local transportation management authorities across the GTHA – provide an innovative response to the mobility challenges of real existing regionalism and open the door for sustainable transportation. Yet, their limited utility also reflects the difficulty in realizing collective public transportation options to accommodate the spatial practices producing complex regional "topologies of relationality" (Jacobs, 2012: 413). As a consequence, although investments in specific transport technologies are not mutually exclusive, the Province's understanding of regional space and territory – principally founded upon privileged network components which optimize regional competitive advantages and ensure socio-technological coherence through material and governance technologies of regionalization (Graham and Marvin, 2001) – are prioritized among the multiple, overlapping spatio-temporalities and mobilities that constitute lived regionalism.

Real existing regionalism and post-suburban politics

Capital concentrates in uneven spatial arrangements. In the Toronto region, new post-suburban growth hubs are being privileged as regional logics of connectivity are overlaid upon, and reconfigure, both established city/suburban metropolitan dynamics and evolving patterns and practices of localized movement with polycentric urban space. The interesting first outcome of the real existing regionalism created by the transportation and land use planning legislation in Southern Ontario is an *integration* of post-suburban realities into the talk, territorial arrangements and applied technologies of the region. While new development is envisioned predominantly in "places to grow", these are mixtures of existing hubs and emerging points of centrality. This pattern challenges the common centre-periphery dialectic of growth and decline in the region as the region develops multiple centres and peripheries, new in-between landscapes where a new politics evolves. Still, although geographical distance between rich and poor may collapse within post-suburbia, relative connectivity and the symbolic distance between centre and periphery are greatly exacerbated and

experienced differentially by users of these spaces. The spatial politics of regionalism are operationalized through a diverse collection of social and spatial practices. Urban nodes figure as assemblages of complex lived urbanities. Inbetweenness becomes a quality of everyday (sub)urbanism and conditions connectivity. While individuality and isolation in the real existing post-suburban region appear to prohibit collective agency (Hamel, 2011), new forms of politics emerge in the interstices of the existing jurisdictional, administrative and territorial governance structures. Clearly, official regional policy reproduces ownership politics (for and by owners of condominiums, houses, businesses, “taxpayers”) at the expense of tenants, workers, non-citizens and state-dependent populations, and mirrors the tripartite power modalities of state, capital accumulation and private authoritarianism (Ekers et al, 2012). Yet, new forms of collective action may well emerge from the diverse polities that populate the post-suburban region, especially at the vast decentralized workplaces and factories, at the metabolic frontier (Greenbelt) and in the newly emerging field of social welfare delivery in the exurban belt.

For Lefebvre (1996), the introduction of centrality into peripheral zones offered the potential to transform marginalized spaces (or the homogeneity of the suburbs) into actual *urban* space by extending the right to the city and the struggle against exclusions from space. Certainly, recognizing the structural complexity evident in post-suburbia is a necessary step in breaking the physical, mental and social dichotomies reified under metropolitan urbanization and opening the potential of suburban space within a remodeled city-region (Kolb, 2008). Drawing from a sympathetic reading of relational urban politics, MacLeod argues the emergent, spatially uneven city-region requires a “nimble” urban politics capable of incorporating and mobilizing new connectivities, centralities and overlapping political relations, and democratizing their governance (2011: 2651).

Likewise, Young and Keil have suggested elsewhere, that “that in today’s city-regional political socio-spatiality, politics will have to be found “in-between” the old lines of demarcation” (Young and Keil, forthcoming). We have entered an era where urban and suburban politics are not easily separated, particularly in urban regions that aspire to be global. In fact, in a globalized context, suburbs are beginning to be key spaces where a newly emerging set of assemblages takes hold that redefine the metropolitan place and the globalized space in equal measure. We are guided here by McCann and Ward (2011: xv-xvi) who have argued that “these assemblages ... shape, reorient, and reconstitute wider flows, thus continually reconfiguring geographies of territoriality and relationality”. They also allow us to “overcome ... easy analytical dichotomies – fixity/mobility, global/local” so commonly assumed at the base of urban realities today.

Some interested parties have, indeed, started to debate the region in new terms, thinking about new territorial relationships and new technologies both material and of governance. A group of regional experts, for example, brought together through the Global Suburbanisms research project at York University under the bulky title Greater Toronto Suburban Working Group (GTSWG), has begun to rethink the region in new terms (Hertel and Keil, 2013a). Functioning as a roundtable over almost three years, representatives of various agencies, institutions, organizations in the public and private sector, discussed the various sectoral, areal and functional aspects of regional governance relevant to their constituencies. While shying away from concrete recommendations, the GTSWG’s Roundtable Report takes stock in terms of regional governance more generally, and lays out the sectoral policy challenges in urban design, the greenbelt, social planning, development, aging and analysis. The report leaves us with various “ways forward” proposing innovative ideas of how to approach vexing regional policy issues creatively, democratically and with a future orientation. Among the most pressing advice is the support of a networked form of governance using innovative online tools as a base. The report concludes:

The models we have engaged over the years to make processes of building, maintaining and maturing the suburbs work, are tired and need reevaluation. The “growth machine” of investment, electoral politics and land development delivers crisis more than solution in postsuburbia. Instead, solutions must be found that re-engage and politicize suburban communities beyond the mantras of cheap taxes, local autonomy and privatism. Good services, regional responsibility and public engagement must be the principles on which suburban governance is built. Democratic procedures are at the basis of this emphatic reengagement. They need to be constructed through a mix of constitutional principles (allowing, in the future, for more self-government and less provincial interference) and bottom-up innovations in civil society (open cities, pop-up suburbanism, right to the suburb). Suburban governance must learn to be part of the governance of urban society (Hertel and Keil, 2013b: 13).

Taking up the chief themes of what we called real existing regionalism, we can conclude that the discourse (talk), jurisdictional logic (territory), and material power dynamics (technology) of the Toronto region have begun to shift. In the case of the Greenbelt, which we examined briefly above, a sudden push forward in November 2012 has revealed an entirely new way to speak about the region. An announcement made on the possibility of enlarging the greenbelt in order to bring more (urban) communities and river valleys under the stewardship of the protected lands created a new dynamic: the regional logic created by the greenbelt now has the potential of working from the outside of the metropolitan region in as municipalities are becoming the decentralized conduits of (bio)regional integration.

In Toronto as elsewhere (Keil, 2011), regional institutions and non-institutional actors have moved to a mode of internalized globalization. The global character of the relationalities that constitute the region is not in question in this period. It is assumed as the sine qua non of regional development. Regionalist discourse, territorial practices and technologies, while often pegged as a possible (resilient) antidote to threats of globalization (Hudson, 2008; 2009) actually have created more often than not the openings for those processes associated with that metadynamics. Yet, internalizing globalization does not mean enabling uncritically and without regional demands. Quite to the contrary, the discourses, territorial strategies and technological solutions deployed in the real existing region have to be understood as the terrain on which regional urbanization takes shape.

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