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# Territory: An Unknown Quantity in Debates on Territorial Cohesion<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

There are complaints about territorial cohesion being a vague concept, but in relevant debates territory, too, figures as an unknown quantity. Thus, is it the fixed property of any state, region or local administrative unit, or is it a malleable social construct; rather than being filled with bounded territories, does space overall contain a dynamic network with fuzzy internal, as well as external boundaries, with implications for territorial cohesion? After all, if the former were to be true, territorial cohesion would refer to qualities of what is inside bounded territories. If it were to be the latter, then the meaning of territorial cohesion would include qualities of the relations within a complex network of socially constructed, sometimes ephemeral constructs. There are implications for the ways subsidiarity and multi-level governance are invoked in EU discourse where there is a similar failure to question the underlying notion of territory. What is relevant here is the distinction between a 'territorial' and 'relational' geography. Considered opinion suggests that these alternatives can and, in view of the persistence of the principle of territorial representation, must be reconciled. However, though firmly entrenched, some constitutional theorists question the very principle. The debate is far from conclusive but at least it shows that discussion, even of this apparently fundamental principle is possible.

**Keywords:** *Territorial cohesion; Territory; Territorial representation*

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# 1. Introduction

Territory ... should not be understood as the static backdrop or container of political actions. Nor is it the passive object of political struggle. It is something shaped by, and a shaper of, continual processes of transformation, regulation and governance. (Elden, 2013, p. 13)

Social theorists are questioning territories-as-containers and so do practitioners. Thus, Nauwelaers (2012, p. 24) writing about innovation policy warns against "...myopic approaches, confined to regional boundaries and overlooking potential cross-border synergies". Politicians defer to their electorates, so one must demonstrate the opportunity costs, she says, of overlooking potential benefits to be gained through cooperation. Meijers, Hoogerbrugge and Hollander comment likewise that pressure on politicians:

... leads to an emphasis on short-term, locally coloured political agendas. Without hard evidence on how decisions taken for 'the regional good' trickle down locally, and how regional performance affects local performance, also on the long run, it is hard to overcome this gap between regional issues and local administration (2012, p. 142)

The underlying principle is territorial constituencies electing representatives which "...has become so habitual that it is almost never questioned, despite the fact that the 'communities' supposedly involved have changed radically in their stability, size and composition" (Schmitter, 2009, p. 487-488). However, the territories relevant for policy making are no fixed entities. They depend on the issue concerned. This is also true for territorial cohesion policy. Conventionally it is assumed that the territories concerned are fixed jurisdictions, each forming a container. The containers are stacked in layers. Territorial cohesion is thought of in terms of how well activities within and also between the stacked containers harmonise with each other. The other view alluded to by Elden (2013) in the quote at the beginning of this paper is of territories as ad hoc constructs, dynamic and depending on who is concerned. Such territories may overlap and do not fit into a 'Russian Doll,' as constitutional thinking – including much thinking about the EU – would have it. The view is one of a dynamic network with fuzzy internal as well as external boundaries. Territorial cohesion refers to how well this network reflects existing complexity, at the same time ameliorating inefficiencies and outright conflict.

As a preliminary to discussing the concept of territory underlying notions of territorial cohesion and the appropriate policies, the first section shows that the literature on territorial cohesion tends not to address territory as such. It is an unknown quantity. The second section discusses the ways both subsidiarity and multi-level governance are invoked in EU discourse. They similarly fail to question the notion of territory. The section draws attention also to relevant thinking in terms of the distinction between a 'territorial' and 'relational' geography. The third section points out that these alternative notions can possibly be reconciled. In

view of the persistence of the principle of territorial representation there seems no other way. The conclusions point out that, firmly entrenched though it is, the principle of territorial representation is nevertheless being questioned by at least some constitutional theorists.

## 2. Territorial Cohesion

During consultations on the ‘Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion’ (European Commission, 2008; see Faludi, 2010, pp. 162-167; Sykes, 2011) a persistent criticism was the lack of a clear definition of the concept. From the beginning it had been a container for different meanings and intentions, an ‘unidentified political objective’. (Faludi, 2005) This allowed governments and EU institutions to interpret territorial cohesion according to their own interests, preferences and development challenges, reminding Evers (2012) of the ‘garbage can model’. Indeed, when introducing the concept, the Commissioner for regional policy Michael Barnier (2004) gave a long list. He emphasised first of all that EU policy already embraced aspects of territorial cohesion such as the support for regions lagging behind. He then outlined new directions aiming to improve the response to the EU’s territorial imbalances:

- exploiting opportunities, and not just addressing problems;
- encouraging cooperation and networking;
- building on existing strengths so as to improve the targeting of cohesion
- policy;
- ensuring the incorporation of the sustainability agenda, including addressing the
- issue of natural risks
- more coherence and coordination between regional and sectoral policies.

It has become common since to talk about different territorial cohesion ‘storylines’ like ‘Europe in Balance’, ‘Competitive Europe’ and ‘Clean and Green Europe’ (Waterhout, 2008). Martin and Schmeitz (2012, p. 120) argue for the need for greater policy coherence and governance changes which is another storyline. It concerns the packaging of policies with territorial impacts, what the Barca Report (2009) refers to as integrated territorial development. This is the ‘Coherent EU Policy’ storyline.

Van Well (2012) follows up on the storylines relating them to the arenas in which territorial cohesion is discussed. She identifies an ‘ESPO pillar’ so called after the European Spatial Planning Observation Network ([www.espon.eu](http://www.espon.eu)); the ‘Territorial Agenda pillar’ so called after the ‘Territorial Agenda of the European Union’ (TA, 2007) and its update, the ‘Territorial Agenda 2020’ (TA, 2011); the ‘Green Paper pillar’ and finally the ‘European Territorial Cooperation pillar’ referring to the EU Cohesion policy objective under this name. Then Van Well turns her attention to ‘Cohesion Policy Storylines in OPs 2007-2013’ identifying storylines, not unlike Waterhout’s, invoked in so-called Operational

Programmes. These are the reduction of regional/spatial imbalances; regional cooperation; exploiting regional potential; horizontal (multi-level) principles.

So it is clear that there are different meanings to territorial cohesion but Faludi (2010, p. 170) argues that integrating territorial development policies is its unique selling point. 'Coherent EU Policy' refers to the coordination of regional, environmental, agricultural, transport and so forth policies, ensuring that such policies acquire added value by forming coherent packages, taking account of where they take effect, the specific opportunities and constraints there, now and in the future. In these terms, Mendez (2012, p. 2) says the post-2013 proposals for Cohesion policy signal a strengthening of 'territorial and integrated principles and the reassertion of Commission control over programming', a return to the founding ethos of the 1988 reform. Mendez, too, presents this, what is also called the 'place-based' narrative, as a key driver in the ascendancy of a territorial cohesion discourse and traces its development from the OECD to Barca. Concerning the 'place-based' narrative in Commission policy he concludes that its 'tenets of spatial balance, integrated development and inclusive governance ... resonated with the well-established multi-level governance and territorial cohesion concepts, which had gained increased attention through the EU's constitutional reform initiatives' (Mendez, 2012, p. 10).

The salience of the 'Coherent EU Policy' territorial cohesion storyline is clear. It is the reluctance of sector policy makers to allow for the necessary coordination which is problematic. This is the more the case since it is unclear whether Member States or the EU should be responsible: the competence issue concerning European spatial planning. (Faludi & Waterhout, 2002; Janin Rivolin, 2010) With territorial cohesion an objective of the 'Union', as the EU is called in the Lisbon Treaty, one might be excused for thinking that competence is no longer an issue. Be that as it may, this paper is not about competence but about the concept of territory, the meaning of which tends to be taken for granted, and well in the sense of territory being a container. Amongst others, this is evident in the way the subsidiarity principle and multi-level governance are conceived in EU discourse where the same assumption of territory being a container will be shown to prevail.

### **3. Territory, as in Subsidiarity and Multi-level Governance**

The Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion asks for a shared understanding of the concept so as to improve the governance of Cohesion policy 'in conformity with the principle of subsidiarity' (European Commission, 2008, p. 4). What the Green Paper seems to allay are fears that pursuing territorial cohesion could weaken the position of Member States and their regions. The backdrop is that of the existing governmental hierarchy: the stack of containers. What the concept of subsidiarity as invoked here means is that the EU should only get involved where

other authorities cannot cope. Commission proposals to effectuate any shared competence require the approval of the Council of Ministers and also the European Parliament, so whether or not such a proposal unnecessarily interferes with their policies is likely to be watched closely. The case of soil protection policy provides an example where the Council did reject a common approach in favour of retaining national policies in the matter. Both the unsuccessful Commission proposal and the counter-arguments advanced by representatives of Member State governments were couched in terms of subsidiarity, but obviously with different emphases. In light of attitudes expressed during the consultations on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, Faludi (2012a) surmises that proposal concerning territorial cohesion would share the same fate of being rejected by the Council of Ministers before they could even reach the European Parliament. In fact, the Commission has never made a legislative proposal to this effect, so whether or not legislative proposals in matters of territorial cohesion would receive a cold shoulder is a moot issue.

More important for the purpose of this paper, even where reactions to the Green Paper are positive, the frame of reference is the existing government hierarchy. For instance, the Committee of the Regions in its reaction to the Green Paper and also in its White Paper on Multilevel Governance states that:

...the principle of subsidiarity ... prevents decisions from being restricted to a single tier of government and which guarantees that policies are conceived and applied at the most appropriate level. Respect for the principle of subsidiarity and multilevel governance are indissociable: one indicates the responsibilities of the different tiers of government, whilst the other emphasises their interaction. (CoR, 2009)

Because of the presumed relation with multi-level governance in the above quote, Faludi also discusses that concept. The view above is of course prefaced upon the existence of a government hierarchy: the stack of containers. This refers to multi-level governance type I according to Hooghe and Marks (2010) who also identify a type II relating to specialised jurisdictions. Importantly, Type II assumes a potentially endless field of intersecting spatial relations. Implicitly, the underlying notion of territory is different, but here subsidiarity makes no sense. It is precisely this which leads Faludi to explore underlying notions of space and territory which the debates mentioned so far have ignored. He invokes Dangschat (2006) arguing that our understanding of space needs to move to conceiving of it as a jumble of overlapping networks; Davoudi and Strange (2009) advocating a relational conception of space, one that depends on the processes and substances that make it up; and Healey (2010, p. 32) pointing out that 'those with a "stake" in what happens in a place are not only local residents, or citizens, of a specific administrative-political jurisdiction'. As commonly interpreted subsidiarity takes no account of this multiplicity of arenas and identities, nor of the underlying notions of territory. Invoked as it is in favour of maintaining the existing nested hierarchy, subsidiarity is thus a conservative prin-

ciple prefaced upon a view of governance in boxes. Faludi (2012a) asks also whether the production of democratic legitimacy as a monopoly for territorial representatives is equally problematic, a point to which the Conclusions return.

Faludi (2012b) sharpens the analysis of multi-level governance. He points out that the concept is ambiguous. It often refers to vertical relations between bodies of government within a multi-level polity – what Hooghe and Marks identify as Type I – but sometimes also to the more comprehensive process called governance relating to their Type II. A related and for the purposes of this paper more important point reflecting the critique also of subsidiarity is that the multi-level governance literature is characterised by its ‘territorialism’. Territory is thus seen as a container with fixed boundaries. Invoking a term of Murphy (2008) drawing on Lewis and Wigen (1997), what is underlying is a particular metageography, one shaped by the map of sovereign states.

Without invoking the term as such, Scholte (2000), too, castigates what Murphy describes as metageography, calling it ‘territorialism’. Territorialism assumes that ‘macro social space is wholly organized in terms of units such as districts, towns, provinces, countries and regions. In times of statist territorialism more particularly, countries have held pride of place above the other kinds of territorial realms’ Scholte (2000, p. 47). However, connections exist that are at least partly detached from this territorial logic. Thus, in global transactions, ‘place’ is not territorially fixed, territorial distance is covered in effectively no time, and territorial boundaries present no particular impediment. In the terms of the famous work by Castells (1996), the ‘space of flows’ overgrows the ‘space of places.’ Social space cannot, therefore, be understood in terms of territorial geography alone.

Murphy (2008) emphasises a different point; the current ‘cartography of social life’ – Scholte’s territorialism – being the outcome of historic choices, ‘... of efforts to achieve particular ends with concrete implications for how things are organized and how people think about the world around them’. He claims more in particular that the ‘...territoriality of the European state system helped to produce a geographical imagination that privileges the “nation-states” over river basins, vegetation zones, population concentrations, or other possible regionalizations...’. As a historic phenomenon, territorialism may thus be subject to change. Conveying the same message, Scholte (2000, p. 57) says that ‘we need to develop an alternative, nonterritorialist cartography of social life’ that does not treat jurisdictions with their fixed borders as the inevitable building blocks.

In his review of multi-level governance Faludi shows that the inspiration of original authors dealing with multi-level governance was not as ‘territorialist’ as its invocation, for instance in the Committee of the Regions ‘White Paper on Multilevel Governance’ (2009). He discusses also the programmatic article ‘Regions unbound: Towards a new politics of place’ by Amin (2004). The butt of Amin’s criticism is a ‘new regionalism’. The latter is based on the mainstream view of cities and regions as territorial entities. However, ‘cosmopolitan forces’ produce a world

of cities and regions without prescribed or proscribed boundaries, so Amin is proposing a relationally imagined regionalism freed from the constraints of territorial jurisdiction.

Some of the authors discussed invoke a related concept, territoriality, according to a classic by Sack (1986) a spatial strategy of controlling resources and people by controlling area. This is often equated with state territoriality, but government control is diminishing. Hajer (2009) thus diagnoses a waning of the 'territorial synchrony', a discrepancies between geographical reach and the scale of problems. Much policy work takes place next to or across established orders. This shifts policy-making to an 'institutional void'.

If territoriality is no longer a state monopoly, does this mean that it is no longer a useful concept? Burgess and Vollard (2006) deny this, but they say unbundling territoriality may mean non-territorial forms of organisation. Faludi relates this to arguments about soft spaces. The emphasis is on scales other than those of the statutory planning system and on planners cooperating with others actors. Reviewing literature on rescaling, Allmendinger and Haughton (2009, p. 3) argue that this reflects 'an apparent predilection for promoting new policy scales, initially at least through the device of fuzzy boundaries'.

Drawing on more human geography literature, Faludi (2013) pursues the themes of territorialism and territoriality further. The studies discussed are innovative in conceptualising new territories criss-crossing existing jurisdictions leading to an 'unusual regionalism,' the term coined by Deas and Lord (2006, p. 1850). New imaginative configurations straddle national and regional boundaries challenging territorialism and state territoriality.

Indeed, there is much 'soft' planning at cross-border and transnational scales implying a new understanding of territory and of territoriality. The Commission promotes this and under the authority of the European Council coordinates its relevant policies and brokers agreements on concrete actions under the Macro-regional Strategy for the Baltic Sea Area, an example of 'spatial rescaling' (Stead, 2011, p. 163) and of soft spatial planning. If Metzger and Schmitt (2012) signal a tendency to veer back towards hard planning, then this only goes to reiterate that there is a complicated interplay between the two forms of planning.

From all this, Faludi concludes that territory is not necessarily a fixed entity enveloping all major aspects of social and political life within its boundaries. Rather, it is the object of negotiation and compromise, open to multiple interpretations. He points out the exciting aspect of this perspective on territory. In his work on 'European Union and the Deconstruction of the Rhineland Frontier', Loriaux (2008, p. 2) says 'that the terms we use so casually are rooted not in "nature," but in the poetic imagination', adding that this:

...has the effect of freeing deliberation and debate from a vocabulary of obfuscation and reveals ... the contours of a Europe that is ... about deconstructing frontiers so as to bring to light a civilizational space that is ... intensely urban, cosmopolitan, multilingual, and less hierarchical than in the past. (2008, p. 2)

The challenge that flows from this is to visualise networks and flows through the use of ‘scenarios’ and ‘fuzzy maps’ (Davoudi & Strange, 2009, p. 38) representing untidy and complicated situations prevalent in the twenty-first century. At the same time, one needs to recognise the entrenched nature of hard spaces. They are the bases for the organisation in wards, constituencies, electoral districts and so forth of democratic decision making. For as long as there are no convincing alternatives, hard spaces will remain building blocks for territorial organisation Faludi (2013) concludes. The next section discusses more recent literature taking a similar and-and position. The Conclusions point out that some alternatives to producing democratic legitimacy in territorially defined constituencies are at least under discussion.

#### **4. Two Worlds Coming Together?**

The first 2013 issue of *Regional Studies* on ‘Regional World(s): Advancing the Geography of Regions’ gives a state-of-the art review of relevant discussions. The editorial states: ‘Traditional views of regions as bounded, homogeneous units have been mostly rejected... The 1990s witnessed new relational tunes in the deliberations on regions’ (Jones & Paasi, 2013, p. 2). Above, the paper has already alluded to such ‘relational tunes’. This section elaborates on the theme, discussing the papers by Varró and Legendijk (2013) and Harrison (2013). First, though, the introductory paper by one of the early authors addressing such issues makes a point that is true, not only of regions but of all territorial entities, including states: ‘Regions of whatever scale or definition are neither immediately self-evident as geographic designations nor meaningful outside the historical context and theoretical frame in which they are used’ (Agnew, 2013, p. 7). In this sense, the paper distinguishes five ‘models of usage’ of regions, referring to: macro-regions, functional regions, aggregates of lower-level units without much regard to national boundaries (geographical areas of similarity), regions as entities involved in the ‘hollowing out’ of national economies and regions as the vehicles articulating sub-national identities. He further identifies seven disputes over regions and several ‘regional logics’ and warns against swapping the nation-state for the region as another one-size-fits-all alternative geographical unit of account.

Varró and Legendijk (2013) cast light on the ‘relational turn’ alluded to by discussing the influential example often referred to in the relevant literature of England’s ‘regional problem’ and regional governance. The, what they refer to as the ‘relational versus territorial debate’ raging in regard to this issue opposed ‘radicals’ to ‘moderates’. The debate gained poignancy under New Labour. To the disappointment of ‘radicals’ its regional policy was based on a container-view of socio-economic processes. This prompted Amin and other like-minded geographers to criticise Labour’s new regional and urban policies for being based on the assumption, already castigated by Amin (2004, p. 36) in the paper referred to above, that a defined geographical territory existed out there over which local actors had control. Referring to their joint pamphlet



under the title 'Decentering the Nation: A Radical Approach to Regional Inequality' (Amin, Massey & Thrift, 2003), Varrò and Lagendijk point out that, instead of

...the misleading celebration of self-reliant regions that actually remain entangled in centrally orchestrated policy frameworks, radicals have called for a more radical revision of the UK's territorial management. ... radicals have asked more specifically – and evoking traditional, that is, Keynesian regional policy measures – for a dispersal of state investments, including public sector institutions. (2013, p. 21)

Whilst sympathising with such views, 'moderates' as against this '... have pointed out the need to be aware of the persisting relevance of the territorial dimension of socio-spatial processes' (2013, p. 21) which amounts to advocating a combination of territorial and relational readings. The two authors conclude: "Territorially embedded" and "relational and unbounded" conceptions of regions are complementary alternatives, and actually existing regions are a product of a struggle and tension between territorializing and de-territorializing processes' (2013, p. 21).

At the same time, they observe that 'radicals' do not absolutely deny this point and so the critique levelled against them by 'moderates' is not wholly justified. The gap between the camps is narrower than it seems: Both see regions as social constructs. Making a point that will not be explored further, Varró and Lagendijk identify differences between the respective meta-theoretical frameworks. The way forward, they conclude, 'is to think of regions, and by extension, of all - thus also national - spaces as constituted relationally through agonistic struggles' (2013, p. 27).

Harrison (2013), too, discusses how different concepts of regions have been invoked in UK regional planning. Having outlined the controversy between 'territorially embedded' and 'relational and unbounded' conceptions and stating the purpose of his paper which is to demonstrate how the required 'key diagrams' employed in the UK Labour Government's 'new regional policy' reflect the move from a one-dimensional to a polymorphic view of regions, he notes globalisation's challenge to existing national arrangements and also the identification by Jessop, Brenner and Jones (2008) of the dimensions of the 'polymorphy' of social enquiry, territory, space, scale and network.

All this concerns North West England having being the object of endeavours to build more networked regional governance influenced, as it has been, by academic thinking. Thus, after the demise at the hands of voters of regional devolution, the draft strategy was couched in terms of networks based on the premise of a 'space of flows', this being reflected in the priority given to networks over Jessop; Brenner and Jones's (2008) other dimensions of socio-spatiality. Thus, most lines on the relevant map referred to connectivity; the focus was on growth corridors; prominence was given to international gateways; city-regions were presented as pivotal points; and the key diagram disregarded political or administrative units. Even the regional boundary was – inaccurately – defined as enveloping areas not part of the administrative region.

However, when it came to the official strategy, the weighting had shifted. The regional boundary was prominently – and this time accurately – represented, and boundaries around political and administrative units forming part of the city regions had become hard. Flows were less prominently illustrated, and so were gateways: the airports and ports linking the region to the world. ‘Networks and their institutional forms have clearly been unable to escape the existing territorial mosaic of politico-administrative units and their boundaries in the way that relationalists argue they can.’ (Harrison, 2013, p. 68)

This was not the end of the story because another key diagram for the 2010 Integrated Regional Strategy appeared. Referring to Jessop, Brenner and Jones (2008), Harrison (2013, p. 69) claims that it was ‘configured around the four first-order dimensions of sociospatial relations’. Thus, the territorial boundary of the region remained evident, but the three areas not formally part of it were once again included; scale had been brought back into the equation in that sub-regions were made visible, but in a way that makes them compatible with the existing territorial mosaic; networks remained evident but had lost more of their power. Notions of virtual flows had disappeared; connections beyond the region were no longer to city regions but to cities and regions; flows were truncated at the regional boundary and there was only lip service being paid to international connectivity. Harrison diagnoses this as simultaneously less relational and less territorial.

All of which leads to an important question. To what extent are emerging configurations conducive to producing more effective spatial policies? For in the North West, if the emphasis on networks in 2006 and then territory and networks in 2008 was driven by a clear rationale and certainty amongst key actors as to why it was necessary to adopt this approach, the move to less territory and less networks in 2010 appears to be driven by a politics of increased uncertainty over the economic, political, and institutional future of regions. (Harrison, 2013, p. 71)

What the study shows is how and why the dimensions of socio-spatial relations as identified – territory, space, scale and network – were dominant, emerging or residual at each moment. The conclusion to be drawn is that what is needed are ‘ever-more-complex configurations in order to make emergent strategies compatible with inherited landscapes of sociopolitical organization, and for new conceptual frameworks capable of theorizing the “inherently polymorphic and multidimensional” nature of social relations’ (Harrison, 2013, pp. 71-72), once more a reference to Jessop, Brenner and Jones (2008).

Harrison does not elaborate on these ‘ever-more-complex configurations’. If it were to be pursued in earnest, which in the EU context anyway it is not, the point could also be made concerning any policy to promote territorial cohesion: It would be a complex affair. Speaking to spatial planning rather than territorial cohesion, Allmendinger and his co-authors (e.g. Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009; Haughton et al., 2010) writing on soft spaces and the equivalent kind of planning are sure to concur, and so are elected representatives having a hard time

dealing with opaque arrangements mirroring the ‘polymorphic and multidimensional’ social relations addressed above. How can they give an account of their dealings to their constituencies? Political representatives and the whole bureaucratic apparatus of states and their sub-units are firmly embedded in – and dependent on – the ‘territorial mosaic’. However, the conclusions show that, although firmly entrenched, some constitutional theorists question the very principle of territorial representation. The debate is far from conclusive but at least it shows that discussion, even of this apparently fundamental principle is possible.

## 5. Conclusions

As indicated, Faludi (2012a) broaches the issue of territorial representation, in his case in relation to concepts of deliberate democracy. Fundamentals of representative democracy like voting and the way it is organised come into focus. In a classic work on representation, Pitkin pointed out the pivotal role of representation in the American Revolution where ‘taxation without representation is tyranny’ was the rallying cry. ‘Thus representation came to mean popular representation, and to be linked with the idea of self-government... And that is how it became embodied in our institutions.’ (Pitkin, 1976, p. 3)

One of the controversies concerns whether representatives are bound by what constituents want which is what the examples from planning practice quoted in the introduction would seem to imply. Thus, if ‘a man represents a particular constituency in the legislature, is his duty to pursue its interest or the interest of the nation as a whole?’ (Pitkin, 1976, p. 215) Further down she expands upon this issue:

The representative is, typically, both special pleader and judge, an agent of the locality as well as a governor of the nation. His duty is to pursue both local and national interests, the one because he is a representative, the other because his job as representative is governing the nation. (Pitkin, 1976, p. 218)

Pitkin’s is a philosophical analysis of the concept of representation. Although briefly mentioning occupation representation, she does not problematise territorial representation as the basis for organising representative democracy, but at least one can take heart from her encouragement to remain critical. Thus, she points at continuing tension between ideal and achievement which ‘should lead us neither to abandon the ideal, retreating to an operational definition that accepts whatever those usually designated as representatives do; nor to abandon its institutionalization and withdraw from political reality.’ (Pitkin, 1976, p. 240)

The institutionalisation of representation in terms of territorial constituencies is of course relevant to the issues in this paper. Schmitter quoted in the introduction says there is little discussion of this in constitutional theory. Rehfeld (2005) is an exception in asking: ‘Why do democratic governments define political representation in this way? Are

territorial electoral constituencies commensurate with basic principles of democratic legitimacy?’ Referring to US congressional districts, he argues that ‘the use of territory for representation has never been explained or justified ... In having never been contested ... territorial constituencies qualify as an arbitrary institution’ (2005, p. xv). Naturally, territorial representation gives preference to territorial interests. Rehfeld discusses large random constituencies allegedly more representative of a general interest as an alternative.

This has received some commentary. Thus, Urbanati and Warren (2008) confirm that the concept of constituency is an underdeveloped subject. Like Rehfeld they note that ‘the idea that constituencies should be defined by territorial districts has been all but unquestioned until very recently’ (2008, p. 396). Also, they concur that ‘when represented geographically, the people are only a ‘demos’ insofar as their primary interests and identities are geographical in nature. Nongeographical constituencies ... are represented only insofar as they intersect with the circumstances of location, producing only an accidental relationship between democratic autonomy ... and forms of representation.’ (Urbanati & Warren, 2008, pp. 396-397) Examples of constituencies underrepresented are racial, class and gender groups. So the ‘geography-based constituency definition introduces an arbitrary criterion... Exclusion works not on people ...but rather on issues, since residence-based constituencies define residency-based interests as most worthy of political conversation and decision’ (Urbanati & Warren, 2008, p. 397). Action groups and NGOs that play a role in notions or deliberate democracy articulate the interests of underrepresented constituencies.

All this does not mean to say that Rehfeld’s proposal worked out in his book in some detail in the form of a scenario of what US politics would be like with randomly assigned rather than territorial constituencies has found broad acceptance amongst constitutional theorists. Thus, Schmitter agrees that the ‘territorial base of representation has become so habitual that it is almost never questioned’ (2009, pp. 487-488). He also concurs with Rehfeld asking: unless citizens ‘...are choosing within collective units that are meaningful to them, why should the winning representatives be regarded as legitimate... Territory may have seemed the ‘natural’ and logistically effective solution in the past, but why continue to rely so exclusively upon it in the present’ (Schmitter, 2009, p. 488). However, Schmitter thinks the inferences concerning the positive effects of Rehfeld’s proposals of random constituencies implausible. In his summary, he states: ‘Territorial constituencies are still considered the most appropriate and reliable political units within which interests and passions should be aggregated, despite evidence that these units have changed considerably due to greater mobility and that citizens identify strongly with functional or ideational constituencies.’ (Schmitter, 2009, p. 489).

The above shows that issues that have agitated participants in the relational vs. territorial debate have at least been raised by constitutional theorists as well. If the relational/territorial debate has resulted in something like a draw, this is less true of the discussion around repre-

sentation in terms of territorial constituencies which is still at an early stage. However, at least the existence of critical positions shows that, when faced with the limitations which decision-making in fixed territorial units impose, one need not raise one's hands in desperation. Merely bemoaning the short-sightedness of politicians and their constituencies, at the same time perhaps also questioning the virtues of representative democracy for failure to deal with a reality which, territorially and otherwise is complex, is not the only alternative. Questioning arrangements for articulating the 'will of the people' could be to the point.

Also, if there is one conclusion staring into our face, then it is that arrangements to deal with 'polymorphic and multidimensional' social relations in a territorial-cum-relational reality are sure to remain opaque. Requesting simplification for simplification's sake is illusionary. Manipulating scale through government reform, increasing or decreasing territorial decision-making units, does not solve much either. Territory is a multiple. Fixed territories are like islands in a sea of malleable ones, with wave patterns incessantly re-modelling the islands' shorelines. To remain within this metaphor, territorial cohesion may thus refer to how well activities on islands harmonise with each other, but it may equally refer to how well the relations in the whole archipelago are managed. The pursuit of territorial cohesion, so conceived, means conceptualising, and re-conceptualising relations, amounting to ever-new images of existing and possible future territories, not in lieu of images of territories as islands but as counter-points to their apparent isolation

## Endnotes

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