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## Regional Governance and Democracy

Sarah Ayres (University of Bristol, UK)

### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to explore the relationship between regional governance and democracy. Enhancing local democracy is often cited as one of the motivations behind regionalism, alongside efforts to boost economic development and transform public services. Many scholars associate regional governance with improving the legitimacy and accountability of political institutions and fostering political participation (Escobar-Lemmon and Ross, 2014; Wills, 2016), promoting the growth of regional economies (Krugman, 2011) and increasing the efficiency of public services (Channa and Faguet, 2016). Global nations have, therefore, been implementing regional reforms in distinct and unique ways.

Governance theorists such as Hooghe *et al* (2016), for example, note that there has been a global trend towards regionalisation over recent years. Of the 52 countries they examined two-thirds have witnessed an increase in their levels of regional authority. This work build on their previous analysis in which they employed an ‘Index of Regional Authority’ to illustrate a marked increase in the level of regional authority over the last half-century (Hooghe *et al*, 2010). They tracked ‘regional authority’ through a combined measure of regional-level democracy, policy competences, tax-raising powers and roles in co-determining central government policy. However, while the direction of change towards more regional authority is clear, the pattern has not been uniform. Marks (2015) refers to ‘differentiated’ multi-level governance to describe the various approaches to regionalism in terms of policy and territorial scale in different parts of the world. He suggests that the term ‘region’ often refers to different geographical scales, including localities (Jones and Woods, 2013), metropolitan areas, cities or city regions (Harrison and Hoyler, 2015). The conception of the regional scale is not the same in various languages and traditions. It carries meanings and connotations that are not always easy to translate without losing their contextual relevance and specific histories. This chapter acknowledges the differentiated and contested nature of the regional tier. As such, it defines the ‘region’ in its broadest sense - as the intermediate or ‘meso’ level ‘between the state and the local level’ (Keating, 2016, 2).

The decentralisation of state functions to the regional tier is viewed by some as a response to a variety of pressures including managing distinct national identities and cultures, relieving the political and bureaucratic burden associated with centralisation and changing political views on the contribution of decentralisation to achieving economic and social policies (Pike *et al*, 2016). Yet, while many national governments put regions and regionalism at the forefront of the policy agenda, a regional approach often remains contested and can be criticised for lacking distinctiveness and vision (Huggins *et al*, 2015). Regional governance is often hamstrung by the continued dominance of the Centre and tensions between multi-level governance tiers (Ayres and Stafford, 2014). So, while there may be compelling evidence of a global trend towards regionalisation, there is far less agreement about whether it has delivered on key objectives, such as enhancing democracy. In the absence of concrete evidence, Bucek and Ryder (2015, 2) suggest that ‘the reorganisation of administrative regions and the reallocation of power, driven by economic and administrative necessity, may be one of the greatest public administration experiments ever undertaken’.

This chapter will examine three areas that are often used to demonstrate the link between regional governance and democracy, namely (i) enhanced civic engagement (ii) effective local leadership and (iii) reducing spatial disparities. The presentation of material is intended to be objective in identifying global evidence of both success and failure. These competing accounts provide an insight into the potential and limitations for regional governance to deliver better democratic outcomes. The chapter concludes by arguing that there is huge variation in prospective outcomes. Regional governance is shown to enhance civic engagement, local leadership and lead to a reduction in spatial disparities when the right subnational conditions are in place. However, outcomes across the globe are variable and measurement is prone to distortion (Davoudi *et al*, 2015). In short, there is no optimal spatial scale for success and regional governance cannot be assumed to automatically enhance democracy. Much depends on the contextual factors shaping, and constantly reshaping, regional governance structures and practices.

The following section highlights research that explores the link between regional governance and enhanced civic engagement.

## **REGIONAL GOVERNANCE AND ENHANCED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

Regional governance can serve to promote civic engagement and territorial identity in a number of ways (Malloy, 2013). Regionalism is often linked with an improvement of democracy, popular participation and empowerment of local people (Mehrotra, 2005). It suits the principle of subsidiarity (World Bank, 2008), promotes responsiveness and enhances accountability (Van Dijk, 2008). In the field of political science, Jeffery (2008) suggests that in relation to ‘bottom-up’ calls for subnational identity and autonomy, most attention has been given to the ways in which shared social identity can sustain a sense of the distinctiveness of the political community. Jeffery refers to a number of ‘usual suspects’ in this kind of analysis: in particular Catalonia, Quebec and Scotland, but also the Basque Country, Bavaria, Flanders and Wales. All have been territorial sources of demands and movements for constitutional change that have challenged and recast the constitutional structures of the state to establish more decision making authority at the regional level.

Others emphasise the advantages derived from the proximity between the governed and governors (Treisman, 2007). By bringing policy making ‘closer to the people’, regionalism has been credited with improved responsiveness, better oversight and disciplining of public officials, intensified grassroots participation and, ultimately, increased legitimacy. In addition, by disjoining regional authorities from the choices made at the centre, devolution is considered to allow room for policy innovation (Ayres, 2017). These effects can result in improved civic engagement, democratic quality, state capacity and allocative efficiency. Other political scientists like Baldersheim *et al* (2013), for example, identify the positive link between regional governance, civic engagement and democracy in Post-Communist Europe, including East Germany, Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Baltic Countries, Slovenia, Croatia, and Russia. Their research draws the following conclusions:

- Decentralisation brings government nearer to the citizens, creating conditions for the democratisation of governance and for increasing its efficiency.
- It provides opportunities for large segments of the population to participate directly in government through elective offices or more indirectly through regional elections and through watching how government works at close quarters.

- It provides the opportunity for the development of new elites at subnational levels who learn new political skills and the roles required to participate eventually in national political life.
- Subnational government acts should be considered at least as a check or a countervailing force to national government.
- Decentralisation activates regional actors to become involved in local and regional economic and social development.
- Devolution of competencies to regional and local government prevents overload developing at the centre.

Coulson and Campbell (2013) also compare and contrast what is happening in different Eastern European countries regards transparency and accessibility to their inhabitants. They conclude that what was occurring in Central and Eastern Europe was not simply the democratisation of one level of government, nor the direct transfer of institutional models from Western Europe. Rather it was the rediscovery and reinvention of the purpose and rationale of regional government, seen as playing a central role in the political and social life of the country. Regional governance helped to bridge the divide between the State and civil society. They argue that the link between regional governance and enhanced democracy depends on historical factors and context specific relationships. In this view, regionalism is not a value in itself. It is promoted as an institutional prerequisite to democratic and efficient government and is justified only to the extent that it serves this purpose. Democracy and efficiency are seen as the potential outcomes of regional governance not an inevitable outcome.

The benefits of regional autonomy and civic engagement have also been felt in developing countries, such as India, Brazil, Mexico and the Philippines. In the field of political economy, Faguet and Poschl (2015) suggest that when public policies are physically brought closer into the territory they become more accessible to more people and arguably more locally responsive. Likewise, Speer (2012) argues that subnational control over public policies in the developing world have brought about several benefits, including increased civic participation, higher government responsiveness and better public services. Speer suggests that evidence on these claims is positive, but limited and variable. A key challenge is enabling and motivating citizens and public officials to make inclusive governance arrangements work, especially in parts of the world where regional structures are less developed (Mollel and Tollenaar, 2013). Regional governance offers the potential for policies tailored to local circumstances and citizens' needs. However, while this is advantageous for those areas that thrive the public, in particular, are often nervous about a so-called 'postcode lottery' and different levels of quality in service delivery around the country. A lack of national consistency can be seen to undermine standards and threaten social justice and equity. Henderson *et al* (2013) refer to a 'devolution paradox': citizens want their regional governments to do more and yet seem reluctant to embrace the logical consequences of regional control, namely inter-regional policy variation and limited state-wide intervention in policy provision.

This issue is emphasised in Yu's (2013) research on the devolution of social welfare services in the Philippines. Findings revealed the fragmentation of welfare support across municipalities and citizen concerns about rising inequality in the system. Devolution in the Philippines was informed by global debates about devolved power and its ability to increase local decision making and control (World Bank, 2009). The objective was to increase local democracy and the independence of communities and enhance innovation, accountability and responsiveness. Newly created regional agencies were given the power to independently shape responses to local conditions and find localised solutions to policy problems. Nonetheless, Yu's (2013)

study confirms that innovation and responsiveness in local welfare was *not* achieved. Instead, the initiative resulted in the ‘widening of policy differences across localities and this compromised the protection of the rights of vulnerable populations’ (ibid, 204).

This evidence shows that the link between regional governance and enhanced democracy is not automatic and much will depend on how territories manage their governance structures and engender a spirit of engagement and inclusiveness. A number of potential barriers are noted in the literature. The first relates to whether regional bodies have the required capacity to respond to and manage regional institutions. They may not necessarily be able to respond adequately to the needs and aspirations of citizens in a post-industrial and global age. Indeed, Arnold and Cole (1987, 133) summarise that ‘the beguiling themes of ‘participation’, ‘responsiveness’ and ‘democracy’ have been interwoven into programmes for decentralisation in such a way that many initiatives have been launched under a shadow of ambiguous, vague and often contradictory objectives’.

Second, economic geographers like Peck and Theodore (2015) suggest that nation states may seek to decentralise responsibility but not the necessary resources required for regional implementation. This is a particular concern during times of austerity when nation states seek to do ‘more for less’ in difficult financial climates. Lowndes and Gardner (2016) argue that subnational tiers face particular challenges in engaging communities and territories in an era of financial crisis and austerity. Based on their analysis of decentralisation in England in the United Kingdom (UK), they argue that the regional tier confronts ‘super-austerity’, where new cuts come on top of previous ones, compounding original impacts and creating dangerous (and unevenly spread) multiplier effects. Finally, some fear that a place-focused politics, if it emerges strongly, would fall into what has been described as ‘the localist trap’, creating an introverted, and sometimes exclusionary, political community that ignores connections and responsibilities to neighbouring places and to wider relations (Davoudi and Madanipour 2015). Increased parochialism can undermine attempts to coordinate across regional jurisdictions to achieve economies of scale.

The next section explores the relationship between regional governance and the potential for more effective local leadership.

## **REGIONAL GOVERNANCE AND EFFECTIVE LOCAL LEADERSHIP**

In the regional studies literature, there has been a recent abundance of academic and policy interest in place-based approaches for promoting economic productivity, harnessing civic engagement and generating creative policy responses (Beer and Clower, 2014). Part of this interest has involved a growing literature on so-called ‘place-based’ solutions to policy issues and problems. Much attention has been paid to the extent to which intervention should be either place-based or place-neutral (Garcilazo *et al*, 2010). Whilst place-neutral advocates promote the role of aspatial ‘people-based’ policies, place-based approaches highlights the importance of the interactions between place-based communities, institutions and geography for developing policies, requiring researchers and policy makers ‘to explicitly consider the specifics of the local and wider regional context’ (Barca *et al*, 2012, 140).

Local government scholars like Hambleton (2015) argues that imaginative place-based leadership can shape more inclusive, democratic and sustainable cities. Drawing on detailed ‘innovative stories’ from around the globe, Hambleton describes how effective place-based leadership can lead to policy innovation, effectiveness and greater responsiveness to citizens’

needs. Examples include advances in the use of Information and Communication Technology in Chicago, dealing with troubled families in the UK, housing in South Africa and city development in Auckland, New Zealand, to name but a few. Eminent sociologist Anthony Giddens (2015) also agrees that the city level is the most effective scale for leaders to tackle challenging issues, such as climate change and environmental policy. He asserts that civic interest, engagement and action can be garnered and coordinated by local leaders and that global city leaders can work together more readily than nation states. In this view, regional leaders are more effective than nation state in tackling difficult global and local challenges (Yoder, 2015).

This view is supported by a recent OECD (2015) report that highlights the importance of local leadership in a comparative analysis of four European cities: Amsterdam, Hamburg, Manchester and Stockholm. It finds that robust city leadership is essential in promoting economic productivity and policy entrepreneurship. It refers to a 'leadership dividend' in ensuring positive outcomes, including growth and investment readiness and locally responsive policy solutions. Nonetheless, successful local leadership is seen to require a particular set of skills. Greasley and Stoker (2008, 722) suggest that the traditional bureaucratic leader is inappropriate at the beginning of the twenty first century because this requires 'the leader to have very high access to and control over the resources of finance, authority, organisation, networks, and patronage'. High levels of control over these policy leavers is not always a feature of modern democracies and instead local leaders have to work with multiple parties at different levels of governance to secure policy outcomes. They draw on the work of Svava (2003, 157) in noting the emergence of a type of elected urban political leader who is 'a facilitator who promotes positive interaction and a high level of communication among officials in city government and with the public and who also provides guidance in goal setting and policy making'. In their view, this style of 'facilitative leadership' is emerging as the de facto style of governing in many regional arenas.

Political scientist Benjamin Barber (2013) agrees with this assertion and suggests that in the face of considerable global challenges, the nation states of the world are paralysed. He claims that cities, and the mayors that run them, offer the best new forces of good governance. According to Barber, cities are home to more than half of the world's population, a proportion which will continue to grow. They are the primary incubator of the cultural, social, and political innovations which shape our planet. Most importantly, they are unburdened with the issues of borders and sovereignty which hobble the capacity of nation-states to work with one another. Drawing on case studies from around the globe, including Korea, the United States (US) and Singapore, Barber demonstrates that regardless of city size or political affiliation, local executives exhibit a non-partisan and pragmatic style of governance that is lacking in national and international halls of power. Through these qualities of leadership, mayors are able to retain the trust of citizens in their office, help cities become beacons of good governance, and spearhead city-to-city collaborations in order to better address shared problems.

Barber's boldest proposal is a 'World Parliament of Mayors', established on a voluntary basis to enable cities to have a stronger voice in global affairs, provide a world-wide platform for the sharing and transfer of urban best practices and establish a more democratic basis for addressing global priorities. Ryšavý (2013) also argues that mayors are hugely important in promoting democracy and citizenship and suggest that directly elected mayors, in particular, have strong and unchallenged legitimacy. Beal and Pinson (2014) agree that mayors can have an active and successful role in urban international relationships policy (e.g. city twinning, participation in cities networks, study trips). These activities provide resources for building up

political legitimacy and for electoral control, which are crucial in accessing the resources required for local policy solutions to urban problems.

However, by contrast, Sancino and Castellani (2016) note that directly elected mayors do not necessarily equate with strong leadership. Based on their analysis of Italy they conclude that more than 20 years after their introduction, directly elected mayors are key players in Italian urban governance, but the effectiveness of their leadership is variable. Governance scholars like Denters and Kloka (2013) also raise the point that strengthened institutional arrangements to promote local democracy can actually act as a barrier between local leaders and citizens. They found that the stronger the regional democratic institutions, the less local leaders maintained contact with citizens and local stakeholders. In a similar vein, Lackowska and Mikula (2015) draw on a case study of Poland to describe an environment where city region governance is both developed and effective. Yet, public support remains low. This research evidence shows that even when regional institutions and leadership are effective, there are barriers to engaging the public in an administrative tier in which they may have little affiliation. This underscores the importance of regional and local identity as a route to enhanced engagement and democracy.

In the field of politics and European studies, Loughlin *et al* (2010) also highlight the importance of regional and local identity in their analysis of twenty-seven Member States of the European Union (EU) plus Norway and Switzerland. They focused on the practice of democracy, including the roles of leaders, political parties and interest groups and also how subnational political institutions relate to the ordinary citizen. Their research reveals a wide variety of practices across Europe in this regard. Among the challenges identified were citizens' disaffection and switch-off from politics. Some countries have confronted this challenge more successfully than others but all countries face it. Differentiation in the quality of democratic ideals lies, therefore, in the specific circumstance, history, definition and context of regional governance.

The next section explores the third and final theme often used to justify the link between regional governance and democracy, namely reducing spatial disparities.

## **REGIONAL GOVERNANCE AND REDUCING SPATIAL DISPARITIES**

Reducing spatial socioeconomic disparities has been one of the key drivers behind the process of regionalisation over recent years. This is seen as beneficial in boosting the overall economic productivity of nation states while also engendering greater spatial equity and social justice between territories. This motivation has been particularly prominent in the EU where there is evidence of some success. Regional studies scholars Bodor and Grunhut (2015), for example, argue that one of the most significant trends of the past thirty years in regional governance has been the reduction in socioeconomic disparities between the developed and the less developed regions of the EU. This process began at the beginning of 1989 when the Cohesion Policy was launched and the first cycle of Structural Funds resources allocated (1989–1993). To pursue the aim of bridging regional disparities, vast sections of the European 'periphery', that included the regions in southern Europe, Ireland and the north and west of the UK, were below the EU mean of 75% in terms of the average GDP per capita.

Yet, by the end of the third programmatic cycle (2000–2006) of the Structural Funds most of the less developed regions had moved beyond that 75% threshold. Ireland exited completely from this category, Spain's original thirteen less developed regions were cut to one for the new

planning cycle of 2014–2020; Portugal’s original seven regions requiring special assistance have been reduced to three; in 1989 Italy had eight less developed regions and now that number has been whittled down to four; Greece began participating in the Cohesion Policy with the entire country (i.e. thirteen regions) eligible for socioeconomic assistance and in the 2014–2020 cycle the total of eligible regions will have been cut by nine leaving four with special assistance; and in the UK only the western part of Wales continues to receive special consideration by the Cohesion Policy. A similar trend emerged in the eastern part of Germany and in the new Member States in Central and Eastern Europe during and immediately after their accession to the EU in 2004. This evidence points to the success of regional governance and EU regional policy in reducing spatial disparities across Europe.

This position is also supported by Maynou *et al* (2016) who argue that ever since the launch of the European integration process, the EU has endeavoured to facilitate economic convergence across Europe by providing funds to its poorer regions and countries. Their paper analyses whether the Structural and Cohesion Funds have contributed towards convergence between the Eurozone countries during the past two decades, 1990–2010. The results illustrate that these funds have positively contributed to the gross domestic product per inhabitant of receiving regions, thus allowing them to reach greater convergence. Kyriacou *et al* (2016) extend this argument beyond Europe in their analysis of 23 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. They suggest that a process of fiscal decentralisation accompanied by measures to improve the quality of regional government is an effective strategy for reducing spatial inequalities.

Other scholars cite the importance of geographical scale and the ‘relational’ features of regional governance (Goodwin *et al*, 2012) as a route to promoting economic productivity. For example, in political science the concept of ‘social capital’ (Putnam, 1993) and in geography the concept of ‘institutional thickness’ (Amin and Thrift, 1994) place great weight on the wider terms, trust, co-operation and reciprocity in boosting economic productivity and reducing spatial disparities. Putnam (1993, 167) defined social capital as those ‘features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-ordinated actions’. Hence, at the regional level, social capital is broadly perceived in terms of norms of civic engagement and cooperation. Civic associations, chambers of commerce, business promotion and community groups can all facilitate communication and foster shared norms. In regions where social relationships are more horizontal, based on trust and shared values, participation in social organisations is higher and social capital is higher. Putnam asserts that regions with high levels of social capital have higher economic performance and more effective regional governance.

In this argument, the region is the optimal level at which institutional networks and institutional thickness may be developed - it is small enough to allow for face-to-face contact upon which trust and co-operation are built but large enough to permit economies of scale and scope. This perspective highlights how spatial scale can be linked to the promotion of a vibrant local democracy, which, in turn, can offer tangible economic and social advantages. For example, Putnam’s (1993) analysis of Italian regions indicated that active citizenship and social capital can have a significant impact on economic development and regeneration. Moreover, Amin and Thrift’s (1995) notion of ‘institutional thickness’ draws on engaged and connected communities in the United States and Europe as a basis for economic productivity.

Beugelsdijk and Schaik (2005) present an index measuring social capital at the regional level in Europe. It shows that there are large regional differences on this social capital index. Their



research explored whether higher scores on this social capital index correlated with higher levels of economic development and regional economic growth in 54 Western European regions. The preliminary empirical results suggest that (i) there are significant regional differences in scores on our social capital index in Europe, and (ii) social capital is positively related to the level of economic development and growth at the regional level in Europe. Regional leaders who can harness the potential of their localities by working across sectors and governance tiers - facilitative leadership - are able to benefit from the social capital and institutional thickness that Putnam (1993) and Amin and Thirft (1995) describe. This asset can then be utilised to boost productivity and reduce spatial disparities to promote greater equity and social justice.

However, some of the assumptions about a positive relationship between regional governance and economic productivity have been disputed. Emerging evidence has questioned the 'economic dividend of regionalism' (Morgan, 2006) and the lack of progress made in meeting national targets to reduce economic disparities between regions (Burch *et al*, 2008). For example, Torisi *et al* (2015) argue that previous research that suggested a link between regionalism and a reduction in regional disparities in Italy is refutable. They argue, instead, that the decline in regional disparities in Italy between 1996 and 2006 was driven by population dynamics and, to some extent, by the loss of competitiveness and consequent poor relative performance of northern regions. They conclude that links between regionalism and the reduction of spatial disparities is unproven and its benefits are temporally and geographically uneven.

Likewise, Dabrowski (2014) assessed the capacity of the EU cohesion policy to promote inclusive regional governance and cooperation in regional development initiatives in Central and Eastern European countries. EU cohesion policy is often credited with improving cooperation and coordination in the delivery of the regional development policy through the principle of partnership working. By imposing a close partnership among a variety of actors, cohesion policy has the capacity to alter domestic relations between the centre and the periphery, and to create a broader scope for regional and bottom-up involvement in economic development policy. However, a lack of tradition of decentralisation and collaborative policy making, as well as a limited capacity of subnational actors, can result in uneven outcomes of the application of the partnership principle and its effectiveness. This raises questions about the transferability of the partnership approach to new Member States characterised by weak regional institutions, a legacy of centralised policy making and limited civic involvement. Indeed, this issue is also pertinent to parts of the developing world, such as India, where the concept of partnership working and citizen involvement is less developed (Asthana, 2013).

Promoting inclusive and cooperative regional development remains a challenge in all parts of the world. Economic geographers Martin *et al* (2015) suggests that in the UK, for example, there is a need for a fundamental rethink to spatially rebalance regions. They identify entrenched and persistent spatial disparities in economic and social conditions in the UK. They assert that 'the growth gap between the South and the North (and indeed between most of the cities in the South and most of those in the North is long-standing and cumulative' (ibid, 58). Their research indicates that the problem is rooted in the spatially biased nature of the national political economy. In this view, decentralisation to regional tier (cities or city regions) will lead to differential benefits, whereby the richest and most productive parts of the country continue to thrive, while the less favoured areas fall further behind. In this view, decentralisation leads to enhanced competition between places for central government funds and inward investment

and, in these situations, the most powerful or largest cities are most likely to prosper at the expense of more peripheral areas (Tomaney, 2016).

Outside Europe, the potential for inter-regional competition is also identified by Jeffery (2006, 87) who claims that there 'is a growing tendency for richer regions to seek to limit any need to share resources with economically weaker regions in the same state'. The demand for regional authority in such cases is about reducing obligations to inter-regional solidarity. Grumbles of the rich about transfers to the less well-off have appeared in Canada, with oil-rich Alberta leading the way and Australia, where Victoria periodically protests about the rigours of the Australian fiscal equalisation process. This evidence proves that regional governance and policy can be both a tool for reducing and also widening spatial disparities.

## CONCLUSIONS

Jeffery and Schakel (2013, 299) indicate the tendency within political science to focus on the nation-state as the main unit of analysis in studying social and political life, and, in consequence, to neglect the region as a unit for political analysis. This tendency has been criticised as a 'methodological nationalism'. Indeed, social scientists, from a variety of disciplines, all too easily reproduce un-reflected, 'naturalised' assumptions that the nation-state, as Martins (1974, 276) put it in an early critique, is 'the terminal unit and boundary condition for the demarcation of problems and phenomena for social science'. This means that the regional tier as a unit of analysis receives less attention and there is, therefore, less evidence on which to draw conclusions. Nonetheless, a number of observations are drawn from the international evidence presented in this chapter.

First, political scientist, Michael Keating, suggests that the task of exploring the relationship between regional governance and democracy is complicated by the contested nature of 'the region' as a concept and a lack of comparable indicators and global data. It is difficult to develop operationalised definitions across national contexts, access high quality and consistent data and compare across national contexts to disentangle and isolate the effects of regionalisation on democratic processes. Second, there is no 'one' correct model in efforts to promote democracy at the regional tier. There are big discrepancies in global case studies regarding regional governance arrangements, configurations of institutional structures and processes and their impact on democracy. Outcomes are determined by a complex mix of macro political, economic and social traditions, the quality of subnational leadership and levels of civic support.

Finally, sociologist, Bob Jessop (2016, 14), argues that 'the territorial organisation of political authority is the essential feature of modern statehood'. It has different forms and rests on specific political, economic and relational attributes that result in different kinds of governance arenas. He suggests that regional territories serve as policy laboratories to experiment in government and governance with implications for redesigning institutions, policies and politics in response to policy failures and other crises. The evidence identified in this chapter epitomises this process of trial and error, experimentation and reinvention through which nation states and regional institutions continue to (re)design structures and processes in pursuit of policy objectives. The relationship between regional governance and democracy is, therefore, in a constant state of flux and adaptation and is dependent on how regional strategies are pursued across and within nation states in different parts of the world.

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