The port–city relationships in two European inland ports: A geographical perspective on urban governance

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ABSTRACT

Urban development projects involve some complex relationships between institutional public agents, who govern local territories, and economic agents, who make urban economies. These relationships between the stakeholders of the economic sectors (transport, water, housing, energy, industry…) and the territories shaped by public action thus define the type of urban governance which results from interactions. In this paper, we develop the hypothesis that the relation between these stakeholders has a major impact on the mechanisms that produce the city. In this perspective, we apply an analytical framework (sector/territory dialogues) to two river cities in order to understand how the interplay between the stakeholders modifies urban geography. Analysing the relationship between the city, the river and the port in Venlo (The Netherlands) and Strasbourg (France) provides examples of project-based urban planning that is founded on negotiation between the river stakeholders (port authorities, inland waterway managers, transport and logistics firms) and the different levels of public policies (municipal, intermunicipal, regional, national levels). Eventually, this approach allows us to consider the forms taken by the above sector-territory dialogue within the urban space in terms of tools and scales. Finally, the paper ends with a discussion about the value of a contribution from geography to an understanding of these governance issues.

1. Introduction: the geography of governance and urban projects

Many scholars have drawn attention, in an academic context, to the introduction of project-based urban planning in metropolises (Douglass & Huang, 2007; Fainstein, 2004; Graham & Marvin, 2001; Pinson, 2009; Young & Keil, 2010) which is linked to an entrepreneurial approach to urban governance (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Harvey, 1989; Macleod, 2011). Urban projects represent a break with a conception of urban planning that is based on a linear planning approach, as they are part of a permanent dialectic between the creation of a project for the territory in question, which lays down the major principles and the overall vision, and specific urban development projects (UDP). Urban projects thus lead to an increase in the number and diversity of the public and private sector stakeholders involved in implementing local and regional public policies. The political sphere gains a vital coordinating role but loses the monopoly of legitimacy with regard to defining a project and the interests of the territory. Urban projects are this way a means of mobilizing a variety of players and resources and a means of deciding on the shared interests of a territory (Pinson, 2009).

Analysing UDP thus allows us to examine the relationships between the private and public sector stakeholders responsible for producing the city. The aim of this paper is to make a methodological contribution to the analysis of urban projects by proposing a geographical interpretation of the interplay between stakeholders in order to identify their impacts on urban form (Graham & Marvin, 2001, McKenzie, 2006).

Initially, we will propose an interpretation of this geography of urban governance which is defined by the interplay between sectors and territories (Part 1). This interpretation is a novel hybrid between the classical definitions of the concept of sector (regulation theory, economic geography), the analytical framework of US urban political economy, an approach adopted by some French political scientists towards the "sectorisation" and "territorialisation" processes that affect public policies and eventually the concept of "collaborative planning" (Healey, 1997). Urban development projects involve complex relationships between those in charge of spatial planning and land development and stakeholders from the sectors that drive the local economy. This relationship between sectors and territories takes form around specific

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projects that are located within cities and plays a part in modifying urban forms. This link between the stakeholder interactions and urban form provides the framework for a geographical interpretation of governance. In Part 2 we will apply this interpretation framework to two river city configurations. Analysing the relationship between the city, the river and the port in Venlo (The Netherlands) and Strasbourg (France) provides examples of project-based urban planning that is founded on negotiation between the river sector stakeholders (port authorities, waterway managers, transport and logistics firms), the territory's institutional stakeholders (the different levels of local and regional government) and the stakeholders involved in planning and land development (planning firms and bodies, property developers and investors). Venlo and Strasbourg illustrate this. Following a geographical interpretation of these two comparative examples, Part 3 will conclude by considering the forms taken by the above sector-territory dialogue within the urban space, the tools it uses and the levels at which it takes place.

2. The geography of governance through the interplay between sectors and territories

The concept of governance was developed so that the analysis of public policy was no longer restricted to governments (Le Galès, 2002). The governments alone are not responsible for the production of public policy: this also involves the participation of many stakeholders from outside the sphere of government, in particular from the private sector. The advocates of this concept present it as an area of research that sets out to explain the diversity of the relationships that are at work between the various stakeholders involved in public policies. It is therefore quite natural that this broad area of research involves several different approaches. In order to construct our interpretation framework we shall refer essentially to three of these: US urban political economy, in particular the approach that involves Urban Regimes, the French Regulation School and its definition of sectors and, finally, a strand of French political science that analyses public policies in terms of the interplay between sectors and territories. We finally propose to make a connection between our approach of the urban governance as an interplay between sectors and territories/dialogue and the concept of "collaborative planning" (Healey, 1997).

2.1. Beyond the public–private sector duality

The theory of urban regimes provides a valid approach for dealing with the question of long-term informal coalitions between public and private sector stakeholders in the context of urban governance (Logan & Molotch, 1987; Stone, 1989). In the American urban context the structural interdependence between local government and the local economic actors leads to the development long-term "horizontal" coalitions between the two (Stone, 1993). Apart from the widely discussed issue of transposing this theory in order to analyse the somewhat different Europe urban contexts (Harding, 1997), there are two major problems with this approach (Mossberger & Stoker, 2001). First, it focuses exclusively on the urban, or even the municipal, level, and does not easily take account of other levels and the stakeholders associated with them, that is to say possible "vertical" dimensions of governance. Second, it tends to perceive the private sector and the public sector as homogeneous entities. However, as a result of the heterogeneous nature of each of them, the public–private dichotomy is not perhaps the only way of explaining the interplay between stakeholders. Finally, the urban regime approach allows us to grasp the horizontal dimension of urban governance, i.e. the links that exist between different local stakeholders. Nevertheless, it also needs to take account of the more vertical dimensions of governance, namely the ties which are formed between local stakeholders and other stakeholders who are

connected with other levels of public policy and other levels of the economic system.

The Regulation School adopts a macroeconomic approach in order to understand the embeddedness of economic mechanisms (accumulation regime) within the regulation provided by the public sector and political regulation (which constitutes part of a mode of regulation) (Aglietta, 1976; Boyer & Saillard, 2002), mainly at the Nation State level. This embeddedness takes very different forms in different "sectors". A "sector" is defined as a complex social configuration of a historically identifiable sphere of production that is characterised by specific technologies and a specific workforce and within which firms are in competition on a national or international market (Tertre, 2002). The properties of the sector create a regulation environment that is specific to it (Hollingsworth, Schmitter, & Streeck, 1994). Firms and workers form associations (unions that are specific to their branch of activity, employers' federations) and in this way lobby governments. National governments, or in some cases sub-national or supra-national governments, put in place policies for the sector which constitute a mode of regulation that is specific to it and which is characterised thus by its verticality. The different elements in this theory thus provide a way of perceiving the mechanisms of governance that are exerted on different economic sectors in a vertical, i.e. multi-level, way. The sector approach has been applied to the study of seaport evolution by W. Jacobs (2007) through the concept of "structure of provision" (Ball, 1986) which enables him to analyse the system formed by the port physical infrastructure, the institutional arrangements linked and the governance structure of the port.

A strand of French political science also views public policies with reference to the relationship between sectors and territories or, more exactly, to the processes of "sectorisation" and "territorialisation" at stake within current public actions. In this approach, a sector corresponds to "a concrete subsystem with specific strategies and modes of action" [3] (Barone, 2008, p. 255), hence a set of actors that generate specific norms, rules, and paradigms that make it possible to govern a particular domain (transport, housing, industry…). Consequently, they "express specific interests"[4]. The form taken by a sector of public policy, that is to say the sectorisation process, is thus the result of "the perception of the problem and its solutions that belongs to the actors that dominate the sector"[5] and it is therefore the outcome of the "division of labour"[6] within public administrations (Muller, 2010, p. 595–596). The analysis of public policy through territorialisation consists on the one hand of "examining (…) how issues are identified at a local level and then placed on the government (or European) agenda, and, on the other hand, taking account of subnational governments which produce their own paradigms and overall vision of the common good"[7] (Faure, 2010, p. 626). In other terms, the territorialisation of public policy involves both the participation of subnational actors, from the public or private sectors, in the formation of national and European public policies, and the development and implementation of public policies that are specifically tailored for subnational levels. Understanding how public policy is produced therefore involves analysing the links and power struggles that exist between these sectoral regulation processes and the cross-cutting policies that are supported by local policies (Halpern, 2007).

Finally, we propose to use this framework to move from the analysis of the production of public policy to the analysis of the way public policy produces the city. The dialectic that exists between the sectorisation and territorialisation of public policy allows us to conduct a systemic analysis of the links between territorial governance, which corresponds

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