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Essay (up to 1,500 words)

Scaling Migration beyond Nation-States: Civic vs Ethnic Nationalism

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In this post-Brexit era characterised by doubt over what Brexit entirely means for British and European citizens—amidst mass migration, a refugee crisis, rescaling nation-states, ethnic and non-metropolitanised populist nationalism, politics of austerity and division, and diversity integration policies in neighbourhoods and district—we could ask how migration can be scaled up through growing uneven borders throughout European city-regions (Hoekstra, 2017); (Burridge et al., 2017, Bürkner, 2017, Pascucci, 2017). According to Keith (2013) 14), the city has historically been seen as an ‘integration machine,’ the site where most people could describe themselves not only as ‘citizens of the city’ but also—as we are observing recently— increasingly as ‘citizens of the non-city’. Thus, migration is a multi-scalar and multi-territorially-defined changing phenomenon that has become a constitutive principle in the public’s understanding of city-ness.

In this European messy and complex migration context, Europe is at a crossroad, and its cities and regions are bearing the brunt of multiple challenges from macro, meso and micro scale perspectives. Thus we should rethink ‘urban Europe’ around how migration could still assure that cities and regions are international conduits for the passage of trade, commerce, and most importantly, citizens.

In contrast, *macro* migration issues such as Brexit are not only re-scaling nation-states but also altering the whole understanding about migration at the supranational scale insofar as there is a growing disconnect between citizens and the EU institutions. Citizens are asking politicians: What does the EU really do for us? Why does it matter? Thus, this workshop brings about academics and policymakers to bridge the gap between citizens and institutions by suggesting the substantial role of European cities and regions leaders in advocating migrants’ and refugees’ integration *meso* initiatives, projects and policies (Betts and Collier, 2017, Agier, 2016). Likewise, these policy interventions require tailored neighbourhood and district level *micro* interventions in order to enable real diversity. The vitality and connections in super-diverse-streets in London for instance ‘demonstrates how important migration has been to the UK’s development in the last few decades’ (Hall, 2015, West, 2015).

At the European level, cities and regions represent the closest level of government to citizens. This is the case of EUROCITIES that represents the leaders of 137 of Europe’s largest cities, encouraging them to stand together to deliver real solutions for their citizens. The impact of the British public’s decision to leave the EU is a wake-up call for international, national, regional and city leaders in Europe and beyond. Surprisingly, neither the New Urban Agenda released by the Habitat III Conference in Quito

(Ecuador) last October 2016 nor the White Paper released by the European Commission recently in March 2017 entitled ‘Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2015’, mention the possible impact of external effects such as Brexit¹. It is thus in these urgent circumstances where cities and regions must be equipped with the tools to connect people and places to growth, wealth, and equality (Cohen, 2016). The Urban Agenda for the EU and Eurocities foresee a future for cities of the UK in this process too, as demonstrated by many UK city leaders from the UK Core Cities initiative. As such, in the midst of re-scaling the UK nation-state, cities, regions and their devolutionary claims have become active drivers in their own right—increasingly independent of the confines of ‘their’ respective nation-states (Calzada, 2015).

In the global context though, while the world is continuously urbanising, it has also rapidly metropolitanised. However, migration is scaling-up within and beyond nation-states. As such, the term ‘nationalism’ should be accurately contextualised insofar as is a slippery concept, which is why politicians find it so easy to manipulate. At its best, it unites the country around common values to accomplish things that people could never manage alone. And here, we should distinguish ‘nationalisms’: the first one is the ‘ethnic’, backwards, xenophobic, right-wing, populist, and by contrast, the second one, would be, the ‘civic’, conciliatory, inclusive, forward-looking, emancipatory. ‘Civic nationalism’ appeals to universal values, such as freedom and equality. In contrast, ‘ethnic nationalism’, which is zero-sum, aggressive and nostalgic and which draws on race or history to set the nation apart.

Particularly in Europe, these is the case of some small, stateless, nations, such as Scotland, Catalonia, and the Basque Country, which are advocating a new socially progressive political agenda around ‘civic nationalism’ appealing to collaborative and integrative values between the respect between nations and national communities worldwide. Despite historic and path-dependency differences between each other, the three of them claim for the ‘right to decide’ as the democratic experimental right to choose its own future beyond the fixed Westphalian order of established nation-states (Calzada, 2014).

This week, the popular academic Benjamin Barber has passed away (Barber, 2013). He advocated that migration, among other coexistential issues, could be fixed ‘if mayors ruled the world, in a global context where dysfunctional nation-states should be superseded by cities and regions. And in the same week, cities ask the EU to put people first, regardless their ethnical, religious, linguistic, or status conditions (Ortiz, 2017).

It may be quite soon already but I could especulate whether this ‘old’ order driven by backwards ethnic nationalism as the main threat for migrants is coming to a transitional peak. Indeed, it could be too soon. Although we should look into pervasive metropolitanisation processes that are subly occurring in cities like Glasgow, Barcelona, and Bilbao, among other, to identify new political responses being fuelled in metropolitan realms. Will collaboration between cities and the establishment of a new city-regional order made up of small nations driven by devolution lead us to a refoundational momentum of borders, migration, nation-states, and stateless national communities?

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