



## **Cities as Political Objects**

### **Historical Evolution, Analytical Categorisations and Institutional Challenges of metropolitanisation**

#### **An International Conference**

12-13 November 2014, Lyons, France

#### **Call for Papers**

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An International Conference will be held in Lyons, France, on October 15-16 2014 to debate the historical development, current evolution and future of cities, city-regions and forms of metropolitan governance. Cities are at the heart of contemporary reflections on new modes of regulation in a context of increasing economic and political interdependency. City governance provides a multidisciplinary research object that interests geographers, economists, political scientists and urban planners. The objective of this conference is to revisit recent reforms – in France and elsewhere - that construct the city as a political and legal object, and place the city at the centre of processes of governance. The choice of Lyons is appropriate and deliberate; the second French city is not only at the centre of one of the most dynamic French regions (Rhône-Alpes), but it has an advanced form of metropolitan governance that is looked on as a model by less integrated cities in France. Lyons is also at the centre of trans-European economic networks.

The conference is open to historians, political scientists, urban and spatial planners, and to a general public interested in metropolitan dynamics. It will provide an occasion to review and analyse the institutional and spatial competition that has become a reality after three decades of multi-level governance. One of the main objectives of the creation of the *métropoles* in France is to invent a new political and administrative authority capable of responding to urban challenges. The city is at the centre of new forms of relationships between politics, economics and society. If the dimension of city governance in Lyon is of particular interest, the conference organisers also strongly invite contributions from other places and times (specifically past and contemporary European, American or global metropolitan experiences).

City governance is one of the most studied phenomena in US and European political science. Cities are often seen through the lens of territorial competitiveness and global competition. From this prism, metropolitanisation is interpreted in terms of a post-Fordist transition which has transformed cities into spaces of economic competition. We welcome contributions that fall broadly into this category. Metropolitanisation can also be understood in terms of domestic organisational learning, or the diffusion and circulation of knowledge between politicians, officials, think tanks, university experts, representatives of associations. What is the appropriate model of city government? Are institutional innovations from other times and places of relevance when considering contemporary debates? If city governance is understood in terms of re-scaling, which levels of government are the losers and what might their reactions be? What are the alternative spatial and mental maps, specifically, in the French case, the question of whether cities and regions are partners or rivals?

Amongst others, these are questions that we invite proposals to address, in dialogue with at least one of the four conference sessions:

### 1). The Social History of Metropolitanisation

The first conference session will map the historical development of processes of metropolitanisation in cities such as Paris, London, Vienna and Barcelona. Comparative and more focussed case studies of the evolution of cities are welcome. Paper proposals will integrate the historical long term (understood in material and cognitive terms) and trace the social, economic and political roots of metropolitanisation.

### 2). Cities as political and administrative categories

Cities have developed their own forms of governance, with tailored institutions, a large policy making capability and a new democratic legitimacy. If the city is not, *stricto sensu*, a legal category, processes of metropolitanisation represent a challenge in terms of political and administrative organisation. In this session we invite paper proposals that address the contemporary and historical reforms that have underpinned the emergence of city government structures.

### 3). Associates or rivals ? Multi-level governance as a field of competition

The creation of city governments has had a major impact on institutional relationships. Papers in this session will address the forms of institutional competition between different levels of territorial public administration. Are processes of regionalisation and city-region building in any way linked? Or are they incompatible? Can zero-sum games be identified, whereby a strong region correlates with weak urban governance structures and vice versa? Or do strong urban governments prosper best in strong regions?

### 4) City Action

Metropolitanisation has been associated with a strengthening of the action capacity of cities, which have developed new competencies in fields, *inter alia*, such as economic development, environmental policy, culture and transport. Paper proposals in this session will address precise public policies that exemplify the rescaling of territorial governance via metropolitan institutions and networks.

We welcome proposals that address one or more of these themes. Please send proposals to the following electronic addresses before 13th June 2014

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