Mayer, Margit. "Metropolitan Research from a Transatlantic Perspective: Differences, Similarities, and Conceptual Diffusion." Thick Space: Approaches to Metropolitanism, edited by Dorothee Brantz et al., transcript-Verlag, 2012, pp. 105–22. DOI.org (Crossref), doi:10.14361/transcript.9783839420430.105.

# Metropolitan Research from a Transatlantic Perspective: Differences, Similarities, and Conceptual Diffusion

MARGIT MAYER

According to the German government, seven regions in Germany have been considered "metropolitan regions" for the last fifteen years, among them Hamburg, Frankfurt, Munich, and, of course, Berlin. In 2005, however, the 130,000 Göttingers and the 160,000 Oldenburgers were also officially included in the ranks of the metropolitans. According to the German federal government's definition, Göttingen, Hanover, Braunschweig, Oldenburg, Bremen, Nuremburg, and the Rhine-Neckar Region qualify as metropoles, providing them conglomeration advantages in the European competition.[1] Given the variety of connotations which the term "metropolitan" has carried over the centuries and in different countries (which are scrutinized in this volume), this recent addition of a political dimension within the German context, where the concept had so far primarily been applied to urban centers characterized by specifically cosmopolitan features, raises questions of conceptual transfer across different national contexts. Particularly, as urbanization processes intensified and urban regions have taken on new significance within global and national competition, issues of measuring, defining, and labeling these entities have emerged, and former path-dependent categorizations have become questionable or been overridden.

The contrast, as well as the relationship, between North American and German usages of the term "metropolis" and its respective academic discourse and epistemologies proves particularly revealing in this regard. The US government introduced the term "metropolitan district" in 1910 when the Bureau of the

1 "Ein Land voller Metropolen," *Tageszeitung*, April 28, 2005, 9.

Census sought to capture the dynamic growth of rapidly expanding cities whose populations spilled over city boundaries and whose manufacturing began to move to the suburban fringe. This bureaucratic act had consequences for the development of the concept in American urban studies.[2] The metropolitan form captured in the United States was shaped by the decentralization of economic activities and daily life, while, in Germany, the metropolitan concept prioritized referencing the concentration of cultural and political life in the great cosmopolitan centers.

This essay seeks to tease out the implications of the different histories underlying contemporary academic discourse, as well as to trace mutual influences in transatlantic urban research. The goal is not merely precision and clarity of understanding but—given the growing pressures to instrumentalize "the metropolitan" as a marketing concept—also to refine and adjust the concept in order to retain it as an analytically useful category for researching the specific contemporary problems and potentials of today's metropolitan regions. In other words, the goal is to show what the added value of a metropolitan perspective would be, as opposed to just plain "urban studies."

## I. CONTRASTING THE "METROPOLIS" IN AMERICAN AND GERMAN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

In the early 1990s, the American historian of the urban form, Robert Fishman, argued that the contemporary city had radically broken with traditional urban spatial structures. As he wrote, the city in the early 1990s "lacks what gave shape and meaning to every urban form of the past: a dominant single core and definable boundaries."[3] The city has reached a scale previously unimaginable. While the leading metropolitan centers of the last century, such as New York, London, and Berlin, spanned about a hundred square miles, the contemporary metropolis covers two to three thousand square miles and its boundaries are far from clear. It is this geographic expansion of the city into a "metropolitan form" or "to the metropolitan scale."[4] In other words, since Jane Jacobs, it is the

2 Blake McKelvey, *The Emergence of Metropolitan America, 1915–1966* (New Brunswick, NJ: 1968).

3 Robert Fishman, "Metropolis Unbound," *The Wilson Quarterly* (1990, repr., Philip Kasinitz, ed., *Metropolis: Center and Symbol of Our Times* (New York: 1995)), 398.

4 Thomas Bender, "The New Metropolitanism and a Pluralized Public," *Harvard Design Magazine* 13 (2001): 70–77.

metropolitan agglomeration that has, in North American urban research,[5] increasingly made the metropolitan region the appropriate focus for analyzing urban developments.

This "metropolitan turn" in urban research—thinking in metropolitan categories instead of in the traditional binary of city vs. suburb—implies that the old dichotomies of center/periphery no longer hold and that cultural, as well as class and strata variables, can also no longer be attributed along a center/periphery pattern or along the Chicago School's concept of concentric rings. The social ecology perspective of University of Chicago sociologists Robert Park and Ernest Burgess (based on studies of the city of Chicago) argued that as a result of the urban land market, social classes sorted themselves out spatially. Older "inner ring" suburbs, which they defined as working class and poor, and newer "outer ring" suburbs, which they defined as middle class, became rings in which real estate values were based on the relationship of the ring to the central business district.

Sprawling metropolitan regions, by contrast, are structured by different residential patterns. While some authors describe polynuclear patchworks based on the premise of territorial fragmentation and decentralization of urban activities shifting toward "edge cities" or "technoburbs," others continue to identify central cities, as well as inner and outer ring suburbs. Along with these changing spatial patterns are new socioeconomic ones: Poor people now inhabit central cities, whereas more affluent city dwellers are located around this center. Tract suburbs, formerly housing the middle classes, have become depressing places due to their lack of public spaces and cultural institutions, and surrounding these pools of suburban working class drabness are "outer" suburbs containing more affluent middle and upper class residents.[6] But these patterns seem in constant flux, as back-to-the-city movements have upgraded certain neighborhoods close to the central business districts and exclusive communities have emerged in well-located or well-defended parts of inner suburbs, making the reality of socio-spatial patterns of the metropolitan region increasingly complex.

The "metropolitan turn" in North American urban research also implied that many features and practices that used to be seen as applying exclusively to cities (such as segregation, ghettoization, congestion, etc.) became recognized as widespread, also in what used to be called suburbs (which actually are no longer sub-urbs). As these "typically urban" features became scattered across the whole

5 Jane Jacobs, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (New York: 1984).

6 See for example Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom, *Place Matters: Metropolitics for the Twenty-First Century* (Lawrence, KS: 2001).

metropolitan region, researchers recognized that, conversely, the concept of the "suburb" was no longer an adequate category for describing the expanding varieties of settlement forms outside of core cities. The relations between them are no longer hierarchical but lateral, and in many respects, the outlying settlements have become autonomous of the former center. In fact, their inhabitants no longer necessarily relate to the center at all. In order to capture this demographic shift toward exurban regions, North American urban researchers have, since the 1980s, begun to speak of "metropolitanization."

This new conceptual language is also reflected in university "Metropolitan Studies" programs that, in their various self-presentations, assume that "urbanization" increasingly manifests itself in a variety of forms that transcend that of the traditional, self-enclosed city. Their object of study is therefore no longer merely the core and its surrounding quarters, but rather the production of different spatial configurations and the new problems and questions thrown up by these new configurations, such as problems of political steering, of administrative coordination, and of adequate political representation across the multiply fragmented metropolitan region.

Whether Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, or advanced programs,[7] all of these interdisciplinary initiatives share a focus on questions that have most explicitly been put on the agenda by the so-called Los Angeles School—Ed Soja, Michael Dear, Allen Scott, and others. They are interested in the transformation of urban form from monocentric to polycentric regions, to exopoles, edge cities, or megacities. In other words, in contrast to the Chicago School tradition, they inquire about, teach, and research regionalization and metropolitanization processes (as well as the questions of political regulation and governance they raise); the construction of local public spheres under such fragmented conditions; and the cultural transformations and sociopolitical contestations in these

7 See for example the Bachelor of Arts at New York University (http://www.nyu.edu/pages/metro.studies/), the Master of Arts in Metropolitan Studies at Arizona State University in Phoenix (http://www.west.asu.edu/koptiuch/MetroStudiesMA/vision.html), the Great Cities Program at the University of Illinois in Chicago (http://www.uic.edu/homeindex/gc_chancellor.shtml), and the Global Metropolitan Studies Center at the University of California at Berkeley, which not only houses graduate and undergraduate curricula, but also supports research as one of the strategic initiatives to mark a new generation of scholarship (http://metrostudies.berkeley.edu/index.html). However, recent endeavors such as the Center for Metropolitan Studies in Berlin have been launched in Germany to draw on both European conceptions as well as the Anglo-American debate in metropolitan research (http://www.metropolitanstudies.de).

spaces. In particular, the question specifically of "integration" in the context of a fragmented and sprawling metropolitan region is very much on the agenda of this research. A focus on metropolitan governance, in this context, recasts traditional definitions of urban political processes by suggesting overlapping, fluid conceptions of the space of urban politics and by focusing on networks, project-based decision-making (rather than rational comprehensive planning), and the collaboration of state and non-state actors.

In spite of its complexity, the concept of "metropolitan" employed here does not convey much more than the pragmatic claim to analyze the spatial, economic, and political transformations of urbanization processes, whether in its historical or contemporary constellation. In this way, it differs significantly from the more normative concept of the "metropolis" widely used in German academic debate, which associates the term (unlike the federal government) primarily with cities that:

- have a certain minimum size of population and density and a certain scale and intensity of economic and cultural activities;
- represent a qualitative degree of something cosmopolitan, which radiates a certain flair and atmosphere;
- possess significant symbolic power, aura, or collective memory, or what is often referred to as a strong "metropolitan identity" and a surplus of symbolic capital;
- which in turn, makes them into magnets that attract further immigration, further diversity and difference, such as creative classes and creative milieus, i.e., the stuff that makes for "cosmopolitanism."[8]

Some of the proponents of this European concept of the "metropolis" define these cities then, as "central places of a society."[9] They are thought of as the opposite of provincial-homogeneous localities—a definition that would of course exclude significant components of, if not entire, North American "metro-

8 See Dirk Matejovski, ed., *Metropolen. Laboratorien der Moderne* (Frankfurt: 2000); See also Heinz Reif, "Metropolises: History, Concepts, Methodologies," in this volume.

9 See Wolfgang Kaschuba, "Stadtluft macht frei? Metropolen als Experimentierfelder für Sinndeutungen und Lebensentwürfe" (lecture, Symposium of the Leibniz Gemeinschaft and the Thomas Morus Akademie "Metropolen. Kulturelle, soziale, politische, ökonomische Deutungsansätze," Berlin, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, October 13, 2004).

politan regions." This concept of the "metropolis," which is rather prevalent in German research, is strongly shaped by Paris and London of the nineteenth century, the first European metropoles, which were succeeded by Berlin and Vienna. These metropolises were also considered showcases of their respective nations and defined by their unique identities, their *citoyen*-culture, and their projections of power.

Metropolitan research in this vein draws, for its perspective and hypotheses, on this "surplus." It assumes that the metropolis is more than its many functions, that some extra value is responsible for its "magnet function," or "magnetic force,"[10] and that, as Heinz Reif argues, to this day, it is characterized by "cosmopolitanism, innovative capacity, self-reflection, plurality, heterogeneity, hybridity, and ambivalence […]."[11]

The founding document of the Transatlantic Graduate Program (*Transatlantisches Graduiertenkolleg*),[12] a joint endeavor of urbanists from Berlin's three universities located at the Center for Metropolitan Studies, also described—in outlining its research program—the metropolis as an "obvious and fascinating special case (*Sonderfall*) of the urban," which dominates on the basis of its special position (*Sonderstellung*),which it is said to have been able to develop due to its position "at the center of accelerated industrial change," since the nineteenth century.[13] In spite of the envisaged transatlantic perspective of this program, American metropoles such as Los Angeles, which reached maturity only after the Fordist period, would not fit this definition. The outline of the research endeavor defined the "particular big cities" to be studied as "locations of highest cultural achievements," as laboratories and stages for modern forms of societalization, as workshops and symbols of modernity, and as the most significant places of modern societalization. The metropolis to be studied is defined as a "large, particular, and very complex city with a far reaching hinterland, that thrives on engaging with the foreign/other, and, as a consequence, is open to the world." The goal of the program is to identify the differences between big cities (such as Saarbrücken, Leipzig, Baltimore, or Portland) and cities with a "metropolitan" character such as New York or Berlin.[14]

10 Reif, "Metropolises," 34-35.

11 Ibid, 46.

12 "Transatlantisches Graduiertenkolleg Berlin–New York. Geschichte und Kultur der Metropolen im 20. Jahrhundert," 2004.

13 Ibid., 4. My translation. See also Reif, "Metropolises."

14 Ibid., 5–7. My translation. See also Reif, "Metropolises."

Thus, the agenda of metropolitan studies in Berlin, at least as framed by some of its founders, is different than that which is pursued in Berkeley, California, Chicago, Phoenix, or New York. The European-modeled and normative agenda, as expressed in the notion of "metropolis" as used here, however, clashes with trends both political and academic, and challenges the suitability of this culturally imbued concept for providing analytically helpful frameworks for contemporary urban questions. It is noteworthy that the term "metropolis" was not used during the era when Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and London actually embodied the pride of their respective bourgeois societies and provided the stage for their representation. Instead, it became widely popular, both in research and in politics, at the moment when these cities might have lost their former significance and function. This argument has been suggested by Gerwin Zohlen, who claims that the widespread adoption of the term "metropolis" reflects the changing meaning of the city in our culture: far from representing the epitome of bourgeois society, the city itself has now become object of commercialization.[15] At the point where large cities are becoming increasingly characterized by their disintegration and fragmentation, the concept seems to have turned, instead, into a marketing concept, valuable within the competitive strategies for image enhancement and the design of "urbanity," for fabricating public spheres and staging "integration" efforts. It has also become useful for creating a particular type of urban studies—namely metropolitan studies, which is playing an increasingly important role in academic self-legitimation.

15 "The concept (of the metropolis) therefore almost exactly reflects the change in meaning of the city in late-modernity. It is by no means the pride of the society of burghers, their stage to perform on [...] the city has now itself become an object of marketing.[..].They are hardly spaces and, that is to say, places, of public of its own kind." ["Ziemlich exakt reflektiert der (Metropolen-)Begriff damit die Bedeutungsveränderung der Stadt in unserer Spätkultur. Beileibe ist sie nicht mehr der Stolz der Bürger-Gesellschaft, eine Bühne ihres Auftretens […] die Stadt (ist) jetzt selbst zum Objekt der Vermarktung geworden […] Räume und, scilicet, Orte einer Öffentlichkeit sui generis sind sie kaum mehr."] Gerwin Zohlen, "Metropole als Metapher," in *Mythos Metropole*, ed. Gotthard Fuchs et al. (Frankfurt: 1995), 31–32.

## II. TRANSATLANTIC MIGRATION OF URBAN RESEARCH CONCEPTS

What might Europeans have to learn from the other side of the Atlantic, from North American urban research where conditions have been so drastically different than in the European city? There is a long tradition of ambivalence toward cities and urbanism in the North American settler societies. Europeans, by contrast, seem to take the urban more seriously and value cities as places of culture and learning. Lynn Staeheli, in a review of urban journals, found that the importance of the urban as a political, social, and cultural opportunity was more pronounced in the articles by Europeans, which she identified through the Web of Science database, than in articles by American, British, and Canadian authors.[16] The list of contrasts between social-spatial structures in the US and in Europe has often been pointed out: more pronounced market liberalism in the US; sharper social divisions and societal polarizations; completely different urban structures (i.e., "doughnut") than the gradually evolved structure of the European city; and ethnic heterogeneities which surpass those of any European city.[17]

And yet, the primary reason why European cities as well as European urban research are increasingly oriented to the US is because such tendencies have accelerated and are becoming increasingly visible in Europe as well. Precisely because the urban problems connected with these tendencies are far more pronounced in the US, they have been researched more extensively in the American literatures. In fact, a broad and differentiated research landscape exists with a variety of theoretical approaches and multiple suggestions for intervention, from which urban and metropolitan research in Europe stands to profit, particularly in this era of convergent neoliberal trends.

In the recent past, German urban research already sought to compensate for its comparative underdevelopment with Anglo-American imports in a variety of fields. In the 1970s, the founders of the Local Politics Working Group (*Arbeitskreis Lokale Politikforschung*) signaled, by borrowing the term "local politics" (*Lokale Politikforschung*) from Anglo-American discourse, their effort to distance and emancipate themselves from the traditional German *Kommunalwissen-*

16 Lynn Staeheli, "Re-Reading Castells: Indifference or Irrelevance Twenty Years On?," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30, no. 1 (2006): 198–201.

17 See William W. Goldsmith, "The Metropolis and Globalization: The Dialectics of Racial Discrimination, Deregulation, and Urban Form," *American Behavioral Scientist* 41, no. 3 (1997): 299–310.

*schaften* (municipal studies), which focused on public administration and laws governing municipalities, and which lacked a conception of urban research as embedded in and shaped by its broader social and political environment.[18] This shift of urbanists within the professional association of German political scientists deliberately introduced Anglo-American research on urban politics to German urban studies, importing scores of novel categories and concepts with which to capture the waves of urban restructuring that began during the 1970s—primarily the rescaling and reorganization of political-economic space transcending traditional urban categories. City-regions as collective actors in the global market and within national intergovernmental relations, transnational networks of global cities, and new urban forms such as the polycentric sprawl of Los Angeles were increasingly seen as not just emblematic of urban restructureing in America, but were also increasingly recognized, though in somewhat different forms, in Europe as well. The trajectory of these restructuring processes and their implications for the social and spatial order of the city (new forms of socio-spatial polarization and gentrification), as well as for urban planning and policymaking, were increasingly similar to what had been described for North American cities. Several key concepts were thus imported during the following decades and became absorbed into academic research, frequently triggering their own "Germanized" debates. They were also widely picked up by the policy community, generating various "turns" in German urban policy.

The most well known of these "concept imports" has been the "global city" thesis as originally presented by John Friedmann and Saskia Sassen.[19] In 1997, at the German Political Science Association Meeting, Sassen put forth her argument that the materialization of global processes in concrete places creates a regulatory void in these places, which cities and their actors attempt to fill with new modes of regulation; this thesis stimulated a series of research projects on local governance systems in Germany.[20] After initial hesitation, urban policy

18 See Hubert Heinelt and Margit Mayer, "Lokale Politikforschung in Deutschland—Entwicklungen und Besonderheiten im internationalen Vergleich," in *Empirische Policy- und Verwaltungsforschung: Lokale, nationale und internationale Perspektiven*, ed. Eckhard Schröter (Opladen: 2001), 63–76.

19 John Friedmann, "The World City Hypothesis," *Development and Change* 1 (1986); Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: 1991).

20 See Jan Rolf Hauke, *Urbane Globalisierung: Bedeutung und Wandel der Stadt im Globalisierungsprozess* (Wiesbaden: 2006); Christoph Parnreiter, "Global City Formation and the Transnationalization of Urban Spaces: Conceptual Considerations and

makers, for example in Frankfurt, Hamburg, and later Berlin, seized on the term to place themselves strategically in the global intra-urban competition.[21]

American concepts brought into German urban studies have even included some that appear to be strictly germane to the US context, such as "urban regime theory" or the Los Angeles School. The analytic concept of "urban regime" (and, connected with it, that of growth coalitions) has found many adopters and adapters.[22] But in this case, there is still a serious shortage of studies that empirically analyze German cities along the lines of this approach, in spite of some interesting adaptations by Heinz Kleger, Karin Lenhart, and Elizabeth Strom.[23] In particular, there are still few studies that might productively assess the current role and transformations of urban forms of governance and regulation. These lags may have to do with the ongoing debate about the adaptability of this particularly American import, making the theoretical transfer from US cities to European cities very challenging.[24] In fact, some authors have suggested that

Empirical Findings," *GaWC Research Bulletin* 336 (2010), http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/rb/rb336.html.

21 See Roger Keil and Klaus Ronneberger, "The Globalization of Frankfurt am Main: Core, Periphery and Social Conflict," in *Globalizing Cities*, ed. Peter Marcuse and Ronald van Kempen (Oxford: 2000), 228–48; Margit Mayer, "Global City Berlin?," *Prokla* 109 (1997): 519–43; Albert Scharenberg, ed., *Berlin: Global City oder Konkursmasse?* (Berlin: 2000); Ute Lehrer, "Willing the Global City: Berlin's Cultural Strategies of Inter-Urban Competition after 1989," in *The Global Cities Reader*, ed. Neil Brenner and Roger Keil (New York: 2006), 332–38.

22 Studies working with the *urban regime* approach have been undertaken on the model of Clarence Stone's *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946–1988* (Lawrence: 1989). For a series of further North American cities, see Mickey Lauria, ed., *Reconstructing Urban Regime Theory: Regulating Urban Politics in a Global Economy* (Thousand Oaks: 1997).

23 See Heinz Kleger, *Metropolitane Transformation durch urbane Regime* (Amsterdam: 1996); Karin Lenhart, *Berliner Metropoly* (Opladen: 2001); Elizabeth Strom, "In Search of the Growth Coalition: American Urban Theories and the Redevelopment of Berlin," *Urban Affairs Review* 31 (1996): 455–81; Elizabeth Strom, *Building the New Berlin: The Politics of Urban Development in Germany's Capital City* (Landham, MD,:2001).

24 See Alan Harding, "North American Urban Political Economy, Urban Theory and British Research," *British Journal of Political Science* 29 (1999): 673–98; Kevin Ward, "Rereading Urban Regime Theory: A Sympathetic Critique," *Geoforum* 27, no. 4 (1996): 427–38.

rather than uncritically importing such perspectives, scholars should use European alternatives to regime theory and growth coalitions, for example, regulation theory, actor and policy network, Foucauldian theories, and social movement literatures.[25]

The Los Angeles School—launched as successor to the Chicago School's paradigms of concentric circles and its binary of city versus suburb—had limited traction in Europe because urbanity and corresponding public spheres have always been more widespread across the European city and not just limited to its downtown. German urbanists nonetheless drew upon frameworks and concepts developed by the Los Angeles School and the writings of its authors, Ed Soja, Allen Scott, Michael Storper, and Michael Dear, regarding urban restructuring processes and their relationship to new urban forms and social practices. These relationships emanated from the demise of traditional manufacturing and the rise of high-tech industries, the de-industrialization of certain regions, and the reindustrialization on the basis of low-wage jobs. While they had studied the spatial and economic restructuring of Southern California, they argued that the trends observed there—the simultaneous de- and reindustrialization, growing income disparities, urbanizing suburbs, eroding political institutions, exploding crime rates, and so on—were paradigmatic for urban regions of the twenty-first century.[26] In fact, they have become characteristic features of many North American cities, in some of which, these transformations are said to have taken place even faster than in Los Angeles, for example in Miami.[27]

"Regionalization" is another concept that has been imported into Germany from the Anglo-American debate. It was also promoted within the European Union, at first as a strategy to support economic revitalization and political em-

25 Andrew Wood, "Domesticating Urban Theory?," *Urban Studies* 41, no. 11 (2004).

26 Edward W. Soja, "Postmodern Geographies: Taking Los Angeles Apart," in *Now-Here: Space, Time and Modernity*, ed. Roger Friedland and Deidre Boden (Berkeley: 1994); Edward Soja and Alan Scott, *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the 20th Century* (Berkeley: 1996). The title of this latter book deliberate echoes "The City" of 1925 of the Chicago School; Allen Scott, *Metropolis: From the Division of Labor to Urban Form* (Berkeley: 1988); Allen J. Scott and Michael Storper, eds., *Production, Work, Territory: The Geographical Anatomy of Industrial Capitalism* (London: 1986); Allen Scott and Michael Storper, "Regions, Globalization, Development," *Regional Studies* 37 (2003): 579–93; Michael Dear, *The Postmodern Urban Condition* (Oxford: 2000).

27 See. Jan Nijman, "The Paradigmatic City," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89 (2000): 135–45.

powerment on a regional basis aided by regional networks and institutions. Meanwhile, some progressive variants of "new regionalism" have been migrating from North America to Europe. These concepts seek to limit excessive regional growth and to regulate it in social and sustainable ways. In other words, they critically challenge the idea of urban regions as "growth machines."[28] This so-called "social regionalism" merges the assumptions of the Californian regional economic geography with insights from regional regime theory and neo-communitarian elements with "Third-way" rhetoric (social capital, social inclusion), arguing not only that more collaborative regional governance structures will improve local well-being, but that they will enhance the competitiveness of regions in the global economy as well. As this approach emerged in academia, it also had a political correlation in the new regional (metropolitan) alliances for social justice sprouting up in many urban regions[29] and in the progressive political regimes that have been gaining in numbers.[30] European urbanists, particularly planners, began to introduce the approach and the American experience with it in the early 2000s[31] and have since been applying it to case studies of urban and regional change across Germany and beyond.[32]

---

28 Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom, *Place Matters: Metropolitics for the Twenty-First Century* (Lawrence, KS: 2001); Manuel Pastor, Peter Dreier, E. Grigsby, and M. Lopez-Garza, *Regions that Work: How Cities and Suburbs Can Grow Together* (Minneapolis, MN: 2000); Myron Orfield, *American Metropolitics: The New Suburban Reality* (Washington D.C.: 2002); Annick Germain and Damaris Rose, *Montreal: The Quest for a Metropolis* (Chichester: 2000).

29 For example, Metro Alliance/AGENDA in Los Angeles formed in 1993 as a reaction to the Los Angeles riots and is based on the concept of "community-based regionalism." Such alliances have been important preconditions for the successful electoral campaigns of progressive city council members and, for example, of Antonio Ramón Villaraigosa's election as mayor of Los Angeles.

30 Some authors have observed a left trend in US urban politics, aided by organizations such as "New Cities," "Campaign for America's Future," and "Cities for Progress." These organizations have formed not only to help recent progressive mayors (of Madison, Milwaukee, Salt Lake City, Berkeley, Chicago, Irvine, Los Angeles, etc.) implement labor- and environmentally friendly policies, but also to influence national policy (John Nichols, "Urban Archipelago," *The Nation*, June 20, 2005).

31 See. the special issue of *European Planning Studies* 9, no. 5 (2001) that focuses on "Regional Planning and Innovation—Experiences in North America."

32 See for example C. Langenhagen-Rohrbach and R. Fischer, "Regionalwerkstadt Frankfurt-Rhein-Main—Region als Prozess," *Standort* 29, no. 2 (2005): 76–80; Hans

Another Anglo-American concept introduced into the German discourse to great effect, even though it has been clumsy to translate, has been "gentrification." It has frequently been applied to analyze and explain recent German urban development processes, both by German[33] as well as American[34] researchers, but it has also been critiqued as unsuitable to explain German urban change.[35] The term achieved unexpected prominence when German authorities in 2007 identified the use of "phrases and key words" such as "gentrification" as potential evidence for suspecting academics that use them of being intellectual leaders of a terrorist group, especially if they deemed close to anti-gentrification activists.[36] As critical geographer Neil Smith remarked, "Several urban social scientists in Berlin were secretly investigated and charged—one was imprisoned—on suspicion of terrorism. […] The authorities also cited [Andrej] Holm's frequent use of the terms 'gentrification' and 'inequality' in his work as pointing to his alliance with the militant group."[37]

There are quite a few US-grown concepts, especially of the kind that promise to lend themselves to effective solutions, that get directly "flown in" by policy makers for advice on bringing innovation to German policies, ranging from

Joachim Kujath, ed., *Knoten im Netz. Zur neuen Rolle der Metropolregionen in der Dienstleistungswirtschaft und Wissensökonomie* (Münster: 2005); Hans Joachim Kujath, "Restructuring of the Metropolitan Region of Berlin-Brandenburg: Economic Trends and Political Answers," *Geographica Polonica* 1 (2005): 117–36; James W. Scott, ed., *New Regionalism in Socio-Political Context: Space-Making and Systemic Transformation in Central Europe and Latin America* (London: 2008).

33 Jürgen Friedrichs and Robert Kecskes, eds., *Gentrification: Theorie und Forschungsergebnisse* (Opladen: 1996); Jörg Blasius and Jens Dangschat, eds., *Gentrification: Die Aufwertung innenstadtnaher Wohngebiete* (Frankfurt: 1990); Matthias Bernt and Andrej Holm, "Gentrification in Ostdeutschland," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Kommunalwissenschaften* 41, no. 7 (2002): 125–50.

34 Myron A. Levine, "Government Policy, the Local State, and Gentrification: The Case of Prenzlauer Berg (Berlin), Germany," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 26, no. 1 (2004).

35 Hartmut Häußermann, "Marginalisierung als Folge sozialräumlichen Wandels in der Großstadt," *Zeitschrift für sozialistische Politik und Wirtschaft* 118 (2001): 27–33.

36 "GegenGentrification," *ambivalenz*, January 30, 2009, http://ambivalenz.blogsport.de/2009/01/30/gegengentrification/.

37 Neil Smith, "German GWOT Misfire," *The Nation*, September 24, 2007, http://www.thenation.com/doc/20070924/smith.

"zero tolerance" (via Police Commissioner William Bratton from New York),[38] all the way to "social capital" (presented personally by the guru Robert Putnam to the German Enquete Commission 'Future of Civic Engagement').[39]

In the realm of urban policy innovation, the concept of the "creative city," proselytized by North American scholar Richard Florida, has had an especially noteworthy career. As one newspaper article noted, "A few years ago, Jörg Dräger, at the time Hamburg's science minister, showed up one day at the city-state's administration, the Hamburg Senate, with Florida's books under his arm. […] The result was called 'Hamburg, City of Talent,' and Florida […] even came to the city in person and gave presentations there."[40] Not just Hamburg, but also Berlin, Amsterdam, and other European cities (as well as cities around the world) have made efforts to import the "creativity fix" via Richard Florida. In each, the arrival of the currently most "charismatic economic-development troubadour" of urban policy has accelerated creative cities programs, pushing creativity to the top of the city's agenda, but also triggering protest by cultural activists and anti-gentrification movements.[41]

## III. EMULATING THE "METROPOLITAN TURN" IN GERMANY

All of these American-born concepts and perspectives, including those associated with the "metropolitan turn," have served to inspire German urban research.[42] Obviously, they are neither to be imported uncritically nor without

38 See Gunther Dreher and Thomas Feltes, eds., *Das Modell New York. Kriminalprävention durch 'Zero Tolerance'?* (Holzkirchen: 1997).

39 See Enquete-Kommission, "Zukunft des Bürgerschaftlichen Engagements," in Deutscher Bundestag, *Bürgerschaftliches Engagement: Auf dem Weg in eine zukunftsfähige Gesellschaft* (Opladen: 2002); Ansgar Klein et al., eds., *Zivilgesellschaft und Sozialkapital* (Wiesbaden: 2004).

40 Philipp Oehmke, "Who Has the Right to Shape the City?," *Spiegel Online*, May 29, 2010, http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,670600,00.html.

41 See the manifesto "Not in Our Name! Jamming the Gentrification Machine" published activists from Hamburg in November 2009: http://www.signandsight.com/features/1961.html.

42 There also have been transatlantic "counter movements," i.e., concepts and programs developed within European urbanism that get picked up in the United States, such as new concepts of "urban mobility" or "environmental sustainability." But the cosmo-

adaptation, as the processes labeled by them manifest themselves in European cities in different forms. Though global neoliberalization processes have implanted market-oriented regulatory restructuring on both sides of the Atlantic, they have done so upon uneven institutional landscapes, in variegated ways.[43] In spite of growing transnational tendencies of convergence, urban models cannot be disembedded from their local conditions of possibility. Hence, there remain important European- and German-specific features that result from such different constellations as the traditions of social democracy and the different positioning of cities within the respective institutional architecture of each nation.[44] These phenomena, among others, erect barriers to the portability and adaptability of imported theories.

Furthermore, distinctions need to be made between "fast-policy transfer"[45] as opposed to "traveling theories," since the conceptual categories driving the work of theorizing are not subject to the type of competition that make urban policymakers so vulnerable to the latest hype in the global circulation of policy models and "best practices." As opposed to policymakers, researchers move in a realm where careful scrutiny, empirical tests, and analytical rigor matter in determining how best to explain the transformations of urban processes and structures, forms and functions.[46]

---

politan version of the "metropolis" finds adherents only in a few culturally or historically oriented disciplines.

43 See Neil Brenner, Jamie Peck, and Nik Theodore, "Variegated Neoliberalization: Geographies, Modalities, Pathways," *Global Networks* 10, no. 2 (2010).

44 European cities have more and closer connections with their central states than US cities do (see Hank K. Savitch and Paul Kantor, *Cities in the International Market Place: The Political Economy of Urban Development in Western Europe and the United States* (Princeton: 2002)). A far greater portion of their budget comes from national funds than in the US, where as a consequence the pressure to attract investors, high-income groups, and tourists—and to marginalize "undesirable" groups—is far stronger (Justus L. Uitermark and Jan Willem Duyvendak, "Civilising the City: Revanchist Urbanism in Rotterdam," *Urban Studies* 45, no. 7 (2008): 1485–503, especially 1488). A reason for the stronger connection between urban areas and the central state in Germany is that a majority of the electoral population lives within urban agglomerations, and not, as in the US, outside of them.

45 See Jamie Peck, "Political Economies of Scale: Fast Policy, Interscalar Relations, and Neoliberal Workfare," *Economic Geography* 78, no. 3: 331–60.

46 However, even here the phenomenon of the academic celebrity circuit, a form of intellectualism that translates academic concepts into adaptable policy formulations,

In this realm, the European adoption of the theoretical perspective opened up by the metropolitanization discourse makes good sense, not because the German federal government has declared more ordinary urbanized zones to be metropolitan regions, but because the normative cultural definition of the European "metropolis," which derives from its importance during the nineteenth century and limits the designation to those distinct cities that generate a cultural surplus, runs the risk of excluding fundamental contemporary trends of regional restructuring and rescaling with all their attendant social and political problems from our research—and from metropolitan studies' curricula.

Our task is, therefore, to systematically identify, via comparative analysis, the influence of national features and differences on urban processes and problems, for example as Alan Harding has done in translating urban regime theory for Great Britain,[47] so that we may develop a European reformulation of the empirical as well as theoretical perspectives on urban/metropolitan development.

The conclusion to be drawn, then, from this overview of conceptual diffusion and transfer processes for the European metropolitan discussion is as follows. Underlying the manifold conceptual imports is the observation of increasingly convergent conditions and policies. On both sides of the Atlantic, globalization and economic restructuring have impacted urban development, triggering the dynamic expansion of city-regions beyond their political-administrative and bioregional boundaries. Neil Brenner has demonstrated that for Europe, metropolistanization has created: "(a) high value-added socioeconomic capacities, advanced infrastructures, industrial growth, inward investment, and labor flows [that] are increasingly concentrated within major metropolitan regions, and (b) territorial disparities between core urban regions and peripheral towns and regions [that] are significantly intensifying across the entire European economy."[48] The transformation of cities and city-regions into amorphous "in-between cities"[49] without clear morphological delineations such as the separation between suburbs and core cities, can productively be interpreted in the context of global economic restructuring as part of neoliberal state transformation and

has been gaining influence, see G. McLennan, "Travelling with Vehicular Ideas: The Case of the Third Way," *Economy and Society* 33, no. 4 (2004): 484–99.

47 Alan Harding, "North American Urban Political Economy, Urban Theory and British Research," *British Journal of Political Science* 29 (1999): 673–98, especially 693.

48 Neil Brenner, *New State Spaces: Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood* (Oxford: 2004), 180.

49 Tom Sieverts, *Cities Without Cities: An Interpretation of the Zwischenstadt* (London: 2003).

welfare retrenchment and as part of rescaling processes that have devolved many formerly higher-level state functions to local and regional levels (and there often toward extra-state, private as well as civil society, actors). These transformations have also intensified policies that emphasize urban entrepreneurialism and city marketing. This is occurring faster in the US but undeniably also on the European continent and has exacerbated (though not caused) new forms of socio-spatial exclusion and disintegration.

These characteristics and accompanying features of metropolitanization—urban decentralization, socio-spatial polarization, state rescaling, and administrative fragmentation—have been making themselves felt as pressing challenges for German urban regions as well as well as those in North America, raising a host of new and urgent political, social, and planning questions. The main concerns discussed in the literatures have been around the role of regional/metropolitan state structures in economic governance, issues of local democracy, and the tensions between social cohesion and economic development.[50] Issues regarding social and technical infrastructure—such as the control of sprawl, transportation gridlock, and provision of water and sewage services—that stretch the policy-making capacities of politicians, experts, corporations, and activists across the urban region, have also been topics of research.[51]

As a result, metropolitan governance has received increasing attention. Initially, metropolitan governance simply meant creating new governmental structures at a larger scale to ease the coordination of municipal decision-making (elected representatives were compelled to work together by integrating municipal bureaucracies and pooling resources). However, now, metropolitan governance increasingly entails the invention of decision-making mechanisms not necessarily based on voting and comprehensive planning. Instead, large infra-

50 C. Lefevre, "Metropolitan Government and Governance in Western Countries: A Critical Review," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 22, no. 1 (1998): 9–25.

51 See Timothy Moss, "Dissecting Institutions. Bestandteile einer institutionellen Konfiguration am Beispiel der Wasserwirtschaft," *ICAR Discussion Paper* 7 (2005); Matthias Naumann and Jochen Monstadt, *New Geographies of Infrastructure Systems: Spatial Science Perspectives and the Socio-Technical Change of Energy and Water Supply Systems in Germany*, *netWORKS-papers* 10 (2005); Axel Stein and Robert Koch, "Strategien für eine integrierte Entwicklung von Siedlung und Verkehr. Ergebnisse einer Analyse zum Raum Dresden," *RaumPlanung* 119: 77–81; Fritz Sager, "Metropolitan Institutions and Policy Coordination: The Integration of Land Use and Transport Policies in Swiss Urban Areas," *Governance* 18, no. 2: 227–56.

structural projects, airport expansions, waterfront revitalizations, and big festivals and events are used to build cohesion and identity across the metropolitan region—and fame for political leaders. Making decisions about regional plans increasingly takes place in negotiations between public and private actors, via project-based coordination, and not along the traditional logic of representative democracy. Thus, metropolitan governance nowadays refers to both the process of consolidating a new political space at the metropolitan scale, which involves new governing instruments and interest-mediation mechanisms, and the process of consolidating the metropolis as a collective actor in global markets and international politics.[52] The ability of metropolitan regions to effectively rescale the exercise of power varies depending on place-specific path-dependencies and national contexts, which calls for systematic intra- and transnational comparative research.

While the traditional concept of the "metropolis" claims to be interested in identifying the contemporary features of cosmopolitanism,[53] in fact, it is instrumentalized as a marketing concept in the serious game of strategic competition between cities as well as between academic programs. More urgently necessary than rehashing the traditional concept of the "metropolis" is furthering metropolitan research that seeks to aid the analysis of contemporary fragmentation and disintegration problems with their concomitant issues of inclusion and exclusion, as well as research that offers critical approaches to understanding processes of metropolitanization.

52 See Daniel Kübler and Hubert Heinelt, eds., *Metropolitan Governance in the 21st Century: Governing Capacity, Democracy and the Dynamics of Place* (London: 2005).

53 For example, Zohlen states "the metropolis is the epitome of the new desire for urbanity," ["Metropole als Inbegriff der neuen Urbanitätslust."] Zohlen, "Metropole als Metapher," 33.