Borders and territorial change

Session is organized by the Annual Meeting of Finnish Geographers’ committee.

Friday 30.10. 10:00–11:30
Chairs: Robert Imre (robert.imre@uta.fi) and Jouni Hääkli (jouni.hakli@uta.fi), University of Tampere

*Governance of futures in European spatial planning: ESPON's territorial scenarios as an example*
Toni Ahlqvist, University of Turku

*The role of the state and borders in EU external cross-border cooperation*
Katharina Koch, University of Oulu

*Peripheral Regions and Connectivity in Smart Specialisation: The Ostrobothnian Way*
Antti Mäenpää, University of Vaasa

*Borderless world: excavating the roots and tenacity of an idea*
Anssi Paasi, University of Oulu
Governance of futures in European spatial planning: ESPON's territorial scenarios as an example
Toni Ahlqvist
VTT, University of Turku

Spatial governance of national and transnational entities is a combination of activities in economic, political and cultural registers. Governance of space is simultaneously governance of space-time, seizure of the present by weighing the possibilities of the future. Thus, spatial planning can be understood as an endeavour to govern space-time through practices that apply potential medium and long term future images as political resources. Future images and concomitant knowledge, created through political arguments and related evidence, can be called anticipatory or futures knowledge. Despite the name, anticipatory knowledge is closely connected to the present: it is always based on selective present perspectives towards future directions. An example of anticipatory political trajectory is the so-called forward-looking perspective in European Union’s political programmes, founded on an amalgamation of anticipatory knowledge and evidence-based policy. In my paper I will focus on two issues. Firstly, I discuss the relations between this forward-looking policy perspective and European spatial planning. Secondly, I explore ESPON’s (European Spatial Planning Observation Network) territorial scenarios as an example of this policy perspective. I interpret the scenarios as strategic interventions that reflect the ideological sub-terrains of European spatial planning in intriguing ways.

The role of the state and borders in EU external cross-border cooperation
Katharina Koch
University of Oulu

The internal borders inside the EU have lost their status as means of control to people’s movements. However, the external Schengen borders experience a securitisation process that includes military and transnational cooperative instruments to provide safety in the external border regions. The focus of the work is directed towards the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) which is a funding instrument to support projects that are supporting and promoting transnational cooperation across the external borders. The geographical scope includes four ENI cross-border cooperation programmes that share borders with Norway, Russia and Belarus. Often researchers claim that the regional integration process blurs the role of borders and territory because the EU aims to gain political influence within its neighbouring countries. However, previous research has found out that borders and the state remain in a significant position also in the multi-level governmental framework in which cross-border cooperation functions. This work investigates what this means for the cross-border cooperation across the external EU borders and how the decision-making authorities are divided between the different levels. The research contributes to the discussion of transnational cooperation and aims to conceptualise the external EU borders under the aspect of the asymmetric relationship between the EU and non-EU countries. The material, which is based on relevant political documents and expert interviews, shows that political and geopolitical questions challenge cross-border cooperation initiatives in the Baltic Sea area.
Peripheral Regions and Connectivity in Smart Specialisation: The Ostrobothnian Way
Antti Mäenpää
University of Vaasa

Smart Specialisation (Foray et al. 2012) is the regional development model and strategy of the EU which is based on the idea of local self-analysis of the regions and strategic support for their main regional assets. One might consider regions even as “regional entrepreneurs” as they are asked to analyse their own strengths and try to combine them in new ways in order to create unique regional products and services which appeal to the global markets.

Universities are seen as important regional connectors and developers, even though the company-based knowledge regarding markets is also a crucial part of the strategy. Public administration should support and enhance local cooperation by acting as an organizer and supporter. Cooperation between these different regional actors is therefore an important part of the smart specialisation strategy.

Peripheral regions are interesting in this context, because they often have only limited connections and they also usually lack in their triple helix (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff 1998, 2000) relations (between companies, universities and public administration). Yet these are the regions that should greatly benefit from the concepts created by the strategy and therefore need more attention. One important tool for understanding their state is the concept of connectivity. In my presentation I intend to demonstrate how connectivity could be used in order to make a regional development policy model that is especially relevant for peripheral regions. I utilize the Ostrobothnian model of smart specialisation as a tool for this.

Borderless world: excavating the roots and tenacity of an idea
Anssi Paasi
University of Oulu

Rudoph (2005) asked 10 years ago “Does globalization threaten the core institutions of world order, including sovereignty and the nation-state? Are we moving into a borderless world? His short answers to these important questions were ‘probably not’, ‘certainly not’, and ‘quite the opposite’”. In spite of such comments the idea of the borderless world, coined by Japanese business-guru Kenichi Ohmae, has persisted in academic discourse since the turn of the 1990s and it continuously circulates in academic and policy discourses related to global business, management, consumption, innovations, security, taxation, drug problems and, of course, to the present and future roles of borders. This presentation asks, how and why did this thesis emerge and what were the key contexts for this. It will scrutinize the roots and key argument behind this idea and shows how it still animates the discourses on globalization even if proper border studies provide simultaneously much more nuanced views/approaches to reveal the contemporary complexities of borders. Yet, such reflection is helpful for understanding the progress of border studies. Therefore, the presentation first aims to locate the upsurge of this idea into the context of knowledge production/circulation. Second, it examines how the thesis developed, how it understood borders and what were the politico-economic-geopolitical contexts behind it. The paper will also briefly comment how borders are comprehended in the contemporary mobile world and how they are crossed.