

Fourth Event

**Smart City-Regional Governance for Sustainability:
Smart Governance (and Institutions) – A Question of Sustainability?**

9-10 July 2018, City of Malmö, Sweden

Report

by Gerd Lintz and Tassilo Herrschel

The fourth and final self-organised event of the RSA Research Network on Smart City-Regional Governance for Sustainability took place in Malmö on the 9th and 10th of July 2018. It was hosted by Tassilo Herrschel, University of Westminster, UK, and Pontus Tallberg, formerly Region of Skåne, Sweden, in the Malmö City Hall, where a seminar room was made available to us free of charge. The group was very international: Nine scholars and practitioners from Germany, Iran, Ireland, Sweden, UK and USA took part.

On the first day, five presentations were given in two round tables. After a presentation on the Regional Studies Association by Gerd Lintz, Tassilo Herrschel introduced the RSA Network and focused his talk on “*Smartness in City-regional governance – why the fuss? Views from Europe*”. He, for instance, claimed that smart governance could and should bring together metropolitan-shaped network space and state territory as well as mitigate conflicts between the winners and losers of general ICT-based development. Then, Gerd Lintz asked *Was that smart? Thoughts about evaluating informal regional landscape governance*. He particularly pointed out that it is necessary to show how the idea of smart governance differs from the concept of effective governance developed in the general literature of governance evaluation.

The second round table was opened by Yonn Dierwechter addressing the topic of *Institutional smartness and spatial planning: can new technology confront old intercurrency? Notes from Seattle*. Referring for instance to Amazon and Airbnb he argued that spatial economic development changes rapidly on the basis of new ICT while it is not clear yet whether these technologies improve public governance. Following, Andrew Karvonen gave a talk about *Smart goes green: digitalising environmental agendas in Bristol and Manchester*. Although both cities have different approaches – bottom up versus top down – they both show that a smartness agenda can supplement green agendas, although there needs to be clarity about the particular meanings of these concepts in a local context. Finally, in a spontaneous presentation, Anders Olshov reported on the development of the Øresund Region which now is called Greater Copenhagen and Skåne after a de facto ultimatum by Copenhagen which had become disillusioned by the foot-dragging in enhancing collaboration from the Swedish side. He particularly highlighted the changing interests and power relations of the cities, regions and countries involved.

All in all the presentations and discussions on the first days showed that ‘smart’ and ‘sustainability’ may indeed mean many different things, and do so increasingly, and are also used in a variety of ways as ‘trendy’ attributes. By the same token, there is evidence that these discussions do reflect a growing awareness of the complexity of the challenges at hand and that simple, one-dimensional and single-disciplinary answers may not suffice. In this way, ‘smart’ and ‘sustainable’ signify growing engagement with the challenges and a search for effective – novel (?) answers. Ready-made ‘good practice answers ‘out of the box’ are less likely to emerge.

In the morning of the second day, the third round table with its focus on publication strategy was held. One, at the moment favoured, suggestion is an edited, conceptually tightly cohesive, book in the Routledge 'Regions and Cities' series. Possible structure and possible editorial responsibilities were discussed by a group of six participants (core group and guests), using a draft proposal presented at the meeting by two core group members (Yonn Dierwechter, Tassilo Herrschel). The draft of the concept will now be updated to take into account comments, suggestions and views voiced at the meeting, and sent to all members of the core group for feedback. Follow-up discussions and strategic planning are envisaged as work sessions at the next Annual RSA European Conference (Santiago de Compostela).

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Dr. Tassilo Herrschel's work revolves around comparative analysis of (smart) urban governance, the growing role of cities as international actors next to states, and the role of different national contexts, including regime 'transition' (democratisation).
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