Spatial planning, metropolitan governance and territorial politics in Europe. Dublin as a case of Metro-phobia?

Abstract

The growing concentration of production and population in capital cities in Europe is accompanied by metropolitan governance reform with two policy objectives in mind. First, capital cities are promoted as 'national champions' in the context of global territorial competition. Second, metropolitan regions are characterised by recurrent crises of 'governability' as economic, social, environmental and infrastructural interdependencies escape existing jurisdictional scales. But this process is highly uneven, reflecting the ways in which cities are embedded in their national contexts. Drawing from the literature on varieties of capitalism, and in particular O'Riain's (2014) perspective on the Irish case, we suggest that in an era when cities are claimed to be acting as 'national champions', territorial politics need to be more strongly foregrounded in these discussions. Through an in-depth qualitative case-study of Dublin (Ireland), we argue that while government power may be strongly centralised in the city of Dublin, the spatial entity of Dublin is relatively powerless. Despite a number of recommendations since the 1970s, there has been little will or action to meaningfully devolve power to the city-regional level in any way, contrary to comparative European experiences. The paper illustrates how a central state stranglehold over the Dublin metropolitan area is hampering the efficient governance and sustainable development of the city. These governance constraints at the sub-national level with significant planning implications indicate a reluctance to engage with the metropolitan as a particular territorial scale in Ireland – and a profound fixity in the architecture of the state. We term this *metro-phobia*.

Introduction

Metropolitan regions are now regarded as the drivers of economic growth (Scott, 2010; Storper, 2014), as key economic sectors, firms, and the production of wealth are increasingly concentrated in urban areas (Glaeser, 2012; Scott, 2008). In the European Union, where competition policy has inhibited state support of key industries, cities, especially capital cities, assume the status of 'national champions' (Crouch and Le Galès, 2012). The performance of these metropolitan regions, reinforced by favourable public policies, accentuates pre-existing urban hierarchies (Harding, 2007). In a context of low growth and austerity, accelerating the development of city regions has become a major policy concern across North America (Katz and Bradley, 2014), Europe (European Commission, 2016) **and** beyond (UN Habitat, 2016). Policy and governance reforms have reinforced the importance of the metropolitan scale – in the planning of land-use, infrastructure and public services – as a field of political and economic action (Brenner, 2004; Krätke, 2007, Sassen, 1992).

Metropolitanisation is a highly uneven process. We are concerned with understanding its development in Ireland. The case of Ireland is important because it offers a warning against viewing metropolitanisation as a universal process leading to a global convergence in state forms and socio-economic processes or as simply the instantiation of ("variegated") neo-liberalism (Peck et al., 2013). The economic crisis that brought the end of the Celtic Tiger, and the severe austerity which followed it, effected a reshaping of the geographies of the Irish economy. The economic dominance of the Greater Dublin region has been reinforced but has not been matched by the political reform at the metropolitan scale that one might expect, based on comparative experiences. We use spatial planning as the lens through which to examine why this might be the case, particularly in the context of renewed political attention to the future trajectory of urban and regional development, signified but the launch by the Irish government in 2016, a new National Planning Framework (NPF) to direct growth up to 2040. The importance of learning from two previous failed attempts at national scale planning (Meredith and van Egeraat, 2013) informed the discourse on the need for the NPF, but raised questions about the role of the urban and metropolitan scale within Ireland. Hitherto, Irish policy and politics has been characterised by an ambiguity toward the urban (Daly, 1985; Hanna, 2013) within a highly dysfunctional local governance system. This distinctive territorial politics has mitigated against metropolitan scale planning and practice and produced regressive urban and regional outcomes (Kitchin et al., 2012). There has been a particular reluctance to consider new metropolitan structures for the Dublin region, a situation we term ***metro-phobia.***

We begin the paper with a discussion of metropolitanisation and particularly the recent literature on cities as new national champions generating challenges of governability within the context of their national political economies. In the second section, we examine the "Irish variety of capitalism" seeking to set the context for the later discussion on Dublin's distinctive metropolitanisation. In doing so, we draw upon Ó Riain's (2014) characterization of the 'Irish variety of capitalism' but add to this a concern with the territorial politics of the Irish state. Sections three and four provide an analysis of the operation of planning – broadly defined as

actors, institutions, discourses and practices – in the Dublin city-region. Our aim is to offer a detailed empirical account of recent developments in Ireland. Acknowledging that there is a crisis of metropolitan governance across Europe (Ahrend et al., 2014; Harding, 2007; Heinelt and Kubler, 2004), we argue that crises are nationally distinct. In Ireland, which has broadly followed a neoliberal political and economic model (Mercille and Murphy, 2015), local actors were not just cyphers for more general processes but displayed distinctive local political and cultural motivations for their actions. We suggest that in an era when cities are claimed to be acting as 'national champions', territorial politics need to be more strongly foregrounded in these discussions.

The paper is based on documentary analysis, a series of 15 in-depth interviews undertaken with key stakeholders over a 12-month period from February 2016 to February 2017, and participant observation. Key planning and economic development documents were analysed including: national spatial strategy, city development plans, and some local areas plans; reports on the regional and economic development of the Dublin city-region by thinktanks and government departments; as well as ancillary documents including all party parliamentary committee reports. Key themes emerged from the analysis that informed the interview questions. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken in three blocks with central government officials (4), local government officials (3), elected local government representatives (2), private enterprises (2), business and planning representative bodies (2), and other central state agencies (2). After each block of interviews was complete, they were transcribed and an interpretive approach taken to analysing transcripts and generating key themes. These key themes were then used to snowball further interviews and inform the later blocks of interviews. During the fieldwork period, one of the authors was invited to participate in a number of policy-focused events and discussions, including consultations on the National Planning Framework. The fieldnotes and observations taken were used to complement the other data collection methods.

Metropolitanisation and ungovernability

"As the purview of spatial planning expands to address ever-wider objectives such as economic development, environmental and social equity, a broader metropolitan scale has been adopted in many countries. This is driven by the need for spatial and land-use planning to keep pace with functional territorial boundaries – the places across which people live, work and commute and the interacting ecosystems and geographies" (OECD, 2017: 56).

Rapid urbanisation on a global scale has been associated with a growing concentration of population, production, innovation and trade in large cities. At the European scale, these phenomena are visible in the rapid growth of capital cities, contributing to widening regional inequalities in most countries. From 2002 to 2012, population growth in capital metro regions was more than double the EU average. Capital cities have been growing faster mainly through positive net migration and tend to have a higher share of working-age population and a lower share of people aged 65 and over. Moreover, migrants from other EU countries and especially from outside the EU are more likely to settle in capital cities, which tend to have a more highly

educated population. Except in Germany, capital cities have higher levels of productivity than their national economies and typically the number of fast-growth firms per capita is highest in capital metro regions (European Commission, 2016).

Within the frame of urban economics, these outcomes reflect processes of urban agglomeration. The growth of cities – and particularly capital cities - reflects the scale, density and concentration of economic activities in them and the role of thick labour markets, specialised goods and services suppliers and knowledge spill-overs (Glaeser, 2012; OECD, 2015). Storper (2014) argues that critical to their success or failure are well-functioning institutions because cities and city-regions have high levels of "economic, social, environmental, infrastructural and 'public order' interdependence, but for which there is rarely an overarching political authority (such as a sovereign, unified regional government)" (Storper 2014: 116; see also OECD, 2015). The spatial form and organisation of large metropolitan areas is in flux, reflecting the evolution of economy, polity and society, the demands for better quality of life and improved infrastructure and services from residents and workforces, and the continued search for means to mitigate the negative economic, social and environmental consequences of urbanisation (Ahrend et al., 2014). Typically, this search occurs amidst a thicket of multiple overlapping and disparate local governments, each responsible for distinct functions and each having to respond to the varying interests and preferences of local constituencies (Le Galès, 2016; Storper 2014). National and local state actors must constantly adjust governance arrangements to match economic changes. The task of urban politics is to overcome recurrent "ungovernability" tendencies (Storper, 2014: 116). Policymakers face a twofold challenge. First, they need to achieve a consensus between varying spatial units of government – from national, regional, city-region to local – as each have a stake in addressing common problems (Kantor et. al., 2012). Fixing and maintaining effective city-region-wide governance and leadership requires the mobilisation of 'civic capital', the collective civic capacities of a community (Nelles, 2013). Second, and crucial to their resilience, larger metropolitan areas – and the units of government within them – must negotiate, adapt and evolve when the city-region expands or contracts spatially, socially and economically. Fluidity, rather than fixity, is a function of effective city-regionalism.

As well-functioning cities become critical to national economic performance, governments have become more concerned with facilitating their development. Urban policy now acts as a proxy for industrial policy. According to Clift and Woll (2012), the concept of 'economic patriotism' takes an urban turn. Crouch and Le Galès (2012: 415) suggest the promotion of cities as 'national champions' in global territorial competition replaces the previous focus on selected favoured national firms or sectors: "In the new policy, governments seek to have parts of their national territories selected by transnational firms, so that these territories might advance in global competition". National governments increasingly direct public investment towards leading cities to ensure that provision of infrastructure and collective services keeps pace with growth (Friedmann, 1986). Powers, resources and responsibilities are devolved to metropolitan regions to facilitate the creation of appropriate urban development policies (Katz and Bradley 2014; Rodriguez-Pose and Gill 2003). In Europe, the creation of the Greater London Authority and its directly elected Mayor, the Métropole du Grand Paris and the Àrea

metropolitana de Barcelona, provide examples of government reforms designed to decentralise political authority to the scale of capital city regions. A currently fashionable idea is that urban leaders – especially directly-elected mayors – are becoming more important political actors than national governments in the arena of territorial competition (Barber, 2013; Dille, et al, 2017; Katz and Bradley, 2014). In the context of small states with dominant capital cities, like Ireland, this can have significant political consequences and may partly explain resistance to strong political leadership or governance at the metropolitan scale.

From the viewpoint of policymakers, problems of spatial planning and urban management now loom large. Metropolitan growth can be offset by negative externalities (agglomeration diseconomies) that include congestion, pollution, rising land, labour and housing costs, which can increase with city size, especially if urbanization is not properly managed, and if cities are deprived of essential infrastructure. The immediate effect of dysfunctional systems, gridlock and physical deterioration may be to deter private investment, reduce urban productivity and hold back growth (UN Habitat, 2016: 32). Confronted with these challenges, governments are urged, notably by the OECD and the European Commission, to improve urban governance and move in the direction of metropolitan scale spatial planning. Peck et al. (2013) suggest that policy choices are influenced by "extra-local fields" of policymaking and manipulation, while structural and macro-regulatory forces help to shape the local 'rules of the game'. In our view, extra-local fields do not determine local outcomes; local contingencies play a critical mediating role.

In this paper, we propose an account that recognises how metropolitanisation occurs within the 'varieties of capitalism' in Europe, which provide the institutional foundations of comparative advantage (Hall and Soskice, 2001). Typically, varieties of capitalism have been defined by their systems of industrial relations, vocational training and education, corporate governance and interfirm relations. But in an era when economic patriotism has taken an urban turn and cities act as national champions, questions of urban morphology, performance and governance become critical components of economic development and comparative advantage. Thus, metropolitan development occurs within national frameworks of "territorial politics". In Europe this has come to refer to the territorial construction of the state, processes of national integration and disintegration and an emphasis on the regional scale as a locus of government (Keating, 2008). In Bulpitt's (2008: 59) classic formulation, territorial politics concerns:

> that arena of political activity concerned with the relations between the central political institutions in the capital city and those interests, communities, political organisations and governmental bodies outside the central institutional complex, but within the accepted boundaries of the state, which possess, or are commonly perceived to possess, a significant geographical or local/regional character (Bulpitt, 2008: 59).

Given Ireland and the UK share a Westminster model of government and relatively weak local government, with suitable adaptation, Bulpitt's model of territorial politics provides a useful starting point for thinking about processes of metropolitanisation in Ireland. We extend the understanding of the territorial politics of metropolitanisation to examine not just the

relationship between central government and other actors (as defined by Bulpitt, 2008) within the boundaries of the state, but also how the relationships between these other actors are constrained within an institutional framework tightly controlled by central government. In the next section, we turn to exploring the broader political –economic context within which metropolitanisation in Dublin has evolved.

Territorial politics and urban development in Ireland

Territorial politics in Ireland is characterised by an often-fractious central-local government relationship, competitive local-local government relations, and a problematic construction of Dublin within the national space and political economy (Kiberd, 1997; Moore-Cherry et al., 2015). On the one hand, (Greater) Dublin accounts for a disproportionate share of Irish population and output that is among the highest in the OECD (Table 1). Despite the scale of the economic crisis that afflicted Ireland after 2008, Dublin's dominance of the Irish economy has continued unabated based on growth in property development, service industries and the city's disproportionate attractiveness to foreign direct investment (see Morgenroth, 2014). Yet, historically, Dublin has held a distinctively ambiguous status in Ireland. Irish political elites traditionally "maintained an uneasy relationship with urban life" (Horgan, 2004: 38), even if the nationalist rising of Easter 1916 was mainly located in the streets of central Dublin (Moore-Cherry and Ó Corráin, 2016). Irish nationalism was founded on a rural ideal and land reform was the prominent issue in the anti-colonial struggles that preceded independence. The Irish Literary Revival of the late 19th and early 20th century, emphasised the Gaelic origins of Irish identity, the heartland of which was the economically peripheral western region: "rural Ireland was real Ireland" (Kiberd, 1997: 492). Leading Catholic clerics actively disparaged urban life as a den of socialism and immorality (Daly, 1985; Horgan, 2004). According to Kiberd (1997: 484-5), Dublin was a "classic example of a periphery-dominated centre" which was shaped by the "values and mores of the surrounding countryside". Moreover, Dublin was the site of British rule in Ireland before 1921, adding further to its 'alien' character. McCabe (2013: 138) suggests that Dublin's problematic status reflects its erstwhile role as, "the outpost of the former Colonial power and also inappropriately located on the more cosmopolitan edge of the island remote from the more Gaelic western seaboard". Such attitudes lingered; in 1968, the then Minister for Local Government, Kevin Boland, attacked campaigners seeking to preserve Georgian buildings in Dublin which he characterised as relics of colonial power (Hanna, 2010, 2013).

The structure of land-ownership and historical attitudes to the urban in Ireland contribute to contemporary planning outcomes. Strong property rights were entrenched in the Irish constitution as a means of reinforcing the conservative structures of rural society, ensuring that, "Ireland was a property owning democracy at independence and this influenced and constrained the policy choices available to successive Irish governments" (Girvin, 2010: 358). Despite significant falls in rates of home ownership from a high of 80.8% to a current rate of

69.8% (CSO, 2017), home ownership in Ireland remains comparatively high, depressed recently by lack of affordability rather than any cultural shift. Prevailing attitudes to land were also reflected in the distinctive Irish housing preferences during the Celtic **Tiger years,** notably the proliferation of one-off rural bungalow developments (O'Leary, 2014). In recent years, the inability of the state to deal with post-crisis issues such as vacant land and 'ghost estates' (newly built unoccupied housing) and a perceived stumbling block to the provision of critical infrastructure has been the primacy of private property rights in Ireland and the intense legal battle that any challenge to these would bring, even where it is in the public interest. Where land interests remain entrenched, "concepts of land management and the redistribution of the windfalls from profits in land are often hard to swallow" (Bannon, 2004, 12), mitigating against more strategic spatial planning.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Reflecting the cultural-historic reasons noted above, the urban has been notably neglected in Irish political discourse and Dublin's dominance of the Irish space-economy has attracted comparatively little explicit theoretical and policy attention. Despite the growing economic and demographic significance of urban Ireland, there has never been a Minister for Urban Affairs, yet a Ministry of Rural Affairs was recently re-established (March 2017) having previously been existence from 1956-2011. Local government reform in 2014 further marginalised the urban with the abolition of 80 Town Councils in Ireland and mergers of urban into larger rural/urban municipal districts subservient to and dependent on County Councils for funding. In the second-tier cities of Waterford and Limerick city and county councils were amalgamated, weakening the urban focus of local government. These recent changes were implemented in most cases for cost-cutting rather than strategic purposes, and there has been no systematic effort at metropolitan spatial planning, despite periodic proposals (Bannon, 1989; Bannon et al., 2004; Moore-Cherry and Tomaney, 2016; O'Leary, 2014). In the sense suggested by Crouch and Le Galès (2012), there is little evidence of Dublin being treated as a 'national champion' even if Dublin is the location for a disproportionate share of inward global investment, nor is there a discourse of the city as replacing the nation-state as the key actor in global competition.

Many authors have interpreted the growth, demise and aftermath of the Celtic Tiger and its spatial consequences through the lens of neoliberalism (Breathnach, 2014; Kitchin et al., 2012; MacLaran and Kelly, 2014; Mercille and Murphy, 2015; Norris and Byrne, 2015; O'Callaghan et al., 2015). But we suggest that these outcomes were equally the product of more contextualised mediation of these larger processes. Local actors' strategies, political conflict and accommodation between central and local governments and assertive private interests within a property-based urban growth coalition were critical in how broader processes became grounded in Ireland. In short, urban and regional outcomes are the product of territorial politics within the Irish variety of capitalism. Ó Riain (2014) has offered an influential account of the Irish variety of capitalism. In the period before and after the collapse of the Celtic Tiger, he shows that Ireland was characterised by an unstable and contradictory mix of clientelism,

liberal politics and corporatism devised by the dominant populist, nationalist party, Fianna Fáil (FF). From the 1960s, successive Irish governments prioritised the attraction of foreign direct investment as the centrepiece of their approach to economic development. In the period before the collapse of the Celtic Tiger, this model was eclipsed by one founded on a property-based growth machine that brought together developers, local and national politicians (especially from FF), together with a banking sector that became over-committed to residential and commercial real estate, while becoming increasingly dependent on short-term foreign lending to fund long-term projects. Although persuasive, this account is only partially helpful in explaining Irish urban development as it pays insufficient attention to the territorial politics of the growth coalition. To explain the urban and regional outcomes of the Celtic Tiger and its aftermath, we must consider how clientelism, focused on a property-based growth coalition, interacted with the politics of Irish local government and its land-use planning function in a peculiarly centralised, clientlistic state (O'Toole, 2010, 2011) to produce a distinctively Irish variety of property-based capitalism.

Central to territorial politics in Ireland is the high degree of government centralisation with few powers and little financial autonomy at the local scale. Ireland has the second lowest share in the OECD of GDP on sub-national spending (Loughlin, 2010). Despite the importance of the local in Irish culture and politics, local government, "is an area in which Irish historiography has been sadly lacking" (Ferriter, 2001: 9). Municipal government began with the provision of local services in the nineteenth century and tended to come under the control of the Catholic bourgeoisie and become a focus for nationalist politics (Potter, 2010). County councils were established in 1898 near the end of colonial rule and, following independence, tended to be viewed suspiciously by Ireland's new national leaders as "relics of British administration" (Ferriter, 2001: 64), although counties play an important role in framing local identities (Hourihane, 2003). In the early years of the newly independent state, national leaders favoured strong central government, typically personality-based and dominated by a handful of politicians and officials. In 1934, Sean MacEntee, Minister for Local Government and Public Health, proposed the abolition of local and regional government; the Irish constitution did not formally recognise its role until 1999 (Ferriter, 2001). Many functions commonly the responsibility of local government in other states, such as education and health, were provided directly by the national government (or the Catholic and other Churches). In 1978, the limited financial independence of local authorities was eroded when central government abolished local residential property taxes (domestic rates) leaving only commercial rates as an independent source of funding. With limited powers and resources, according to Lee (1985: 84) local government in this period was concerned with the "three Fs": family, friends and favours. Elected local councillors were crucial actors in the arena of patronage, clientelism and brokerage particularly as gatekeepers to local state employment and land-use planning decisions.

A distinctive feature of Irish local government, since 1942, is the role of the City (or County) Manager, appointed by central government. Section 4 of the City and County Management (Amendment) Act, 1955 gave councillors the power to direct the actions of managers, which

had significant implications for the operation of the planning system and patronage[1]. Modern Irish planning has its origins in the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 1963 and subsequent amendments, which established a plan-led system, on the British model, and revised and consolidated in the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 2000. Under these provisions, planning permission is granted by the County manager but making, reviewing and varying the local plan is the task of elected councillors. A state tribunal of enquiry, which sat from 1997-2012, concluded that there was evidence of deep-rooted, systemic corruption in Irish public life focused on the planning system: major land rezonings occurred during five-year development plan reviews in return for developer contributions to specific political parties, most notably FF (Mahon, 2012; see also Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2015; O'Leary, 2014). The local planning system, interacting with the structure of local government and traditional attitudes to land-ownership, constituted a critical component of the system of clientelism that served both individual voters seeking one-off housing and developers seeking large-scale residential and commercial schemes, enabling the short-term returns to the property-based growth coalition but undermining coherent spatial planning. The current situation in relation to planning and urban development – particularly its territorial politics – can only be fully understood in relation to this wider history of the Irish state.

Unlike other European countries where the region might have played a coordinating role to mitigate the negative effects discussed above, and is often a key spatial scale in the negotiation and performance of identity, Ireland has had a limited history of regionalism (Meredith and van Egeraat, 2013). In the 1960s, some public services were reorganised on a sub-national basis such as for example regional heath boards although these have subsequently been recentralised through the Health Services Executive (HSE). Regional arrangements were for the most part administrative and Horner (2000: 136) concludes that "pragmatic considerations dominated, with little sustained attention to the cohesion and co-ordination of the designated regional frameworks". Walsh (2014: 69) argues that Ireland is marked by "a political and administrative vacuum at regional levels". Regional structures that do exist were initially created for the purposes of managing EU Structural Funds. In 2015, three new regional assemblies were created. Theoretically regional assemblies coordinate activity across local authority boundaries but are burdened by problematic regional boundaries and little legitimacy:

It's hard to know what we [the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly] do, to be honest with you. The area stretches from Louth to Kildare and over as far as Laois, Westmeath, Longford. There's very little in common between all of those areas. So what we do nominally is we approve or disapprove county development plans. It's very hard to know what else we do (Former Chair, Regional Assembly).

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[1]   More recently the Local Government Reform Act (2014) gave elected officials the power to veto the candidate recommended by the Public Appointments Service for the new Chief Executive (formerly city manager) role, raising concerns that this crucial appointment was brought too far into the political arena (Quinlivan, 2014). In fact, this was an easy concession to local government in the context of increasing control by central government, particularly of planning related matters through an enhanced Ministerial role in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2015.

Comprising representatives delegated from the constituent local authorities, the regional assemblies are limited and fragile organisations rather than effective and powerful strategic actors within a multi-level governance framework. The Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly, of which the Dublin city-region is a significant component, covers twelve constituent local authority areas. Tasked with producing a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), it is sub-divided into three Strategic Planning Areas: County Dublin (Fingal, Dublin City, South Dublin, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown local authority areas); Eastern area (Louth, Kildare, Meath, Wicklow) and Midlands (Longford, Laois, Offaly, Westmeath). The weakness of regional structures means that the European Council of Local and Regional Authorities does not permit Ireland voting rights at the Chamber of the Regions because "in order to qualify regions must effectively have the capacity to take full responsibility, in the interests of their communities, for a substantial share of matters of public concern, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity". Despite government agencies such as Forfás (2006) identifying the lack of regional governance as critical to the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy (2002), "strengthening regional organising capacity was not on the government's agenda" (Breathnach, 2014: 2277).

Irish political culture and the institutional framework have produced distinct, negative spatial planning outcomes, at the urban, city-regional and national scale in Ireland during and after the Celtic Tiger. For example, "ghost estates" of unsold or unfinished housing were symptomatic of the failures of planning due to the over-zoning of residential land in some areas (Kitchin et al., 2012). Simultaneously, in the Dublin region, a different crisis emerged driven by lack of housing affordability, constrained supply and the unplanned outward sprawl of the city. Research underpinning the new National Planning Framework consultation suggests that the functional urban region of Dublin now extends into 11 of the 26 counties in the Republic of Ireland, and a populist discourse has emerged around 'How Dublin is eating Ireland' (Irish Independent, 2 February 2017). Despite evidence of successful planning in some parts of the city, such as within the Dublin docklands, in other parts planning has been characterised as a patchwork of disconnected policy interventions across space, at multiple scales, with limited effectiveness (Moore-Cherry et al., 2015). At the metropolitan scale, planning has lacked a coherent vision and been speculatively-driven rather than infrastructure-led with significant consequences for mobility and quality of life. Yet, despite some discussion in policy circles about the need for more strategic planning and a failed attempt to introduce a directly elected mayor for Greater Dublin (the four local authorities within the boundary of County Dublin), there has been limited public discourse about the need to adopt a more strategic approach to planning the capital region **(Figure 1).**

INSERT FIGURE 1 about here

Territorial politics in the Dublin city-region

The international literature suggests that cities, and in many cases capital cities, are being promoted as 'national champions' (Crouch and LeGalés, 2012) on the global stage and that

government and governance structures evolve and adapt to support this role. Irish territorial politics incorporates a distinctive form of centre-periphery relations. Moreover, regressive urban and regional outcomes within and beyond the Dublin city-region have resulted from the ambiguous position of the urban, both historically and currently, in Irish political culture and the dysfunctional relationships between central, regional and local governments. Unlike in other jurisdictions the political-administrative system and culture and the lack of a meaningful 'meso-level' or regional system of government prohibit processes of metropolitanisation seen in other jurisdictions. This has been combined with a distinct reluctance – grounded in particular forms of territorial politics – to facilitate new forms of 'metropolitan governance' that would play a coordinating role and counter-balance the powerful private sector, property-based growth coalition. The interplay between these complex factors has produced what we characterise as a 'metro-phobia' and this is examined in the following sections.

The architecture of the Irish state

Our local government system here is closer to Russia than it is to the rest of Europe. That's not an exaggeration. We are way out of kilter. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities … tied into the Council of Europe, provided an absolutely damning report about [the state of local government in Ireland] six or 7 years ago, pointing out all the changes that needed to be made (Elected member, Dublin City Council).

Despite conventional wisdom about subsidiarity and devolved decision-making in Europe, Ireland remains one of the most highly centralised political systems in the world characterised by strong departmental silos and arms-length government agencies (OECD, 2008), marked by limited regional planning structures have operated without meaningful devolution of political authority (O'Riordan and van Egeraat, 2013) and local and regional governments constrained by severe austerity in the post-crisis era. Institutionally, this has resulted in a situation where there is a preference for national agencies or central government to solve "local" problems creating delay and bureaucracy, inhibiting strategic decision-making and generating a fractious relationship between the central and local state. In the realm of planning, this has particular implications and can help explain some of the disjointed nature of policy and implementation at the urban level. One interviewee who worked as a project manager within Dublin City argued that key to the inability to deliver on some of the Integrated Area Plans was that "*….a lot of the functions are very centralised and they are not required to be part of a local approach*" (Project manager, Dublin City Council). Successful urban policy requires joined up thinking not just in relation to development but also education, social care, health and policing, none of which are under the control of, or financed by, the local authority, creating intractable coordination problems at the local scale. Paradoxically, these are discursively constructed as a failure of local government and used to justify further central government intervention in the urban sphere:

There was talk of a Dublin minister, which just shows you where Ireland is. Its central government controlled. In other cities that would be a mayor but it was, 'No, we'll have a

minister.' But again, what would that person be able to do? The number of ministers we have here is astonishing. But all that does is, when you think about it, looking for someone who's close to where the money is, as opposed to changing the money routes in the first place to make them more transparent and usable. (Senior Planner, state agency).

For example, major developments in central Dublin in the 1990s and the early 2000's, such as the International Financial Services Centre in Dublin docklands, were controlled by central government and agencies with the aim of meeting sectoral planning objectives rather than any pre-defined integrated metropolitan spatial planning objectives, with limited consideration for urban liveability or the communities in the immediate vicinity (Moore, 2008). Particular parts of the city undoubtedly economically benefitted from the attraction of international investment capital, but not because of any strategic attempt to promote Dublin. These benefits were the outcome of national sectoral planning and the influence of central state agencies playing out in Dublin's urban landscape.

Weak and competitive local government

Over the last thirty years, major development projects such as the docklands regeneration have been progressed but at arms length from local government and facilitated through special purpose authorities or central government agencies. Examples include not just the Dublin docklands redevelopment, but also its predecessor the Custom House Docks Development, as well as the Temple Bar redevelopment. More recently, the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA), which acquired the assets of failed banks, has been playing a critical role in the strategic development zone in the North Docklands (Byrne, 2016). These examples highlight the scale of intervention by the central state within the Dublin region but also the relative weakness of the local authorities. One key exception is their control of land use zoning and development management. During the Celtic Tiger period and with limited ability to raise finance (as until very recently there was no local tax base), land zoning decisions were driven by competition between local authorities for major projects resulting in a 'race for rates' and development levies. One central government official described this as 'the [central government] Department giving local authorities an incentive for dysfunctional behaviour' (senior official, central government). A case in point was along the orbital M50 route around Dublin city, where three 'regional-scale' shopping centres all within different local authority areas are located within 25km of each other (Figure 2). The limited revenue-generating capacity of local government was therefore one of the contributory factors in the property bubble and bust – the financial structures served to incentivise as much development as possible - but led to poor outcomes in terms of sustainable and appropriate planning (Mahon, 2012). As one elected official puts it:

I find it very difficult to believe what the planning department tells me because I feel the planning department and development department are all one. There should be one department keeping a check on the other and that's not happening. I feel what comes out of the planning department is in the interest of the development of the city, without the ethics of good urban planning practice. (Elected council member, Dublin City Council).

INSERT FIGURE 2 about here

The model of governance in the Dublin city-region rewarded competition rather than co-operation between local authorities, an issue that we discuss further in the next section, with devastating consequences once the property and economic crash hit in 2008. The development model was very simple and described as follows: 'You get your monies from business rates, business charges, development fees and then the small little gap between that and what you need to spend, you'll get from government' (Former CEO, Dublin Chamber of Commerce).

Where the local authority could exert some control and pressure, positive outcomes were evident for example in the introduction of minimum sizes on apartments, improved housing standards and the design of high quality public spaces, for example in Smithfield and Grand Canal Dock (Figure 2). However the lack of coordination on regulations and codes across the various local authorities meant that developers in essence played one local authority off against the other. The County Manager – now Chief Executive – rather than planners became the crucial decision-maker, with planning decisions driven by short-term financial considerations rather than an overarching spatial vision. The Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 2015, reinforced this distancing of planning decisions from planning professionals through additional powers vested in the responsible central government Minister to over-ride development plans. While this could be interpreted as a mechanism for enhancing coordination between local authorities, for others it is another example of a dysfunctional central-local government relationship and the inappropriate distribution of power and decision-making. As one local authority planner stated, the provision makes it "look like the local authority is just administering planning" (Senior Planner, Dublin City Council).

Politicised private actors

As noted earlier, facilitated by the weak position of local government, politicised private actors were critical actors in the growth coalition at work in the city-region. Public investigations and tribunals have highlighted the close, and sometimes corrupt relationships between private developers and some local politicians (Mahon, 2012). These networks extended to include the banks before 2008 creating a dangerously unstable development model:

You had banks who were competing viciously in the marketplace to get the attention of developers to lend them money to enhance their own scale and stature in the marketplace, you had local authorities who were being driven by the need for more development fees and then you had developers who were just looking to turn the next site into a profit and move on from there. (Former CEO, Dublin Chamber of Commerce).

The frantic nature of the planning environment was partly driven by discourses of limited land capacity within Dublin City during the Celtic Tiger period, justifying sprawling developments – generating rates and levies – in the surrounding counties of the wider city-region. The limits of this discourse were highlighted by an All Party Oireachtas (Parliamentary) Committee that identified speculative land hoarding in the urban core as a problem: there is "a perceived shortage of development land and an incentive to maintain the shortage and keep values up by

not developing the land until it suits their interests" (APOCC, 2004: 84-5). A former Dublin City Planner averred: "A lot of planning in Dublin has been quite top-down, elites knowing how to get in there, knowing how to apply the least amount of pressure to get what they want". Yet in the context of local authorities' weakness and dependency on private finance and development, development interests systemically had the upper hand. Uncontrolled sprawl on the urban fringe, unsupported by appropriate infrastructure meant once economic crisis struck, unfinished developments on the urban edge and vacant land at the core were the result.

The power of private developers was most clearly exemplified by the undermining of Part V of the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 2000. This required all developments to contain 20% social and affordable housing but was amended in 2002 after sustained lobbying from the construction sector. Instead Certificates of Exemption from affordable housing requirements could be issued by the local authority, in return for development levies. O'Connell (2007, 166) describes this as: "cash strapped local authorities [accepting] cash contributions (up to €60million in 2006) ... in lieu of social and affordable housing elements of new residential developments". The power exercised by politicised private actors over central government, within a context of weak local government, effectively undermined the intention of the original Planning Act (Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2015).

Prior to the financial crisis of 2008, weak local and siloed central government in Greater Dublin (and elsewhere in Ireland) was functional for private developers even if it produced regressive social outcomes and spatial planning failures. Direct access by the construction industry to local and national politicians made possible extensive rezoning, irrespective of infrastructure provision. The growth coalition showed little inclination to think systematically about metropolitan governance and planning. In the absence of formal and powerful regional structures, informal governance mechanisms were critical in shaping development outcomes.

Understanding 'metro-phobia' in Ireland

Dublin city authorities were set up to compete not co-operate. There has been under-investment in regional planning compared with other places in Europe (Former Senior Planner, Dublin City Council).

Accelerating the development of city-regions and, in particular, capital city-regions has become a key priority for policymakers in this metropolitan century (OECD, 2015). Powerful metropolitan regions have emerged where government and governance structures have been adapted to address fragmentation and where civic capital has been deployed to advance a coherent spatial vision. However, Dublin remains embedded in a state with strong centralising tendencies that have not just constrained local government but also militated against the emergence of regional-scale institutions with significant power. In the context of weak local government, where "5% of the power lies with elected members and 95% with the Chief Executive" (senior official, central government), any attempt to strengthen strategic regional planning is perceived less as an opportunity and more as a threat to the already limited

autonomy of local government. Intra-urban competition even when it would be beneficial to co-operate. Local authorities in the Greater Dublin area and elsewhere compete across administrative boundaries (Morgenroth, personal communication). The former CEO of Dublin Chamber of Commerce summarises this as a form of reverse NIMBYism - In My Back Yard Only at any cost - by local authorities:

we have four local authorities in a very small land space. And they compete with each other … [there is a lack of] joined-up thinking, it's that grand plan. It's that making a decision because it's right for the whole region (Former CEO, Dublin Chamber of Commerce).

However, given the emphasis at central government level on sectoral rather than territorial planning and drawing on our interview data, it is also clear that sectoral agencies and their political masters have little appetite to engage in a fundamental rethinking of the Irish political system to strengthen regional or metropolitan scale planning and coordination. In interview, one central government official suggested that were a metropolitan authority to be established for the Greater Dublin Area its functions could not include transport planning (under the remit of Transport Infrastructure Ireland) nor the attraction of international investment (under the remit of the IDA Ireland/Enterprise Ireland). Contrary to the international literature, which suggests that cities (territory) are now promoted as 'national champions', a sectoral approach remains pre-eminent in Ireland.

Structural and cognitive barriers exist to more effective vertical and horizontal co-operation in the Dublin metropolitan region, but Nelles (2012) argues that even where these exist, they can be overcome in cases where 'civic capital' – the construction of meaningful collaborative networks by civic entrepreneurs - is strong. The absence of civic capital in the Dublin city-region is perhaps linked to the persistence of strong local (county) identities in Ireland despite urbanisation and modernisation (Hourihane, 2003). It may also be a product of the particular type of growth coalition that exists in Dublin that includes a foreign investment sector that has remained aloof from involvement in local affairs. Effective spatial planning in the Dublin city-region would reduce the capacity to engage in significant rentier speculative development and is therefore opposed by property-based interests. This resistance to alternative thinking has worked against the emergence of any overarching urban vision for the Dublin metropolitan area and has stymied institutional or civic society capacity-building around a city-region identity. This reluctance to engage with the metropolitan as a distinct territorial scale – 'metro-phobia' – persists despite a number of attempts dating back to the Buchanan Report (1968) to encourage a more concentrated territorial (growth pole) approach to local and regional development in Ireland.

Even in the context of the National Planning Framework (NPF) published in 2018, which recognises the need for the urban to play a new role in local and regional economic development, some central actors remain ambiguous toward the need for new metropolitan governance structures. The NPF requires the production of a Metropolitan Area Spatial Plan (MASP) for the city-region but this will not be backed, until central government determines otherwise, by metropolitan governance structures that would give it weight. But, without a shift

to more strategic spatial development, the planning outcomes of the Celtic tiger boom to bust (O'Callaghan et al., 2015) are likely to be repeated. Ironically, despite central government's direct role in the development in the Docklands, Temple Bar and so on, there has been limited desire to promote effective governance structures for Dublin as a metropolitan region.

Compared to, say, London, Barcelona or Berlin, Dublin lacks powerful political voices operating at the metropolitan scale. A former local authority official claims that, in his experience, "most politicians speak with their hands behind their backs when speaking about Dublin" (former senior planner, Dublin City Council). The Local Government Reform Act (2014) proposed a complex administrative process to determine whether Dubliners should be given a plebiscite on a single directly elected mayor for the four Dublin counties. Promoted as a potential mechanism to improve policy coordination and bring decision-making about the city closer to the people, the proposal required the agreement of all four local authorities in Dublin county before being put to a referendum. One local authority area, Fingal, failed to support it, ending the plan. Given the primacy of Dublin demographically and economically, a popularly elected, Mayor of Dublin could potentially have destabilised institutionalised power structures and relations. A former CEO of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce acknowledges the challenge: "politically, a mayor of Dublin would be a very, very, very powerful position. My sense is that it would challenge the Taoiseach [Prime Minister] of the day". In a small state, this would be particularly problematic for the political classes. Experiences in Auckland, New Zealand indicate the problems of managing the large city in a small state (McArthur, 2017). In Ireland, central government officials endorse the view that even if there were to be a Mayor for the city-region, it should not be "a Boris [Johnson], but a politician who wouldn't have a massive profile" (senior official, central government). In contrast to the general trend towards reform of metropolitan governance in comparator cities, Dublin's institutional structures have been peculiarly resistant to change.

Conclusion

'My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis', James Joyce, 1906 (in Ellman, 1975: 83).

The growth and development of Dublin has been understood as a local instantiation (or "variegation") of neo-liberalism (Peck et al., 2013; Breathnach, 2014; Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2015; Kitchin, et al., 2012; Norris and Byrne, 2015) but it could also be viewed through the lens of a general "ungovernability" of metropolitan regions (Storper, 2014). In this paper, we argue that crises of metropolitan governability are nationally distinct. While Ireland has broadly followed a neoliberal political and economic model (Mercille and Murphy, 2015), land-use and planning outcomes are equally the product of attempts by local actors' strategies, political conflict and accommodation between central and local governments and private interests within a property-based growth coalition which have deep historical roots in the 'Irish variety of capitalism' (Ó Riain, 2014). Our evidence provides some support for Le Galès'

(2016: 166) suggestion that, "Clientelism, institutional and political exchanges are far more important than neoliberalism to explain policy change in the European context and beyond". Dublin is "more or less governed", to use Le Galès' phrase through formal and informal mechanisms, including clientelism and corruption, in uneasy relationship with institutions of government. These territorial politics have their origins in the founding of the state and reflect the geography of its post-colonial history, urban structure, patterns and discourses of land ownership, and political institutions. Although evolving over the long-run, territorial politics were reshaped during and after the Celtic Tiger. It is striking how successive judicial and parliamentary enquiries have identified a series of problems in the way the planning system operates but have made scarcely any impact on official thinking. In seeking an explanation for the Dublin experience, we place equal emphasis on the contingencies of context as we do on the unfolding of a neo-liberal logic that others have previously identified.

Despite Dublin's economic dominance being accentuated in the last decade, this primacy is not reflected in structures of metro-governance and spatial planning (Le Galès and Vitale, 2013) or in any attempts at meaningful reform; the system demonstrates a profound fixity in the context of an increasingly complex and fluid world. The intense localism of the political environment is at odds with the disproportionate attractiveness of the city to mobile global capital. There is a distinct absence of "civic capital" (Nelles, 2013) at the metropolitan scale. The importance of a long-standing and deeply-rooted ambiguity to the urban and the continuing centralisation of power and decision-making are a comparatively neglected aspect of analyses of Irish urban planning, yet are a crucial component of the Irish variety of capitalism. These play a significant role in producing infrastructure gaps and planning failures such as the over- or under-provision of housing.

The National Planning Framework, published in 2018 represents tacit admission of this reality but ignores the need for governance frameworks that would support a metropolitan approach. While the Regional Assemblies have been tasked with producing Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASP's) as part of their Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies, this will only address metropolitan planning rather than metropolitan governance. Moving on the latter is a power reserved for central government at a time of their choosing.

Unusually, in a European context, national politics have not favoured Dublin in the sense affirmed by Crouch and LeGalés (2012). While there has been significant central government activity *in* Dublin, there is comparatively little government *of* Dublin as metropolitan entity. The territorial politics of metropolitanisation in Ireland is however not just confined to the relationship between central government and other actors within the boundaries of the state; it is also constituted by the constraints placed on relationships between these actors within an institutional framework tightly controlled by central government. A general reluctance to engage with the metropolitan as a distinct territorial scale across institutions and scales of government demonstrates a deeply-rooted metro-phobia at work in the Irish context.

Acknowledgements

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