

Just Regions: Putting Social Justice into Regional Development

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Just Regions: paper outline

- Introduction
- Limitations of mainstream thinking
- Spatial justice, equality and democracy
- Rethinking regional development

Introduction

Paper seeks to contest dominant narratives and argue for alternative progressive regionalism

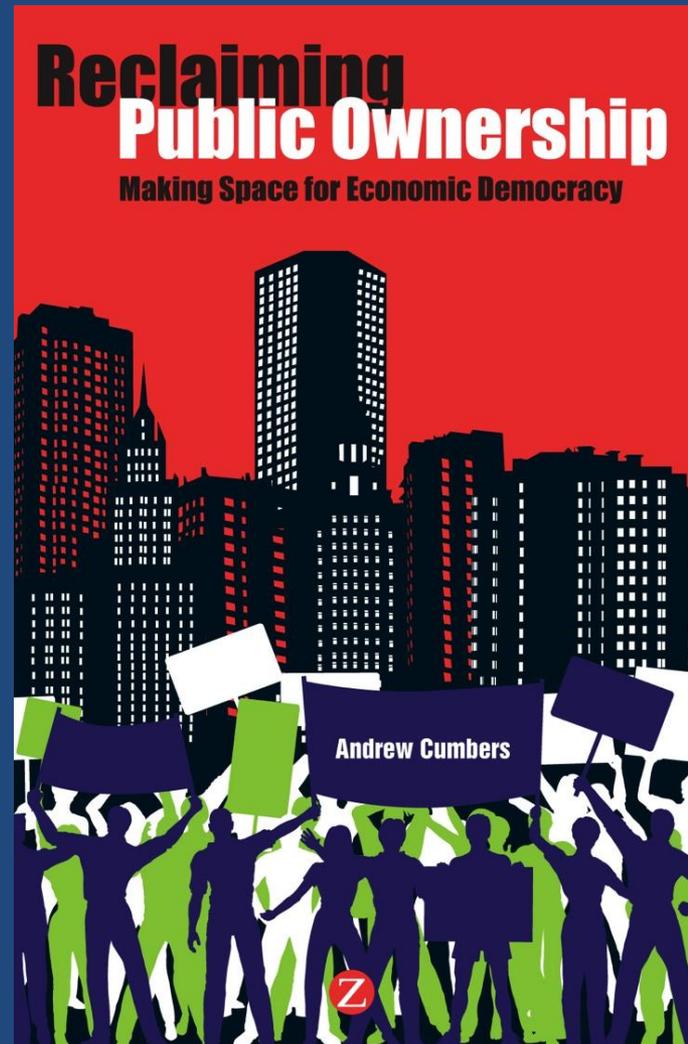
- Globalisation post Cold War
- Regional competitiveness agenda
- Crisis = opportunity to rethink around a regional social justice agenda

Part of broader agenda around alternative local/regionalist projects

Featherstone et al (2012) 'Progressive localism and the construction of political alternatives' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 31, pp. 177-182.

MacKinnon and Derickson (in press) 'From resilience to resourcefulness'. *Progress in Human Geography*.

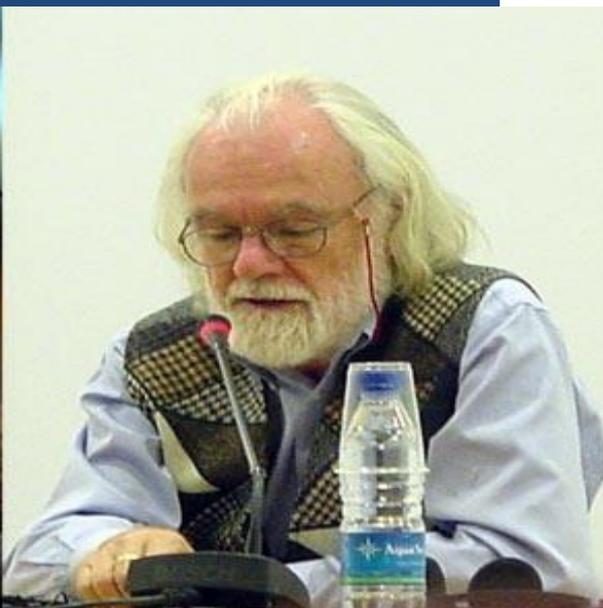
Cumbers, A. (2012) *Reclaiming Public Ownership: Making Space for Economic Democracy*, London, Zed.



Limitations of mainstream regional agendas

- Neoliberal policy environment – capital mobility, regional competition, flexible labour markets, Schumpeterian business innovation, welfare reforms
- Regional competitiveness agenda
 - Locally orchestrated supply-side approach replacing traditional regional policy
 - Business led – marginalising or co-opting other social actors
- Internalist conception of regions, deficit of skills, enterprise, social capital
- Limited role of regional institutions in pro-market agendas, coupling assets to GPNs
- Crisis, recession, austerity reinforcing inequalities, state retrenchment + tendencies towards inter-regional competition, regressive regional nationalisms

Progressive sub-national
politics at city scale, urban
social movements
(e.g. Occupy, Right to the City,
Living Wage, Transition Towns)



Spatial Justice, Equality and Development

- What kind of regional development and for whom? (Pike et al 2007)
- What are regions? – relational and internally fractured
- Tensions between equality, democracy and diversity
- Rethinking social justice: distributive, productive, appropriative – questioning control + ownership of regional economic decision-making
- Democratic participation: local + regional democracy
- External dimensions of regional development – geography of responsibility (Massey 2005)

Rethinking Regional Development

- Progressive regionalism – relational, outward-looking, multi-scalar, cooperative not competitive
- Spatial particularism v social justice, equity v diversity
- Key elements:
 - Decentred, locally orchestrated agendas with wider participation and inclusion (e.g. Danish renewables sector)
 - Spatial targeting of most disadvantaged areas: opposite of fiscal federalism but beyond spatial Keynesianism
 - Agenda of labour rights, living wages to ‘raise the floor’ of basic standards
 - Inter-regional networking and collaboration (e.g. public-public trans-local partnerships in utilities)
 - Revised (but not weakened) role of national government + institutional redistribution alongside devolution

‘ multi-polar polity in which the regions can run discrete areas of national life (rather than just a limited set of their own affairs) as well as count on action by the state to redirect opportunities towards them, bolster their bottom-up strategies, and regulate inter-regional competition. This is not an argument for a ‘hand-out’ approach to local regeneration, but recognition of the principle of spatial mutuality and connectivity. (Amin 2005: 625)