Neomedeivalism in the new urban and political order

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### Similarities Middle Ages and Present

#### Middle Ages
- Fragmented political authority
- Rise of independent cities
- Network of European nobility and clergy
- Unified by Christianity
- Multiple loyalties and identities
- Crisis of the (feudal) system

#### Current situation
- Fragmentation of state authority
  - Upscaling (EU, IMF, UN etc)
  - Sidescaling (Privatisation of public tasks including violence)
  - Downscaling (Regionalism, cities)
- Rise of world cities
- Network of Global business elite and intellectuals
- Unified by neoliberalism
- Multiple loyalties and identities
- Crisis of the (national) system
Differences Middle Ages and Present

• A repetition of history?
• Many differences:
  – Speed of social change
  – Nation state still important
  – Globalisation
• The future is not pre-modern but a new type of modernity (Sassen 2006)
  A Fragmented Middle Ages
  B Centralisation nation state
  C Fragmentation through globalisation and individualisation
• Different types of comparisons
  – A & C Middle Ages and Present (Comparing social systems)
  – A→B & B→C Transition between systems (Comparing social changes)
Outline: Development of the role of the Middle Ages in discourses on development

1) From bad to good
development of societies

2) From simple to complex society
development within society

3) Renewed interest in Middle Ages based on new complexities
globalisation, decentralisation, individualisation

4) Possible future scenario of International Relations

5) Transition between social systems

6) Similarities with the new spatial and political order

7) Research questions
1 Modernisation theory

- Removal of medieval traditional barriers to modernising forces
- Reduction of spatial differences into differences in time
- Deterministic – One path – Future is foretold
- Focus on differences between societies
2 Focus on complexity within society: From simple past to complex society

**Traditional**
- Stable
- Simple
- Fixed
- Duties
- Collective
- Gemeinschaft
- Ascribed social position
  - Status
- Mechanical solidarity
  - Natural

**Modern**
- Dynamic
- Complex
- Flexible
- Freedom
- Individual
- Gesellschaft (Tönnies)
- Achieved social position
  - Class (Weber)
- Organic solidarity (Durkheim)
  - Constructed
2 Complex national societies

• Society is becoming more complex
  – Economic development
  – Social differentiation
  – Individual freedom

• Analysis of current complexity starts with contrasting Medieval simplicity
  – Process of civilisation and increased control (Elias)
  – Fixed Medieval identity ↔ reflexive modern identity (Giddens 1991)
  – Controlled mobility in Middle Ages ↔ current mobility turn (Cresswell)
  – and many, many more others is this stereotypical template

• Focus on integration of diversity in single national society
3 New multiple complexities undermine national societies in the last decades

- Individualisation undermines national community
- Globalisation undermines the nation state
  - Americanisation
  - Migration and nation
  - National economies
    - New spatial division of labour (China)
- Dominance of nation states is challenged by:
  - Centralisation (UN, EU, IMF, etc.)
  - Privatisation
  - Spatial fragmentation (Cities and regions)
Interruption by nation state: 
Rise and decline comparable?

Nation state

Middle Ages  Present
Interruption by nation state: Rise and decline comparable?

- Christianity Church
- European nobility & clergy: Middle Ages
- Neo-liberalism, NGO's: Present
- Global Market
- Cosmopolitan elite
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4 International Relations: Alternatives to the “Contemporary” States System (Cold War + US hegemony)

- Alternative Forms of States System
  - A Disarmed World
  - The Solidarity of States (UN like)
  - A World of Many Nuclear Powers
  - Ideological Homogeneity (Different from Cold War)

- Beyond the States System (Based on three related elements: A system of sovereign states based on common rules)
  - A System But Not a Society (No shared rules, international chaos)
  - States But Not a System (No global, only regional relations)
  - World Government (Centralisation and no sovereign states)
  - A New Mediaevalism (Fragmentation, no sovereign states, but a system based on common norms and rules)

BUT: “there is no clear evidence that in the next few decades the states system is likely to give place to any of the alternatives to it” (Bull 1977)
4 A New Mediaevalism (Bull 1977)

*HOWEVER*: aspects identified in the 1970s fit current world

- **The Regional Integration of States**
  - EU
- **The Disintegration of States**
  - Regionalism (Flanders, Scotland, Catalonia)
- **The Restoration of Private International Violence**
  - Revolts and terrorism
  - Defence contractors
- **Transnational Organisations**
  - NGO
  - MNC
- **The Technological Unification of the World**
  - Travel
  - Internet

+ end of Cold War + globalisation + European Integration ➔

Neomedievalism as an established scenario for International Relations
From a possible future to comparing transitions between social systems

- Transition from modern system in crisis to new system
- What can we learn from previous transition from Middle Ages to modern society?
5 Immanuel Wallerstein: transition between world-systems: Transformational TimeSpaces

- **Events**
  - War on Terror

- **Cycles**
  - Kondratieff’s
  - New Division of Labour (Asia)

- **Structures**
  - World-systems
    - Modern world-system
      - started in 16th century Europa
      - expanded in 19th century to whole globe

- **Transformations between structures**
  - Only during structural crises
    - End of Middle Ages (crisis feudalism)
    - Present (crisis capitalism)
    - Uncertain outcome

- **Eternal**
  - Cities
  - Trade
5 From Medieval to Global Assemblages

- Disassembling and assembling new **assemblages** of **rights** related to **authority** and **territory** (private ⇔ public)
  - Centrifugal scaling of the Late Middle Ages (outward)
  - Centripetal scaling of modern nation state (inward)
  - Centrifugal scaling of the global (outward)
- Similar transition between complex systems & tipping points

This is not pre-modern but a new type of modernity. It arises out of the partial unbundling of what had been dominant and centripetal normative orders into multiple particularized segmentations.”
(Sassen 2006, p. 423)
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6 Similarities between Middle Ages and new spatial and political order

• Why are social scientists and geographers interested in Middle Ages?
  – Observed similarities
  – Opposition to old developmentalist discourses (see 1 & 2)
    • The enemy of my enemy is my friend

• What sources do they use?
  – First impression:
    • Secondary literature
    • Old
    • (Re)interpretation of old social scientists
  – It would be interesting to analyse which historical publications are used by social scientists and geographers
    • Question for further research
  – Market opportunities for Medievalists
6 Unbundling the territorial sovereignty of the nation state: centralisation, privatisation, decentralisation

• ‘Fragmented’ centralisation
  – Organisationally, f.i. EU, IMF, World Bank
    • European Economic Area
      – EU plus Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Iceland)
    • Schengen
      – EU + Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, but – UK and Ireland
    • Eurozone (EU 17 +)
      – Euro also official currency of some non EU members Andorra, Kosovo, Montenegro, Monaco, San Marino, and the Vatican City
  – Ideologically, f.i. neoliberalism
    • Lisbon agenda (all EU member states)
    • National deregulation based on EU regulation
6 Unbundling the territorial sovereignty of the nation state: centralisation, *privatisation*, decentralisation

- Privatisation of previous tasks of nation state
  - Erosion of state monopoly on violence
    - Security firms (f.i. airports)
    - Defence contractors
      - US department of defence has more defence contractors than US military in Iraq and Afghanistan
  - Gated communities
- Social security
  - Private hospitals
  - Insurance companies
- Transportation
  - Privatisation public transport
  - Toll roads
- Mixing of private and public property like in Middle Ages
  - Who owns and control the internet?
  - Bonuses of managers
6 Unbundling the territorial sovereignty of the nation state: centralisation, privatisation, decentralisation

- Decentralisation: erosion of centralised hierarchies
  - Regionalism: some regions
    - More autonomy for traditional regions (Catalonia, Flanders, Scotland)
  - Decentralisation: all administrations
    - Transfer of authority (≠ money) from the central level
      - Municipal administrations
  - New ‘regions’ based on cooperation between administrations
    - New territories (based on f.i. municipal cooperation)
    - Cooperation between administrations of different levels
    - Inclusion of private actors (f.i. transportation companies, but also civil society)
    - Sectorial or Functional focussing on one topic
    - Temporary
    - Networks
      - Become less linked to place

- Explosion of different New State Spaces
Unbundling of territorial sovereignty

- **Selective Unbundling**
  - Aspects (policies)
  - Participants
  - Territories
  - But nation state still important

- **Changing Multi level relations**
  - “Europe of the regions”
  - Non-state actors
    - Civil society, NGO
    - Business: local and MNC

- **Blurring of internal and external affairs**

- **Border from line to transition zone**
  - No borderless word
  - Barriers not based on external relations
  - But barriers of different domestic policies
From the unbundling of territorial sovereignty towards networks?

• Like in Middle Ages division and overlap of:
  – Legal systems
  – Political authority
  – Identities and especially loyalties
  – Values and norms

• New network based political structures create integration?
  – Persuasion based ‘voluntary’ cooperation
  – Agenda setting
  – Implementation still depends on the resources controlled by nation state
  – Communication
  – Based on some shared norms and policies
Spatial and social fragmentation and normative integration?

• Integrates world capitalism like the ‘universal’ moral order of medieval Christianity?
• Sovereignty belongs to the people and is not based on a single hierarchy originating in God
• Shared or disputes norms?
  Global civil society, democracy, universal rights
  Neoliberalism
  Sustainability
  Authenticity
  Middle Ages as unspoiled past
  Local festivals with traditional crafts
  White Europe before migration
  Neomediævalism as part of a lifestyle
  many more lifestyles
6 The fragmentation of the nation

• Location no longer determines identity and loyalty
• Individualisation and freedom to choose life path
  – From national community to individually selected networks
    • Shared norms within networks
    • Different norms between networks
• Fragmentation into consumption based lifestyles
  – Shift to image and incorporated values
  – From products to leisure
• Normative lifestyles
  – Product and leisure activities incorporate shared beliefs
  – Shared not in national, but more in global or local networks
• Changeable lifestyles
  – Practices and values of lifestyles
  – Individual choice for lifestyle(s)
  – Linked to political support
7 Conclusion: Research questions

• How do actors at different levels deal with multiple identities, loyalties and values?
  – Global  \((\text{Climate, international security})\)
  – EU  \((\text{Financial stability})\)
  – Nation state  \((\text{Public security})\)
  – Local + region  \((\text{Quality of life})\)
  – Individuals  \((\text{daily life})\)
    • Lifestyles  \((\text{consumption, leisure})\)

• Opposition, selective layering, ignoring?
Conclusion: Research questions

• How to deal with increasing divisions between social groups without national integration?
  – Global elite
  – Local population
• **Thick** cultural identity of population linked to **territories**
  – Regionalism
  – But differentiation between lifestyles
• **Thin** political identity of cooperating elites in **networks**
  – Regional administrative networks
  – But functional differentiation and transitory
• How can these be connected through communication?
Conclusion: Research questions

• How to deal with fragmented authority?
  – The shifting relation between spatial scales
  – Hierarchical power ↔ network cooperation

• How to deal with different and competing rule systems?
  – Risks
  – Opportunities
  – Strategies
    • International migrants
    • Border surfers
    • Land grabbing