

## Nationalist Neoliberalism?

### Minority Nationalism, Competitiveness and the Urban Question



Universitat Oberta  
de Catalunya

[www.uoc.edu](http://www.uoc.edu)

Ramon Ribera Fumaz  
Economics and Bussines Department  
Universitat Oberta de Catalunya  
[rriberaf@uoc.edu](mailto:rriberaf@uoc.edu)

- 1. Neoliberal Governance Restructuring**
- 2. Nationalism and (Neo-)liberalism**
- 3. Geographies of Minority Nationalism and Uneven Development**
- 4. Researching Minority Nationalism**
- 5. Catalan Nationalism and Neoliberalism**

# Neoliberal Governance Restructuring

<b>State Spatiality</b>	<i>1950s-1970s</i>	<i>1980s-1990s</i>	<i>1990s-2000s</i>
<b>Economic Imaginaries</b>	Fordism	Post-Fordism	KBE
<b>Spatial Policies</b>	Poles of Development	Regions/clusters	City-Regions Networks
<b>Characteristics</b>	Industrial Policy Nationalisation National Champions State Planning	Competition Policy Public/Private SME-lead Decentralisation	Public/Private Start up/FDI De- & Re- centralisation
<b>Examples</b>	Heavy industry concentred in few places...	UE Regional Policy Third Italy Decentralisation in France, UK, Spain, Italy...	ESPD Dutch Randstand New macro- regions (e.g. euro-regions)

- State rescaling and the resurgence of regional/local governance (Jessop, 2007)
- competitiveness new mantra:
  - OECD Competitiveness
  - EU Lisbon Agenda...
- competitiveness is “local”

# Neoliberal Governance Restructuring

- Neoliberal Rolling back/out (Peck and Tickell, 2003)
- Neoliberal everywhere and nowhere (Peck, 2001: 441)
  - neoliberal cities,
  - neoliberal regions,
  - neoliberal states,
  - neoliberal Europe,
  - neoliberal worlds...

BUT ... neoliberal nationalism?

Oximoron?

Neoliberalism – emphasis on markets and competitiveness

Nationalism – barriers to market

# Nationalism and (Neo-)Liberalism

- Minority Nationalist literature focus on cultural, political, civic or ethnic perspectives

## BUT

- the economy plays a vital roles of nationalist projects:
  - Flemish nationalism and the KBE (Oosterlynck, 2007)
  - Quebecoise sovereignty and Monetary Integration (Helleiner, 2003)
  - Lisbon Agenda and Minority Nationalism

HOWEVER in most of the literature:

- Economy is left a part or just as a justification – economy as static context
- Economic minority nationalism equated with protectionism or mercantilism – ignores the existence of (neo-)liberal policies
- Cultural aspects as a selling point of economic distinctiveness – ignores inner contradictions (i.e. the language problem,immigration, what is part of the “national” economy?...)

## THUS

*Do demands for regional autonomy based on distinctive cultural identities resonate with liberal economic discourses and the increasing integration of the world economy?*

Analysis of minority nationalism focus on

- the relation between “nation”-states and sovereignist regional projects
- (in western countries) wealthy sovereignist regions
  - Catalonia, Basque Country, Padania, Flemish, Quebec, Vermont...

Tendency to:

1. Economic nationalism as single-sided – national uneven development
2. Internal Geographies of minority nationalist projects

## 1. Economic nationalism as single-sided

Struggles between nation-state governments and regional nationalist projects

- neoliberal nation-states not as nationalist
- multiculturalism/cosmopolitanism – neoliberalism (Zizek, 1999)

HOWEVER

- evidence not so clear (Helleiner and Pickel, 2006)

i.e. Mergers and Acquisitions

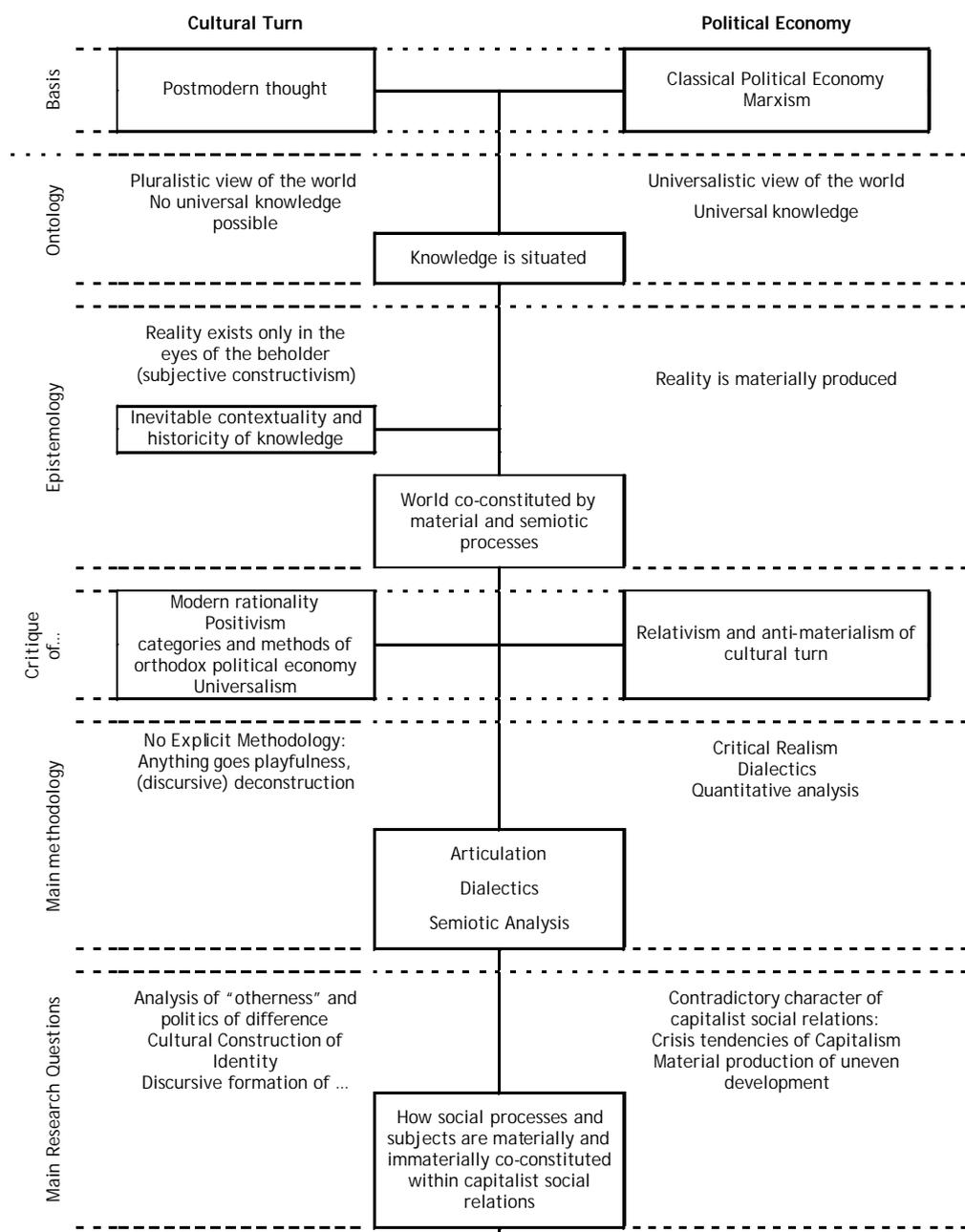
- Few liberal heavens (e.g. UK)
  - Abertis/Autoestrade-Endesa/Enel (Spain/Italy)
  - Financial industry Italy
  - Gaz de France/Suez
  - Eon...
- National-state uneven development

## 2. Sovereign economic imaginaries and the urban question:

- how nationalist projects articulate their inner territories (i.e. cities and city-regions)?
- Regions and nation-states as coherent but heterodox territories
- Conflicts between “multicultural” “global” enclaves and mono-cultural visions. E.g.:
  - Brussels
  - Montreal
  - Barcelona
  - Milan

*What are the geographies of economic nationalist projects? In particular, what implications do they have for the strategies of cities located in these regions to become full members of a global city network?*

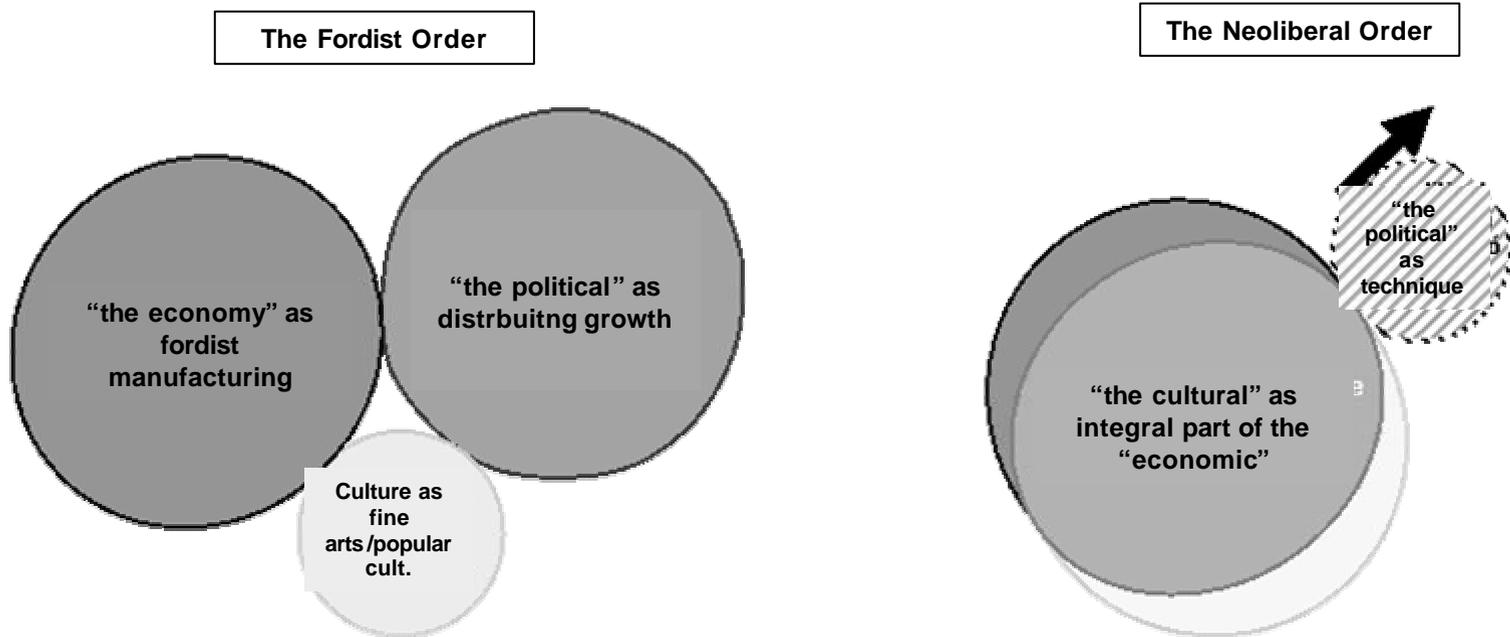
# Researching Minority Nationalism and Economic Projects



# Researching Minority Nationalism and Economic Projects

## 1. Rethinking Amin and Trhift (2004: xiii) through Mitchell (2000) and Castree (2004):

The actual mobilization of “culturalized” economic strategies can be seen as ‘a hybrid process of aggregation and ordering that cannot be reduced to either [ideas of culture, politics or economy] and, as such, requires the use of a unitary term such as’ *ideas of cultural economy politics.*’



## **2. Representations-of-space (Lefebvre, 1974)**

is only encountered through the understanding and abstractions contained in plans, codes, and designs that shape how we conceptualize ordered space' (McCann, 1999: 172).

For Lefebvre, this is the dominant form of space and it is intrinsically discursive.

## **3. 'spatial policy discourse'**

The discourse analytical framework as an operational and analytical tool for probing at the ways in which spaces and places are re-presented in policy discourses in order to bring about certain changes of socio-spatial relations and prevent others (Richardson and Jensen, 2003: 17).

## Spanish Neoliberal project

- through EU's integration (1986)
- EU as anchor to neoliberalisation

## **BUT**

- liberalisation+privatization+financialisation – spatial and power concentration
- UE funds + modernization + real estate + owners public companies: new capitalist class
- New (neoliberal) Spanish Economic Nationalism
- Catalan elites start to feel “unfairly” treated – 2001 back to struggle
- 2003: sovereignist government in Catalonia: new regional constitution, emphasis on infrastructure
- M&A battles

## **New national discourse in Catalonia:**

**“first we need to grow, then we will redistribute”** (J. Montilla, Regional President of Catalonia, 2004)

**“to recover the initiative in the 21st century economy is a challenge which can only be expressed in one concept: competitiveness”** (J. Montilla, Regional President of Catalonia, 2006)

- KBE-Catalonia – Lisbon Agenda
- New territorial organization – parallel to ESPD- EU
- New infrastructure – around Barcelona
- Developing new regional charter – reinventing nationalism

Explore redefinition of nationalism in the light of competitiveness discourse

Look at the uneven development produced by it

Conceptualise nationalist neoliberalism

