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Foreword for Natalie Papanastasiou *The Politics of Scale in Policy* (The Policy Press, 2019)

This book presents a long overdue encounter between policy studies and critical work on questions of scale (from geographers, anthropologists, political sociologists and others). Scale, as Natalie Papanastasiou argues compellingly, is central to the political and intellectual landscape of policy studies. It is present everywhere and almost always taken for granted as the terrain on which policy takes place – whether that be the role of *global* organisations (such as the World Bank or International Monetary Fund) in shaping policy or the *local* as the site of policy implementation (where the 'front line worker' meets the 'service user'). Between these two levels is the apparently fixed point of the nation – the place where policy and politics meet, in the offices, corridors, debating chambers and legal drafting departments of the nation-state.

Both space and scale matter for policy and policy studies. It has taken a long time to loosen the grip of methodological nationalism on policy studies which has conventionally treated policies as exclusively national phenomena, attached to a particular place and polity, and being devised, directed and enacted by a nation-state. Such a view enabled a comparative studies approach centred on looking for the similarities and differences between national systems (and attending to their evolution through time). However, this conception of the national space of policy has been increasingly challenged and there has been a growing attention to new domains and dynamics of policy, in particular, those associated with perceived processes of globalisation, regionalisation and Europeanisation. These processes are understood to have unsettled the assumed unities of place, people and policy associated with methodological nationalism. At times, there has been a risk of substituting a methodological globalism in its place, projecting a flat world of policy travel and transfer. More importantly, however, much of this emerging scholarship has been framed by a taken for granted conception of the scales or levels at which policy comes into being – the local, national, European, global and so on.

This book takes on this scalar framing directly and aims to enhance and deepen the work of critical and interpretive policy studies, not least by inciting a conversation with critical geographers and others. Critical geographers have done those of us working in policy studies a great favour by undoing such ways of thinking about space and scale – both conceptually and politically. For me, my former colleague Doreen Massey (2004; 2005) provided the opening to the relational constitution of place. For example, in an interview with Andrew Stevens, she gave a crisply compressed version of her view of the relational character of place making:

> For me, places are articulations of 'natural' and social relations, relations that are not fully contained within the place itself. So, first, places are not closed or bounded - which, politically, lays the ground for critiques of exclusivity. Second, places are not 'given' - they are always in open-ended process. They are in that sense 'events'. Third, they and their identity will always be contested (we could almost talk about local-level struggles for hegemony). (Massey nd)

But scale, too, is relationally constituted – even as specific scalar orderings aspire to be seen as natural and normal. My first practical encounter with the problem of scale came at a long-ago workshop comparing local government in the UK and Germany. The event was supposed to be a classic academic comparison of organisation of government in the two countries. However, the plan came unravelled when it became uncomfortably clear that 'the local' was not referring to the same thing in the two countries. So we had a different comparison on our hands: how were both space and scale being 'made up' in the government systems of these two places – the territory, its relationship with other 'scales of government', its imagined relationship to the population and more. Scale – or more precisely what Engin Isin (2007) called 'scalar thinking' – proved profoundly unreliable and unhelpful in this case. It has continued to be so in a variety of forms, whether in the strange juxtapositions of levels (the local and the global) or trying to map scalar hierarchies (as in the idea of multi-level governance). Scale is 'made up' – both in the sense of being imagined or invented and in the sense of being assembled or composed.

This question of the local is central to this book's exploration of the relationships between scale and policy. In chapters 5 and 6, Natalie Papanastasiou explores the local in its their different incarnations, institutionalizations and inflections. Her tracing of the shifting construction of the local in English education policy (away from its old association with the local authority) through a new political drive for 'localism' illuminates just how scale can be effectively re-imagined – and reveals the links between what she calls statecracft and scalecraft.

Escaping from the naturalising implications of scale demands a challenge to what Isin calls scalar thinking: 'the scalar thought that underlies our understanding of modern political entities (cities, regions, nations, states…) assumes exclusive, hierarchical and ahistorical relations among and between these entities, and conceals their multiple, fluid and overlapping forms of existence' (Isin, 2007: 211). To underline Isin's argument, scalar thinking treats the 'levels' of social and spatial organization as distinct and separate entities that exist in only external relationship to one another – juxtaposition rather than imbrication or interrelation. Their ordering – and the structure it implies – is hierarchical, such that each level subsumes, contains or even commands the one(s) below it. Thus, the local is subordinate to the national, which is, in its turn, subordinate to (and subsumed by) the global (see also Freeman's reflections on the subordination of local to global, 2001). Finally, the ahistorical character of scalar thinking conceals the spatial and temporal conditions of its construction (and the variation of scales) by projecting them as universal – and thus, a set of conditions that we must inhabit, rather than challenge or change.

In parallel with Isin's comments, the earlier critique by James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta (2002) points to the depoliticising effects of a particular way of thinking about scale – both in everyday thought and in the social sciences. Indeed, geometrical and spatial metaphors of 'up there', 'grassroots', 'bottom up' and 'top-down' are plentiful in the social sciences, in both conventional and critical modes. Writing about ideas of the state, Ferguson and Gupta argue that:

> Two images come together in popular and academic discourses on the state: those of verticality and encompassment. Verticality refers to the central and pervasive idea of

the state as an institution somehow 'above' civil society, community, and family. Thus, state planning is inherently 'top down' and state actions are efforts to manipulate and plan 'from above,' while 'the grassroots' contrasts with the state precisely in that it is 'below', closer to the ground, more authentic, and more 'rooted.'

The second image is that of encompassment: Here the state (conceptually fused with the nation) is located within an ever widening series of circles that begins with family and local community and ends with the system of nation- states. This is a profoundly consequential understanding of scale, one in which the locality is encompassed by the region, the region by the nation-state, and the nation-state by the international community. These two metaphors work together to produce a taken-for-granted spatial and scalar image of a state that both sits above and contains its localities, regions, and communities. (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002: 982)

This critique implies a double analytical challenge – to grasp scales as specific socio-political inventions (rather than universals) and as constructions with material effects or consequences. The crystallization or reification of particular scalar formations into normalised and naturalised architectures has to be understood as the outcome of political-cultural work, producing the arrangements of power, authority and rule inscribed within these architectures. But the resulting orderings are specific to places and times, even when the same vocabulary seems to apply generically. For example, the 'local' as a designated space of governing differs widely between nations – in its spaces, scales and articulation with other levels of governing. Massey has described this conception of scale as resembling 'a nested set of Russian dolls' (2004: 9) – precisely the sense of encompassment that Ferguson and Gupta highlighted. Such a conception of scalar ordering refuses the sort of relational understanding developed in this book. For example, Papanastasiou explores how the European level has come to play a decisive role in educational (and other) policy making as the European Union extended its reach through practices of scalecraft – making up the scale and investing it with policy making capacities, institutions and relationships. She highlights a fascinating dynamic that contrasts the 'particular' character of national policy and practice with the more abstracted or generalised quality of European level reflection and development. Here, the European level appears 'above' the politicised, particular and

partial quality of national policies: the European level is, she suggests in Chapter 3, characterised by a sense of 'placelessness' that transcends the ordinary geography of the various national spaces. This is reminiscent of the strange spatial and scalar qualities attributed to the global by celebrants and theorists of globalization: the sense that the global is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere in particular (but see Cameron and Palan, 2004).

With 'scalar thinking', we encounter the reification of particular levels and specific ensembles or configurations of levels as the natural or normal order of things. These acquire institutional form and also an aura of institutionalised permanence as they achieve political, journalistic and even academic recognition in acronyms (the EU is surrounded by such things as the EEA, EFTA, ECHR, etc.), specialist naming (Schengen/non-Schengen; the euro-zone) and reified technical terms, such as multi-level governance (e.g., Bache and Flinders, 2004; Scharpf, 1997; see the critique by Stubbs, 2006). However, the tendencies to which Ferguson and Gupta and Isin refer are only tendencies: the naturalisation and de-historicisation of scalar thinking is vulnerable to moments of de-naturalising and historicising counter-discourses – in what Papanastasiou calls 'dislocatory moments'. Challenges to both Europeanisation and globalisation have often drawn on a sense that the 'proper' or 'natural' scalar order – centred on the nation-state – has been distorted or deformed. For example, the United Kingdom's political struggles to leave the EU (aka Brexit) rested on arguments about the unnatural and artificial character of the EU as a scalar relation – one that deformed the proper scalar order of sovereign nation-states and the inter-state system. Similarly, the encompassment and verticality that Ferguson and Gupta attribute to state imaginaries proved vulnerable when they were attached to the supra-national forms of the EU. There, encompassment has been resisted as excessive, while the verticality of European multi-level governance has been resented as an oppressive force (on re-imaginings of space, scale and sovereignty in Brexit see, *inter alia*, Clarke, forthcoming).

These refusals do not escape from spatial imaginaries or scalar thinking. Rather they rest on a juxtaposition of normal-natural-proper configurations of scale, space and sovereignty with artificial, unnatural and excessive configurations. So, the verticality and encompassment enacted in the EU was not experienced as neutral but as a scalar formation that was

articulated to economic, political and social projects that have proved contradictory and crisis-ridden. It was also felt as a mechanism for distributing the costs of failure (especially on fiscal management, see the case of Greece). This is clearly not an end of scalar thinking (nor state imaginaries that are expressed in encompassment and verticality). Rather the campaign for Brexit rested on a distinction between artificial and natural orders of things in which the national level reclaimed all the naturalising aura of scalar thinking. But what is at stake here is an important reminder about the complicated relational entanglements – or, perhaps better, articulations – of the politics of scale and space. They are commonly entangled, at least in the sense that scalar thinking – or scalar imaginaries often (usually, always?) invoke senses of place: the intimacy of 'home'; the attachments of community; the felt density of the local; the 'imagined community' of the nation (Anderson, 1991), or the elsewhereness of the global. But we also have to attend to the fact that the 'material and discursive' politics of scale always *take place* in socio-spatial formations (even as they might attempt to reorganize them and their scalar relationships).

Rather than focusing on what political scientists have called the multi-level character of governing, we might want to think about the ways in which political or governmental projects (as well as practices by other actors) bring new spaces into being, or make new framings of space and scale visible, such as 'South East Europe' (Stubbs, 2005) or the 'local health economy' in the UK (Aldred, 2007). Both South East Europe and the 'local health economy' had to be imagined, mapped and produced – made into a reality – by the very institutions that name themselves as governing the area. Allen and Cochrane (2007) have explored these processes of 'assembling' in a study of regional government in England. They make clear the ways in which these are 'regional' assemblages, rather than geographically tiered hierarchies of decision-making, produced through a tangle of interactions and capabilities within which power is negotiated and played out. There is, as the authors show, 'an *interplay* of forces in which a range of actors mobilize, enrol, translate, channel, broker and bridge in ways that make different kinds of governing possible' (2007: 1171; emphasis in original). Such a perspective stresses the political processes by which scales are created and assembled, rather than being pre-existing sites that become the focus of new mechanisms of governing. 'Making up' scales is a social and political practice – and one with

no necessary guarantee of success. Only when the particular ordering of scale becomes established, institutionalized and acted upon can such a politics of scale be called effective.

Policy, then, is interwoven with scale in multiple ways. It is created at enacted at specific scales; it creates, adjusts or reinforces particular scalar hierarchies; and it constantly reinforces the significance of scales. In the process, it borrows from the authorization of existing scalar levels (the placelessness of the European; the weight of the national; the implied membership or sharing of the local, for example). It then reciprocally enhances the authority of those levels – and the agencies and agents who people them. In Chapter 6, Natalie Papanastasiou takes up the significance of the 'front line' in policy work (sometimes known as 'street level bureaucrats', Lipsky, 1980). We inherit the idea of the front line from 'hierarchically integrated' organisations, particularly the military and state bureaucracies. The front line, in this sense, work at the end of a 'chain of command' with a clear scalar structure. In the processes of state reform that have dominated the last forty years, such vertically integrated organisations have become less common (replaced in part by networks, partnerships, contracting relationships, outsourcing, etc.). As a result, the front-line is somewhat harder to find and front-line workers may take on new forms – sub-contracted domiciliary care workers, charity volunteers, or the 'co-producing' users of services. Such front-line workers are, at least, more distant organisationally from the 'commanding heights' of policy and strategy and may be only loosely connected by a variety of organisational devices (contracts, targets, performance management techniques, etc). As a result, the 'dispersed state' (Clarke and Newman, 1997) creates a proliferation of front lines and multiplies varieties of front-line workers.

In sum, contemporary policy movements make the spaces and scales of policy both more visible and more problematic (as we argue in Clarke et al, 2015). We should not assume that the inherited vocabulary of policy studies – particularly nation-states and global institutions on the one hand, and the hierarchical modelling of scale on the other – can provide adequate or productive analytical resources for studying policy. More importantly, they were never appropriate to that challenge. Instead, Papanastasiou invites us to consider how policy moves, means and makes things – including scales themselves. Such entwined

projects of policy making, statecraft and scalecraft are, in this view, always unfinished, even when apparently naturalized as necessary and inevitable.

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