

The Regional Concept, Public Policy and Policy Spaces: The ARC and TVA

Jay D. Gatrell, Robert Q. Hanham, Jeff Worsham, and Maureen McDorman

Abstract—This paper examines two policy spaces—the ARC and TVA—and their spatialized politics. The research observes that the regional concept informs public policy and can contribute to the formation of stable policy initiatives. Using the subsystem framework to understand the political viability of policy regimes, the authors conclude policy geographies that appeal to traditional definitions of regions are more stable over time. In contrast, geographies that fail to reflect pre-existing representations of space are engaged in more competitive subsystem politics. The paper demonstrates that the spatial practices of policy regions and their directional politics influence the political viability of programs. The paper concludes that policy spaces should institutionalize pre-existing geographies—not manufacture new ones.

Keywords—Agenda Setting, Politics, and Region.

Regions are not, however, independent actors; they exist and ‘become’ in social practice...

[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

THE re-constitution of political space has become of heightened interest to academicians and policy makers. Rooted in a neo-institutional interpretation of the rational governing unit, policy making and implementation has evolved into a complete complex of social spatial relationships that link the state, localities, bureaucrats, and citizens in discrete policy processes and shared spatial practices [2]. The purpose of this paper is to examine how two previously articulated regions have performed within the context of an accepted policy framework that examines overall stability and political viability of public policy initiatives that are derived from and/or contribute to the formation of specific regional constructs or identities.[Note 1] In particular, the findings of this study should be of interest to policy makers and academics alike as increasing resources are being dedicated to spatialized policy initiatives, such as the ARC, TVA, and Delta Regional Authority [Note 2].

Hence, the paper explores the ability of governments to create spatial institutions that are stable and promote efficient

and effective area-wide policy implementation. To illustrate how and when institutions and policy can be spatialized, this paper examines two Southeastern policy spaces: the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). As the research indicates, spatial policy niches can either flourish or flounder depending on how regions appeal to the public’s shared geography and the ability of policy makers to ‘make real’ or institutionalize these geographies. In particular, the paper focuses on how well defined policy spaces promote the development and implementation of stable and distributive politics. Likewise, the paper posits that poorly constructed spaces are inherently less stable and conflict prone. In most cases, conflict arises when policymakers engage in the more divisive politics of redistributive and regulatory policies that do not necessarily reflect the public’s more widely accepted regional identity.

The first section of this paper: (1) reviews contemporary discussions of the region, (2) examines the peculiar institutional context of regional policy in the US and (3) the historical development of the TVA and ARC. The second section examines how a shared set of spatial practices emerge to create spaces of policy implementation—the ARC or TVA—and how these policy spaces are, or are not, subject to stable subgovernment politics. The paper concludes with an analysis of institutional stability and considers the overall stability of each subsystem and diagrams the spatial practices of each.

II. REGIONS AS INSTITUTIONALIZED BOUNDARY

Policymaking is inherently spatial, yet the geography of the public policy process and related decision making processes has seldom been investigated. Instead of investigating the spatial characteristics of policy making, geographers have opted for an approach that explores the spatial expression of policy in the landscape by ‘plotting’ policy outputs, assessing program outcomes, or considering the politics of power. While these exercises have merit, a new policy geography is emerging which examines the socio-spatial implications of scale, boundary, and region. These new approaches emphasize the spatiality of policy making by exploring the function of basic geographies within a wider set of contemporary and historical political, cultural, and institutional realities [1,3,4,5,6,7].

In the late 1980s, geographers recognized the once passé regional geography was again an important and a useful concept for understanding the world around us, the socio-

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spatial dynamics of territorialization, and globalization [8]. [Note 3] In particular, reconstructed regional geography embraced the region as more than a container of things and began to explore the real world dynamics of socio-spatial dialectic in place and across space. In place of a spatial box, new regionalists offered inter-related conceptualizations of the region as: (1) response to economic and political processes, (2) platform for interaction, and (3) individual and collective identifier [9, 10, 11]. In either context, regions exist as and extend from extra-regional economic, cultural and political institutions [1]. As such, the new regionalists have contributed to a body of literature focusing on the politics of regional development [12].

The new regionalists challenged the 'given' nature of space by positioning regional geography within an inter-connected and over-lapping collection of social, political, economic, and cultural processes [2]. In the process of examining the inter-connectedness of socio-spatial processes, new regional geography gave rise to and grew out of a variety of scalar discussions within geography associated with the localities debate. In an attempt to situate micro and macro conditions and processes in space, the regionalist framework contributed to the development of a significant body of research on the production of space and scale and the role of government, individuals, institutions, and capital in altering social structures.

Policy Space and The Region

One theme is prominent throughout the growing collection of regional political geographies: conflict. In nearly all cases, regional researchers focus on the direct (political-economy) and indirect (cultural) by-products of a global economy and the many ways in which the geopolitics of capitalism sites and situates global actors at various differing scales (local, regional, and global). In practice, regional geographies of conflict explore how the inherent contradictions of capitalism are expressed across space and the ways in which regions and politics of scale articulate the dynamics of the space:place dialectic. To explore the resulting conflict in local places, geographers have turned to Lefebvre's (1991) Triad to understand the dynamics of global processes in local places [12]. Comprised of spaces of representation and representational space, new regional geographer's use Lefebvre's Triad (Figure 1) to explore how the spatial practices of individuals, communities, firms, and governments mediate the disjuncture that exists between, and the conflict that results from, the instability experienced in the everyday places (representational space) and the implied stability of planned spaces (spaces of representation) [12, 13]. Based on how people, communities, and government resolve various conflicts or increase the overall stability of social structures, Lefebvre's Triad (when placed within a regional context) can be used to resolve conflict and construct networks of social relation from the micro through macro scales (see Gatrell and Worsham 2002).

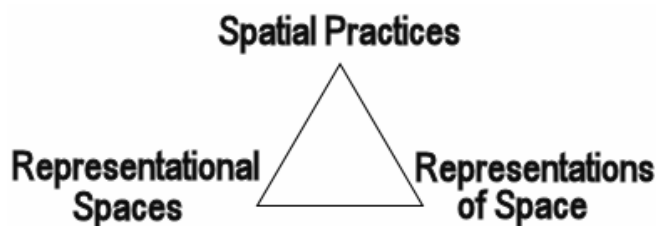


Fig. 1. Lefebvre's Triad

As our two case studies illustrate, policy spaces, when properly articulated, develop and benefit from the shared representations of space and spatial practices of a region, its residents, and all subsystem participants. In contrast, spatial practices associated with mixed policy missions, diverse policy types (distributive—delivery of services or benefits to the general public without perceived resource limitations, redistributive—the redistribution of limited resources to specific clients [zero-sum game], or regulatory—rulemaking and enforcement activities) and uneven accounts of the region result in conflict and decreased stability.

III. SPATIALIZED SUBGOVERNMENTS

The federal policy process in America is anchored by the congressional committee system. To explain the mechanics of policy making, researchers investigate how communities of actors, known as subgovernments or subsystems, promote policy agendas, define programs, enact enabling legislation, and perform oversight functions [14, 15]. To model political behavior within subgovernments, researchers have made several basic assumptions about policy making, policy makers, and subgovernments: (1) limited participation through representative government; (2) a well-defined division of labor exists based on the committee system; and (3) policy-makers are self-interested [16, 17]. Based on these assumptions, the institutional division of labor associated with the committee system sites public policy within discrete policy venues or subsystems [18]. In doing so, the subgovernment approach assumes that the activities of individuals, legislators, bureaucrats, and interest groups 'naturally' coalesce around the policy initiatives of substantive congressional committees; thereby limiting participation. In the case of this comparative study, we suggest policies coalesce around "geographies" and that geography can promote stable or unstable policy implementation.

In its most basic and most stable form, subgovernments have been crudely conceptualized as an 'iron triangle' [16]. Iron triangles are stable, closed, and nearly autonomous decision-making systems composed of congressional committees, agency bureaucrats, and interest groups [16]. Alternately, subgovernments can also be conceptualized as 'issue networks', 'advocacy coalitions', or 'subsystems' [16, 19]. Irrespective of terminology, policy spaces are the domain of experts and characterized by the principle of limited participation. For this reason, heightened policy visibility threatens the stability of subgovernments as new actors may seek to 'policy poach', 'grandstand', or establish new political

turf within a policy portfolio. Despite the attributes assigned to subsystem politics, Gatrell and Worsham (2002) posit policy spaces are inherently more stable than the subsystems politics described above [5]. Indeed, heightened visibility of policy spaces and regional myths do not necessarily destabilize—and may even strengthen—spatial policy systems [5, 6].

The following analysis examines two specific spatial niches within and between the same policy subsystem. One, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), appeals to an accepted economic, cultural, and political myth based on poverty, a recognizable culture, and in most cases a shared physical geography—the Appalachian Mountains. In many ways, the ARC exists in much the same way today as it did (or does) under more traditional descriptions of Appalachia as a physical (formal), cultural (vernacular), and economic (functional) region. Nevertheless, the structural dynamics of subsystems and electoral politics of Congress resulted in an ARC that does not correspond to any single or combination of Appalachian regions—but a boundary that appeals to Appalachia's imagined physiography, culture, and economics. The other—the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)—is an example of a more ambiguous national policy that becomes embedded within a regional myth that has not been so successfully cultivated.

Whereas these are similar policy regions, their histories, political context and policy missions are unique. As Figure 2 demonstrates, the exact trajectory, scale and scope of both the ARC and TVA vary. Historically, the ARC has been more focused on the distributive politics of economic development and infrastructure. In contrast, the TVA's economic development mission has been complicated by regulatory obligations and redistributive politics. Despite this inherent limitation, both the ARC and TVA operate in the "economic development and public works" subsystem of Congress, their cartographies overlap, and they evolved as a result of major Presidential Initiatives under unified federal governments. Likewise, both programs have experienced periods of political instability as legislators and the public questioned specific actions of the agencies, the broader legitimacy of the program, or sought to erode the policy image. Most importantly, both policy spaces compete for federal resources within a shared Congressional institutional context and this shared context is the basis of the comparative case studies.

IV. CASE STUDIES

The TVA and ARC are examples of large-scale infrastructure programs associated with historically non-urban places. Similarly, the TVA and ARC are closely associated with major social welfare policy campaigns, the New Deal and War on Poverty, respectively. Likewise, these policy spaces were defined during periods of economic crises and both policy initiatives contributed to and expanded the public's understanding of each region. In practical terms, policy spaces are shaped by and shape the action agenda of policymakers, public interest, issue salience and legislative action. In case of the ARC and TVA, this interactive trend can

be readily observed by charting total stories and total legislation (Figures 3 and 4). Historically, the observed "saw-toothing" of the total stories and legislation (as indicated in the graphs) coincides in both the ARC and TVA cases—and is consistent with the findings of Baumgartner and Jones [17]. In statistical terms, a positive correlation can be observed between TVA and ARC bill and story data, .397 and .292, respectively ($\alpha=.000$). That is, higher visibility in the media results in increased bill activity and an increased potential for conflict as legislators outside of a policy area (i.e., policy space) may seek to engage in the process as a result of an issue's increased visibility and salience.

Despite inherent similarities and overlapping geographies, the policy trajectories of the TVA and ARC have not shared the same degree of stability. Indeed, the fortunes of each has waxed and waned within the changing politics of nation. Yet, the geography of each still endures. In terms of their institutional context within congress, the committee system, and the wider subsystem politics, the programs were also selected as they share the same broad policy portfolio and the pork barrel politics of each are often bundled together to expand each region's functional constituencies and maximize support. Moreover, this comparative study is important because—as Stein and Bickers (1995) notes—new geographies (such as the new Delta Regional Commission) will need to exist within the ARC/TVA policy bundle as the portfolio must continue to expand its "electoral geography" to maintain support [20]. Indeed, the physical expansion of the ARC boundaries has been observed over the years. Similarly, the TVA has steadily expanded its infrastructure and energy production capacity over the years to the extent that the TVA customer base exceeds the region's "official" population. For all of the above reasons, the TVA and ARC cases are useful for understanding the role of the region within the policy process and the political viability of policy regions within the institutional context of congress. Likewise, the cases may prove to be instructive for understanding how regions inform policy (i.e., ARC) and policies define regions (i.e., TVA).

TVA: A policy driven region

Founded by the Roosevelt administration as "a corporation clothed with the power of government but possessed of the flexibility and initiative of a private enterprise", the TVA has emerged from recent history as a cultural and political icon [21, 22]. One of the New Deal's most visible success stories, the United States Post Office issued a series of 20th century commemorative stamps that prominently include the "TVA" as part of the 1930s series. Yet, few Americans would likely be able to locate the region or correctly identify the full range of activities. Created in 1933, the primary purpose of the TVA was to promote responsible resource management in a region of the nation that was over farmed, prone to floods, experienced destructive timbering, and was falling even further behind the rest of the nation. Emblematic of New Deal liberal-federalism, the TVA used federal largesse to address local poverty, subsidize local projects, develop key national infrastructures, and employ victims of the Great Depression. In the process, the TVA would specifically build and expand the infrastructure of a TVA region that grew to include the entire state of Tennessee and the more limited Tennessee

Valley watershed that straddled the borders of neighboring states. However, the growth and expansion of the TVA was a slow process of obtaining new land, constructing new facilities, defining expanded markets for power generated by the TVA, and expanding its role as local utility provider. Yet, the influence of the TVA extends well beyond the formal borders of the policy region and includes sale and transmission of electricity throughout the Southeast and Mid-West.

The incremental expansion of the TVA's jurisdiction was accompanied by agency mission creep. That is, TVA's resource management mission grew to include anti-deforestation projects, flood control, public health protection through decreased malaria, rural electrification, recreation, city planning, libraries, economic development, and soil conservation, as well as aiding the World War II war effort. Today, the TVA characterizes its mission as a triple "bottom line" that emphasizes economic, environmental, and societal value [21]. While these three values are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they are often cited at the nexus of contemporary political conflict between: (1) public and private sector; (2) national, state and local government; (3) development and environmentalism; and (4) community development and the profit motive.

To accomplish this fragmented mission, the TVA was structured as a private enterprise-akin to the Post Office with a board of directors appointed by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Because of its unique funding scheme and the diversity of policy initiatives, the oversight role of the Congress is considerably less straightforward compared to more traditional agencies or commissions. That is, Congressional oversight of TVA activities is: sited in variety of policy venues, visible across a range of constituencies, and inherently competitive. Finally, the TVA is burdened by the mandate to provide low cost energy to wholesale markets, reduce debt, and self-fund non-energy related activities; thereby reducing its overall dependence on the federal budget. Historically, the TVA mission and spatial context has been uneven--and contradictory. While the initiative was initially conceptualized exclusively as distributive policy, the TVA and the historical context within which it operates have changed over time. Today, the TVA is engaged in a variety and wide collection of now controversial activities and policies. Most notably, the TVA has had to experience a shift in the public's perception of the environment and the appropriate balance between development and environment. One of the most visible environmental conflicts, raged through the 1980s when endangered species were put at risk by TVA facilities at Tellico (the snail darter fish) and a proposed dam at Duck River was stopped to preserve the habitat of two mussel species [23]. During this same period (roughly 1980-1986), planned construction on three nuclear facilities was stopped [24]. More recently, TVA environmental conflicts have expanded to include a powerful coalition of environmental groups and Native American organizations who seek to stop private development of TVA lands for ecological and historical purposes [25]. In addition to environmental politics, the organization's structural configuration has proved to be a challenge with respect to congressional oversight. In the 1950s, the TVA was rocked by a major scandal known as the Dixon-Yates Contract Scandal. However, the TVA emerged

from the 1950s solvent (nearly self-sufficient in financial terms) and the legitimacy of public power provision was firmly established. Besides scandals, the public's perception of the project has been shaped by pro-privatization initiatives and the Reagan-esque notion of limited federal government. Since 1980, these two trends have introduced increased instability within the subsystem (95th Congress – present) as members of Congress seek to redefine the agency, its policies, and the role of government. These TVA reform efforts were inadvertently supported by the TVA's highly visible rural electrification initiative as the rationale for a government agency to promote rural electrification no longer exists. In concert, political, economic, and philosophical change has also coincided with a number of TVA high visibility conflicts with environmentalists (wildlife kills, coal plant, and nuclear power), vacationers, deregulation, land sales/leases, and other utilities.

ARC: Policy derived from a region

The social construction of Appalachia as a poverty space has a long history that extends from the 1800s and this collective history populates the public's perception of the region and its peoples [26, 27]. In the 1930s, the federal government codified the image of the region as a poverty space when it recognized that the conditions of urbanization, economic and community development observed in Appalachia lagged behind that of the rest of the nation [28, 29, 30]. Like the TVA, regional development efforts in Appalachia became a major—if more informal—component of the New Deal vis-à-vis creation of two WPA districts (Allegheny and Appalachia) that served to delimit the initial boundaries of what would eventually become the ARC [31]. Yet, the region itself was not a target or engine of New Deal policy per se. The present day ARC was a by-product of later work performed by the President's Appalachian Regional Commission (PARC). PARC was charged by President Kennedy to study the socio-economic conditions of the region and to set an appropriate policy agenda to improve the material conditions of everyday life and provide a foundation for future development. Based on PARC's recommendation, enabling legislation was passed in 1964 to create a 13-state jurisdiction that partnered states with the federal government to promote economic change [32]. Today, this mission is embodied in the ARC's three inter-related goals: (1) Education and Workforce Training, (2) Physical Infrastructure, and (3) Civic Capacity and Leadership. While the physical infrastructure mission is the most visible of ARC initiatives (i.e., the Appalachian Development Highway System), the ARC has primary responsibility for coordinating and administering programs in the other two goal areas that clearly compliment the infrastructure project. Because of the program's scope, the ARC provided tangible benefits to a varied pro-growth constituency including local governments, national business coalitions, and individual residents by securing federal funds.

In its final configuration, the ARC grew to include 410 contiguous counties in 13 states from New York to Mississippi. West Virginia is the only state to be entirely within the region. Beyond the state and county jurisdictions, the ARC depends heavily on the subregional geography of the

local development districts (or LDDs). The ARC depends on multi-county LDDs to define local priorities, design projects, and—when possible—implement ARC projects. Yet, the politics of local development—as expressed through LDDs, counties, or states—are increasingly competitive. As such, conflict at the local and intra state scale—outside of the subsystem—does influence the overall implementation of policy and programs. In fact, the competition and strategic investments of federal funds captured by the ARC is highly competitive within and between states and localities. However, LDDs, counties, and states work together to cultivate a legitimate and shared image of the policy region within the institutional context of the Congress.

Today, the ARC continues to fund a variety of development and infrastructure projects. However, the core of the ARC projects remains the completion of the development highway system. However, a shift in ARC policy can be observed since the beginning of the Bush administration. Specifically, the ARC has strategically repositioned its priorities and increasingly focuses local development efforts that combine workforce development and community leadership. In the end, the ARC has proven to be an enduring program because it continues to appeal to, re-produce, and re-articulate (when necessary) the original regional scheme.

Nevertheless, the ARC has been the subject of considerable political debate on the legitimacy and efficacy of the ARC approach. Within the context of the devolutionary politics of the Reagan, G. H. W. Bush, and G. W. Bush administrations, the historical trend towards a New Federalism and the Contract with America, the ARC—like the TVA—has been a popular target for balanced budget and anti-pork barrel crusaders. Indeed, the ARC has experienced periods of diminished political viability as a result of attempts to eliminate the program, expand the ARC boundaries to counties well-beyond the mountain system, and controversial road projects—like West Virginia's Corridor H. Indeed, some legislators have argued that expanded urbanization, growth in the southern region of the ARC, and other examples of modernization suggest that the rationale for the ARC—as a poverty space—exists. The results of these efforts to eliminate, reduce, or redefine the region can be observed between the years 1981-1994 (97th-103rd Congress) when the ARC visibility and legislation increase. However, it was the strength and shared political and spatial practices of ARC member states, congressional delegations, and the time honored tradition of logrolling that enabled the commission to thrive. Ironically, attacks on the ARC nearly vanished when Georgia's Newt Gingrich became the speaker of the House. While the ARC endures, intermittent attempts to under-cut, decrease funding, or eliminate the ARC underscores how the social, political, economic, and even cultural geography of Appalachia has changed and promote moments of instability. That is, policy changes the region and the resulting changes re-articulate the regional myths and alter subsystem politics.

Characteristics	TVA	ARC
Sub-System Type	Competitive	Monopoly
Primary Policy Venues*	Agriculture, Military Affairs, Public Works, Energy, Government Operations, Environment	Public Works Committees
Mean Herfindahl's Index	0.62	0.73
Primary Policy Type	Distributive	Distributive
Secondary Policy Types(s)	Regulatory & Redistributive	
Primary Justification	Resource Management & Flood Control	Economic Development
Primary Revenue Source	Energy Sales & Land Leases	Federal Government
Secondary revenue Source	Federal Government	States
Interaction with Public	Electric Utilities and 7.3 Million Customers	22 Million Constituents in Member States

Fig. 2. Dynamics of the Spatial Niche

V. DATA AND METHODS

To determine the competitiveness of policy subsystems, we calculate Herfindahl's Indices. The obtained Herfindahl's Indices demonstrate that the stability of policy spaces varies over time and these fluctuations correspond to major events. The Herfindahl's Index is used to determine the overall share of transactions performed by a single subsystem within a given "policy space". In a political context, numerous conditions, such as scandals or changes in political philosophy, may influence the viability of a policy space and thus inform the overall legitimacy of the actors, region, and policy as the total number of actors and potential policy venues expand. Beyond political change, procedural changes in Congressional rule making also influence competitiveness of subsystems. In this study, a Herfindahl's Index (see below) was calculated for each policy region and Congressional session (a two-year period) to determine the relative degree to which any a single congressional subsystem has control over a policy area [33, 6].

$$HI = \sum (X_i/T)^2 \quad (1)$$

where X_i represents the number of bill referrals to a congressional committee i

T represents the total number of Appalachian/TVA bill referrals to all congressional committees

HI represents the Herfindahl's Index

In this study, the index is based upon bill referrals to specific committees as published in the Congressional Record.⁵ In practice, the Herfindahl's Index can be used to assess the relative stability of subsystem politics and allows researchers to understand the degree to which policy discussions are or are not limited, venue expansion has or has not occurred based on total reports, and the general character of subsystem politics. Ideally, well articulated spatial policy will result in an accepted, limited, stable, and controlled geography characterized by limited venue expansion. For example, a complete policy monopoly--the most stable form of policy politics--would receive an index of 1.0. Alternately, disintegrative subsystem politics would be characterized by little or no venue control and approach 0.0. Realistically, subsystem politics exist along a competitive continuum from 0.0-1.0.

To assess issue salience and the public's awareness of a policy space, the paper uses data obtained from the Reader's Guide to Periodicals. The Reader's Guide was chosen as it indexes a cross-section of national—not local or regional—magazines and periodicals across multiple content areas. Overall, the diversity and generic nature of the Reader's Guide indexing makes it an effective gauge of issue salience across the nation and multiple constituencies. Using a methodology developed by Baumgartner and Jones, story counts are used to measure the national visibility of a policy region. [Note 4] In most cases though, as Baumgartner and Jones established and others have replicated (see [34, 15]), increased visibility seldom promotes the overall viability of a policy subsystem [17]. Indeed, the viability of policy subsystems is especially challenged when publicity results for waste, fraud, abuse, or negative externalities. The factors are all the more difficult to control when the mission of a policy subsystem is mixed, actors compete to define a region's character or boundaries, and the policy type is not distributive. In short, the sub-government model holds increased bill and story activity are inherently negative conditions within subsystems.

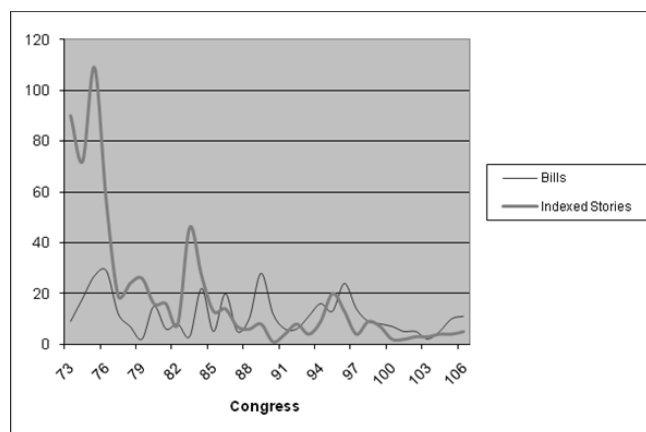


Fig. 3. Total TVA Stories and Total Legislation by Congress, 1933-2000. Source: Congressional Record Index (multiple years) and Reader's Guide (multiple years).

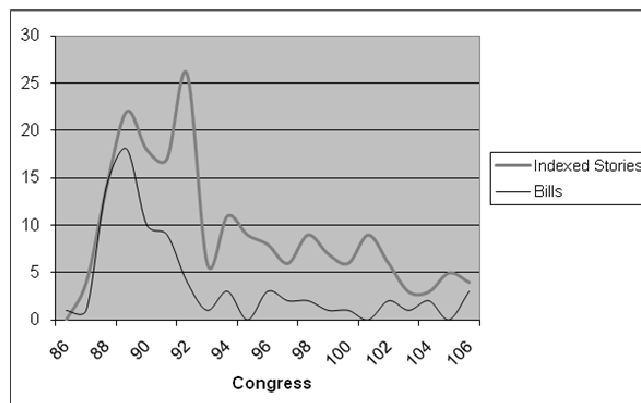


Fig. 4. Total ARC Stories and Total Legislation by Congress, 1963-2000. Source: Congressional Record Index (multiple years) and Reader's Guide (multiple years).

Congress	Stories	Bills	Index
73	90	9	0.49
74	72	18	0.54
75	109	27	0.70
76	56	29	0.53
77	19	12	0.41
78	24	7	0.69
79	26	2	0.50
80	16	15	1.00
81	16	6	1.00
82	8	8	1.00
83	46	3	0.55
84	27	22	0.32
85	13	5	0.55
86	14	20	0.75
87	7	5	0.39
88	6	10	0.77
89	8	28	0.85
90	1	12	0.75
91	4	6	0.71
92	8	6	0.68
93	4	11	1.00
94	9	16	0.73
95	20	13	0.85
96	13	24	0.55
97	4	14	0.62
98	9	9	0.71
99	7	8	0.34
100	2	7	0.55
101	2	5	0.68
102	3	5	0.44
103	3	2	0.50
104	4	5	0.56
105	4	10	0.32
106	5	11	0.46

Fig. 5. Total Stories Indexed in the Reader's Guide to Periodicals*, Total Bills, and Herfindahl's Index for the Tennessee Valley Authority, 73rd through 106th Congress 1933-2000. Note: Stories are lagged by 1 year to account for issue/agenda setting. This is consistent with work schedule and political cycle of the U.S. Congress. Additionally, double reporting was instituted as a short-lived congressional reform in the late-1970s and early-1980s; thus

resulting in perceived instability.

Congress	Stories	Bills	Index
88	14	4	0.61
89	18	14	1.00
90	10	22	1.00
91	9	18	1.00
92	4	17	1.00
93	1	26	0.56
94	3	6	0.65
95	0	11	0.65
96	3	9	1.00
97	2	8	0.52
98	2	6	0.44
99	1	9	0.31
100	1	7	0.59
101	0	6	0.60
102	2	9	0.63
103	1	6	1.00
104	2	3	0.63
105	0	3	0.71
106	3	5	1.00

Fig. 6. Total Stories Indexed in the Reader's Guide to Periodicals*, Total Bills, and Herfindahl's Index for Appalachian Regional Commission, 88rd through 106th Congress 1963-2000. Note: Stories are lagged by 1 year to account for issue/agenda setting. This is consistent with work schedule and political cycle of the U.S. Congress. Additionally, double reporting was instituted as a short-lived congressional reform in the late-1970s and early-1980s; thus resulting in perceived instability.

As Figures 2, 5 and 6 demonstrate, the forces that shape and reshape the spatial politics of the TVA and ARC are inherently different. While both regions have been influenced by similar political trends over the past 30-years, such as Reagan-omics and the devolution of power from the federal government to the states (see [35]), the ARC has been—in relative terms—more successful in promoting its agenda and avoiding subsystem conflict as measured by the Herfindahl's index. This empirical observation indicates that the policy outcomes, clientele, and regional characteristics vary between the two spatial niches. As a result, the overall efficacy of the respective bureaucratic cartographies differs. In terms of correlations between story and bill activity and observed stability as measured by the index, the ARC relationships are weak (.292 bills) to moderately (.425 stories) positive indicating that policy spaces are a unique class of policy subsystem ($\alpha=.05$). In contrast, the TVA correlations are statistically insignificant.

These findings diverge from Baumgartner and Jones (1993) and Jones et al (1993) [17, 34]. More importantly, the research suggests policy spaces are inherently more stable and that well articulated regions—like the ARC—are even less prone to destabilization (see [5]). Likewise, the TVA has not produced a statistically significant example of destabilization despite increased visibility, scandal, mixed missions, and

contradictory policies. In terms of the TVA data, story titles and their content are extremely diverse and do not necessarily coalesce around a single or shared vision of the “Tennessee Valley Region”. In contrast, the vast majority of ARC stories reinforce and expand the regional myth of Appalachia as a poverty space and in some cases profile major ARC investments. In either case, a heightened awareness of policy regions does not necessarily produce instability. For the ARC, heightened awareness appears to promote increased stability. While the TVA results are mixed, both cases suggest that geography does complicate policy studies and that current conceptual frameworks should consider the possibility that regional myths and policy spaces are a separate category of public policy that does not necessarily correspond to basic tenets of the subsystem approach.

In the case of the TVA, the overall competitiveness of the subsystem has coincided with increased visibility, scandal, and a diversified mix of policy directives. Charged with managing natural resources, rural electrification, recreation, and flood management, the TVA's politics have historically been more competitive than the ARC. The growth and expansion of TVA efforts have led to increased visibility and the introduction of new policy agents into the process. The expansion of the spatial extent of TVA projects coincided with an expansion of policy efforts associated with World War II. Likewise, cases of governmental waste, fraud, and abuse have been uncovered and led to the near disintegration of the subsystem in the 1950s. For example, the Dixon-Yates scandal resulted in a low .32 Herfindahl's Index. By the 1970s, negative externalities, such as air pollution and wildlife kills, redefined the mission of the TVA and nation's image of the program. As a result of the public's heightened awareness of the TVA, the program's primary objectives—flood control and rural electrification—were reconsidered and the mission expanded to include “resource management” coupled with a more comprehensive development mission. In total, the competitive nature of the subsystem parallels the uncertain and competing interests that shape the TVA's complex.

VI. SPATIAL PRACTICES AT THE NATIONAL SCALE

While the analysis is not definitive, the subsystem experiences of the TVA and ARC have historically been characterized by moderate stability with periods of volatility or conflict and moderate to high levels of stability, respectively. So far, the paper has focused primarily on the classic correlates of political viability associated with subsystem politics: policy type, visibility, participation, and policy mission. Yet, the politics of the TVA and ARC as political institutions are inherently spatial and the emphasis is on a national scalar politics and the competition for scarce resources within Congress. For this reason, the form, structure, and directionality of each institution's spatial practices should be considered.

Beyond the “political” circumstances that befell the TVA, the agency's dominant spatial practices are problematic. Specifically, TVA's dominant spatial practices are a combination of external and internal. In external terms, the

TVA's most visibly national policy—electrification—literally and figuratively re-distributes wholesale power throughout the nation across a power grid to public and private utilities (Figure 7). Internally, the TVA's mission is mixed and complex as the development, resource management, and recreation missions compete for policy dominance and/or enter in to conflict with the interests of residents, localities, and states. In many respects, the TVA has always been a national policy cast as a regional policy. For this reason, the

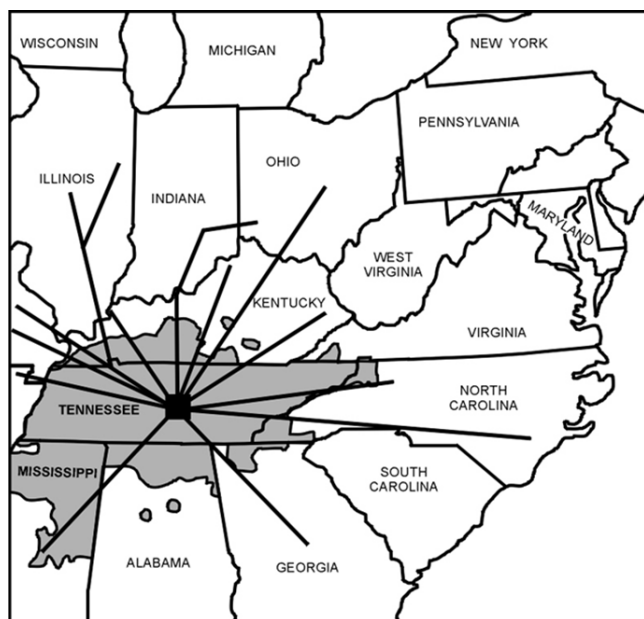


Fig. 7. A Cartographic Representation of the Primary Spatial Practices of the TVA. The TVA's primary function is that of the nation's single largest provider of wholesale energy sales. The TVA operates 11 fossil fuel, 3 nuclear, and 29 hydro energy plants—as well as other production facilities. The TVA 'fence' depicted in the map denotes the primary distribution of electricity to extra-regional electric utilities. The TVA's primary constituents are a base of external 'customers'. While the initial intent of the TVA may have been internal flood control, the primacy of the power project suggests other 'missions' (land use, environmental protection, flood abatement) are spin-offs. The policy region is comprised of contagious and perforated geographies across several states united by power production capabilities or facilities.

TVA's most prominent policy myth—electrification—and regional identity are driven by the program not the inverse. As a result of its electric policy, the spatial practices of the TVA are externalized as it expands the total subgovernment participants and visibility increases. In some respects, the geography of the TVA is irrelevant to the delivery of resources to external constituencies. Hence, the overall sustainability of a defined policy space whose exact geography is not explicitly connected to a spatialized policy missions is unclear. Collectively, the factors described above reinforce the competitive and sometimes disintegrative politics of the TVA.



Fig. 8. A Cartographic Representation of the Primary Spatial Practices of the ARC. The ARC functions as a regional development program. The program's initiatives (such as the corridor system) literally and politically link internal constituencies (residents, local governments, and states) together to create a seamless Appalachian policy region. Secondary constituencies (such as outside business interests) benefit from the construction of region-wide infrastructure initiatives, as well as miscellaneous programs like workforce development.

In contrast, the ARC has remained a stable policy initiative over time relative to the TVA and the ARC has avoided the periodic episodes of uncertainty and instability that continue to plague the TVA. The relative geography and spatial practice of the ARC is internal and emphasizes a single shared mission—economic development—within and between the subsystem's primary and secondary constituencies. This single policy mission is reinforced by and mitigates Appalachia's accepted national identity as a poverty space. Operating as an economic development coalition, the ARC competes to bring federal largesse to member states and counties and distributes through a full range of inter-locking development programs. In this sense, the mission and politics of actors coalesces around a single political node and the associative political power of the ARC and its member states is then focused on securing development resources (Figure 8). Like all networks of association or growth coalitions (see [8]), the purpose of this coalescence of power is to improve the overall competitiveness of Appalachian localities and the Appalachian region. This shared spatial practice—internal cooperation for external competition—has promoted the overall stability of the ARC subsystem at the federal level. In short, the political viability of the ARC relative to the TVA is a function of: (1) the structural and directional spatial relationships that define ARC and TVA constituencies; (2) the variable interactions within and between the larger community of TVA actors; (3) the limited policy mission and distributive

politics of the ARC; and (4) the ability of the ARC to serve as a central node for political power for a “naturalized” poverty region.

VII. CONCLUSION

In the end, Agnew (1999) is correct: regions are neither entirely intellectual nor political [36]. As the case studies illustrate, mostly ‘political’ regions, such as the TVA, are not necessarily as politically viable as regions like the ARC that appeal to the popular and accepted regional myths. As this analysis suggests, a ‘given’ or ‘accepted’ regional geography has important implications with respect to a policy’s subsequent political viability. When properly articulated, policy spaces define and reinforce policy missions as well as shape the directionality of socio-political relationship and the relationship between internal and external policy actors. When improperly framed or artificially juxtaposed upon other competing regional imaginaries or policy missions, policy spaces will deteriorate. Indeed, the efficacy of what Keating (1997) calls “inventing regions” is questionable [7]. While this research demonstrates that regional geography has the potential to promote and implement strong, stable, and effective policies which are tailored to communities, it also highlights the inherent pitfalls of ‘manufacturing’ regions and regional policies. That is, the region should give rise to the policy—NOT THE INVERSE. In the case of the ARC, the region did exist prior to the policy. However, the TVA and its many policy outcomes appear to be driven by national—not regional—imperatives. In short, the “new regionalism” that defines contemporary governance is not a panacea.

While the primary goal of this research was to define the trajectory of spatial niches in two cases, the analysis recognizes that strong leaders, historical context, and time play an integral role in the articulation, creation, and maintenance of regions and regional policy. Irrespective of the impact of historical events, the analysis clearly indicates that stable politics are the result of ‘stable’ or ‘accepted’ regions. In the future, geographers might investigate the creation of purely administrative regions that have little or no reference to ‘real’ geographies. Until then, policy geographers will undoubtedly continue to identify and articulate new intersections between governing and governed spaces.

NOTES

1-The term space is used in an attempt to not privilege a specific scale. While the intent is to discuss and explore the regional concept, contemporary human geography often conflates the region with the meso-scale. As such, the more generic—albeit slightly less meaningful term “space” is used.

2-The Delta Regional Authority is composed of 240 counties or parishes in an 8 state region. Based on a search of the Congressional Record Index for the 107th, 106th, and 105th Congress located only a single specific bill—the Delta Regional Authority Act of 1999 (S. 1622). To date, the HERF Index has been 1.0. The DRA is an outgrowth of an earlier policy initiative known as the Lower Mississippi Delta

Economic Development Commission (see Johnson, 1994, p. 19) [37].

3-For a more general discussion of New or Reconstructed Regional geography refer to [9, 11].

4- Story counts were based on the established Reader’s Guide indexing system. The story counts were derived from a review and accounting of all stories under related headings, such as “Tennessee Valley Authority”, “TVA”, “Tennessee Valley”, “Appalachian Regional Commission”, “ARC”, and “PARC”. Likewise, references to specific mission of the entities and the region (i.e., “Appalachia—Poverty”, TVA—Electricity) were also included. The Congressional Record Index was searched using the specific terms “Tennessee Valley Authority”, “TVA”, “Appalachian Regional Commission”, and “ARC”.

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