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TERRITORIAL COMPETITIVENESS FOR THE INTERESTS OF PUBLICS

COMPETITIVIDAD TERRITORIAL EN INTERÉS DE LOS PÚBLICOS

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ABSTRACT

Competitiveness refers to a territory successfully satisfying its aims and objectives. In both research and practice, aims and objectives are usually specified in terms of compatibility with market success (e.g., performance in international trade) and/or the success of hierarchies (e.g., performance of large corporations). We suggest a different paradigm, focused on compatibility with the interests of publics, i.e., groups of people who share concerns about

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what is happening in an economy. Achieving this would require forums where people could freely inquire about the territory. They could then recognise their concerns about choice of the territory's aims and objectives, and might identify when they share concerns, i.e., when they constitute a public. The forums would enable people to learn and experience, observe, discuss, share understanding and ideas, express their voice, and listen to others. Despite university governance and epistemic governance tending to crowd-out space for activities centred on publics, one way that researchers can help to create forums is by cooperating with citizens, community groups, policy-makers, and diaspora. Together, they might reframe the nature and purpose of territorial competitiveness, making it for the interests of publics.

Keywords: Competitiveness, Organisation of production, Public interest, University researchers.

RESUMEN

La competitividad se refiere al éxito de un territorio en la consecución de sus metas y objetivos. Tanto en la investigación como en la práctica, las metas y los objetivos suelen especificarse en términos de éxito del mercado (por ejemplo, los resultados en el comercio internacional) y/o el éxito de las jerarquías (por ejemplo, los resultados de las grandes empresas). Proponemos un paradigma diferente, centrado en la compatibilidad con los intereses de los públicos, es decir, los grupos de personas que comparten inquietudes acerca de lo que sucede en una economía. Para lograrlo se necesitarían foros en los que la gente pudiera informarse libremente sobre el territorio. Así podrían reconocer sus inquietudes sobre la elección de los fines y objetivos del territorio, y podrían identificar cuándo se comparten inquietudes, es decir, cuando constituyen un público. Los foros permitirían a las personas observar, debatir, compartir conocimientos e ideas, expresar su voz y escuchar a los demás. A pesar de que la gobernanza universitaria y epistémica tiende a excluir el espacio para las actividades centradas en los públicos, una forma en que los investigadores pueden ayudar a crear foros es a través de la cooperación con ciudadanos, grupos comunitarios, responsables políticos y la diáspora. Juntos, podrían replantear la naturaleza y el propósito de la competitividad territorial, poniéndola al servicio de los intereses de los públicos.

Palabras clave: Competitividad, Organización de la producción, Interés público, Investigación universitaria.

1. Introduction: focus and scope

This essay suggests a framework for addressing the nature and purpose of territorial competitiveness. To do so, we draw on studies of the organisation of production, and Deweyan analysis of the interests of publics, a neglected topic in competitiveness discussions.

Competitiveness refers to a territory successfully satisfying its aims and objectives, but the specification of those aims and objectives is contestable. Typically, they are defined in terms of market success (e.g., in international trade, or in service industries such as tourism and higher education) and/or the success of hierarchies (e.g., corporations). In contrast, we suggest a focus on the interests of publics, i.e., groups of people who share concerns about what is happening in an economy.

Being for the interests of publics would align with being inclusive, other-regarding, and mutually supportive. It would also entail messy and complex processes that enable publics to identify themselves and their interests; and to translate those interests into actions and policies. Territories seeking competitiveness for publics would need to take on the challenge of developing those processes.

The essay shows how researchers might use our suggested framework as a basis for their action, so that they can enhance processes of understanding and action in territorial competitiveness policy in practice. We advocate purposeful cooperation with community groups, citizens and policy-makers to develop stimulating and challenging spaces that enable publics to identify themselves, voice their interests, and influence future success.

2. **Context: the organisation of production**

Following seminal research by Ronald Coase and Oliver Williamson that developed transaction cost theory, markets and hierarchies have long been seen as alternative means of organising production (Coase, 1937; Williamson, 1975). The idea is that production can be imagined as a series of transactions, each of which could in theory either be carried out using an arm's length trade on an open market, or within a hierarchy characterised by centralised direction and control, or indeed a mix of the two. For instance, in England in the Industrial Revolution, the market-based *putting-out system*, in which the organiser of production contracted with people to spin wool in their own homes, was replaced by the hierarchical factory, where people came to work under direct supervision and for set hours (Marglin, 1974). A reverse tendency was seen in the 1990s, when a wave of marketisation across western countries was associated with private corporations and public bodies contracting on the market for the provision of services that were previously delivered within the organisation, such as office cleaning, and catering facilities for employees and customers. More generally, the norm for any particular territory is to observe both markets and hierarchies being used in the organisation of production. Transaction cost theory argues that the choice between these possibilities would be made on cost grounds – efficiency requires the cheaper transaction to prevail, with efficiency being mostly understood in terms of benefit to investors. Impacts on other groups of people are largely ignored (Sacchetti & Borzaga, 2021).

In contrast, more recent literature recognises that the organisation of production can be conceived, not necessarily with reference to markets

and hierarchies, but in terms of compatibility with the interests of publics. See Branston et al. (200a6) on the organisation of large corporations; Sacchetti and Sugden (2009a) and Sacchetti *et al*. (2009) on organisation more generally; Sacchetti (2015) on governance, and preferences about including or excluding the interests of publics; Branston et al. (2016) on financial and energy sectors; and Conyon *et al*. (2022) for an appreciation of a segment of this literature in the context of monopoly capitalism analysis.

This literature focuses on governance, and the idea that actions have consequences, both for those directly engaged in the action, and for others. The economic governance of an organisation refers to its control, specifically to strategic decisions about its broad direction; to how strategic decisions are made, by whom, on what basis, for whose benefit. The argument is that strategic decisions impact not only the decision-makers (e.g., in large corporations, the senior managers) but also others (e.g., investors, employees, and consumers) (Branston et al., 2006a). That is where publics enter the analysis.

For John Dewey, a public is a group of people who share a concern for the "serious and enduring consequences" of an act that they are not directly engaged in (e.g., groups of investors, employees or consumers concerned about the strategic decisions of a corporation) (Dewey, 1927). Dewey also argued that, whenever there is an act, there can be multiple publics, each with its shared concerns. For example, employees might form a group sharing interest in a corporation's strategic decision to cut prices and increase employment, as might consumers.

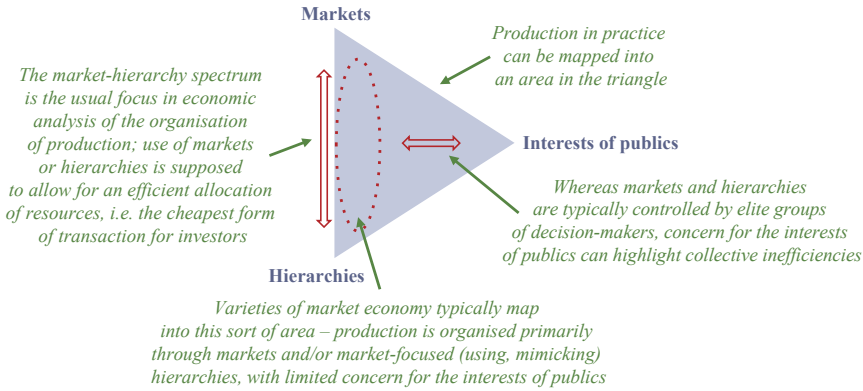
When those who govern an organisation make a choice, they express a specific preference, or value, towards including or excluding the interests of publics (Sacchetti, 2015). It follows that the organisation of production can be understood as the outcome of the values of decision-makers; and it can be conceived – as well as mapped – in terms of the outcome's compatibility with the interests of publics, in addition to the use of markets and hierarchies. This conception is depicted in Figure 1.

The points of the triangle in Figure 1 represent three ideal-types in which, respectively, production is organised entirely through markets, or hierarchies, or in accord with the interests of publics. An area within the triangle represents production in practice. Varieties of market system map to an area close to the markets-hierarchies spectrum, far from compatibility with the interests of publics. The distance between such an area and the point of the triangle representing compatibility with the interests of publics is a measure of the foregone public value generated by the use of

the market or hierarchy in an exclusive way, i.e., for restricted, private interests. It is the system's degree of negative external effects, or its collective inefficiencies. Viewed from the opposite perspective, the distance represents the scope for improvement, where alternative modes of production can be applied to produce net public value.[1]

Figure 1

Markets, hierarchies, publics, and the organisation of production



3. What is territorial competitiveness for?

We suggest that Figure 1 depicts not only the organisation of production but also a novel starting-point for thinking about territorial competitiveness. That is because the usual focus on markets and hierarchies in economic analysis of the organisation of production is paralleled by a concern with markets and hierarchies in much of the literature on competitiveness. Yet if the organisation of production concerns the interests of publics, the same can be said for territorial competitiveness.

Competitiveness is a term that emerged in the 1990s to denote particular approaches to aspects of the socio-economic development of territories. It is a relational concept about the perceived success of a territory.

Typically, a territory is seen to be competitive with respect to other territories. That is often taken to mean that territories are in competition

[1] A total cost model that considers the overall efficiency by including the net costs of excluding publics from the governance of the corporation, is suggested in Sacchetti and Borzaga (2021).

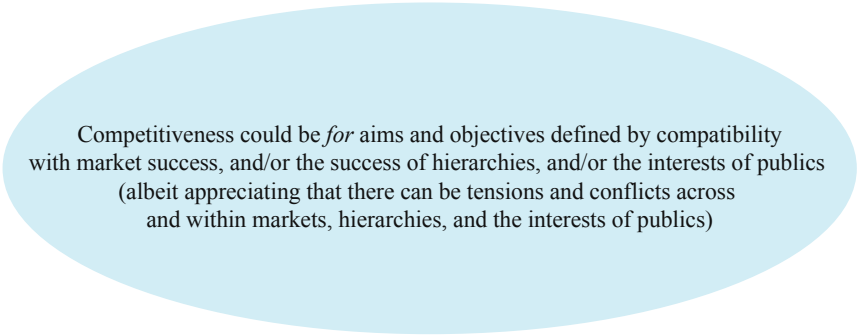
with each other, but that is not strictly the case; competitiveness only implies comparison across territories. See Branston et al. (2006b) on the health sector, and Sacchetti *et al*. (2009) more generally. In principle, a territory could be seen as competitive not only compared to another territory but also compared to an ideal-type, or to itself. For example, over time a territory might increase its competitiveness by being more successful in what it does than previously.

Whilst there is consensus in published research that competitiveness refers to a territory successfully satisfying its aims and objectives, there is contestability about the specification of those aims and objectives, and how to achieve them. Discourse has tended to favour "rather narrow, private sector originated agendas", not broader concerns (Bristow, 2005). Those agendas have often resulted in a market criterion being used – e.g., that territories aim for success in free international trade, or in service industries such as tourism, and higher education. Other times, success has been equated with the performance of privately controlled hierarchical organisations, e.g., what is good for the large corporation is good for the territory.

Analogy to the markets, hierarchies, publics triangle in Figure 1 suggests another possibility: that territorial competitiveness be conceived in terms of compatibility with the interests of publics. The implication of this possibility for the purpose of competitiveness is depicted in Figure 2.[2]

Figure 2

The purpose of territorial competitiveness



[2] This conception aligns with the suggestions about competitiveness in the health industry in Branston *et al*. (2006b).

4. **What does compatibility with the interests of publics entail?**

Policy-makers often assert that they know the interests of publics – at least, politicians often seem to make that claim – but actually, identifying the interests of publics is an extremely messy process. A particular challenge is that publics are what John Dewey called "amorphous and unarticulated" (Dewey, 1927). A group of people may not realise that they share an interest in a territory's economic aims. Even if they do, they may find it problematic to articulate and identify that interest. There is also the complication of multiple, overlapping groups being interested in a territory's aims – indeed, the set of publics and their interests will constantly emerge and change as people share, learn, and experience with each other, and as the territory itself changes.

Following Dewey, a process for untangling such complexity ideally entails the development of forums for democratic deliberation across all aspects of a territory's economy and society, and involving all people interested in its competitiveness. The forums need to focus on people identifying where they share interests in the aims and objectives of the territory, i.e., on publics identifying themselves and their interests; and on the translation of those interests into actions and policies for a territory to achieve success.

Democratic deliberation implies both "freedom of social inquiry and of distribution of its conclusions", and ''improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion" (Dewey, 1927). A corollary is that people embrace the corresponding supporting values and define shared rules, such as (Sacchetti & Sugden, 2009a):

- Reject attempts to control processes and outcomes.
- Require inclusion of all people on equal terms.
- Be other-regarding, not only self-regarding.
- Be mutually supportive through reciprocity.
- Embrace informed participation and continuous learning.

Extant western market economies typically reject a deliberative culture, instead favouring the assignment and use of property rights to define who controls resources and who is excluded, on the basis of self-interest. For instance, it is common for university students to pay rent for a room in the private market – student access to housing is typically in the hands of private landlords. For some students, this cost is a barrier to accessing education. For others, those who can afford to rent in the private sector,

the consequence can be nonetheless impoverishing for their families. Yet the values of western market economies leave landlords free to speculate and accumulate resources, notwithstanding the interests of students and their families. The widespread use of short-term letting through digital platforms has further accentuated this tendency. Each of the publics – on the one hand amongst students and their families, and on the other hand amongst landlords – appears to be self-regarding, focused on its own context, without seeking to appreciate and accommodate the circumstances of the other, and without embracing some sort of reciprocity agreement or social pact that values mutual support. Similar arguments might apply to access to affordable housing more widely, for instance for seasonal workers in service or agricultural industries.

To attain an outcome centred on the interests of all publics, a set of nested institutions that enable and allow democratic deliberation throughout a territory's economy and society would be required – Figure 3 depicts the necessary process. People must have opportunities safely to learn and experience, and to do so together. They need forums that enable them to observe, discuss, and share their understanding and ideas, as well as reflect critically on their own thinking and understanding, and that of others. They must be able to challenge themselves, and each other. They must be able to express their voice and, correspondingly, listen.[3] In turn, these requirements depend on the development of stimulating and supporting education and learning opportunities, as well as access to decision-making contexts where deliberative competences can be applied and refined in practice, through experience.

Inquiry, discussion, and sharing can enable people to increase their understanding, and reveal or change their awareness of the interests that they have in common in the consequences of a territory choosing particular aims and objectives. They can stimulate thinking and creativity, which might even catalyse the emergence of previously unimagined aims and objectives: "deliberation is a journey of exploration and discovery about preferences" (Sacchetti & Sugden, 2009).[4]

The implication is a change in paradigm. The organisation of production from a deliberative perspective needs to define competitiveness (and efficiency) in terms of its capacity to reduce the trade-offs between multiple aims. It needs to do so by defining rules which promote and require

[3] On voice, see Hirschman (1970).

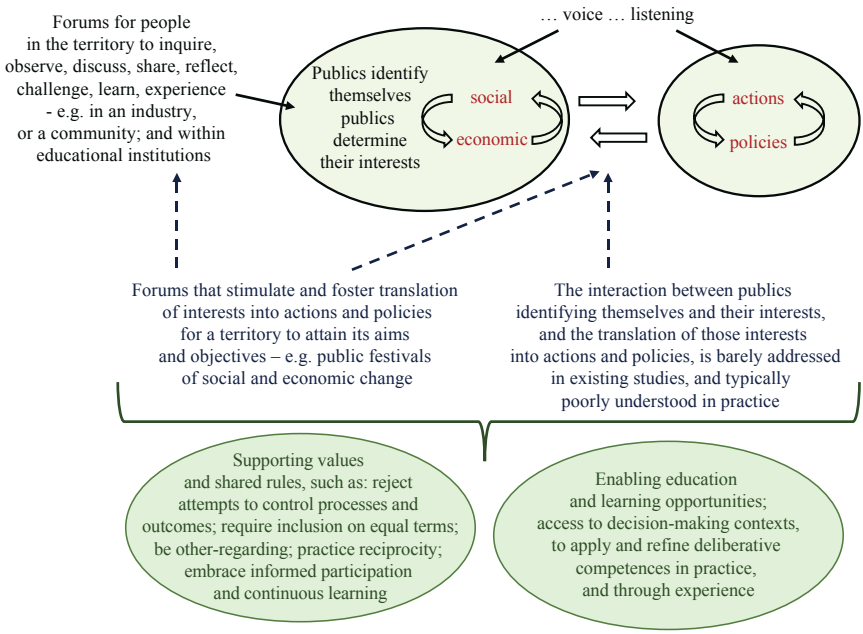
[4] On creativity, see Sacchetti *et al*. (2009).

the inclusion of the interests of publics, specifying access to debate and decision-making beyond the usual criterion defined by property rights. It needs deliberative forums where instances and novel ideas can emerge.

Adopting this paradigm would imply a dynamic approach to innovation that changes the nature of production governance itself. Decisions on how to coordinate resources for competitiveness would generate different effects, for instance in terms of how income is distributed, contractual conditions for workers are defined, environmental, social and other forms of sustainability are conceived and pursued, and, more broadly, how the emergent interests of publics are accounted for.

Figure 3

The identification of publics and their interests



5. **For publics in practice**

Bearing in mind that democratic deliberation is an ideal-type benchmark, in actual circumstance competitiveness might entail a territory successfully satisfying aims and objectives defined by compatibility with the interests of *some* publics. Each of those publics would need to identify

themselves and their interests, for which forums to observe, inquire, share ideas, and learn – and in which people voice and listen – would be important. The territory would be characterised by a set of values and shared rules that support the emergence of publics, and the identification of their interests.

There would need to be awareness of the risk that the publics which are accounted for in practice might become an elite, excluding others. It might be necessary to emphasise the significance of shared rules such as rejecting attempts to control processes and outcomes, requiring inclusion of all people on equal terms, and being other-regarding, not only self-regarding. Publics would always need to be open to the emergence of new publics.

Variation in values and rules across territories might be associated with differences in economic context and technological trajectories, which might be linked to, for instance, the influence of secularisation, the mix of religions, or perhaps the prominence of particular elites in especially influential institutions or sectors.

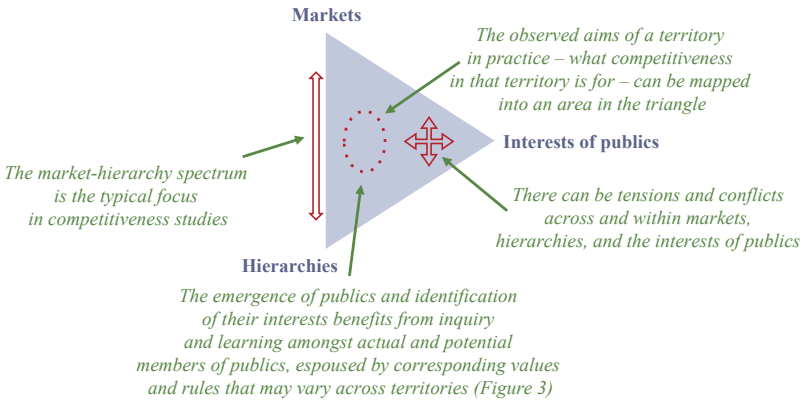
Analogous to depiction of the organisation of production in Figure 1, observed territories could be mapped to a markets, hierarchies, publics triangle – Figure 4. The points of the triangle represent three ideal-types in which competitiveness is for aims and objectives defined by compatibility with, respectively, markets, or hierarchies, or the interests of publics. An area within the triangle represents observed competitiveness – what, in practice, competitiveness is for. As with Figure 2, the distance between that area and the point of the triangle representing compatibility with the interests of publics is a measure of the foregone public value generated by the observed economic system. Alternatively, it is a measure of the scope for improvement.

Mapping into the triangle can also reveal tensions and conflicts across and within markets, hierarchies, and the interests of publics. For instance, an emphasis on trade in free international markets might jeopardise the prospects of infant sectors being developed in a particular territory (because the more mature sectors in other territories might prevent others from entering the market), but possibly there is a public interest in those infant sectors being successful, for instance because they are central to the identity of the territory, how it sees itself and what it aspires to be. Or perhaps favouring large corporations in a particular sector would prevent small and medium sized enterprises from thriving, contrary to the interests of some publics, such as those sharing an interest in employment in the small and medium sized enterprises. To illustrate, in the territory of

British Columbia (Canada), some might see the infant wine industry as important in this regard, and some might see the influence of large corporations in that industry as problematic (Pesme *et al*., 2022). Similar conflicting interests may occur between heterogeneous units (in terms of size) within the same conglomerate or group. There can also be conflicts across publics, and within the same public. For instance, the employees of a large corporation sharing interests in the consequences of its activities might be at odds with those sharing interests in employment in small and medium sized enterprises; and people within each of those publics might disagree with each other, for instance on the qualities of particular jobs.

Figure 4

Markets, hierarchies, publics, and the aims and objectives of a territory – mapping what competitiveness is for, i.e. its purpose



6. Cooperation amongst researchers, community groups, citizens and policy-makers

The primary task of the university researcher is not to champion particular competitiveness policies. It is to study, stimulate inquiry, enable discussion, and challenge. With this in mind, what can researchers do to enhance processes of understanding and action in competitiveness policy in practice?

The framework suggested in this essay for addressing the nature and purposes of territorial competitiveness clearly points to areas where researchers might focus their attention. In principle, they are ideally placed to help to create forums to enable people to inquire, observe, discuss,

share, reflect, challenge, learn, and experience, so that people might coalesce into publics, groups with identified and shared interests; and so that the translation of those interests into actions and policies might be stimulated and fostered.

Within universities and educational institutions, researchers might offer challenging and stimulating courses and programs that are grounded in inquiry, reflection, experience, *etc*., and intended to enable students to learn about processes for people to identify shared concerns. Researchers and students might also work with communities and industries, to enable practitioners and citizens.

To illustrate, consider two projects that were recently carried out in western Canada from the University of British Columbia.

First, a festival of social and economic change organised in the summer of 2022 in Kelowna, the principal city of the Okanagan region of British Columbia.[5] Through exhibitions, performances, and conversations, the festival explored social and economic change in real places: what it looks like, its effects, and how it is shaped. It brought together academics, artists, and members of publics, locally and from various parts of the world, in a forum where they could interact, express themselves, and inquire. One objective was to disrupt perhaps comfortable narratives associated with restricted, private interests.[6]

For instance, the exhibitions included art by Arleene Correa Valencia from a project entitled *En Tiempos de Crisis*.[7] The context for the work is the 2017 wildfires that swept through Northern California. It refers to the conditions in which migrant vineyard workers harvested grapes. In the artist's own words: "While 254,000 acres scorched through the day and night, the air quality of Napa reached 'hazardous' – the level deemed most dangerous on the Environmental Protection Agency scale. These severe air quality conditions led a group of people to evacuate their homes in search of clean air. Others, like low-income agricultural workers, had no choice but to continue with the ongoing harvest in an attempt to save

[5] The university researchers involved in coordinating the festival were Malida Mooken, Roger Sugden, and Marcela Valania.

[6] An earlier initiative in a related spirit is the 2007 Festival on Creativity and Economic Development, organised in and around Gambettola, Italy, by Silvia Sacchetti, Roger Sugden and Marcela Valania, in cooperation with municipalities and other territorial actors. Sacchetti is from Gambettola, and Sacchetti, Sugden and Valania were then based at the University of Birmingham, England. The festival brought together artists, citizens, and academics to seize opportunities for critical thinking, and to shape ideas and perspectives (Sacchetti & Sugden, 2009b).

[7] https://www.correavalencia.com/en-tiempo-de-crisis.

the area's grapes. Tractors with heavy bright lights illuminated vineyards across the valley as people raced to pick grapes before the smoke could damage them. Agricultural workers worked through the night, exposing themselves to toxic air, risking their health and safety. These unseen heroes of our community are resilient embodiments of strength, commitment, and power."[8] The exhibition in Kelowna could be seen as begging a question: do vineyard workers face similar conditions in the Okanagan, which is also a territory that produces wine and is prone to wildfires, and might there be publics with interests in such matters?

Second, an initiative between 2015 and 2019 that was supported and partly funded by the Canadian federal government to *Position the British Columbia Wine Industry for International Growth*.[9] In some respects, this initiative took an explicitly Deweyan approach to the interests of publics (Mooken *et al*., 2018; Pesme *et al*., 2022).

The funding supported a series of *Wine Leaders Forums*. They were organised and facilitated from the University of British Columbia, intended for industry participants, and focused on the strategic challenges of the British Columbia wine territory. The *Forums* aimed to "encourage collaboration and reflection. They enable participants to share a common interest in the consequences of actions, thus to see themselves as a public" (Pesme et al., 2022). This is illustrated by work on wine labelling. The context is that "accuracy about origin in labelling is crucial for a wine region to be taken seriously on an international level" (Sugden & Pesme, 2016). Wine industry participants at the *2015 Forum* highlighted labelling as a strategic challenge – for them, it was crucial to the competitiveness of the British Columbia wine territory – but a difficult challenge to address without outside help. That was because of industry fragmentation: the large wine producers were often seen to have different interests to small and medium sized producers, and different parties sometimes found it hard to have fruitful discussions.

Following the *2015 Forum* an industry task force on labelling was established. Like the *Forums*, it comprised industry participants, and was organised and facilitated from the University of British Columbia. "The task force committed to engage with industry stakeholders to provide rec-

[8] As reproduced in the festival brochure: https://issuu.com/sechange/docs/se-changefestivalfinal (accessed 6th May 2024)

[9] The project coordinating group comprised Kim Buschert, Malida Mooken, Jacques-Olivier Pesme, Roger Sugden, and Marcela Valania.

ommendations about labelling and label architecture, including the specification of origin on labelling, for all wines that are produced by wineries in [British Columbia], both those containing 100% [British Columbia] grown grapes and others, for the purposes of growing international and domestic markets" (Sugden & Pesme, 2016). The task force findings were discussed at the *2016 Forum*. As a consequence, winery representatives agreed to lobby for change to federal government labelling regulations. *Forum* participants were enabled "to consider themselves as part of a wider public with common interests in the consequences of regulatory requirements. The inclusive discussion empowered them to feel less marginalised within the industry, and they were able to voice their interest as a public" (Mooken *et al*., 2018).

Notwithstanding these experiences, the opportunities of researchers in practice to contribute to creating forums that support territorial competitiveness for the interests of publics should not be taken for granted. That is because university governance, and epistemic governance, typically crowd-out space for research and education focused on publics. Put another way, the organisation of modern universities in western economies typically confines them to an area close to the market-hierarchy spectrum in Figure 1.

Part of the difficulty is suggested by Martin Gurri's stylised analysis of the relationship between universities, governments and businesses, and the consequences for publics. "An iron triangle of government, the universities, and the corporate world controls the careers of individual scientists. Consequently, the ideal of the lonely and disinterested seeker after truth has been superseded by that of the scientist-bureaucrat" (Gurri, 2018). Some people "believe that science is a tool of Big Business, that scientists are willing to poison us with genetically modified food and torture laboratory animals to earn a bigger profit for their paymasters. This may be an exaggeration, but, as a general proposition, it's accurate enough" (Gurri, 2018). For others, "science has become the handmaiden of Big Government, raising climate and environmental scares to justify the imposition of ever more restrictive political controls over every aspect of life. And this, too, while overstating the case, is generally correct" (Gurri, 2018).

Consider also the rise and influence of university business and management schools that adopt and serve marketisation, and those schools being exemplar of university organisation (Sugden, 2019). They leave little room for the interests of publics.

Another concern is the approach of universities to epistemic governance. By analogy to the conceptualisation of the economic governance of

organisations (discussed at the start of this essay), epistemic governance considers how decisions are made about what is accepted and valued as knowledge, ways of creating knowledge, and ways of using knowledge. Who makes the decisions, on what basis, for whose benefit? In the field of policy making, it has been argued that "epistemic governance speaks to and evokes actors' deep-seated values and beliefs" (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2014). The same can hold for a university. Epistemic premises tend to be tacit and reproduced, not scrutinised. That can result in universities reinforcing extant centres of power. To illustrate, in the colonial construct that is the University of British Columbia,[10] epistemic governance seems to be inextricably entwined with nineteenth century British ways of organising universities. These include prizing western ways of doing and being, hence western approaches to knowledge, notwithstanding the university's twenty first century commitments to truth and reconciliation in relationships with Indigenous people. Such practices tend to cut-off the free and open inquiry that might help to enable all publics to identify themselves and their interests.

These arguments do not mean that researchers have no opportunities to affect forums about competitiveness for publics. They suggest what typically or often occurs, and omit the less frequently observed possibilities that indicate spaces for researchers to be relevant to publics. It is the latter that researchers can build upon.

7. **Conclusion: what to do now**

In principle, if territorial competitiveness is to be in the interests of publics, everybody associated with a territory has things to do in practice. But there is perhaps an onus on certain people to act first.

It would be immediately beneficial if policy-makers shifted their perspective. The dominant discourse on competitiveness currently favours narrow, private agendas, but policy-makers need not only think about competitiveness in terms of success in markets, or success for corporate business. They must also think of successfully achieving the aims and objectives of publics – groups of people who share interests in what is happening in the territory.

We have shown that there needs to be forums for democratic deliberation across all aspects of a territory's economy and society. The forums

[10] https://archives.library.ubc.ca/general-history/ (accessed 4th June 2022).

must enable people to inquire, observe, discuss, and share their understanding and ideas, as well as reflect critically on their own thinking and understanding, and that of others. People have to be able to challenge themselves, and each other; to express their voice, and to listen. People can then appreciate where they have interests in common, what that means for the aims and objectives of a territory, and how it translates into actions and policies for territorial competitiveness.

None of this can happen by magic. It necessitates purposeful action to establish and nurture the forums. Policy-makers can play a decisive role in that messy yet essential process.

They would benefit from the active support of beneficiaries of the currently dominant discourse on competitiveness. Perhaps most especially, influential participants in business. As a minimum, current beneficiaries should not try to control forum processes and outcomes.

Step-by-step change is a practical goal. Everything cannot be done at once. Perhaps forums could be experimented with – piloted – around particular industries or communities where there is a willingness to act amongst a critical mass of policy-makers, business people, and citizens-.

Amongst those acting first there is also an onus on researchers. Their challenge is to open and nurture educational spaces that are relevant to publics. They might be able to develop courses and programs that are grounded in inquiry, reflection, experience, *etc*., and that enable students to learn about processes for people to identify shared concerns. They might be able to work with industries and communities, to enable practitioners and citizens.

In urging researchers to act, we suggest cooperation with people outside universities and educational institutions. For example, we have pointed to the opportunities in public festivals of social and economic change. In practice, the label "festival" has been applied to varied activities with wide ranging purposes. Some are intended to be integral to market economic success and development, i.e., to production that is organised primarily through markets and/or market-focused hierarchies (Edensor & Sumartojo, 2018). We have something else in mind: festivals centred on publics and their interests; that enable inquiry, observing, sharing, learning, voicing and listening; that are underpinned by particular values and rules, including that participants reject attempts to control, require inclusion, and are other-regarding. To achieve this outcome, festivals might be created and developed by cooperation between researchers and people interested in a territory: citizens, community groups, poli-

cy-makers, business people, and perhaps diaspora from the territory living elsewhere, yet maintaining ongoing, shared concerns.

This would enable researchers to bring to bear their capabilities to study, stimulate inquiry, enable discussion, and challenge. It would enable them to work with people from diverse walks of life, with varied understandings, experiences, and histories, all bringing their own capabilities, and with everyone linked through a shared willingness to engage in the interests of publics. By cooperating, people might impact territorial competitiveness in practice.

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