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## Political Geography

Volume 25, Issue 5, June 2006, Pages 482-505

# Rescaling regions in the state: The New Regionalism in California

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2006.02.002>

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### Abstract

A “new civic regionalism” based on participatory, inclusive and partnership models of governance has recently been rolled out in California to tackle the challenges of urban growth, planning and economic development across the State's diverse metropolitan and rural regions. Backed by non-profits and private foundations, California's New Regionalism has been packaged as a flexible and responsive grassroots governance initiative, which is designed to circumnavigate State and local government. Its proponents have been influenced by New Regionalist ideas and practices circulating nationally and internationally. Despite this, our explanation for the rise of the New Regionalism in California is not grounded in these wider theoretical and policy developments; nor do we see it as the outcome of a “new politics of scale” framed around the region. Instead, California's *newest* regionalism is part of a much longer-standing social movement spearheaded by large-scale business interests and directed at reorganizing local and State government powers particularly in urban regions. This regional reform movement has sought to rationalize land use and environmental

regional reform movement has sought to rationalize land use and environmental planning, coordinate infrastructure, and make government more fiscally efficient and responsive to growth. Over the longer term, its efforts have been undermined by the fiscal fallout of the property tax revolt, Proposition 13. Our analysis calls into question some of the claims in the literature on state rescaling and suggests the value of collapsing the conceptual distinction made between new spaces of political regionalism and regional economic spaces.



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## Keywords

State rescaling; New Regionalism; State and local government; California

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