

NEWS

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LETTER

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In December COHSMO published a set of articles exploring the territorial challenges in Europe in the journal Social Inclusion. In this newsletter we will present three of the articles.



Social inclusion

In December COHSMO published a set of articles exploring the territorial challenges in Europe in the peer-reviewed journal Social Inclusion. In this newsletter we will present three of the articles as an inspiration to further reading and then you can find all articles in full length here: <https://bit.ly/2M1jblH>. First you will get the editorial brief as an introduction to the theme in the articles:

The EU and the member states have put attention to a silent but growing issue of inequality: The EU and the member states have

put attention to a silent but growing issue of inequality: The spatial disparities are in several member states considered able to provide wider political tensions and challenges. Consequently, the EU has launched a research theme in its framework programme Horizon 2020 to cope with such matter. Most of the papers in this issue have their origin in the Horizon COHSMO project "Inequality, Urbanization and Territorial Cohesion. Developing the European Social Model of Economic Growth and Democratic Capacity. "While social or economic

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INEQUALITY, URBANIZATION AND TERRITORIAL COHESION:
DEVELOPING THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEMOCRATIC CAPACITY

inequalities are recognized as a social problem, spatial disparities are forgotten or ignored. However, territorial inequalities do boost social and economic differences and add to growing tensions and contradictions in many cases. Coping with such challenges is a difficult matter; most European countries have had programmes aiming at rebalancing regional inequalities for many years. This means major investments in public services, infrastructure, education and culture, as well as targeted support for private investors, businesses raising employment opportunities and so on. However, the success in terms of growing population and employment has not dissolved problems related to territorial inequality. Therefore, endogenous structures and relations has received more attention; in particular local capacity to generate solutions and means to promote economic and social development.

Positioning the Urban in the Global Knowledge Economy: Increasing competitiveness or Inequality

By Tatjana Boczy, Ruggero Cefalo, Andrea Parma and Rikke Skovgaard Nielsen

Cities face international competition on multiple economic fronts. Investments in becoming a knowledge economy are one of the prominent schemes to bolster the local economy. However, what happens alongside such investments in terms of social inequality in the cities? The article analyses strategies and discourses of knowledge economies regarding their implications for social inequality in three cities: Aarhus, Milan, and Vienna. They all face spatial differentiation and social inequalities. Still, there is a divergence in addressing and tackling these issues in combination with knowledge economy investments. Our paper shows that specific state-city relationships shape the association between competitiveness and social integration.

This finding highlights the importance of the institutional economy that frameworks as well as the specific urban policy traditions. The article points to the importance of jointly addressing competitiveness and integration to mitigate the risks of social exclusion. From another angle, the article shows the significance of boosting social investments in education to shape a more robust local knowledge also benefits vulnerable groups. Lessons may be learned from these three case studies regarding their strategy rhetoric, collaboration schemes and stakeholder involvement.

Rethinking Suburban Governance in the CEE Region: A Comparison of Two Municipalities in Poland And Lithuania

By Jurga Bučaitė-Vilkė and Joanna Krukowska

The article deals with the two cases of suburban governance in Polish and Lithuanian municipalities looking at the territorial development trends and strategies typical for the Central Eastern Europe (CEE) region.

In other words, regional differences are significant. We assume that there are similarities and differences in suburban governance in analyzed municipalities compared to Western countries in terms of local networks, actors, and territorial understanding. Much less attention is paid to the suburbanization process in Eastern Europe that symbolize the economic convergence and different patterns of central-peripheral development.

Why do we need to look at the suburban governance? Suburban municipalities are understood as a multi-functional delocalized arena, mostly dependent on metropolitan decision-making and driven by marketization forces and public choice. Both, Lithuanian (Kaunas district municipality)

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and Polish (Pruszcz Gdański municipality) localities had experienced similar institutional paths concerning economic growth and territorial cohesion policies since the EU accession process in 2004 as a part of the CEE region. The similarities in both municipal cases are also significant, e.g. growing middle-class population, economic capital accumulation, suburban sprawl, interconnectedness with the metropolitan zone, and overlapping public services infrastructures. The paper uses the qualitative datasets from the fieldwork in suburban Lithuanian and Polish localities (municipalities) collected in 2019. Can we refer to specific modes of suburban governance in Polish and Lithuanian cases? What are the governance practices, policies, actors, and networks that lead to the suburban character? Our analysis concludes that both localities represent the specific design of “regional” suburban governance marked by low inclusiveness of social stakeholders, dependence on the top-down vertical state and regional networks and creating own urban-suburban policies with metropolitan areas. Thereby, the importance of local authorities in territorial networks is relatively high where the municipalities tackle the ongoing tensions between the interests of different stakeholders. Contrary, our findings demonstrate the low significance of state/regional authorities in designing and implementing urban-suburban interrelations policies that is also typical for the region.

Local Territorial Cohesion: Perception of Spatial Inequalities in Access to Public Service in Polish Case-study Municipalities

By Wirginia Aksztejn

The aim of this article is to investigate a

research area situated off the mainstream of social inequality considerations: territorial inequalities at the local level. The marginalisation of this aspect can be seen both in EU cohesion policies and in academic discourse. The European policies focus their attention (and funding) on the regional level, and researchers who study more local contexts tend to be interested in spatial inequalities in the urban environment with an emphasis on metropolises. This article seeks to fill this research gap in four ways. Firstly, it downscales territorial inequalities to the micro level of municipalities. Secondly, it goes beyond the metropolitan context and investigates localities which are varied in terms of size, location and function. Thirdly, the focus of the study is on accessibility of selected services of general interest such as public transportation and childcare within the municipality, which deviates from more commonly adopted perspective of economic (income-based) differences. Lastly, the paper explores the perception of spatial inequalities in access to public services in the eyes of local actors from the public, civic and business sectors. The research indicates that a subjective view on local inequalities does not necessarily match the actual level of service provision. It raises a question about circumstances under which objectively existing disparities are perceived as an important problem of the locality which requires urgent intervention. The paper brings the local context to the fore: path dependencies and past events that shape present expectations and actions. It also accentuates the role of the active civil society and the political process. The conjunction of the above-mentioned factors produces varying patterns of top-down and bottom-up interventions in the studied localities. The article will be an interesting reading for those interested in local territorial cohesion and the role of public and community actors in smoothing up inequalities.

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