

Network Conference of Spa-ce.net

“Territorial Development in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe – ‘Places that do not matter’ and inner peripheries”

POLIS University

26 - 27 September 2019, Tirana, Albania

Societal actors strive to achieve sustainable territorial development by reducing territorial disparities and fragmentation, promoting growth and competitiveness, and building socio-ecological resilience. In so doing, these actors take advantage of interdependencies between institutions and people in a network society, and promoting more social collaboration. In this process, power dynamics, social heritage and unequal knowledge contribute to the creation of various territorial constructs, where some places are more advantageous than others, and some remain peripheral or lose importance. This inequality has given rise to scientific and policy discourses on ‘places that do not matter’ and inner peripheries.

Inner peripheries, a seemingly confusing term, has gained attention due to increased awareness on the multitude of features (in addition to the territorial dimension) that less advantageous and less developed places have, together with the diversity of factors that contribute to creation of *peripherality*. In this framework, the definition of peripherality varies between socio-economic marginalization, low access to markets and services, and weak human resources, to locational features and geographical and/or socio-economic remoteness and/performance. This broad definition may lead inner peripheries to become indistinguishable from *lagging areas*. However, accessibility to economic potential and especially to services of general interest, associated with well-being of residents, is key to classifying areas as *inner peripheries*.

“Places that do not matter”, is a rising metaphor to characterise territorial constructs and urban areas, where human and economic capital have for some time been on a declining path, through depopulation and emigration, brain drain, diminishing and/or low/negative growth of industries and agricultural activities. Places may ‘lose importance’ because of internal socio-economic processes, but also because government’s policies may result, deliberately or not, into the establishment of inequalities on the territory, and formation of inner peripheries, and lagging areas. Understanding dynamics and interlinks between these internal and external factors, and the features of the resulting inner peripheries and ‘places that do not matter’ is of importance to institutions (formal and informal) and policy-makers for drawing and implementing efficient policies and targeted instruments for territorial development.

Indicative Themes and Topics:

1. **Identification and socio-economic and spatial analysis of inner peripheries and 'places that do not matter' in the region:** settlement and social network features; formation of sparsely populated areas; the effect of topography and other geographical features on the formation of inner peripheries; historical, political and socio-economic factors and structural processes that lead towards the formation of inner peripheries; the rurality of inner peripheries.
2. **Inner peripheries and 'places that do not matter' from an EU perspective:** Accessibility, connectivity, markets, social capital, territorial resources, and territorial specificities of the inner peripheries in the region; cohesion policy and instruments in relation to lagging areas inner peripheries; EU integration as a means to overcome inequalities, peripherality and lagging development.
3. **Shifting demographics:** processes that could lead to the formation of places that do not matter and inner peripheries: internal migration within countries and among regions; aging population; refugee flows, their effect on territorial development, and policies and solutions to integration in order to avoid formation of inner peripheries and 'places that do not matter', or the negative effect of refugee crisis on territorial development.
4. **Local and regional development** in or in relation to inner peripheries and lagging areas: socio-economic vulnerabilities, unemployment, social exclusion, territorial and socio-economic segregation including ethnicity related factors, lack of growth, rural ghettos; partnership approaches that tackle peripherality and unequal development; polycentric and flexible [network] governance for producing sustainable territorial development; etc.
5. **Place-based and/or place-informed approaches** and policies to tackle challenges of 'places that do not matter' and inner peripheries, and craft innovative tailor-made solutions, accounting for territorial specificities and strengths. These could be specific models of development related to tourism, SMEs, agricultural activities, etc.
6. **Ecosystems' resiliency in 'places that do not matter' and inner peripheries:** environmental risks, the expected effects of climate change, societal understanding on ecosystem services and willingness to integrate socio-ecological interactions in planning and development decisions for 'places that do not matter' and inner peripheries.

Alongside the representatives of the member institutions of the Spa-ce.net network and other interested researchers, PhD candidates undertaking research on one of the above themes and topics are also invited to submit papers. The authors should send a 150-words abstract, indicating which of the three mentioned topics their paper most closely addresses. Shortlisted and presented research works will be offered the opportunity to publish in the Annual Review of Territorial Governance in Albania, an annual, bilingual publication (with an ISSN).

The application documents must be sent by **18 August 2019**. Please send your application form by email to matej.jasso@stuba.sk, a.korzhenevych@ioer.de, rudina_toto@co-plan.org. The selection and notification of participants is expected by the **2 September 2019**.

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Network of Spatial Research and Planning
in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe

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Spa-ce.net – Network of Spatial Planning and Research Institutes in Central and Eastern Europe

Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development, Dresden, Germany

SPECTRA CE EU at the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava

POLIS University, Tirana, Albania

Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development, Tirana, Albania

For more information feel free to contact the Spa-ce.net conference coordinators:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Matej Jaško

SPECTRA CE EU and UM STU

Vazovova 5,

81243 Bratislava (Slovak Republic)

Email: matej.jasso@stuba.sk

Prof. Dr. Artem Korzhenevych

Leibniz Institute of Ecological
Urban and Regional Development,
Weberplatz 1,

01217 Dresden (Germany)

Email: a.korzhenevych@ioer.de

Dr. Rudina Toto

Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development

Rr. Bylis 12, Highway Tirana-Durres 5th km,

Kashar, Tiranë, 1054, Albania

Email: rudina_toto@co-plan.org

