

to some extent locally but often significantly so in the core regions, yet, in popular discourse, the periphery is often perceived as a "burden" on the core. What does such a contradiction imply? Has economic reasoning failed to convey the message of a symbiotic relationship between peripheries and the core? Is economic analysis perhaps insufficient and is a wider approach needed? Should we consult anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, political science, gender studies or linguistics in addition to the more traditional Regional Studies troika of economics, planning and geography?

Apart from the academic approach, this theme has more practical underpinnings. The implicit social contract involves questions of fairness in the distribution of taxes, transfers and services over space. Ultimately these are questions of sensibility and fairness, of balancing equity and efficiency. However, such a model implicitly assumes rational social planning. What if the system is not rational and is constrained in its ability to seek an optimal social outcome, balancing the long term needs of the periphery and the core? What is the role of ulterior motives, such as existentialism and empire building, in understanding the distribution of public goods between the periphery and the core? Do we need to rethink the spatial aspects of democracy and the influence of access?

Finally we would like to ask if the periphery and the core are equal partners within a nation state? Drawing on common observations in Icelandic discourse it is worth further exploring: is the periphery just interesting but not important?; is it a time capsule for preserving old ways of living and funny eccentrics; a host for an experience economy that city dwellers delight in partaking of, but not suitable for company headquarters and influential public sector jobs; an area of national parks and countryside, rather than money and influence? Is this delimitation of roles perhaps reasonable?

Theme 3: Current Practice and Research of Peripheral Regions

For the third theme, we would like to invite participants to present on recent developments both in research on peripheral communities as well as in current policy practice. Although in some cases these perspectives are distinct, in many cases academic research and policy practice overlap.

Are there original applications of existing methods or even new methods entirely that are of interest? Is new data being harnessed to better understand peripheral economies? What are future scientific priorities? Are there particular hot topics in regional development studies, e.g. gender aspects of regional development, the experience economy, regional food design, new energy sources, the knowledge economy or something entirely different? Are there interesting case studies that could inform research or practice? What is coming out of the latest thinking in policy circles, such as at the European level, the Nordic level, from individual nations, autonomous regions or local communities?

A pertinent question to keep in mind is whether thinking and attitudes, whether in academia or policy circles, reflect differences in cultural outlook between different parts of Europe/the World. For example, does the "Nordic model" with its emphasis on equality and quality of public services offer any lessons for regional policy. It is sometimes suggested that these policies improve community resilience thereby enabling Nordic economies to rebound faster after negative shocks – does the evidence support this view or is the "ideal" of the Nordic countries a myth? Alternatively, are there difference in outlook towards regional policies between federal states such as Germany, Canada or Australia, compared to more centralised states such as France or the UK (which is experimenting with partial devolution of its regions). Furthermore, can lessons be drawn from the different experiences of new EU members in Central and Eastern Europe? For example, do policies and outcomes in polycentric Poland differ from experience in the smaller more monocentric countries such as Hungary, the Czech Republic or the Baltic states?