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Rethinking Constructions of Spatial Justice in Regional Policy.

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- **8th progress report: Cohesion Policy is needed more than ever to promote lasting jobs and growth** Between 2008 and 2012, unemployment increased in four out of five regions in the EU. In addition, GDP shrank in two out of three regions between 2007 and 2010. This crisis has a widespread effect including both more and less developed regions. As a result, the disparities between EU regions have started to grow again after a long period of convergence.
- This dramatic reversal of fortune is highlighted in the 8th progress report on economic, social and territorial cohesion: 'The regional and urban dimension of the crisis' adopted by the European Commission today. It reveals the staggering reductions in regional employment and Gross Domestic Product, housing prices and disposable household income. It shows that while Foreign Direct Investment and exports volumes recovered quickly from the crisis, import volumes are still significantly below its pre-crisis level



Overview:

- 1. Purpose and assumptions of paper.**
- 2. Contested meanings of territorial cohesion.**
- 3. Constructions of Justice.**
- 4. Normative reflections.**



1. Purpose and Assumptions of Paper.

Purpose:

- Insights into the normative constructs that underpin regional policy.
- Give expression to relationships between diversity and values.
- Seeks to apply a critical analysis within co-operative governance; contested meanings of geography; outcomes as expression of fairness.



2. Contested Meanings of Territorial Cohesion.

- Constituted of several discourses and practices.
- A setting of financial and environmental crisis.
- Challenges to universalism and assumptions of the dominant group.

3. Constructions of Justice.

- Expressions of justice.
- Fairness in public policy.
- Towards spatial justice.



Expressions of Justice.

- Social justice – inclusion of the poor, marginalised and oppressed.
- Territorial justice – to each area according to the needs of the population of that area.
- Environmental justice – who is disadvantaged through consumption and pollution and subsequent decision making.

Fairness in public policy.

- Need to improve **welfare of the worst-off**, prioritise a more urgent or greater claim, scale of privilege.
- Redistribution based on utilitarian value, on what will afford the **greatest good to the most people**, rather than prioritising minorities.
- Justice is fairness based on the idea that everyone has an **equal right to the most basic liberties**, equality of opportunity.
- Equality achieved by respecting and **acknowledging difference**, rejection of universalism and assumptions of dominant group.



Spatiality – geography matters but which geography?

- Cities and polycentric urban areas as motors of Europe's development.
- Urban-rural common services for balanced development.
- Trans-national research for business and regional development.
- Investment in trans-European networks and risk management.
- Strengthening trans-European ecosystems and cultural resources and heritage.



Towards spatial justice:

“The traditional universal and legally formal approach of spatial justice, that is, the right to equal treatment of all territories, is actually replaced by a novel rationale...in the face of a more complex and unpredictable world... a European style of competitive spatial fairness...”

G.Giannakourou (1996) Towards A European spatial planning policy: theoretical dilemmas and institutional implications. EPS 4.5



The paradox of a competitive spatial fairness:

equality of chances through the diffusion of information and knowledge, redistributing the chances to access economic prosperity, not economic prosperity per se; such spatial fairness is highly compatible with negative spatial integration.

Equality through discrimination:

diversity of spatial inequalities legitimates the discrimination of objectives to be achieved and measures to adopt. Strongly differentiated / complex world used to strongly argue for responses to be differentiated to adapt to individual circumstances, adopted on a voluntary basis.

Beyond distribution to constructions...

“The concept of justice is central to a political activity such as planning ... a conception of justice which interweaves both substantive and process oriented elements.

This emphasises that planners are concerned with both a ‘just distribution’ and one that is ‘justly arrived at’ “

(Harvey 1973 in Campbell & Marshall 2006)

How are inequalities, exclusion, segregation and social polarisation manifested spatially and reproduced spatially through spatial development.



4. Normative Reflections.

- Regional policy can and does have different normative purposes.
- Do certain aspects of space themselves sustain the production and reproduction of injustice?
- Research that is inherently spatialised in its analysis.
- Seek instrumental constructions or contested sites of wider geo-political forces.
- A conceptual framework within which to critically assess alternatives.

A Disruptive Discourse

“We must approach the future with strategic optimism, with radical openness to new ideas, and, if there is one lesson to be learned from all that I have been saying, with the theoretical and practical insight that comes from a critical spatial perspective.” [Seeking Spatial Justice, Soja \(2010\) p.200](#)



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Thank you.

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