Cohesion Policy should avoid the implementation pitfalls of other well-intended principles that underpin the existing European Cohesion Policy.

References

Abrahams, G. 2014. “What "Is" Territorial Cohesion? What Does It "Do"?: Essentialist versus Pragmatic Approaches to Using Concepts.” European Planning Studies 22 (10): 2134–2155. doi:10.1080/09654313.2013.819838.

Burdack, J., R. Nadler, and M. Woods. 2015. “Rural Regions, Globalization and Regional Responses: The Case of Oberlausitz Region.” In Understanding Geographies of Polarization and Peripheralization, edited by T. Lang, S. Henn, W. Sgibnev, and K. Ehrlich, 323–339. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Copus, A. K. 2018. “Introduction: From Rural Development to Rural Territorial Cohesion.” In Territorial Cohesion in Rural Europe: The Relational Turn in Rural Development, edited by A. K. Copus and P. de Lima, 3–10. Abingdon: Routledge.

Copus, A. K., T. Dax, and P. de Lima. 2018. “Epilogue: Rural Cohesion Policy as the Appropriate Response to Current Rural Trends.” In Territorial Cohesion in Rural Europe: The Relational Turn in Rural Development, edited by A. K. Copus and P. de Lima, 236–248. Abingdon: Routledge.

Crowley, C., and D. Meredith. 2018. “Agricultural Restructuring in the EU: An Irish Case Study.” In Territorial Cohesion in Rural Europe: The Relational Turn in Rural Development, edited by A. K. Copus and P. de Lima, 173–190. Abingdon: Routledge.

Dax, T. 2018. “The Evolution of European Rural Policy.” In Territorial Cohesion in Rural Europe: The Relational Turn in Rural Development, edited by A. K. Copus and P. de Lima, 35–52. Abingdon: Routledge.

de Lima, P. 2018. “Reconciling Labour Mobility and Cohesion Policies: The Rural Experience.” In Territorial Cohesion in Rural Europe: The Relational Turn in Rural Development, edited by A. K. Copus and P. de Lima, 126–150. Abingdon: Routledge.

Hanell, T. 2015. “Measuring Territorial Cohesion: A Macro-Regional Approach.” In Understanding Geographies of Polarization and Peripheralization, edited by T. Lang, S. Henn, W. Sgibnev, and K. Ehrlich, 235–251. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Muller, H. B. M. 2013. “The Place where Streams Seek Ground. Towards a New Territorial Governmentality: The Meaning and Usage of the Concept of Territorial Cohesion in the European Union.” Doctoral Thesis, University of Amsterdam.

Nemes, G., C. High, and A. Augustyn. 2018. “Beyond the New Rural Paradigm: Project State and Collective Reflexive Agency.” In Territorial Cohesion in Rural Europe: The Relational Turn in Rural Development, edited by A. K. Copus and P. de Lima, 212–235. Abingdon: Routledge.

Skuras, D., and A. Dubois. 2018. “Business Networks, Translocal Linkages and the Way to the New Rural Economy.” In Territorial Cohesion in Rural Europe: The Relational Turn in Rural Development, edited by A. K. Copus and P. de Lima, 151–172. Abingdon: Routledge.

Regional and local development in times of polarisation: re-thinking spatial policies in Europe, edited by Thilo Lang and Franziska Gormar, Singapore, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, ISBN: 978-981-13-1189-5. ISBN for eBook: 978-981-13-1190-1

This is a timely and important book because it addresses one of the most urgent challenges facing societies today, namely socio-spatial polarisation, the phenomenon that is fuelling the growth of intolerant nativist sentiments in and beyond Europe. As it's
impossible to do justice to all 15 chapters, this review is necessarily highly selective. The chapters in Part 1 deal with questions of power and they feature two very prominent critical geographers. The opening chapter on geographical uneven development consists of a conversation between Ray Hudson and John Pickles that surveys the contributions the former has made to the field of economic geography over the course of a long and productive career. A leading exponent of the Marxian approach, Ray Hudson argues that “Marxian political economy is the only perspective that seeks to develop a holistic conception of the way in which capitalist economies are constituted and change, structured around the capital-labor class relation, and that allows a rigorous specification of the structural parameters of capitalist social relations”. But he concedes that some other perspectives – such as feminism and political economy perspectives like evolutionary and institutional economics for example – “can complement Marxian approaches, since they focus on aspects of how capitalist economies develop and function”.

Fittingly, the chapter that follows is a Marxian analysis of peripherality in Europe by Costis Hadjimichalis, a leading critical geographer from Greece who presents a very persuasive argument as to how and why neoliberal austerity contradicts socio-spatial cohesion policy in the EU. Existing mainstream theories and policies, he says, are too weak to promote socio-spatial cohesion and therefore “fresh thinking” is necessary. The chapter concludes with a clarion call for “policies and actions that challenge socio-spatial injustice and the lack of democracy and accountability, both at home and in EU institutions”.

The chapters in Part 2 address the dynamics of regional and cohesion policies in the EU, beginning with a fascinating chapter by Rhys Jones and colleagues on reconceptualizing territorial cohesion through the prism of spatial justice. The authors begin by pointing out that “territorial cohesion” is becoming an ever more ambiguous and contested term and they justify this claim by citing the latest Cohesion Report (2017) which is structured in chapters on economic, social and territorial cohesion. “Territorial cohesion”, they argue, “is now treated as an issue that is somehow separate and distinct from economic and social ones, with territorial cohesion being viewed in relation to different environmental challenges (e.g. climate change and pollution) affecting EU regions and with regard to various territorial cooperation schemes (e.g. cross-border connections)”. One of their central arguments is that a new agenda for empowered regions in the EU should be founded on the concept of spatial justice, which would allow us “to envisage how plural understandings of development, justice and well-being and the ‘good life’ might be developed, ones that are attuned to the regions and territories from which they emanate”.

Another fascinating chapter in this section, by Jozsef Benedek and colleagues, consists of an evaluation of the process of establishing urban growth poles as part of the new regional policy in Romania. The authors find that the external, country-level convergence to the EU average was accompanied by a strong internal territorial polarisation, creating a dual spatial structure, which leads them to conclude that the national regional policy failed to achieve its main goal, namely “to reduce regional disparities at the development level in the medium or long run”.

Part 3 shifts the focus to the responses to regional polarisation and one of the common threads running through these chapters is an agentic perspective; in other words, people in peripheral regions may be poor, but they still have agency and therefore they are not treated as powerless victims of circumstance. The scope for barriers to local action are most clearly illustrated in two excellent chapters in this section – the first by Aura Moldovan, who analyses out-migration strategies in peripheries in Romania, and
the second by Sorin Cebotari and Melinda Mihaly, who look at local community initiatives in Hungary and Romania.

The chapter by Moldovan highlights the interplay of selective migration and local development, where the outcome is contingent on (a) what form migration takes as between commuting, internal migration, international migration or temporary migration abroad and (b) how far political power and public policies are attuned to local needs. One of the key problems in centralized states like Romania, she argues, is not necessarily a lack of resources, but the fact that these resources are allocated “in a way that doesn’t engage with local needs and potentials”. This, in turn, is attributed to “the limited power that peripheries have in relation to national and European decision makers”.

The chapter by Cebotari and Mihaly reinforces this analysis by demonstrating that local elites are just as much a problem as central elites. The centralization of local development in Hungary, a process that has been underway since the mid-1990s, had a negative impact on both civil society organizations and SMEs, especially on their ability to access national and EU funds for local development. As a result “civil and municipal actors ceased to be interdependent, as the latter gained privileged access to funds for rural development and became unevenly represented in decision-making processes”. A similar process was apparent in the Romanian case study, where “local authorities (i.e. the local mayor) are the only elective actors who can submit the application for a community-owned project and who can become the owner of the project”. This chapter should be read by anyone who still believes that “localism” is an entirely benign phenomenon because the chapter is a sobering testament to the political disconnect between local elites (i.e. mayors) and local communities. The chapter should also be required reading for western-centric scholars and Brussels-based bureaucrats because the authors conclude by saying that the case studies from Hungary and Romania provide “examples of the mismatch between existing conceptualisation of community-owned projects in Western Europe and the practical situation in CEE countries”.

The final two chapters in Part 4 provide a very useful coda for the whole book because the penultimate chapter by Garri Raamaa and colleagues reflects on the conceptual value of the book, while the final chapter by Sorin Cebotari and colleagues distils the policy implications of the book. As regards the chapter on conceptual value, the authors are surely correct in their two basic arguments: (a) that there is an urgent need for more agency-centred research in peripheral contexts and (b) that EU policies have inadvertently shackled regions by focusing capacity building efforts on the national level and neglecting sub-national administrative capacity and civil society in CEE countries. This leads the authors to claim that “EU post-accession investments have contributed to great regional differences in CEE countries, while turning convergence, partnership and subsidiarity principles into a farce … The cases of Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia and Romania show that the centralised EU regional policy cannot fulfil its objectives when there is a lack of capacity in localities and regions”.

The spatial dynamics of political power and institutional capacity are addressed more directly in the final chapter on policy implications. The authors argue that the national state remains a key actor in the shared management system of EU Cohesion Policy because national policymakers are “probably the most important link in promoting (or even compromising) the idea of even development”. Unless this top-down logic is reversed, they argue, “we risk ending up in situations where local authorities implement projects only for the sake of accessing funding, but lacking any serious impact on local development … This is the reason some of the projects implemented through EU funding still fall short of reducing disparities between centres and peripheries”.

EURASIAN GEOGRAPHY AND ECONOMICS 365
These conceptual and policy conclusions are sound and sensible and the book makes a valuable contribution to the burgeoning debate on socio-spatial polarisation, especially with respect to our understanding of the specificities of CEE countries, where sub-national administrative capacity and civil society organizations are nothing like western-centric scholars imagine them to be.

For all its merits I had two concerns about the way the book framed the issues. First, in the introduction to the book, we are told that innovation and growth are “neoliberal concepts”, an extraordinary notion whatever your political or theoretical perspective. One can have neoliberal conceptions of innovation and growth (stressing the role of heroic entrepreneurs etc.), but it seems totally misguided to dismiss the notions of innovation and growth without specifying the nature of these phenomena. Second, some authors claim to have identified a regional policy paradox because, despite generous regional policies, regional polarisation has intensified. But to expect Cohesion Policy to reverse uneven development on its own is to hugely over-emphasize its significance as well as to neglect the counteracting effects of Framework Funds like Horizon 2020, which operate as an unofficial regional policy for core regions because the latter capture most of the funds, counteracting the goals of Cohesion Policy.

Kevin Morgan

*Governance and Development, School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University*

[morgankj@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:morgankj@cardiff.ac.uk)

© 2019 Kevin Morgan

https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2019.1627236

---

**The Caucasus: an introduction**, by Thomas De Waal, New York, Oxford University Press, 2019, 312 pp., $74.00 (Hardcover), ISBN 9780190683085; 18.95 $ (Paperback), ISBN 9780190683092

The Caucasus. A majestic mountain range separating communities. It gives an extreme physical background to a geopolitical area where the concentration of different peoples and cultures is almost unique. However, this cavalcade of diversity can determine the identities of the people living here, their relationship to each other and the territory, and their interactions in everyday life as a factor generating conflicts in the space divided by nation-states.

As a member of a research group investigating the post-Soviet social processes with ethnic features in the eastern part of Europe, I waited the work introducing the Caucasus with great expectations. The cover of the publication suggests that the book identifies the Caucasus with armed conflicts, modernisation, and the periphery situation, but the sad female figure also promises the viewpoint of the greatest victims of the situation, the subaltern members of the society. After getting to know the content, the last one, the subaltern missed from the book; it gave its place to large political-driven conflicts.

I noticed with disappointment from the Introduction that this book is not about the whole Caucasus, only a part of it, more specifically about the three nation states, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. In this sense, the title of the book is misleading; the Transcaucasian states cannot and should not identify the Caucasus. The book puts the history of the Transcaucasian states in a geopolitical context. It deals primarily with internal and external political conflicts (with each other and with Russia and the Soviet