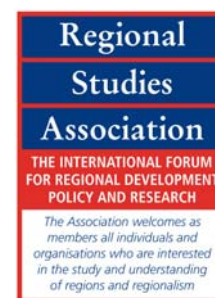


Regional Studies Association Research Network

Peripherality, Marginality and Border Issues in Northern Europe



We are very pleased to announce the launch of the ***Peripherality, marginality and border issues in Northern Europe*** Regional Studies Association Research Network, jointly organised by Peter de Souza and Mike Danson. This has developed out of interests and concerns over the position and attention given to such regions across the globe, but particularly within a Europe where cities and city-regions are dominating the research and policy agenda. As well as establishing a forum for discussion and debate about such issues, three meetings are planned over the next year to progress the topic area and to build a network of interested parties. All are welcome to contribute in whatever form they are able. We plan to launch the Research Network with an informal meeting at the Regional Studies Association Annual International Conference in Prague in May 2008 and look forward to hearing from colleagues there and through e-mail and other means before then.

Peter de Souza and Michael Danson

Background

While there has been much research and attention paid to the regions in the core of Europe - and especially to cities, city-regions, old industrial areas, border regions and to some of their underlying characteristics - such as clusters, agglomeration phenomena generally, regional innovation systems, the specific features of peripheral and marginal regions have been relatively neglected. This proposal seeks to address this by establishing a regional studies network of interested parties to bring together facilities, expertise, experience and other resources as the first step in the development of more significant cooperation. Many members of the Regional Studies Association are located in non-core areas of Europe and face obstacles and challenges in applying locally the theories and strategies appropriate to the centre. There is a need, confirmed by consideration of the literature underpinning peripherality and by anecdotal evidence collected from Regional Studies Association, Nordic-Scottish, Regional Studies Association, and other conferences across the continent, for those interested in the particular issues of peripheral regions to have more effective and dedicated networks. In the context of competitiveness and centralisation, each enlargement of the EU has both included but also generated more peripheral regions. There is an opportunity, therefore, for the Regional Studies Association to be at the heart of an initiative to address the associated research and policymaking agenda. Because of the natural and organic links and parallels with the analysis and treatment of border regions in the European context, it is proposed that the focus of the Research Network is on 'peripheral, marginal and border regional issues'.

Aims of the Research Network

To establish a network with the following ambitions:

- To gather the scientists and regional actors around peripheral, marginal and border regional issues;
- To define its own, more specific, agenda in a first workshop where a thematic approach will be covered and future themes defined;
- To promote scientific discussions and contributions forwarding theoretical and methodological issues in relation to peripheral, marginal and border regional issues.
- To develop this discussion directly and through the organization of empirical studies creating a foundation for comparativity on a wide geographical scale.
- To establish different fora where this discussion will be undertaken on the net and face-to-face.
- To liaise with complementary networks and associations of academics, policymakers and practitioners in peripheral Europe, including but not exclusively the Centre for Island Studies and the Nordic-Scottish Network.

- To ensure that the results will be continuously presented electronically and gathered in specific edited variants.
- Finally, to establish structured and long term cooperation in this field.

Participants and their roles (paper givers / attendees)

- We have already had preliminary discussions and defined a number of interested parties in Scotland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia. We are now working actively to promote our activities and we welcome all who want to add themselves to this list.
- The preliminary round of discussion papers will discuss the principles, defined above, with future strategies in mind and will bring the discussion on the research agenda forward substantially. We will also bring in examples of work in progress and reports on ongoing activities. The network and its methods will evolve, therefore, to pursue the objectives outlined above.

While the workshops will deliver papers and discussion around the principal themes, the activities are planned to be a springboard for a more long term elaboration of the specific foci described in the application: peripheries, marginalities and borders. Although drawing on evidence and literature from other geographies, the focus is on the particular issues generated in Northern Europe, and mainly the Nordic and Celtic countries. In preparation for each workshop, the organisers will undertake a literature, evidence and researcher scoping exercise to identify the definitions, prime issues, and gaps; these papers will form the basis for initial discussions at the meetings. Calls for papers will be made to carry forward these discussions within the workshops (Workshop Group Meetings – WGM).

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Programme

Panel at the Prague Conference (May 2008)

This panel is intended to launch the Research Network and to introduce an outline of a platform, orientated towards the issues of peripherality and marginality, which will be elaborated and presented in a more final form at the Rena meeting in Norway.

Please contact Lisa Bibby-Larsen at the Regional Studies Association office for further information at: lisa.bibby-larsen@rsa-ls.ac.uk

Research Network event 1: (9-10 October 2008, Rena, Norway)

Theme 1:

Keynote scoping paper: *Methods, concepts and future scientific priorities*. There will be a special focus on the potential and prerequisites of comparativity (Peripheries and Marginalities) based on a mapping exercise of current work and interest in the field by the Regional Studies Association and other researchers. With different national backgrounds, cultures and disciplines, these aspects of cooperation need a preliminary exploration and analysis.

Theme 2:

Rural mobility and infrastructure. (Taking the lead from the annual conference and elaborating more specifically on the dimension of periphery and marginality issues.)

Research Network event 2: (February 2009, Paisley, Scotland)

Theme 1:

Service development and infrastructure in rural/peripheral areas.

Theme 2:

Keynote scoping paper: *Methods, concepts and future scientific priorities*. A special focus will be placed on issues where borders, peripherality and marginality are simultaneously on the theoretical, applied and policy agenda. Another special focus will be on the potential and prerequisites of comparativity. With the same argument as in Research Network event 1: theme 1.

Theme 3:

The Border 'regime' – special aspects of regional administrative and informal practices in perspective of national priorities and administrative priorities.

Research Network event 3: (Spring 2009, European Conference, tbc)

Scoping papers, modified by workshop-based discussions, will be reported and other papers accepted for a dedicated strand at the annual international conference. This will facilitate dissemination and mainstreaming of the workshop findings, research agenda, and the network.

Themes for the future:

Part of the discussion at the Research Network event 1 will be directed at creating a common set of issues that should be of interest in the future development of the network. Suggestions on these issues will be developed in preparation for this meeting and submissions from any interested group will be kindly received.

Planned outputs:

- Reports after each meeting for *Regions*.
- Confirm the interest and format of a dedicated *website*.
- Organisation of proposals/applications for *bilateral/multilateral cooperative projects*.
- *Publication* of proceedings from Research Networks events as special editions of journals or books
- *Journal* articles on scoping papers
- The organisation of the *network* in itself (names, organisations, venues, ...)