

REPORT FOR THE REGIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION:

SUMMARY OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE RSA RESEARCH NETWORK ON REGIONALISATION AND MARGINALISATION: BRIDGING OLD AND NEW DIVISIONS IN REGIONAL GOVERNANCE.

06 – 07 November 2009

Gdansk/Gdynia, Poland

INTRODUCTION:

This was the second of three seminars organised by the convenors of the Research Network Group: Tassilo Herrschel (University of Westminster, UK) and Iwona Sagan (University of Gdansk, Poland).

This RSA event was hosted by the University of Gdansk, Dept of Geography, in collaboration with the *Centre for Urban and Regional Governance* (CURG), University of Westminster.

A total of 13 delegates were present, all participating in the work group discussions and most gave a presentation. Bursaries were available to subsidise travel costs, and provide food and accommodation. Contributions came also from the Department of Geography, University of Gdansk

The general theme explored was: Marginalisation and marginality as projected, created and perceived features across different scales

The theme of this second workshop of the Research Network was twofold: (1) reviewing and evaluating the observations made earlier this year at during the first meeting in Malmö, and, (2) how the issue of marginality on the Baltic coast, 'on the edge of Europe', is perceived in Central Europe which, in its own right, represents a degree of peripheralisation in a Europe-wide context, where the main centre of gravity seems to be in the northwest of the continent. Within that international peripheralisation sits a further, regional scale of marginality, here the coastal city region of Gdansk-Gdynia. This marginality applies to the political-governmental perspective from the national government in Warsaw. To some extent, this view is also reflected in the infrastructure-based peripheralisation – the main focus is on the axis Berlin-Warsaw-Moscow.

This creates an interesting, complex layer of different marginalisation processes and perceptions – politically, economically and in terms of perceived distance (reachability). Yet, despite the challenges faced by the Gdansk-Gdynia city region in the national and

international context, strong localist rivalries continue between the two cities, and prevent a more effective, externally, rather than intra-regionally targeted political drive and lobbying process. Only then, with added political courage and imagination Among The key actors, so it seems, can the experienced marginalisation be overcome. Currently, the two budget airlines Ryanair and Wizzair provide the only affordable efficient 'mass' connections at national and international level. Train journeys are painfully slow and car journeys take almost as long in the absence of a coherent motorway network.

This illustrates the impact that political ambitions, actor networks and relationships exercise on a locality's connectivity and thus political-economic relevance in a national and international context. Barely featuring on the political horizon of the Warsaw-based national political elite, the Gdansk-Gdynia city region seems too busy 'infighting' for small-scale local political advantages to effectively develop strategies for overcoming its peripherality. Such circumstances are unlikely to be limited to the Gdansk-Gdynia region, but may well be expected in other city regions at national and international level. Further research into this, that is the multi-scalar nature of peripheralisation, and the role of actors and networks within that, is needed.

Some of the main questions explored during the workshop discussions and inviting further investigation, included:

- the role of the legal/state framework for actors to represent interests and implement policies
- the importance of coalition building for effective network building and 'connecting'
- the underlying local and regional social and economic processes which influence policy agendas, the range of actors and their policy-making relevance
- a broader and more differentiated understanding of what 'peripherality' and 'marginality' mean, going beyond the conventional geographic 'edge of a territory' notion.
- the complexity of core-periphery relationships, involving overlapping and intersecting concepts of place, territory, network and boundary.
- marginality and marginalisation as a political strategy.
- strategies considered by policy actors to overcome marginalisation.

These questions were raised and discussed during seminar sessions and illuminated in the presentations from a local, regional and international perspective:

Presentations 1: Introduction to the symposium

- The conventional view: Peripherality as geographic margin (Mike Danson, University of the West of England)
- Peripherality as functional/created marginalisation – even in core cities/regions. Summary of discussions at the Malmö workshop (Stephen Syrett, Middlesex University, London)

Presentations 2: Peripheralisation and marginalisation in the Gdansk-Gdynia Region

- Pomorskie – regional socio-economic features and development tools. Bartosz Kozicki (Office of the Marshal of Pomorskie Voivodeship in Gdansk):
- Tri-City region: cooperation to boost visibility and tackling peripherality. Iwona Sagan (University of Gdansk, Gdansk)

Presentations 3: Challenging peripherality as a perception

- Overcoming Peripherality – Building bridges: Lessons from the Øresund Region for the Baltic Sea Region? (Tassilo Herrschel, University of Westminster, London)
- EU support in the regional capitals of eastern Poland. Agata Miazga (Ministry of Regional Development in Warsaw)

Presentations 4: Peripheralisation in metropolitan regions – international observations

- Exclusions and Marginalisations among actors and places in the Vancouver Region (Peter Holt, consultant, formerly Surrey Board of Trade)
- Exclusions and Marginalisations among actors and places in the Frankfurt Region (Carsten Klug, Economic Development, City of Frankfurt/M)
- Exclusion and Marginalisation of places and actors through national (state) policies. A UK (English) perspective (Derek Walker, consultant and Chief Economic Development Officer's Society (CEDOS), UK)

The event also included social events such as two joint dinners for most of the attendees, and an afternoon bus trip to core and periphery areas in the Gdansk-Gdynia region.