Regional development is often treated as being based on a clear and consensual perspective on the kind of progress needed. But academic as well as political debates are far less univocal. Regional studies in the past three decades have articulated a range of new and old social, spatial, economic and political divides, especially between urban centers and peripheralised non-metropolitan areas that stem from the dominant regional development approaches in CEE and beyond. Existing research has emphasized the capacity of Neoliberalism to reinvent and consolidate itself after each juncture of crisis, which has been at the expense of foreclosing alternative developmental paths. A range of recent processes, such as the so called ‘migrant crisis’, rise of illiberal populism, questioning the European project, the rising economic influence of China in CEE, adaptation to climate change and recently the COVID-19 pandemic, have sparked further anxieties and fears of new divides and exclusions.

The RSA CEE Conference in Leipzig will open up a dialogue around these divides, exploring how they shape current research and regional policy in, across, and beyond CEE. We are particularly keen to see research which views globalisation not as a recent process only, nor simply emanating from an assumed centre creating all kinds of peripheries, but one that is deeply rooted in a longer process of adaptation to the global condition and over-time transformations of the capitalist world economy. We invite contributions scrutinising development as a concept by bringing forward alternative approaches. The conference intends to challenge current and highlight new research perspectives to regional development in CEE, bridging disciplinary, temporal, socio-spatial, scalar, knowledge production, policy, material-inmaterial and theory-practice divides. The conference warmly invites inputs from researchers, policymakers and practitioners working in all areas related to regional policy, regional development and regional studies.

The RSA CEE Conference in Leipzig offers an excellent opportunity for initiating a progressive and multidisciplinary dialogue on, but not limited to, the following themes and topics:

- **(Alternative) economies:**
  - New and old economies and their spaces
  - Winners and losers of economic transformation and transnationalisation
  - New spaces of innovation, between mainstream, social and bottom-up alternatives
  - Between foreign direct investments and locally rooted economies
  - Deindustrialization and reindustrialization between path renewal and path dependency
  - Sustainable development and green growth
  - Infrastructures and foundational economies for building resilient regions
  - Diverse economies, post-development and de-growth
  - Hidden economies of everyday life and social reproduction
- **EU and regional policies:**
  - Core-periphery, urban-rural, East-West divides
  - Competition, competitiveness and cohesion – neoliberal vs. distributive policies
  - Global cities, socio-spatial polarisation and regional policies
  - Smart territorial development
  - European Green deal, climate change and regional policies
  - The transformative power of cities for the common good - Leipzig Charter 2.0
  - Peripheral development, borders and border regions
  - Participatory and deliberative regional policymaking
  - Place making, spatial imaginaries, futures of regions and regionalism

- **Political geographies and re-thinking CEE:**
  - Old and new liaisons: CEE between Russian, Chinese and US influences
  - Contesting the European project: CEE within the EU
  - Past and future of democracy in CEE: liberalism, illiberalism, authoritarian backsliding
  - CEE and the Global East, de-colonial and post-colonial approaches
  - Beyond (post-)socialist and (post-)soviet transformation
  - Changing state agencies and the rescaling of power in times of crises
  - Polarizing regional development as a driver of political radicalization?
  - Populism, electoral geographies and the left behind

- **Societies and culture:**
  - Civil societies, social movements, protest and space
  - Arts, creativity, culture and development
  - Housing, conviviality and the commons
  - Local agency and global challenges
  - (Im)mobilities and migration
  - Demographic shifts and changing social structures
  - Race, ethnicity and othering
  - Labour, healthcare, and welfare during COVID-19 and socio-spatial divides

We welcome papers from all – academics, researchers, students and those working in policy and practice. The event is inclusive and offers networking opportunities for all in our field. The organisers welcome proposals for special sessions, themed workshops and innovative forms of networking and collaboration. If you would like to organise or offer a session to the conference, please contact Katharina Bürger at katharina.buerger@regionalstudies.org.

**Submission Details:**
Please submit your abstract (up to 250 words and text only) through the RSA conference portal, which will open in due course. Abstracts will be considered and reviewed by the Conference Committee against the criteria of originality, interest, subject balance and geographical spread. We also welcome Special Session submissions. Please see the separate Call for Special Sessions and email your proposal to Katharina Bürger, katharina.buerger@regionalstudies.org.

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