

PhD and Early Career Paper Development Workshop: Regional Inequalities and Perceived Left-Behindness 11-13 May 2026 L'Aquila, Italy

Description:

Academic and policymakers have highlighted interpersonal and interterritorial inequalities as key factors behind rising feelings of discontent and left-behindness across different types of territories, including rural and urban areas.

This two-day workshop will bring together senior scholars and young researchers to examine the drivers of life satisfaction and dissatisfaction, the construction of narratives and spatial imaginaries of 'left-behind regions', and alternative expressions of discontent. Participants will explore how inequality, economic restructuring, social identities, and policy frameworks shape subjective well-being across diverse populations, as well as the emotional and material implications of perceived marginalisation.

During the workshop, senior scientists will provide young scholars with the latest insights into ongoing and top-level research in the field and discuss their work.

Objectives:

- To deepen understanding of life satisfaction, discontent, and left-behindness from a multidisciplinary perspective.
- To explore how socioeconomic inequalities influence subjective well-being in various contexts (urban/rural, national/cross-national).
- To foster collaboration and knowledge exchange between senior scholars and early-career researchers in the field.
- Giving participants the opportunity to present, discuss and get extensive feedback on their on-going work.
- Facilitating networking among young scholars and making their voices visible within the discourse.
- To encourage the development of new research directions, policy implications, and interventions.

Research themes:

- Theorisations and empirical manifestations of perceived left-behindness
- Regional discontent and perceived marginalisation
- Rural–urban disparities in life satisfaction and well-being
- Alternative expressions and dimensions of discontent

- Construction and circulation of narratives and spatial imaginaries of ‘left-behind regions’
- Material, emotional, and policy implications of spatial imaginaries and feelings of exclusion
- Policy responses and best-practice initiatives aimed at addressing left-behindness

Target Audience:

Young scholars (PhD Students and Early Career Researchers) who are committed to interdisciplinary research, especially bridging a gap between topics, are strongly encouraged to apply.

Confirmed Speakers:

- [Andrés Rodríguez-Pose](#) | Princesa de Asturias Chair and Professor of Economic Geography Department of Geography and Environment – The London School of Economics and Political Science
- [Simona Iammarino](#) | Professor of Applied Economics – Gran Sasso Science Institute
- [Stefania Fiorentino](#) | Associate Professor in Planning and Urban Regeneration – University of Cambridge

Application Process:

Step 1: Interested PhD Students and Early Career Researchers (5 years from PhD) are invited to submit an extended abstract (between 500 and 1,000 words in PDF format, using standard academic formatting) until the 1st of March 2026) via the following Google Form:

Google-Form for extended abstracts: <https://forms.gle/uABX3N8qCLr8bmYQ6>

Abstracts will be selected based on clarity, relevance, originality, suitability with the overall workshop theme and (preliminary) results. We will inform all applicants by the 16th of March about the outcome of the selection process and subsequently invite the selected young scholars to proceed to Step 2.

Step 2: The selected young scholars are expected to submit a full working paper version of their research (between 5,000 and 8,000 words, inclusive of abstract, references, figure/table captions and endnotes) until the 20th of April 2026. Only participants who submit a full paper will be able to join the workshop. All paper presenters will also be assigned as discussants for another paper.

Financial Support:

- We aim to make the workshop as inclusive as possible for PhD students and Early Careers. The workshop will therefore be free of charge.

- The event will offer financial support for selected participants if needed, specifically: Partial stipend for accommodation and/or partial travel stipend. The level of support will depend on the available budget.
- As co-financing for travel expenses with participant's own resources is expected, we also encourage an early application to the wide range of external opportunities for small travel grants.

Special issue:

There is an ongoing Call for Papers for the Special Issue in Regional Studies [“Spatial inequalities and feelings of left-behindness: perceptions, imaginaries, and policy responses”](#). Participants in the workshop are encouraged to consider submitting their work to this Special Issue. While presentation at the workshop does not guarantee acceptance, the sessions will offer an opportunity to receive valuable feedback that may help strengthen their manuscripts prior to submission.

Scientific Committee:

[Fabiano Compagnucci](#), [Alessandra Faggian](#), [Giulia Urso](#) and [Paolo Veneri](#)

YSI - Urban & Regional Economics Working Group Organisers:

[Christian Joel González-Cuatianquis](#) and [Max Roessler](#)



If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us!

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