

Special Issue

City Regions and Polycentric Territorial Development: Concepts and Practice

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This special issue of *Urban Research and Practice* discusses the three closely related themes of polycentricity, city regions and territorial disparities. The focus on polycentric settlement systems is framed by the normative goal of sustainable spatially-balanced territorial development declared in the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and further developed by European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON) and the Interreg IIIB programmes. The experience of former socialist countries in Central Europe shows that issues of territorial development discussed in the light of polycentricity have a long tradition in this region. Instead of a division of space into exclusive and closed territories with only one choice structure, as operated under Communism, polycentricity now offers a plurality of choices for populations and firms within a networked system of centres. However, we have to bear in mind that displacing the notion of territorial contiguity in favour of a one-sided preference for networks of settlement nodes and corridors runs the risk of producing greater spatial inequality.

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