

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **ESPON Atlas: Territorial Dimensions of the Europe 2020 Strategy**

ESPON 2013 Programme, Luxembourg, 2013, 66 p.  
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**Reviewed by** IONUȚ ANGHELE, University of Bucharest, Romania

This book contains information regarding the results of the ESPON SIESTA project (Spatial Indicators for a 'Europe 2020 Strategy' Territorial Analysis). The European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) commissioned the project in order to investigate the territorial dimensions of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The book is divided into five unequal chapters. The second, third and fourth chapter represent the core of this publication whilst the first and the last chapters provide the introduction and the conclusions. Although small in size, they provide important information necessary for a better a better understanding of the content.

The first chapter (The Europe 2020 Strategy) is a concise presentation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. It contains information about when the strategy had been launched and adopted, and which are its priorities and objectives. The priorities are Smart Growth, Sustainable Growth and Inclusive Growth and they represent the basis of Europe 2020. In order to achieve these priorities, seven flagship initiatives have been initiated: Innovation Union, Digital Agenda for Europe, Youth on the Move, Resource Efficient Europe, An Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era, An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs, European Platform against Poverty. Besides the priorities and the flagship initiatives, several measurable indicators have been agreed as headline targets for the whole European Union. These are: 75% of the 20-64 year-old population to be employed, 3% of the EU's Gross Domestic Product to be invested in Research and Development, a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in relation to 1990 levels, 20% of energy from renewable

sources, a 20% increase in energy efficiency, reducing early school leavers to below 10%, at least 40% of 30-34 year-old population completing third level education, at least 20 million fewer people in or at-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion.

The next three chapters have a similar structure, each representing a detailed presentation of one of the priorities of Europe 2020 Strategy. Each chapter opens with an explanation of the concept and it continues with an analysis of key indicators that illustrate the regional diversity within Europe.

The second chapter (Smart Growth) focuses on the first priority of the Europe 2020 Strategy. It is divided into three subsections: research and the promotion of innovation and knowledge transfer, the quality of education and the digital agenda.

In the first subsection, the authors argue that few European regions reach the overall target on research and development (R&D) expenditure, and that the targets on investments are unlikely to be met. This is because of the slow increase of R&D expenditure and the mismatch between human resources and investment at the regional level. It is also important to note that private expenditure on R&D has increased less in Europe than in other regions of the World, top regions being concentrated mainly in Centre-North.

The second subsection tackles the issue of education in the Europe 2020 Strategy, which is analyzed at a regional level. The percentage of early school leavers, regional distance to achieving national targets regarding drop-out

rates, trends in regional drop-out rates and drop-out rates in Larger Urban Zones are indicators that reflect the territorial situation for lower secondary education, while the Shanghai index, the percentage of population aged 30-34 years with tertiary education, distance to the national targets regarding tertiary education and trends in tertiary education attainment by people aged 30-34 years are the indicators chosen to illustrate the tertiary education level.

The third subsection regarding the digital agenda covers different aspects such as people working in the ITC sector, the broadband penetration rate, the use of e-commerce and the compute use. ITC employment is concentrated in urban areas, especially capital cities. The Nordic countries lead the statistics in broadband penetration, e-commerce, and computer use, whilst in some regions in South-Eastern Europe more than half of the population never used a computer.

The third chapter (Sustainable Growth) is dedicated to the second priority of the Europe 2020 Strategy and it is structured in two subsections: traditional economic indicators of growth and the green economy.

GDP per capita is one of the main EU indicators that reflect economic growth. This indicator varies both between countries and between regions of the same country. The difference between Eastern and Western European countries is still visible, although there are improvements in the East. The economic and financial crisis had a major influence on the evolution of the national GDP per capita. Changes between 2007 and 2011 show that the impact of the crisis is most evident in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Iceland and in the Southern European countries, while the best performing countries are located in Eastern Europe, including non-EU states such as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.

The use of renewable energy is an important aspect of the Europe 2020 Strategy, but only few countries reach the 20% target. The Nordic countries, Estonia, Latvia, Austria, Portugal and Romania are above the proposed target.

In terms of potential, Northern Europe, the Atlantic coast, and the Baltic coast have the greatest potential for electricity production from wind power stations, whilst Southern European regions have the highest potential for photovoltaic energy production.

In chapter four (Inclusive Growth) there are two subsections: employment and lifelong learning; and poverty and social exclusion. The first subsection analyses the territorial patterns of employment and unemployment in European countries. The target for an employment rate of 75% is mainly reached in Central and Northern European Regions whereas the majority of Southern and Eastern European regions suffer from very low employment rates. The study has also shown gender inequalities in employment, with a difference of 13% between the male employment rate and female employment rate in the EU27.

The second subsection begins with statements regarding poverty and it continues with the territorial dimension of the indicators taken into account. The results of the study show that the highest risk of poverty is in Eastern and Southern Europe, mainly in Bulgaria, Romania, Southern Italy and Southern Spain. It is important to note that there are considerable differences between the regions from the same countries in terms of the population at risk-of-poverty.

The fifth and final chapter (Conclusions: Territorial potentials and challenges, and the EU 2020 Strategy) illustrates a series of conclusions regarding the results of the ESPON SIESTA project. One important aspect that is highlighted in this chapter is the difficulty to achieve the headline targets in many of the regions. This is because each region is unique and has its own specificities. The Atlas has managed to show that the European regions are very diverse both in terms of potentials and challenges.

An aggregated index was developed to evaluate the fulfillment of the Europe 2020 Strategy. It measures the distance of the regions from fulfilling the eight headline targets officially set by the EU.

The atlas concludes with a final map, the Aggregated Europe 2020 Map which shows the regional aggregate index for 2009-2010. There is a difference between the Centre-North countries and the rest of Europe in terms of index values. While the Nordic countries, Germany, France and the United Kingdom have regions that register a very high aggregate index, regions in Romania, Hungary, Southern Italy, and Southern Spain are lagging behind.

Overall, it can be said that the book has a very organized structure, with clear and concise ideas. On the other hand, there are some

ambiguities regarding different national targets that are mentioned throughout the book, but are not fully detailed. More information about the national targets could have been useful in better understanding some territorial issues.

Concluding, with 44 maps, 6 figures and 4 tables, the book provides very good visual information considering its purpose and its theme. Also, the text that complements each graphical element offers depth to the content, making this book not just a collection of maps, as its title might indicate, but a valuable resource regarding the Europe 2020 Strategy.

## **Globalization and New Challenges of Agricultural and Rural Systems**

Doo-Chul Kim, Ana Maria Firmino, Yasuo Ichikawa (Eds.),  
IGU Commission on the Sustainability of Rural Systems, Graduate  
School of Environmental Studies, Nagoya University, 2013, 182 p.  
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Nowadays the entire planet is facing globalization and the development process often passes up the sources of energy held both by the territory and the local communities, which are able to provide a quite significant support for the agricultural and rural systems evolution towards progress and welfare. In this context, the theoretical and methodological approaches of the concept of agricultural and rural systems are very important for the future development of the human society.

The book includes papers presented at the 21<sup>st</sup> Colloquium of the Commission on the Sustainability of Rural Systems (CSRS) of the International Geography Union (IGU), held at Nagoya University, Japan. The overall mission of the Commission is the development and application of an internationally comparable research program on the sustainability of rural systems in various regions of the world. As the editors say, the 21<sup>st</sup> Colloquium of the CSRS was held during 29<sup>th</sup> July and 4<sup>th</sup> August 2013, gathering 40 participants from 16 countries with 36 presentations. The proceedings present 12 papers presented at the colloquium, involving contributions from many individuals and institutions.

The proceedings start and end up with two academic considerations over the main ideas and concepts that CSRS is working on in the broad field of Agricultural and Rural Systems. The starting consideration is made by the text of Christopher R. Bryant, Professor and Director of the Laboratory on Sustainable Development and Territorial Dynamics from the University of Montreal, who points out the importance of research and the development approach in rural geography. As an ending,

Akira Tabayashi, Professor Emeritus from the University of Tsukuba, describes the new roles of the rural space in Japan, and in general. He marks the dynamics of the rural areas in the last decades and their growing importance in all the sectors of the economy. Professor Akira Tabayashi illustrates the prospects for the rural areas naming this process the "commodification of rural space".

The book has its structure organized in 4 chapters corresponding to the four main themes of the Colloquium, indeed very topical in the research field of rural and agricultural geographies. The papers cover various areas of study in the domain of agricultural and rural systems, such as: social construction and analysis of rural sustainability; regulation of rural sustainability; sustainability and the rural business enterprise; sustainability in the interaction between rural and urban systems, rural community dynamics and sustainability. These research directions are among the tasks that were defined at the business meeting in Hague to pursue the CSRS's objectives and to contribute to the IGU Executive's policy of ensuring an enhanced profile for geographic research in the international scientific community.

The papers presented in this book are very valuable for the research of the rural systems, bringing their contribution for the geographical methodological approaches and being a step further to the future development of the rural space.

The first chapter is entitled Rural Landscape, Tourism and Tradition: Challenges and Opportunities and it includes 4 papers with various subjects about rural landscape, tourism development in rural settlements and the effect of tourism on functional diversification. Besides the methodological approach, the papers are represented by case studies of different regions in according with the regional specific of a geographical research. All the authors from this chapter address a fundamental component of the concept of sustainable development which consists in adopting adequate strategies in the concerned regions that can integrate the problems of the geographical environment and the development of the rural settlements on short, medium or long temporal sequences.

In terms of graphic and cartographic representation of the majority of works in this section one can appreciate their high quality and professionalism. In this regard, I would also point the need for its enrichment. This is a comment generally available also for the other chapters treated in the book.

I found very interesting the paper on the participation in landscape and local knowledge. The author realizes the importance of local communities in the large process of developing a certain region. His study is focused on the agricultural landscape of Catalan Mediterranean Mountains. In terms of the classic theme that sees tourism as an alternative for development, the authors propose theoretical models and critical assessments for the current state of tourism in a certain region. In this chapter we also find an international collaborative study that highlights the differences in the approaches of experts from different regions. The authors present this difference by telling us that Romanian experts generally stress more the biocentric approach of landscape while Walloon experts assign importance to urban or industrial landscapes. In my opinion this may be due to the different rates of these landscapes in the analysed regions for each group of experts. Furthermore, the authors of this paper suggest nine features worth to be considered when assessing the landscape.

The second chapter of the proceedings is entitled: Heritage and Rural Society in Sustainable Development and it includes 3 papers with clearly methodological approaches and conclusive results about the role and the importance of heritage in sustainable development. The case study areas include regions from the eastern hemisphere, starting with Japan and Israel and ending with the Australian coast. The authors of each paper point the importance of regional particularities in the process of developing the agricultural and rural landscape. Each of them marks in their studies the big role of the cultural component of every landscape, while representing the solution for starting and accelerating the regional development of rural landscapes.

The third chapter of the book addresses another important theme from the economic sector: Food and Local Production: Issues of Local Farmers in a Global Context. This section includes 3 papers that analyse this problem in the actual context of 3 different regions of the world: Japan, Spain and Laos. This theme is a very actual one in the globalization context, the local producers facing big issues in adapting to the global economy. The authors provide different solutions for the problems that they identify and they try to propose some specific application methods for the region analysed.

The fourth part of the proceedings includes 2 papers that treat the theme of Conceptualization of Rural Factors in general and focus on Vietnam, one of the paper including a case study of community forestry in central Vietnam. In this territorial context, the authors try to find the theoretical and methodological approaches of the concept of agricultural and rural systems, pointing out their importance for the future development processes.

The book manages to find a number of problems for agricultural and rural systems, in the context of globalization. It also captures, through its structure and coherence, the present-day dynamics of rural systems by presenting the causes and the solutions for their territorial problems.

## Book Reviews

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As previously mentioned, an important issue of this book is represented by the necessity of a quantitative improvement of its graphic and cartographic material. In this sense, it is recommended a more applied approach for managing the representation part of rural landscape research in the future. But the proceedings need to be appreciated for their overall varied and complete approach on the topic of agricultural and rural systems.

geo-system, involving economic, social and cultural changes. The included papers bring viable solutions for the current issues of rural space, in the spirit of sustainable development. Such approaches are very valuable both for scientific knowledge and the local communities of rural settlements, the bridge between them being sustainable development, as the main objective of the IGU Commission on the Sustainability of Rural Systems.

In conclusion, globalization brings new challenges to each component of the