

INTRODUCTION

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Cities and regions in contemporary Europe are undergoing profound changes. With their development being increasingly dependent upon their performance in the complex process of intensifying transnational network building, local and regional decision makers are faced with the challenge to govern in a fast-changing environment. Challenges to be tackled do not only increasingly surpass the boundaries of territorial self-government units or even national state borders, but also the borders between the public and the private domain. The erosion of classical spatial hierarchies as well as local or regional decision structures needs to be compensated by the building of flexible and network-oriented forms of making and implementing decisions. This shift, often described as a change from “government” to “governance” structures, is a challenge for local and regional authorities anywhere in Europe, but even more so in the countries that until 1989 lay behind the former Iron Curtain. Therefore spatial, social, economic, political and cultural dimensions of this process will be examined here from the German-Polish perspective, which includes territories in the relatively stable conditions of West Germany, in the somewhat less settled structures of East Germany, and in the newly-created and still transforming setting of the post-socialist country of Poland. This perspective derives from the fact that the present thematic issue of *Quaestiones Geographicae* is an outcome of the strong cooperation structures existing between the Institute of Socio-Economic Geography and Spatial Management of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and the De-

partment of Geography of Christian Albrechts University in Kiel. Since 2007, a regular exchange of academic staff and students of both institutions has been organised within the framework of jointly defined research topics in the field of analysing urban and regional development processes as well as strategies and policies to manage them in Germany and Poland. This cooperation is embedded in the partnership programme between both universities, and thankfully received additional financial support by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Hence scholars from both geographical institutes have been able to get to know and discuss the research agendas, approaches and experiences of the other side by hosting researchers, guest lectures, and workshops in Poznań and in Kiel. The thematic concept of the present issue of *Quaestiones Geographicae* was inspired by this years-long practice and brings together researchers from both partner institutions as well as from other geographical research units in Germany and Poland. Their contributions address the topic of governing urban and regional territories in multifaceted ways.

In their opening article, Robert Hassink, Oliver Plum and Arne Rickmers argue for a more sophisticated approach to regional innovation policies. The latter seem to be viewed by some scholars and regional decision makers as a panacea for regional development. By presenting empirical evidence from three chosen case studies in Germany (the biotech cluster in Aachen, the automotive industry in Southwest Saxony, and the video game industry in Hamburg) representing three types of knowledge bases, the authors

highlight existing differences and question the general significance of implications of knowledge bases for regional innovation policies.

The repercussions of strategic clustering of grocery discounters on regional development are the issue of the contribution by Ulrich Jürgens. As shown by the example of the German federal state of Schleswig-Holstein, the implementation of internal company policies may require the definition and implementation of local public policies at a supra-municipal level.

In turn, Sebastian Kinder, Kamil Lis, Wolf-dietrich Peiker and Lech Suwala discuss the potentials of governing cross-border investment in peripheral and socio-economically weak regions. Based on the results of fieldwork in a German county situated in the German-Polish border area near the city of Szczecin, this contribution contains policy recommendations for prospective approaches to governing Polish investments.

In the following article, Alexander Tölle looks at the same borderland area from the perspective of governing cross-border metropolitan development. As his analysis reveals, the ambitious task to build the Szczecin Cross-Border Metropolitan Region is confronted with various problems in the field of German-Polish cross-border planning as well as of intercommunal cooperation on the Polish side, yet it may also become a means to overcome the existing barriers. This contribution is the first of four that discuss urban-regional governing from a metropolitan perspective.

Mariusz Czepczyński pictures the various difficulties connected with the task of building the Gdańsk Metropolitan Region. In focusing on local discourses of identities, powers, and hopes, he explains the contrasting setting of unifying initiatives and exemplifications of separatism characterising the building of metropolitan governance structures in the Polish context.

In turn, Andrzej Mizgajski, Marzena Walaszek and Tomasz Kaczmarek analyse differences in the social, economic and environmental living conditions between the communes of a single agglomeration on the example of the metropoli-

tan area of Poznań. The result of this quantitative approach leads to the conclusion that the development of urbanisation processes in suburban areas has had a significant impact on improving the living conditions of their inhabitants notably outside the core city.

A metropolis showing strong features of global city formation – i.e. West German Frankfurt – is the object of investigation by Samuel Mössner and Tim Freytag. They argue that the transformation of the city's West End into a "strategic site of global control" in the 1960s and 1970s can be proved to have laid the ground for the networks of neoliberal local élites dominating the process of turning the city into a global hub.

The analysis by Justyna Chodkowska-Miszczuk and Daniela Szymańska focuses on the question of to what degree sustainable building practices influence the modernisation process of public buildings in Polish cities and regions. The authors find a significantly uneven distribution of such projects across the country's voivodeships, which is a clear indicator of regional government being an important factor in the implementation process.

The volume closes with a description of the decade-long process of building regional government as well as regional planning structures in the Hanover Region. Axel Prieb, who draws on his knowledge of this process both from an academic and a practitioner's perspective, points out important factors of a successful creation of urban-regional government structures, such as solidarity between municipalities or the creation of political responsibility at the regional level.

We hope that this volume of *Quaestiones Geographicae* will meet with the interest and kind reception of its readers not only from Germany and Poland. We shall be grateful for any comments and discussion that the following contributions may inspire.

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Editors