

Sustainable Transitions – Balance and Future Challenges in EU Cohesion Policy Context

9th December 2024 – online event

RSA Research Network on EU Cohesion Policy (#CPnet)

Centre of Geographical Studies, Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Lisbon

The European Cohesion Policy aims to strengthen the EU's economic, social, and territorial cohesion by reducing disparities between regions and promoting sustainable development. This policy is crucial in fostering balanced growth and ensuring that all regions, regardless of their development levels, can contribute to and benefit from the overall prosperity of the EU. In the 2021-2027 framework, the Cohesion Policy Joint Action Plan has outlined crucial actions to address contemporary challenges and opportunities, some following the extremely important Twin Transition. These actions are designed to create a more competitive and smarter Europe by leveraging innovation and digital transformation, transitioning towards a greener, low-carbon economy that prioritizes environmental sustainability, enhancing connectivity and mobility to improve regional integration and accessibility, fostering a more social and inclusive Europe that tackles inequalities and promotes social justice, and bringing Europe closer to its citizens through sustainable and integrated territorial development. By focusing on these pillars, the Cohesion Policy aims to create synergies between economic, social, and environmental goals, recognizing that true sustainability can only be achieved when all regions advance together, emphasizing the essential role of cohesion in ensuring that the benefits of sustainability are shared equitably across all regions and does not enhance regional disparities. Furthermore, Cohesion Policy is key to preventing the digital and green transition from further reinforcing the divergent growth potential of EU regions.

This research workshop will examine the Cohesion Policy and Twin Transition focusing on their connections and potentialities, providing new thinking on the potential of Cohesion Policy for a digital and sustainable future.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Sustainable Transitions – balance and future challenges in EU context workshop will be held online as an online-only event.

This workshop is prepared under the auspices of the [Regional Studies Association's Research Network on EU Cohesion Policy](#), co-organised with the Network's partners and hosted by the [Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Lisbon](#). More information about the Network can be found on the [RSA website](#) and on [Facebook](#).

Main Organisers for this workshop are Eduarda Marques da Costa and Pedro Franco (Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Lisbon, IGOT-ULisboa), as local organisers, and Sonia De Gregorio Hurtado (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid) and Ida Musialkowska (Poznan University of Economics and Business) as academic convenors.

Participation in the event is free of charge. Participants are very welcome but we ask you to please register.

Please register here: <https://forms.gle/meYecKE7Yao3vqjFA>

To enquire about practical information, please contact Eduarda Marques da Costa at eduarda.costa@edu.ulisboa.pt.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Alessandra Faggian is a Full Professor of Applied Economics and previous Director of Social Sciences at the Gran Sasso Science Institute, L'Aquila, Italy. She is currently Vice President of the Western Regional Science Association (WRSA) and Editor-in-Chief of Annals of Regional Science. She has been President of the North American Regional Science Council (NARSC) and Vice President of the Italian Economics Society (SIE). She has co-authored over 150 academic articles, published in top international journals. She has been co-editor of both Papers in Regional Science and Journal of

Regional Science. Alessandra is the 2007 recipient of the Moss Madden Memorial Medal by the Regional Science Association International: Irish and British section and the 2015 recipient of the Geoffrey Hewings Award by NARSC for outstanding research contribution by a young scholar in the field of regional science In North America. In 2020 she won the European Regional Science Association (ERSA) prize for best European researcher in regional science and was made a Fellow of the Regional Science Association International (RSAI) in 2021.



Anabela Santos is a team leader and economic analyst at the Joint Research Centre (JRC). She has a PhD in Economics and Management from Université libre de Bruxelles (Belgium, 2014-2018), and an MSc in Economics from the Universidade de Évora (Portugal, 2011-2012). Before joining the JRC, she was a Research Fellow (2014-2019) at Université libre de Bruxelles and for the Public Policy Monitoring Unit at Universidade de Évora (Portugal). Between 2005 and 2014, she was a Financial Advisor for SMEs in Portugal (especially for agri-food companies and the tourism sector). Her main research interests and expertise are policy evaluation, impact assessment, rural development, economics of innovation, corporate finance, and tourism. Furthermore, she has been heavily involved in researching Regional Policy and Cohesion Policy, lately also addressing sustainable transitions.



Marcin Dabrowski is a researcher at the University of Delft. He graduated from Sciences Po in Paris and completed his PhD at the University of the West of Scotland. Furthermore, before coming to Delft, he worked as a researcher at the European Policies Research Centre (University of Strathclyde) and at the University of Vienna. He is both an urbanist and a planner, with a background in political science but focused on sustainable futures of cities and regions. His main interests of research span across the disciplines of spatial planning and regional and urban studies, focusing on governance on a wide range of urban sustainability and urban development issues. With this Marcin published extensively on the nexus between spatial planning and the context of climate change, on spatial planning systems, EU Cohesion Policy, international policy transfer and, more recently, on the territorial and governance dimensions of circular economy. Moreover, he has a track record of prestigious research funding and awards and has been involved in a number of EU-funded research projects (H2020 COHESIFY, H2020 REPAIR, ESPON COMPASS, Interreg Europe WaVE, ESPON Financial Instruments and Territorial Cohesion, HE DUST, HE UP2030, among others). Recently he has been working on the DUST (Democratising Just Sustainability Transitions) project, that develops on the themes of the Just Transition Fund and citizen engagement.

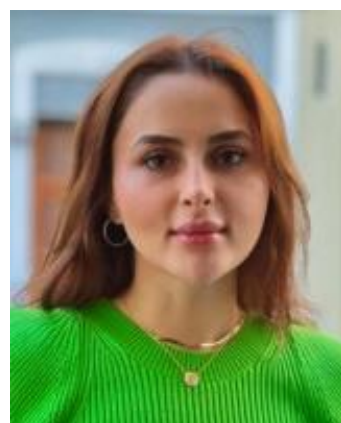


Roman Römisch is an Economist at The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw). His research focuses on regional economic developments national accounts and macroeconomic analysis. Moreover, he has a strong background in quantitative analysis. He has worked on and also coordinated major European studies on regional economic development, such as Economic Challenges of Lagging Regions (DG Regio, 2015-2016), Establishment of consolidated financial data 1989-2013 (DG Regio, 2015-2016) or WP13 Geography of Expenditures (DG Regio, 2014-2015) – as part of the Ex post evaluation of Cohesion policy programmes 2007-2013 –, and most recently The Future of EU Cohesion Effects of the Twin Transition on Disparities across European Regions. Roman Römisch holds an M.A. degree in Economics at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration.

YOUNG PRESENTERS



André Alves holds a degree in Geography and a Master's in Geographic Information Systems and Modelling Applied to Spatial Planning from the University of Lisbon. He has worked at the Portuguese Directorate-General for Territory, focusing on land use change dynamics and spatial planning. He is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Lisbon. His research, funded by the MIT Portugal Program, explores the Land (Renewable) – Energy Nexus, focusing on the intersection of solar energy development and land use planning. As part of his doctoral studies, he was a visiting researcher in the Land Use Planning group in the Department of Environmental Sciences at Wageningen University & Research.



Mahshid Cheraghi is a Doctorate researcher in the Department of Urban and Spatial Planning at the School of Architecture, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (UPM), with a background in architecture, she specializes in citizen-centered urban regeneration empowered by smart city technologies. Her research, focusing on European cities such as Hamburg and Copenhagen, investigates how digital tools can enhance public participation, aligning with the Green Deal framework for sustainable urban regeneration. She is actively working on "smart urban regeneration citizen-centered approach" to foster meaningful citizen involvement in urban decision-making.



Martina Caputo is a PhD student in Urban and Regional Development at the Interuniversity Department of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning (DIST) and a researcher at the Responsible Risk Resilience Centre (R3C) at the Politecnico di Torino. Her research focuses on critical topics such as adaptation, resilience, and the green transition, particularly within the framework of EU policies. She explores innovative and transformative solutions to tackle climate change, proposing initiatives based on a ‘functional areas’ approach. These address the complexities of implementing integrated and adaptive actions that transcend administrative boundaries, aiming to make a significant impact. Notably, the functional areas concept was a key policy innovation in the European 2014–2020 political framework. Building on this, Martina advocates for a functional understanding of spatial systems as the foundation for effective climate change adaptation strategies. She is actively involved in the ESPON TERRES project and the PRIN TRIALS project, contributing to research on resilience and disaster risk reduction.

PROGRAMME (schedule in CET)

10.00 - 10.15 – Opening session

- Ida Musialkowska (*RSA #CPnet coordinator, Poznan University of Economics and Business, Poland*)
- Mário Vale (*Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, IGOT-ULisboa, Portugal*)
- Eduarda Marques da Costa (*RSA #CPnet member, IGOT-ULisboa, Portugal*)

10.15 - 11.45 – Session I

- The Twin-Transition – Challenges for Cohesion and Cohesion Policy
Roman Römisch (*The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, Austria*)
- Sustainable Transition and Cohesion Policy
Anabela Santos (*Joint Research Centre, European Commission*)

Moderation by Ida Musialkowska (*RSA #CPnet coordinator, Poznan University of Economics and Business, Poland*)

11.45 - 12.00 – Break

12.00 - 13.15 – Session II

- Exploring Solar Energy in Portugal's Energy Transition
André Alves, Eduarda Marques da Costa, Eduardo Gomes (*Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, IGOT-ULisboa, Portugal*), Samuel Niza (*Circular, Portugal*)
- Beyond One-Size-Fits-All: Customizing Smart Solutions for Enhancing Public Participation in Urban Regeneration: A Research Agenda Proposal
Mahshid Cheraghi, Sonia De Gregorio Hurtado (*Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain*)
- Promoting Territorial Resilience in Europe: a Preliminary Classification of National Policy Approaches
Martina Caputo, Francesca Abastante, Erblin Berisha, Grazia Brunetta, Ombretta Caldarice, Giancarlo Cotella, Danial Mohabat Doost, Bruna Pincegher (*Politecnico di Torino, Italy*)

Moderation by Eduarda Marques da Costa (*RSA #CPnet member, IGOT-ULisboa, Portugal*)

13.15 - 14.00 – Lunch break

14.00 - 15.30 – Session III

- Leaving no One Behind? A Critical Assessment of Citizen Participation as Part of Place-Based Policies in Regions Covered by the EU Just Transition Fund
Marcin Dabrowski (*Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands*)
- Inclusive and Sustainable Growth: What to Do (if Anything) with Peripheral Areas?
Alessandra Faggian (*Gran Sasso Science Institute, Italy*)

Moderation by Sonia De Gregorio Hurtado (*RSA #CPnet coordinator, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain*)

15.30 – Closing Session

- Sonia De Gregorio Hurtado (*RSA #CPnet coordinator, Un. Politécnica de Madrid, Spain*)
- José Luís Zêzere (*Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, IGOT-ULisboa, Portugal*)
- Eduarda Marques da Costa (*RSA #CPnet member, IGOT-ULisboa, Portugal*)

YOUNG RESEARCHERS ON TWIN TRANSITION – ABSTRACTS

Exploring Solar Energy in Portugal's Energy Transition

André Alves¹, Eduarda Marques da Costa², Eduardo Gomes³, Samuel Niza⁴

Abstract

The energy transition within the European Union (EU), driven by initiatives such as the European Green Deal and REPowerEU, incorporates objectives to energy security and economic competitiveness in addition to climate goals. At the EU level, shifts in policy frameworks are shaping national energy strategies and prioritising ambitious renewable energy targets within shorter timeframes. Consequently, growing territorial discontents of the energy transition are becoming more inevitable. In Portugal, recent revisions to the National Energy and Climate Plan, including a more than twofold increase in solar capacity targets, are intensifying land-use change and competition. Our analysis estimated the expansion of solar energy facilities in Portugal, suggesting mainly land-use changes in agricultural areas, pastures and forest land. Moreover, it has been identified that solar development overlaps with land and nature conservation regimes. Given the pivotal role of the Cohesion Policy as a financial instrument supporting the development of clean energy systems, challenges emerge concerning an inclusive regional transition that addresses regional disparities. This analysis presents key aspects of project funding under Portugal's Cohesion Policy and its role in advancing climate and environmental objectives. Further, it explores potential future challenges and opportunities, with a particular focus on co-location strategies for mitigating land-use conflicts inherent to the energy transition.

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4 Circular – Consultoria em Sustentabilidade, email: samuel.niza@circular-cs.pt

Beyond One-Size-Fits-All: Customizing Smart Solutions for Enhancing Public Participation in Urban Regeneration: A Research Agenda Proposal

Mahshid Cheraghi¹, Sonia De Gregorio Hurtado²

Abstract

This research explores the role of smart city technologies in deepening citizen participation in urban regeneration, aligning with the European Green Deal and Cohesion Policy's goals of sustainable, inclusive development. Grounded in Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation, this study proposes tailored smart enablers—such as Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), Internet of Things (IoT), and big data analytics—that are adapted to the unique social, economic, and cultural needs of specific urban areas. Moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach, the research examines how these customized digital tools can empower communities and enhance public influence over urban regeneration processes.

Focusing on Copenhagen, a city at the forefront of smart city initiatives, this study investigates whether these technologies can evolve from top-down applications to flexible, citizen-responsive frameworks. Through a systematic literature review and empirical analysis, key barriers are identified, including digital divides, trust concerns, and governance constraints that limit inclusivity. The findings highlight the need for co-creation and adaptable design processes, enabling smart enablers to address diverse socio-economic contexts more effectively than standardized approaches.

By advocating for an integrated governance for sustainability, this study positions citizens as co-creators, promoting cohesive policy frameworks that encourage tailored smart city solutions. This research offers best practices in designing policy frameworks that advance sustainable, equitable urban regeneration, ensuring that digital and green transitions foster cohesive and inclusive growth across regions as envisioned by the European Green Deal.

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Promoting territorial Resilience in Europe: a preliminary classification of national policy approaches

Martina Caputo¹, Francesca Abastante², Erblin Berisha³, Grazia Brunetta⁴, Ombretta Caldarice⁵, Giancarlo Cotella⁶, Danial Mohabat Doost⁷, Bruna Pincegher⁸

Abstract

In an era characterised by rapid change and unpredictability, territorial resilience has become vital in international and European policy arenas. Acknowledging the above, the contribution delves into the multifaceted dimensions of territorial resilience, addressing regions' pressing challenges—ranging from sudden shocks to enduring transformations. In doing so, it draws on the results of the policy analysis conducted in the framework of the ESPON TERRES research project (2023-2025). In more detail, it analyses 93 policy documents from 31 countries involved in the ESPON program, aiming to explore how territorial resilience is conceptualised and addressed across diverse country contexts. Central to this inquiry are three pivotal questions: What obstacles and solutions arise in territorial resilience implementation across various national landscapes? Can distinct regional interpretations be discerned? Finally, which existing policy designs and planning strategies can inform and enhance future resilience frameworks? Methodologically, the research employs a discursive analysis approach, evaluating documents based on three critical capacities of territorial resilience - absorptive, adaptive, and transformative. The analysis is organised into two interconnected dimensions: (systemic) resilience, which encompasses the capacities mentioned earlier, and (territorial) resilience, focusing on governance, spatial, and thematic constitutive elements. By conducting a pan-European analysis, the study reveals the intricate dynamics influencing how different countries integrate different understanding of territorial resilience into their policy frameworks, shaped by specific and path-dependent institutional structures, socio-economic contexts, and historical legacies. Based on the above, the study presents a first attempt to classify the different countries' attitudes and approaches to territorial resilience capacities.

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