

EDITORIAL

This volume is the product of scholars associated with the activities of the Commission on Local and Regional Development of the International Geographical Union. The Commission's mission is to advance international research, scholarship and knowledge in a variety of domains concerning matters related to local development in the urban and rural space, reorganization of space and the role of both institutions and agencies in developing and reshaping the settled space. In this context the current volume has the aim to disseminate theoretical, conceptual and methodological issues concerning local and regional development, to discuss empirical and policy issues, and to widen the scope of the debate on the topics of "local and regional development" in different national and institutional contexts.

The collection of articles presents a mosaic of case studies that occur in various countries, developed and developing. It covers topics with some emphasis on issues concerning rural transformation and development, regional progress, socio-economic transformation of rural settlements and regions. The major aim of this collection is to understand a wide range of social and economic phenomena in various countries with an attempt to universalize from the micro (local) and the meso (regional) to the global. In other words, and from an opposite angle, the idea is to emphasize some universal concepts that characterize the human settled space, but at the same time to present the local (national) uniqueness and to recognize that in the era of global influences it is not sufficient to base all of our findings and conclusions on the accepted theories. Understanding the phenomenon in each case study requires delving into the local settled landscape, the community residing there, the events that have affected this space over time, and the economic, social and political processes shaping them.

Australia's often fragile, fast-changing and highly diverse rural regions are, compared to many countries, barely shielded by top-down regional policy. In this context, **Sorensen** proposes a somewhat novel approach to rural development, drawing on Taleb's notions of antifragility, in which the task is reconceived as honing local capacity to drive a future-oriented and highly adaptive culture. **Sofer**, **E. Grossman** and **D. Grossman** consider the roles of management and ideology in modifying the sustainability of an Israeli communal system – the planned kibbutz – and the recent processes that have brought about its current transformation. It seems that pragmatism tends to prevail over ideology and communality has difficulties in functioning effectively in a highly complex and changing world.

Moroz's paper reviews the main tendencies and problems of rural employment in Ukraine. It is clear that the issue of rural employment could not be solved without a well-defined integrated rural development policy which assumes a multi-sectoral approach to overcome the existing problems, to stimulate the economic diversity, and to expand non-agricultural activities in the rural space. In the case Castilla-La Mancha region in Spain, **Vázquez Varela** and **Martínez Navarro** assess contexts of legitimacy for the government

and management of the space between agents and institutions. They try to detect the level of territorial identity which the population has with regard to their municipality, natural space and supra-local scales, as well as detecting conflicts concerning environmental, social and economic nature and how to manage them.

In the upper Kosi Catchment, Uttarakhand Himalayas, India, **Tiwari** and **Joshi** are interpreting inter-linkages between environmental changes and rural out-migration and assessing their impacts on quality of life of rural women. The availability of water, fuel-wood and fodder decreased, agricultural production declined and livelihood opportunities were reduced mainly due to depletion of natural resources. Consequently, male out-migration increased and women workload has increased thus threatening their life conditions and health. The Czech team of **Vaishar**, **Šťastná**, **Stonawská** and **Žitňáková** discusses the role of energy production from renewable sources in the rural areas of the South-Moravian region. The problems with the use of water, wind, sun, geothermal and biological sources for the energy production are illustrated, and environmental, technological, economic and social aspects of the matter are discussed.

Since the establishment of Iran's family planning program it has been one of the most successful state programs in the world, having reduced dramatically the national annual growth rate. The paper by **Alaeddini** and **López-Carr** explores international and national legal, institutional, demographic, and cultural-geographical influences that may have contributed to its results. Local development systems using their entrepreneurship to establish an "anti-system" as a response to the system imposed by the Tunisian State are discussed by **Neifar**. This is based on two cases of local development through self-help, the first is based on agricultural resources and activities, and the second is concerned with marine resources. The focus of the paper is on the survival strategies explored and developed by these two communities.

Grigorescu, **Mitrică** and **Mocanu** assess the main urban sprawl-related housing dynamics in the most important Romanian metropolitan areas. Their research is focused on the triggering driving forces in terms of the spatial transformations of built-up areas, changes in population patterns and residential expansion. They seek to provide an insight into the links between the main patterns of change and the residential development pathways in the Romanian metropolitan areas.

We hope that this issue will contribute to a better understanding of the processes, and their underlying mechanisms, taking place in the settled social and economic space and to the appreciation of specific case studies and their multifaceted contribution to the understanding of the meaning of local and regional development.

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