

RETHINKING THE CORE-PERIPHERY PARADIGM: EVIDENCE FROM EUROPE AND BEYOND

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The core-periphery paradigm has long been central to geographical, regional and development studies, shaping our understanding of spatial inequalities, uneven development, and territorial polarization across local, regional, national, and global scales. From classical formulations in regional science and political economy to contemporary debates in economic geography and spatial planning, the model has provided a powerful framework for interpreting patterns of concentration and marginalization.

In recent decades, profound economic, social, political, and technological changes have challenged traditional interpretations of the core-periphery model. Processes such as globalization and deglobalization, demographic change, climate transition policies, digitalization, and geopolitical instability have contributed to the emergence of new spatial patterns. Polycentric development, shrinking regions, cross-border functional areas, global production networks, and digital connectivity have redefined the meaning of ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ in ways that demand renewed scrutiny.

At the same time, long-standing disparities between cores and peripheries, within and beyond Europe, persist or have even intensified. Peripheralization processes continue to affect rural regions, old industrial areas, borderlands, and small and medium-sized towns, while metropolitan cores consolidate economic and political power. These developments raise critical questions about the continued relevance, adaptability, and limitations of the core-periphery paradigm in explaining contemporary local and regional development.

This thematic issue of Europa XXI, prepared as a joint initiative of the International Geographical Union Commission on Local and Regional Development (LRD) and the Young & Early Career Geographers Commission (YECG), invites original contributions that critically assess the core-periphery paradigm through innovative theoretical, methodological, and empirical approaches. Contributions are welcome from diverse territorial contexts, with a particular focus on Europe, while also encouraging comparative and global perspectives. Early career scholars are particularly encouraged to submit contributions presenting emerging research, novel investigations, and comparative case studies.



Suggested themes include (but are not limited to):

- Theoretical and methodological approaches to the core-periphery concept
- Core-periphery dynamics in urban, rural, and cross-border regions
- Regional development trajectories in post-socialist, peripheral, or lagging regions
- Demographic change, migration, and social inequalities
- The role of governance, policy, and institutions in shaping core-periphery relations
- Innovation, digitalization, and infrastructure as drivers of territorial change
- Resilience, sustainability, and green transitions in peripheral areas

Key research questions:

- How can the core-periphery paradigm be theoretically and methodologically redefined to reflect contemporary spatial transformations?
- How do core-periphery dynamics operate across urban, rural, and cross-border regions?
- What development trajectories characterize post-socialist, peripheral, and lagging regions, and under what conditions can they reposition themselves within wider spatial structures?
- How do demographic change, migration, and social inequalities interact with and reshape processes of peripheralization?
- How do cohesion policy, governance reforms, and institutions influence core-periphery relations and territorial change?
- How do resilience, sustainability, and green transitions affect peripheral regions, and what insights emerge from comparative and cross-national perspectives within and beyond Europe?

Submission procedure and timeline:

This Call for Papers follows a two-stage submission process:

Deadline for abstract submission: 15 May 2026

Extended abstracts (300-400 words mail to biancadumitrescu78@yahoo.com or Europa.XXI@twarda.pan.pl) should outline the research question, conceptual framework, data and methodology, and expected contribution.

Notification for full paper invitation: 1 June 2026

Deadline for paper submission: 31 January 2027

All manuscripts will undergo the standard double-blind peer-review process of Europa XXI. Submissions must comply with the journal's author guidelines. Authors should clearly indicate that their submission is intended for the thematic issue "Rethinking the core-periphery paradigm: evidence from Europe and beyond."