



Special Session Proposal

Innovative Data Approaches to Regional Disparities and Inequality Perceptions in Left-Behind Places

Organisers:

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised the multidimensional nature of regional inequalities, underlining disparities across social, economic, environmental, and digital dimensions. In this context, the study of inequality perception is of growing importance, especially in “left-behind” places and regions often excluded from decision-making processes.

Post-crisis recovery initiatives, such as the EU post-COVID recovery plan, must be continuously monitored during their implementation phase, as adaptive policy instruments are critical to avoid exacerbating existing objective and subjective disparities. The identification of novel and up-to-date data is vital during the recovery phase, as the evidence generated throughout its implementation provides a large repository of information for analysing public perceptions of inequalities and developing place-sensitive policies.

This session seeks to bring together cutting-edge research examining the interaction between objective inequality indicators and subjective measures. It invites contributions employing innovative methodologies such as sentiment analysis, web scraping, natural language processing, and media analytics to investigate the impacts of crises and post-shock policies on regional disparities and evaluate how populations perceive these inequalities.

We invite papers from multidisciplinary backgrounds that address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Studies on the divergence between objective inequalities and subjective perceptions;
- Analyses of how public perceptions influence or diverge from measurable regional disparities, particularly in left-behind places;
- Applications of sentiment analysis, web scraping, NLP, and media analytics in regional studies;
- Use of large-scale textual data, such as news, websites and social media to analyse trends in regional inequalities and public narratives;
- Case studies highlighting innovative data-driven approaches to policymaking in response to regional disparities.