

Open Special Session Proposal

for

RSA Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) Conference 2019

Session Title: Towards the better understanding of land-use conflicts in rural, remote and peripheral areas

Session Organisers:

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Political conflicts linked to land-use and taking place at the local or regional levels of governance may have a significant impact on the local population and public subnational administrations. These conflicts come in many forms and have various levels of intensity. For some communities, these conflicts relate to the anxiety of losing existing public facilities or services (for instance, regional bus services) while entering into conflict with central government to prevent such a loss. For some regional actors, these conflicts have the form of a struggle to impede the development of an unwanted piece of infrastructure (such as a pipeline, a snowmobile path) or activities (such as the authorisation of the exploitation of natural resources). Some conflicts find their roots in the rivalry between close communities competing for a new project or a new business opportunity, whether it is a new sports team or the location of a deep-water port. Finally, some clashes over land-use have more to do with the political process and community management (as issues related to political transparency, public participation in decision making or the allocation of benefits to stakeholders). Besides being costly and time-consuming, all of these conflicts may be very detrimental for the solidarity of communities.

While the biggest cities and metropolitan areas may receive the attention needed to deal with these conflicts from influential stakeholders, including central governments, multinationals and the media, the fate of small communities in rural, remote and peripheral areas may, on the contrary, appear difficult in this respect. Despite the importance of works by academic and practitioners on regional land-use conflicts (also coined “local geopolitics” or “land-use geopolitics” (géopolitique de l’aménagement du territoire] by the French political geographer Philippe Subra), the body of this literature seems somewhat patchy. The initiatives to bring together the discussions about the nature and complexity of these local conflicts under one corpus are still modest, if not almost non-existent. The present session aims to bring together scholars and practitioners willing to share their observations, questions and findings on this topic while paying particular attention to rural and peripheral communities in Central and Eastern European Countries.

The session organisers encourage potential participants interested in this subject to submit paper proposals touching upon (but not limited to) the following topics:

- Conflict theory in Central and Eastern Europe;
- Means taken by small and medium-sized communities to cope with territorial governance conflicts;
- The struggle between subnational governance actors, central states and corporate actors over land-use in CEE;
- The scope and intensity of spatial conflicts in rural and peripheral regions;
- How municipalities are dealing with the loss or potential loss of public services;

- Conflicting mobilities: disputes over the development, abandonment or maintenance of transport networks in vulnerable areas;
- Competing local communities: rivalries and cooperation between localities over public facilities and business opportunities;
- Best practices in land-use diplomacy;
- Case studies about local economic and environmental conflicts;
- Comparative strategies and the mobilisation of local actors: how local actors advocate and try to influence decision-making;
- The social and political impact of media coverage on regional and local tensions about land-use and public services in CEE;
- Women's perspectives in local land-use conflict;
- Security issues and concerns about regional conflict escalation and protests over land-use.

If you are interested in presenting a paper in this session, please submit your abstract of no more than 300 words via the RSA platform by 21st May 2019.