

**Socio-Economic Sustainability, Regional Development and Spatial  
Planning: European and International Dimensions & Perspectives**

Prof. Dr. George M. Korres  
Department of Geography  
University of the Aegean  
*Email:* [gkorres@geo.aegean.gr](mailto:gkorres@geo.aegean.gr)

Dear Colleagues,

Celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Department of Geography, University of the Aegean, organized the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on ‘Socio-Economic Sustainability, Regional Development and Spatial Planning: European Dimensions & Perspectives’, in 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2014, in Mytilene, Lesvos.

This conference has been the output regarding a great deal of joint effort and enthusiasm, put in by the:

- the Laboratory of Economic Geography, Regional Development and Territorial Planning, Department of Geography, University of the Aegean
- "Ergaxia", Sociology of Labor Academic Laboratory, Department of Sociology, University of the Aegean, and the
- International Sociological Association (ISA), Research Committee on Sociotechnics /Sociological Practice (RC26).

The Conference accommodated 12 parallel sessions, presenting more than 50 papers of more than 100 contributors from all over the world; with an actual attendance and presentation rate of 85 % sharing novel academic knowledge and research and also providing a platform for productive and effective scientific dialogue.

The Conference Key Note Speaker was **Sergio Arzeni, Director of the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and Local Development**, overseeing the work of the Local Economic and Employment Development programme (LEED), the Working Party on SMEs and Entrepreneurship, the Tourism Committee, and the OECD LEED Trento Centre for Local Development (Italy).

Regarding the Conference agenda, it summarized the debate for the future and prospects of socio-economic and regional development of the European Union, under the fields of Economic-Geography, Sociology, Regional Development and Spatial Planning. The Conference identified and examined relevant key research issues, building a conceptual framework drawing on the application of socio-economic development, regional development and spatial planning in obtaining measures of growth and development, enabling a comparative analysis, both in European and international level, explaining also any related socio-economic effects. To conclude,

this Conference considered both an economic and social perspective to increase the information base and derive broader conclusions about the socio-economic consequences of the economic crisis, since yet little attention has been paid to this evaluation approach.

More specifically, this Conference covered the following sections:

- Section 1: ‘Policies and Practices for Sustainable Growth’
- Section 2: ‘Socio-Economic Sustainable Growth and Regional Development’
- Section 3: ‘Regional and Territorial Governance: Economic and Social Policies’
- Section 4: ‘Social Economy Innovations and Sustainable Communities’
- Section 5: ‘Inclusive Recovery and Local City Governance’
- Section 6: ‘Territorial Innovation and Planning Policies: Regions and Enterprises’
- Section 7: ‘Local and Global social dimensions in Sustainable Development’
- Section 8: ‘Innovative Community and Social Development’
- Section 9: ‘Entrepreneurship and Regional Development: Policy and Planning’
- Section 10: ‘Sustainable Communities: Social Development and Education’
- Section 11: ‘Cultural Management, Local Heritage and Local Development’
- Section 12: ‘New Types and Policies of Sustainable Growth: Case Studies and Applied Research’

Along this approach, a new spectrum of policies is expected to emerge, capable of overcoming the limitations and failures of past experiences, such as collusive practices between political and economic power, heavy bureaucracy, lack of accountability and obstacles of entrepreneurship. The politics behind such a new departure have to be based on a wide social consensus over the distribution of the productivity and efficiency gains deriving from new technologies and socio-economic activities, (with decision-making mechanisms that are more democratic and inclusive of different social interests, pulling out of the current crisis). For this, an environment which favours new ideas and new businesses is required, being the primary driver of a successful and sustainable regional policy, of central importance in finding solutions to socio-economic challenges, for spreading social progress, environmentally friendly technologies and innovations, worldwide.

The findings of this conference aim to be of value for researchers, policy makers and academic community alike for a better identification and understanding of the key elements and consequences of the current economic crisis and beyond.

In order to disseminate its findings, the conference accommodated 13 refereed international journals indexed by EBSCO, DOAJ, Cabell's Directory, Copernicus Index, RePEc, Scopus and the EconLit Journal databases.

Moreover, regarding publishing opportunities, currently, the Conference has already finalized the procedures towards publication of selected papers in the following:

- Cambridge Scholars, UK: *Book Edition*
- International Journal of Sustainable Agricultural Management and Informatics (Inderscience) [www.inderscience.com/ij sami](http://www.inderscience.com/ij sami): *Special Issue*
- Journal of Regional Socio-Economic Issues <http://www.jrsei.yolasite.com>: *Special Issue*
- Regional Science Inquiry Journal [www.rsijournal.eu](http://www.rsijournal.eu): *Special Issue*
- Cyprus Journal: *Special Issue*

To conclude, the Organizing Committee would like to thank all the participants of the Conference, who have contributed with their academic and research works, providing a platform for scientific dialogue, leading to knowledge creation and dissemination. The Organizing Committee would also like to thank all the Conference Committees for their enthusiastic, careful and punctual work and contribution. Last, but not least, the Organizing Committee also recognizes that this Conference would not have been taken place without the support of: a) the University of the Aegean, Department of Geography, b) Hellenic Republic, the General Secretariat of the Aegean and Island Policy, and c) Aegean Airlines.

Offering, once more, our thanks and gratitude to all the contributors, for making this Conference possible, we strongly wish that this meeting will act as a platform for further theoretical and empirical research, rendering a creative source for further collaboration.

Best Regards:

Prof. George M, Korres, Prof. E. Kourliouros, Prof. Georgios O. Tsobanoglou