

Abstracts

Geography as a Multi-level Political Cleavage

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One of the dominant political cleavages at the moment is a geographical one. The geographical cleavage structure is, however, more complex than in the classic distinction between center and periphery made by Lipset and Rokkan more than half a century ago. The struggle for economic development and prosperity is played out as well on the global level as on the national and local level, and this makes the formation of geographical coalitions complicated. The geographical cleavages have not led to changes in the Danish party system (neither national nor local) and therefore, quite a number of political questions in regard to geographical redistributions have to be addressed by the established political parties and their politicians.

The Danish Urban Hierarchy – Metropolization or Change?

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Danish public debates over the plight of peripheral areas have generally been based on the assumption of an inadvertent long-term metropolization of the country. Based on data for 2000-2008 this article sheds some light on the long-term forces affecting the urban hierarchy. Changes of industrial composition have generally benefitted the top of the hierarchy at the expense of the bottom, but this is trumped by intrasectoral developments within practically all sectors. As a result, medium-sized towns appear to be the real winners, both in terms of employment and population. One obvious theoretical explanation is that declining transport and communication costs have actually reduced the agglomeration advantages expected to underpin metropolization.

Rural development and agriculture – potentials and challenges in a Danish context

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OECD gave the idea of rural development extra nourishment by launching a »New Rural Paradigm« (OECD, 2006). Agriculture as rural *raison d'être* has been outdated and instead the redemption of other potentials has emerged in the territory by way of local initiative. In a Danish context, agriculture is in fact decoupled from rural areas for many years and is mostly a part of an international food complex. Yet, development in rural areas has taken place. This should, however, rather be explained through drivers such as the late industrial development and not least the decentralized welfare state than through a »New Rural Paradigm«. Since these drivers now are weakened a need for a real »New Rural Paradigm« may be actualized: A »new use of land by new landusers«.

Proclamation of »remoteness« – a blessing in disguise ?

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Designation as remote area means that the state, the regions and a number of NGOs have stated that development is not as favourable here as in other parts of the country. Implicitly, this indicates that these areas »have not made the most of their talents«. Accordingly, the designation has a stigmatizing effect, and it tends to underestimate the local people. On the other hand, the designation as remote area always results in a political willingness to implement different aid programmes and development measures, spanning from special advantages in relation to legislation to the allocation of considerable economic funds from the EU and/or the Danish state. Finally, we witness that both public authorities and different NGOs find a base for identifying the particular regional opportunities. Hence, there are both positive and negative effects of the remote area designation.