

# Regions, borders, and social policy

## *The limits of welfare in regional cohesion debates*

This first issue of Volume Four of *Regions & Cohesion* continues a trend of articles that gained momentum in Volume Three, focusing on the territorial aspects of welfare in social cohesion debates. The Summer 2013 issue of the journal presented a collection of articles that specifically discussed the role of borders and border policies in social cohesion politics. Although this collection was not intended to be presented as a thematically specific issue, the simultaneous arrival of these pieces highlighted the importance of borders in defining the territorial limits of cohesion and the ensuing renegotiation of these limits in political debates. For example, the article by Irina S. Burlacu and Cathal O'Donoghue focused on the impacts of the European Union's social security coordination policy on the welfare of cross-border workers in Belgium and Luxembourg. The article illustrated the limits of this regional policy as cross-border workers do not receive equal treatment compared to domestic workers in the country of employment. Similarly, an article by Franz Clément in the same issue analyzed the "socio-political representation" of cross-border workers and discusses how such workers can mobilize for socioeconomic rights in institutions aimed at worker protection (such as professional associations, trade unions, etc.). Both articles show that despite formal regionalization of legislation concerning social rights and representation, national boundaries clearly present challenges to cross-border workers who have difficulty negotiating rights in both their country of employment and country of residence.

These themes also prominently featured in *Regions & Cohesion* 3(3), a special issue entitled "Regions without Borders? Regional Governance, Migration and Social Protection in Africa and Europe." This issue, guest edited by Bon Deacon, Lorenzo Fioramonti, and Sonja Nita, included a series of articles on regional social policy in Europe and Africa and its impact on mobility. The special issue highlights the fact that even though the European Union is often viewed as a pioneer in the field of regional social policy, especially in comparison to African subregional organizations, citizens on both continents nonetheless face regulatory obstacles to mobility due to the reinforcement of national welfare regimes on both continents.



The special issue contends “that a regional framework for social rights realization is needed to overcome the (perceived) material clash of interests between the citizens of receiving countries and immigrants, as well as those of sending countries.”

Consequently, *Regions & Cohesion* 4(1) continues this discussion of the territorial limits of cohesion. The first article in this issue, presented by Stephen Kingah, furthers our critical analysis of regional social policy. Focusing on the implementation of global social policy in the European Union and the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), the article argues that “in a period of economic hardship with an ever-widening inequality gap, there is pressure to roll back regional endeavors to manage social challenges. However it is exactly during such a period that robust regional measures need to be sustained or put in place to integrate global social policy, map out new social responses to problems, or implement existing regional social norms.”

This is followed by two articles that examine North American border politics. First, Angeles Mendoza presents an article analyzing transnational mining and its impact on local social cohesion. The analysis examines Canadian transnational mining corporations that are active in Mexico. It argues that a lack of social responsibility amongst the Canadian companies has led to hurtful social impacts on local Mexican communities. In this case, national borders facilitate a lack social responsibility in transnational markets for natural resources.

The second “border article” presented here focuses on health and security at the US-Mexico border. Pamela Lizette Cruz contends that historical institutionalism explains the weakness of cross-border health governance along this particular border. Her analysis shows how bi-national disputes related to health and security weakened cross-border health institutions when they were established and thus, they have not been able to evolve effectively. The article correctly argues that the field of health governance has largely been ignored by political scientists active in borderlands studies. For this reason, this research, and the agenda on which it is based, are original. The article received the “RISC Award” in recognition of the best paper presented at the 2013 conference of the Association for Borderlands Studies (ABS). It was selected by an independent jury of scholars from the ABS. The RISC Consortium warmly thanks the ABS for naming the best paper award at its annual conference for RISC and it looks forward to introducing a best paper award named for ABS at its conference next year. These prizes signal a mutual commitment that these organizations share to analyze social issues and promote social cohesion in border regions throughout the world.

The Editors