

The importance of effective partnerships for sustainable development

The following question was asked during the 2017 International Conference of the Consortium for Comparative Research on Regional Integration and Social Cohesion (RISC) on “Integrated and Coherent Sustainable Development”: “If forced to choose one of the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] to prioritize, which would it be?” Of course, this provocation elicited numerous responses, and passionate debate as each of the SDGs is worthy and the policy community supporting sustainable development is heterogeneous, including stakeholders who are implicated in discussions on the environment, human rights, public health, food security, water security, gender equality, and so on. None of the responses forwarded can be considered “wrong.”

There is an SDG, however, that is set apart from the rest, SDG #17: To establish an effective partnership for sustainable development. This SDG is different from its predecessors because it does not focus on a socio-ecological condition or a political outcome. Instead, it addresses how sustainable development needs to be achieved.

Of course, sustainable development partnerships remain problematic, which is why they are included in a list of global political goals. Nonetheless, the inclusion of this SDG is relevant because of the recognition that sustainable development is not simply policy objective but also a community goal that needs to be pursued by a variety of actors. This issue of *Regions & Cohesion* includes articles that focus in many ways on such the role of actors in sustainable development. The three academic articles included in this issue address the challenges that actors face in sustainable development discussions. Shirlita Espinosa’s article on impact investment and diaspora philanthropy highlights the role of migrants/diasporas in development finance and acknowledges the recent “financialization of diaspora philanthropy.” Irvin Aguilar León examines the local impacts of oil extraction by focusing on the predominant perceptions of local populations, which highlight the negative impacts in local communities of extraction strategies. Following the *Regions & Cohesion* 7(3) special issue debates on



political participation and the emergence of citizenships in Latin America, the article by Eliana Elisabeth Diehl and Esther Jean Langdon reviews efforts in Brazil to foster participation of ethnic groups in policymaking processes on health. The article specifically discusses the shortcomings of these efforts through long-term research. This is followed by a contribution from María Claudia Mejía and Claudia Puerta Silva that examines consumption practices in Medellín, Colombia. The results of this study show that pro-environmental practices related to consumption and waste contribute to the formation of pro-environment citizenships, despite numerous structural limitations.

While the academic articles in this issue address the challenges related to actor-driven sustainable development, the contributions to the Leadership Forum highlight the potential such approaches hold. Virginia García Acosta presents reflections on the importance of social cohesion to the establishment of disaster risk management strategies. This is followed by a contribution from Djénéba Traoré that addresses the importance of the Fourth Global Forum on Local Economic Development, held in Praia, Cabo Verde 17–20 October 2017. This important forum, held for the first time in an African country, is a platform for dialogue between actors from different sectors (e.g., government, business, civil society, etc.) aimed at promoting sustainable local development. It highlighted the inclusive growth and strategies for social and territorial cohesion.

Through their focus on actors, we believe the articles in this issue of *Regions & Cohesion* highlight the importance of sustainable development partnerships. We hope the effectiveness of these partnerships will improve significantly through the Sustainable Development Agenda among others, as these partnerships are a key to achieving the other 16 SDGs. Also, it is with this focus on that sustainable partnerships that we are pleased to introduce *Regions & Cohesion's* new editorial board. Welcome to new and returning members. We are grateful for your collaboration.

The Editors