



# Re-conceptualising Regional Inequalities and the Prism of Spatial Justice: Critical Perspective on Academic and Policy Discourses

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# Structure of talk

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Introduction: spatialising the European Social Model

Thinking through territorial cohesion

Approaching spatial justice

The empirical realities of austerity

IMAJINE: Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe

Conclusions: from territorial cohesion to spatial justice?

# Introduction: spatialising the European Social Model

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## Socio-economic cohesion and the European Social Model

- One of the fundamental principles of the Treaty of Rome: promotion of employment; improved living and working conditions; social protection, dialogue between management and labour, the development of human resources with a view to lasting high employment; combating exclusion.
- European Commission (1994: 1): “to give to the people of Europe the unique blend of economic well-being, social cohesiveness and high overall quality of life”.

# Introduction: spatialising the European Social Model

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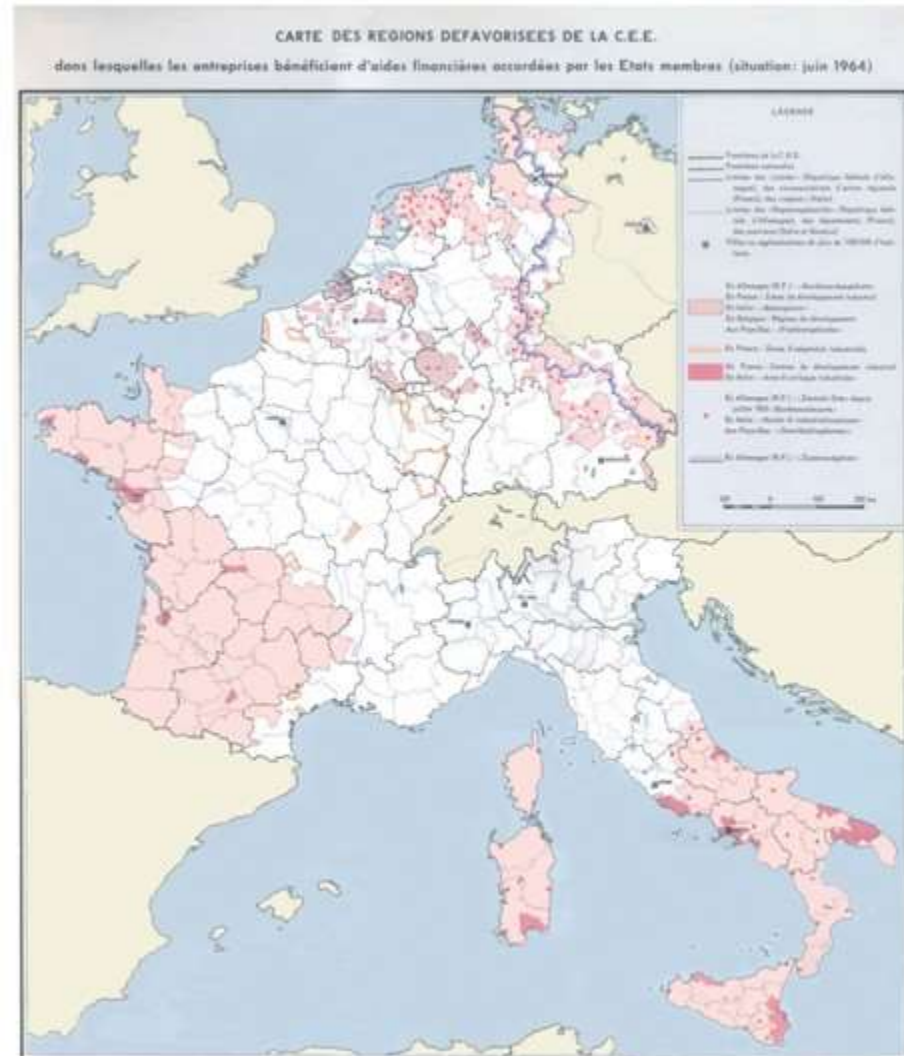
From a social model to a spatial/territorial one:

- Enlargement of the European Community in 1973 and the creation of the ERDF
- From the 1980s, a realisation that “Europe was divided into a geographical and development core and periphery” (Sarmiento-Mirwaldt 2015: 433)
- Assembly of European Regions (1995): the coordination of sectoral policies with unintended spatial impacts
- “to help achieve a more balanced development by reducing existing disparities, preventing territorial imbalances and making both sectoral policies which have a spatial impact and regional policy more coherent” (European Commission 2004: 27)

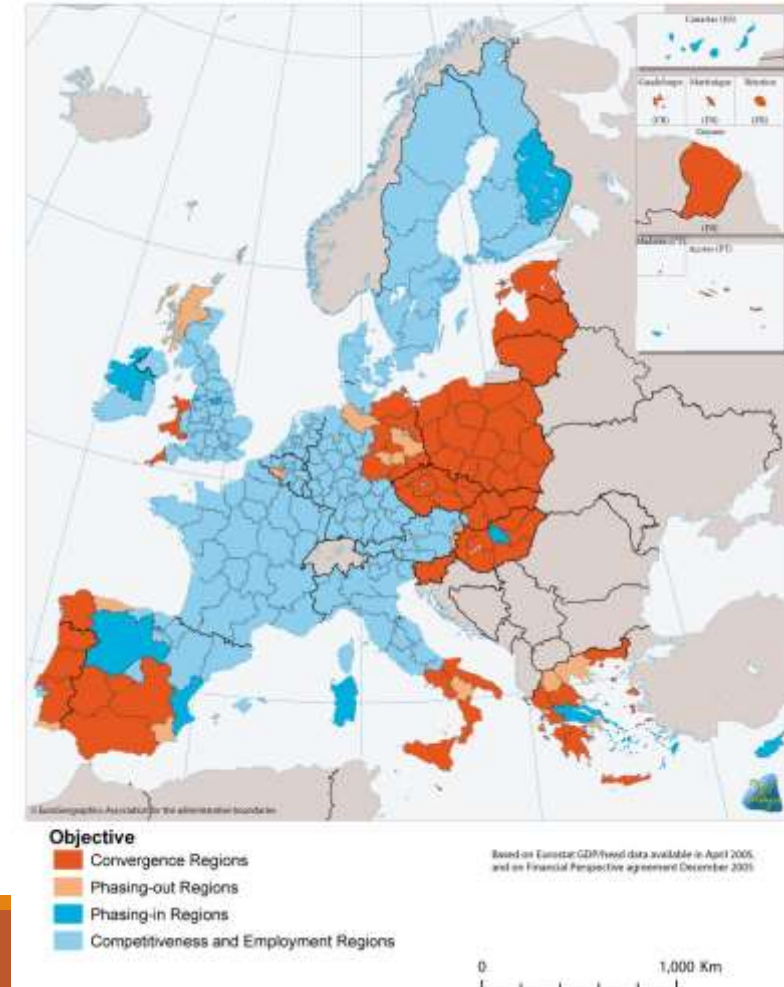
# Introduction: spatialising the European Social Model

A map, left, of less favoured regions from 1964, and right, a more familiar recent map of convergence regions

Territorial Agenda (2007), aimed at “strengthening territorial cohesion”



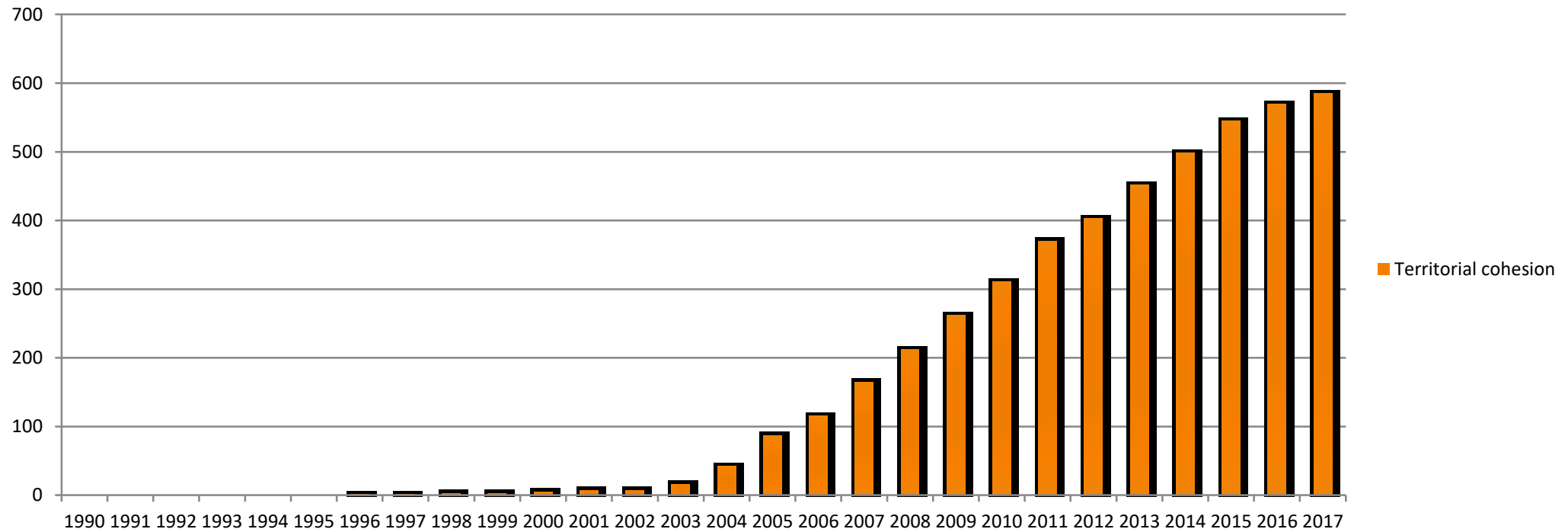
Structural Funds 2007- 2013:  
Convergence and Regional Competitiveness Objectives



# Thinking through territorial cohesion

Used extensively now in academia and European policy circles

**Territorial cohesion (Google Scholar hits)**



Thematic categories	Key dimensions
Genealogy of the concept	<p>French tradition of <i>l'aménagement du territoire</i></p> <p>German tradition of the integrated comprehensive approach</p> <p>Evolution of the concept in the EU's policy processes</p> <p>Successor to European spatial planning</p> <p>Links to the European Social Model</p>
Territorial cohesion as a mode of governing	<p>Integrated approach</p> <p>Open method of coordination</p> <p>Multilevel governance</p> <p>Evidence-based policy</p> <p>Territorial dimension</p>
Territorial cohesion as a normative policy objective	<p>Balanced development/Equality</p> <p>Competitiveness</p> <p>Territorial capital</p> <p>Sustainable development</p> <p>Solidarity</p> <p>Spatial justice</p>
Territorial cohesion as a spatial framework	<p>Polycentrism</p> <p>Place-based development</p> <p>EU territory as a whole</p> <p>Functional Europe</p> <p>Spatial division of labour</p>

# Thinking through territorial cohesion

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Multiple academic trajectories: from the French perspective, territorial cohesion relates to balanced economic development and solidarity between regions, while the German tradition is based more on sustainable development (Faludi 2004)

Reinvigorating European Spatial Planning?

Policy objective or policy tool?

A 'fourth tier of governance' (Holder and Layard 2011: 2), providing entirely new possibilities for cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation?

Promoting both balanced development and competitiveness?



# Thinking through territorial cohesion

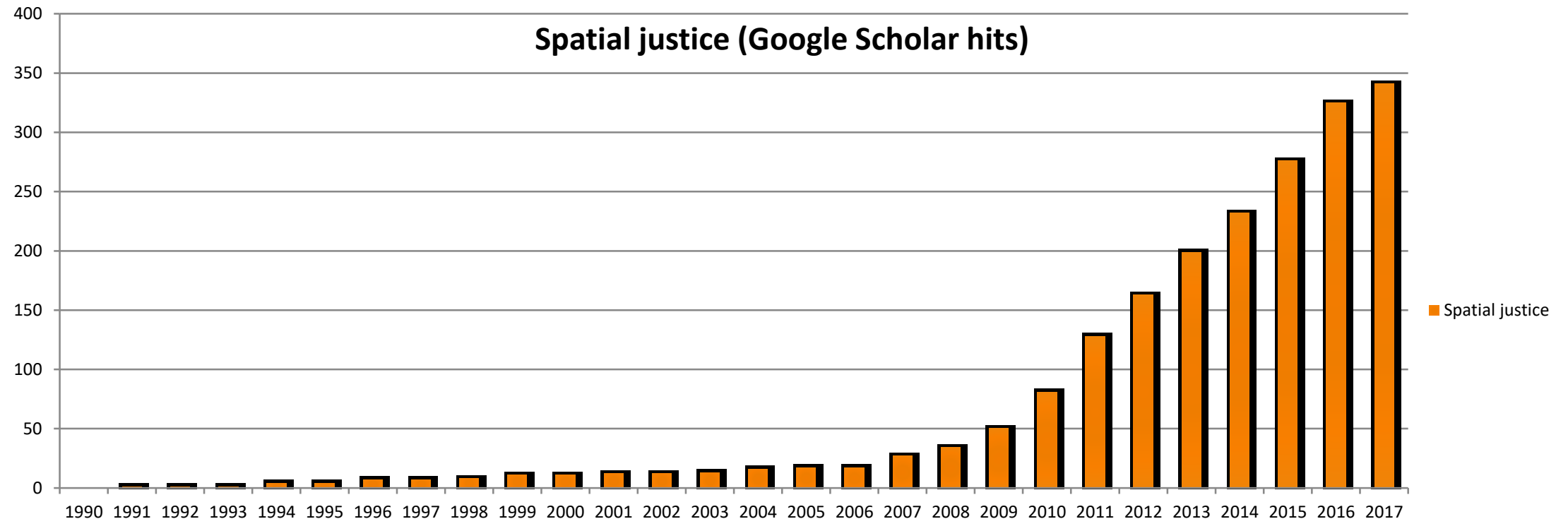
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The geographies of territorial cohesion:

- Polycentric spatial patterns of development (Faludi 2005)
- Place-based development enabling the place-based needs, characteristics and potentials to be taken into account (Mendez 2013)
- An “Europe of places” rather than an “Europe of flows” (Holder and Layard 2011): Europeans more connected to places?
- Unleashing the “territorial capital” of European regions (Finka 2007)
- Viewing Europe as an integrated whole (Faludi 2007)

# Approaching spatial justice

A concept that has gained some traction in academia and, increasingly, in policy arenas



# Approaching spatial justice

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Again, some contradictory tendencies:

- A focus on the urban and global: what of the regional/national?
- A focus on distribution in space (of resources, of services etc)
- The result of structures that are unequal and unjust (Dikec 2006)
- Socio-economic or something broader, e.g. political, environmental?
- More than just a “shorthand for social justice in space” (Dabinett 2011: 2391)
- As part of a new “spatial consciousness” (Soja 2010), spatial justice can show how space enables inequalities and injustices to emerge

# Approaching spatial justice

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A focus on capacities to act and capabilities:

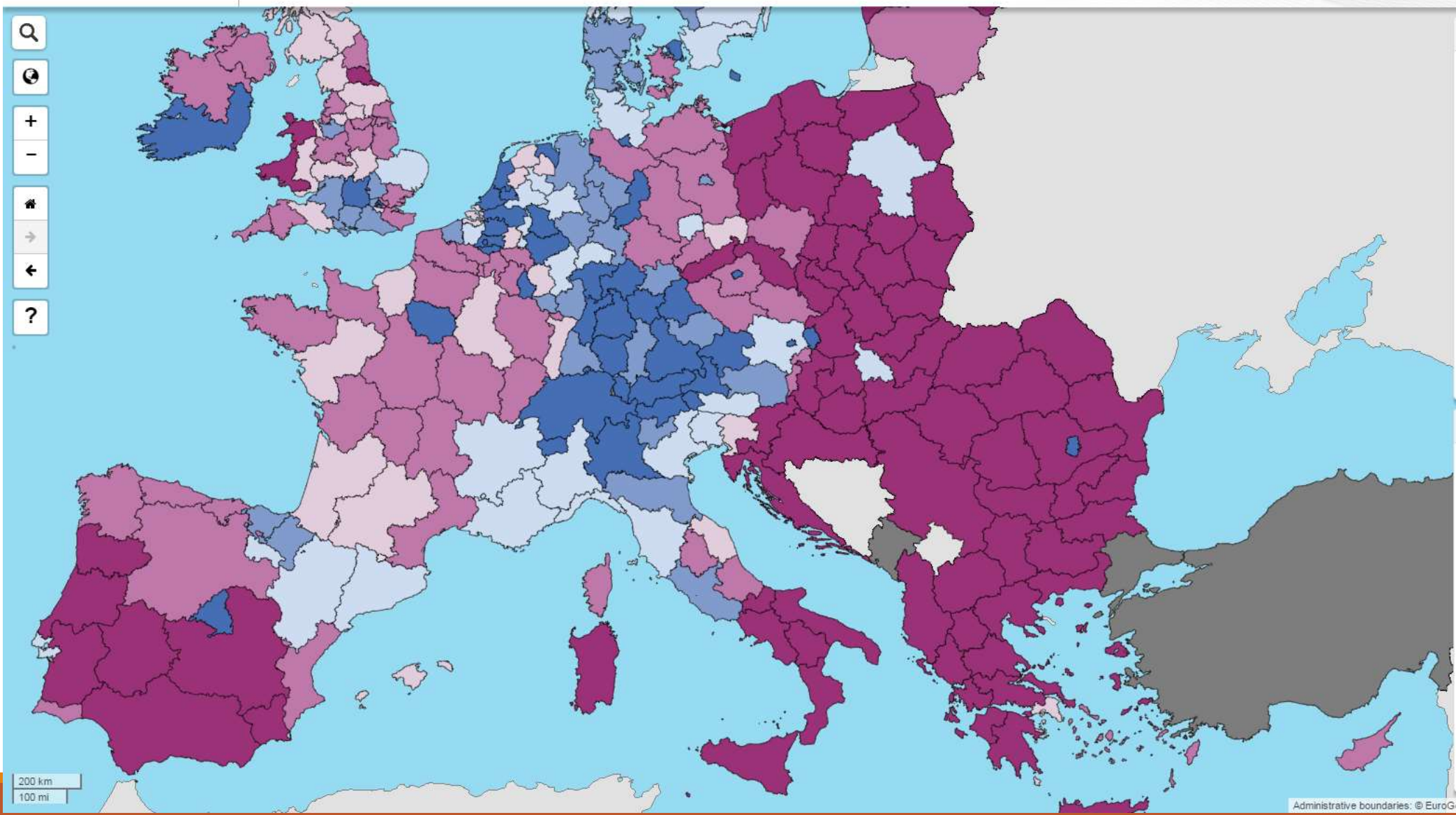
- Lefebvre (1968) *Le Droit à la Ville/The Right to the City*: spatial justice involves the right to take part in the urban transformation process
- “a person’s capabilities and his (sic) liberties to be and to do (opportunities or life chances), according to the terminology of Amartya Sen. The extent to which these capabilities are equally distributed in space will define whether a given spatial arrangement is (un)just” (Israel and Frenkel 2017: 2)
- European regions being given the capacity to transform themselves, rather than being supported to reach certain socio-economic goals?

# The empirical realities of austerity

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Growing regional disparities since 2007:

- 16 out of 26 countries with available data registering increases in the regional dispersion of GDP for NUTS3 regions between 2007 and 2011 (including France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the UK)
- How effective are current territorial cohesion policies?
- Should different mechanisms and goals be developed?



► Eurostat regional yearbook 2016

► Population and social conditions

▼ Economy and finance **1**

▼ Chapter 6: Economy **1**

6.1 GDP per inhabitant in PPS **1** + -

6.2 Change of GDP per inhabitant in PPS

6.3 GVA per person employed

6.4 Primary income of private households

6.5 Change in disposable income of pri...

► Science and technology

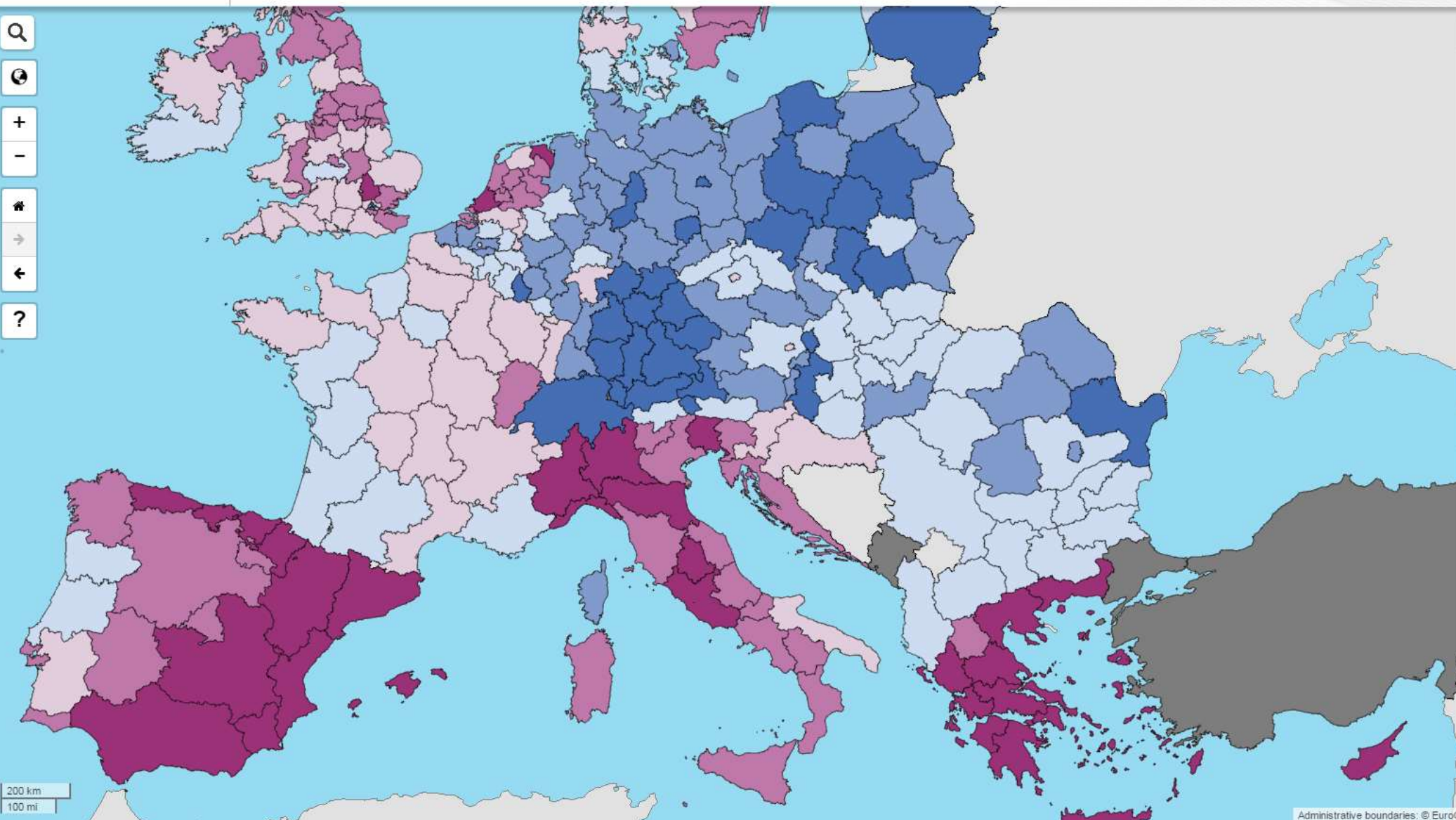
▼ Legend

**6.1 GDP per inhabitant in PPS**

Gross domestic product (GDP) per inhabitant in purchasing power standard (PPS) in relation to the EU-28 average, by NUTS 2 regions, 2014 (% of the EU-28 average, EU-28 = 100)(<sup>1</sup>)

- < 75
- 75 – < 90
- 90 – < 100
- 100 – < 110
- 110 – < 125
- ≥ 125
- Data not available

(<sup>1</sup>) Norway: 2013. Switzerland, Albania and Serbia: national data. Switzerland and



► Eurostat regional yearbook 2016

► Population and social conditions

▼ Economy and finance **1**

▼ Chapter 6: Economy **1**

6.1 GDP per inhabitant in PPS

**6.2 Change of GDP per i** **i** **+** **-**

6.3 GVA per person employed

6.4 Primary income of private households

6.5 Change in disposable income of pri...

► Science and technology

▼ Legend

**6.2 Change of GDP per inhabitant in PPS**

Change of gross domestic product (GDP) per inhabitant in purchasing power standard (PPS) in relation to the EU-28 average, by NUTS 2 regions, 2008–14 (percentage points difference between 2008 and 2014)(<sup>1</sup>)

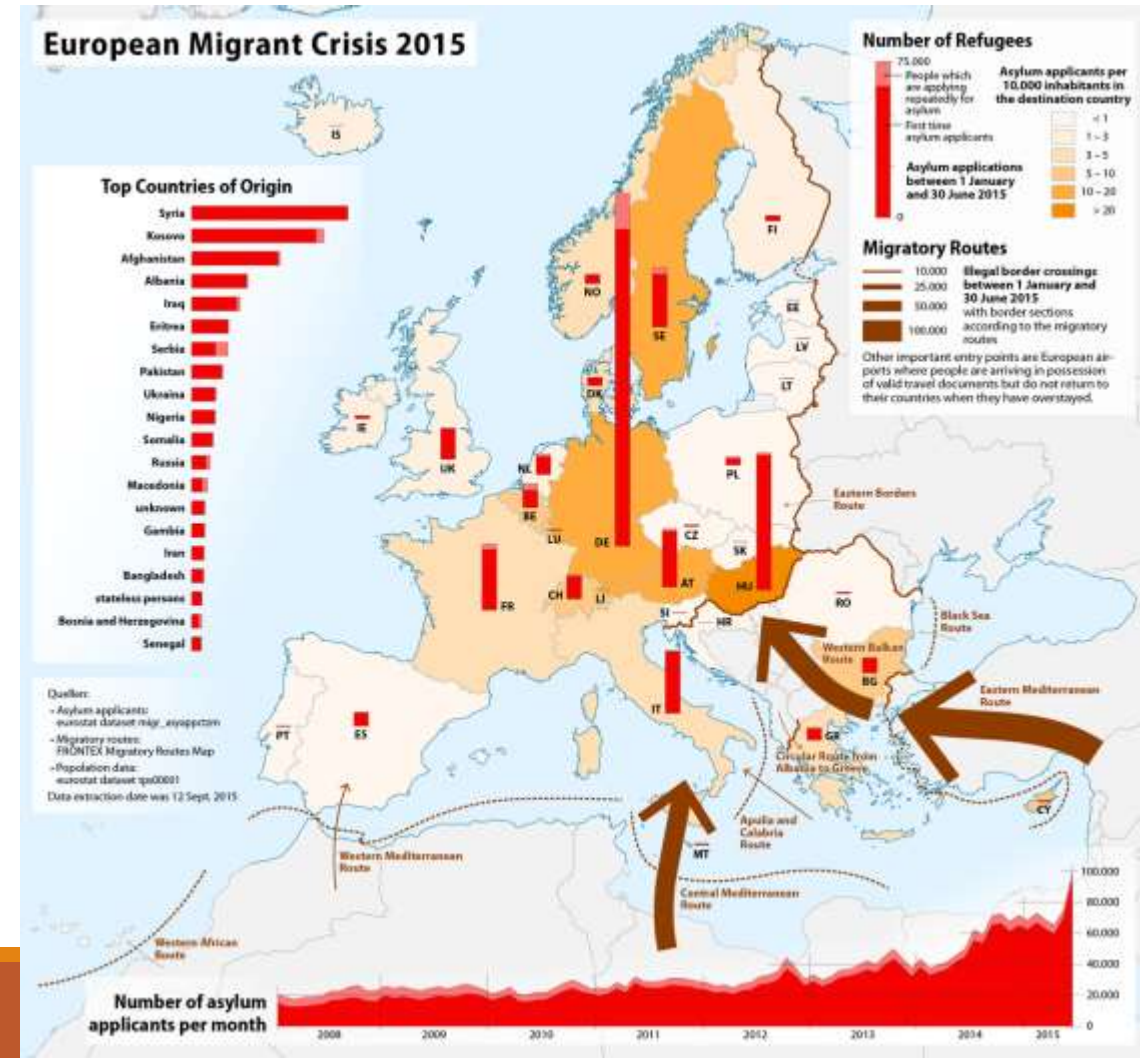
- < -10
- 10 – < -5
- 5 – < 0
- 0 – < 5
- 5 – < 10
- ≥ 10
- Data not available

(<sup>1</sup>) Norway, Switzerland, Albania and Serbia: national data. Switzerland and Albania:

# The empirical realities of austerity

An Europe of flows becoming ever more important?

Clear policy responses to this, e.g. Brexit and the recent election results in Germany





# IMAJINE

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IMAJINE: Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe

5-year project: measuring territorial inequalities in Europe and their link with migration, territorial politics and ideas of spatial justice

Aberystwyth University; Academia di Studii Economice din Bucuresti; Harokopio University; Helsingin Yliopisto; Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique; National University of Ireland, Galway; Rijksuniversiteit Groningen; Universidad de Oviedo; Università degli Studi 'G d'Annunziano' Chieti-Pescara; University of Stirling; Polish Academy of Sciences; Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde; Universität Bern; Università degli Studi di Siena; Athens University of Economics and Business; TNS Opinion

# IMAJINE

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WP1: Conceptual and Policy Review

WP2: Analysis of Territorial Inequalities in Europe

WP3: Territorial Inequalities and Economic Growth

WP4: Experimental Survey on Solidarity and Territorial Cohesion

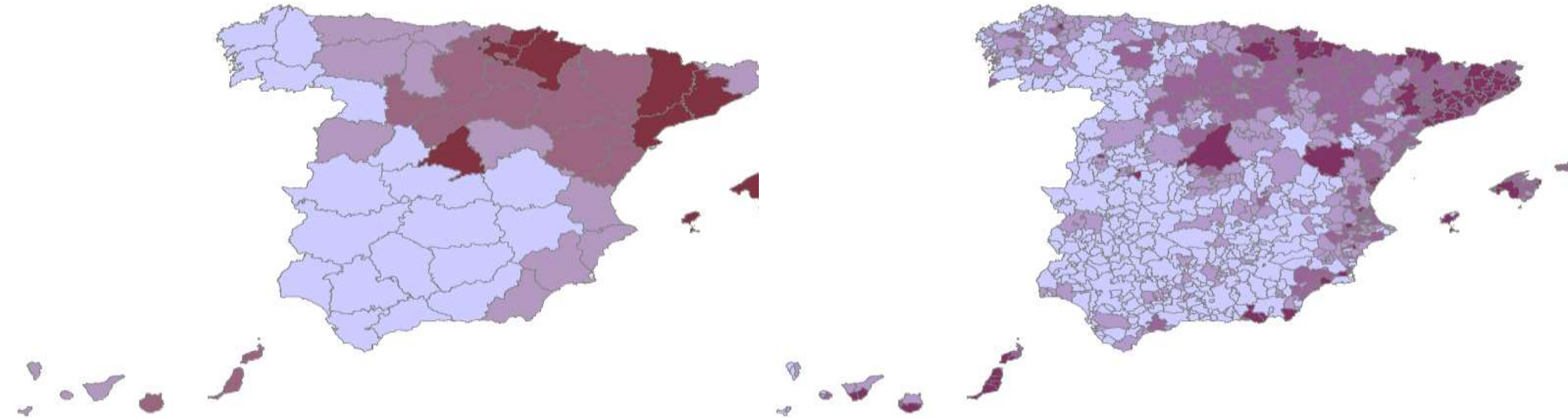
WP5: Migration, Territorial Inequalities and Spatial Justice

WP6: Multi-level Policy-making and Inequalities

WP7: Autonomy Movements and Social, Economic and Spatial Justice

WP8: Re-imagining Regional Futures through Participatory Scenario Building


## WP2: Creating more sophisticated understandings of territorial inequalities





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Spanish per capita GDP (2001) = 100

 <80

 80-100

 100-120

 > 120

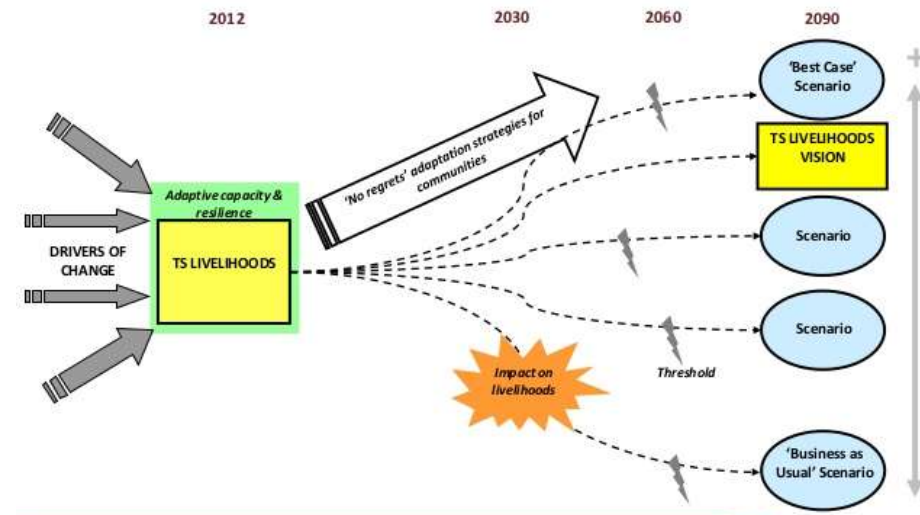
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# IMAJINE

Spatial justice and the capabilities of regions to transform themselves:

1. WP7: the role of autonomy movements in promoting new socio-economic agendas
2. WP8: enrolling individuals and groups to develop new scenarios about alternative regional futures, cf. the Wales we Want by 2050

## Scenario workshop process



# Conclusions

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A need to understand territorial inequalities and how they come about, and how they are manifest in different ways: services; migration; lack of political autonomy

Examine different ways of addressing these inequalities: a shift needed from territorial cohesion to an approach informed by spatial justice?

Policy-related and political appetite for the latter approach, but will it work?

Watch this space!