

## EDITORIAL

### A NEW JOURNAL FOR THE NEW EUROPE



This first issue of *European Urban and Regional Studies* appears at a time of momentous – maybe even epochal – change in the composition of the political, economic and social map of Europe. For member states of the newly-renamed European Union (EU), completion of the '1992' single internal market programme has been followed by eventual ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, after a little local difficulty involving the UK and Denmark. In central and eastern Europe, a process of political and economic reform which began in the late 1980s has not only led to the dissolution of the former USSR and some redrawing of national boundaries, but also to widely differing experiences of privatization and of democratic transition. Partly in consequence, major question marks remain over the future geopolitical structure of the region (particularly over the role of Russia). Media coverage of events in what was once Yugoslavia has alerted the world to the stresses, strains and horrors of war in the most intense of Europe's recently-resurgent ethnic conflicts over territory.

These changes have all had an impact on those west European states which were not part of the European Community. Four of these – Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden – are exploring the possibilities of joining the EU by 1995 as their means of 'defence' from conflicting external economic and political pressures, although substantial questions remain to be resolved in each of them before membership becomes a reality. The EU has also begun to reshape its relationships with central and eastern European states, and has recognized the eventual aim of full membership for at least some of these. Finally, completion of the latest round of GATT negotiations (as more than one commentator put it, at the eleventh minute of the eleventh hour) formalized the terms of trade involving much of Europe and the rest of the world, but many significant international political and economic tensions which surrounded the prolonged GATT talks still continue to simmer, and at times none too gently. These were

particularly evident in the cultural dimension, for instance in concern over the causes and consequences of major audio-visual trade deficits.

Such events have been reflected in, and in turn helped to shape, a pattern of more intensely uneven development within Europe than has been evident for at least 50 years. New and increasingly powerful international processes have been involved in helping to fashion urban and regional structures in Europe, although there has also been a political reaction seeking to regain some lost control over the evolution of local, regional and in some cases even national economies. The impact of the processes described above has been deepened by generalized economic recession during the early 1990s, and has intersected in a myriad of ways with other changes, to do particularly with the constitution of gender and culture. The 'old' western Europe (which actually lasted as a concrete reality for just 40 years or so) now faces a prospect in which not only are some 20 million of its citizens formally unemployed, but also many more – particularly unregistered migrants, women and younger people not recognized by the vagaries of eligibility principles defining access to state benefits – are either 'unofficially' unemployed, or informally employed in highly exploitative conditions.

Heightened tensions on the streets of big cities, in declining industrial regions, and in rural areas faced with sudden and violent transformation of their way of life, are just some of the ways in which such issues are becoming more and more clearly evident. There is a new concern in the EU with the problem of 'social exclusion', a term coined to refer to denial of access to market-based waged labour or state welfare rights. In part this is an attempt to compensate for some of the deficiencies of neo-liberalism, which was so powerful an influence on national and international regulatory agencies during the late 1980s. Others go further, to refer to the question as one of 'marginalization', in which individuals and whole groups are being disadvantaged as an inevitable, structural

consequence of the form of restructuring taking place. Space and place are at the centre of this debate, although precisely how reflects a complex and shifting pattern of social relationships. Such processes are by no means confined to the 'core' of Europe either; they are evident, albeit in subtly-differing ways, in rural areas too. In eastern and central Europe, these difficulties are if anything even more acute. The macro-economic costs and internal frictions of privatization in the context of a sudden adoption of market principles are only too evident in the stumbling and at times violent experience of the economy and society in Germany since unification. In this part of the 'new Europe', tensions associated with economic and political transformation spill over into sheer uncertainty as to what the future might hold. At the same time, the environmental legacies of industrial development in this region point all too forcefully to future challenges ahead for the whole continent, which again have simultaneously global and more local dimensions.

It is in such turbulent conditions that *European Urban and Regional Studies* has been launched, with the intention of making a significant and substantial contribution to academic and policy debate related to processes of urban and regional development in the new Europes. The journal aims to publish research of the highest quality on issues of pressing contemporary significance. In stating these outwardly simple goals, however, as many questions are opened as answered. It is important to acknowledge, for instance, that in the scene depicted above, there are multiple and contested meanings of exactly what Europe is, and what it stands for – not only in the sense of physical boundaries, but also in terms of political objectives. It has already been noted, too, that the novelty of at least some of today's dominant processes might perhaps be as much apparent as real. Equally, the focus on Europe should not be read as implying some preference for a sort of inward-looking Euro-parochialism. *European Urban and Regional Studies* will not only publish research on Europe and set the key European issues in a broader global context, but also constantly aim to situate European urban and regional development within broader debates. For guidance, our conception of the spatial reach of Europe is a relatively broad one –

from the Atlantic to the Commonwealth of Independent States, and from the Arctic Circle to the Mediterranean – but that does not mean that an artificial conceptual wall need (or indeed can) be built around this part of the earth's surface or its population. Our firm belief is that processes of urban and regional development are more central than they have ever been in the ongoing and occasionally contradictory transformations taking place in Europe, and that the time is right for a journal which can reflect and develop this theme in the centrality of its published debate.

*European Urban and Regional Studies*, then, will analyse urban and regional development change in the broadest sense. It has an interdisciplinary perspective (evident in the composition of the editorial advisory board) and an innovative structure, within the confines imposed by publishing schedules and conventions. For better or for worse (though we would argue the former), the journal is independent of any political or professional affiliation or body, and we will strive to maintain genuinely high standards of independence and academic freedom. Our goal is to provide a means of dialogue between different traditions of intellectual enquiry into the ways in which space and place make a difference to the economic, social and political map of Europe. Our intention is to respect the significance of differences between places and regions in Europe, but not to glorify them. The restructuring taking place in Europe is simultaneously social and spatial, in that (for instance) political boundaries are refashioned as one constitutive element in processes of ethnic conflict. Understanding uneven development, in other words, is more than just a question of constructing maps and using spatial analytic tools.

Our objectives encompass too a concern for exploring the connections between theoretical analysis and policy formulation, through politically – and theoretically – informed analyses of such policies. To that end, we shall not only publish high-quality refereed articles, but also a series of topical and up-to-the-minute Euro-commentaries. These will be shorter in length than full papers, frequently more discursive, and occasionally (we hope) provocative. Additionally, there will be a selection of reviews of major books in each issue, focused not just on English texts, but those

published in a variety of European languages, as one further contribution to a broadening of the debate. *European Urban and Regional Studies* is committed to dialogue, and as such particularly welcomes articles and comments which are written clearly and simply for a broad-ranging audience. The journal is international in character, but just happens to be published in English. Even though this is increasingly a key language of scientific co-operation, we regard it as important not to exclude other voices from the debate (or to accord English some kind of linguistic and cultural supremacy), and the editors are committed to reviewing sympathetically all material received. It cannot be stressed enough that we seek to foster a genuinely pan-European discussion, one concerned with

questions which are at the same time urban, regional, and international in character.

The editors and the editorial advisory board are only too aware that this is a difficult and challenging agenda. We hope that readers find the journal an informative and stimulating resource, and that contributors – present and prospective – are encouraged by our goals. In years to come, a measure of the success of *European Urban and Regional Studies* will perhaps not only be in the printed pages of the text, but also in the unfolding of processes, policies and alternatives described and analysed herein.

David Sadler