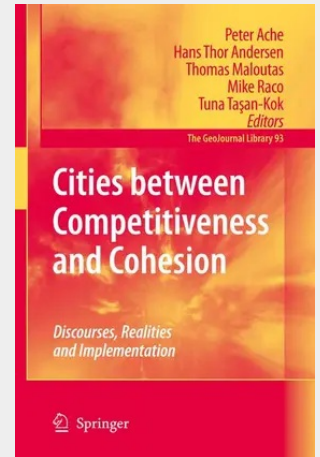


Cities between Competitiveness and Cohesion

Discourses, Realities and Implementation

European cities have for decades found themselves in a phase of important changes. Concomitantly multi-level and multi-actor policy processes have unfolded in the EU. Sub-national governments are facing new challenges as their manufacturing industry withers away, still more responsibility for matching the globalisation challenges such as welfare, employment and general social improvements are transferred from national to sub-national levels. This raises specific governance problems for city regions in their attempt to meet the demand from the emerging knowledge-based society. Yet, no city or city region exists in a vacuum; they are all embedded in national settings with specific structures and traditions as well as different perceptions of challenges, needs and solutions. It appears that a general, neoliberal discourse has conquered the political agenda during the last one or two decades: That economic regeneration requires increasing competitiveness achieved by - forced stress on knowledge intensive industries, which itself needs more and better education. However, the implementation of such a strategy has many forms and the realities are often quite a step from the intended outcome. During the last three years, a group of about forty people has met regularly across Europe to develop the ideas as originally presented in the Memorandum of Understanding, setting the agenda for the analysis of preconditions, strategies and outcomes among different cities in their effort to reconcile welfare and growth.

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