
Governance and Territorial Cohesion: Empirical Analysis



Pereira Cristina, Gonçalves Herminia, Sequeira Teresa

Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, UTAD, Portugal

Since the middle of the 20th century, the perspective that made economic growth (measured through GDP per capita) and social progress (measured through an improvement in quality-of-life standards) coincide has been updated or extended to new areas, reflecting the growing recognition of the multidimensional nature of well-being. This concept includes material comfort as an important component, but now adds non-material aspects, such as the appreciation of living conditions, health and education services and conditions, social relationships or the environment. This empirical analysis text aims to assess the extent to which social cohesion and the well-being of the population tends, taking the income and wealth indicator as a reference. More specifically, the effect of political decentralization on social cohesion and well-being will be analyzed, that is, to what extent the implementation of decentralized governance can translate into visible effects on the well-being of populations, based on the statistical results of this indicator. . This analysis will be applied to the Portuguese case, by comparing two territories, verifying what was done to make well-being an influential concept in political decision-making processes, in particular, at the regional and local scale. In the case of Portugal, the literature points out that the effects of public policies aimed at improving the cohesion of the territory have not proven to be methods for reducing inequalities and that the implementation of locally based policies, associated with good local governance, emerges as the path to explore so that public policies can respond more specifically to the specific needs of territories and the people who live in them.

Keywords: public policies, social cohesion, governance, well-being, decentralization.