

## **THE DUALITIES OF REGIONAL SCIENCE AND STUDIES – REPORT ON THE 15TH ANNUAL MEETING OF HUNGARIAN REGIONAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION**

**Sándor Zsolt KOVÁCS<sup>a</sup>, Szilárd RÁCZ<sup>b</sup>**

<sup>a</sup> Junior research fellow. Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre for Economic and Regional Studies Institute for Regional Studies. skovacs@rkk.hu

<sup>b</sup> Research fellow. Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre for Economic and Regional Studies Institute for Regional Studies. szracz@rkk.hu

The 15th Annual Meeting of the Hungarian Regional Science Association was hosted by Széchenyi István University Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences in Mosonmagyaróvár between 19–20 October 2017. The main theme of the meeting was the polymorphous notion of dualities in spatial research. As usual, the General Meeting of HRSA was held during the first morning. Members became acquainted with the activities of the past year and the realised mid-term programs through the Presidential Report, while the Audit Committee Report highlighted the organisation's continuous financial stability.

Due to the resignation of President *János Rechnitzer* and Vice-President *Imre Lengyel* and the demise of presidential member *Éva G. Fekete*, the general assembly proceeded with the partial re-election of officials, the inauguration of the new President of HRSA, *Zoltán Gál*, senior research fellow of HAS CERS Institute for Regional Studies and professor of University of Kaposvár and its new Vice-President *Attila Varga*, professor of the University of Pécs. The new members of the Presidency include: Tamás Dusek, professor of Széchenyi István University, Balázs Lengyel, senior research fellow at HAS CERS Institute of Economics and György Csomós, professor of the University of Debrecen.

As in previous years, the General Assembly was concluded by book presentations, during which the volume of studies co-edited by Gábor Lux and Gyula Horváth published by Routledge entitled „The Routledge Handbook to Regional Development in Central and Eastern Europe”; the monograph of Gábor Lux published as a part of the *Studia Regionum* series by Dialóg Campus entitled „Reindustrialisation in Central Europe”; the 14th volume of the *Regions of the Carpathian Basin* series co-edited by Ferenc Jankó, Attila Fábíán and Tamás Hardi entitled *Burgenland*; and the volume titled „Territorial Capital and its Hungarian

dimensions” under the editorship of Miklós Oláh, Pál Szabó and István Balázs Tóth were presented with the participation of requested contributors, the authors and editors.

Participants at the Plenary Session were greeted by *Éva Szalka*, Dean of Széchenyi István University Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, the Chair of the English-language plenary session was *Zoltán Gál*.

The first lecturer, *Grzegorz Gorzelak*, professor of the University of Warsaw discussed the specific position, successes and failures of Central Europe within the European Union. Through the example of GDP growth, the presenter noted that even on the basis of 2018 estimates, economic growth in Eastern member states post-EU accession and the economic crisis outpaced that observed in the EU18, while Western convergence in countries accessing the EU more recently shows a decreasing trend. The Polish professor highlighted the major risk factors in the Central Eastern European region, namely the negative demographic trends (emigration, ageing), external dependency (fossil fuels, FDI) and the disappearance of low value-added labour. Maverick behaviour is considered as a further risk factor, as demonstrated by the specific attitude of Poland and Hungary towards EU policies.

In his presentation, *Gunther Maier*, professor of the Vienna University of Economics and Business explored an interesting aspect of dualities, namely the evolution of publishing from traditional 'hard copy' journals to Open Access publication forums. In traditional forms of publishing, copyright revenues were transferred from authors to publishers, leading to the rapid multiplication of the number of journals, higher subscription fees and the emergence of an oligopolistic market whose main winners were Springer, Elsevier and John Wiley and Sons with profit rates exceeding 30 percent. Technological development, however, produced cheaper and easier internet access even in laggard or developing continents and countries, creating an opportunity for Open Access. This entailed a significant reduction in publishing fees, since the costs of printing, dissemination and other personal fees were reduced to the charges associated with editing and server services, and the handling of citations and searches was also simplified. There are two main forms of Open Access publishing; „green” and „gold”, the former implying that the journal or volume comes out in print, and the author receives distribution rights for its electronic version, while the latter contains only an online version of the scientific work.

*Michael Steiner*, professor of the University of Graz presented a lecture on the specific problems and perspectives of European regional policy, highlighting the significance of nation-specific responses to the problems of the day. He noted that the dominant trend in Cohesion Policy is that while MSs demonstrate a certain degree of convergence, country-level

regional disparities – economic potential, productivity, revenues – tend to increase. The majority of research examining the efficiency of EU Regional Policy demonstrate positive results to a lesser or a greater extent, nevertheless, one-fourth of these analyses detected a weak or negative impact on growth in the case of EU funds. Remedying this situation requires a new approach: besides fostering stronger ties, particularly in the domain of international cooperation, a shift towards other dimensions (e.g. society, the environment) transcending the mere analysis and consideration of economic factors is strongly encouraged. In the domain of governance, there is a need for a higher degree of decentralisation and a reinforcement of local and regional organisations.

The English-language plenary session was concluded by the presentation of *Balázs Lengyel*, leader of the HAS CERS Institute of Economics, Agglomeration and Social Networks Research Group, who presented his results on the role of social networks in the evolution of agglomeration trends. The population of the globe is increasingly concentrated in metropolises, which, besides generating new problems, is a powerful incentive to economic and technological development due to the presence of agglomeration economies, i.e. the specific benefits related to the concentration of firms in a given sector. According to economic theory, metropolitan environments are more conducive to learning processes between firms and workers than sparsely populated areas. The detection of social networks is fundamental to understanding these learning processes (a source of urban economies), however, we still know very little about networks operating in metropolitan environments.

The Hungarian-language plenary session was presided by *Imre Lengyel*, professor of the University of Szeged. The first lecturer was *József Nemes Nagy*, professor of the Eötvös Loránd University Department of Regional Science. In his lecture entitled *Dualities of the Divided World* he discussed the challenges and tasks of regional science, while profiting from the specific toolkit and results of various scientific disciplines (philosophy, logic, mathematics, psychology, arts). Such complex thinking may facilitate an understanding of the dualities characterising geographical space, regardless of whether they are centered around economic centres and peripheries, poles and axes, global and local approaches. The main foci of the analyses in regional science contain a number of dualities, such as space and society or territorial inequalities and cohesion. The professor concluded his lecture by presenting his empirical results on the dual nature of development in the European Union as well as domestic trends of peripheralisation.

*Ákos Jakobi*, assistant lecturer at the Eötvös Loránd University Department of Regional Science, began his lecture by presenting the famous „death of geography” thesis related to the

development of information technologies, according to which the development of the internet together with globalisation trends have led to a narrowing of geographical space, enabling firms to manage global-scale production and distribution chains and real-time communication. This led to the proliferation of significant outsourcing destinations across the globe in South-Eastern-Asia, Africa, Latin-America and Central Europe. Nonetheless, man, as a localised being, remains the key element connecting physical and virtual space, which renders untenable the thesis of the disappearance of geographical space. The lecture illustrated the interconnection between virtual space and geographical space on the example of iwiw, the former Hungarian social network, through an absolute and weighted analysis of network-type connections. The conclusion of the results of the analysis presented the duality of physical and virtual space as a core spatial feature of the informational society.

*Katalin Mezei*, Associate Professor of the Széchenyi István University Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences presented dual approaches on the example of the land as a key resource in local economic development. The first such approach concerned land use, whose duality can be grasped along agricultural and non-agricultural usage, however, this classification is currently characterised by a number of diverse typologies. The location of resources, their spatial distribution, natural and market processes exert a powerful impact on territorial development, rendering their evaluation indispensable in a resource-based local economic development model. In the case of land we encounter a new type of duality, namely ecological and economic assessment. While ecological assessment, through qualitative classification, may serve as an instrument of the appropriate organisation and development of production, economic assessment may yield benefits in the realm of funding, market prices and taxation. In the latter case, there is no evidence of a unified international practice, in Hungary the heavily criticised gold crown system is in standard use, which, together with the applied indicators would require a serious re-evaluation.

The plenary session was terminated by the presentation entitled *Dualities of regional science and studies* by *János Rechnitzer*, professor of Széchenyi István University, who summarized the domestic institutions of regional science, devoting special attention to educational-cultural institutions, publishing forums and other civil organisations, as well as introducing the main research directions (spatial theory, spatial policy, social spaces, spatial structure, spatial capital). This was followed by a discussion of the new challenges (the function of the state; the changing dimensions and re-evaluation of the role of the space, the post-2020 changes in Cohesion Policy and technological paradigm changes) in regional science ranging from theoretical and methodological research to practical applications and a

re-thinking of the institutional system. The training of a new generation of scientists, increasing visibility, new forms of training, the upgrading of teaching materials and internationalisation are significant factors shaping the future of domestic regional science.

The session was concluded by the ceremony of granting the awards founded by HRSA, including the awarding of the Honorary Certificate for second time to members who, following the Constitution of HRSA, by their outstanding scientific results, exemplary professional and social activities were deemed eligible. The award was granted to Zoltán Andor Végh, retired Director of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Szeged Regional Department, former leader of the Southern Great Plain Division of HRSA. The Association announced the call for proposals of the Outstanding Young Regionalist Award for the ninth time, which was granted by the HRSA Presidency and Heads of the HRSA Divisions to Zsófia Vas, assistant lecturer of the University of Szeged Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, recognizing her valuable contributions to the progress of regional science.

The second day of the General Meeting of HRSA proceeded by 12 thematic (one English-language) sections. A total number of almost a hundred presentations were delivered in the various sections:

- Theoretical and Methodological Questions of Spatial Analysis (Chair: Tamás Dusek Professor, Széchenyi István University)
- Regional Innovation and Innovation Policy (Chair: Attila Varga Professor, University of Pécs)
- Forms, Tools and Results of Regional Development (Chair: Pál Szabó Associate Professor, Eötvös Loránd University Department of Regional Science)
- Centrum-periphery Relations, Socio-spatial Inequalities (Chair: Attila Korompai Associate Professor (ret.), Corvinus University of Budapest)
- Integration vs. Segregation: Good Practices, Old Innervations in Rural Spaces (Chair: Tibor Szarvák Associate Professor, National University of Public Service)
- Networks in Space – Space in Networks (Chair: János Péntzes Assistant Professor, University of Debrecen)
- Research and Development (Chair: János Rechnitzer Professor, Széchenyi István University)
- Rural and Urban Spaces, Parallels and Oppositions (Chair: János Schwertner President, Academic Society for the Development of the Micro-regions)
- Innovative Community Solutions in Rural Areas (Chair: Frigyes Nagy Retired Minister, Honorary Professor, Széchenyi István University)
- Dualities in Health Inequalities (Chair: Annamária Uzzoli Senior Research Fellow, HAS Institute for Regional Studies)
- Border Studies, Political Geography and Geopolitics (Chair: Tamás Hardi Senior Research Fellow, HAS Institute for Regional Studies)
- Emerging new periphery: Central and Eastern European regions in the multi-speed EU (Chair: Zoltán Gál Professor, Senior Research Fellow, HAS CERS Institute for Regional Studies)

Dualities, polarities are omnipresent, as demonstrated by the thematic structure of the sections extending from centre-periphery relations through inequalities of health to integration and segregation featuring in the presented lectures which are accessible on the website of HRSA: <http://www.mrtt.hu/>.