

TERRITORIAL RESEARCH IN CENTRAL EUROPE – REPORT ON THE 2019 CONFERENCES OF THE HUNGARIAN REGIONAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

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Three major scientific events were organized by Hungarian Regional Science Association (HRSA) in the year 2019. The report presents these in a chronological order.

11TH CONFERENCE OF YOUNG REGIONALISTS

The HRSA, the West Hungarian Research Department of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Institute for Regional Studies (IRS) and the Doctoral School for Regional and Economic Sciences of the Széchenyi István University organised the 11th Conference of Young Regionalists in Győr entitled „*Paths of urban development in Central and Eastern Europe – past, present and future*” on 21-22 June, 2019.

The conference series was launched in 1999 and has enjoyed relentless popularity ever since. Each year, the conference programme divided into 6 to 12 sections is structured around a major topic and introductory lectures are held by prominent researchers and experts of the discipline. The programme also includes a presentation of major projects, scientific journals and newly published books. Through the past years, a total of 80 to 100 participants held 70 to 80 lectures during the conference, enabling young researchers to contribute to scientific debates and providing an outstanding opportunity for a meeting of generations, a platform worth attending.

As in the previous years, the 2019 event was organized around a specific topic. The common specificities and engines of urban development in Central and Eastern Europe formed the main thematic focus, with a specific emphasis on factors beyond traditional economic resources. The event also served as the opening conference for the research entitled „The role of territorial capital and innovative milieu in the development of Central and Eastern European regional centers”.

The plenary sessions took place during the first day of the conference. In a novel approach compared to the previous ten conferences and more faithful to the title of the conference,

keynote lectures were held no longer by senior researchers and professors but seven prominent members of the young generation of postdoctoral scientists, in the following order:

- *Dávid Fekete* (Széchenyi István University): Current trends of metropolitan governance in Hungary.
- *Gergely Tagai* (Central and North Hungarian Research Department of IRS): Urban development and regional disparities in East Central Europe.
- *Ádám Páthy* (Széchenyi István University): Territorial capital and urban development – Development specificities of East Central European regional centers.
- *Viktória Józsa* (CEO of Nord Consult Kft.): The presentation of the development path of a large city: Where do you come from and where are you heading, Miskolc?
- *Szilárd Rác* (Transdanubian Research Department of IRS): Spatial structural specificities and urban network processes of post-socialist South Eastern Europe.
- *Boglárka Barsi* (West Hungarian Research Department of IRS): Happy cities – territorial aspects of well-being.
- *Dániel Kuttor* (Miskolc University): The domestic financial space and the position of cities in Hungary.

Thematic sessions were held after the plenary sessions. The event attracted somewhat less attention compared to previous years (which might be attributed to the introduction of attendance fees). A total of 30 presentations were divided among four different sessions:

- Large cities and metropolitan areas in East Central Europe;
- The state of territorial development;
- Innovative economic activities and regional development;
- The concept, limitations and practice of social responsibility.

7TH CENTRAL EUROPEAN CONFERENCE IN REGIONAL SCIENCE

The 7th Central European Conference in Regional Science (CERS) entitled „*Flows of Resources in the Regional Economy in the Age of Digitalisation*” was held in Sopron between 9-11 October, 2019. The main organisers of the event were the University of Sopron Alexandre Lamfalussy Faculty of Economics and HRSA. Further co-organizers with CERS included the German speaking, Polish and Slovak Sections of European Regional Science Association (ERSA) and University of Economics in Bratislava, Technical University of Košice. The 2019 CERS was the first to be hosted by a Hungarian institution. The scientific committee was headed by Prof. Zoltán Gál, president of the HRSA. The president of the organisation committee was Balázs István Tóth, associate professor of the University of Sopron, operative tasks were managed by Dénes Hargita (University of Sopron), Sándor Zsolt Kovács (IRS) and Balázs Páger (IRS), as well as Szilárd Rác (HRSA).

The history of the conference dates back to 2005. The main organiser of the first six CERS were members of the Slovakian session of ERSA, more specifically, its honorary president, Milan Buček, its president Štefan Rehák and vice president Oto Hudec: 2005, 2007 Nový Smokovec - High Tatras; 2009 Košice; 2012 Bratislava; 2014 Košice; 2017 Banská Bystrica. In the course of its one-and-a-half decade long history, CERS has developed into one of the most prominent scientific events of Central European regional science, and HRSA was already included among its co-organizers in 2017. The conference has significantly contributed to the integration of experts, doctoral students and young researchers from Central and Eastern European countries to the international scientific arena. This is demonstrated, on one hand, by the steadily increasing number of participating researchers and countries, and, on the other hand, by the list of plenary speakers that includes the most illustrious figures of European regional science (to name but a few: Roberta Capello, Manfred M. Fischer, Gunther Maier, Peter Nijkamp, Andrés Rodríguez-Pose).

Plenary sessions organised in the framework of the CERS held in Sopron explored highly topical issues, and the list of invited speakers was on equal footing with any of the world congresses. *Andrés Rodríguez-Pose*, Professor of the London School of Economics, in his lecture entitled „The Geography of EU Discontent and the Revenge of the Places that Don't Matter” discussed the fortune of territories remaining outside the focus of development policy and their political impacts manifest in electoral outcomes, citing Hungarian examples as well. The presentation of *Alessandra Faggian*, Professor of the Gran Sasso Science Institute analysed the main explanatory factors of hate speech and its geographical aspects. *André Torre*, President of ERSA, Professor of Agrotech in Paris held a lecture on the role of the exploitation of endogenous and exogenous resources in territorial development. *Katarzyna Kopczewska* Professor and Vice-Dean at the Faculty of Economics, University of Warsaw explored opportunities of the integration of „machine learning” into territorial analyses.

During the three days of the 7th CERS, 190 speakers from 20 different countries presented their state-of-the art research results in the framework of 160 presentations. The scientific programme was organised into 29 sessions around 14 different topics (two sessions – networks; regional development – enjoyed outstanding popularity, attendees were able to exchange ideas in four parallel sessions).

Regular sessions:

- Digital and Smart Solutions;
- Circular Economy and Environmental Challenges;
- Rural Policy and Development;

- Urbanization and Urban Policy;
- Innovation, Knowledge and Universities;
- Regional Development and Smart Specialization;
- Modelling regional growth and economic development;
- EU and Regional Policy.

Thematic sessions:

- Tourism and Regional/Local Development (organiser: Márta Bakucz);
- Contemporary Issues in Regional Corporate Embeddedness (Viktória Józsa);
- The presence and effects of Asian investments in Central Europe (Dániel Kuttor);
- Networks, Development and Disparities in Regions (Balázs Lengyel and Attila Varga);
- Geoeconomic/geopolitical challenges in the EU and CEE (Márton Péti and Géza Salamin);
- Innovative Solutions to Manage Social Urban Problems in European Small and Medium Sized Towns (Viktória Szirmai).

A book presentation taking place on the second day of CERS analysed the success and sustainability of the Central European (post-socialist) model of catching-up. The presented volumes (Lux, Horváth, 2017; Gorzelak, 2019) were published in the Routledge book series. The authors of both volumes sought to explore the extent and ways in which convergence of Central European regions to Western European societies can be demonstrated. In their presentations, *Gábor Lux and Grzegorz Gorzelak* analysed the main dimensions of territorial disparities (urban–rural and Western–Eastern development divide), human capital endowment and loss of knowledge and skills triggered by migration and issues of institutions and regionalisation.

Prizes for manuscripts submitted by doctoral students and young researchers are regularly awarded during the CERS conferences. The President of the evaluating committee at the 2019 Conference was Gunther Maier, Professor of Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien. Based on the unanimous decision of the committee, the Young Researchers Prize was granted to *Andreas Diemer*, doctoral student of the London School of Economics for his paper entitled „Diffusion of Local Economic Shocks in Social Networks: Evidence from the US Fracking Boom”.

A discussion on the future of the conference was conducted by representatives of the co-organizer organizations. In its framework, previous commitments were reaffirmed, targeting widening the range of co-organizers of future CERS conferences, extending participation to the Polish and Hungarian sessions of ERSA, alongside the Slovakian session, the original main organiser and founder of the event series. During the closing ceremony of the conference, leaders of the respective organisations and André Torre, President of ERSA expressed their joy

over the continuation of the cooperation, announcing that Poznań would be hosting the 8th CERS Conference organised by the Polish session in 2021. In addition, the CERS in Sopron provided a platform for preparatory works for local organisers (HRSA, IRS & University of Pécs) of the ERSA Congress to be held in Pécs in August 2022. Presentations of the CERS Conference were published in Autumn 2020 in a 700-page-long, peer-reviewed and indexed English language Proceedings volume (Gál et al. 2020).

17TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE HUNGARIAN REGIONAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

The Annual Meeting of HRSA was organised immediately after the CERS Conference in the early afternoon hours of 11 October, 2019. The conference, also hosted by the University of Sopron Alexandre Lamfalussy Faculty of Economics explored various aspects of *Central European territorial researches*. Due to the temporal proximity of the two scientific events and contrary to previous practices, no plenary or English language sessions were organised, after the General Assembly, lectures continued in parallel regular sessions.

During his introductory speech held at the General Assembly, Gál Zoltán, President of HRSA requested participants to honor the memory of Bálint Csátori, founding member of HRSA who passed away in September 2019 at the age of 70.

Due to the expiring mandate of office-holders appointed at the full renewal of the committee in 2015 and its partial renewal of 2017, new officials were elected for a four-year term in the framework of the General Assembly. 54 out of the 190 active members of HRSA (paying their membership fees before the General Assembly) submitted their votes, those present voted on the issue of 16 posts. Based on the decision of the General Assembly, six new and ten re-elected members will ensure the leadership of the Association in the 2019 to 2023 period. The mandate of Zoltán Gál, President of HRSA and Szilárd Rácz, its Secretary were both renewed. The list of Vice Presidents has not changed, these posts will be filled by Imre Nagy, Pál Szabó and Attila Varga in the coming four-year session. Newly elected members of the Presidency include Attila Fábián, Ákos Jakobi, Viktória Józsa, Sándor Zsolt Kovács, Balázs Lengyel, Katalin Mezei, and external member József Káposzta. György Csomós was elected as the new President of the Accounting Committee, its members include Katalin Lipták, Zsófia Vas, and Balázs Forman as an alternate.

The ceremonial granting of the awards issued by the Society took place during the General Assembly. The award was distributed for the 3rd time. The Society granted the award to

recognize the achievements of *György Kocziszky*, professor emeritus of the University of Miskolc, outgoing Head of the North Hungarian Division of HRSA. The Excellent Young Regional Scientist Award – awarded for the 11th time by the Presidency and the leaders of regional sections – was granted to *Zoltán Elekes*, assistant professor of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, University of Szeged in recognition of his outstanding scientific results, exemplary professional and community activities.

The General Assembly was followed by nine regular sessions. The 70 presentations, applying a variety of territorial scales and thematic focuses, represent the great diversity of Central European regional scientific research. A call for the organisation of sessions has been announced each year since 2017 by HRSA in the first Circular of the Annual Meeting, the list of sessions organized at the 2019 event is as follows:

- Theoretical and methodological issues related to territorial research;
- Territorial policy and planning in Central Europe;
- Territorial dimensions of consumption;
- Territorial and social disparities in Central Europe;
- Urban development in Central and Eastern Europe;
- Agricultural-, environmental and rural research;
- Social capital and territorial disparities;
- Social, economic and regional impacts of automation.

Further information on the conferences is available on the webpage of the Society (<http://www.mrtt.hu/>), photo albums can be accessed on social media (<https://www.facebook.com/mrtt.hu/>).

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