

The centre of the periphery or the periphery of the centre. Pécs case study

We will present Pécs as the centre of a depressed, abandoned region. The Transdanubian region is among the 20 most disadvantaged regions of the European Union which shows a significant decline compared to previous years. This in our opinion justifies the need for professional research directed at changing this situation by performing some tangible efforts. The investigation of the cultural heritage of the area's centres, and the drafting of their possible development path in harmony with the existing development plans may not only provide a positive vision of the future for the towns, but their wider environment as well.

Pécs is a 2,000-year-old city, acquiring various historical and mutually reinforcing central functions, by virtue of which it has developed into a regional centre. Of the historical drivers of the development of Pécs, we were able to identify three groups of factors 1) centrality within its region, the regional functions it has fulfilled throughout its history, 2) culture and multiculturalism, and 3) industrial development. We will analyse the relation of the cultural center position and the other functions of Pécs.

The other aim of the study will discuss some Hungarian concepts and their effect on the county seat. Among other concepts, we will analyse the Pécs pole concept – a loosely connected set of health, cultural and environmental cluster building initiatives – which is distinguished by its services and amenities-based approach aiming to reposition Pécs as a creative city appealing to its visitors and residents alike on the basis of quality of life factors. Despite its weak economic impact, it provided a major impetus for the city to identify new development priorities, attract new target populations searching for metropolitan alternatives and promote a better valorisation of its rich environmental (proximity of curative waters, viticulture, Mecsek mountain) and cultural capital (e.g. the EU-sponsored UNESCO World Heritage Site, its nationally renown museum network). The role of culture as the main catalyst of postindustrial urban change gained official recognition with the European Capital of Culture 2010. With culture gaining increasing prominence in the city's self-identification, manufacturing was relegated to the position of a de-emphasised or "hidden" sector.