

The Role of Small and Medium Sized Cities in Regional Development – Report on the 14th Annual Meeting of the Hungarian Regional Science Association

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The Annual Meeting of Hungarian Regional Science Association was organised for the third time in 2016 across the border. The venue of the XIVth Annual Meeting taking place between the 15th and 16th of September was the Partium Christian University of Oradea, the main theme of the event was the role of small and medium sized cities in regional development. More than a hundred presentations were given discussing various aspects and fields of urban development. As usual, the General Meeting of HRSA was held during the first morning, where the activities of the past year and the plans for 2017 of HRSA were presented to the members, and the report of the Audit Committee mentioned as a permanent feature the financial stability of the organisation. The co-organiser of the event was the Partium Institute for Spatial Research (PTKI).

The opening lecture was given by *Manfred Kühn*, Senior Researcher of the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space titled „Small and Medium Sized Cities – Driving Forces of Peripheralisation”. The focus of the lecture was on the changing distribution of tasks among cities, the main beneficiaries were metropolitan centers to the detriment of small and medium sized cities. In the case of these former, three factors contributed to the aggravation of peripheralisation: their dependence on metropolitan areas; a lack of access to innovation, transportation and social infrastructure and networks; and the outward migration of the young and skilled workforce. These processes may be reversed by the availability of strong local governance and decision-making capacities, and the well-suited business policies of local enterprises.

Natasa Pichler-Milanović, Senior Researcher of the University of Ljubljana presented a lecture on the perspectives of Small and Medium Sized Towns in Central Europe. The results of several large-scale research (ESPON, INTERREG, etc.) demonstrate a shifting focus on cooperation, and more particularly, international cross-border cooperation encouraged by the EU would be a possible development alternative for cities' without central functions. This

alternative, however, would imply a simultaneous consideration of multi-level (EU, national and local) approaches and regulations.

Zoltán Pogátsa, Associate Professor of the University of West Hungary began his presentation by an evaluation of the Barca Report on the paradigm change and reform of the European Union. His criticism was centered on the political anomalies and deficiencies of social cohesion, emphasising that the anomalies were to a large extent responsible for the moderate convergence effect of funds. Despite all criticisms, the Barca Report played a non-negligible role in the transformation of Cohesion and Structural Policies.

Mihály Lados, Senior Research Fellow of HAS CERS Institute for Regional Studies gave a lecture on smart city models, their roots and modes of implementation, with a view on the adaptive opportunities and practices of small and medium sized cities. The smart cities concept aims to respond to global problems such as urban population growth and the increasing carbon-dioxide emission it entails, climate change and migration waves.

The first presenter in the Hungarian language plenary session was *János Rechnitzer*, Professor of Széchenyi István University, who began his lecture by reviewing the main phases of urban research performed by the domestic research community focusing on the role of small and medium sized cities in the transforming Hungarian urban network: research on large cities, the analysis of the urban network and functions, the urban system, space and society. The city as an object of scientific research is far from being exhausted, and the area to be explored remains vast in the field of governing the city and the metropolitan area, smart city concepts, city use, and further areas of research may extend to the role of human capital, culture, higher education, factors of creativity, new economic stakeholders and spatial linkages on urban development.

The presentation of Sándor Illés, President of Active Society Foundation and *Áron Kincses*, Deputy Head of Department of Hungarian Central Statistical Office titled „Migration, Settlement Networks in the Carpathian Basin” was based on 2001 and 2011 Population Census databases, whose results indicate that 1) The migration area of Hungary is continuously extending, with a maintained yet foreseeably declining predominance of the neighbouring countries. 2) The data assembled between the two Population Censuses support the thesis of the shifting role of Hungary from local to global migration. 3) The spatial distribution of foreign citizens is different from that of the Hungarian population with national scale effects significantly lagging behind the influence on their areas of preference (Central Hungary, border districts and Balaton region).

Edit Somlyódyne Pfeil, Associate Professor of Széchenyi István University gave a summary on the opportunities of efficient urban governance in light of EU requirements and the new strategic directions of the amelioration of public administration. The effort to comply with EU standards and achieving territorial cohesion might upgrade the role of small and medium sized cities outside metropolitan areas, however, they are encouraged to cooperate in order to create a polycentric structure based on reciprocity, or self-governing functional urban areas in order to achieve economies of scale and thus emerge as possible competitors of metropolises. This requires a reform of the current practice by implementing multi-level governance, adopting the place-based approach and organising the efficient cooperation between sectoral or territorial policies.

The closing speech during the plenary session was presented by *Ferenc Szilágyi*, Associate Professor of Partium Christian University, Director of PTKI who discussed the urban development of Partium and its cross-border urban connections. On the basis of the investigation of the fields of force in the proximity of the border it can be stated that along the major section of the common border (194 kms) the dominance of Romanian large cities (Arad, Oradea, Satu Mare) can be observed in the area of cooperations, while on a 141 km long section the predominance of Hungarian cities prevails (Békéscsaba, Debrecen, Szeged), and on the remaining section of 88 kms, neither of the two groups exert a significant influence.

The plenary session was followed by the ceremony of granting the awards founded by HRSA. The Pro Regional Science Award was granted by the unanimous vote of the general assembly of the Association to József Nemes Nagy, Professor of the Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Science, former Deputy President of the Hungarian Regional Science Association in order acknowledge his outstanding research, educational and school founding activities in the area of regional science. The Honorary Certificate was awarded for first 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 Béla Baranyi, Professor Emeritus of the University of Debrecen, Former Leader of the North Great Plain Division of HRSA, and Attila Korompai, Retired Professor of the Corvinus University of Budapest, former President of the Audit Committee of HRSA. The call for proposals of the Excellent Young Regionalist Prize was announced for the eighth time, which HRSA in collaboration with the Heads of the Division of HRSA granted to Balázs István Tóth, Senior Lecturer of the Faculty of Economics of West Hungarian University in order to recognize his valuable contributions to the advancement of regional science.

After the plenary presentation, the Annual Meeting continued in twelve thematic (one English-language) sections. A total number of almost a hundred presentations were delivered in the various sections:

- Theoretical and Methodological Questions of Urban Analysis (Chair: Tamás Dusek Professor, Széchenyi István University);
- Regional Innovation Systems (Chair: Attila Varga Professor, University of Pécs);
- Urban Development, Planning and Management, Public Services (Chair: László Faragó Professor, Senior Research Fellow, HAS Institute for Regional Studies);
- Urban Ecology, Climate Change, Smart and Sustainable Cities (Chairs: Imre Nagy Professor, University of Novi Sad and Richárd Ongjerth Managing Director, Hungarian Urban Knowledge Centre);
- Regional processes in the Partium (Chair: Ferenc Szilágyi Associate Professor, Partium Christian University);
- Urban–Rural Relations (Chair: János Schwertner President, Academic Society for the Development of the Micro-regions);
- Urban Sociology, Local Community, Territorial and Social Capital (Chair: Zoltán Csizmadia Associate Professor, Széchenyi István University);
- Small Cities and Declaration of New Towns (Chair: András Trócsányi Associate Professor, University of Pécs);
- Cities, Spatial Structures, Networks (Chair: György Csomós Professor, University of Debrecen);
- City Marketing, Culture, Tourism, Hungaricums (Chair: Gábor Kozma Associate Professor, University of Debrecen);
- Borders and Cities (Chair: Tamás Fleischer Senior Research Fellow, HAS Institute of World Economics);
- The Role of Small and Medium Sized Cities in Regional Development (Chair: Attila Korompai associate professor, Corvinus University of Budapest).

Presentations and photo albums are available on the website of the Hungarian Regional Science Association: <http://www.mrtt.hu/vandorgyules2016nagyvarad.html>