

diminishes. Consequently, the highly differentiated life chances between residents of cores and peripheries support the reproduction and enhancement of socio-spatial inequalities.

EU STRUCTURAL FUNDS FOR SMART GROWTH IN POLAND

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The importance of knowledge and innovation in the explanation of regional economic performance has progressively gained attention in both the scientific and the policy domains. Significant advances in economics in the last three decades (mainly the new growth theory) have highlighted that creativity and innovation are very important to achieving lasting economic growth. The Europe 2020 strategy move precisely in this direction by putting investments in knowledge creation at the core of a smart growth strategy. Smart growth means enhancing the role of knowledge and innovation as a driving force for economic development. Cohesion Policy, as the EU's main investment policy, is one of the most important tools to achieve the Europe 2020 goals, and Poland is by far the largest beneficiary of Cohesion Policy funding among member states and the vast majority of the country's regional development funding comes from EU budget. European Cohesion Policy is likely the largest of all development programmes whose objective is to promote the development of lagging regions and, hence, long-run convergence. Its effectiveness, however, has been scrutinized by scholars who have questioned its impact on growth.

The aim of this paper is to achieve two objectives. Firstly, it examines the smart growth concept and explains the challenges involved in applying this concept in less developed regions. Secondly, it aims to make a contribution to the debate on public intervention in this regard by analysing, at the regional level, the impact of EU structural funds on the smart growth in Poland. On that instance, the research questions, explored in this paper are as follows: "Is the concept of smart growth postulated by the European Union adapted to the less developed regions?", "Whether and to what extent EU funds contribute to achieving smart growth in Poland".

From a methodological point of view, the role of the EU funds is estimated using statistical analysis, mainly on the basis of a flexible regression discontinuity design (RDD), which allows for a fixed but arbitrary number of variables with which treatment interacts, thus determining its heterogeneity.

DIVERGENCE TRENDS IN SPACE AND TIME: RURAL REAL ESTATE MARKETS BEFORE, UNDER AND AFTER ECONOMIC CRISIS IN HUNGARY

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Real estate markets has crucial role in everyday life of Hungarian families. 9 of 10 families own their flats/houses and the major part of families' assets laying in them.

The real estate markets in a peripheral economy develop under the influence of West European processes in terms of financialisation, economic prosperity/crisis.

In country level, the geographical inequalities in real estate markets were strict before the global economic crisis (2008), however some index suggest, there were active and more prosperous areas in rural Hungary, as well. The direct effect of crisis result a "frozen" market including housing, real estate transactions and emergence of passive and less prosperous markets, in parallel the shrinking number

of active ones. While the role of rural areas were moderately decreased under the period of crisis (2008-2013), the new emerging period of real estate markets (2014-2016) resulted new level of inequalities, with increasing share of the capital city and second tier cities.

Our research tried to find the basic elements of the 'pre-crisis' high speed development period, and the roots of the new emerging 'post-crisis' years. Our investigation was highly concentrate on the role of the state in these two decades (1997-2016), the steps of the process leading to the sectoral crisis, the actions solving the problems of certain social groups, and the new policies supporting a new, dynamic period in real estate markets.

GEOPOLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE EUROPEAN PIPELINE NETWORK AND OF THE SUPPLY WITH FOSSIL ENERGY SOURCES

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The energy supply is a delicate issue of nowadays because it implies aspects of geopolitical, environmental and economic questions. Europe still not managed to reduce its dependency of fossil energy though the financing of the renewable energy sources is increasing. This fact still provides Russia a considerable political influence in Europe, but this power is shrinking because the modified European energy policy targeted a larger self-sufficiency. In the present two competing pipelines are in debate, which can play a considerable role in Europe` supply – namely the North Stream, and the South Stream. The North Stream is already working but is planned to be doubled. The Southern Stream had good chances since the Nabucco was abandoned, but the geopolitical insecurity in the Middle East and in the Black Sea region, the Russo-Ukrainian dispute and the clashing interests of the big energy companies hindered the construction of this pipeline. A special emphasis will be given to the interests of great powers and international corporations.

TOWARDS A BALANCED METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE: COMBATING THE “BACK DOOR” STATUS OF PERIPHERAL RURAL AREAS

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With urbanization cities become spatially, functionally but also economically interdependent with their surrounding rural areas. Even if the urban centres provide better job opportunities and good service delivery, their rapid expansion faces spatial limitations. Therefore, cities become reliant not only on the land but also the human as well as environmental resources of their surrounding rural territories. As a consequence, these spatial and sectoral flows result in linkages between the rural and urban territories, a process which requires a balanced and integrative approach in order to exploit the strengths and opportunities that rural-urban linkages can offer. Nevertheless, their interdependent relationship and synergistic effect (Andersson et al., 2015; Hamilton, 2014) are repeatedly neglected by their governance systems which constantly fail to involve local stakeholders from peripheral rural areas in the planning and development process of the metropolitan area. As a consequence, the peri-urban interface becomes the scene of marginalized local authorities which only function as a “back door” for the urban centre, serving this with various resources and space without benefiting from infrastructure developments, service delivery financial mechanisms or even active involvement in