

EDITORIAL

Opportunities of core and peripheral regions in Central Europe

Dear Reader,

It is a pleasure for the Guest Editors to introduce the new thematic issue of DETUROPE – The Central European Journal of Tourism and Regional Development. Our publication provides a selection of papers presented at the 18th Annual Meeting of the Hungarian Regional Science Association (HRSA) entitled Opportunities of core and peripheral regions for their sustainable future. The first paper in the current issue presents a thorough report on the scientific conference, prepared by the editors, Szilárd Rác and Ildikó Egyed.

Due to the large number of presentations (four plenary and 185 section presentations were given over the four days), HRSA offered participants three publication opportunities. In addition to the international journal DETUROPE, two others in Hungarian or English language, in the Hungarian scientific journals *Észak-magyarországi Stratégiai Füzetek* (Strategic Issues of Northern Hungary, published by University of Miskolc), and *Tér-Gazdaság-Ember* (Space-Economy-Society, published by Széchenyi István University, Győr). The papers were selected in three steps. After the HRSA conference, session chairs were requested to propose the best presentations for publication. In the second round, the submitted English language abstracts were revised by anonymous reviewers. The authors of the best eight proposals were invited to submit a manuscript in the subject of the thematic issue of DETUROPE: Opportunities of core and peripheral regions in Central Europe. The submitted manuscripts were reviewed by two anonymous reviewers. The accepted articles were revised and corrected according to the provided critical remarks.

The first original scientific paper addresses the issue of geopolitics – Central European opportunities of core and peripheral regions in a global and European perspective. This keynote lecture was given in the section entitled: Central Europe after historical burdens, facing new beginnings. The study of Professor *James W. Scott* examines the current state of Visegrád Group Geopolitics: “Illiberalism” and Positionality within the European Union. The Visegrád Four (Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) represent an important platform for macroregional cooperation within the EU. The author analyzes the shifts in the Visegrád Group’s identity as a regional integration platform and, in particular, links between Europeanization, ‘illiberal regionalism’ and new Central European geopolitical identity. This regionalism does not represent a coherent or stable Central European political project (see the

‘revolutionary’ Hungarian and Polish national conservative agendas versus the pragmatism of the Czech Republic and Slovakia). On the one hand – according to the researcher's conclusions – the V4 cooperation remains salient in order to prevent the political marginalization of its members. On the other hand (despite the troubling backdrop of illiberalism) European integration should be interpreted as an agonistic and contested process that offers space for a more heterocentric understanding of Europeanization and EU political community. This is a potential point of departure for moving towards a common European future.

One of the major challenges today is digitalisation and automatisisation. A significant part of transport is realized due to tourism motivations. Therefore, such disruptive innovations like automation in passenger transport might also affect tourism. In the second article *Márk Miskolczi, László Kökény, Katalin Ásványi, Melinda Jászberényi, Tamás Gyulavári and Jhanghiz Syahrivar* present an insight into the impacts and potential of autonomous vehicles in tourism. The study aims to identify the expected changes in tourism arising from technology, and the openness towards autonomous vehicle-based tourism services, based on a data collection completed among 671 Hungarian tourists. The empirical results have shown that tourists would be willing to give up control to the autonomous vehicles in a foreign environment, and hence, to pay more attention to the surroundings. The attitude analysis concerning autonomous vehicles provides a basis for further empirical research in social sciences and helps to prepare for the technology revolution for practitioners in tourism.

After global challenges the second group of papers examines socio- economic development in Hungary on various spatial levels. The paper of *Réka Horeczki and Ildikó Egyed* explores the small town development processes in Hungary. The paper also analyses the national development policy and the governance of small towns in Hungary. Small towns present a highly heterogeneous picture but play a quintessential role in the settlement network, concentrating one-third of the urban population. In many respects, the classification of small towns (with less than 5,000 inhabitants) as urban settlements is a mere formality. This is clearly demonstrated by the development funds of the recently launched Hungarian Villages Programme that have put these small towns on equal footing with the rest of the settlements with a population below 5,000 inhabitants.

Pál Szabó, Viktória Józsa and Tamás Gordos present the cohesion policy challenges of Hungary in the 2021–2027 EU programming period. The expanse of the study is remarkable due to its complexity. The main objective is to present the most important challenges at the member state level in a bottom-up and practice-oriented perspective. The researchers identified and studied three specific factors as a significant challenge for policymaking: the new NUTS2

regions (the capital city became a separate macroregion); the economic aspect of newly created territorial units (Economic Development Zones); the nature-focused aspect (management of surface water).

The paper of *István Finta and Péter Dombi* presents the practical experiences, regulatory principles and issues of the territorial delimitation of development policy in Hungary. Both at national and community level, the differentiation of specific territorial units is a key issue in development policy. Hungary has been operating and developing a delimitation system since the '90s, the elements of which can serve as a model, and can be well-utilized at the community level. The authors present the regulatory starting points and principles of spatial delimitation, the statistical methods used so far, the range of data used, and the problems that can be associated with the methods and data used so far. It can be defined as a basic requirement that the developmental classification based on statistical calculations and non-statistical methods should not conflict with each other.

The last paper in the special issue focuses on tackling the measurement of cross-border cooperation intensity. *Zoltán Pámer* presents an empirical example of the Hungarian-Croatian border and a transparent methodology on how the intensity of cross-border cooperation may be measured. In the first part of the paper, the author provides a brief overview of border studies and a summary of the evolution of European Territorial Cooperation. This refers back to the conclusions of James W. Scott. Strengthening local and regional elements of cross-border cooperation would indeed be of essential importance in recreating networks and addressing many border-transcending problems that the Visegrád Four states face.

The current issue is the 7th thematic issue prepared with the cooperation of DETUROPE and HRSA. The members of the Association – as previous or potential authors – hereby express their gratitude to the journal and particularly its Editor-in-chief, Dr. Kamil Pícha.

We hope that you will find inspiring ideas, research results or practical achievements in this collection. We wish you a good reading,

Szilárd Rác and Ildikó Egyed¹

Editors of the thematic issue

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