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**ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC REPORT**  
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## **I. Main duties of the research unit in 2016**

Basic research, as its public function, remained the core task of the Institute for Regional Studies (IRS). In the reporting year, the analysis of socio-spatial inequalities (poverty, marginalisation, territorial and social capital, trust, well-being), decentralisation, governance and cohesion policy, metropolitan development, regional development in Central and Eastern Europe, border research (neighbourhood policy, geopolitics, europeanisation, migration), rural development in Hungary (land, agrarian economy, polarisation), public employment, urban environment (smart city, city metabolism) and spatial theoretical issues were the key research areas. In addition, two large-scale research programmes, an NKFIH project and an FP7 research project were successfully completed.

To present its research results, IRS targeted the publication of four monographs, four textbooks, thirty international and fifty domestic scientific articles, circa a hundred book chapters and the continuous publication of *Tér és Társadalom* (Space and Society). The Institute undertook the organisation of fifteen international, twenty domestic scientific, ten popular and one cultural event. The West Hungarian Research Department of Győr celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of its foundation in the reporting year. This significant event was commemorated by an international scientific conference entitled *Cities and regions at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century* co-organised by the three founding organisations (HAS, the city of Győr and the county government of Győr-Moson-Sopron).

In 2016, the elaboration of project proposals imposed more burden on researchers than before, hindering and delaying in many cases personal career advancement and the publication of monographs and papers in top international scientific journals. In its new Mid-Term Strategy adopted in Spring 2016, the Institute indicated that a chronic shortage of academic funding notwithstanding, it demands a stronger personal commitment from its staff to achieving excellence and procuring supplementary funding in order to guarantee the financial bases of its network-based functioning. Thus, the Institute had to pay a considerable price for its intense and efficient project-related activities. During the reporting year, seven H2020, three ESPON and five small EU grant applications were submitted, producing three winning H2020 and two ESPON projects commencing in the reporting year. The Institute prepared new international research project proposals as well, three Horizon 2020 project proposals were submitted during the first months of 2017. Thus, the Institute was able to uphold its outstanding position among the East Central European regional scientific research units. The projects to receive funding were oriented at basic research: seven out of the sixteen research proposals submitted to NKFIH (National Research, Development and Innovation Office) were eligible for funding. The apparent scarcity of applied research projects is due, in part, to the grant schemes and in part, to the specifics of academic research.

## II. Outstanding research and other results in 2016

### a) Outstanding research results

#### Macroregional and cross-border research

The main scientific output of the FP7 project titled EUBORDERSCAPES *Bordering, Political Landscapes and Social Arenas: Potentials and Challenges of Evolving Border Concepts* in a post-Cold War World involving the cooperation of twenty-two partner institutions from seventeen different countries conducted between 2012 and 2016 was the comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the controversial and complex concept of borders and the evolution of effective border functions within and outside Europe in the post-Cold War period. The domestic implications of the research demonstrated that the processes emerging during the post-Cold War era not only impacted the evolution of scientific approaches but the basic structures of the nation as well: from its former status of the „West of the East”, Hungary as an EU and a NATO member state has evolved into being the „East of the West”. The introduction of the theory of the double Iron Curtain – surrounding East Central Europe from two directions since the end of the Cold War –, contributed to laying the groundwork for border research in the region and outlining future research directions as well. The project has strengthened the Institute’s dominant position in border research in the Eastern European area, inspired the drafting of a number of international project proposals on contemporary geopolitical and migration processes. The results of the researchers were published in numerous scientific papers, some papers were co-authored by foreign contributors. The results were disseminated in scientific papers (mostly in IF-journals), one edited volume, five book chapters, to be followed by the publication of further two book chapters and a journal article in 2017.

The four-year large-scale NKFIH research titled *New driving forces of spatial restructuring and regional development paths in Eastern Europe at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century* closing in 2016 examined multiple aspects of the transformation processes in Central Europe and provided a novel synthesis of Central and Eastern European regional development. The research explored various spatial impacts of economic sectors and the heterogeneous development prospects of metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. The limitations of post-socialist development models were highlighted as well as the inherent risks and relations of dependency, and a more in-depth exploration of alternative knowledge-based and sustainable development paths was encouraged. Contemporary problems related to institutional development and the dysfunctions of centralising development policies and institutional systems were also evaluated. Territorial cohesion will receive less emphasis in the future and the benefits of FDI flows are likely to decrease. According to our research results, an increased focus on bottom-up, place-based development approaches facilitating the more efficient exploitation of local/regional growth potential might provide a panacea to these problems. The basic conditions of the embeddedness of high value added economic activities and the development of knowledge-based growth paths are a more balanced spatial distribution of innovative performance and the effective decentralisation of economic and development policy. The research results will be published in a volume of studies titled *The Handbook to Regional Development in Central and Eastern Europe* published by Routledge as well as six further books, twenty-seven journal articles, forty book chapters, fifteen conference publications and three PhD dissertations.

## **Agrarian and rural research**

The large collaborative NKFIH project titled *Living from their Land: Agricultural Actors, Rural Development Trajectories and Rural Policies in Hungary* conducted by the Institute of Sociology, Center for Social Sciences of HAS between 2012–2016 provided the basis of the summary volume edited by Katalin Kovács lead researcher titled *Living from their Land: Polarisation in rural Hungary*. The case studies presented in the volume claim that the process of the reorganisation of land use and property relations defining the conditions and frameworks of farming has come to an end: most of the ownership rights of land, invested capital and assets have been reclaimed by their previous owners becoming top managers of successor companies or entrepreneurs. This group is basically constituted by the former leaders of public companies and agricultural co-operatives and those new domestic/foreign shareholders-managers who took over company leadership and are currently the main shareholders and landowners. Their dominant power position notwithstanding, they represent a unique subgroup of the protagonists. The end of the first phase of the transformation is indicated by the transfer of arable land to its present users or family members predominantly through purchase or inheritance, while restitution figured third in terms of frequency of occurrence, according to the survey.

Most of the case studies highlighted the shortage of arable land supply in the examined areas. The scarcity of land is a serious and multifaceted problem in each area, but its absence is most problematic in cases where the dominant land users are individual farmers and owners of small-to-mid-sized family farms who cultivate and live from the land (Szatmár region). The other pitfall is the pressure exerted by large farms jeopardising the survival of small farmers directly and indirectly (South-Transdanubian areas). Capital investment in land is widespread, yet it is most common on the Great Plain where the collusion between the political and landowner elite is apparent. The regional disparities of ownership and rental conditions of land use reflect the overrepresentation of large farms and small and mid-sized farms and land ownership relations in intermediate regions: in the Transdanubian regions, the share of private property in total agricultural land was an overall 35%, while on the Great Plain more than 50% of the total cultivated land area (54% in the south, 51% in the north), and in the Central and North-Hungarian regions, 43 and 41 percent were in family ownership in 2010, respectively.

The entrepreneurial holdings, – family farms and firms alike –, prioritise efficiency over employment, which explains the low employment capacity of the sector. The capitalist agrarian sector still contains a diminishing number of successor firms of former agricultural co-operatives which displayed a humane attitude towards employees experiencing post-transition crisis situations by keeping them. Employment growth is hindered by the lack of a qualified labour force: the shortage of state-of-the-art and high-standard skills deteriorates the development prospects of the sector to the same extent as the scarcity of land and capital. Public employment remains the sole alternative for the unqualified masses since, as a tendency, they remain cut off from the seasonal labour market due precisely to public employment, while Romanian, predominantly roma workers occupy their place. The seasonal labour market was fundamentally transformed during the past decade: non-roma seasonal workers of Hungarian nationality from Transylvania and the Lower Carpathians find higher-paying jobs in the Mediterranean countries of the European Union and in the United Kingdom; while the market niche is occupied by roma seasonal workers no longer exclusively of Hungarian nationality.

The volume discusses the issue of agricultural public employment extensively. The authors of the studies strived to maintain a neutral standpoint: while they highlight its contradictions, they also acknowledge the fundamental role of public employment in lagging rural areas. The positive results of Start Work Model Programmes centered on agricultural activities included the increased self-esteem and community adherence of public employees. The disadvantages include the possibility of remaining „stuck in” them since the training courses available for public employees do not foster integration in the open labour market, instead of preparing workers to access employment, they mostly encourage their autonomisation. The exclusive nature and generalisation of public employment programmes is also problematic since this specific labour market tool has erased every other alternative.

The research results were published by Argumentum Publishing House in a volume of studies edited by Katalin Kovács titled *Living from their Land: Polarisation in rural Hungary* as well as five international and 9 domestic scientific journals. A further eight manuscripts are currently under peer review, their publication is anticipated in 2017. Twenty-two presentations in international and 16 in domestic conferences contributed to a wider dissemination of the results.

### **Local government and urban research**

The monograph of János Rechnitzer titled *Territorial Capital in Urban Development – the Győr Code* became the first volume of the relaunched series *Studia Regionum* of Dialóg Campus Publishing House. The book discusses the development processes of Győr, one of the most successful agents of Hungarian modernisation. The monograph represents a novel experimentation in metropolitan research, it introduces the various development phases of the city by adopting a territorial capital-based approach – one of the most state-of-the-art theories in contemporary regional science. The volume contains a lengthy discussion of the post-regime change processes and their complex interrelations with economic, social and cultural capital. János Rechnitzer relies heavily on some previous results of his research group analysing the city’s potential transformation into an industrial district. In his quest to decipher the Győr Code, the author reviewed urban development ideas and master plans where he detected the occurrence of the examined types of capital, their evolution and forms of manifestation.

The volume titled *In search of the causes of the failure of decentralisation in Hungary* was published as a part of the *Studia Regionum* series under the editorship of Ilona Pálné Kovács. The volume draws heavily on the results of the NKFIH-research entitled *The guarantees of decentralisation in Hungary* which was successfully closed in 2015. The analysis of domestic municipal reforms enabled the authors to investigate the underlying causes of the declining role of local governments in the post-Socialist era, the failure of the successive reform initiatives and the factors behind the lack of resistance to the re-introduction of a centralised system of government post-2010. The book, in addition to presenting the results of the empirical research (survey by questionnaire, interviews, document analysis, content analysis of the parliamentary debate), investigates the changing domestic system of territorial governance from the perspective of its compliance with European reform processes. The volume offers a significant contribution to political science literature by laying the groundwork for reform decisions. The research concludes that in the past 25 years, the Hungarian system of territorial governance was unable to eliminate the deep-rooted causes of the almost uninterrupted centralising efforts of the Hungarian state.

## **Spatial Theory**

László Faragó prepared and submitted his academic doctoral thesis entitled *Spatial existence. General premises of social space theories* in which he examines and evaluates the multiple interpretations of space and outlines the contours of a novel theory of social space in the domain of spatial studies. The results provide a significant contribution to domestic spatial research, while certain elements of his theory – the social constructivist interpretation of space, the notion of autopoietic closed systems – enrich the international scientific discourses as well.

## **b) Science and society**

Thanks to its research units operating in five different Hungarian cities, IRS demonstrates an outstanding activity in the scientific and educational community of five regions and numerous settlements of the country. The Institute's four rural professional libraries are open to local researchers, professors, professionals and students. MADI Gallery operated by the Department of Győr is a renown exhibition site of geometric art where two exhibitions were held in 2016.

Scientific and popular events are organised at each research unit welcoming interested members of the local society. The Department of Kisalföld (Győr) and the Department of Körösvidék (Békéscsaba) of the Hungarian Geographic Society have co-organised 9 professional lectures at the institute's premises. As of the beginning of 2016, the Transdanubian Research Department of Pécs launched its Seminar Series which provided an arena for the discussion of ongoing research, manuscripts, research results, the exchange of ideas between experts, on seven consecutive occasions. The West Hungarian Research Department in collaboration with the Győr-Moson-Sopron county division of Hungarian Society for Urban Planning maintained the organisation of the Smart City event series in Győr, in the framework of which eight events have already taken place. Several research fellows of the Central and North Hungarian Department participated in the organisation of the joint event series of the Catalyst Network and Public Sociology Workshop which promotes synergies between civil, religious, private and public stakeholders and programmes in favour of disadvantaged individuals and aims to achieve a network-based organisation of parallel activities. The Socio-spatial inequalities horizontal research network organised two panel conferences, the representatives of several universities actively participated in the debate sessions.

According to the main conclusion of the NKFIH research project titled Living from the Land, land use practices serving social purposes – owing primarily to the Agricultural Start Work Programme – public work initiatives have become highly appreciated means of ameliorating the living conditions of people trapped in deep poverty, in many instances, providing their unique chance of escape. The outcome of the various programmes depends on the heterogeneous place-specific assets and operating conditions. Therefore, organising a forum for an exchange of experiences between researchers, leaders of settlements, public officials, social entrepreneurs and the civil population was deemed highly beneficial, with the title of Land use in the service of economic and social objectives – Public Employment, micro crediting, social cooperatives, market. The commentators agreed that the local programmes' main target was to prevent the outward migration of the local population from the settlements in question and to release those living in deep poverty from their decade-long immobility through the mobilisation of local resources. The presented cases demonstrated that in addition to local successes measured by a slight improvement of material welfare, a regeneration of a sense of community among the beneficiaries was also evident.

### **III. A presentation of national and international R&D relations in 2016**

#### **Domestic co-operation**

The journal *Tér és Társadalom* (Space and Society) published by the Institute plays a key role in the organisation of regional science in Hungary and across the border. *Tér és Társadalom* is an interdisciplinary journal engaged in the continuous dissemination of new results in regional science and spatial research, its four yearly issues, as a result of the coordinated work of the editors, are published at the end of each quarter. A new column titled horizontal research network was inserted from 2016 presenting the major horizontal research topics of IRS. In 2016, a membership request to the Web of Science database was submitted to be evaluated by 2017. The publication of *Tér és Társadalom* is financed by IRS (financial support and research work), research grants (HAS, National Cultural Fund), the Hungarian Regional Science Association and various sponsors.

The Institute has achieved a strong position in higher education in the domain of regional studies. The researchers of IRS are involved in 10 doctoral schools as lecturers or supervisors, they are core members in four of them. Their presence in doctoral schools is a strategic interest for the Institute both in terms of educating the upcoming generation of scientists and disseminating results.

In the framework of corporate relations a new co-operation was established with an FDI-funded bioethanol factory in 2016 targeting the evaluation of the impacts of the firm's implantation on the local economy and society and the extent to which it may contribute to enhancing the population-retaining capacity of rural territories. The evaluation demonstrated that the rural investment was able to reverse some previously negative tendencies, the positive socio-economic impacts of the operation of the factory were mediated through four different channels: by creating jobs that required a skilled labour force, paying the local business tax and helping to maintain the quality of local public services, creating a permanent and stable demand for a wide network of subcontractors and promoting future agricultural developments.

#### **International relations**

The researchers attended a large number of international conferences and contributed to significant research programmes and projects (H2020, ESPON, INTERREG). The Institute's partnership relations brought membership opportunities in several international consortia. Several new partnerships were developed in their framework contributing to the development of research projects covering practically the entire territory of Europe. In the framework of the bilateral projects of HAS, the collaboration was strengthened with Bulgarian, Czech and Romanian institutes. In 2016, a cooperation agreement was established between IRS and the Institute of Economics and Industrial Engineering, Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The international conference titled *New Ideas and New Generations of Regional Policy in Eastern Europe* attended by 150 participants from fifteen different countries contributed significantly to the Institute's international embeddedness. The discussions were organised in eight thematic sessions (socio-economic inequalities, regional policy, cohesion, sustainable development, migration, border areas, territorial capital, innovation in rural areas, smart city). The main objective of the two-day event in Pécs, in addition to discussing the most up-to-date results and pressing questions of spatial research, was to provide an opportunity for younger research fellows to strengthen and develop their international partnerships.

#### **IV. Brief summary of national and international research proposals, winning in 2016**

The most significant international and domestic projects receiving funding in the reporting year were as follows:

- The H2020 project titled *RELOCAL Resituating the Local in cohesion and territorial development* whose goal is to articulate, by using social scientific instruments, the growing demand towards European Cohesion Policy to adopt a more place-specific approach and acknowledge the fundamental role of the development of localities and local communities in the decreasing of socio-spatial inequalities. The research seeks to contribute to reshaping EU Cohesion Policy so that it might better reflect the principle of spatial justice and recognise the fundamental role of the local in development processes.
- The H2020 research project entitled *REPAIR Resource Management in Peri-urban Areas: Going Beyond Urban Metabolism* seeks to develop and test an eco-innovative, transdisciplinary open source geodesign decision-support environment in city regions and periurban zones of heterogenous size, development level and geographical position. The implementation of the system based on integrated, territorial-based, eco-innovative territorial development strategies may contribute to establishing optimal material flows and reduced waste flows in the examined cities.
- The H2020 project entitled *NATURVATION Nature-based Urban Innovation* undertakes the elaboration of a novel practice of implementing smart cities and communities by designing an urban development model called Nature Based Solution and an evaluation methodology adapted to the European urban network to be tested in several European cities and adapted in the framework of the Urban Research Innovation Partnership.
- The ESPON research titled *COMPASS Comparative Analysis of Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning Systems in Europe* is the first project to provide a comprehensive overview of European territorial planning systems since 1997 by performing a comparative analysis of the role of territorial planning in 39 countries with a particular focus on its relation to the 352 bn euro investment programme of the EU Cohesion Policy.
- The ESPON research *PROFECY Processes, Features and Cycles of Inner Peripheries in Europe* examines the processes and social specifics of Europe's inner peripheries which contribute to the growing distance of these areas from the main networks and centres of power as a result of the heterogeneous development cycles. The resulting marginalisation processes are manifest in a decline of economic performance and social well-being. The research, in addition to identifying the inner peripheries, seeks to elaborate strategic proposals in order to ameliorate the situation of these areas and reverse the impacts of the processes of peripheralisation.
- The NKFIH project titled *Governing urban marginality in shrinking cities* focuses on the (re)production of socio-spatial marginalisation characterising local public policies and declining cities in Hungary. The research analyses and describes the changing position of segregated neighbourhoods within cities; local policies leading to marginalisation, presents the changing social status of inhabitants of segregated neighbourhoods and the transforming relations of various social and ethnic groups.



- The NKFIH project titled *Role of access to health care in health inequalities in Hungary* seeks to evaluate the factors determining the varying access to health care and their spatial features. The research may contribute to health policy by providing proposals targeting the reduction of domestic health inequalities.
- The NKFIH project titled *Economic development role of Financial institutions based on performance and lending indicators: Territorial Financial Analysis* examines the impact of the wider network availability of domestic financial services structures on local economic development. The research, by comparing the saving cooperative sector with the commercial banking sector, evaluates the former in terms of performance, deposit collection and lending activity and its commitment to local economic development from the perspective of the opportunities and framework conditions inherent in integration. The research examines areas of operation and performance indicators that locally embedded banks may benefit from in their adaptive processes in the face of rapidly changing operating conditions imposed by the crisis.
- The objective of the NKFIH project entitled *Long-run regional economic forecasting: a model-based approach for Hungary* is to explore and apply the methodological possibilities inherent in long-run regional economic forecasting and develop a support database. Long-run forecasting requires that the research operate with multiple scenarios the elaboration of which will constitute a large share of the closing phase of the modelling work. The scenarios are two-tiered: on one hand, their purpose is to describe overall economic growth, on the other, to explain territorial inequalities.
- The NKFIH postdoctoral research project titled *Uneven development and labour in Hungary* investigates the impact of unequal development, crisis processes and state intervention on the world of labour during crisis periods in Hungary, by applying long-term historical research and reviewing the relevant literature. The research analyses the evolution of crisis cycles and territorial inequalities through the lens of labour as well as the measures undertaken by the state to tackle these inequalities.
- The NKFIH postdoctoral research titled *The main features and the typology of ethnoregionalist parties in Central and Eastern Europe* seeks to provide a synthesis of the less known ethnoregional parties by developing a detailed database and a typology of organisations and a summary of the specific features of Central and Eastern Europe and thus to open the way to future European-wide comparative analyses.
- The NKFIH postdoctoral research titled *Effect of State Interferences and Development Act on disadvantaged Roma Communities* examines the internal organisation of disadvantaged Roma communities in predominantly rural areas and their attitude towards development activities and organisations targeting the amelioration of the position of their communities. The central aim of the research is to evaluate the role of the various types of developments in shaping the self-sustaining and identification strategies of the members of disadvantaged Roma communities and to examine the embeddedness of state intervention and civic engagement in local power relations and their impact on ethnic discrimination.
- The Journal Publishing College of National Cultural Fund and HAS have both supported the publication of the journal *Tér és Társadalom* in the framework of a project.

## V. List of important publications in 2016

### BOOKS

- Kovács K (szerk.): Földből élők: Polarizáció a magyar vidéken. Budapest: Argumentum Kadó, 2016. 532 p. (ISBN:978-963-446-773-1) RKI-ELEKTRA
- Pálné Kovács I (szerk.): A magyar decentralizáció kudarca nyomában. Budapest; Pécs: Dialóg Campus Kiadó, 2016. 264 p. (Studia regionum; Dialóg Campus szakkönyvek) (ISBN:978-615-5376-83-2) RKI-ELEKTRA
- Rechnitzer J: A területi tőke a városfejlődésben: A Győr-kód. Budapest; Pécs: Dialóg Campus Kiadó, 2016. 270 p. (Studia regionum; Dialóg Campus szakkönyvek) (ISBN:978-615-5376-84-9) OSZK

### PAPERS

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- Péger É, Farkas J Zs, Kovács A D: Delimitation and Classification of Rural Areas in Hungary. ROMANIAN REVIEW OF REGIONAL STUDIES: JOURNAL OF THE CENTRE FOR REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY 12:(1) pp. 39-50. (2016) RKI-ELEKTRA
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- Stead D, Pálné Kovács I: Shifts in governance and government across Europe. In: Schmitt P, Well L V (szerk.) Territorial Governance across Europe: Pathways, Practices and Prospects. 278 p. London; New York: Routledge, 2016. pp. 21-35. (Routledge Research in Planning and Urban Design) (ISBN:978-1-138-86087-2) RKI-ELEKTRA
- Timár J, Velkey G: The relevance of the political economic approach: The interpretations of the rural in the migration decision of young women and men in an economically backward region. JOURNAL OF RURAL STUDIES 43:(February) pp. 311-322. (2016) RKI-ELEKTRA
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