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**ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC REPORT**  
**2015**

## I. Main duties of the research unit in 2015

Basic research constituted the main task of the Institute for Regional Studies (IRS), on one hand, in the framework of strategic research themes and the domestic (OTKA) and international (Marie Curie, FP7, ESPON) projects launched during the previous years, and it also extended to the execution of a number of short-term albeit large-scale research tasks.

In the area of applied research, the project titled *Long-term socio-economic forecasting for Hungary* required especially massive efforts. The objective of the project implemented by EEA Grants in the framework of the Adaptation to climate change programme was the production of data in the National Adaptation Geo-Information System, which contain territorial socio-economic indicators for Hungary with an outlook to Hungary 2050. These may contribute to more efficient planning in the adaptation to climate change at different administrative scales (national, county, district, settlement) in the future.

FP7 Cross-border research (EUBORDERSCAPES Bordering, Political Landscapes and Social Arenas: Potentials and Challenges of Evolving Border Concepts in a post-Cold War World) launched in 2013 has required the utilisation of significant capacities, in the framework of which our Institute was assigned with the task of analysing the processes of Eastern borders. Fundamental changes have occurred along the eastern inland and southern coastal borders of the EU since 2014, and also in various, mainly post-socialist countries as a result of the migration processes. The researchers of our Institute were engaged in the study of these research topics and areas during 2015.

In an attempt to define the future profile of IRS, the conceptualisation of strategic directions of theoretical research relying on a closer cooperation among research fellows has commenced. The debates, theoretical studies and publications in the area of socio-spatial inequalities, social capital and regional research in environmental science contributes to reinforcing the general research profile of IRS and the submission of large-scale research projects.

## II. Outstanding research and other results in 2015

### a) Outstanding research results

#### The investigation of spatial inequalities

Albeit studying socio-spatial inequalities has been a permanent engagement of IRS, new dimensions and approaches have emerged in the recent period. The Marie Curie-programme titled *RegPol<sup>2</sup> (Socio-economic and Political Responses to Regional Polarisation in Central and Eastern Europe)* investigates through various approaches the increasingly apparent peripherisation processes in Central Eastern Europe. One strand analyses the production and reproduction of centre-periphery relations from a discursive perspective, demonstrating the that peripherisation is not merely a result of various policies and practices producing material effects, but is also reproduced in public speech and various representations.

The primary objective of the ESPON-project *Territorial Dimension of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe* was the development of indicators at the appropriate territorial scales for mapping the spatial patterns of poverty and social exclusion and designing a more efficient

targeting of cohesion policy. The analyses performed in the framework of the research justified the substantial explanatory power of GDP per capita, especially in the realm of the spatial patterns of poverty and social exclusion in Central and Eastern Europe, which, however, is not the case in each of the advanced Western and Mediterranean countries, where the relatively high GDP per capita values may coincide with massive poverty and social exclusion. This is predominantly the case of countries where new and old forms of poverty and exclusion co-exist, or where the financial crash of 2008 has produced a long-lasting and deep economic recession, manifested in high unemployment rates, a shrinking public sector and a cutback on social expenditure. Albeit the indicator depicting the spatial characteristics of poverty is primarily designed to measure internal disparities detected in the various countries, it also has a good explanatory power at the European scale. Accordingly, the rate of the population experiencing income poverty is lower in Northern and Western European countries, while it is especially high in Southern and Southeastern Europe. Urban-rural disparities constitute the major divisive dimensions of internal disparities at the level of countries. In Northern and Western Europe, the majority of poverty is concentrated in urban areas, while in Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, poverty has a more rural „profile”. The patterns of exclusion representing social inequalities outside income poverty can be divided into four major subgroups according to the European analyses. On one hand, significant disparities in the risk of social exclusion can be detected between Western Europe and the former socialist countries, the Scandinavian area and Southern Europe along each investigated dimension. In addition, urban-rural disparities constitute divisive dimensions in this aspect, too, and exert heterogeneous impacts in various areas of Europe in a similar way to the spatial features of poverty.

The OTKA research entitled *Social and ethnic boundaries in local society* sought to identify the conditions and situations whereby individuals are regarded as Roma or non-Roma, worthy or „unworthy” poor within the group of financially deprived individuals identified as such by the local communities, to what extent the various groups generated by the various categorisations overlapped, and under what circumstances they demonstrated stability. The results were published in the volume *Fracture lines – poverty and ethnicity in rural spaces*. The research highlighted the diverse forms of poverty as a life situation, the structures maintaining and reproducing poverty, the mechanisms of creating and maintaining ethnic, economic and social boundaries between the poor and the non-poor and the various groups of economically disadvantaged people. The investigations targeted the various forms of social and spatial exclusion and their mechanisms of operation, the patterns of cooperations and conflicts among various social and ethnic groups. The disparities of access to institutions, services, development programmes and jobs illustrate remarkably well the heterogeneous position of financially deprived Roma and non-Roma families in the localities. Poor non-Roma families are generally regarded as an integral part of local society by the non-poor majority, which does not refuse solidarity with them. Roma people, on the contrary, in addition to difficulties and challenges stemming from poverty, are also confronted with a generalised racist discourse and practices and uncertain social membership.

The key objective of the TÁMOP-research entitled *Social conflicts, social well-being and security – Competitiveness and social development* was to demonstrate the interrelatedness between social well-being, competitiveness and security interpreted in a broad sense, and the underlying relationships. A multi-dimensional objective indicator of well-being adapted to domestic conditions was designed on the basis of internationally applied indicators which enabled the unravelling of the spatial structure of well-being at the same time. The values of

the settlement-level indicator clearly revealed the remarkably perennial spatial structure of well-being based on a Northwest-Southeast slope and a superseding hierarchy stemming from settlement size. The analysis of the database based on a large sample survey (6600) highlighted the outstanding role of material well-being among the objective indicators included in linear regression models in the degree and subjective evaluation of happiness, satisfaction and personal success, indicating at the same time the strong interrelatedness between subjective and various objective dimensions of well-being. A marked deficit was registered in the measured objective dimensions of well-being in lagging micro-regions. The inequalities also point to the existence of a marked settlement and development slope.

*A promising interdisciplinary cooperation has developed in the framework of a horizontal workshop on socio-spatial inequalities, which will hopefully be manifested in the implementation of numerous research projects. The research team has started research in the following areas: marginalisation can be interpreted as a complex socio-spatial process whose mechanisms can be grasped in the everyday practices of the population living in marginalised areas. The selected social practice-oriented approach enables a better understanding of the processes of marginalisation and its complex local and supralocal implications and provides a more nuanced picture of the transformation of rural areas. The institutional reforms „marketised” and subsequently depreciated the local resources of rural areas. Local entrepreneurs strived to find „market-conform” responses, however, these strategies generated new dependencies relating to various geographical scales and spaces, and, on the other hand, they aggravated the marginalisation of local society. The majority of the local population does not dispose of sufficient knowledge, financial and relational capital that would enable overcoming their marginal situation, either through migration, entrepreneurial activities or developing local collaborations. The cooperation among researchers has generated the emergence of new questions to be answered. Why and in what manner is the marginalisation of various spaces and areas reproduced? What new forms and mechanisms of marginalisation have emerged in urban and rural areas during the past two and a half decades? What are the distinct features of marginalisation in urban and rural areas? Why do domestic and European regional and urban policies targeting theoretically a socio-spatial equilibrium seem to be lacking efficiency? It is highly preferable to analyse the structural transformations from the aspect of their impacts on local actors, while a shift from the static interpretation of locality and the approach excluding the majority of society from the circle of actors is necessary. The role of scientific, professional and public discourses in the (re)production of spatial inequalities must also be considered.*

The ongoing research on *social capital* in the Institute focuses on one hand on the investigation of Hungarian society as a whole, and on the other hand, on narrower target groups. The average social capital scores in the case of Hungary presented in international comparisons reveal marked disparities when investigated through the lens of socio-spatial inequalities. This specific problem in Hungary has been largely unexplored by research. There is a lack of comprehensive large-sample surveys on social capital targeting various social groups and territorial scales, therefore, the conduction of such surveys constitutes a priority of the current research. The available results of social capital research focusing on development policy networks indicate the presence of unfavourable processes in these micro-and meso – level fields of actors as well which are presented by the literature as the negative consequences of social capital. Sectoral and development policy interventions enhance these negative impacts in several cases. The OTKA research launched in 2015 provides an excellent opportunity for the detection of the underlying causes of the already explored relations.

## **Development policy, institutional research**

The results of the researches conducted by our Institute indicate that tackling highly space- and socio-specific problems is impossible through the uniform recipes prescribed by EU funds. The funding policy of the period between 2014–2020 has become increasingly insensitive and under-resourced against the backdrop of local development problems and needs. While EU regional policy has not been able to generate significant results in the East European region either and is currently experiencing a crisis and seeking new paths under the aegis of competitiveness i.e. the dotation of advanced areas, and the majority of Eastern European countries, due to an excessive constraint of adaptation stemming from under-financement are unable to present their own solutions for tackling the problem of coherent crisis areas and lagging layers within their borders. Based on the official method of Cohesion Policy – the place-based approach – problems need to be tackled from the bottom-up via the optimal utilisation of local resources. However, the practice of spatial development does not reveal any attempt to attain this optimum either at the local or the territorial level, the majority of developments are based on hoc decisions and conducted along the actual funding and investment (FDI) opportunities. In most cases, the lack of information and instruments also hinders the provision of appropriate decision support, the local scale tends to be the weakest element in the system, while the lack of the integrated management of databases may also frequently serve as an obstacle.

The closing year of the OTKA research entitled *The guarantees of decentralisation in Hungary* saw the summary of the main results in the form of a volume of studies. The research highlighted the absence of strong public legal and political guarantees of the decentralised exercise of power in the domestic system of government. The commitment, system of values of the domestic political elite related to decentralisation and self-government has undergone a significant transformation since the regime change. Essentially, the external constraint of EU accession is no longer relevant, which was manifested in the adoption of EU principles of governance in shaping domestic government during the past decades. Local democracy and autonomy are not generally enforced and stable elements of domestic political culture. The research pointed out the weakening influence of independent experts in the elaboration of the reforms. These results forecast that a short-term remedy for the serious deterioration of the status of Hungarian territorial governance is highly unlikely.

## **Environmental research**

The results of environmental researches constituting a permanent component of the research portfolio of the Institute are disseminated through a monograph, a number of projects and volumes of studies. The researches highlighted that from the aspect of the institutional system, environmental interests and aspects are integrated into the plans merely as formal and obligatory elements, while the systematic downsizing and centralisation of the institutional system of environment policy over the past decades has further hindered their enforcement. Intensive research has been carried out in the field of renewable energies as well. An international conference titled *Perspectives of renewable energy in the Danube region* was organised on March 26–27, 2015 by IRS, in partnership with Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt and Wuppertal Institut, where the regional impacts of the paradigm shift in energy production in Central Europe were discussed. The conference and the volume of studies containing the presentations has pointed out that the post-fossil transition has by far not commenced, since the utilisation of those new technologies (solar, wind, geothermic) on

which the transformation of energy systems rely remains quite modest and is hardly measurable outside Austria and Germany. The presentations highlighted numerous factors transcending the familiar realms of technological development and natural assets. Several researchers emphasised the scarcity of energy supply related infrastructural and research collaborations in the area as well as the necessity of the integration of European energy supply systems and the extension of networks, and the need for demand-side energy management (e.g. smart systems/smart energy/smart grid) in the course of the transition to a low-carbon society.

The output of the project titled *Long-term socio-economic forecasting for Hungary* (NATÉR) listed among the main priorities included the construction of demographic models at the level of districts, land use models at the level of settlements and economic models at the level of counties, and the preparedness of the population for climate change was quantified by indicators derived from surveys by questionnaire. In addition to the data, the project provided an important methodological development enabling the incorporation of impacts of climate change into the socio-economic prognoses and the identification of the most pertinent territorial scales at which general claims concerning the future can be established in various fields. The results were presented in a volume of studies. The analyses revealed a hiatus between the incorporation of the aspects of socio-economic processes in modelling climate change and those of climate change in socio-economic prognoses. Consequently, the elaborated spatial models contained significant experimental calculations which may encourage professional dialogue on climate change and the relationship between society and the economy, and they also highlighted the detected spatial disparities in the adaptive capacity of society and the economy to respond to climate change.

### **Cross-border research, macroregional examinations**

*The results of the OTKA research entitled Examination of the political-geographical spatial-structures in the Carpathian Basin – Changes of systems, possibilities of cooperations, absurdities on the turn of 20–21<sup>st</sup> centuries* were published in an individual volume, among which the following statements deserve special attention. The organic development of the Carpathian Basin as a unit within the European Union is only envisageable only on the basis of the „joint legitimacy” of the involved states. While it can be declared sonorously that the Carpathian Basin is a „Hungarian internal economic area”, neither the Hungarian nation as a whole nor the reigning Hungarian governments can aspire towards its unilateral enforcement in practical life. However, the EU, the Danube-Strategy neighbourhood relationships, cross-border sub-systems and the cooperation between Hungarian settlement areas point towards a realistic possibility for the future. Spatial identity, the recognition of spatial coexistence and relationships are determined by two significant factors: the prospect of improved, higher living standards – Western orientation –, and ethnic-historical relations. While a high proportion of the respondents from more eastern and poorer countries were willing to share a common space with their western counterparts, this was not the case on a reciprocal basis (asymmetrical east-west relations). The standpoint of Russia is of special interest. While the majority of the population living in different states refuse their Eastern-European identification, only the Ukrainian questionees excluded the linkages with Russia. Central European identity is still regarded as a value, however, multiple small, „narrower Central Europes” have replaced the broad zone of the 1990s. In the case of a number of countries, the internal, mental division has a detectable influence on the results of elections. Electoral maps frequently serve as the indicators explaining „crypto-borders”, i.e. former political

boundaries, natural, ethnic borders or frontiers of other areas. In the framework of the research, surveys were conducted among students of Hungarian nationality in Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and the Ukraine. The heterogeneous spatial approach of the majority nation and the minority can be attributed to their altering ethnic, linguistic, identity backgrounds. Ethnic disparities can also be revealed in the evaluation of the internal structure of the countries under consideration, such as thinking in terms of historical regions or emphasising local or regional units in the geographical identification.

## **b) Science and society**

IRS, thanks to its extensive network, actively participates in the scientific and educational activities of various regions and cities and contributes to the grounding of local development policies. In Kecskemét, for instance, a demand for the foundation of a new higher educational institution and research institute was articulated, in whose activities our colleagues in Kecskemét will also participate. A shrinking number of commissions of research by local governments are still available which provide a direct contribution to local planning in the service of accessing EU funding.

The documentation centres and libraries at the various institutes are still available to serve the demands of local researchers, professors, professionals and students.

The book, under the editorship of Gyula Horváth titled „The portrait of the regions of Eastern and Central Europe” was published at the end of 2015 in the framework of the OTKA research entitled New driving forces of spatial restructuring and regional development paths in Eastern Europe at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Its objective is to present the specifics and main economic, social, and spatial structural characteristics of the 65 NUTS2 regions of East Central European countries. Its mission is to provide useful information for experts interested in economic relations, chambers of commerce and industry, professionals in development policy and public administration with an interest in the Central European space and university students alike.

Conferences and debates which are open for interested members of local society are organised at each research unit on a regular basis. 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.

MTA MADI Gallery operated by the Department of Győr is a renown exhibition site of geometric art where two exhibitions were held in 2015.

West Hungarian Research Department, the Győr-Moson-Sopron county division of Hungarian Society for Urban Planning, in collaboration with the Regional and Spatial Development Working Committee of Regional Centre of the HAS (Veszprém) organised a conference on November 10, 2015, with the objective of organising professional discourse on the concept of smart cities, exploring the attitude of the region’s large cities towards this subject and also facilitating an exchange and sharing of ideas. In addition to researchers’ presentations, the cities of county status of Dunaújváros, Győr, Sopron and Veszprém presented their ideas on the smart cities approach together with their relevant future plans and undertakings.

The project aiming at forecasting the long-term socio-economic development path of Hungary promoted dialogue between science and society directly. The results contribute to more efficient planning of adaptation to climate change at the various territorial scales. The tasks

related to dissemination undertaken in the project facilitated a direct contribution to the preparations for climate change, enabling us to access a wide range of academic actors and public policy decision-makers during the opening and closing events (130 participants), via 6 published newsletters, 27 relevant conference lectures, and the volume of studies summarising the project's results. The results of the project are accessible at the homepage of the Institute.

### **III. A presentation of national and international R&D relations in 2015**

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

The Institute began to develop professional partnerships focusing on smart cities with actors such as the László Rajk Special College of Corvinus University (professional grounding and realisation of the Smart City Summer University in the frame of the 10th Central European Conference of the Special College), the József Antall Knowledge Centre (request of presentation in the framework of the panel of EU–China Cooperation on Sustainable Development with Special Focus on Smart Cities in Brussels), the Smart Technologies research team of János Szentágothai Research Centre of the University of Pécs and BME Federated Innovation and Knowledge Centre. Partnership has intensified with the Hungarian Society for Urban Planning as well. The Institute of the Division of Győr-Moson-Sopron county of the Hungarian Society for Urban Planning has been re-established at the Department of Győr which, in collaboration with the Department, has launched a smart city event series on a monthly basis.

The journal *Tér és Társadalom* (Space and Society) published by the Institute has become a major forum of the profession and the main organiser of regional studies in Hungary. In 2015, out of the 71 authors publishing in the journal, 35 were members of various universities and colleges, 28 were employed by IRS, the chief owner of the journal. The journal also published articles by authors from domestic and international academic departments.

#### **International relations**

The Institute's research fellows have demonstrated a remarkable activity in terms of attending international conferences, and at the level of the institute, in the form of participation in research projects. Owing to the previous personal and institutional relationships, IRS has received numerous invitations to international consortiums, amongst others, in the framework of five H2020-projects, with one winning proposal. Demand for the participation of the Institute's researchers in international programmes is especially high in the domain of research with an environmental and sustainability focus or targeting planning and development policy in the Central Eastern European area. The team of Kecskemét has already joined the international network *Spa-ce.net* focusing on regional research, which enabled participation in the elaboration of a new Horizon 2020 project.

Jack Engwegen, the Dutch Director General of the DG Regio Department for Hungary, and Norbert Vincze, the Hungarian expert of the same Department of DG Regio were invited to the Department of Győr on May 11, 2015. The evaluation of R&D projects of the previous programming cycle and future R&D project opportunities in the West Transdanubian Region was undertaken in the framework of a workshop where territorial partners were also invited.

At the annual November conference in Brussels of the international group POLIS federating sectoral cooperations between local governments in the domain of transportation, partnership were established with the Martens Center and the leader of the Chinese Smart City Program. In the framework of the Smart City Coaching Pilot Training undertaken between November 30 and December 3 in Graz, relationships were established with participants of the SMACC project implemented through the support of Erasmus+ program: StadtLabor Graz (Austria); NHL University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands); Neurosubianco (Italy); Parthenope University of Naples (Italy); Regional Agency Alma Mons di Novi Sad (Serbia); Militos (Greece).

The Institute has increased its activities in co-operations with universities and research units of the Visegrad countries and is constantly gaining new partners.

In 2015, a number of academic bilateral co-operations were concluded. There are plans for the continuation of the multiannual research focusing on local developments partially in the framework of a new bilateral programme, and partially through funding from future H2020 projects. The bilateral project proposal targeting the renewal of the Romanian-Hungarian framework programme focussing on the spatial development role of regional centres has been submitted, and researchers are also seeking the possibilities for the extension of the research cooperation. The H2020-project proposal elaborated jointly with the University of Iași was rejected in the first round, yet on the basis of its positive evaluation, it is likely to be submitted again during the next year.

#### **IV. Brief summary of national and international research proposals, winning in 2015**

The capacity-intensive preparation of a number of large-scale consortium projects has commenced during the reporting year. During 2015, five H2020-project proposals were submitted with the participation of IRS, including one winning proposal (the contract is under elaboration) and two further H2020 and three ESPON projects were also submitted. The submitted, winning and contracted projects in the reporting year were the following:

- The project entitled *Long-term socio-economic forecasting for Hungary* in the framework of EEA Grants Adaptation to climate change programme contributed to adaptation to climate change through forecasting the long-term socio-economic development path of Hungary (up to 2050). The results will be integrated into the National Adaptation Geo-Information System (NATÉR).
- *The project targeting the elaboration of the model for surveying the local profitability of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures* commissioned by the Hungarian Energy and Public Utility Regulatory Authority elaborated a model which, by analysing data provided by local governments (the utilisers) indicates, in the case of each group of renewable energies, whether the given project and investment is rentable in terms of its anticipated costs and benefits.
- *The OTKA project entitled The role of the domestic sector of medium-sized companies in the territorial competitiveness of industry* investigates the role of medium-sized companies in territorial competitiveness. The limitations of the prevailing development models in Central European industrial development with the attraction of FDI as their

basis have become manifest in the course of the new economic crisis, and improved territorial competitiveness requires an increased promotion of the development of domestic enterprises in developed and lagging areas alike.

- *The OTKA project entitled „The relations of trust and governance at the local level* explores the relations between good governance and trust through conducting empirical analysis based on a self-constructed model applied in the micro-regional context of Hungary.
- The aim of the *OTKA project entitled Contemporary spatial theoretical perspectives in a Central Eastern European context* is the reinvigoration of Hungarian academic discourse in the field of the spatial sciences by contributing to international theoretical-conceptual debates “from within” the CEE empirical context. The overarching aim of the project is to broaden the horizon of scholarship by facilitating the acceptance and adaptation of internationally established knowledge in the Hungarian context.
- IRS participated in local and spatial planning in the framework of a number of projects in 2015. Of outstanding significance are the elaboration of a *District plan for the equality of opportunities* for the districts of Mosonmagyaróvár and Tét; the *supervision of the strategic programme of Zirc and the preparation of a new document*; and the elaboration of *Integrated Settlement Development Strategies* for the districts of Budapest and the district centres of the Central Hungary region.
- 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 2015

### BOOKS

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