

Spatial inequalities in the context of success in Hungary

Our analysis focused on the municipal-level dynamics of spatial inequalities in Hungary. It was based on local GDP estimations compared to the EU average. This approach can be explained by the importance of GDP as the main indicator of European cohesion policy and our aim to evaluate the Hungarian spatial development processes in a European context. As main contribution, a more refined picture compared to the NUTS-2 or NUTS-3 level analyses should be emphasized. In European context all the 19 NUTS-3 level regional units outside the capital city can be regarded as underdeveloped or peripheral: their GDP per capita values are under the EU average (mostly under 75% of it) during the examined period. But our analysis demonstrated that there are some higher developed islands beyond the administrative borders of Budapest as well. It also revealed a colourful patchwork of GDP convergence with the predominance of municipalities getting really closer to the EU average. However, particularly the convergence pattern of higher developed larger cities shows that the success of the chosen economic development model is largely depending on the global turbulences (many cities showed convergence only in the second decade, after the economic crisis). On the other hand, the case of Győr (having convergence only in the first period) regarded as one of the most successful cities of Hungary might demonstrate the limitations of this model often connected with the so-called middle-income trap of the factory economies.

Current analysis discovered a definite convergence on the municipal level inequalities of economic power (decomposed and estimated GDP). This convergence process is indicated according to the European averages. However, the trend of convergence has tended to slow down within the country and inequalities have begun to slightly increase again. Besides of this, the spatial development structure of Hungary is expressively fixed with segregated central and peripheral zones.

The conceptualisation might serve as a basis for identifying new growth paths in peripheral regions (both in growing urban and rural areas) in the post-pandemic world used for challenge-oriented local development.

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