

PROJECT CLOSING REPORT (FINAL REPORT)

New spatial disparities after the global crisis

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1. Background and project overview

The research project was aimed at delivering new scientific findings on some topical academic issues that are strongly related to new social and economic disparities emerging after the 2008 global crisis. My plan was to question some globally dominant views on, and interpretations of, spatial disparities in the post-crisis period through pointing out theoretical and methodological considerations as well as empirical examples (mainly from post-Communist countries) they are not compatible with. The first goal was to identify the major theoretical and methodological aspects along which the research of urban inequality can be reconceptualised in order to make it fit the new sociospatial processes in urban regions, which result in new kinds of urban inequality while also reshaping and transforming, yet not resolving, formerly existing ones. As second objective, I wanted to confront with internationally dominant theories the contemporary trends of regional development inequalities, with a special focus on post-Communist countries as well as China in the process of transition to a market economy. By doing so, my major aim was to reveal the serious weaknesses of mainstream theories in post-crisis contexts outside North America and some core economies of the Eurozone. Thirdly, given the crucial role scientific concepts play in shaping economic and social policies and, consequently, spatial disparities as well, the project was to investigate new disparities in global scientific life. Here the main point was to scrutinise the uneven access of national and local academic circles to the global flows of knowledge production, their unequal capacity to shape international scientific research on disparities, and the geographical factors of access to knowledge production, dissemination and internalisation in general. The project was thus expected to result in novel contributions to the international research of these issues, and to promote post-Communist perspectives from outside the leading Anglophone centres in inequality research.

2. Implementation of the research project

My initial goal, as it was outlined in my original research proposal submitted in April 2016, was to carry out the research project in 12 months between October 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. Finally, I managed to fully accomplish my project one month earlier, actually delivering more publications and conference papers than I undertook in the detailed research plan. Therefore, in 2017 I submitted an application to Professor Dr. Attila Demény, President of the Council of Complex Environmental Sciences at NKFIH, in order to gain allowance to closing my project on August 31, 2017. This meant I waived the salary for the last month (September 2017) that was included in the original budget accepted by NKFIH. An official allowance to these changes was also a requirement for becoming eligible to start a different research project in September 2017, funded by the New National Excellence Programme. My application to Professor Dr. Demény was officially accepted.

3. Main results of research

In line with the three main objectives that were set in '1. Background and project overview', the project has delivered the following results:

1. It has analysed and synthesised various strands of academic literature on spatial inequality in general, and urban inequality in particular, in order to reveal shortcomings which should be handled to adopt urban theories and methods to the new realities of urban inequality after the crisis. The research has identified normative debates and aspects, both in the academia and beyond, that have mainly emerged with regard to spatial and social inequality only since 2008. It also investigated the main changes of the urban condition after the global crisis and consequent social problems and financial austerities. Finally, in the intersection of both issues, the research identified those aspects that should gain special attention in contemporary urban inequality studies and, employing the example of creative cities, presented the ways these aspects can be introduced into research practice.

2. Studies on global inequality have been mushrooming since the global crisis. These works, however, are still predominantly based on experience in Anglophone countries. They are also strongly influenced by concepts of (global) inequality and development, as well as corresponding analytical methods, that emerged in the Cold War context of much more rigid state-spaces and late Fordist ways of economic and social organisation. My research results underlined important issues with regard to global inequality research in general, and to China as a new global player in particular:
 - (i) On the one hand, inequality studies with a firm economic focus, which constitute the international mainstream, do not and cannot reveal the considerably increasing level of development in some basic social issues, especially health and education, which many less developed regions of the world have showed up in the last decades, both before and after the global crisis of 2008. Therefore, they unintentionally hide several positive tendencies, namely a bunch of social issues where global disparities are declining.
 - (ii) On the other hand, studies on new global disparities tend to concentrate on global averages instead of carefully scrutinising deviations and individual cases. They are also prone to 'methodological nationalism', i.e., where the focus on national level trends (mainly statistical data) hinders an understanding of regional and especially local inequalities embedded into global processes. These misleading, even if unintended or unconscious, premises result in that economically focused studies confirm some global convergence in the last 10 to 15 years, but they do not reveal that excluding China from the datasets results in that this convergence vanishes. Although the massive economic growth of China is unquestionably a remarkable achievement, my analysis shows there is hardly any positive trend for the remaining part of the 'developing world' or the 'Global South' in sense of *economic* disadvantage. My results also stress that even the declining trend in global *social* inequalities hides several countries and country groups, which do not follow the global trend and do not get closer to the global average, either. In other words, global development programmes that indeed seem successful in many countries, still tend to let others lag behind. Hence, a reconceptualisation of such development projects and their more conscious adaptation to variegated local contexts is necessary in every case.
 - (iii) The remarkable economic growth of China since the beginning of economic reforms in the late 1970s, which had a visible impact on global inequalities as presented above, is perceived by several analysts, scholars and decision-makers as the result of well-functioning policies issued by the consecutive Chinese governments. Thus, these policies are often advertised as good examples, which can be copied by other national governments with a realistic chance of comparable success in terms of growth. Such views have become especially widespread after the global crisis, with many national governments looking for alternative solutions in order to stimulate the economy after several years of decline and slow growth. My research revealed, however, that the success of Chinese policy measures is inseparable from the specific, and from the Chinese perspective very fortunate, global economic context, in which the economic reforms were launched, and from the special demographic situation of the country between the late 1970s and the late 2000s. Therefore, several decisive components of the Chinese economic policies are either impossible to adapt in most countries of the world or they could not result in comparable success for different local circumstances. In consequence, such policy suggestions, although much popular in many places, including East Central European countries, are often based on false analogies and they are fundamentally unable to promote the kind of growth in the global peripheries and semi-peripheries that would be a necessary prerequisite of decreasing global economic inequalities even beyond China.
3. In my project I analysed new disparities in global academic life employing the example of human geography as discipline in post-Communist East Central European countries, with a special focus on Hungary. A main result is that rapidly increasing internationalisation, a main engine of which is reducing state funding due to the global crisis, has complex impacts on local scholarly practice. This impact is neither one-sidedly 'good' or 'bad', but this shift provides several new and actually accessible opportunities whereas it increasingly exposes academic staff and institutions outside the Anglophone global core to neoliberal funding, employment and research practices, sometimes even more harshly than in the centres of global knowledge production. Yet, the positive and negative consequences of this process very unevenly concern individual scholars, especially in terms of age and international experience. Hence, although the global crisis has resulted in new forms of academic inequalities that can be detected on the national scale as well, it produces the most massive disparities not

between national scientific communities but within them, at lower levels, especially those of individuals and institutions.

4. Publications, conference papers and other scientific outputs

The research was expected to produce articles in peer-review international journals as well as book chapters in titles of internationally acknowledged publishing houses, the total quantity of which was planned to achieve the number of four. Besides, the project was expected to result in two presentations at scientific conferences, at least one of them at a high-prestige international congress. Some major findings were planned to be published in at least one journal article or conference paper in Hungarian, which was expected to promote the dissemination of findings to audiences beyond the academic circles of geography.

The above goals were fully accomplished during the project, and the actual quantity of publications and conference papers exceeds the numbers that were targeted in the research plan. I published two papers in peer-review international journals (one with impact factor), and two book chapters in edited volumes published by Routledge and Palgrave Macmillan. I was author or co-author of two articles in Hungarian. All these publications have already been released and they are accessible either in open access online platforms or in books that can be purchased online. Furthermore, I gave a total of five papers at academic conferences, including three in the United States (at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers and one of its pre-conference meetings), one in Germany and one in Hungary. I also held two popular science lectures in topics related to my research in order to contribute to disseminating my results beyond the academic sphere as well, and have been disseminating since then my major findings in various bachelor, master and PhD courses at the university, in both Hungarian and English (for foreign students).

NKFI funding has been properly indicated in all publications, including grant ID of the current project.

The detailed list is as follows:

Publications in English

- Gyuris, F. (2018). Geographies of development in the twenty-first century. In M. W. Solarz (Ed.), *New Geographies of the Globalized World* (pp. 30–53). Abingdon; New York: Routledge.
- Gyuris, F. (2018). Problem or solution? Academic internationalisation in contemporary human geographies in East Central Europe. *Geographische Zeitschrift*, 106, 38–49.
- Gyuris, F. (2017). Urban inequality: Approaches and narratives. In U. Gerhard, M. Hoelscher & D. Wilson (Eds.), *Inequalities in Creative Cities: Issues, Approaches, Comparisons* (pp. 41–76). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gyuris, F. (2016). Freytag Tim, Jahnke Holger, Kramer Caroline (2015), Bildungsgeographie. *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft*, 158, 406–407.

Publications in Hungarian

- Csanádi, M. & Gyuris, F. (2018). Átalakuló pártállam és egyenlőtlen túlfűtöttség Kínában a globális válság idején [The transforming party state and uneven overheating in China during the global crisis]. *Tér és Társadalom*, 32, 50–75.
- Gyuris, F. (2017) A kínai gazdasági csoda okai és korlátai [The Chinese economic miracle: reasons and limits]. *Földrajzi Közlemények*, 141, 275–287.

Conference papers

- International perspectives on leadership in the history of geography.* (Invited speaker.) Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers. Boston (Massachusetts, USA). 5th April 2017
- Post-transition and post-crisis shifts in geographies in post-Communist contexts: A Hungarian perspective.* Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers. Boston (Massachusetts, USA). 5th April 2017
- Spatiotemporal fixes, uneven geographical development and „actually existing socialism”. An Eastern and Central European perspective.* Development Geographies Pre-Meeting Conference. Clark University, Worcester (Massachusetts, USA). 4th April 2017

Geography of the economic crisis: the case of China. 2nd “Day of Lectures on Geography”. Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest. 14th March 2017 (in Hungarian)

Does more history make human geography more relevant? An early 21st century perspective from Hungary. New Cultural Geography XIV: Priorities, Irritations, Relevance: What Is To Be Done? Bayreuth University (Germany). 26th January 2017

Popular science lectures

The impact of politics on the geography of the economy – in China. ELTE Eötvös József Collegium, 5th Talent Camp, Budapest. 24th January 2017. (in Hungarian)

Economic growth in China and the limits to its sustainability. Tiszazug Geographical Museum, Tiszaöldvár. 11th January 2017. (in Hungarian)

Results of the project are relevant not only in academic sense, but they can be utilised in urban planning as well as the elaboration of national economic and academic strategies.

Budapest, July 13, 2018