

Barraí Hennebry

Dynamics and spatial polarisation of rural regions in Europe. An economic investigation

Summary of the doctoral dissertation

In the work, the author deals with the problem of the dynamics of development and spatial polarisation of rural regions in Europe from an economic perspective. It is an important cognitive issue, and the research results may be useful in the implementation of the regional policy of the European Union. The work was created as part of the RurAction project (Horizon 2020), which largely defined its substantive and spatial scope as part of a specific "division of labor" between project participants (*early-stage researchers*).

The aim of the study is: (1) determine the degree of spatial polarization, (2) identify the factors which contribute to spatial polarisation, (3) attempt to answer the question: how external shocks (e.g. economic recessions, such as the financial crisis of the years 2008-09) contribute to an increase or decrease in polarisation, in other words: how resilient are rural regions.

The aim of the work is achieved through the following three groups of detailed questions:

1. What are the disparities in the level of development between rural regions in Europe? What is the trend over time? Can convergence be observed? What are the most important determinants of economic growth in rural regions?

Searching for answers to these questions, the author uses selected theories and methods of economic and spatial analysis, including in terms of dynamics.

2. What is the 'structural strength' of rural regions and how has it changed over time? What socio-economic features define it?

In the study of the above-mentioned issues, the author goes beyond simple, one-dimensional indicators (such as GDP per capita) and analyses the more complex issue of 'structural strength' of rural regions by constructing a composite index.

3. What is the economic resilience of rural regions, i.e. how did they respond to the global financial crisis of 2008-09? What are the socioeconomic characteristics that contribute to increasing or decreasing resilience? Can it be assumed that there is a link between resilience to the 2008-09 financial crisis and resilience to the economic crisis related to the Covid-19 pandemic?

In addressing the above issues, the author analyses the nature of the impact that external shocks (such as the 2008-09 financial crisis) may have on the growth path of rural regions and in which regions it is most pronounced.

Throughout the work, the analysis is carried out on two spatial scales: pan-European and selected European countries. The results of the dissertation fill a gap in the research of rural areas in Europe by addressing topics that have not previously been of wider interest to geographers and economists in regional studies (e.g. proposing to use Petrick's game theory approach as a conceptual model for analysing neo-endogenous rural development or undertaking a study of the resilience of these areas). At the same time, they can be the basis for comparisons with the results of other works created as part of the RurAction project.