

5th ERSA Winter Seminar of Regional Science – Fruitful and Cosy

It is my great pleasure to be writing this short personal reflection of the 5th ERSA Winter Seminar of Regional Science which took place from 11th to 14th March 2015. Since this was my first Winter Seminar ever, I really had not known before what to expect. Of course, being a social scientist, I carried out vigorous investigation and both quantitative and qualitative analysis prior to the event. This was to be later compared with my personal observation and collection of data. All people from the representative sample whom I asked to comment and reveal some intriguing facts about the seminar said that it is a rather smaller but nevertheless an interesting event with a cosy atmosphere in the field of regional science. Even the official mission statement said that the main objective is to bring creative academic debate on current issues of regional science and practice of regional policy in an attractive environment and relaxed atmosphere. So let me briefly go over the event and provide some hard evidence to either confirm or refute this rather challenging hypothesis.

As a specialist in the field of public administration and public policy, I considered it a bit of a challenge to fit my paper into one of the set themes. However, I was encouraged by my colleagues to try it nevertheless. After all, it is almost impossible not to fit into one of the topics and themes which can also cut across: Agglomeration and Industrial Clusters; Creative Industries, Creative Cities and Regions; Evolutionary Economic Geography; Entrepreneurship and Innovation; European Cohesion Policy; Globalization and Regional Development; Local and Regional Development Strategies and Policies; Regional Labor Market and Migration; Urban Development and Urban Change.

In September 2014 I attended the CERS (Central European Conference in Regional Science) - a major regional science event not only in terms of Slovakia but also internationally. Being now able to compare both regional science events in Slovakia, the ERSA Winter Seminar undoubtedly reaches the same scientific quality but is an event of a much lesser scale. Perhaps most importantly, the Seminar was as before held in the High Tatra Mountains – the jewel of Slovakia. The seminar venue was at Štrbské Pleso – one of the key ski and tourist resorts. Both the hotel and social activities were superb.

25 participants, 18 presentations, 12 universities, and 5 countries being represented, signified true regional and international diversity. In terms of topics of presentations, we have seen a wide range. Be it “Regional Innovation Systems” (Slavka Klasova), “Endogenous agglomeration externalities” (Andrzej Cieslik) or a more theoretical oriented “Limits of correlation analysis” (Martin Alexy, Marek Kacer) – they all broadened my knowledge. Also, having been to a number of conferences and seminars delivered in English, I was very pleasantly surprised by the high command of English that all presenters at the ERSA Winter Seminar had.

If I may choose the highlight of the seminar, it would be the keynote lecture by professor Christoph Weiss (Professor of Economics at the Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria). He delivered a brilliant, perfectly timed presentation on the topic of “Information and Price Dispersion in Space: Theory and Evidence”. We all learnt that science can bring new significant results also in a topic popular among the general public such as volatility of petrol prices at petrol stations. Although I had no background in this kind of research, mainly thanks to the selected research object, I was able to easily follow the presentation and the vast amount of work which was behind it.

Last, I would like to thank the organising committee, Ms Valeria Szitasiova, Mr Stefan Rehak, and Mr Miroslav Sipikal, for organising such a lovely and scientifically fruitful event.

Oh, I almost forgot. The hypothesis was definitely confirmed!

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