

Pecs 2022 Epainos award speech by Katarzyna Kopczewska

Being a young researcher is quite a unique state – you need to prove that your research is worth attention, you have to show that walking new paths is as interesting as the race on old beaten tracts, and you have to face the criticism of more experienced researchers. But, you can also be awarded for your effort, with a prize which is unavailable for older scientists – with Epainos prize.

This year, the EPAINOS jury also had a tough choice, which of the submitted papers is the closest to the high bar in this competition. Probably many young scholars are now thinking, what is the key to success. The answer is only seemingly simple. A jury in its search for the best paper, looks for the balanced composition of theory, methods, data analysis, research questions and policy implications. We look for novelty, which will be well-grounded in existing state-of-art of regional science and urban studies. We also look for an interesting story as well as if the paper can be published soon.

This award is very prestigious, as *ex ante* - it is usually the first award the young scholars get, while *ex post* - Epainos awards go to researchers who later are invited for the key-note speeches or are our community leaders.

In this 24th edition of Epainos, there were 11 competing papers, each reviewed by distinguished scholars and Epainos committee, which consisted of: our chair - Frank van Oort, editor of Papers In Regional Science - Daniela Constantin, editor of REGION - Francisco Rowe, two fixed members - Michael Wyrwich and Patricia Melo, and myself - Kathy Kopczewska, acting as the secretary. I also wanted to thank all involved scholars who supported the Epainos and Young Scientists Sessions with their reviews and recommendations in the middle of the summer holidays.

This year we had a challenging task. We went through all the papers – the ones with very advanced and sophisticated methods and novel questions but lacking the theory behind, or oppositely, deeply immersed in literature with just replication study onboard. However, the Epainos aims to award papers that answer essential questions and enrich the theory of regional science or urban studies. Excellent, when they open, not close, the path for a new wave of studies.

We give the prize today *ex aequo* to two young scholars for their papers, that, to the opinion of the jury, are selected for different reasons.

One of the winners is Niels Kuiper from the University of Groningen, Netherlands, with a paper on “The effectiveness of policy-induced gentrification: evidence from large-scale urban renewal projects in the Netherlands”. This paper’s novelty lies in the research approach and the question that was asked. The paper is based on a unique self-collected dataset on the reconstruction of housing premises in whole quarters of Amsterdam. Paper checks if policy assumptions to change a socio-economic neighbourhood by renewal, reconversion and gentrification projects work. What we liked is that the text was well-written and organised, the problem was anchored on existing literature, estimation method was efficient in catching the questioned effects. However, the paper could explain more - the full picture of inhabitants’ displacement effects. Yet, the paper showcases the good skills of the researcher, and we think this deserves the prize.

Another winner is Maria Kubara from the University of Warsaw, Poland, with the paper on “Spatio-temporal localisation pattern of technological startups – Recurrent Neural Network in predicting intra-urban startups’ clusters”. This paper was selected by the jury because of its methodological novelty. It deals with location decisions of technological start-ups, and it uses a diverse set of advanced methods to look at the identification of such clusters, their emergence and evolution. The results confirm already known diffusion patterns, but the neural network methods in this paper are new to regional science and offer new opportunities for prediction, which the field could benefit from. However, his methodology could be integrated more with theory, potentially leading to more robust outcomes in cluster formation research. Yet, both papers after some improvements, are good candidates for being published well.

We really hope, that next year in Alicante the Epainos award will keep its taste of prestige and uniqueness and that the new wave of ambitious young scholars will keep on enriching regional science.

Many congratulations to **Nils Kuiper and Maria Kubara**. I invite you to the stage.