



2025 RSA Annual Conference  
Navigating Regional Transformation  
SS10. Regional Inequalities and Perceived Left-Behindness

# How to escape from inner peripherality – does cohesion policy really work?

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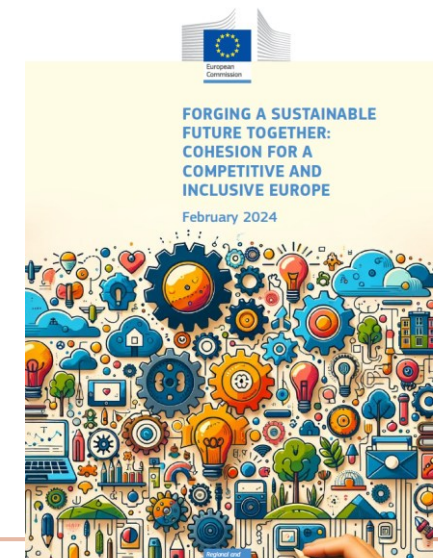
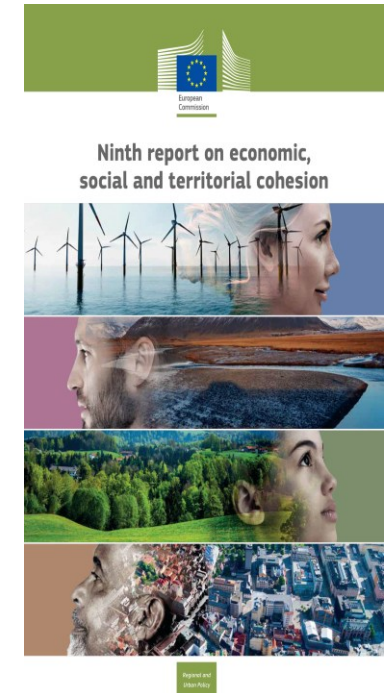
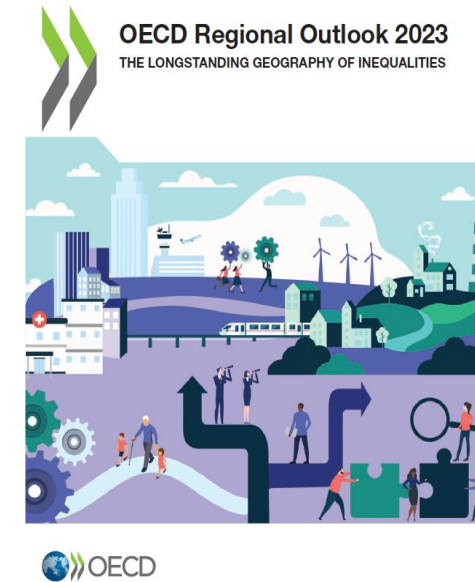


# Agenda

1. Deficits of Contemporary EU Cohesion Policy
2. Inner Peripheries in the Context of Cohesion Policy
3. TIPERICO project: Objectives, Stages and Methods
4. Results of TIPERICO project
5. Recommendations for Cohesion Policy after 2027

# Deficits of the Cohesion Policy

1. Regional disparities persist
2. Limited success in addressing productivity gaps
3. High economic, social and political costs of inequalities
4. Inadequate preparation for global changes and future challenges (climate change, demographic and technological changes)
5. Unequal impact of global shocks (COVID-19, war in Ukraine)
6. Policy complexity and institutional weakness



# Inner Peripheries as a category of places

## Categories of low-development regions

places as loci of discontent  
(Florida 2021, Martin 2021)

left-behind people and places  
(McCann 2019, Dijkstra et al. 2020)

places that don't matter  
(Rodríguez-Pose 2018)

**INNER PERIPHERIES**  
(Servillo et al. 2016)

## Operational application in the cohesion policy

low-growth regions  
(European Commission 2015)

lagging regions  
(European Commission 2015)

low-income regions  
(European Commission 2015)

## Approaches in the analysis of development processes

remote areas  
(Ardener 2012 [1987])  
*anthropological approach*

periphery areas  
(Keeble et al. 1998, Copus 2001)  
*geographical approach*

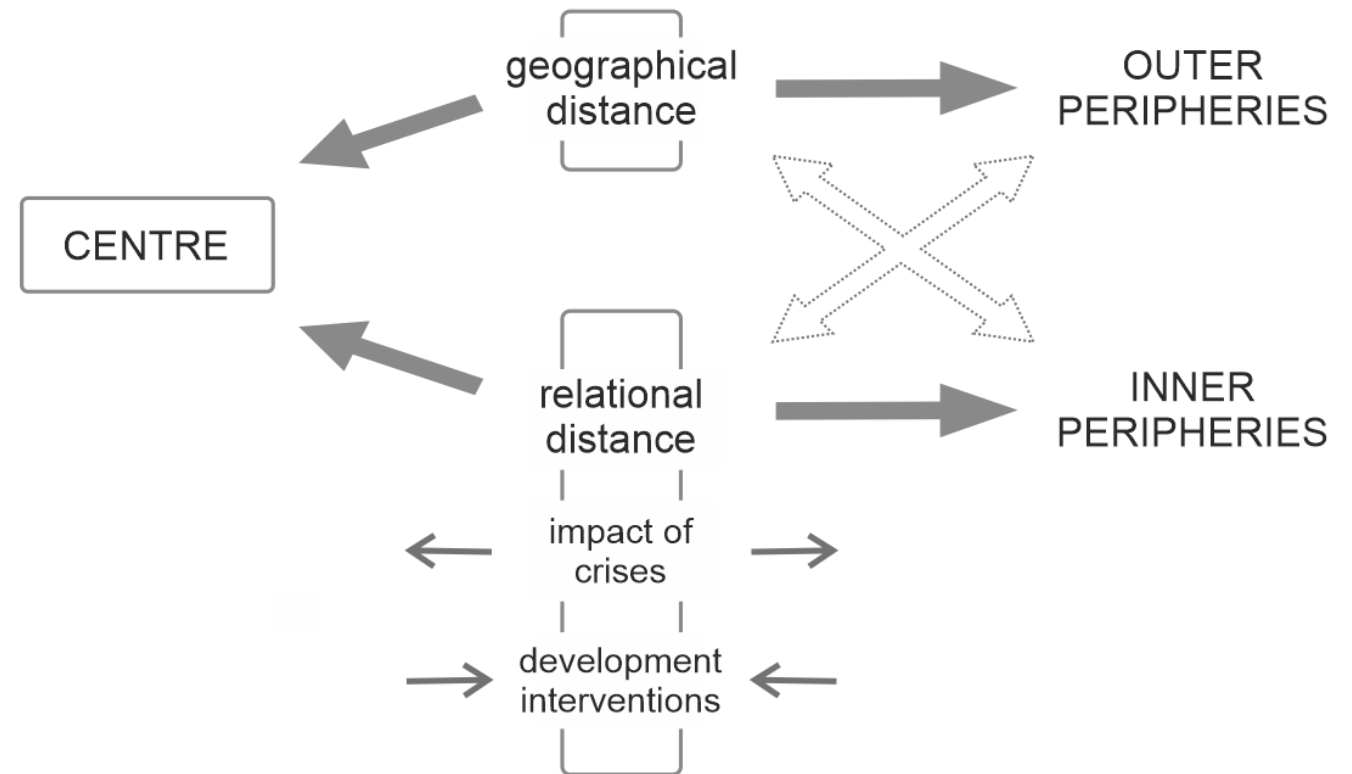
periphery and semi-periphery  
(Connell et al. 2005)  
*sociological approach*

# Inner Peripheries in TIPERICO project

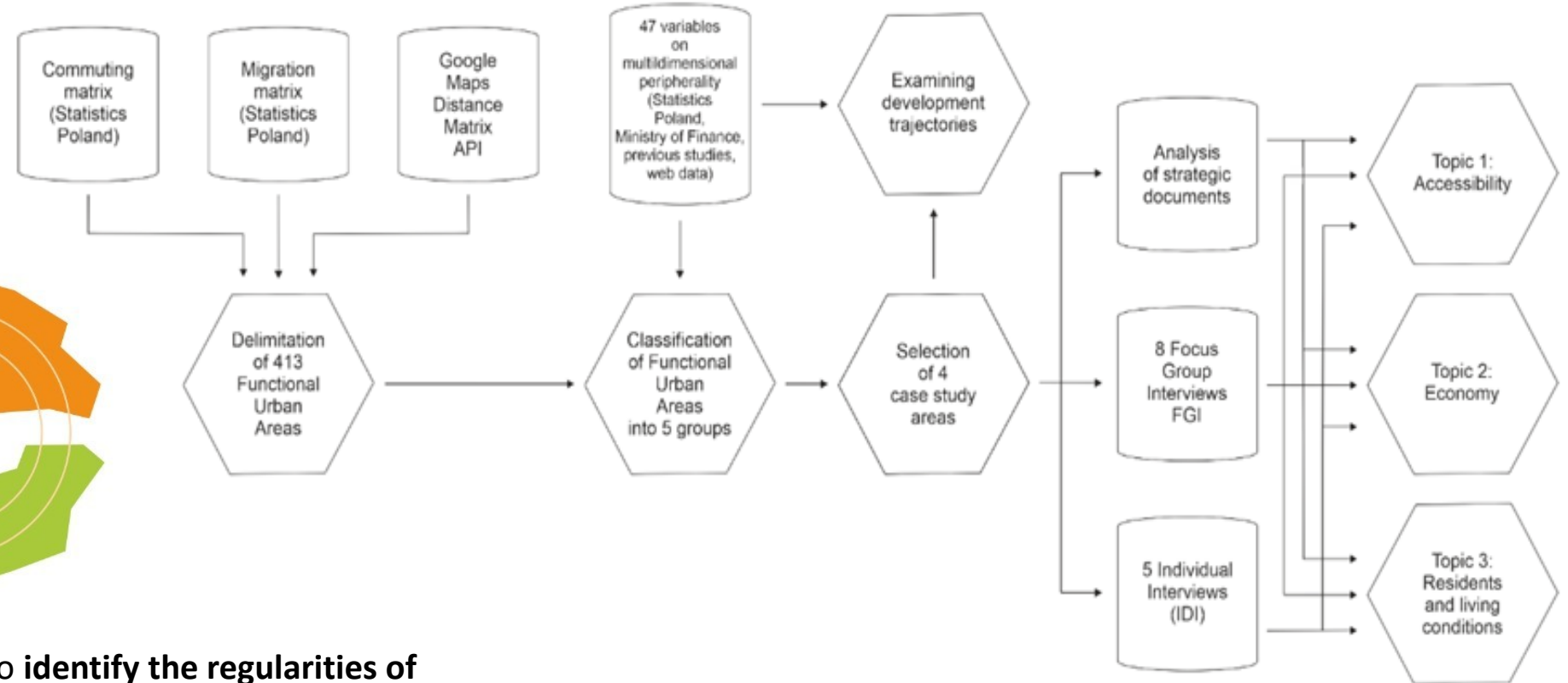
We understand the **inner peripheries** as areas with dormant or lost development potentials, due to their social or economic peripherality, caused in particular by low **communication accessibility** and a relatively long time distance to economic centers, a **limited range of functional connections** and the **lack of abilities or difficulties in establishing them** permanently.

## Their characteristic features are:

- relatively low efficiency of the territorial socio-economic system,
- relatively low access to public goods and services,
- relatively low quality of life (wellbeing).



# TIPERICO project



The objective of the project is to **identify the regularities of changes to the socio-economic development in selected inner peripheries in Poland with special attention given to their sensitivity and resilience to the consequences of the SARS-CoV-2 crisis**, and the resulting recommendations for the changes in the development policy interventions.

The application-related goal of the project refers to recommendations on the **direction and ways of making developmental intervention (including the choice of instruments) in inner peripheries in Poland** with special emphasis placed on the importance of the local cities to creating conditions for networking and diffusion of developmental processes.

# Identifying Inner Peripheries in Poland



Delimitation of 413 functional urban areas  
(FUAs) based of daily population flows



# Identifying Inner Peripheries in Poland



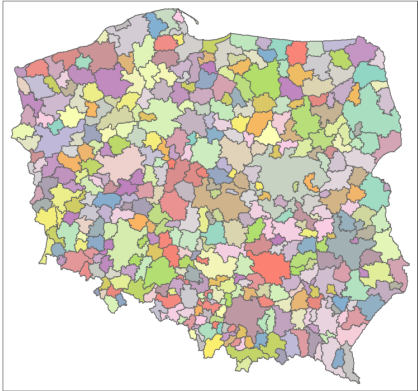
Delimitation of 413  
functional urban  
areas (FUAs)



Classification based  
on 47 indicators of 6  
factors of territorial  
capital  
(accessibility, human  
capital, social and  
institutional capital,  
financial capital and  
material capital)



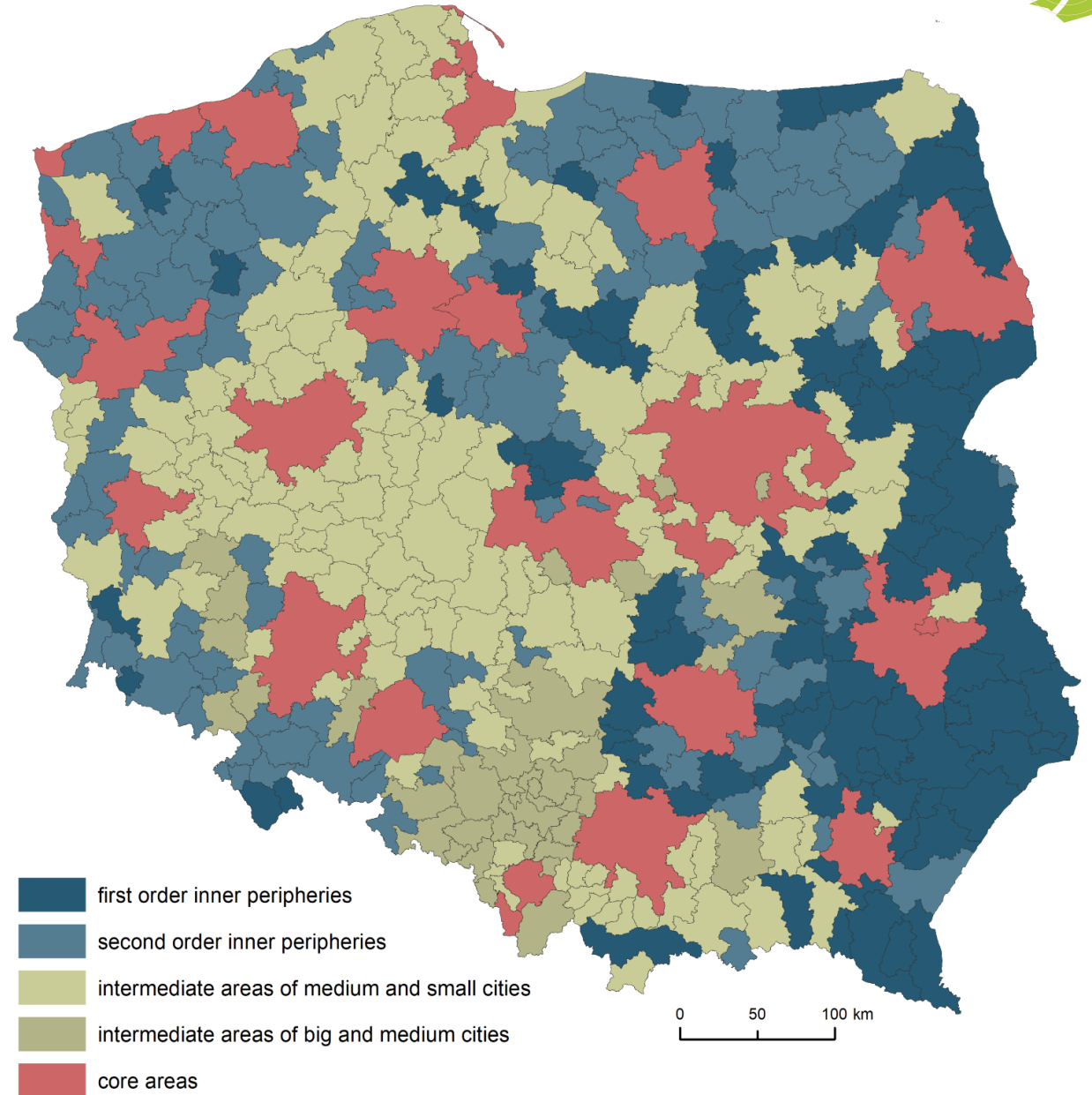
# Identifying Inner Peripheries in Poland



Delimitation of 413 functional urban areas (FUAs)

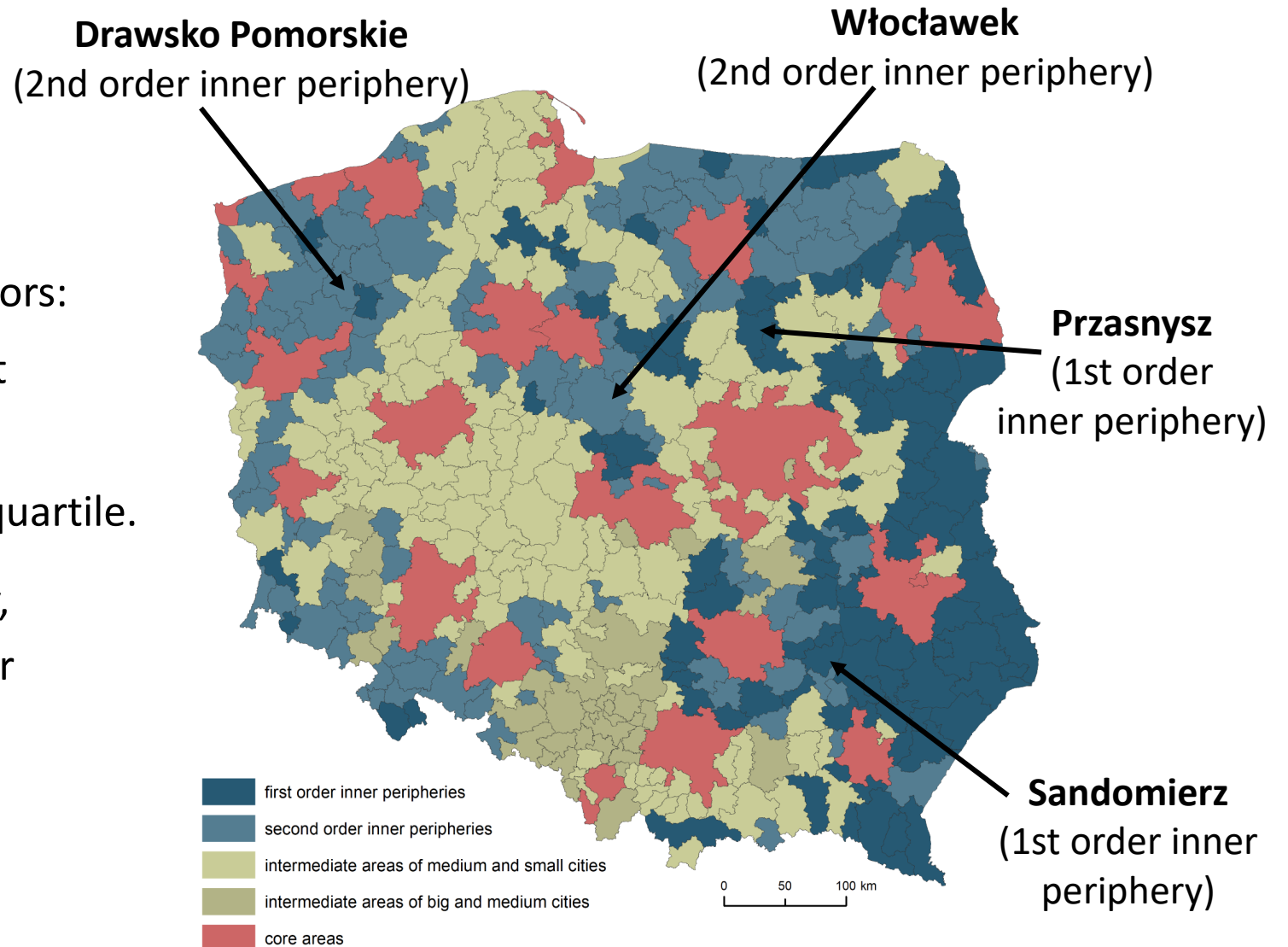


Classification based on 47 indicators of 6 factors of territorial capital (accessibility, human capital, social and institutional capital, financial capital and material capital)



# Case Studies - selection of four Inner Peripheral FUAs

1. 4 case study areas:
  - 2 of 1st order inner peripheries,
  - 2 of 2nd order inner peripheries.
2. Typical values of peripherality indicators:
  - 1st order inner peripheries – lowest quartile,
  - 2nd order inner peripheries – 2nd quartile.
3. From different regions of the country, representative for large areas of inner peripheries in Poland.
4. Diverse size of central city.



# Case Studies - methods

1. **8 Focus Group Interviews (FGI)** - with entrepreneurs, local authorities, and non-governmental organization representatives.
2. **4 Individual In-Depth Interviews (IDI)** - with mayors of urban centers.

The FGIs and IDIs covered main topics: **accessibility, economy, the inhabitants and living conditions**. The discussions aimed to identify and evaluate developmental changes within these areas, especially focusing on the period **following the COVID-19 pandemic**. Respondents were also queried about effective practices in addressing identified **developmental challenges**.

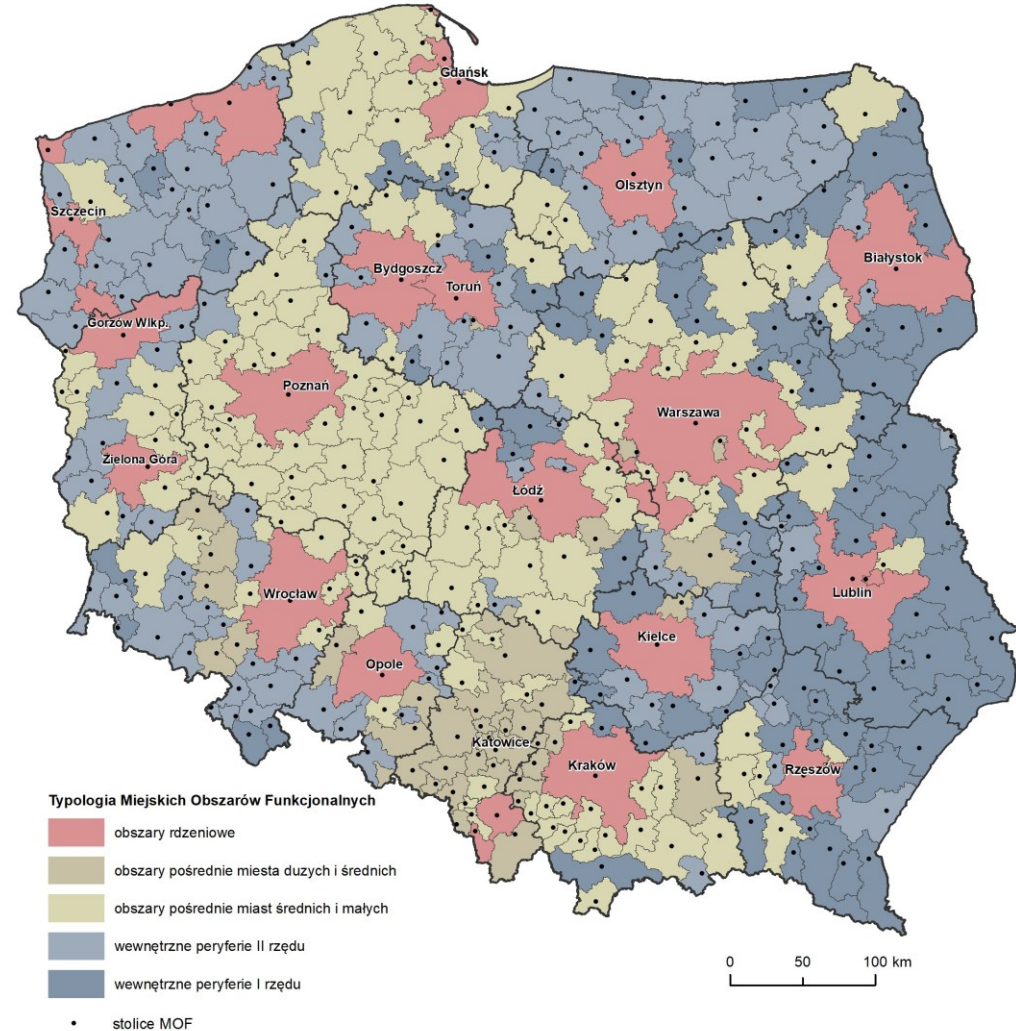
3. **CATI/CAPI survey** with residents, N=1570.

Survey questions covered topics of the economic situation, employment, housing, commuting and accessibility, and the changes due to COVID-19 pandemic.



# TIPERICO project results – where are inner peripheries of Poland?

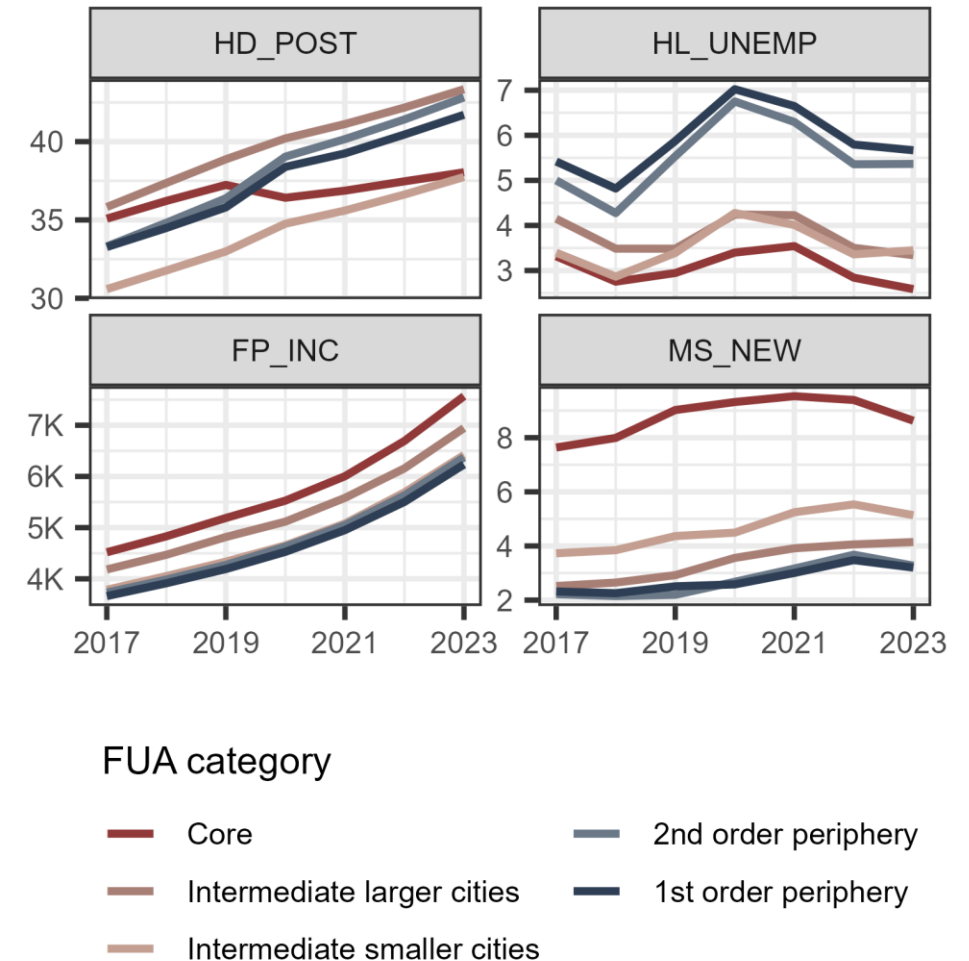
- Location of inner peripheries is shaped by distance to major cities, population density (north), natural conditions (mountains) and historical factors (east).
- Inner peripheries are often located along regional borders.
- Inner peripheral functional areas vary in sizes of both core cities and their surrounding areas.





# TIPERICO project results – do peripheries diverge from the centres?

- Peripheral FUAs only continue to lag behind core and transitional regions in terms of human, socio-institutional, and financial capital.
- The gap is widening in aspects: entrepreneurship, the labor market, local public finances, infrastructure, and demographic trends.
- Other indicators suggest a stabilization or narrowing of the gap between cores and peripheries, e.g. personal income, housing.



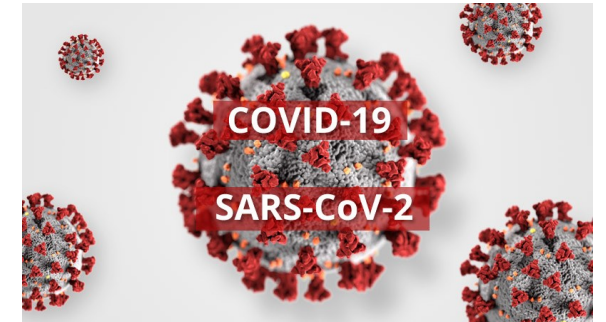
# TIPERICO project results – how do development spread towards and within peripherieies?

- Are shaped by personal flows, corporate cooperation and travels within FUAs and beyond tchem.
- Most travel within and out of the FUA is car-dependent, partly due to insufficient public transportation infrastructure and services.
- Hopes that remote work might open new opportunities, halt emigration, or attract new residents ultimately were not realized.



# TIPERICO project results – what were the effects of COVID-19 pandemic?

- Local economies dominated by micro- and small-sized enterprises, operating mainly in processing industries and in services requiring physical presence proved to be the least resilient to the pandemic shock.
- Adaptation to new conditions during the pandemic (e.g., transitioning to remote work or changing business profiles) was limited.
- Limited financial capital both in the private sector and the public sector impeded efforts to mitigate the effects of the crisis. In many peripheral municipalities, there were insufficient funds to actively support the local economy, further depressing demand and investment levels.





# TIPERICO project results – what are the development barriers of in inner peripheries?

- Peripheral areas have long experienced an outflow of young and educated residents.
- Economic cooperation networks and business support institutions (e.g., clusters, chambers of commerce, local development agencies) are underdeveloped.
- Poor coordination between labor supply (schools, including vocational schools) and demand.
- Underdeveloped transport infrastructure and public transport services, particularly within and between peripheral FUAs.



## Key Recommendations for Cohesion Policy after 2027

1. A greater integration of the **supra-local level**, in particular the use of **Functional Urban Areas (FUA)** as key entities in the programming and implementation of cohesion policy.
2. Enhanced incorporation of **territorial social justice** objectives into the programming and implementation of EU Cohesion Policy interventions, achieved through a full use of **integrated development planning** and the application of an operational definition of the **spatial social minimum**.

# General recommendations for Cohesion Policy after 2027

1. Enhancing the resilience of peripheral areas through comprehensive investments in transport and digital infrastructure.
2. Supporting economic diversification to reduce dependency on a single sector.
3. Prioritizing investments in human capital, especially in education and vocational training.
4. Improving access to high-quality public services in peripheral areas.
5. Strengthening institutional capacity at the local level in managing projects and cohesion policy funds.
6. Promoting interregional and transnational cooperation.
7. Placing greater emphasis on green transition in peripheral areas.

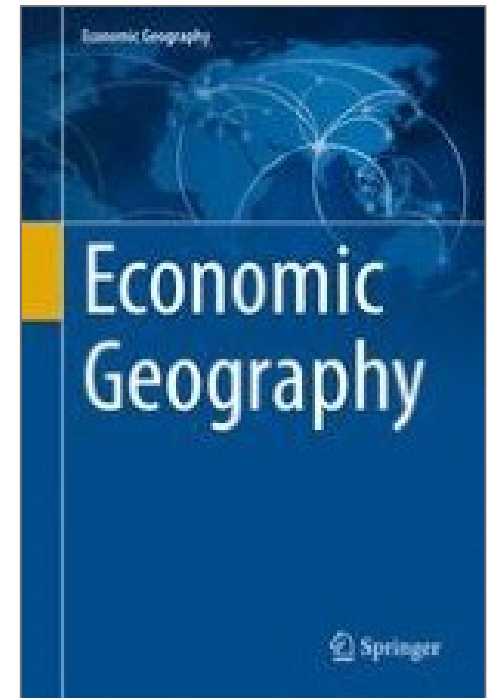
# Publications



Churski P., Adamiak C., Dubownik A., Pietrzykowski M., Szyda B., 2024.  
**What doesn't work in European cohesion policy?**  
**Development challenges of the inner periphery after the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.**

Quaestiones Geographicae 43(4)  
<https://doi.org/10.14746/quageo-2024-0038>

Churski P., Adamiak C., Dubownik A., Pietrzykowski M., Szyda B., 2025.  
**Inner Peripheries in the New Conditions of Cohesion post-SARS-CoV-2**  
**- recommendations for European Cohesion Policy.**  
 Economic Geography series, Springer  
 (under Review)



Thank you for your attention.



<https://tiperico.web.amu.edu.pl/en/>