

## **Epainos speech 2017 by Eveline van Leeuwen**

The Epainos prize, is not just any prize. It is the prize for the best paper written by only young scientists. For 21 years now it has awarded promising, creative and excellent young regional scientists.

Although it is an ERSA and thus a European prize, apart from discriminating on age and quality, it does not discriminate on ethnicity. Its laureates come from all over the world among which Brazil, United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Finland, Italy and Sweden. It also does not discriminate on methods used, by rewarding papers that are qualitative and quantitative, theoretical and empirical. However, the committee is always strict on the regional component of the paper. It is, after all a Regional Science prize.

As Hans Westlund told you the past five past years, selecting the prize winner is always a very difficult task. Therefore, the Epainos committee, which consisted this year of Maria Abreu, Wolfgang Dauth, Martin Andersson, Roberto Patuelli, Kathy Kopsceweska and myself, follows a very careful procedure. In the first round, each paper is evaluated on five aspects by three different persons: the chair and the discussant of the sessions well as by one committee member. We are really thankful to the reviewers, of which some read the papers during their holidays in beautiful mountains with limited Internet access. Based on these evaluations, Kathy, our new secretary created a shortlist. In the second round, each committee member reads all papers on the shortlist and provides a personal ranking. Next, these six ranking are combined which usually result in one or two winners. A very dedicated committee, I would argue.

And if you look at the list of former prizewinners at the ERSA website, you can see over the years, the committees did a good job in selecting promising young scientists such as the young Erik Verhoef, Jens Suedekum, and Julie Le Gallo. And also this year, we trust we selected a promising researcher. In particular, because for the first time, we all came up with the same top-three.

So the Epainos Prize 2017 goes to **Daniel Oto-Peralías**, for his paper titled **“Settlement Patterns in Europe and the Spanish Anomaly: The Medieval Frontier Origins of a Country’s Economic Geography.”**

The paper stands out in a challenging and interesting geographical approach at a very low spatial scale. Daniel exploits a spatial discontinuity that was meaningful during the Christian colonization of central Spain in the Middle Ages to investigate the historical roots of today’s settlement patterns. His findings suggest that medieval frontier insecurity heavily conditioned the colonization of the territory, resulting in a sparse occupation of the affected region, and a ranching orientation of the economy. By doing so, it shows, how political events that took place in a very far past, can still affect the spatial and economic situation of a region today.

Unfortunately, Daniel had to leave earlier. We know that has happened before, apparently Epainos prize winners are busy people. However, we still congratulate him with the prize and I would like to encourage all young scientists to submit a paper to the Young Scientists sessions In Cork next year. To give the future committee a hard time and to benefit from the valuable feedback and vibrant discussions that we saw taking place this year.

Thank you.

Eveline van Leeuwen, Chair Epainos Committee