

## II. REVIEWS AND NOTES

---

Elżbieta Sobczak (ed.): REGIONALNE I LOKALNE UWARUNKOWANIA ROZWOJU GOSPODARKI POLSKI [REGIONAL AND LOCAL DETERMINANTS OF POLAND'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT]. WUE 2020, 124 pp.

*Regional and Local Determinants of Poland's Economic Development*, a publication comprising original research and edited by Dr. Elżbieta Sobczak, an Associate Professor at the Wrocław University of Economics and Business, is a collective effort. Its key strength is its multidisciplinary and multidimensional approach to the factors and processes underlying economic development, i.e. the diversity of the spatial focus and subject of analysis of individual chapters, ranging from the economics of inequality, through ecological, environmental, and public goods economics, to the knowledge-based economy and the green economy. The monograph presents the inter and intra-regional heterogeneity of the conditions and processes that underpin socio-economic development. Some chapters address the spatial diversity of the conditions and processes of development using the example of selected regions, while two examine a smaller set of spatial units (business clusters and public vocational schools), and one analyses electromobility, with particular emphasis on selected Polish cities.

In Chapter 1, entitled "Territorial heterogeneity of social inequalities in Poland," the author used the standardized sums method and achieved interesting results by providing an overview of social inequalities. In Chapter 2, "Spatial diversification of the economic situation of households in Poland in light of recent emigration trends", the author reached her intended goal, although she could have effectively replaced her analysis of individual explanatory variables with a multivariate statistical analysis of the 'economics of complexity' and classified Poland's voivodeships (regions) according to the economic situation of their households. Such a classification could in turn be linked to a typology of provinces according to the intensity and characteristics of the migration structures that emerged in each of them.

Chapter 3 offers an assessment of the level of social and economic development of the province of Zachodniopomorskie compared to other regions in Poland. Two methods were used in this evaluation, each with different explanatory variables. However some measures, such as the unemployment rate and average gross monthly salaries, are strongly correlated. The author could have instead developed multidimensional classifications and rankings of territorial units using variables characterized by high spatial differentiation and low correlation to reflect various aspects of the level of the socio-economic development of territorial units.

Chapter 4 explores the determinants of the development of non-agricultural economic activity in rural areas with valuable natural assets. The author linked the results of his own research to those results of empirical research in the field of ecological economics (and, to a smaller extent, previous theoretical work) that collectively highlights the interdependence between conditions, affordances, and natural assets in different territorial units and the development of non-agricultural economic activity. The author outlined and operationalized a custom indicator that accounts for the determinants of non-agricultural economic activity and presented a multidimensional set of determinants for the development of municipalities. His analysis spans a range of natural, demographic, and economic (infrastructural) factors, although it could be improved by presenting the interdependence between them and the development of non-agricultural economic activity using a regression model, among other possibilities. In Chapter 5, entitled “Determinants of the destination attractiveness of communes in Warmia and Mazury Province,” the author utilized the theory of peripherality, analysing the conditions for the emergence and development of tourism as an innovative regional specialization. Using Hellwig’s method, she described the attractiveness of communes as tourist destinations in a nuanced and multifaceted way, and identified the relationships between the volume of tourist traffic on the one hand, and the available tourist attractions and the level of development of tourist infrastructure, on the other.

Chapter 6, “Assessment of the effectiveness of infrastructure investments using the DEA method,” delved into public goods economics and its associated body of scholarly work. The concepts of free riding and market failure, which emerge in the context of infrastructure and the equipment used to create it, are the focus of studies on the economics of public investment and public services. The externalities of infrastructural investments often do not emerge instantaneously, but rather in the long term, and they compromise both economic and non-economic (e.g. social or ecological) externalities. Non-economic externalities are difficult to measure, although their multidimensional, comprehensive assessment in the long run is a key focus of environmental economics. The author of the chapter defined the concept of investment effectiveness in the development of infrastructure equipment using a classic framework, as the relationship between effects and expenditures. In analysing the effectiveness of infrastructural investments, the author considered the commune’s own revenue and the number of business entities in operation (i.e. economic effects, without taking into account non-economic effects), linking them to expenditure on investment in infrastructure.

Chapter 7, “A partnership for innovation processes in the regions of Poland,” deals with the issue of the knowledge-based economy and is especially noteworthy. It identified interregional variations in the intensity of partnerships and highlighted key partners in the creation of scientific, technical, organizational, and financial innovation processes. The authors of the chapter proved that relations between partners (industrial enterprises as well as various commercial and non-commercial entities, including universities) in creating innovative processes are the key determinant of success for innovative projects. Chapter 8, “Analysis and evaluation of the development potential

of entities in selected business clusters in Świętokrzyskie Province,” also addressed the knowledge-based economy. Using the example of the Kielce Trade Fair Cluster, the author identified the mechanics of the ‘budding cluster’ and explored the dynamics of the formation of interconnected ‘innovation bands’. The chapter points to the importance of linking entities in the value chain by creating multi-level relationships that ‘incubate innovation’, cutting across the sectoral boundaries and spatial borders of the cluster and creating new relationships of cooperation and competition with groups from outside the cluster.

Chapter 9 analysed the curriculum of public vocational colleges and universities in terms of its relationship with the region’s smart specialization process. The author of the chapter provides an overview of “graduate trajectories,” i.e. the time it took for graduates to secure a job and their earnings as they begin their careers. In this way, the author linked the educational value of these institutions to the local and regional labour market, which is a critical focus of the field of labour economics. The final chapter, “The Polish electromobility plan: energy for the future – evaluating its realization and impact on electromobility in Poland.” The chapter deals with the important and highly relevant problem of the aspirational nature of development plans and programmes at central, regional and local levels, as well as their tendency to frame their needs as demands. Such plans often founder and fall through as they tend to be conceptually underdeveloped, and their creators fail to identify the entities responsible for implementing specific actions as well as the operational instruments that will allow them to achieve their goals. They also routinely fail to evaluate and monitor their progress in achieving their goals (though such a plan does not examine who is to evaluate such progress, when, by what means or tools, and what sources of information should this assessment rely on). The author of the chapter could have cited examples of good practices in bioeconomics with regard to the green economy and green energy, using Norway as an illustration. Norway is a leader in the development of electromobility, while Poland largely relies on antiquated forms of personal transportation such as old, imported diesel vehicles. The latter are still one of the main sources of negative externalities (air pollution) in cities, which contradicts the assumptions of sustainable urban development. The Norwegian system entails both economic incentives to use electric vehicles and instruments to discourage the use of diesel vehicles.

Overall, *Regional and Local Determinants of Poland’s Economic Development*, despite some imperfections, is an original work that enriches the extant literature. Its contribution to the literature is largely due to the empirical results of the research it presents on the regional and local economy, focusing on topics such as regional innovation strategies, business clusters, destination attractiveness, factors that support the development of tourism as an innovative form of regional specialization, and the inclusion of public higher education curricula in regional smart specialization processes.

*Artur Myna, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin*