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ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF GEOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES
Dziegielowa 27, PL 61-680 Poznań, Poland

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W POZNANIU, UL. F. NOWOWIEJSKIEGO 55, 61-734 POZNAŃ
Dział sprzedaży: tel. 061 829 39 79, fax 061 829 39 80
www.press.amu.edu.pl e-mail: press@amu.edu.pl

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Theme Issue:

CHANGING CONCEPTS, TRENDS AND EXPERIENCES IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL POLICY

Edited by: Tadeusz Stryjakiewicz (Poznań) and Peter Jurczek (Chemnitz)

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INTRODUCTION

Collected in this volume of *Quaestiones Geographicae* are articles addressing a variety of problems in regional development and regional policy. In some, the theoretical aspect is well to the fore, other discuss development tendencies of various types of regions, still other focus on a detailed analysis of selected regional development issues or application of selected concepts in regional studies. The geographical range of the contributions is also very wide. It embraces both, countries and regions of Europe (EU members and non-members) and Asia. This diversity of topics and spatial scope reflects the comprehensive perspective of geographical regional research, but makes it a hard job for the editors to order the contents and ensure the volume some measure of consistency. Ultimately, the volume opens with those articles that offer general and theoretical considerations (such as the place of the institutional approach in economic geography and regional studies, or the role of cluster policy in regional development), followed by those presenting problems of regional development and regional policy at the country level, and finally by detailed empirical analyses concerning specific regions and localities. In the last group the European case studies come first, the Asian ones next.

The journal opens with an article by Krzysztof Stachowiak and Tadeusz Strykiewicz which presents the foundations, research issues and theoretical conceptions of the institutional approach and its application in economic geography and regional studies. Institutional analysis rests on three basic concepts of embeddedness, evolution, and difference. This entails the assumption that regional economies are socially determined, have a history that affects their present-day development (path dependence), and display geographical differences. It seems that the institutional approach opens a new cognitive perspective in geography and regional studies by extending the research to cover both global and local contexts, the evolution of regions, the role of institutional location factors, and regional networking.

The next article, by Gill Bentley, seems to corroborate the importance of the institutional approach in regional studies (although the author does not stress this explicitly). She presents the role of clusters and cluster-oriented policy for regional development using West Midlands, UK, as her case study. The paper gives a survey of various definitions of a cluster and different approaches to cluster development, viz. the Third-Italy model and Michael Porter's model. In the empirical part, the assumptions and results of cluster policy in West Midlands are discussed, and more specifically, the cluster strategy for the automotive industry. In her assessment, the author highlights not only strong points, but also weaknesses of this approach in regional development policy, and concludes that to make this policy successful, both the conceptualisation of clusters and the institutional framework for policy implementation must be 'refined' from their fuzziness.

The next three papers deal with the problems of regional development and its dynamics at the nation-state level. This great dynamics is especially readily visible in the case of Slovenia, analysed in depth by Anton Gosar. With its impressive economic growth, Slovenia belongs to the most successful transition countries. Still, as in the other transition countries, here too there are ever widening disparities between the core and peripheral regions (including the south-eastern border areas). The author presents the main characteristics of Slovenian regional development over the recent period and government attempts at minimising detrimental effects of growing regional differences, e.g. through the use of public-private partnership. These attempts are reflected in "The National Development Projects for the Time-Span 2007–2023".

The next article, by Walter Leimgruber, addresses the topic of regional policy and the future of the countryside in Switzerland. The author defines mutual relationships and differences between

urban and rural areas, presents their spatial typologies, and their development dynamics. The second part of the article focuses on policies for the countryside and its prospects for the future.

The article by Quentin Mackré, entitled „Regional development and geopolitics of the state borders in Poland: Implications of the EU membership”, tackles the role of borders in regional development. This question has been given much attention recently in connection with such geopolitical changes as the EU enlargement in 2004. The French author conducted an extensive, several years’ research in Poland, and the article published in the volume presents some of its results. This gives it an interesting perspective ‘from outside’ on the development problems of Polish regions (including border ones) and their determinants. Quentin Mackré compares the situation of regions lying near the western and the eastern border (the latter being the boundary of the Schengen zone today). The comparison is set in the national context, and the differences in the level of regional development are explained in terms of the geopolitical situation and the border system ‘inherited’ from the past. Special attention in his analysis is given to the implications of the new border effects on the contemporary dynamics of regional development in Poland.

The next article also considers issues in Polish regional development, but its spatial range is limited to a single region, viz. Silesia. This is a very important region, also at the European scale. At present it has been undergoing an intensive process of restructuring in which the motor vehicle industry features very prominently. Tomasz Rachwał and Krzysztof Wiedermann seek to estimate locational multiplier effects of this industry on regional development using an estimation method of their own.

The next three articles are case studies from several regions of Asia presenting various aspects of regional and local development. Peter Jurczek describes economic and ecological aspects of tourist development in the border region of Korea using the Goseong district as his example. Relying on German experience, among other things, he formulates a variety of scenarios for this development which will crucially depend on the future relations between South and North Korea and on the ‘permeability’ of the inter-Korean border.

Anand Prasad Mishra, in turn, focuses on the problem of population displacement connected with the economic development of India. He shows the evolving conflicts between the implementation of development projects (such as the construction of huge dams and reservoirs) and the situation of the local people. These conflicts, the author claims, follow from liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, and are felt the most acutely in underdeveloped rural areas. The article gives a detailed analysis of the nature and consequences of new development policies (displacement, landlessness, food insecurity, social disintegration and marginalisation) at the macro- and micro-levels, with the Varanasi region as the case-study area.

The last of the articles gathered in this volume, authored by Bernhard Köppen, describes the process of change taking place in one of the post-Soviet republics – Kazakhstan. One of the elements of this process is the creation of new symbols of power and a new national identity. Its manifestations include the transfer of the state capital from Almaty to Akmola (later renamed Astana) and the design and implementation of new postmodern projects of urban development as symbols of the new Kazakhstan. Those projects are intended not only to help in nation-building and to express the post-Soviet Kazakh spirit, but also to present a new model of the sustainable Eurasian city.

All the three Asia-centred articles contribute new, highly significant elements to our knowledge of the present-day processes of regional development and regional policy in this part of the world. A volume collecting them together with Europe-related papers offers a wide spectrum of changing concepts, trends and experiences. We therefore believe that it will meet the expectations of the readers and give a new incentive to our debate on the mosaic of regional development paths and regional policies.

Tadeusz Stryjakiewicz and Peter Jurczek
Editors