

Modern challenges of regional research – European, national, regional and local perspective

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Introduction

The year 2015 was a sad time for Polish regional science. On the 5th of June, passed away Prof. dr hab. Zbyszko Chojnicki, one of the greatest Polish geographers and regionalists, the creator of the Poznań school of theory and methodology of economic geography, a renowned authority, our Master. At the beginning of this volume we remember the Professor, who will always remain in our memory, and his work will continue to build the foundation of our scientific research.

This double issue of the quarterly journal *Studia Regionalia* in your hands is a combination of tradition and change. Traditionally, we present interesting and valuable articles that touch regional studies in a cross-sectional manner at various levels: European, national, regional and local. And the change involves establishing regular editorial cooperation with the Polish section of the European Regional Science Association, which is a consequence of the development of Polish regional science, especially of its advancing consolidation. And this, in turn, follows from the creation of the Polish section of the ERSA, which is a platform for cooperation between scientists from different fields and areas, different methodological schools, and many Polish universities, which have a common denominator: regional studies. The Association, under an agreement with the Committee for Spatial Economy and Regional Planning, the Polish Academy of Sciences, and recognized by ERSA Core, has gained the status of a national section of the ERSA. Thus authorized in 2013, we have now started research activities in the ERSA PL association.

Apart from the participation in the work of this organization in the international arena, including the organization of special sessions during the congresses in Lisbon (2015) and Vienna (2016), the preparation of a summer school in Poznań (2014) with the participation of Professors Daniel A. Griffith, Roger Bivand, Jesus Mur Lacambra and Roberto Patuelli, and active participation in conferences and meetings organized by both the ERSA, ERSAC (Council of ERSA) and other national sections, we have taken action to support and integrate the Polish community of regionalists. We organized international conferences in Zwierzyniec (2014) and Katowice (2015). We promote young researchers dealing with regional studies by funding awards (grants and funding the cost of participation in a conference), and ensuring the publication of the best works.

We have prepared and successfully gained the support of the National Science Centre to implement a research project “Statistical models to identify regional specialization including the spatial heterogeneity component” (call OPUS 6, contract number UMO–2013/11/B/HS4/ 01098). We have organized a summer workshop with the participation of Professor Daniel A. Griffith from The University of Texas at Dallas (Międzyzdroje, 2015).

All these activities have drawn our attention to the need to support our community with the possibility of publishing research results which, when presented in the international arena, should be a contribution to the development of wider cooperation and an exchange of experiences. This was the background motivating us to come up with an initiative for the Presidium of the Committee for Spatial Economy and Regional Planning of the Polish Academy of Sciences to support publishing efforts associated with running *Studia Regionalia*, a journal with an established position. The favourable response of the Committee Presidium led us to sign a contract under which, as of 2016, we will be responsible for the edition and production of two out of the four issues per year. We hope that this cooperation will be fruitful, and the change related with it will be appreciated.

This double issue of *Studia Regionalia* is a composition of regional research seen from various angles and dimensions. In a geographical cross-section, the articles touch different perspectives: European (Grünhut and Bodor, Antczak and Lewandowska-Gwarda), national (Dominiak and Hauke, Woźniak, Maćkiewicz and Kacprzak), regional (Miszczyk, Szafranek), and local (Jón, Zuzańska-Żyska, Szabó and Gordos, Kacprzak, Kołodziejczak and Szczepańska, Dembicka-Niemiec). A qualitative approach seems to be predominant, but enriched with a quantitative approach (Antczak and Lewandowska-Gwarda, Dominiak and Hauke). Some of these papers focus on urban analysis (Jón, Zuzańska-Żyska, Maćkiewicz and Kacprzak, Szabó and Gordos, Kacprzak, Kołodziejczak and Szczepańska, Dembicka-Niemiec), others deal with problems analysed from a regional perspective (Grünhut and Bodor, Antczak and Lewandowska-Gwarda, Dominiak and Hauke, Woźniak, Miszczyk, Szafranek). Finally, some of the texts see the public sector as the subject of analysis (Grünhut and Bodor, Jón, Zuzańska-Żyska, Maćkiewicz and Kacprzak, Szabó and Gordos, Kacprzak, Kołodziejczak and Szczepańska, Dembicka-Niemiec), while others consider the examined problems in economic terms (Dominiak and Hauke, Woźniak) or from inhabitants' perspective (Antczak and Lewandowska-Gwarda).

This many-threaded diversity and multiplicity of articles only apparently does not form a coherent whole. The multiplicity of perspectives enables a complementary perception and explanation of regional processes, resulting from factors occurring at all spatial levels, from the lowest local level to the supranational pan-European one. Also incorporated in individual works is the perspective of various stakeholders who guide policies and real processes, giving a comprehensive picture of the conditions of regional processes. A careful analysis of the issues raised in the articles demonstrates the challenges which modern development policy faces. They are an important signpost for researchers involved in the processes of regional and local development which should be taken into account by them in subsequent studies.

We hope that this collection of works will gain your interest, and these challenges will be a contribution to your own research, the results of which can be disseminated in upcoming issues of our journal.

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