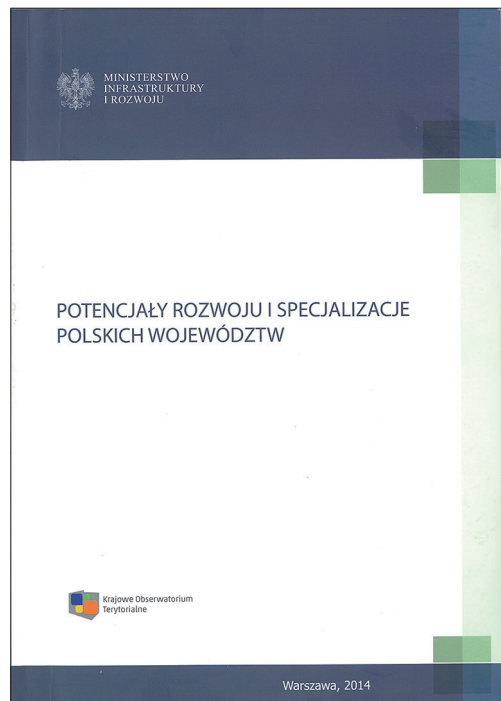

Development Potentials and Smart Specializations of Polish Voivodships – Book Review

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ABSTRACT

The reviewed book is devoted to the issue of smart specialization of Polish regions. Smart specializations are supposed to help to mobilize and fully use regions' endogenous development potential. The book presents the process of identification of smart specializations and their typology. This publication may also play a role of feasibility study, since it provides many detailed information on regions' development potential and plans for the future.

The problems of specialization and development potential of regions have reached a new dimension in the context of discussions on how to implement the “Europe 2020” strategy and on what development paths the recovery from recession should be adopted. The emergence of new development incentives, necessary to overcome crisis phenomena requires preparation by regions and countries of the European Union effective mechanisms and instruments to mobilize their development potential. This mobilization, which is of a strategic nature and is described in brief as a “smart specialization”, involves the purposeful and innovative use of resources and assets, which will lead to regional economic transformation. Smart specialization should ensure economic development based on endogenous resources, efficient use of available financial resources and innovative management methods. The logic behind the building of a smart specialization requires a selective approach to the region's resources and assets and involvement in this process by different stakeholders, who have a direct and indirect impact on the formulation and implementation of development policies. Smart specialization, as an instrument guiding development processes, should



support the restructuring of regional economies in order to strengthen their competitiveness in the specific spheres of activity.

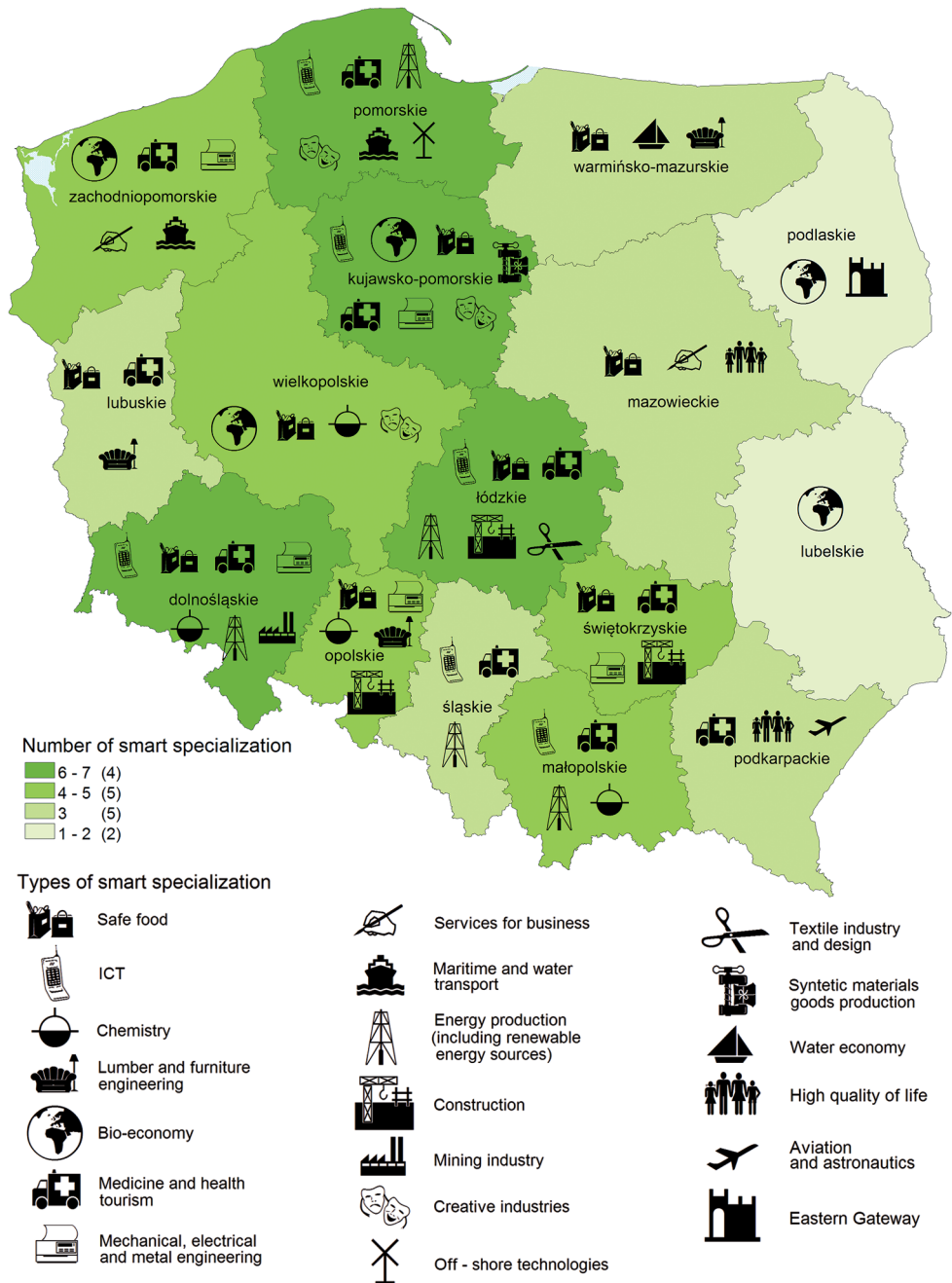
The book entitled “Development potentials and smart specializations of Polish voivodships” is an important contribution to the discussion on the development of Polish regions in terms of new challenges and proposed ways to deal with them. Over the past several months, Polish regional authorities have prepared key documents related to the problems of their development potential, regional assets and smart specialization. These diagnostic documents, supplemented by the regional development strategies, reflect different approaches to smart specialization and present preferred paths of development. The authors of the book, which has been reviewed, conducted an in-depth analysis of the diagnostic documents, pointing out differences and similarities concerning regional development potentials and selected smart specializations. Methodologies used by regional authorities to identify smart specializations are also described and analyzed. Thus, the book offers not only a description of the current situation but also a multidimensional perspective necessary to evaluate problems related to development of Polish regions in theory and in practice. The book serves as an aid in the interpretation and better understanding of the practice of the programming of development of regional.

The book consists of four main sections entitled: Potentials and regional specializations - new components of development policies, Development potentials of Polish regions, Smart specializations of Polish regions, and Conclusions and recommendations. The first part changes in the regional development paradigm discusses. The authors emphasized the fact, that many regional economies, even in developed countries, are still in the transitional phase from Fordism to Post-Fordism. Fordism is not history yet, it is present in many areas of the economy and its surroundings. This fact has many serious consequences for the effectiveness of mobilizing endogenous growth potential or actions undertaken to restructure regional economies. Awareness of this fact is particularly important for an objective assessment of the development potential of the region and in finding ways to build its smart specialization.

In the second part, the book presents the results of the analysis of documents describing the development potential of the Polish regions. For the purpose of analysis and to enable comparisons between regions the authors have proposed their own, original typology of development potentials. Issues related to “lost” and “hibernated” potentials are also discussed. This section of the book contains many interesting details on the specific situation of given regions, including problems from the sphere of development management. Some of this information may seem somewhat astounding or at least can be regarded as surprising. The authors cite the example of the West Pomeranian Region, which in 2014 adopted 47 strategic documents; only 23 documents from this collection were mandatory. This example prompts a question about the real “strategic nature” of different documents, reasons why they are being prepared, and their usefulness in managing the development.

The third part presents the smart specializations of Polish regions (*Fig. 1*). The authors point out that there are many differences between regions in terms of adopted approaches and the process utilized in identifying smart specializations. Basically, there are two appro-

Fig. 1. The smart specializations of Polish regions



Source: own work by Tomasz Szański based on illustrations in "Potencjały rozwoju i specjalizacje polskich województw"

aches to identifying smart specialization: sectoral and procedural. The sectoral approach is focused on the selection of specific industries or groups of industries; they are supposed to form a base and serve as a framework for smart specializations. The procedural approach is focused on the linkages between different regional potentials (economic, institutional, social): smart specializations are based on the strongest relations among different complementary sectors and potentials. The results of analyzes of regional development strategies and regional innovation strategies (RIS) show that the number of smart specialization in the voivodships varies widely (from 2 in Podlaskie to 8 in Kujawsko-Pomorskie). Smart specialization were defined using both sectoral and procedural approaches. The most popular smart specialization at the regional level was ITC – information and communication technologies (10 regions). The ITC smart specialization is defined differently depending on voivodship: in Kujawsko-Pomorskie the ICT sector is understood very widely and includes data processing, multimedia, programming, ICT services; in Małopolska voivodship the ICT sector includes media and in particular computer games. Most regions see their future development in fields related to the natural environment assets possessed: bio-economy, healthy food, health tourism (9 provinces). There are also regions, where traditional industries will still play an important role in regional economies development (mainly engineering, but also heavy industry and energy production).

The comparison of regional and national smart specializations leads to the conclusion that their coherence is limited. The most extensive coherence concerns specializations from the thematic area “Bio-economy agri-food, forestry-wood and environment”. These three thematic areas, defined in the national smart specialization are found in as many as 15 regional smart specializations. In the case of the thematic area “Innovative technologies, processes and products of the agri-food and forestry-wood” there are 10 regional smart specializations. The lowest compliance feature of specializations is assigned to the thematic area “Natural resources and waste management.” The authors also point out, that at national level there were no smart specializations such as creative industries or business services, which are smart specializations in several regions.

In the conclusions and recommendations the authors state, that regardless of the needs and expectations concerning regional development, and the role of smart specialization in this development, one should not expect reduction of disparities between regions. Certainly, in the years 2014-2025 the quality and standard of living in less developed regions will increase. However, this will not stop the migration to better developed regions. Therefore, pro-development efforts in less developed regions should predominantly be focused on supporting their endogenous potential in order to utilize it in the long-term perspective as comparative advantages. Carefully developed smart specialization may organize focus on the most pressing investments needed and innovative solutions to effectively utilize the existing development potential.

A very important conclusion summarizing the results of the research conducted by the authors is that in a number of cases Polish regions are not currently equipped with all necessary potentials to develop smart specializations they have identified. The authors therefore

recommend that smart specializations formulated by the regions should undergo additional assessment in order to determine the deficiencies in the potentials and how to supplement them. This may lead in some cases to questioning whether the correct selections have been made. This assessment should be a priority in the context of allocating of resources for regional operational programs (both at national and regional levels). A similar priority is to determine the method of financing the development of smart specialization identified at national and regional level. A separate issue is the national smart specializations, which none of the regions identified as regional specializations; the same applies to regional smart specializations that do not exist at national level.

The authors of the book state, that the new term entered into the regional development dictionary: "smart specializations" will have a stronger impact on the activities undertaken in the regions than with the former term "clusters". Smart specializations, however, seem to be far more difficult to implement than the cluster policy. Their implementation requires the cooperation of many "participants", multi-level governance, integrated territorial approach, and the boldness to cross sectoral and administrative borders. The practice of regional development will verify whether the identification of smart specializations was correct. There will be two factors indicating that the choices are correct: a/ whether there is enough endogenous potential to develop smart specialization, and b/ the impact of smart specialization on development processes and their results.

Smart specializations are both opportunities for regions, as well as a great challenges for them. They are not so much a test of creativity in the identification of smart specialization but a test of pragmatism, openness and determination in the implementation of innovative development activities by cooperation of 'participants' from government, and the science and business sectors.

Information about the book:

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Potencjały rozwoju i specjalizacje polskich województw – recenzja książki

STRESZCZENIE

Recenzowana książka poświęcona jest kwestii inteligentnych specjalizacji polskich regionów. Inteligentne specjalizacje mają sprzyjać uruchomieniu ich endogenicznego potencjału rozwojowego. W książce przedstawiono proces identyfikacji tych specjalizacji, ich typologię, oceniono ich realność w odniesieniu do posiadanego potencjału rozwojowego.

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