

REVIEW
of the collection
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, IDENTITIES
AND DEMOCRATIC INTEGRATION

The topic of the collection is extremely important, both from the point of view of the interpretation of the processes taking place in modern societies, and for their management with a view to the balanced and sustainable development of the regions and societies. The editors have included articles by 25 authors from 6 countries working in different research fields, and in this way an extremely wide variety of problems is covered, which is undoubtedly an important merit of the work.

The articles in the collection are grouped thematically in 4 parts. The first, REGIONS AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: GLOBAL AND REGIONAL, includes studies interpreting regional development at various scales. An analysis of the social roots of disparities, disproportions and contradictions between regions is proposed; connections between regional inequalities and political processes and conflicts are drawn. A special emphasis is a placement in a global context and the search and identification of more general regularities, trends and determinants of the position and development of the modern countries of the world's periphery and semi-periphery

The second part CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF REGIONAL INEQUALITIES IN SERBIA; PERSPECTIVES OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, includes author's texts dedicated to the development of regions in Serbia. In addition to the differences along the city-village line, special attention is paid to such key topics as regional specifics and differences in the labor market at the level of various kinds of territorial units (regions and areas), i.e. statistical territorial units NUTS-2 and NUTS-3, and in the educational structure of the population, which is particularly important in its role as a predictor of social inclusion of the population in a given region.

In the third part - REGIONAL AND RURAL: CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE POINTS, the research focus is on regional differences along the urban-rural lines. A special focus are Gender aspects of agriculture and rural development - the status of women involved in agricultural production and a connection between the level of development of an agricultural region and the status of women farmers. The particularly important issue of digitization is examined from the perspective of digital inequalities. In this part, in addition to

examining various aspects of regional similarities and differences in Serbia, the picture is enriched by analyses of the development on processes and practices in Russia.

The fourth part - IDENTITY ASPECTS AND DYNAMICS OF REGIONS AND REGIONALISM, gives a look from different angles, incl. a very significant and painful contemporary challenge such as the question of the identity and integration of the second generation of exiles.

The presented collection has many merits that should not be underestimated. Definitely a positive feature is the reference to studies of scientists from previous years - both the research of Đorđe Tasić and those of university teams (formed in the Institute of Sociology of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Niš) and the highlighting of ideas with heuristic value regarding the interpretation of current topics.

The majority of articles combines theory and empirical analysis. Extremely diverse and ample empirical material from various sources was used - state documents, national and regional statistical data, incl. from the last census, information from sociological studies using various methods adequate to their goals and tasks (representative surveys, in-depth interviews, etc.). In addition to the presentation and analysis of already widely used key indicators, original aggregate ones are also presented - e.g. a composite index shown in the form of an interval scale with five levels of economic position in three time periods.

Among the positive aspects of the collection is not only the variety of topics and methodological starting points, but also that the editors have included articles giving a different interpretation of a same problem – e.g. the conflict in Ukraine. One of the articles, however, creates an impression of selectivity in the presentation of the facts and events. The scientific value of the article would increase if the analysis was more comprehensive and thorough – if it examines the roots of the events back in time before the conflict and gives an explanation of the presented facts - e.g. that “Two-thirds of the units' personnel betrayed Ukraine and went over to the Russian side” (p.53). And the use of assessments and terms with political connotation such as “betrayal” in a scientific publication is not appropriate.

It should be emphasized that the articles in the collection are important not only from the point of view of the development of scientific knowledge - both with their contributions and with the outlined directions for future research. They are also valuable from the point of view of social practice – the analyses and conclusions in almost all of them offer guidelines for policies to stimulate the development of the regions and the reduction of regional disproportions and inequalities. Even more, the introduction of ICTs provides great

opportunities for social development that would improve the quality of life of deprived groups and communities,

The articles repeatedly emphasize the need for systematic and in-depth interdisciplinary research on the topic of regional development, justifying the necessity to overcome the neglect and "marginalization of social and humanistic sciences in the society because they are of the essential importance for the formation of the cultural identity of a person in the process of socialization, for the development of a critical public in society, the building of individual and collective self-awareness and developing the ability to formulate alternative social development projects" (p. 25).

The collection REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, IDENTITIES AND DEMOCRATIC INTEGRATION represents a significant scientific research contribution, useful both for the professional scientific community, as well as for managers and experts, and should be widely promoted.

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