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Entrepreneurial Activities of Communes in Creation of Competitive Advantages at Regional Investment Markets – Evidence from Poland

Abstract: The objective of this paper is to present examples of local regions represented by Polish communes that demonstrate entrepreneurial activities within competition for investors, tourists, and inhabitants at regional investment markets. I will present local regions of different location, size, functional type, and potential investment attractiveness that were the best in their class within the research sample studied. I decided to perform multilayer research on 50 communes in Poland using electronic audit research method, mystery client research method, and benchmarking of communes within their subpopulation types. Within the research 10 communes that are the best in their class have been selected. Identified activities of the best in class communes are presented and enable to form recommendations of applicable character for local regions aiming to improve their competitiveness in attraction, and retention of investors, tourists, and inhabitants.

Keywords: benchmarking; competitive advantage; competitiveness; local administration; local development

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of this paper is to present local regions represented by Polish communes that demonstrate entrepreneurial activities within competition for investors, tourists, and inhabitants at regional investment markets. Presented local regions provide applicable examples of entrepreneurial activities possible to implement by local administration in the territorial units they are responsible for. Local development studies outline the role of competitive advantages needed for effective competition of territorial units such as local regions, and continuous competition of local regions in attracting investors, tourists and inhabitants. This kind of competition is partially stimulated by the benchmarking, which in form of local region rankings impacts the perception of

local regions by their stakeholders. R. Giffinger et al. (2010) point out possibilities of institutional learning basing on the best practices identification and dissemination in benchmarking context.

Creation of entrepreneurial activates of local regions is additionally stimulated by modern discourse relating to public sector reform paradigms, which outline new role of public administration within the schools of new public management, market-based public administration, and entrepreneurial government (Zalewski et al., 2007). Contemporary research relating to entrepreneurial activities of local regions in Poland is rather limited. Wide and regular studies of this phenomenon with publications in form of reports with data evidence and examples of applicable character have been conducted since 2011 by Academic Club of Entrepreneurship and Regional Analyses at the Warsaw School of Economics (Kasprowicz et al., 2014).

To fulfill the knowledge gap identified within researched area I performed a multi-layer research on 50 communes in Poland using a set of both non-reactive and reactive research methods. Methods used included electronic audit research of official website portals of communes and their Bulletins of Public Information, surveys with representatives of communes using structured questionnaire, mystery client research method, and benchmarking.

Within the Literature Review section of the paper I present modern context of competition at regional investment markets, role of benchmarking in stimulation of dissemination of the best practices, and modern discourse of entrepreneurial activities of local regions. In Materials and Methods section I elaborate on approach toward research sample selection and research performed in Poland in the years 2013–2014. In Results and Discussion section I provide an analysis of 10 local regions represented by Polish communes of different size, functional type, and potential investment attractiveness. I conclude the paper with implications of the study for economic practice, and indication for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Competitive Advantage at Regional Investment Market

Contemporary literature on local development points out the role of competitive advantages in attraction of development resources at regional investment market. Inflow of development resources is considered the basic condition of new investments, which contribute to local development process. Development resources enabling new investments in local regions include: investors, tourists, inhabitants, and financial and non-financial capital they bring to local regions (Olszewska, 2001).

Investors, tourists and inhabitants create the supply side of the regional investment market, whereas the demand side is created by local regions creating advantages of a place in context of attracting investors, tourists and inhabitants (Godlewska-Majkowska et al., 2013).

In such characterized regional investment market, local regions develop and demonstrate competition ability that is a long term ability to be able to match competition from the other market participants (Olczyk, 2008). For the purpose of research

performed I proposed an own conceptualization of competitive advantage of local regions at regional investment market, narrowing above concept described in the literature. Within the study performed, the competitive advantage at regional investment market was conceptualized as long term ability of local regions to attract and retain investors, tourists and inhabitants with better results in comparison to other market regional investment market participants.

Contemporary discourse on competitiveness of economic entities relates in particular to the private sector (Y. Doz and M. Kosonen, 2008) In relation to this modern public sector reform paradigms – such as new public governance paradigm, neo-weberian state paradigm, networks and joining-up paradigm, or governance paradigm outline the process of learning from private sector practices within the public administration transformation, including local region administration transformation (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).

Role of Benchmarking in Creation and Dissemination of the Best Practices

Activities aimed at the attraction of investors, tourists, and inhabitants are additionally stimulated by preparation and publication of rankings benchmarking local regions toward their attractiveness for business activity, quality of life, or other measures. Such rankings are prepared both in academic and business environments. The most popular rankings' criteria, taken into account in local regions benchmarking, refer to quantitative statistical data, and also qualitative interviews, for example, with business sector representatives assessing local investment's climate. Rankings benchmarking local regions that are prepared and published in academic environment include "European Competitiveness Index" by the University of Cardiff, "Europas attraktivstes Metropolen fur Manger" by the University of Mannheim, or "EU Regional Competitiveness Index" prepared by Joint Research Institute affiliated with the European Commission. Rankings benchmarking local regions that are prepared by business environment include "The Atlas of Regional Competitiveness" prepared by Eurochambers, "European Cities & Regions of the Future" by fDi Intelligence, "Hot Spots" by Economist Intelligence, "How the world views its cities" by Anholt City Brands, and "Canada's most sustainable Cities" issued by Corporate Knights – Canadian magazine for responsible business (Godlewska-Majkowska et al., 2011).

There is a common quality of rankings prepared by both academic and business environment – a differentiation of research methods used that may result in different position of the same local region in different rankings. Although the empirical approach is far from consistent, rankings might provide inspiration for redesigning the approach of local regions (Giffinger et al., 2010).

Entrepreneurial Activities of Communes in Contemporary Discourse

Attracting development resources by the local regions, and incorporating activities typical for private sector gained significance in recent decades. Researchers of local entrepreneurship (Lakshmann & Chatterjee, 2009) argue that entrepreneurial representatives of local public administration need to gain new economic and political competences to create and maintain their competitiveness, which includes using knowledge that would enable local goods and services to conquer global markets and attract capital

to the regions. Researchers also outline the need for stimulation of entrepreneurship by public administration at local region's level, which is a part of market-based public administration and entrepreneurial government (Audretsch et al., 2012). Local region stakeholders expect local public administration, which uses modern communication technologies of the information era, to minimize information asymmetry related to possibilities available in the local region (Piotrowski et al., 2009), and to foster cooperation and network structures connecting various local development stakeholders (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). Taking above arguments into account, in relation to own definition of competitive advantage proposed in Literature Review section above, I decided to indicate the most important aggregates impacting on its creation by attraction and retention of investors, tourists and inhabitants.

In this study they relate to (1) lower costs of setting up and conducting economic activity, (2) advantages of the economy of scale (access to additional markets and investment locations), and (3) advantages of the economy of scope (access to goods and services, and potential of satisfaction of differentiated demand of local region stakeholders).

I define entrepreneurial activities of local regions as the activities taken up by local public administration that line with legal acts underlying spectrum of local administration responsibilities, but require additional, internal effort or resources. Entrepreneurial activities researched in this study relate to the spheres discussed in the modern local development and public sector reform discourse, which impact on the creation of competitive advantage of local regions elaborated above. These activities include: (1) management of information and knowledge, (2) creation and promotion of investment, tourism and residential product, (3) stimulation of local entrepreneurship, and (4) support of cooperation and creation of network organizations.

Basing on my own study of 50 local regions in Poland I selected 10 that that are the best in their respective class of regions with similar size, functional type, and potential investment attractiveness. My study, which is based on examples of Polish communes, examines whether and how local regions, demonstrate activities identified within modern local development and public sector reform discourse and create competitive advantages that could be a reference point for the other territorial units.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In the research part I focused on local regions, which are NUTS V level classification territorial units in the system of spatial hierarchy in European Union. Local regions are the smallest territorial units officially classified in spatial hierarchy of the European Union. In case of Poland, in which local regions were researched, there were 2479 local regions located within 16 regional investment markets.

I decided on multilayer selection of research sample to make the identification of local regions demonstrating entrepreneurial activities more probable. To narrow down the population of 2479 local regions in Poland existing at the time of research, I decided on two additional premises that needed to be fulfilled in order for the local region to be included in the sample. Each local region I selected needed to cooperate and create

networks with their stakeholders, and also create and promote its investment product, defined as a location ready for inflow of investors looking for greenfield or brownfield investment possibilities.

To perform the abovementioned selection, I used two external central government databases registering local region activities in Poland. For the selection of local regions fulfilling the premise of cooperation and creation of networks with their stakeholders, I used the National Information System of Monitoring and Financial Control of Structural Funds and Cohesion Funds (NIS SIMIK) 2007–2013 database. NIS SIMIK registers all local regions undertaking investment projects with external funds of European Funds, including partnership investments in particular. Within the NIS SIMIK database I looked for local regions that as of 30th June 2013 had the status of being a beneficiary of investment project delivered in form of local regions partnership, or local regions association. I identified 166 local regions fulfilling this premise. Next, I decided to investigate which of these 166 local regions fulfill the second premise, which was to demonstrate activities related to creation and promotion of its investment product. For the selection of such local regions, I used a database of Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency. The database is of national character, and gathers non-clustered information on all available investment products of Polish local regions to promote them among potential investors, including international investors as the database in English.

Out of 166 local regions identified using first selection criterion, there were 50 local regions informing about at least one investment product as for 27th August 2013. Final research sample included 50 local regions fulfilling 2 indicated sample selection conditions. Geographic distribution, and names of local regions in the sample had been presented below (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Research sample of Polish local regions in their regional investment markets selected for the study



Source: own elaboration based on research sample selection criteria

In relation to the administration type of local regions in the research sample, there were 18 rural, 18 urban-rural, and 16 urban local regions. Considering the number of inhabitants, 30 local regions were of small size (up to 20,000 inhabitants), 14 local regions were of medium size (above 20,000 up to 100,000 inhabitants), and 6 local regions represented big size category (above 100,000 inhabitants). In terms of potential investment attractiveness I used the potential investment attractiveness taxonomy prepared by the College of Business Administration at the Warsaw School of Economics (Godlewska-Majkowska et al., 2011). The taxonomy used was based on classes of potential investment attractiveness measured by aggregates of sets of measures of Polish Central Statistical Office. According to the last version of the taxonomy available at the time of research, 20 local regions were of high, 21 of medium, and 9 of low potential investment attractiveness. Details of the local regions in the sample had been presented in the Table 1.

Tab.1. Name, size, functional type, and potential investment attractiveness category of local regions in the research sample

No.	Name of the local region	Size of the local region as per Local Data Bank of Polish Central Statistical Office B - big, S - small, M - medium	Functional type of the local region as per TERYT typology - U - urban, R - rural, or U-R-urban-rural	Potential investment attractiveness taxonomy of researched communes in form of classes from A (the highest) to F (the lowest) as per taxonomy used in research of Collegium of Business Administration at Warsaw School of Economics basing on data for 31.12.2011
1	Krakow	B	U	A
2	Strykow	S	U-R	B
	Piła	M	U	A
4	Bialystok	B	U	A
5	Rybnik	B	U	A
6	Wegorzyno	S	U-R	E
7	Swinoujście	M	U	A
8	Katowice	B	U	A
9	Kutno	M	U	A
10	Wolin	S	U-R	C
11	Olsztyn	B	U	A
12	Polkowice	M	U-R	A
13	Krynica-Zdroj	S	U-R	A
14	Nowogard	M	U-R	A
15	Jastrzebie-Zdroj	M	U	A
16	Kamien Pomorski	S	U-R	B
17	Budzyn	S	R	C
18	Szczurowa	S	R	E
19	Ryki	M	U-R	C
20	Koszalin	B	U	A

21	Gryfice	M	U-R	C
22	Drwinia	S	R	E
23	Medyka	S	R	C
24	Przemysl	M	U	A
25	Pszczolki	S	R	C
26	Konskie	M	U-R	C
27	Karnice	S	R	E
28	Zychlin	S	U-R	D
29	Ilow	S	R	E
30	Dzialdowo	M	U	A
31	Brzezno	S	R	D
32	Ujscie	S	U-R	C
33	Golczewo	S	U-R	D
34	Debica	M	U	A
35	Turosn Koscielna	S	R	D
36	Trabki Wielkie	S	R	D
37	Zblewo	S	R	D
38	Dabrowka	S	R	D
39	Ploty	S	U-R	D
40	Krosniewice	S	U-R	C
41	Wysoka	S	U-R	D
42	Lagow	S	R	E
43	Przemkow	S	U-R	B
44	Jaslo	M	U	A
45	Orly	S	R	C
46	Slubice	S	R	E
47	Bodzanow	S	R	E
48	Belzyce	M	U-R	C
49	Moszczenica	S	R	D
50	Przybiernow	S	R	E

Source: own elaboration based on research sample selection criteria, Local Data Bank of Polish Central Statistical Office for 31st of December 2012, and data of Collegium of Business Administration at Warsaw School of Economics for 31st of December 2011

Basing on above Table 1 identified the following 9 subpopulation types by which local regions have been ranked in context of demonstrated entrepreneurial activities and presented in the next section of the paper.

A set of reactive and non-reactive research methods and techniques had been used. In relation to researching entrepreneurial activities of local regions I assumed that in the second decade of the 21st century, the basic, comprehensive and trustworthy source of complex information for local region stakeholders is the official website of the local region, together with online Bulletin of Public Information, the existence of which for each local region is required in Poland by the law.

Thus the electronic audit method basing on structured questionnaire for each official website of local region in the sample was applied (structured questionnaire

consisted of 20 questions). I analyzed content available at official websites of the communes, including archives of sections dedicated to commune current news for the period of 12 consecutive months preceding the day of electronic audit.

In the study I had also used mystery client method in form of sending electronic communication to the local region public administration from the position of potential investor interested in setting up economic activity, asking specific questions and expecting support (electronic correspondence with request for investment offer, investment incentives available, factors distinguishing local region among other of similar size in regional investment market, and possibility of a direct meeting). Within this method the response time, and quality of the answers received were measured. Another reactive research method was a survey, basing on a formal questionnaire, sent to official representatives of local regions (questionnaire consisting of 8 questions of open character)¹. Results achieved within the abovementioned methods were the subject of identified examples analysis, including their descriptive aspects and applicable aspects related to the mechanism they based on. Timeline of research performed refers to the following stages: (1) electronic audit research of official website portals of communes and their Bulletins of Public Information – 7th October 2013 – 3rd November 2013, (2) mystery client method research – 1st September 2014 – 15th September 2014, (3) survey with representatives of local regions using structured questionnaire – 25th August 2014 – 3rd November 2014. Within the electronic audit research all official websites of 50 local regions were analyzed. In the mystery client method research 19 letters of potential investor were replied². In survey with representatives of local regions 8 surveys were filled in by local administration representatives. My research hypotheses were the following: (1) Local regions demonstrate nature and intensity of entrepreneurial activities within their subpopulation types of similar size, functional type and potential attractiveness to create competitive advantages at regional investment market of the following nature: management of information and knowledge, creation and promotion of investment, tourism and residential product, stimulation of local entrepreneurship and support cooperation and creation of network organizations; (2) Basing on the intensity of entrepreneurial activities demonstrated by local regions in their subpopulation types of similar size, functional type and potential investment attractiveness, a benchmark with the best practices of entrepreneurial activities can be created.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of intensity of entrepreneurial activities within the 9 studied subpopulation types together with local region with the highest number of demonstrated entrepreneurial activities lead to a conclusion on conscious creation of competitive advantages and concentration on their particular type.

¹ Filled surveys were received from Bialystok, Katowice, Krakow, Kutno, Olsztyn, Pila, Rybnik, and Strykow.

² Replies in the mystery client research method were sent by Bialystok, Bodzanow, Debica, Dzialdowo, Kamien Pomorski, Koszalin, Krakow, Krosniewice, Lagow, Pila, Przemysl, Przybiernow, Pszczollik, Rybnik, Strykow, Szczurowa, Ujście, Zblewo, and Zychlin.

Below I present a detailed analysis of entrepreneurial activities of distinguishing character demonstrated by local regions with the best in class position in their subpopulation including the best in class and average for adequate subpopulation intensity of entrepreneurial activities of local regions studied (with minimum possible score of 0 and maximum score of 28):

Budzyn – the best local region in class of local regions of small size, rural functional type, and medium potential investment attractiveness

Budzyn is located in Wielkopolskie Voivodeship in the west part of Poland. Budzyn demonstrated 16 examples of entrepreneurial activities identified for an average number of 8.99 in compared subpopulation. The majority of entrepreneurial activities of Budzyn were demonstrated in stimulation of local entrepreneurship. Budzyn informed about economic entities localized within the local region via its official website portal serving role of intermediary between economic entities and their stakeholders, including local entrepreneurs and investors. Budzyn enabled for local economic entities to upload information on the local region's official website free of charge and served as local business support communication board. Budzyn organized learning and development initiatives directed to its inhabitants such as workshops on setting up and financing economic activity, or promoting learning process ("Days of Foreign Languages").

Pila – the best local region in class of medium size, urban functional type, and high potential investment attractiveness

Pila is located in Wielkopolskie Voivodeship in the west part of Poland. Pila demonstrated 13 examples of entrepreneurial activities identified for an average number of 8.3 in compared subpopulation. The most intensive entrepreneurial activities of Pila related to supporting cooperation and creation of network organizations. Pila engaged in organization of World Days of Innovation, numerous international science-technology conferences, and days of open education engaging various local stakeholders. Pila was also distinguished in the field of informing about investment and development possibilities by efficient and value adding reply in the mystery client research. Pila replied electronically to potential investor presenting comprehensive investment offer, including promotional folders with local investment products. Creation and promotion of local investment, tourism and residential product of Pila was also demonstrated by active presence within social media.

Pila prepared and promoted dedicated residential offer for potential students considering Pila as destination of tertiary education, including information on dedicated internships for students in Pila. Promotion of investment, tourism, and investment product was complemented by brand promise created and communicated by Pila.

Szczurowa – the best local region in class of local regions of small size, rural functional type, and low potential investment attractiveness

Szczurowa is located in Malopolskie Voivodeship in south-east part of Poland. Szczurowa demonstrated 12 examples of entrepreneurial activities identified for an average number of 8.02 in compared subpopulation. Szczurowa demonstrated numerous entrepreneurial activities related to creation and promotion of local investment,

tourism and residential product. Szczurowa led a professional public relations section on its official website to inform its stakeholders on the presence of Szczurowa in public discourse, and nurtured its own audio-visual materials promoting its area via social media such as the Youtube portal. Szczurowa informed about economic entities located within its location via official website portal of Szczurowa. Not only the names, locations and addresses of such entities were provided, but also direct contact details to people in particular entities. Szczurowa informed on financing of economic activity, and workshops dedicated to preparation of business plans and applying for external investment funds. Szczurowa effectively replied to potential investor within mystery client research. Within the cooperation with other local regions Szczurowa offered vocational trainings for its inhabitants.

Wolin – the best local region in class of small size, urban-rural functional type, and medium potential investment attractiveness

Wolin is located in Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship, in north-west part of Poland near the border with Germany. Wolin demonstrated 13 examples of entrepreneurial activities identified for an average number of 8.3 in compared subpopulation. Wolin was distinguished for its support of cooperation and creation of network organizations with local regions located in Germany (Kalkar and Usedom), France (Venesault), Russia (Zelenogradsk) or Sweden (Staffanstrop). Wolin stimulated cooperation and creation of networks by organizing international scientific events, including forums for academics and international competitions for students.

Wolin also created and promoted local investment, tourism and residential product aimed at investors, tourists and residents from Germany, actively competing for development resources with local regions there. Wolin actively organized local competitions with entrepreneurial attitude recognition award, and organized a local yearly event – St. Jacob Fair, that additionally stimulated promotion of local region and economic exchange

Krakow – the best local region in class of big size, urban functional type and high potential investment attractiveness

Krakow is located in Malopolskie Voivodeship in south-east part of Poland, it is the capital of the voivodeship. Krakow demonstrated 19 examples of entrepreneurial activities identified for an average number of 8.3 in compared subpopulation. Krakow was distinguished in field of informing about investment and development possibilities because of comprehensive reply in 1 working day in the mystery client research. Krakow represented many cost-intensive and complex entrepreneurial activities, including organization of international job fairs, leading local job offers portal within the official website of Krakow, or engagement in stimulation of entrepreneurship among students by regular presentations of investment and employment offer of Krakow in tertiary schools located in its area.

Till 30th May 2014, representatives of public administration of Krakow delivered 318 presentations for 7864 students. In terms of preparing and sharing non-obligatory documents supporting decision-making process of local development stakeholders, Krakow was the only local region that had its up-to-date local development strategy

published at the official website both in Polish and in English. Krakow led its own Geographic Information System (GIS) called "Observatory" aimed to minimize asymmetry of information for potential investors in Krakow. Krakow regularly prepared and issued its own virtual magazine available on the official website, and 13 folders promoting selected tourism aspects of Krakow available in 6 different language versions. On the top of that, Krakow offered a mobile application enabling its users to access practical information about Krakow, for example information enriching tourism experience by informing on location of selected landmarks, or public communication supporting tourism visits. In the field of supporting cooperation and creating networks Krakow partnered 22 local regions with official partner status, 9 development oriented organizations, and was a local region with most intensive cooperation network within whole sample researched.

Strykow – the best local region in class of small size, urban-rural functional type and medium potential investment attractiveness

Strykow is located in Lodzkie Voivodeship in central part of Poland. Strykow demonstrated 21 examples of entrepreneurial activities identified for an average number of 12.51 in compared subpopulation. Within the study, Strykow was distinguished by intensive support cooperation and creation of network organizations. Representatives of public administration of Strykow participated in my survey, and comprehensive reply in mystery client research method was sent within 1 day, including information on available investment products and investment incentives with proposition for sending additional promotion materials via traditional post. Strykow cooperated with central government in preparation and execution of economic visits and international economic missions aimed at promotion of its investment products for investors. Strykow led an open dialogue by preparing local strategic documents, and encouraged its stakeholders to actively engage and contribute in this process by regular meetings and collaboration with local public authorities.

Ryki – the best local region in class of medium size, urban-rural functional type and medium potential investment attractiveness

Ryki is located in Lubelskie Voivodeship in the east part of Poland. Ryki demonstrated 13 examples of entrepreneurial activities identified for an average number of 10.5 in compared subpopulation. Ryki was distinguished by entrepreneurial activities in informing about external financing possibilities of economic activity for its local stakeholders, including informing on opportunities not directly located within Ryki. Ryki informed about educational initiatives (including "third age universities", leading activates for the elderly), and job fairs taking places in neighborhood locations, which proves its openness and ability to derive from possibilities taking place not only in the region, but also in its direct vicinity.

Polkowice and Nowogard – the best local regions in class of medium size, urban-rural functional type and high potential investment attractiveness

Polkowice is located in Dolnoslaskie Voivodeship in south-west part of Poland, and Nowogard is located in Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship in north-west part of Poland.

Polkowice and Nowogard both demonstrated 14 examples of entrepreneurial activities identified for an average number of 14 in compared subpopulation.

Polkowice was stimulating local entrepreneurship by organizing local initiative related to promotion of history, tradition and current activity of local entrepreneurs and companies located within its area. The activity was aimed at rewarding the attitudes worth following, and promoting it among Polkowice stakeholders. Polkowice informed about internships and job offers within its location, and also abroad in cooperation with abroad job offices. Polkowice as the only local region in the study had local low emission strategy aimed at the increase of its energy efficiency, and local development strategy oriented to sustainable development.

Nowogard, as a local region in the same class with the same number of entrepreneurial activities identified, was distinguished by its intensive support of cooperation and creation of network connections by interactions with 8 local regions of official partner status (including local regions from Macedonia, Germany, Serbia, Sweden, and the Ukraine), promoting its investment product and informing on advantages related to locating new economic activity within its area.

Wegorzyno – the best local region in class of medium size, urban-rural functional type and low potential investment attractiveness

Wegorzyno is located in Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship in north-west part of Poland. Wegorzyno demonstrated 16 examples of entrepreneurial activities identified for an average number of 16 in compared subpopulation. Wegorzyno intensively created and promoted its local investment, tourism and residential product. Wegorzyno offered folders with investment offer available in electronic format on its official website, folder with attractions for tourists visiting its area, including the description of biking paths and tours proposals, or maps with local lakes dedicated for the enthusiasts of fishing, including biking paths leading to the most attractive fishing places. Wegorzyno was also active in stimulation of local entrepreneurship and organized workshops for its stakeholders on the preparation of investment projects' financing applications and applying for external investment projects' financing.

CONCLUSIONS

Basing on the performed research sample of 50 communes, the presented examples of Polish local regions representing various locations, size, functional type, and potential investment attractiveness prove that demonstration of entrepreneurial activities is not determined by these factors, and can have cost-efficient character.

Examples of the best in class local regions might provide a reference point on possibilities in increase of investment attractiveness for local regions of similar location, size, functional type and potential investment attractiveness. Identified entrepreneurial activities impact on costs of setting up and conducting economic activity by minimizing transaction costs of access to the information, advantages of economy of scale by enabling access to additional markets through networks created by local regions, and advantages of economy of scope by intermediating in offer of goods and services of

economic entities located within local region. Presented examples of small and medium size local regions prove that in context of limited resources and lack of market leader status a local region does not need to focus on all entrepreneurial activities possible, but rather to concentrate on one or a couple of its types to create competitive advantages and differentiate from local region of similar size, functionality type, and potential investment attractiveness at regional investment market.

Intensity of entrepreneurial activities demonstrated by local regions in their sub-population types of similar size, functional type and potential investment attractiveness enables creation of benchmarks with the best practices of entrepreneurial activities providing arguments, which might be supportive in diagnosis, planning and implementing of activities related to conscious increase of attractiveness and competitiveness at regional investment market by local regions. Presented results complement to studies performed by other researchers (Kasprowicz et al., 2014) by providing detailed examples of entrepreneurial activities of communes of different types, and toward broader range of local regions stakeholders.

Due to the intentionally narrowed in the study types of studied entrepreneurial activities, and local regions I recognize the need of further, qualitative, in-depth studies focused on understanding mechanisms of entrepreneurial activities leading to creation of concrete competitive advantages, their resilience and impact on real investment attractiveness over time measured with comprehensive and comparable statistical data.

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