

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of increasing the role of local authorities in the process of regional and local systems' development, the importance of research on this issue is also increasing. They allow for the analysis of the changes taking place and for defining the expected directions of development against the background of changing internal conditions and national, international or global environment. Regional and local systems are not isolated socio-economic, cultural or political areas, but through diverse economic, social and cultural relations they are elements of more complex spatial structures. This is the trend represented by works relating the research results of selected problems.

Economic policy is an important factor of development. M. Szajt, taking into account patent activity, employment and expenditure in the R&D sector, and human resources for science and technology, addresses the issue of measuring innovation distance in spatial and dynamic terms. Research results achieved allowed him to identify the disparities in the level of development of Polish regions and their distance from European regions.

Modern transformation processes cover structures developed in the times of centrally controlled economy. This is illustrated by M. Dolata's article discussing transformations of the urban structures of former East Germany which occurred in the years of the implementation of market economy rules. The high difficulty of adapting cities to new economic conditions was pointed out, resulting in the processes of diminishing of their economic and social importance in relation to cities in West Germany.

The thesis, known from previous works, is that large investments have a fundamental impact on local and regional development. This issue is addressed by W. Dyba who analyses the impact of the Volkswagen-Crafter factory in Białężyce near Września on the transformations of social and natural structures of the local system. They are mainly the result of the creation of new jobs, development of municipal facilities, increase in turnover in services sector, as well as the creation of new housing estates and the possibility of attracting new companies cooperating with Volkswagen.

In addition to the economic benefits of industrial production, there also exists a highly unfavourable phenomenon of recycling of municipal waste generated in households. This issue is addressed by J. Rudewicz who deals with the organisational and regulatory solutions used in European countries in relation to waste management.

As a result of the increasing process of concentration of capital, the structures of commercial services are changing. With this in mind, M. Mayer-Wydra holds that the expression of it is, among others, the changing structure and hierarchy of commercial areas in the city space. She justifies that the city is characterised by stable elements of the spatial layout of commercial services with varied levels of hierarchy. A. Kulawiak points to the conflict between small commercial units and developing large-surface ones. This is illustrated by the changing importance of marketplaces in the city space.

Important factors in shaping regional systems include location and access to business environment institutions. J. Ładysz justified this through examining the spatial concentration of these institutions with regard to the settlement network on the territory of the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship. He believes that existing spatial disparities in this regard will continue to grow, which may hinder possibilities for entrepreneurship development.

Ł. Damurski takes up the topic of the role of local services centres in the socio-economic space. He provides guidelines for spatial economy, defining the relationship between the quality of life (well-being) of those living in residential settlements and the spatial planning of said settlements.

The varied level of development of the European space affects the different range of trade links. This is illustrated by B. Kołsut's analysis which undertakes the issue of Poland's import of used cars. He assumes that changes in import values have been influenced by the economic slowdown, the reduction in income, restrictive vehicle scrapping schemes in Western Europe and the value of złoty in relation to euro.

In the conditions of the increasing impact of education on the level of socio-economic and cultural development, the shaping of a book market plays an important role. A. Czaplńska assumes that on the basis of modern technologies, access to the text of the book is likely to further increase. She considers the socio-cultural factor and the development of an information society in which the information and a convenient medium is important to be key factors of further developments of this market.

We encourage you to develop this particularly topical research issue in order to learn more precisely the rules for shaping the socio-economic and cultural life of regional and local systems. Implementing obtained results can make a significant contribution to improving management processes and increasing the competitiveness of spatial systems. We wish to stress that our journal remains open for those interested in the topics undertaken.

*Zbigniew Ziolo, Wioletta Kilar*