

BOOK REVIEWS

Vladimír SLAVÍK, *Cross-border cooperation and foreign partnership cooperation (Cezhraničná spolupráca a zahraničná partnerská spolupráca)*, Bratislava: Comenius University, 2023, 226 pages

The reviewed work is a result of the author's long-term activity in the field at the level of basic research, didactic interpretation, as well as application in public administration. Although I am convinced that the publication could have come to existence already long ago, I have to admit that its longer "maturation period" had a positive effect on the final output. In my opinion, my colleague V. Slavík successfully managed to interconnect closely related subjects, namely border research chiefly from a geographical perspective and the study of the decision-making sphere as an important phenomenon for regional development.

At the same time, a similar pattern or principle of hierarchical observation has been applied within both levels, starting from theoretical (general) features through global, continental (European, Central European or "neighbourhood"), national, regional up to local dimensions. I agree with the author that the issue concerning cross-border and partnership (meant always foreign) cooperation has only recently been included in professional texts dedicated to regional development and regional politics. Therefore, I am glad that – in a way – the textbook fills in these blank spaces.

The presented comparison of development and situation at different scale levels then supports a plastic (complex) perception of the relevant issue, which is so close to geography as a scientific discipline. As a "foreign" reviewer, I am naturally pleased by the attention paid either to the Czech Republic as a close

neighbour and nation, or indirectly further west to Germany as a driving force of European integration, including cross-border and partnership cooperation. I am convinced that specifically cross-border and partnership activities are a tangible manifestation of Europeanisation, which should not only be managed, but also promoted.

In the process of text creation, the author used countless titles of diverse nature, language, extent and provenance, as well as a number of accompanying tabular, graphical, and cartographic elements. The variety of the textbook's elements adds to its attractiveness: seen from works of legal character up to selected findings obtained, e.g., from the research of one locality. This "inventory" alone would be praiseworthy and, to a certain extent, it builds on similar works from the beginning of the millennium. It is surprising how Slavík (as the sole author) managed to interconnect these "sources" and present them synergistically. I do not know any similar publication, at least in the Central European context. Although the focus on the Slovak situation is evident, examples from "elsewhere" form an integral part of this book.

The chosen structure of the book is natural, its individual parts (Chapters 1 to 6 with different extents) follow each other logically. I have already stressed above the interconnection of two topics: the central issue and the description of external environments (framework conditions) for cross-border and/or partnership cooperation.

As the work is primarily a textbook, I evaluate the didactic concept, too, having no major comments. The text itself is dense, but retains the required legibility. The illustrative or accompanying material is relatively rich (31 tables, 23 graphs, 2 diagrams, 23 maps, and 73 images), which certainly contributes to the attractiveness of the publication. This component includes both well-known elements and – what I appreciate – completely new, original or adopted, elements that are fully left in an original shape. Professional terminology applied corresponds to relevant standards.

Personally, I do not quite agree with the author's statement about the novelty of interest in the borderland. Rather, I am inclined to strengthening interest in research and increasing its significance, particularly in connection with principal political milestones. In modern history it was, e.g., the split of Czechoslovakia in 1992/1993, the accession of the two successor states to the European Union in 2004, the incorporation of Slovakia (and the Czech Republic) into the Schengen Area in 2011, etc. Likewise, it is untrue that no cross-border cooperation occurred before 1989, at least between "friendly" countries of the Eastern Bloc, for example, in the Czechoslovak-Polish border area.

I am convinced – thanks to language proximity – of the potential use of this publication not only at Czech university workplaces, but also within public administration. Regional development requires professional solutions and the reviewed work provides enough study material for diverse target groups. In my

view, it is exactly a considerable overlap from the academic environment to the decision-making sphere that can be deemed positive; after all, the author has cultivated and promoted this approach throughout his career.

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FROM EXPORT OBSESSION TO ENERGY TRANSITION: HOT TOPICS IN GERMAN ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

With a review of:

Jan-Otmar HESSE, *Exportweltmeister. Geschichte einer deutschen Obsession*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Berlin 2023, 447 pages, Elmar KULKE (ed.), *Wirtschaftsgeographie Deutschlands* (third edition), Springer, Berlin 2023, 400 pages, and Ingo LIEFNER and Sebastian LOSACKER, *Nachhaltige Wirtschaftsgeographie*, Brill Schöningh, Paderborn 2023, 259 pages

1. INTRODUCTION

German scientists have made a major contribution to the development of economic geography as an academic discipline. Traditionally, Germany has had wide regional and local disparities, which may explain why economists like Von Thünen, Weber, and Christaller were early to explore the spatial dimension of production and consumption. It was also a German textbook that three decades ago sparked my interest in economic geography: Ludwig Schätzl's *Wirtschaftsgeographie* (three volumes, on theory, empirics, and policy). The first edition of this trilogy appeared in 1978 and has been updated numerous times since.

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