

Review about the collection of Regional Development, Identities and Democratic Integration

The collection of „Regional Development: Identities and Democratic Integration" has a significant contribution to the literature on regional development by integrating global and local perspectives. Its relevance lies in its interdisciplinary approach, including sociology, economics, and political science to address both theoretical and practical concerns in regional development. It provides a comprehensive understanding of regional development, with particular focus on Serbia and its democratic transition. The book attempts to explore regional inequalities, identity politics, and democratic integration from different perspectives. By applying several theoretical frameworks, empirical case studies, and interdisciplinary methodologies, it contributes to the literature on both sociology, political science, economics, and development studies.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part presents a broad theoretical framework for understanding regional development from a global perspective by involving Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems and political realism theories, the question of sustainable development, the role of international cooperation and geopolitics. The key topics highlight the importance of participatory democracy, international cooperation, sustainable development and regionalism in Serbia and its neighbouring.

The second part examines the causes and consequences of regional inequalities in Serbia, with specific reference to labour markets, economic disparities, and educational differences. The authors use mainly data analysis in this session: the detailed analysis of fragile states indices of international organisations, Labour Force Surveys, own surveys data, Eurostat and census data show how regions like Southern Serbia have historically suffered from underdevelopment due to economic restructuring, political instability, and social disparities. The section provides a historical account of how political and economic shifts, especially after the breakup of Yugoslavia, have deepened regional disparities in Serbia, including the rural-urban economic positions. The results also show that interregional differences between rural and urban areas are more significant at narrower regional levels (i.e. at the NUTS-3 level). By examining educational differences, one of the others found that computer literacy among citizens is not as pronounced as differences in educational composition.

The third part focuses on the Serbian and Russian rural areas by identifying the convergence and divergence points of catching up. It discusses the status of women in agriculture, the challenges faced by rural regions, and the digital divide in rural Serbia. It also highlights the role of climate change in exacerbating these challenges and emphasizes the importance of sustainable development models. The section applies both qualitative and quantitative analyses, particularly focusing on demographic surveys and digital infrastructure assessments. It also includes case studies of rural women and agricultural communities, providing in-depth analysis of the socioeconomic challenges these groups face. The section contributes to ongoing debates

about how to integrate rural regions into national economies by applying a complex approach and improved access to technology and sustainable agricultural practices. It highlights that benefits from the application of new technologies and digital infrastructure in society create new inequalities, however, these also provide opportunities for social development that would improve the quality of life of deprived groups and communities.

The final section explores the cultural dimensions of regionalism, focusing on how identity is constructed and maintained within regions. It examines the role of historical memory, symbols, and cultural practices in shaping regional belonging, with case studies on transgenerational trauma. This section predominantly uses qualitative research methods, including interviews, historical analysis, and case studies. The exploration of identity is contextualized within broader sociological theories of regionalism, culture, and conflict. This section shows the importance of telling the true stories for second-generation exiles. The section enriches the literature on identity and regionalism by demonstrating how cultural identities are shaped by historical and social contexts. By linking regional identity with broader sociological concepts of culture and conflict, this section provides a framework for understanding how identity dynamics influence regional development. The case studies of Belgrade and other regions offer valuable insights into the complex relationships between regional identity and national belonging.

In sum, the book examines the question of regionalism from different perspectives, stands out as an interdisciplinary work that not only addresses the structural barriers to regional development but also emphasizes the role of participatory democracy and identity in shaping regional outcomes.

Overall, this book is a valuable resource for scholars and policymakers interested in regional development, identity, and democracy. It offers both theoretical advancements and practical recommendations for addressing regional inequalities in Serbia and beyond.

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Viktória Endrődi-Kovács, PhD

Associate Professor

Institute of Global Studies

Corvinus University of Budapest