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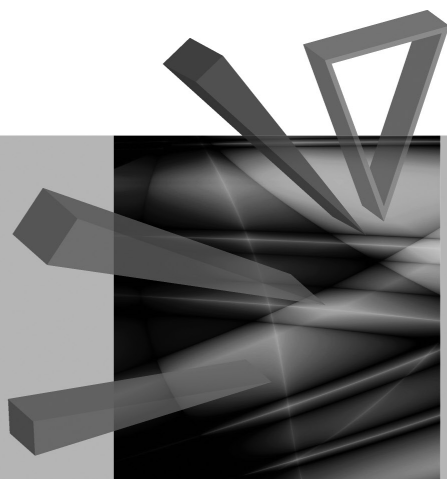
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Local Economy in Theory and Practice Planning and Evaluation Aspects



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EVALUATION OF INVESTMENT ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE CENTRAL POMERANIA COMMUNES BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Summary: Specific areas of larger territories have varying value for investors. A set of area characteristics determines the investment attractiveness of that area, i.e. its usefulness and the impact on a competitive advantage over other areas, which in turn has an impact on attracting investment. The author conducted a survey of the investment attractiveness of Central Pomerania communes: a geographic area consisting of the sub-region Koszalin and sub-region Słupsk. The study was conducted at the turn of 2011 and 2012. We analyzed the impact of various factors affecting the investment attractiveness of the community. In conclusion, it was found that the factors of investment attractiveness are primarily the low labor costs and natural and geographical location (location premium). Local governments see their key role as improving the investment attractiveness of the community, but their activity in this area is insufficient. Central Pomerania is not very popular among foreign investors, as the result of many local factors.

Keywords: investment attractiveness, Central Pomerania, local government, community.

1. Introduction

For investors, certain areas are more attractive than others, but the outcome of this assessment is influenced not only by the objective characteristics of the territory, but also the type of project and the preferences of the investor. Different locations of investment create different projects for the investment process and its subsequent operation. For investors, each area has some characteristics of trade – characterized by a set of features which, in comparison to other locations, encourage or discourage its selection as a place of business. The set of features determines the investment attractiveness of the area, that is, determines its usefulness as an investment location, designate the area's competitive advantage over others and creates the power to attract investors [Godlewska 2001, p. 26]. These features can be classified as follows:

1) political climate: political views of ruling elites and their relations with investors, historical background, importance of the private sector, benefits for entrepreneurs,

- 2) social climate: the situation on the labor market, quality, safety, attitude to work,
- 3) economic climate:
 - a) type A: on a national scale: the economic situation of the country, national and regional market capacity as determinants of the decision to invest,
 - b) type B: infrastructure of the country or the region and its impact on the effectiveness to attract capital.
- 4) administrative climate: a range of influence of administrative factors on tax policy, price control, regulations.

A collection of these elements shapes the investment climate in the region, which is reflected in its attractiveness to investors. The components of the set have a different source. Some of them are derived from macro-economic impacts, others are developed locally. The process of shaping them is also different: some of them are objective features of the region due to its geographical location, whilst others are a function of actions and attitudes.

In this study, the delimitation of the area of Central Pomerania (*Pomorze Środkowe*) is adopted across two sub-regions: Koszalin and Słupsk. Based on the physical-geographical, historical, ethnic, administrative and economic criteria. The social and economic situation of Central Pomerania, after the administrative reform of the country, is of the deepest concern of the communities, regional and local authorities and researchers. The adoption of a such scope has a theoretical and practical importance.

2. Administrative division of Central Pomerania

Central Pomerania is a geographical area, which roughly represents the former Koszalin province, and is now an integral part of the fragments of two provinces: Pomerania and West Pomerania. The Słupsk sub-region, which accounts for 44% of the area of Central Pomerania, consists of five counties and a city with county rights – Słupsk. The Koszalin sub-region includes eight counties and a city with county rights – Koszalin.

Sub-regions are level 3 in the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS), compiled on the basis of the *Nomenclature of Territorial Units of Statistic* (NUTS, used in the European Union). NUTS was introduced in Poland by the Regulation of the Council of Ministers on 13 July 2000.

Isolating the Central Pomerania area and treating it as a whole has its substantive reasons. Once, there were two provinces functioning in this area: Koszalin and Słupsk. Although the sub-regions do not quite correspond to the prior administrative division, the area adopted for this study shows lots of similarities in the historical, settlement, demographic, ethnic, socio-economic, physical and geographical terms [Figurska 2003, p. 51].

Treating the Central Pomerania area as a whole, which is internally homogeneous, is used to a great extent used in scientific literature on various aspects of the functioning of this territory as well as in publications on socio-economic life [Figurska, Wiśniewski 2008, p. 4].

Central Pomerania consists of 15 counties, including two cities possessing the rights of the county – Słupsk and Koszalin – which constitute the bipolar system for this area. There are 87 communes, including 14 municipalities, 22 urban-rural communes and 51 rural communes. The area includes 36 towns.

Table 1 presents basic data along with the basic information about the level of investment in local government units.

Table 1. Administrative division of Central Pomerania and investment (2010)

Sub-regions and counties	Area [km ²]	Population [thousand]	Number of communes	Capital expenditure of companies [million PLN]	Capital expenditure of private companies [million PLN]	Capital expenditure of public sector [million PLN]	Capital expenditure per capita [PLN]
CENTRAL POMERANIA	18 550	1 071.980	87	2 068.2	1 109.8	1 492.4	
SUB-REGION							
KOSZALIN	10 402	591.538	49	1 349.8	612.7	707.2	2 281.89
Białogard County	845	48.193	4	242.3	45.3	64.1	5 027.70
Drawsko County	1 764	57.353	6	60.3	32.2	57.2	1 051.38
Kołobrzeg County	724	77.244	7	232.0	73.0	128.6	3 003.47
Koszalin County	1 653	64.441	8	136.6	103.3	91.4	2 119.77
Sławno County	1 043	57.251	6	37.4	27.3	25.1	653.26
Szczecinek County	1 766	76.900	6	244.3	75.8	92.3	3 176.85
Świdwin County	1 093	48.205	6	31.5	19.4	15.6	653.46
Wałcz County	1 415	54.023	5	135.2	102.4	81.0	2 502.64
City of Koszalin	98	107.948	1	230.2	134.0	121.9	2 132.51
SUB-REGION							
SŁUPSK	8 184	480.448	38	718.4	497.1	785.2	1 495.27
Bytów County	2 192	76.043	10	71.4	58.7	47.0	938.94
Chojnice County	1 364	93.411	5	127.3	100.0	74.7	1 362.79
Człuchów County	1 575	56.762	7	82.5	67.7	60.4	1 453.44
Lębork County	706	63.915	5	72.5	45.2	31.8	1 134.32
Słupsk County	2 304	93.230	10	248.7	154.4	522.7	2 667.60
City of Słupsk	43	97.087	1	116.0	71.1	48.6	1 194.80

Source: [Rocznik Statystyczny... 2012a; 2012b].

3. Investment attractiveness – basic terms

The area of Central Pomerania, consisting of fragments of the Pomeranian (*Pomorskie*) and West Pomeranian (*Zachodniopomorskie*) province, can be identified in various rankings of the investment attractiveness of local systems. For example, in the IBnGR report of 2012 [*Ranking atrakcyjności... 2012*] both provinces are in sixth and seventh place, while according to some partial criteria they are in the country's lead. For instance, in terms of the sales market, the Pomeranian province takes third place and in terms of the activity towards investors the West Pomeranian province is also in third place in the country. In the assessment of the economic activity of sub-regions, the area of West Pomerania received an "average" grade for industrial activity and an "average" grade for service activity – whereas for technological progress, the Koszalin sub-region obtained a "high" grade and the Słupsk sub-region got an "average" grade [*Ranking atrakcyjności... 2012*, pp. 31–37].

One can discuss the contribution of the sub-regions of Central Pomerania in these results. The authors of those rankings usually take the viewpoint of a potential investor to assess the given area, whereas the author took another point of view, of how the issue of investment attractiveness is perceived by the commune authorities.

The research was carried out at the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012. The relevant survey was sent out to all 87 communes of Central Pomerania, and was answered by 68 communes, which represents 78.2%.

Investment attractiveness is understood as the ability to attract investors through offering a competitive advantage of the locations, possible to achieve in the course of running a business [Gawlikowska-Hueckel, Sumiński 2000, p. 7]. These areas offer the optimal combination of location factors, whilst at the same time creating the best conditions for business operations, and thus attracting investors. For the synthetic evaluation of the investment attractiveness of provinces, several variables are analyzed, which are the basis for the assessment of the spatial differentiation of individual location benefits (factors), in particular:

- 1) transport accessibility,
- 2) benefits of work,
- 3) the quantity and quality of labor resources,
- 4) absorption of the market,
- 5) level of economic and social infrastructure,
- 6) level of economic development,
- 7) level of public safety.

These factors are given different weights depending on the type of business.

The investment attractiveness of the sub-regions is shaped by seven partial indicators. Four of them have a direct impact on production costs, and therefore are the primary parameters that determines the location of businesses:

- 1) the quantity of work resources,
- 2) transport accessibility,

- 3) the amount of labor costs,
- 4) level of the economic infrastructure development.

The impact of three other indicators is indirect and related to the possibilities of cooperation or the inability to use the optimal location due to being situated in protected areas:

- 1) protection of the natural environment,
- 2) level of public safety,
- 3) level of economic development.

4. External investors in the community

Most of the examined communes reported investment in their area made by outside investors. The question “Was there any investment made by external investors in your commune?” was answered affirmatively by 48 communes (55.2%) pointing out domestic investors, and 7 communes (8.0%) indicated foreign investors¹. The vast majority are domestic investors having their registered office outside the commune. Another survey question concerned the assessment of the significance of investment for the commune’s employment rate and income. There was the following distribution of indicators: very important – 12 communes (13.8%), significant – 12 communes (13.8%), noticeable – 24 communes (27.6%). Their role was rated as insignificant only in seven rural communes (8.0%).

The diversification of investment in the commune is interesting, which is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Types of activities of the most important investment in the commune after the year 2000*

Type of the activity of the most important investment in the commune after the year 2000	External investors		Internal investors	
Industry	17	19.5%	15	17.2%
Construction	3	3.4%	15	17.2%
Services	25	28.7%	32	36.8%
Trade	37	42.5%	32	36.8%
Tourism	45	51.7%	42	48.3%
Others	3	3.4%	3	3.4%

*Note: The communes had the possibility of multi-variant answers.

Source: own elaboration.

The investors’ interest was focused mostly on tourism, trade and services. There are no major differences between the investors coming from outside the commune and domestic investors (commune residents), though we can see the predominance

¹ Note: The survey questions gave the possibility of multi-variant answers.

of foreign investors in the field of tourism and trade at the expense of construction. The segment of internal investors also dominated tourism (rural tourism), but its distribution is more even.

Another question concerned the factors which – in the opinion of the respondents, representatives of local governments – led investors to choose the commune as a place of investment (Table 3).

Table 3. Decisive factors of impact on the choice of the commune as a place for investment

Impact factors on decision	Number of indications	%
Geographical location	35	40.2
Technical infrastructure	13	14.9
Qualified staff	5	5.7
Low labor costs	25	28.7
Easy access to raw materials	15	17.2
Natural values	13	14.9
Created by the commune preferences	17	19.5
Good promotion of the commune	5	5.7
Investor's personal reasons	15	17.2
Accident	3	3.4

Source: own elaboration.

According to the respondents, the key factors in choosing a commune as a place of investment were geographical location and low labor costs. It can be concluded that the geographical factor is perceived through the important business features of the commune such as a good resource base (mainly for food processing), proximity to the border crossing point (sea) and roads to ports, proximity to a large market (around Koszalin, Słupsk) and tourist attractions. The importance of low labor costs, preferences created by the commune and personal (not related to business) reasons of investors were also noted. The quality of human resources (qualified staff) and the promotion of the commune were of marginal importance, which proves the low evaluation of these factors in attracting investors to the commune. It can be assumed that the explanation for this evaluation is the presence of investment with low and easy to meet qualification requirements.

5. Factors of investment attractiveness of communes

Against this background, we can see as interesting these indicated features which, according to the representatives of local governments, are important commune assets for investors, such as investment locations, and so they create the investment attractiveness of the commune (Table 4).

Table 4. Features affecting investment attractiveness of the commune

Features of the commune attractiveness	Number of indications	%
Geographical location	51	58.6
Good technical infrastructure	47	54.0
Qualified staff	13	14.9
Low labor costs	65	74.7
Favorable conditions for supply	13	14.9
Favorable conditions for sale	3	3.4
Natural values	60	69.0
Good prospects for the development of the commune	22	25.3
Created according to the commune's preferences	23	26.4

Source: own elaboration.

The most important assets in the analyzed communes were low labor costs and natural values. The preferred features were also the following: geographical location, which in practice means a coastal location; technical infrastructure is relatively highly evaluated, but it is identified as the network infrastructure (water, sewer, power grid, telecommunication). External investors prefer two characteristics: geographical location and low labor costs. However, the technical infrastructure and natural values are not most important to them, so there is a significant disparity in the assessment of commune assets by the local government and investors. In contrast, factors of commune unattractiveness were also examined and presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Features affecting unattractiveness of the commune for investors

Features of commune unattractiveness	Number of indications	%
Geographical location	20	23.0
Poor technical infrastructure	35	40.2
Inadequately qualified personnel	13	14.9
Poor work culture	5	5.7
Unfavorable supply conditions	22	25.3
Unfavorable sales conditions	15	17.2
Poor natural values	0	0.0
Poor prospects for the commune development	5	5.7
Poor economic incentives of the commune	30	34.5

Source: own elaboration.

The unattractive features of communes are less clearly indicated. Poor technical infrastructure (with an emphasis on the road network) and the poor commercial incentives of a commune can be distinguished. It is interesting that in both questions, the problem of the quality of human resources and work culture is recognized to a small extent. According to the respondents, these factors do not threaten to discourage investors, although they are not a force that attracts them. This may mean

that the investor is associated with business activities that have little requirement for qualified staff. The evaluation of factors of commune investment unattractiveness is confirmed in the answer to the next question: “What were the reasons that made the investors interested in investments in the commune, withdraw from these plans?”. Relatively speaking, there were not noted many cases of investors’ failing to implement their investment. This may indicate both a lack of knowledge about such changes of the position by investors and their weak interest in the commune. The decision to withdraw from the investment was influenced by: poor technical infrastructure (10 indications – 11.5%), lack of proper land (7 indications – 8.0%), and negative social climate (5 indications – 5.7%).

6. Developing investment attractiveness of the commune

The next group of questions concerned activities undertaken for the improvement of the investment climate in the commune. In this regard, you will notice the very high awareness of the role of the local self-government. Table 6 presents the results of the question about the institution having the greatest impact on the investment attractiveness of the commune.

Table 6. Institution which has a dominant impact on the investment attractiveness of the commune

Institution, organization	Number of indications	%
Residents of the commune	27	31.0
Commune office	63	72.4
County	15	17.2
Provincial self-government	20	23.0
Governor	10	11.5
Government	20	23.0
The European Union	22	25.3

Source: own elaboration.

Respondents indicate that the key entities shaping the investment attractiveness of the commune are the commune office and its residents. The other entities are assigned a smaller role. This can prove both the lack of a tendency to look for a causative power in the various “external forces” and the high awareness of the local self-government of its responsibility for the economic development of the commune, as well as the lack of belief in the effectiveness of aid from higher levels of authority. The next survey’s questions, whose statistical effect is shown in Table 7 and Table 8, verified this opinion, at least partially.

Table 7. Current compilation prepared by the commune

Current compilation in the commune	Number of indications	%
Strategy of the commune development	64	73.6
Local spatial development plans	25	28.7
Long-term investment plans	52	59.8
Database of areas for investment	31	35.6
The commune program of enterprise assistance	7	8.0
Commune-based study	55	63.2
Others (local development plan, environmental protection plan, waste management plan)	22	25.2

Source: own elaboration.

The program preparation of the commune is relatively good – nearly all confirmed being in possession of a development strategy (many of them have not updated it for a long time), most have a long-term commune investment plan and a prepared commune study. The respondents from 31 communes confirmed the possession of a database of areas for investments, though there is disagreement in the interpretation of the database concept and its contents. The current local spatial development plan has been prepared by 25 communes, however some of them have only partial plans. The commune program of enterprise assistance is a rarity. Therefore, they were also asked about the instruments used to promote entrepreneurship (see Table 8).

Table 8. Proper activities to promote entrepreneurship in the commune

Activities to promote entrepreneurship in the commune	Number of indications	%
Separation of areas for enterprise investments	45	51.7
Utility infrastructure in the areas for investment	35	40.2
Access to facilities and commune properties at an affordable price	27	31.0
Facilitating the procedures relating to the investment process	15	17.2
Tax incentives for new businesses and investment	25	28.7
Separation of economic activation zones	5	5.7
Legal counseling	10	11.5
Promotion of the commune	60	69.0

Source: own elaboration.

Most of the indications concerned the promotion of the commune as a place of economic activity. This is surprising insofar as the promotion factors were considered of little significance in shaping the locational decisions of external investors. This may indicate the low efficiency of the existing promotion, as well as the need for promotional activity addressed to investors other than those interested in the

commune so far (active territorial marketing). The separation and preparation of land for investment are in second and third place respectively.

The main limitation of enhancing the attractiveness of the commune is the shortage of funds. Local governments were asked about the following hypothetical situation: if there was no shortage of funds, what tasks would be considered a priority? Improvement of the transport infrastructure was identified as the most urgent (55 indications – 63.2%) as well as the enhancement of the promotion of the commune (45 indications – 51.7%). Increasing the incentives for investors is only in third place (33 indications – 37.9%).

Promoting the commune and attracting investors are primarily the tasks of the commune authorities (65 indications – 74.7%). A separate organizational unit deals with this in only every fourth commune. Direct contact with the commune office was considered the most appropriate way to obtain information about the commune (59 indications – 67.8%). Nearly two thirds of the communes offer information brochures about the commune (28 indications – 32.2%). Most of the communes have their own website (55 indications – 63.2%), but only 16 communes also present it in a foreign language version. Nearly half of the surveyed communes benefit from the opportunities for promoting the commune through the promotional materials of the county or province (41 indications – 47.1%). Table 9 presents the main areas of interest in investment in the commune.

Table 9. Types of investment interest in the commune

Commune investments area	Number of indications	%
Foreign capital	22	25.3
Domestic capital	37	42.5
Local entrepreneurs	41	47.1
Use of local raw materials	20	23.0
Job creation	61	70.1
Not harmful to the environment	38	43.7
No difference – each is good	20	23.0

Source: own elaboration.

In the efforts to attract investors, the question of sources of capital is crucial. However, interest in national capital is greater than in foreign capital, and local entrepreneurs as investors are singled out even more frequently. This may be the result of the evaluation of realistic chances to acquire capital. The most important expectation is the creation of new jobs. Twenty communes declared that any investment is good for the commune. Such an attitude can be attributed to the high rate of unemployment, where job creation is a priority, regardless of the type of investment.

In conditions of high unemployment, the tendency to liberalize requirements for investors is strengthened by the relatively low evaluation of the chances to acquire

external investors by the communes. To the question: “How do you determine the chances of acquiring external investments by the commune in a period of 2–3 years?” 30 communes assess their chances as probable, 24 communes as small, 6 communes as very big, and 8 communes as none. This means that the previously mentioned commune attractiveness factors for investors are considered to be relatively weak, and taking measures to increase the investment attractiveness of the commune is carried out without much hope for their effectiveness.

7. Conclusions

Numerous studies show that the greatest level of investment attractiveness at local government level are characterized by the communes of central importance to the sub-region, which means bigger cities and towns with a specific significance, such as of tourism. The confirmation of this thesis are their features such as: large resources of employees with high and diverse competencies, large and absorbent markets, good transport accessibility and a well-developed economic infrastructure. Słupsk, Koszalin, Kołobrzeg and Szczecinek belong to this group in Central Pomerania.

The main conclusions of the conducted studies are as follows:

a) factors of investment attractiveness of the communes – in the opinion of local governments – are especially the low labor costs, natural values and geographical location, whereas their main weaknesses are poor technical infrastructure (roads) and weak economic incentives,

b) local governments perceive their key role in improving this situation, but their activity in this area is insufficient and does not point at the clear realization of economic policy; although the majority of the studied communes are in possession of a development strategy, a commune-based study and a long-term investment plan, a current spatial development plan is a rarity,

c) promotion of the community turned out to be of little importance in attracting the already implemented external investment, but respondents strongly emphasize its role in efforts to promote entrepreneurship. Making available the information about a commune as a place of investment is conducted mainly through a standard website and a brochure in Polish, as well as direct contact with commune employees, which can be associated with informing the visiting investor rather than with searching on their behalf,

d) waiting for an investor is non-selective – the most important aspect is to create jobs and not to present a risk to the environment; orientation towards foreign investors is not noticeable in the studied area, which can be confirmed by the realistic evaluation of their much reduced chances to attract investors and the need to create for them favorable conditions for investment,

e) lack of an enterprise assistance program and giving great importance to the commune’s promotion, with their main interest in the investment from local

entrepreneurs, does not create a coherent whole and may be the cause of the failure of the process of increasing the scale of investment in the commune.

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OCENA ATRAKCYJNOŚCI INWESTYCYJNEJ GMIN POMORZA ŚRODKOWEGO WEDŁUG SAMORZĄDÓW LOKALNYCH

Streszczenie: Określone obszary większych terytoriów mają dla inwestorów zróżnicowaną wartość. Zespół cech obszaru wyznacza atrakcyjność inwestycyjną, tzn. określa jego użyteczność i wpływ na przewagę konkurencyjną nad innymi obszarami, co też ma wpływ na przyciąganie inwestorów. Autor podjął się badania atrakcyjności inwestycyjnej gmin Pomorza Środkowego: obszaru geograficznego składającego się z podregionu koszalińskiego i podregionu słupskiego. Badania przeprowadzono na przełomie 2011 i 2012 roku. Analizowano różne czynniki wpływu na wybór konkretnej gminy jako miejsca inwestycji. W konkluzji opracowania stwierdzono, że czynnikami atrakcyjności inwestycyjnej gmin są przede wszystkim: niskie koszty pracy, walory przyrodnicze i położenie geograficzne (renta położenia). Samorządy gminne dostrzegają swoją kluczową rolę w poprawie atrakcyjności inwestycyjnej gmin, lecz ich aktywność w tym zakresie jest niewystarczająca. Na Pomorzu Środkowym nie widać wzmożonego zainteresowania inwestorów zagranicznych, na co wpływa wiele czynników lokalnych.

Słowa kluczowe: atrakcyjność inwestycyjna, Pomorze Środkowe, gmina, samorząd lokalny.