



Strategies of international enterprises and their interactions in local and regional space (an example of selected industrial concerns in western Poland)

SUMMARY

This work deals with dependences between internationalisation strategies of international concerns investing in the industrial sector in western Poland and the effects of the location of those investments in the form of various types of socio-economic interactions at the smallest spatial scales: local, subregional and regional. Those are problems in the stream of current research directions concerning internationalisation and international production, and the analysed issues focus on their geographical, i.e. spatial, aspects.

The chief research goals and tasks of the work were achieved on the basis of a detailed empirical analysis of the operation of selected branches of large international concerns (a case study) in the first decade of the 21st century: Swedwood Poland sp. z o.o. in Chlastawa, Volkswagen Motor Polska sp. z o.o. in Polkowice, and Exide Technologies SA in Poznań. The analysis embraced a broad spectrum of interactions of those factories in various fields: the labour market, production links with suppliers and recipients, and their impact on the geographical environment in the form of pro-ecological measures and those taken for the benefit of local communities. To achieve those goals, use was made of information, data and materials obtained mainly from primary sources, i.e. directly from enterprises, from direct interviews with representatives of their managing boards and individual organisational cells, from interviews with representatives of local governments, and from a survey research conducted among suppliers and inhabitants of the towns and communes where those plants are located.

The starting point is the identification of strategies of the analysed concerns in the process of their internationalisation on the basis of C.A. Bartlett's and S. Ghoshal's conception of strategic orientations of international enterprises. A detailed analysis of general internationalisation strategies reveals some hybridisation of the solutions employed, especially visible in the highly diversified pattern of their organisational structures, including the spatial aspect. Then, on the basis of a theoretical discussion of connections between motives for an expansion abroad and location factors, and on the basis of the results of an empirical study of the location factors of the three selected concern branches in western Poland, detailed competition strategies on the regional market characteristic of them were established.

A significant research task undertaken in the work was also the identification and assessment of their impact on their milieu: the natural environment and the local community. Those aspects were interpreted in terms of an enterprise's sustainable development strategy and its social responsibility. An analysis was also made of the influence of the branches on the local and regional labour markets in three aspects: quantitative (changes in the number of jobs offered), qualitative (changes in workers' occupational skills), and spatial (determining the spatial range of interactions of the plants of those international concerns by identifying directions and the number of their employees' journeys to work).

The most extensive part of the work is devoted to economic interactions in the form of production links, both with suppliers (of raw materials, spare parts, materials necessary in production) as well as suppliers of various services for enterprises (e.g. transport or conservation), and links with the recipients of products. After an analysis of production links at the local and the subregional level, the next step involved the determination of the multiplier effects generated and the identification of the emerging new forms of a spatial concentration of industry: an initial form of a branch cluster or an industrial park initiative.

In the summing-up part a generalising model is constructed that describes hypothetical dependences between the strategic orientation of an international enterprise and the factors of location of its branches and detailed strategies of competition, and further on, the range of interactions at the local and regional levels in terms of production links and journeys to work. The constructed model is a generalisation of relations occurring only in the cases studied; to increase its universality, deeper analyses are necessary taking into account additional conditions, criteria and variables. Even so, the model reflects some relations between the global economy and the regional and local ones, because branches of large international concerns can be seen as nodal points at which two trends meet: those connected with global strategies and with embeddedness in regional and local structures.

The empirical analysis of those issues is preceded by a discussion of theoretical approaches, e.g. the conceptions of distance /nearness, multiplier effects, sustainable development, and social responsibility of enterprises, as well as the conceptions of international production and strategic management, including their spatial (i.e. geographical) aspects and in connection with the theory of the location of economic activity. The conceptions discussed in the work provide a basis for an interpretation of the phenomena and relationships identified.

In application-related terms, this book offers new original methodological solutions in the form of a measure of geographical distance and three-dimensional 'internationalisation hills' allowing a dynamic approach to the process of the internationalisation of enterprises. Also presented are a new method of analysis of transnational strategies worked out on the basis of Bartlett-Ghoshal's model, and its practical use in assessing the strategic orientation of one of the international concerns selected.