

mgr Karol Wałachowski

The main research objective of the dissertation is to assess the impact of the loss of provincial city status on the level of socio-economic development of cities in Poland after the implementation of the 1999 administrative reform. Using statistical methods and in-depth expert interviews, a comprehensive analysis of the issue was undertaken. The main hypothesis formulated in the dissertation was as follows: the loss of provincial status as a result of the 1999 administrative reform had a negative impact on the level of socio-economic development of these cities.

The dissertation consists of six chapters. The first one critically reviews the literature on socio-economic development, factors, barriers and determinants of cities. The functions of cities are described, with a particular focus on the administrative function. Subsequently, the second chapter identifies the importance of the administrative function for socio-economic development in the light of selected economic theories: central place theory, economic base theory, path dependency theory and cumulative causality theory. Based on these, the mechanisms of the impact of the administrative function on the socio-economic development of cities were identified. Chapter three identifies the changes in Poland's territorial administration after World War II. In particular, the assumption, course and evaluations of the 1999 administrative reform are described. A synthesis of previous research on the impact of changes in administrative status on the socio-economic development of cities in Poland is also made. In the fourth chapter, using statistical analysis, the socio-economic situation of the former and current provincial capitals was determined in 1995-2021. The analysis was made in a number of dimensions: demographics, labour market, economy, public finances and accommodation and social capital. The fifth chapter dealt with the quantification and evaluation of the level of socio-economic development of the former and current provincial capitals between 1995 and 2021. This was done on the basis of a synthetic indicator of socio-economic development. The impact of the reform on the current and former provincial capitals was examined in a number of time horizons: short, medium and long.

The last chapter describes the conclusions drawn from the in-depth expert interviews. It assesses the impact of administrative status on the socio-economic development of cities, identifies mechanisms for the impact of administrative status, evaluates central support for cities that have lost status and makes recommendations for further public policy actions to support the development of cities that have lost their provincial status.