

# REVIEW

*By:* Prof. Dr. Veneta Stoyanova Gaydardzhieva, Scientific specialty "National economy (History of the national economy - regional development)", Thrakia University - Stara Zagora, Faculty of Economics, Department of Regional Development

*Concerning:* Dissertation for the award of a scientific degree "Doctor of Science" in a professional direction 3.7. Administration and Management (Regional Development).

*Author of the dissertation:* Prof. Dr. Kliment Minev Naydenov, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Geology and Geography, Department of "Regional Development"

*Dissertation title:* "Geographical determinants of social and cultural dynamics: regional discourses in intercultural communication in the context of sustainable development."

*Reason for presenting the review:* Participation in the composition of the scientific jury for the defense of the dissertation according to Order No. RD-38-39/19.01.2024 of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

## 1. Information about the author

The disclosure of the procedure for the defense of the dissertation work is based on the decision of the Faculty council of the Faculty of Geology and Geography dated 16.01.2024 with protocol No. 1.

Prof. Dr. Kliment Minev Naydenov acquired the educational and qualification degree "Master" in "Geography, Economic Geography, Population and Settlements" at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 2001. From 2002 to 2005, he was a part-time teacher in the Department of "Regional and Political Geography" of GGF, SU. In the period 2005-2016 he was successively an assistant, senior assistant, chief assistant and doctoral candidate in the "Regional Development" Department of the Faculty of Geology and Geography. In 2012, he obtained a doctorate from the National Academy of Sciences with a dissertation on the topic: "The demographic policy of the Republic of Bulgaria - a factor for sustainable development". From 2013 to 2015, he studied a second Master's degree in "Economics and Tourism Management" at the Higher School of Agribusiness and Regional Development, Plovdiv. During the period 2016 - 2019, he was the head of the "Regional Development" department and was qualified as an associate professor in professional direction 4.4. Earth Sciences (Regional Development, Demography and Human Resource Management). Since 2019, he

is a professor in professional direction 4.4. Earth Sciences (Regional Development, Demography and Human Resource Management). From 2019 to now Prof. Naydenov is the Dean of the Faculty of Geology and Geography at Sofia University.

Prof. Naydenov's professional competence in the field of sustainable regional development gives him participation in the work of various state institutions and councils:

- 2017-2019 - head and member of expert groups in procedures for institutional and program accreditation in professional direction 4.4. "Earth Sciences" at NAOA;

- 2015–2022 - member of the Regional Policy Council to the Minister of RD&RD;

- 2017–2020 – unpaid associate at the Commission for Regional Policy, Public Works and Local Self-Government of the 44th National Assembly;

- 2020-2021 – member of the working group at the Metropolitan Municipality for the preparation of the program for the atmospheric air quality of the SO for the period 2021-2026;

- 2021- – member of the Regional Council for the Development of the Southwest Region for Planning;

- 2021-2026 – member of a permanent scientific council at the SO for the implementation of the "Complex program for improving the quality of atmospheric air on the territory of the SO for the period 2021-2026;

- 2021 – member of the Monitoring Committee of the Operational Program "Regions in Growth" 2014-2020;

- 2020 – member of the Joint Program Committee for the development of the Greece-Bulgaria Cooperation Program 2021-2027.

He has over 20 years of experience in project management and team management.

## **2. General characteristics of the presented dissertation work**

- *Structure, volume*

Structurally, the dissertation work on the topic "Geographical determinants of social and cultural dynamics: regional discourses in intercultural communication in the context of sustainable development", presented by Prof. Dr. Kliment Naydenov, is in a volume of 726 pages in total and includes: introduction, three chapters, conclusion, scientific contributions and references. The text uses 475 literary sources, of which 6 are in Cyrillic and the rest are in Latin.

- *In terms of content*, the presented dissertation work is relatively well

balanced.

*The introduction* justifies the comprehensiveness and versatility of the topic, as well as its relevance in view of sustainable development. Emphasis is placed on the main role of geographic determinants for social and cultural dynamics in shaping policies and practices for sustainable development at regional, national and supranational levels. The author emphasizes that a deep understanding of the geographical, cultural and social context of each region is essential for sustainable development to be effective. The main objective of the study "Geographic determinants of social and cultural dynamics: regional discourses in intercultural communication in the context of sustainable development" is to establish the influence of geography on the development of society and the formation of cultural features in different countries, establishing or not the relationship between them and the formation of environmentally conscious behavior, refracted through the lens of sustainable development and the green growth index. In addition, the impact on social and cultural dynamics, particularly in the area of cross-cultural business communication, and how these dynamics intersect and influence sustainable development efforts at the regional level are explored and analyzed. To achieve the goal, the author sets five main tasks for implementation, related to the identification of geographical determinants; analysis of social and cultural dynamics; study of regional discourses; analysis of geographical, social and cultural factors and their interaction with sustainable development goals; an analysis of how these factors interact with the Green Growth Index and its sub-indices. The main thesis hypothesis is that the geographical characteristics of a region (such as its climate, topography, natural resources and relative location) significantly influence its social and cultural dynamics, which in turn shape regional discourses in intercultural communication. These influences are crucial for understanding and implementing sustainable development strategies in different regional contexts. The author's main hypothesis is supported by several sub-hypotheses.

The research uses a multidisciplinary approach combining methods from geography, economics, cultural studies, sociology and earth sciences. A variety of quantitative and qualitative methods were used to gain a better understanding of the ways in which geographic determinants shape social and cultural dynamics and how this understanding can be applied in the context of sustainable development and intercultural communication.

*In the first chapter*, in theoretical terms, the influence of the main geographical factors and geographical laws influencing society and culture, as well as sustainable development, are examined in detail.

*In the second chapter*, cross-cultural differences in the world are analyzed in detail (for example, 78 countries from around the world and their business culture).

*In the third chapter* "Regional discourses in intercultural business communications in the context of sustainable development and environmental behavior" analyzes the effects of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on pro-environmental behavior and the influence of business culture on environmentally conscious behavior and, accordingly, on sustainable development goals.

*In conclusion*, the author emphasizes the importance of Geography for the study of the environment, social dynamics, governance structures, climate risks, opportunities for sustainable development, investment strategies and cultural aspects, and the need to understand and integrate geographic knowledge into the business strategies of companies, which will lead to greater responsibility and sustainability in their work.

The structural integrity and logical connection of the individual structural elements of the dissertation work are relatively well presented and protected.

*• Assessment for: topicality of the topic; the purpose; the tasks; the object; the subject; the main thesis of the dissertation*

The dissertation examines a current scientific and scientific-applied problem, of high social significance, and is protected by the author in the introduction and in the overall content of the dissertation. Historically, the ideas of the influence of geography on the socio-economic and political development of society, and the formation of cultural characteristics in all countries, were developed in the 18th century by Charles Montesquieu in his treatise "On the Spirit of Laws" (1748) and the representatives of the predecessors of the Historical School in Germany Adam Müller and Friedrich List in the first half of the 19th century. They declare themselves against the abstract method of studying any economic process, because the state has its concrete-historical features in its economic development. This confirms that research of this nature has your societal relevance and from the point of view of external challenges.

The main goal and the five tasks specified in the paper for its implementation are relatively clear and logically linked to the leading research thesis. The main hypothesis of the thesis that the geographical characteristics of a given region significantly influence its social and cultural dynamics, which in turn shape regional discourses in intercultural communication, and these are crucial for understanding and implementing sustainable development strategies in different regional contexts is well formulated and successfully defended by the author. It is supported by several sub-hypotheses and can be verified through the author's chosen methodological toolkit.

- *Assessment of the degree of knowledge of the scientific literature and the issues investigated in the dissertation work.*

An extensive review of the existing literature (a total of 475 literature sources, including the most recent studies on the issue) was performed to establish the current state of research in this area. Included are academic journals, books and online sources covering geography, cultural dynamics, sustainable development, intercultural communication, etc. This shows a good knowledge of the contemporary problems of the issues discussed.

### **3. Evaluation of the obtained scientific and scientific-applied results**

The following scientific and scientific-applied results were achieved in the dissertation work:

- the essential importance of Geography for studying the possibilities for sustainable development, investment strategies and cultural aspects, for the integration of geographical knowledge in business strategies, which allows companies to work more sustainably and responsibly, is substantiated;

- in the context of global challenges such as climate change, migration and economic inequality, this study gives a deeper understanding of the different ways in which different regions approach these problems, facilitating more effective global cooperation;

- the analyzes and conclusions of the dissertation work can support politicians, businesses and international organizations in making decisions; to increase the effectiveness and adoption of policies and initiatives related to sustainable development;

- the study advocates for cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness, promoting the understanding that different cultural and geographical backgrounds contribute different perspectives and solutions to global problems;

- contributes to overcoming gaps in understanding between different cultures and regions;

- aims to promote policies and communications based on a deep awareness of the geographical and cultural contexts that shape societies, thereby contributing to a more sustainable, inclusive and harmonious global community.

Given the stated results, it can be assumed that the goals and tasks set in the dissertation have been fulfilled.

### **4. Evaluation of scientific and scientific-applied contributions**

- *Evaluation of the contributions indicated by the dissertation student.*

The analyzed scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the candidate can be grouped in a research area related to PN 3.7. Administration and Management (Regional Development) and specifically concern certain socio-economic, cultural and communication aspects of regional development. Prof. Naydenov has formulated 10 scientific contributions, the majority of which have a scientific and applied nature.

I believe that the specified scientific and scientific-applied contributions meet the necessary requirements and are directly related to the research topic, but with an additional revision, the semantic overlap in some of them could disappear (e.g. contributions 1,5,8 or contributions 4 ,7).

## **5. Evaluation of dissertation publications**

Publications indicated by the author related to the dissertation are 6, namely:

• *Scientific publications in publications that are referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information*

1. Naydenov Kl., BULGARIAN CASE STUDIES IN IMPROVING URBAN AIR QUALITY, International Multidisciplinary Scientific GeoConference Surveying Geology and Mining Ecology Management, SGEM, 2022, pages:287-294, ISSN (online):13142704,

doi:10.5593/sgem2022/4.1/s19.37, Ref, SCOPUS, SJR ( - 2022)

2. Naydenov Kl., GEOPARKS AS A BASIS FOR THE INTEGRATED CONSERVATION OF ECOSYSTEMS, CULTURAL HERITAGE, AND DEVELOPMENT OF ECOTOURISM, International Multidisciplinary Scientific GeoConference Surveying Geology and Mining Ecology Management, SGEM, 2022, ISSN (online):13142704,

doi:10.5593/sgem2022/5.1/s20.026, Ref, SCOPUS, SJR ( - 2022)

3. Naydenov Kl., D. Atanasov, Green city—future sustainable development and smart growth, Proceedings of the International conference “InterCarto. InterGIS”, issue:28, 2022, ISSN (print):2414-9179, ISSN (online):2414-9209, doi:<https://doi.org/10.35595/2414-9179-2022-1-28-35-42>,

Ref, SCOPUS, SJR ( - 2022)

4. Naydenov Kl., GREEN COMPETITIVENESS AS A REGIONAL BUSINESS STRATEGY, 21st International Multidisciplinary Scientific GeoConference SGEM 2021,2021, pages:131-138, ISSN (print):978-619-7603-28-6, ISSN (online):1314-2704,doi:10.5593/sgem2021/5.1/s20.031, Ref

5. Naydenov Kl., SMART REGIONS – OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE FUTURE , Proceedings - International Scientific Conference GEOBALCANICA 2020, 2020, pages:565-570, ISSN (online):1857-7636, doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.18509/GBP.2020.62, Ref, IF ( - 2020)

• *Scientific publications in edited collective volumes*

1. Naydenov Kl., D. Atanasov, Circular economy and sustainable development in the EU — some aspects and trends, Proceedings of the International conference "InterCarto.InterGis", 26/1, 2020, pages:5-11, ISSN (print ):2414-9179, ISSN (online):2414-9209 , Ref, etc.

• *Participation with a report from a conference is also indicated:*

1. Kl. Naidenov, D. Atanasov, Mapping Hofstede's dimensions and their influence on environmental behavior, Conference "Geography and Regional Development, Sozopol, 2023.

All publications are on the topic of the dissertation work and reflect important moments of the overall development. They are in specialized scientific publications aimed at a readership with a high degree of knowledge of the issue.

## **6. Evaluation of the autoref**

A 128-page abstract has been submitted for review on the dissertation work. It presents the general characteristics of the dissertation work (relevance, object, subject, thesis, goal, tasks, limitations, theoretical and methodological basis of the research, etc.). The structure and content of the dissertation is presented. A reference to contributions and a list of publications on the topic of the dissertation are presented. The content of the abstract is consistent with that of the dissertation and presents the results of the research in a good way and synthesis.

## **7. Criticisms, recommendations and questions**

The dissertation was developed in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Art. 37. (Amended - SG No. 19 of 2011), para. (1) and para. (2). My overall positive opinion is related to the established achievements in the dissertation work, as well as the fact that no significant gaps and inaccuracies are found in it. I have no critical remarks, but I believe that the work would benefit from a clearer and more concise statement.

## **8. Conclusion**

The proposed dissertation work for the acquisition of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" by Prof. Dr. Kliment Minev Naydenov on the topic "Geographical determinants of social and cultural dynamics: regional discourses in intercultural communication in the context of sustainable development" is an independently completed author's research , in which the research tasks have been successfully completed, and the main goal has been achieved. This gives me the reason to vote "for" the acquisition of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" in professional direction 3.7. Administration and Management (Regional Development) by Prof. Dr. Kliment Minev Naydenov.

02/27/2024

Sofia

Signature:

(Prof. Dr. Veneta Gaydardzhieva)