

OPINION

by Prof. Dr. Ganeta Minkova Minkova, Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski'

of a dissertation work for the award of a scientific degree 'Doctor of Sciences'

by field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences

professional direction 3.7 Administration and management (Regional development)

Author: Prof. Dr. Kliment Minev Naydenov

Topic: Geographical determinants of social and cultural dynamics: regional discourses in intercultural communication in the context of sustainable development

1. General description of the presented materials

By order Order RD - 38-39 / 19.01.2024 of the Rector of Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski' I have been appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury in the procedure for the defense of a dissertation work 'Geographical determinants of social and cultural dynamics: regional discourses in intercultural communication in the context of sustainable development' for the acquisition of a scientific degree 'Doctor of Sciences' in: field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction, 3.7 Administration and management, scientific specialty 'Regional Development'. Professor Naydenov presented a set of documents in connection with the procedure for awarding the scientific degree 'Doctor of Sciences'. The attached documents meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Application and the Regulations for the Terms and Conditions for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at SU 'St. Kliment Ohridski'.

2. Brief biographical data

Professor Kliment Naydenov was born on February 8, 1977 in Dobrich. He graduated from the EG "Geo Milev" in 1996, and in 2001 - majoring in 'Economic Geography - Geography of Population and Settlements' at the Faculty of Geology and Geography (GGF) of Sofia University, specializing in 'International Relations' for two years at the same university.

In the period 2001-2002, he completed his military service in the Naval Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria. Acquired a second master's degree in 'Economics and Management of Tourism', and in 2012 defended a dissertation on the topic 'Demographic policy of the Republic of Bulgaria - a factor for sustainable development' in professional direction 4.4. 'Earth Sciences' (Population and Settlement Geography - Regional Demography). He successively held the positions of part-time lecturer (2002), assistant (2005), senior assistant (2007), principal assistant (2010), associate professor (2016) and professor (2021). From 2016 to 2019, he was the head of the "Regional Development" Department, and from 2019 - the dean of the Faculty of Geology and Geography of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". He is a member of the Academic Council of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" - in 2004-2007 as a doctoral student and in 2019-2023 as dean of the GGF.

3. Relevance of the topic

The topic 'Geographical determinants of social and cultural dynamics: regional discourses in intercultural communication in the context of sustainable development' is extremely relevant today. It emphasizes the importance of geographical factors in shaping social and cultural interactions and their influence on intercultural communication. This theme is crucial for the development of sustainable development strategies that respect cultural and regional particularities in a globalizing world, fostering a deeper understanding of multicultural interactions and fostering cultural exchange and mutual respect. The scholarly work presented with this dissertation is a significant and up-to-date contribution to the understanding of the complex interrelationships between geography and socio-cultural dynamics within regional and global contexts. The research successfully substantiates the thesis that geographical factors play a key role in the formation of cultural identities, social practices and communication models, which in turn influence the processes of sustainable development. It should also be noted the fact that in our country there are few geographical studies dedicated to this topic. Therefore, there is an opportunity to set new scientific tasks in the chosen topic, which makes the work undeniably relevant.

4. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work

The dissertation is structured in a way that allows for an in-depth examination of different regional discourses and their role in intercultural communication. The introduction effectively outlines the scope of the study and its importance to the scientific community and

practice. The theoretical overview is detailed, drawing on a wide range of literary sources, which contributes to enriching the scientific discourse in the field.

The dissertation has a total volume of 726 pages. In addition to the main text, the work includes 28 maps and a list of 475 literary sources mainly in English. Footnotes are 453. Structurally, the work includes an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The structure of the work is balanced and meets the requirements established by practice regarding the content of a dissertation.

In the introduction, the author writes his arguments for what the topic is interdisciplinary, integrating concepts from several academic fields to create a comprehensive understanding of how geography influences social and cultural interactions and sustainable development. Here he defines the topicality of the topic, the scientific and practical significance of the topic, the object, the subject, the goal, the tasks. 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. A main hypothesis is supported by several sub-hypotheses, namely: cultural dynamics sub-hypothesis, sustainable development strategies sub-hypothesis, resilience and adaptation sub-hypothesis, global versus local dynamics sub-hypothesis. The research methodology is adequately selected and applied, which guarantees the validity and reliability of the obtained results. The author successfully uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including case study analysis, interviews and statistical analyses, to identify and analyze the geographical determinants of cultural and societal dynamics. The dissertation has both novelty and credibility, and as with any research topic comes with certain limitations. A short literature review was also made.

In the first chapter 'Geographic science, geographical laws and their impact on the development of society, culture, sustainable development and the green growth index', the author analyzes geographical laws and their impact on society, culture and sustainable development. Major geographic factors influencing society and culture are examined, examining the interrelationships between physical geography and settlement patterns; cultural adaptations to the environment; agriculture and food culture; trade routes and economic development; cultural diffusion and migration; natural disasters and societal resilience; political geography and borders; technological advances and geographic accessibility; environmental sustainability and cultural practices; biodiversity conservation. Next, the

influence of geography, society and culture on the green growth index is examined. Of interest is the analysis of geographical laws and their impact on society, culture and sustainable development. Tobler's first law of geography and its impact on society, culture and sustainable development are examined. In the same way, Tobler's second geographical law and the principle of spatial heterogeneity are considered.

In the second chapter titled 'Analysis of intercultural differences in the world (the case of 78 countries and their business culture)', the analysis of intercultural differences in the world is extremely important in the context of sustainable development. Understanding cultural differences is crucial to promote effective international cooperation. Through an analysis of business culture in these 78 countries, the author is intended to offer that knowing these cross-cultural differences is critical for businesses to effectively manage risks and comply with local environmental laws and standards. Detecting cross-cultural business differences is vital to green behavior because it enables businesses to operate more effectively and sustainably in different cultural settings. It improves their ability to engage with different stakeholders, comply with different regulations, promote innovation and to promote sustainable practices globally, thereby making a smooth transition to the next chapter and Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

In the third chapter, entitled 'Regional discourses in intercultural business communications in the context of sustainable development and environmental behavior', which is also the basis for dissertation work, Hofstede's cultural dimensions are considered first. The chapter attempts to analyze the effects of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on pro-environmental behavior and how business culture influences environmentally conscious behavior and hence sustainable development goals. For each of the dimensions, a regional analysis by continent was also made. The author offers his original reading of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the context of intercultural communication and environmental behavior, although the topic of sustainable development has been discussed many times and these goals are a universal call to action adopted by all UN member states in 2015 to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people will enjoy peace and prosperity. We agree with the author that the intersection between the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), geography and environmental behavior is dynamic and multifaceted, reflecting how human-environment interactions are shaped by geographic factors and how these interactions in turn influence sustainability outcomes. Again in a general and then in a regional context, the impact of intercultural business communications on the implementation of each of the goals for sustainable development is examined. Then, respecting

the regional principle again, the impact of cross-cultural business communications on the performance of the Green Growth Index is explored. Essentially, the Green Growth Index is a tool that helps measure and guide progress towards achieving the SDGs. It provides a framework for understanding how economic policies and practices can be aligned with environmental sustainability and social inclusion, reflecting the holistic and interconnected nature of the SDGs.

In the extensive conclusion, the author reiterates his thesis that geographical science plays a critical role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals because of its holistic approach to understanding and managing the Earth's environment and human societies. He also claims, not without reason, that geographical science plays a crucial role in public administration and society also for several reasons .

5. Contributions and significance of the development for science and practice

The author lists 10 contributions with which we agree, although they can be reduced to 6-7.

1. Improving understanding of geographic influence on culture.
2. The study contributes to theoretical advances in cultural geography and cultural studies by examining how geographic contexts shape cultural identity and social dynamics.
3. An interdisciplinary approach was used, combining methods from geography, sociology, economics, anthropology, communication studies and earth sciences. This encourages the development of innovative research methodologies that can be applied to other interdisciplinary research.
4. Contribution to sustainable development practices.
5. The findings contribute to the field of intercultural communication by illustrating how geographic determinants influence communication styles across cultures.
6. The study offers empirical data and theoretical propositions that can inform public policy and planning, particularly in areas related to urban development, cultural preservation, environmental protection and social cohesion.
7. By analyzing how geographic science affects social and cultural dynamics, the research contributes to the understanding of how different communities perceive, respond and adapt to climate change, which is vital for developing effective climate resilience strategies.
8. In a globalized world, understanding the geographic determinants of social and cultural dynamics is key to fostering positive global and local cultural interactions. This

research contributes to a more holistic understanding of global interconnectedness and cultural diversity.

9. Educational contribution.

10. In the context of international business and global cooperation, the research provides valuable information on managing and working in culturally diverse teams.

6. Criticisms, recommendations and questions

The main recommendations are two – reducing the volume of work, as some texts can be shortened, and the second – a purely technical better design.

Question: Can you make a connection between geography and environmental law, and specifically how geography affects its regional characteristics?

7. Evaluation of publications on the dissertation work

The candidate submitted seven articles on the topic of the dissertation, as follows:

1. Naydenov Kl., D. Atanasov, Mapping Hofstede's dimensions and their influence on environmental behavior, Geography and Regional Development Conference, Sozopol, 2023.
2. 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)
3. 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)
4. 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)

5. 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
6. 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.
7. 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)

8. Abstract

The abstract has a total volume of 129 pages and adequately reflects the structure and content of the dissertation work. The abstract meets the requirements established by practice, containing the main results achieved in the dissertation work, although its volume is large.

9. Personal participation

The overall presentation shows the personal participation of the doctoral student in the dissertation research. I believe that the formulated contributions and obtained results are his personal merit.

10. Personal impressions

I have personal impressions of the author, with whom I work in a department. He is highly responsible, proactive and motivated to work in the field of science.

11. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results

I believe that the presented dissertation work deserves to be evaluated on its merits. The present work is also useful for students. After some editing, I recommend and consider that the work can be published in two monographs.

Conclusion

The dissertation ,Geographic determinants of social and cultural dynamics: regional discourses in intercultural communication in the context of sustainable development' with author Kliment Minev Naydenov contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results that represent an original contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for Implementation of ZRASRB and the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". The research results provide valuable contributions regarding the influence of geographical factors on intercultural communication and social dynamics, highlighting specific regional features and their contribution to sustainable development. The final part of the dissertation effectively integrates the main findings and offers practical recommendations for policies and strategies aimed at optimizing intercultural communication and supporting sustainable development in different geographical contexts. This highlights the applied value of the research and its potential to influence the development of effective strategies for managing cultural and societal processes. Overall, the dissertation represents a significant contribution to scholarly knowledge in the fields of geography, cultural and social sciences, and offers a solid foundation for future research. Its timeliness, depth of analysis and contribution to understanding the complex interactions between geography and social dynamics make it a valuable resource for the academic community and sustainable development policy. The author demonstrates a high degree of analytical and critical thinking in interpreting data and formulating conclusions. The dissertation work shows that Kliment Minev Naydenov possesses the necessary theoretical knowledge and professional skills, demonstrating qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research. Due to the above, I give my positive assessment of the conducted scientific research based on the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract and other publications, as well as due to the achieved results and contributions.

I propose to the honorable Scientific Jury to award the scientific degree ,Doctor of Sciences' to Kliment Minev Naydenov in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, in professional direction 3.7. Administration and management, scientific specialty ,Regional Development'.

Prof. Dr. Ganeta Minkova Minkova

22.02.2024