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This book examines the specific regional development paths of Central and Eastern European countries, and evaluates the effects of the factors determining this process. The author summarizes the main points of this book under three themes: making a comparative analysis of the system of objectives, instruments and institutions of spatial development from a unified perspective (mainly in Part I); evaluating various periods of regional development of Eastern Germany, Russia, and Hungary (in Part II); and indicating a comprehensive picture of two essential factors of European territorial cohesion, that is, the role of research and development and macro-regional integration in the Central and Eastern European transition process (mainly in Part III and the conclusion).

The book is divided into three main parts and nine chapters. The chapters of Part I compare the regional development of East European countries. Chapter 1 explains the historical development and current situation of the regional disparities in these countries, and points out that the construction of new nation states from regions with different historical backgrounds, the central planning of the socialist era conducted without considering the situation of the regions, and the radical transformation of the economic structures after the regime change have created the current regional differences. Chapter 2 analyzes the development of regional policies since the regime transformation, and concludes that the regional development policies of East European countries are still underdeveloped, and that the accession to the European Union paradoxically has had a centralizing effect on these countries by giving central governments the role of making national development plans. Chapter 3, titled "Regions as frameworks of power," discusses desirable methods of decentralization of East European countries, and indicates that under the condition that regional self-governments in East European countries are still weak it would be appropriate to create a common managing body for developing peripheral, backward regions with states providing part of the financial resources for this decision-making forum. In Chapter 4, "Towards a knowledge based regional development," the author analyzes the regional distribution of research units in East European countries, and concludes that R&D institutions should be dispersed to various regions, especially in the West Balkan states.

The chapters of Part II discuss specific cases of regional development and policy, focusing on the cases of East Germany, Russia, and Hungary. Chapter 5 discusses the history of regional development of the Eastern part of Germany from the unification of the German Empire through the German Democratic Republic to the post-reunification period of Germany, and emphasizes the need to strengthen industry and R&D as two driving forces of sustainable development of the Eastern part. Chapter 6 explains the history of regional transformation of Russia from the final period of the Russian Empire through the Soviet Union to the current period, and concludes that the disparities between regions have been increasing because of the lack of a systematic regional policy during the Soviet era and the inappropriate regional policy since the destruction of the Soviet Union. Chapter 7, examining the regionalism in Hungary as an example of a unitary state, summarizes the failure to create effective regional institutions and offers opinions concerning regional development in Hungary.

Part III contains only Chapter 8, in which the author analyzes the current situation of the Carpathian Basin and emphasizes the need for “the institutionalization of the formal regionalization of this area” (p. 235).

This book is very informative and would be useful for understanding the history and the current situation of regional development and regional policies in East European countries. In particular, the chapters of Part II concisely summarize the history of over one-hundred years’ regional development of three countries, which is useful for understanding the current problems from a historical viewpoint.

There are, however, some shortcomings to this book. One is that this book is not systematically organized, and that each chapter discusses issues independently, contrary to the author’s emphasis that this book makes a comparative analysis “from a unified perspective” (p. 10). There is no systematic method of analysis or concrete methodology for the comparison, so readers of this book would have the impression that this is not a book with a systematic analysis but rather a collection of articles. The other shortcoming is that, as is seen in my summarization above, this book confuses the analysis of the situation with opinion on the regional development policies. In some chapters (especially the chapters relating to the Hungarian case) most of the parts are devoted to the opinions offered, rather than analysis of the current situation. The opinion concerning policies should be based on an analysis of the current situation, but these two things should be discussed separately. In addition, the text should be edited more carefully, as there are many spelling and punctuation errors.

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