



## REVIEW

by Dissertation Council Member Professor Tadeusz Stryjakiewicz  
of the thesis submitted by Arina Eduardovna Mordvinova  
entitled “State policy of old industrial areas revitalization in the practice of foreign countries”  
for the degree of Candidate in Economics, Specialty: 08.00.14 – World Economics

### **Relevance of the topic of dissertation research**

The dissertation reviewed<sup>1</sup> falls, on the one hand, within the scope of World Economics, and on the other, contains many elements of economic geography. It is a good example of the so-called evolutionary approach developed in the both mentioned scientific disciplines. Therefore, I can state already at the outset of my review that this dissertation fits well with the implementation of two contemporary research trends, such as interdisciplinarity and the above-mentioned evolutionary approach. Arina E. Mordvinova continues good traditions of the Ural economic school, related, among other things, to studies on the nature of old industrial areas (OIAs) in the context of economic geography.

The dissertation topic has been chosen very well. In view of a rapid increase in the number of studies on branches and regions connected with the newest technological paradigms, the answer to the question ‘what to do with old industrial areas’ seems somewhat neglected. The applicant has made an interesting attempt to analyse old industrial areas as part of global economic trends. In doing so, she assumed that this analysis cannot be limited only to traditional OIAs in Europe and the USA (which she names ‘classic’), but it must be expanded into newly emerged OIAs in Asia and Latin America (which she names ‘catching up’). Such a geographical scope of the research, the comparative studies conducted in the dissertation and the formulation of an algorithm of the state strategy development for OIAs economic recovery give the reviewed work the value of universality and, concurrently, practical usefulness.

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<sup>1</sup> In the review, I rely on the English version of the dissertation (pp. 192–365).





### Validity of scientific results and conclusions

The validity of the scientific results and conclusions of the dissertation follows from several reasons. The first one is the formulation of four ambitious (although not easy) objectives which are consequently implemented in the successive chapters. These objectives correspond to two paragraphs of the 08.00.14 specialty description by the Higher Attestation Commission of the Russian Federation (HAC RF), i.e. “The world economy, its structure, patterns and modern development trends” (paragraph 1) and “Interaction of state and business at national and international levels...” (paragraph 10).

The structure of the thesis is logical and contributes to the disclosure of the essence of research. The dissertation is composed, except for Introduction and Conclusion, of three main chapters. The first, deeply rooted in economic theories, includes, among others, an attempt at comprehensively defining old industrial areas, their characteristics and typology. The second chapter is devoted to the forms of state participation in the economic revitalization of ‘classical’ old industrial areas (in Western Europe, Central Europe and the USA), whereas the third one—to the experience of the ‘catching-up’ OIAs (in Asia and Latin America).

When commenting on the generally correct structure of the dissertation, I only wonder if the subchapter 3.3. should not be a separate chapter, because the algorithm for developing a state strategy for economic revitalization of old industrial areas presented there is based on experiences of countries representing **both** the distinguished OIAs types and different models of state intervention related to them (cf. Table 23).

The dissertation rests on thorough literature studies (the list of references includes 243 sources). All conclusions are embedded in theory and well documented, and the knowledge of peculiarities related to state intervention in some OIAs is quite impressive. This is noticeable, *inter alia*, on the example of the Upper Silesian Industrial Region in Poland, which I investigated myself for some time, therefore I may confirm both the relevant choice of source materials and their correct interpretation by the author of the dissertation.

The overview tables, comparative juxtapositions and the clear illustrative material are a great value of the thesis (the only drawback for me — as for a geographer — is the lack of a map with the location of OIAs, in particular those discussed in the dissertation). The findings and recommendations are fully consistent with the declared aim and objectives of the study.





It is also worth noting that the results of the dissertation research were presented and discussed at 13 international and national conferences and reflected in 14 publications (some of them are indexed in the Scopus and Web of Science databases).

### **The novelty of the main provisions and conclusions**

There are several points of scientific novelty in the reviewed dissertation. Let me mention the most important.

#### **In theoretical dimension:**

1. Systematization of the existing theoretical approaches to the problem of old industrial areas and their economic revitalization.
2. Introduction of the concept of the 'catching-up' type of OIAs, its clear definition and characteristics.
3. Identification of five models of the state policy towards old industrial areas and their economic recovery.
4. Formulation of the author's algorithm for developing a state strategy for the old industrial areas' revitalization.

#### **In empirical dimension:**

1. Comprehensive analysis of policy instruments for old industrial areas in different geographical contexts and institutional settings.
2. Focus on the 'catching-up' type of old industrial areas in Asia and Latin America, neglected in research so far.

#### **In practical dimension:**

1. Transfer of knowledge on the good and bad practices concerning revitalization of old industrial areas in foreign countries useful for decision-makers.
2. Elaboration of a toolkit for key scenarios of OIAs revitalization involving different stakeholders (central, regional and municipal government bodies as well as business entities).

Overall, the dissertation research makes a significant contribution to our knowledge about state policies for old industrial areas based on international experience.





### **Weaknesses of the dissertation and specific areas for discussion**

Next to the strengths of the dissertation presented above (which far outweigh), a reviewer is also obliged to indicate the most important weaknesses and arguable issues. They are listed below.

1. The author did not, regrettably, pay more attention to one of the key notions of the thesis, i.e., that of revitalization. It is briefly discussed only in the footnote on page 195. With reference to OIAs, the semantic scope of this notion often embraces not only economic recovery, but also revitalization of the built environment. The subject of Arina Mordinova's interest is primarily OIAs' **economy revitalization** and this should be indicated also in the dissertation title. Moreover, the author does not explain the relationship between such synonymous (but still not identical) terms used in the work as: revitalization, rehabilitation and revival.
2. In my view, the applicant has paid relatively little attention to such issues as: failures of some revitalization policies, their social costs, limitations of the proposed models as well as barriers to their implementation. This is not a critique because the substantive scope of each dissertation requires limits; this is rather an invitation to explore these issues in the further research.
3. I have doubts if all the theories (especially of T. Hägerstrand 1953) presented in Table 2 (p. 208) can be included within the stage "New economic geography". I also wonder why in the brief description of technological paradigms and their periodization (Table 9) there is no mention of the output of Nikolai D. Kondratiev. I refer to it deliberately, mainly because this dissertation defence is held at the Saint Petersburg State University (I would not mention this at other universities). As far as I know, in the years 1911–1915, N. D. Kondratiev was studying at this very University and had strong ties with it. In my opinion, the applicant should be proud of such a famous Russian scientific predecessor and promote him in particular. Of course, this is only my subjective view, and the omission of Kondratiev does not affect the quality of the research results.
4. The dissertation has some minor spelling mistakes, e.g., it should be I. Kantor-Pietraga (instead of I. Cantor-Pietryga) on page 221 or R. Boschma and J. Lambooy (instead of R. Boshma and I. Lambuya) on page 224. The title of Table 1 is unclear (probably the



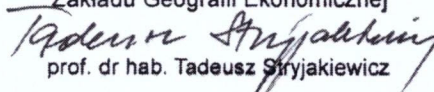
word 'distribution' is missing). I realize that the above-mentioned mistakes are most likely due to incorrect translation.

All the above remarks are of minor importance and in no way undermine the previously emphasized high scientific value of the dissertation. Some of them result probably from my using the English text, not the Russian original one.

### **Conclusion**

The dissertation meets the basic requirements established by Order No. 6821/1 of 1 September 2016 "On the Procedure for Awarding Academic Degrees at Saint Petersburg State University". The applicant Arina Eduardovna Mordvinova deserves the award of the scientific degree Candidate in Economics in the specialty 08.00.14 World Economics. Clause 11 of the aforementioned Order by the author of the thesis is not broken.

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