

Educational migrations as a factor of the depopulation of the intermetropolitan region

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Abstract: In this paper there are presented results of the research which indicate that metropolises could “wash out” of economic resources from intermetropolitan regions which as a consequence may experience many problems, one of which could be a depopulation. One of the factor of the depopulation are educational migrations involving the transfer of young people in order to enter the higher education institution to other centers (metropolises). In the situation when educational migrations transform into non-return migration it may contribute to the depopulation of the region and can lead to slow down the development of the intermetropolitan regions changing such areas to peripheries.

Keywords: educational migrations, the depopulation, the intermetropolitan region

“There is nothing worse for the development than the depopulation”
(Ryszard Wilczyński, governor of the Opole Voivodeship)

1. Introduction

The review of existing literature suggest that a intermetropolitan region is identified in some of its features as a peripheral region located between cores – strong regional centers (Heffner, 2010: 171). But in addition to the geographical position, significant a feature of intermetropolitan region is "distance" in the level of economic development compared to metropolitan regions (Lechman, 2012). Undoubtedly, the factors determining such a situation are other important features of the intermetropolitan region – the exploitation of regional resources by nearby metropolises which mainly concern the drain of the most valuable part of human

capital, skilled labour and other resources (Barry, 2004: 753-759). Unquestionably this process leads to deepening disparities between metropolitan and the intermetropolitan regions. In the context of these phenomena one of the possible consequences of "washing out" of the human resources of the region which cannot be ignored is depopulation, leading to deformation of demographic and social population structures in the regions. One important factor of depopulation is a special category of internal migrations – educational migrations involving the transfer of the youth to the cores in order to enter higher education.

One example of an intermetropolitan region facing the described problems is the Opole Voivodeship¹, located in the south western part of Poland between two strong metropolitan centers – Katowice with the Upper-Silesian Metropolitan Area and Wrocław with the Wrocław Metropolitan Area. Undoubtedly, the proximity of the two metropolis affect to some extent the most important growth factors of the Opole Voivodeship by the outflow of human capital and the reduction of the regional economic and social potential (Heffner, 2010: 170). The process of depopulation as a determinant limiting the development of the region on the one hand, is a consequence of economic and permanent “old” emigration (large and until now unregistered), while on the other hand being a consequence of new permanent migration after the Polish accession to the European Union (EU). At the time vast number of young people from the last baby boomers (born in the late 1970s and the 1980s) have emigrated to old EU countries. The scale of the post-accession migration is still undetermined because of its largely undefined status (Jonczy and Rokita 2007: 77-79). The demographic consequence of the definitive emigration is rather the undisputed fact that the region’s population is lower (900-930 thousand) than officially estimated with an above-average share of people in older age groups (Jonczy, 2011: 51). However, it turns out that in the process of the further depopulation of the region foreign emigration does not necessarily play a dominant role. Recent pilot studies conducted by the authors have shown that there is a large-scale of internal migrations from the Opole region to other regions and centers, especially to the neighboring Lower Silesia regions and its metropolis – the Wrocław Metropolitan Area. The background of this migration is the common access to higher education in Poland, creating a structural surplus in regional labor markets, noticeable in regions with a lack of centers that are able to absorb a large number of people with higher education. As a result of this structural mismatch, a significant proportion of graduates in areas

¹ In the article term region and voivodeship (province) are used interchangeably

that do not have large regional centers (including the Opole region) are not able to undertake the work in accordance with their qualifications and aspirations, and as a consequence they look for it somewhere else.

The purpose of this article is to present the results of research on educational migrations and attempt to identify their impact on the depopulation of the Opole Voivodeship as an intermetropolitan region.

2. Characteristics of the research methodology and the research sample

In order to provide evidence for the hypothesis about the impact of educational migrations on the depopulation of the intermetropolitan region, some results of research² conducted in 2012 among 1 254 senior year students of secondary schools in 12 education centers located in the Opole Voivodeship³ are presented.

The study were conducted in selected secondary schools⁴ located in the poviats cities and smaller localities as pilot studies had found that young people studying in larger cities of the region probably have a different propensity to leave the region than the young from the smaller localities. The described selection of secondary schools and the number of examined students have as a consequence that the results of the research cannot be regarded as representative for the region. However, it is believed that this discrepancy would not be large.

The study was carried out directly (from two to several weeks) before the secondary school final examination, when the youth had already made choice of subjects for the exams and had defined intentions of future field and place of study. The surveys had an auditorium character and interviewers tried to be helpful in the case of emerging concerns and questions.

² The research was carried out on behalf of the Voivodeship Labour Office in Opole and was published in R. Jończy (red.), D. Rokita-Poskart, M. Tanas, Eksodus absolwentów szkół średnich województwa opolskiego do dużych ośrodków regionalnych kraju oraz za granicę (w kontekście problemu depopulacji województwa oraz wyzwani dla szkolnictwa wyższego i regionalnego rynku pracy), WUP Opole, Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny we Wrocławiu 2013.

³ The questionnaire research was conducted with the help of Sandra Adamek, Dawid Czuń, Grzegorz Grzegorzewski, Magdalena Koloh, Monika Kordus, Joanna Korzeniowska, Paweł Kręciproch, Justyna Nowak, Barbara Majewska, Anna Martyńska, Monika Pakuła, Monika Rasztar, Anna Reginek, Izabela Ziółkowska.

⁴ The choice of secondary school students was made on account of their dominance in the structure of high school students and their relative homogeneity which allows for comparisons between groups of respondents representing different features. It is recognized that young people who graduate from technical schools and other profiled secondary schools could have different preferences.

The research included the near future (after graduation of secondary school) education and career plans, motives of continuing education and study, preferences for future work and place of future residence and students' opinion about opportunities to find job at the end of education. This article focuses on the presentation and analysis of the results related to education migrations and their directions.

Among 1254 respondents were more women – 831 (approximately 66.3%) and fewer men – 423 (33.7%) – (Table 1), which is in accordance with the fact that secondary schools consist predominantly of female students (CSO, 2010). Men are generally more likely than women to study at vocational and technical schools.

Other metrical feature which differentiate respondents was their citizenship.⁵ As it turned out (Table 1) Polish citizenship⁶ was declared by 87.8% of the respondents (1101 respondents) and dual citizenship – Polish and German⁷ – was declared by 12.2% of the respondents (153 people). About 70% of the respondents (867 people) lived in urban areas, while about 30% (387 people) lived in rural areas.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

	N=1254	%
Gender		
Male	423	33.7
Female	831	66.3
Citizenship		
Polish	1101	87.8
Polish and German	153	12.2
Place of living		
City	867	69.1
Countryside	387	30.9

Source: Authors' own research

⁵ Because of the historical conditions the Opole Voivodeship is inhabited by about 200-250 thousand of people who have German citizenship or German origin.

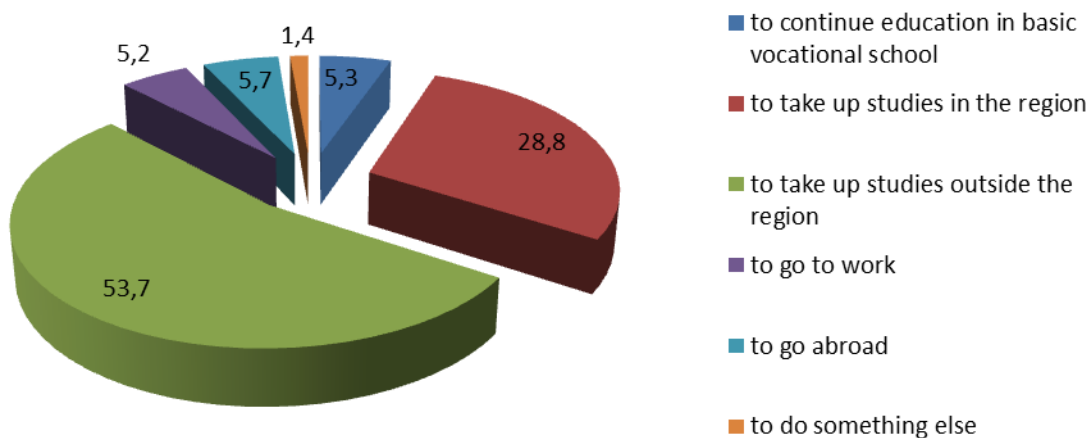
⁶ In the article the term “people with only Polish citizenship” is used interchangeably with the concept of non-autochthonous population and non-autochthons.

⁷ In the article the term “people with double Polish and German citizenship” is used interchangeably with the concept of autochthonous population or autochthons.

3. Planned educational migration among respondents

One of the main objectives of the study was to identify the plans of senior year students of secondary schools after graduation. It should be stressed, as mentioned earlier, the phenomenon of depopulation of the Opole region is not only the result of foreign emigration, but also a consequence of educational migrations which may turn into definitive abandonment of the region. In order to recognize the plans after graduation, especially those connected with educational migration outside the region, in the questionnaire the following closed question was asked: "What are you going to do after graduating of secondary school?". Figure 1 presents responses on this question.

Figure 1. Respondents' plans after graduation from secondary school



Source: Authors' own research

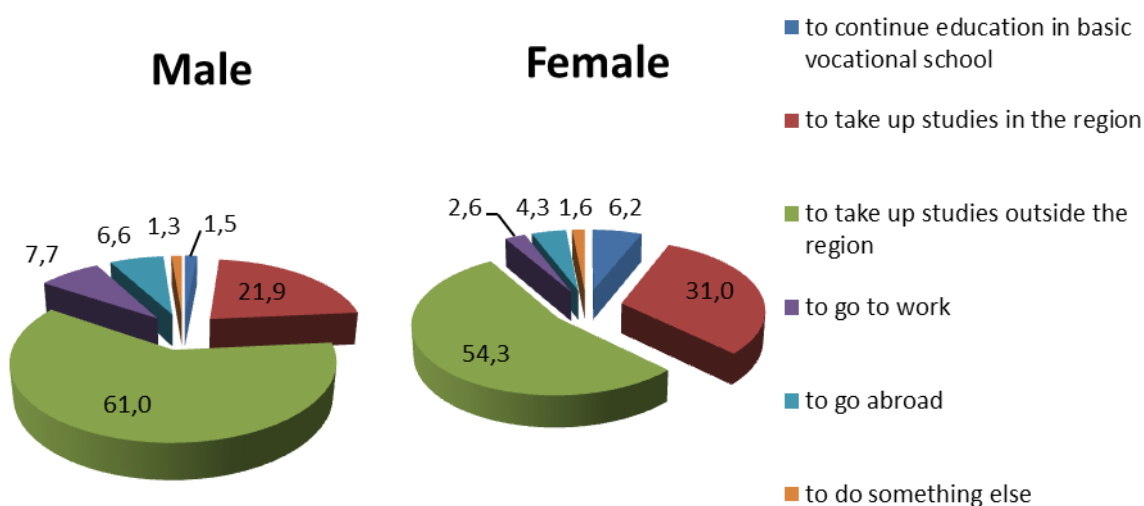
The data presented in the Figure 1 shows that the vast majority of respondents – 87.3% planned to continue their education. In this group, the largest share planned to take up studies (82%), while only 5.3% planned to continue their education in a two-year vocational schools. In the examined group there was a relatively small proportion of people intending to find job immediately after graduation (5.2%) and similar share of people who planned to go abroad after graduation (5.7%). The rest of the respondents declared that after graduation from secondary

school they intended to do something different, but in many cases they indicated plans related to work or further education (answer: make money for study, study abroad or an internships).

In the context of the aim of the article the most important answers to the question were plans to study in or outside the region. The results of the research show that almost two-thirds of those who planned to study were going to enter higher education outside the Opole Voivodeship (53.7% of all respondents), which in consequence may have an adverse effect upon the situation of the intermetropolitan region. Furthermore, alarming is the fact that only one third of the students who planned to enter higher education intended to take up study in the Opole Voivodeship (28.8% of all respondents). Therefore, the results indicate a significant scale of planned educational out-migration, which at the time of transformation to the non-return migration can be a major threat for the regional development and even to the functioning of the region.

A detailed analysis of senior year students plans shows that the decisions are affected by several factors. Gender differences can be observed (Figure 2). It turns out that man (61%) slightly more often than women (54.3%) intended to study outside the Opole region, while women were more likely to declare plans to study in the Opole Voivodeship.

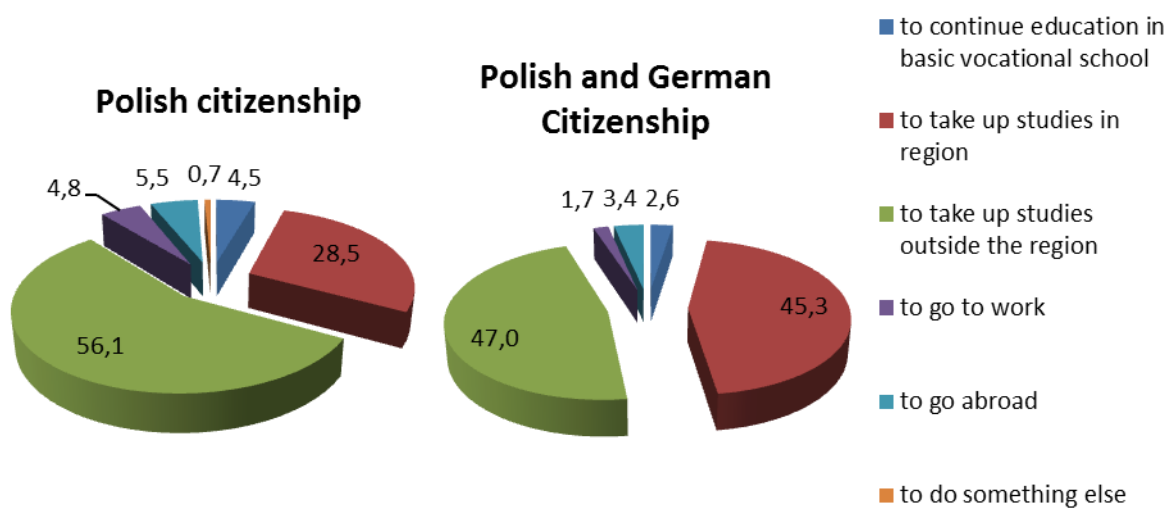
Figure 2. Plans after graduation from secondary school according to gender



Source: Authors' own research

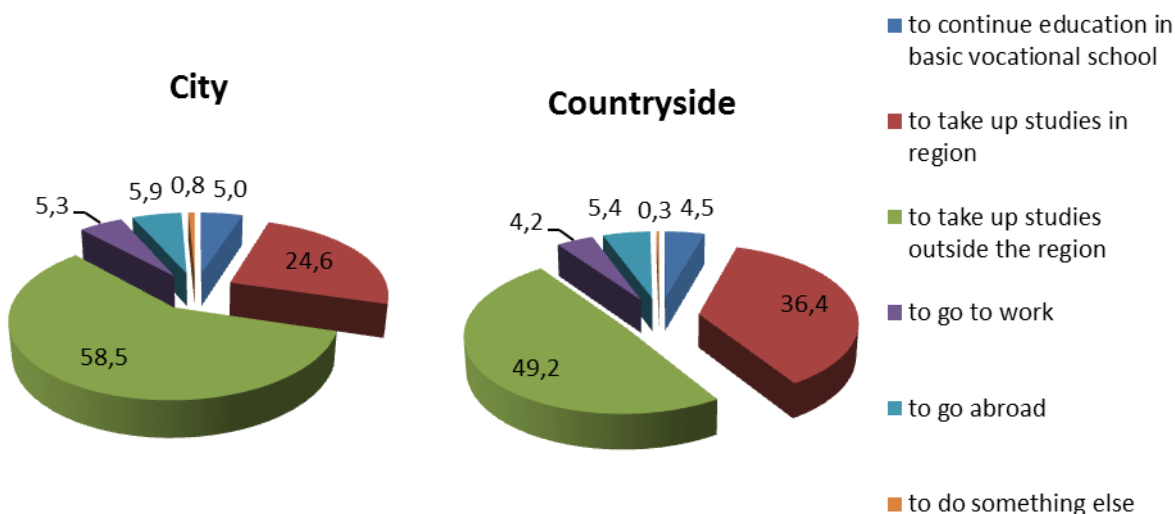
Another determinant of students plans is citizenship (Figure 3). More than 45% of autochthons, while only 28.5% of non-autochthons intended to study in the region of origin. There are also differences in the share of students who planned to study outside the voivodeship – such plans declared 47% of respondents with dual citizenship, against 56.1% of people with only Polish citizenship. Thus, autochthons are more likely to study in the region than those with only Polish citizenship.

Figure 3. Plans after graduation from secondary school according to citizenship



Source: Author's own research

The intentions of the examined students were also analyzed according to the place of residence – city or rural areas (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Plans after graduation from secondary school according to the place of residence

Source: Authors' own research

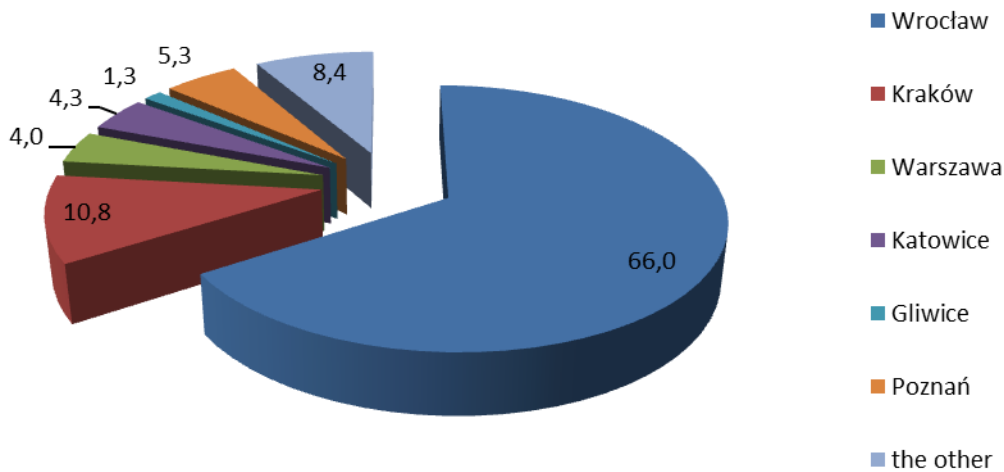
Also for place of residence differences could be observed. The results of the research indicated that rural residents (36.4%) were more likely to study in the region than urban residents (24.6%). Similarly – the intention to study outside the voivodeship were more often indicated by urban dwellers (58.5%) than rural residents (49.2%).

Yet another determinant of the decision about studying in or outside the region is the location of the secondary schools. The highest share of those who declared they planned to study outside the voivodeship or go abroad after graduation were noticed in the secondary schools located in the cities in the periphery or located at a considerable distance from the capital of the voivodeship – Opole. The results show there is a tendency that the more peripherally and the further from the capital of the voivodeship cities are located (in most cases this coincides with the place of residence), the larger the share of students planning to study outside the region. In the secondary schools located in the cities near the capital of the voivodeship there were the lowest percentages of students who planned to study outside the region and the largest shares of planning to take up their studies in the Opole Voivodeship. An exception is the capital of the region itself – Opole. Students taking education in secondary schools located in the city mostly planned to study outside the region, but in this case it seems that the decisive factors are the

desire to study away from home, in a bigger city at a more prestigious university than those located in the Opole region.

To determine the direction of migration of young people from the Opole Voivodeship, respondents who plan to study outside the region were asked to indicate the city where they intended to study. Figure 5 presents the responses to this question.

Figure 5. Cities indicated by respondents planning to study outside the region



Source: Authors' own research

The results of the study confirm the assumption that the dominant direction of educational migration from the Opole Voivodeship is the capital of the neighboring Wrocław Metropolitan Area. As it turns out, 66% of the respondents who planned to study outside the region were willing to study in Wrocław. It appears therefore that the total share of respondents planning to study in Wrocław (about 35% of the total number of respondents - see Figure 1) is even greater than the share of respondents planning to study in the Opole Voivodeship (28.8% of all respondents).

Among the remaining of respondents willing to study outside the Opole Voivodeship the largest part chose Kraków (10.8%), followed by Poznań (5.3%), Katowice (4.3%) and Warsaw (4%). The remaining 8% indicated other cities, among others Gliwice, Lublin, Gdańsk and Łódź.

In the students' selection of the direction of educational migration the localization of secondary school seems to play an important role. In the areas which are located peripherally, at a

similar distance (and time of travel) from the capital of the region and other metropolises, a large share of students was planning to study in the capital of the neighboring metropolitan region. However, based on the results of the research it became clear that the "drain" of young people from the Opole region is rather towards only one of neighboring capitals of the region – Wrocław. Evidence is provided by the fact that a small share planned to study in Katowice (4.3%) compared to Wrocław (66%). It can be assumed that young people choose Wrocław, not only because the city is close to the Opole Voivodeship, but also for the reason that many universities with a wider range of educational offer are located in this city, which are better ranked in the university rankings⁸ and parametric evaluation.⁹ Furthermore, Wrocław offers better jobs for students and graduates, often in accordance with the field of studies. The relatively small shares (or even none) of those who would plan to study in the Silesia Voivodeship (Katowice, Gliwice and Częstochowa) may be explained by the low attractiveness of centers in Silesia and the Silesian region. Undoubtedly, if in the examined group of cities had been these located in the Eastern part of the region, the share of respondents choosing study in the Silesia Voivodeship would have been bigger.

4. Conclusion

The results presented in this article confirm to a certain extent the impact of educational migration on the depopulation of the Opole Voivodeship as an intermetropolitan region. It turns out that more than half of the respondents intended to take higher education outside the Opole region, and just less than 30% of respondents intend to study at universities in the Opole Voivodeship. As far as these plans are realized, the Opole Voivodeship would experience a powerful drain of young people. The educational migrations itself would not be such a big threat to the region, if young people who decided to study in other regions would return to the Opole

⁸ In the university rankings Wrocław universities is better ranked than Opole universities. For example, according to the ranking of *Perspektywy i Rzeczpospolita 2012* the Wrocław University of Technology was ranked at the 5th place, the University of Wrocław at 7th, the Wrocław Medical University in 22nd place and the Wrocław University of Economics at 35th place. Universities located in Opole took in the same ranking the following position – the University of Opole 44th place, the Opole University of Technology 49th place.

⁹ Examples are often chosen fields of studies – economic. In the ministerial assessment made in 2010, four faculties of the Wrocław University of Economics received the highest category – 1st. The two departments of Opole universities which offer field of economic in this assessment received the third category.

Voivodeship after graduation from universities. Unfortunately, a comparison of the results presented in the article with the answers to other questions included in the questionnaire question shows that people who plan to study in other regions do not intend to come back in the future. The non-return educational migrations of young people is confirmed by answers to the question about the planned place of residence in the future. It turns out that people who declare the intention to settle down outside the region in the future are mostly the same respondents who declared that they planned to study outside the Opole Voivodeship.

Detailed analysis of the data shows that the intentions of the respondents are to some extent the consequence of the location and socio-economic situation of the area where secondary school is attended. It turns out that in the cities located peripherally, on the outskirts of the region, at a considerable distance from Opole and other metropolises, the share of respondents planning to study outside the region were the largest. An example are two of the examined towns – Namysłów and Brzeg, located at a similar distance from Opole and Wrocław, where nearly 70% of respondents intend to study out of the Opole Voivodeship. Within this group, about 70% respondents from Brzeg, and more than 90% respondents from Namysłów planned to take up study in Wrocław.

The smallest share of those planning to study outside the voivodeship occurred in two other examined secondary schools located in Krapkowice and Dobrzeń Wielki which firstly are located near the city of Opole, and secondly, they are also inhabited by people with dual (Polish and German) citizenship impacting the studying plans. Moreover, it turns out that respondents from larger cities are more likely to study in metropolises (Wrocław, Kraków, Poznań, Gdańsk, Warsaw) than residents of the villages. As the results of the research show, respondents' plans are determined by the place of residence – in the city or in the countryside, and by the gender of the respondents.

The process of the depopulation caused by educational migrations and non-return migrations may also affect other intermetropolitan regions than the Opole region (McQuaid and Hollywood, 2008; Stockdale, 2002, 2004). One group of factors determining the transformation of educational migration into non-return migration are push factors such a lack of local opportunity caused by a poor social and economic situation as well as the lack of prestigious universities and poor local and regional labour market perspectives for young people. The process of the depopulation of the intermetropolitan regions is also conditioned by the proximity

between strong regional metropolitan centers. In this case, a decisive role is played by pull factors – attractiveness of neighboring metropolises with prestigious universities and good situation on the local labor market. In this situation most interregional regions would “lose” with metropolises.

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Migracje edukacyjne jako czynnik depopulacji regionów międzymetropolitalnych

Streszczenie

W artykule zaprezentowano wyniki badań świadczące o „wyplukiwaniu” kapitału ludzkiego z regionu międzymetropolitalnego przez sąsiadujące z nim regiony metropolitalne. Jednym z czynników wpływających na proces wyludniania się regionu są migracje edukacyjne polegające na transferze młodzieży do innych silnych ośrodków w celach podjęcia tam nauki, w szczególności studiów wyższych. O ile przeistoczą się one w migracje definitywne, w znacznym stopniu przyczynić się mogą do depopulacji i być jednocześnie zagrożeniem w rozwoju regionu międzymetropolitalnego.

Słowa kluczowe: migracje edukacyjne, depopulacja, wyludnienie, region międzymetropolitalny