

KAZIMIERZ KUCIŃSKI  
Warsaw School of Economics, Poland

## Academic Identity of Researchers Investigating the Location of Business Entities

**Abstract:** The issue of the location of economic entities, which is crucial for economic geography, is becoming the object of ever more thorough analyses undertaken by the growing number of various academic disciplines, and especially those included in economic sciences, which paradoxically initiated this trend of research. This results from the cognitive interests of these disciplines, but also the needs of economic practice related to the perception of the complexity of conditions and the implications of the location of economic entities and its significance for their competitiveness. Each of the disciplines studying this issue does it a bit differently, and the analyses they make are a function of the academic identity of the researchers who conduct them. It is institutionally conditioned and determined by their education and practical experience, while the dynamically treated location theory plays a crucial role in its formation. However, the question remains whether the academic identity of the researchers of the location of economic entities shaped around this theory should be complex, nomadic or explicitly defined, and how the postulate of interdisciplinary investigation of location issues should be understood in this context.

**Keywords:** academic identity; analysis; business entity; interdisciplinarity; location; theory

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## INTRODUCTION

If we say that for some time the location in the modern economy has been crucial three times over, it shows the importance of the location of economic entities for the economically safe implementation of their missions, goals and strategies. It also testifies to the role of spatial structure, considered in various geographical scales, within which these economic entities arise, function and develop, as well as the importance and complexity of globalisation conditions and the implications of running a specific business in a given place and time.

This location triad also applies to the fact that today it is not enough to make the right decision about where to run a specific business. It must continuously be analysed dynamically and contextually; this place must be perceived concerning a particular and general location in all geographical scales of the operational space of a given economic entity.

This kind of locational triad also pertains to the criteria for assessing the impact of location factors on the functioning and development of a given economic entity. It is no longer just a matter of looking for a location that ensures minimisation of costs or maximising profits, or their satisfactory optimisation, but also competitiveness and economic security.

It is also a matter of considering the location of economic entities from the point of view of a possible strategy of adapting the place to the location requirements of a specific economic entity, the expectation of adopting this entity by this site, or treating it temporarily with a view to migration or regulation of a pre-selected location.

At the same time, it is also necessary to look threefold at the location of the analysed location of economic entities that cease to be distinctly industrial, and more and more often become both service and commercial service entities operating not only in real, but also virtual economic space of local, regional, and sometimes also global dimension.

Added to this is that the site analysis is undertaken and carried out both by economics and management sciences, as well as economic geography studies by economists or geographers, and it is becoming increasingly the subject of research interest of numerous other disciplines. Also, it is not only a manifestation of the imperialism of these disciplines but it results from the increasingly felt need of interdisciplinary analysis of the multiple conditions of the location of economic entities and its various consequences.

All this makes it indifferent to who the location researcher is, whom he considers himself and whom he is considered to be. In a word, the question is what his academic identity and its provenance are, how this identity manifests itself, whether it is homogeneous or multiple and synergically complex<sup>1</sup> and whether a given researcher by any chance is not a question for himself.

## PROVENANCE AND THE ESSENCE OF ACADEMIC IDENTITY

There are such concepts and categories of thought and the words that define them, which over the years do not evoke any emotions, and then suddenly, in changing socio-cultural conditions, become extremely important. Identity became such a term and word. It was spoken about out loud when it was realised that community was disappearing. Besides, unfortunately, there came the time people had to explain who they are and why, as well as who they are not, and especially who they do not intend to be, or in any case will not be.

Identity is becoming all the more critical, the more seemingly homogeneous communities start dividing, and their former components become heterogeneous and introverted; the more important for the functioning of these communities is the unambiguous belonging of their members.

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<sup>1</sup> In the sense of this complexity presented in the second chapter (Kuciński, 2015a).

“The idea of ‘identity’ arose from the crisis of belonging, the desire to build a bridge between what ‘belongs’ and what ‘is’, to raise and transform reality to standards and the similarity of this idea” (Bauman, 2007). So it is not only to take over this identity, to acquire it and to realise that it is owned, but above all to create it for and in oneself by building it from these standards.

Moreover, this is done in a situation where there are many options to choose or create an identity. Also, “in essence, it is a supermarket where you can pick what you want and to what extent you refer to it” (Szczerek, 2018) with your life and actions, remaining more or less loyal to the implications of your choice.

It is by no means easy because building identity “is a simultaneous fight with melting and fragmentation; it is the idea of devouring and at the same time the steadfast resistance to devouring” (Bauman, 2007). The construction of this identity, however, becomes necessary in the contemporary diversifying world. It is also necessary for modern science, which is a subject to increasingly stronger specialisation, and at the same time feels the need for a holistic approach. This applies to today’s science in general and is particularly acute in the scientific study of economy and management, which are the subjects of interest in various fields of science and their disciplines and specialities, and at the same time which are studied from very different points of view.

To tell people what economy is like and how it works, as well as how it develops, and how management evolves, and in particular what regularities it shows, you need to know who you are. You also need to be aware from what perspective and through which prisms one looks at entities, phenomena and economic processes. For this message to be understandable, it must also be known to those for whom the effort is made to study specific fragments of economic reality and their location.

The determination, or rather self-definition, of the academic identity of a researcher of economy and management, is needed to himself, so as he knew how and why he researches them in that way, but it is also necessary from the point of view of the stakeholders of his research awaiting the ideological and intellectual clarity of what they are offered as a result of this research. They want to know whom they are dealing with and what they can expect from him, what to expect from his work, how to read it and how to interpret it, and especially whether they can and want to identify with the views expressed in these works.

It is not indifferent to the provenance of the scientist’s academic identity and his conviction as to how, when and under what circumstances he took this identity over or created it and realised that he has it, how he understands it and how he makes use of it. You can have doubts about the researchers claiming that they always had a clearly and unequivocally defined academic identity, they knew who they were as scientists, whom they would like to be, and what this implies for their research. Those who wanted to be somebody else but become those who they are, are more reliable. On the other hand, researchers who do not know who they are and who do not bother themselves about it are entirely unreliable. They do not know what discipline and speciality they teach, why they undertake specific research problems and try to solve them in a specific way.

If the researcher does not have a clearly and unequivocally determined academic identity and if he does not lose the mental and intellectual freedom necessary within it, his research achievements are homogenised. Also, when their individuality and heterogeneity are lost, they cease to be one of a kind. Something is lost then, and this thing is

what science is all about, which makes the researcher original and builds his position in the scientific environment, which makes him someone.

Doing science, you must know who you are as a researcher, whom you want to be and whom you want to be considered for. At the same time, however, one must always “go ahead / ... /, and not in the dead laurels leaf stubbornly decorate the head”<sup>2</sup> (Asnyk, 1956). One cannot, however, “trample the altars of the past”, because “on them, the holy fire is still burning”<sup>3</sup> (Asnyk, 1956). Creative researchers “should bless them”<sup>4</sup>, because without these “altars” they would not be themselves, as well as it would be impossible to create works that try to bring new content to the discipline and speciality.

Science is a kind of rebellion, it is a rebellion against the legacy, it is an attempt to validate earlier ideas and theories, it is a striving to improve or supplement them, it is a new look at what others have been watching not seeing what has now been seen and learned from this enriching science conclusions. However, it is a very specific contestation and questioning the current scientific achievements because it is rooted in it, and is full of respect for the achievements of predecessors, on which “arms” creative researchers stand.

The greatness of practising researchers is based on the fact that they know what, how and why to contest and what to accept in the present scientific achievements created by others, but also by themselves. It is challenging. On the one hand, the reverse of the developing science of creative intelligence is foolishness, which requires treating the existing knowledge, especially the one created by oneself, as something inviolable and somehow sacralising it. On the other hand, the whole questioning of existing knowledge is, in principle, impossible, because in a sense it would deny the undertaken research projects before they are made and implemented, considering that they must be, in one way or another, rooted in this knowledge.

Doing science, you cannot uncritically believe in what the existing theory says, but you cannot voluntarily ignore this theory, especially if you do not know it well enough or do not understand it. By rejecting existing knowledge, we lose the foundation on which the one we intend to create must be based, but without questioning this foundation, it is impossible to make a step forward in science.

In principle, you cannot take this step, seeking inspiration only in the theoretical foundations of the discipline and scientific speciality with which we identify, which we try to do and to which we want to be counted as researchers of. It is necessary not only to be competent in the so-called literature on the subject of the study, but also, or perhaps first and foremost, being an intellectual looking for heuristic inspirations in broad humanist knowledge, but also in this natural science, especially that of the natural sciences.

Being aware of one’s academic identity and its specificity, one cannot forget even for a moment that the discipline and speciality with which we identify is “stuck” in its field of science, and at the same time, like it, is a subsystem of science understood as a socio-cognitive system.

It is also necessary to be aware of the fact that practising science is an endless process of cognitive discoveries and disappointments always taking place in a specific

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<sup>2</sup> A. Asnyk (1956). Daremne żale. In: *Asnyk wybór poezji*. Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 113–114.

<sup>3</sup> A. Asnyk (1956). *Do młodych*. Op. cit., 188.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

cultural, social and historical contexts, as well as a political context specific to the place and time in which this process is undertaken and then implemented.

This process has its methodological, methodical and institutional procedures and algorithms, but it is not true that there is only one way to achieve the goal of solving the research problem and approaching the truth about the object of cognition. There are many ways, and it is not only important what you can discover following them, most often by accident, but also what you can find out, what you can see, and most importantly what you can understand better or even understand at all.

Therefore, by adopting a specific strategy for solving a research problem, one must first think about how to solve the problem and, after a while, think about it again, but completely different. Then you have to go along one of these paths, which seems to be as original as an optimal solution, or choose a hybrid path, which should not be sought but followed merely towards the goal to which one is heading. Ideally, it would be the path on which "Indiana Jones" will most likely meet "Albert Einstein" (Krakauer, 2018), and the work that will be created when we reach the goal of a scientific wandering will be the one that its author would like to read on a given subject himself.

Going along such a path is especially recommended when reality of the subject of the cognitive process is complex, and at the same time unstable, as modern economy and everything that is connected with it, as well as what is going on in connection with it, and when analysing all this should also have the character of research of real, as well as alternative realities.

It is especially justified when thinking about economic subjects, phenomena and processes, we move away from thought constructions inspired by mathematics and physics to treating economy and management as analogues of animate world analysed by biology. Following such a path is particularly justified when we want to determine how much what we examine is deterministic and how much stochastic when we try to find a moment of balance between regularity and randomness of the subject matter of the study.

Such an approach requires a harmonious acceptance of the description with the explanation obtained through its deepening and the resulting understanding with the formalism of effective laws and theories. This allows us to discover a new order of supposedly known, and at the same time unknown, economic reality. Learning this reality ends successfully only when the adopted principles of its research refer not only to the processes and phenomena analysed by physics and classical economics, but also see the biological and cultural, and especially social, nature of scientific research into the economy and management as well as the location of economic entities.

For such a cognitive process to be possible, a dialectical approach to the academic identity of researchers in economy and management is necessary, and above all being guided by principles of methodological and methodical principles in research work. The point is that economics, while remaining economics, and geography remaining geography, is a science tailored to the challenges posed by the modern economy, while economists and geographers who study it, as well as representatives of other academic disciplines and specialities, are still the same as before, but showing entirely another view of the subject of their research, allowing to perceive its complexity, and in particular to capture its instability, spatial diversity and socio-cultural and spatial contexts.

For this to be possible, they should have their academic identity, but it cannot be treated dogmatically. They cannot be excluded from engaging in solving challenging research problems generated by the differences that shape this identity and their understanding of the field and discipline of science. Neither can it be an identity that is so far alienated from the mainstream of economics or geography, that there would not be any "bridge" if one had to withdraw from its sublime and very original perception, in particular analysing, economy and management (Bauman, 2007). The researcher of economic subjects, systems, phenomena and processes should have a clearly defined and revealed academic identity, but should not treat it dogmatically or statically. On the one hand, it is the existing attribute of the researcher, and on the other hand, something that becomes and evolves during scientific research into economy and management, in particular, the location of economic entities and their location spaces.

It requires constructive criticism of yourself, your discipline, your speciality, your scientific community and your mentors, combined with respect for all this and all those who have shaped us as researchers. On the other hand, however, it should not be that the only thing that characterises us as researchers is the uncritical pride of belonging to a given scientific circle that does not allow to perceive its weakness and that makes us fiercely defend it even against those adversaries who are in fact right.

## RESEARCHERS OF THE LOCATION OF BUSINESS ENTITIES

Academic identity determines the field and discipline of science in which we place our research interests. It specifies the specialisation practised, and above all the theme of the studies. It suggests research problems one perceives, the way of solving them and the way of announcing the results obtained, as well as generalising the statements formulated on their basis. It happens that the same problems are undertaken on the basis of various fields and disciplines of science by researchers with a completely different academic identity. They look at the same thing, seeing, however, in what they observe various properties of the object of interest, seeing its different provenance and different implications, different cause-effect relations and various regularities of functioning and development of what they have to study. Sometimes they see the same, but not in the same way, and the conclusions they reach are not the same, and even if they are identical, they verbalise them differently.

A spectacular example of such a situation is research on the location of economic entities and attempts to create theories explaining the mechanism of making location decisions and recommending methods of conducting location analyses. When undertaking this kind of study, one must be aware of one's academic identity and not only the one arising from academic education, but the final one generated by formal and informal education, as well as life and, especially, practical experience. At the same time, it is essential not only whom the researcher considers himself to be, but in fact who he is in the sense of academic identity.

This also applies to the authors of studies dealing with various aspects of the location of enterprises or facilities in which business activities are undertaken and conducted. Before reading the papers, and joining their authors on an intellectual journey, we must think for a moment who they are and why they see the subject of their scientific fascination as they try to present it to us.

The issue of locating business entities is primarily a matter of interest to economists and economic geographers<sup>5</sup>, but also psychologists analysing the way of making location decisions and their behavioural determinants, sociologists studying social aspects of this process and social perception of its consequences, as well as anthropologists for whom economic objects and entities resulting from this decision process are significant, a relatively permanent element of material culture, culturally generated and creating culture.

Location of economic entities is also interesting for planners analysing their location in the spatial structure of settlement units, spatial planners, for whom it is important to locate these objects in the spatial structure of regions at different levels of geographical scale, and architects interested in the form of material substance of these objects and its functional implications.

However, it is important not only how the location decision is made and how the localised objects are incorporated into the spatial structure of places of their location, and how the economic entities operating in these facilities are incorporated into the economic structure of these places, how they are adopted by these places and/or what adaptation of these places to the location requirements of these enterprises is, but also what regulations are in force in this respect. This, in turn, means those interested in these issues include lawyers who create legal norms regulating the process of making location decisions, analyse the manner of applying these regulations and their economic, social and ecological consequences considered from the point of view of the publicly achieved objectives.

Each of these analysts of the location considered as a decision process, actual or hypothetical situation, treats the issues of the location of the surveyed business entities in settlement and spatial units slightly differently seeing it in the ontological, epistemological and methodological field, in the discipline and scientific specialty with which he identifies himself and on the ground of which he conducts his research.

It happens that these representatives of so many fields, disciplines and specialities are so strongly immersed in their domains that they are becoming a problem for themselves, losing in a way the essence of their interest in the location of enterprises. They especially do not notice its structural and institutional context, which somewhat requires us to see in a different light the issue of the location considered from their point of view, and somewhat differently interpret what seems to be so obvious and unambiguous. They sometimes seem to forget that in describing, analysing and explaining the world in which we live, the paper they write is not so important; it is the problem itself that should be taken and, more importantly, solved not only locally and specifically but universally.<sup>6</sup>

A particular problem begins when a location researcher, having a specific academic identity, tries to approach the subject of the study as if he had a completely different one and asks to be asked, quoting the point of one of the songs of the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar*, "Do you think you're what they say you are?"

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<sup>5</sup> It is also said that economic geography is, in essence, a theory of location, especially when it attempts to grasp the universal regularities of deployment in the space of the economic activity of a human being and its social life, when it tries to capture the conditions, connections and spatial implications associated with this arrangement (Kuciński, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Vladimir Nabokov drew attention to this, saying in *Laughter in darkness* that "What counts is not the book we write, but the problem it puts - and solves".

Sometimes it is difficult to follow the course of thinking of the researchers of locations who have substantively complex scientific identities<sup>7</sup>. I am half-hearted if their way of analysing the location is indeed interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary (Kuciński, 2010), which is a challenge for the reader of the publication presenting this analysis. Worse, if this inter-, multi-, trans- or cross-disciplinary is alleged and in fact is a kind of smokescreen covering the superficial nature of the conducted study, which does not analyse anything, fluctuating towards the contexts of what it should be focusing on.

The mainstream of studies on the location of enterprises is connected, however, with researchers who want to be economists or geographers, and sometimes whose academic identity is partly economic, and partly geographical. The economist who studies economy and management treats the location of economic entities primarily as a microeconomic issue. Depending on the accepted criterion, he is looking for a place in space that due to its importance of the location factors for the given type of economic activity and its scale, is the optimal or suboptimal solution for this economic entity. On the one hand, he aims to detect the regularities governing the process of making location decisions and its possible regulation, and on the other hand, tries to recommend specific procedures for praxeologically and economically efficient implementation of this process.

The way in which he tries to accomplish these tasks depends on the specifics of his academic identity. The economist who identifies with the naturalistic (scientific) methodological model of practising economic analysis perceives the issue of location somewhat differently, while somewhat differently does it the one who adheres to the principles of the humanistic (anti-scientific) or modified naturalistic model (Kuciński, 2010; Kuciński, 2014a). The key here is the selection of quantitative or qualitative methods of analysis or attempting to hybridise them. Also noteworthy is the way non-economic location factors are treated in this analysis, which mainly depends on whether the researcher analyses the location in the mainstream of economics or whether he or she takes it on the basis of institutional, behavioural or moral economics, as this leads him to particular exposure of specific location factors and methods of their analysis.

It is not without significance whether, being an economist and being able to look at issues of location and related risks (Kuciński, 2014b), he can look not only through the prism of economics but also other sciences dealing with the context of localisation. If he does not, he becomes a bore and is almost dangerous (Hayek, 1967), because he is partially sighted, “and if he is partially sighted, he cannot rationally prove what he is trying to prove and thinking that he knows, in fact, he does not know” (Kołodko, 2008). It seems to him that he is rational in how he thinks, and especially in what he does and what he says, while in fact, analysing the location of economic entities, he only rationalises his own actions and thinking, not wanting to admit blindness, deafness and often stupidity, either his own, or location decision-makers, whose actions and their consequences are being investigated (Kuciński, 2017).

For the assessment of character, quality, cognitive value, theoretical depth and practical utility of a given location analysis, it is not enough to say that its author is an economist. What is also important is what kind of economist he is and how he

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<sup>7</sup> Understood as presented by M. Polański in the second chapter (“Interdisciplinary scientific identity”) of the book (Kuciński, 2015a).

implements the ontological, epistemological and methodological recommendations of undertaking and conducting such an analysis, which results from the specificity of his identity.

This also applies to the location analyses undertaken and conducted by economic geographers, for whom the issue of distribution and location of economic entities in settlement and spatial units is an essential element of their research field. The economic geographer, however, is not interested in what location to choose for a given economic entity, how to do it, and how it will affect the economic efficiency of the given enterprise and the possibilities of its development, as well as its economic security<sup>8</sup>. The subject of his research interest is how economic entities are distributed, what location and spatial values of the places they are located in have caused that they are there and what the result is for these places in the sense of the choreological economic, social, spatial and environmental implications.

Whereas for an economist analysing the location of a given economic entity, the critical category is the costs of economic activity borne by the enterprise, or its native economic system, due to the specific location of this economic entity, its locally implied competitiveness and economic profitability, for the economic geographer spatial conditions and the consequences of undertaking and conducting this activity in a given place are essential.

No wonder then that an economic geographer, more than an economist, is interested in the local and regional, increasingly international and global location system, the place of a given economic entity in this system, relations occurring in this system and its relationships, considered in various geographical scales, in relations with other spatial systems of the economy affecting or generated by a given location.

In this view, the issue of the location of enterprises is reflected in the economic geographer's distinctive academic identity. It is based on the specificity of geography as a science, which offers a comprehensive view of multidimensional and, at the same time, hierarchically analysed places and spatial units of various levels of regional taxonomy.

In this analysis, it is not just about saying how, where and why exactly, but not otherwise, economic entities are located, but also about indicating potential opportunities for their secure economic location resulting from the comprehensively assessed attractiveness of location of specific settlement and spatial units.

Recapitulating the characteristics of research attitudes of economists and economic geographers analysing the location of economic entities and the location attractiveness of places, one can say that the approach to this analysis resulting from their academic identity is in a sense the reverse and obverse of the location issue. The economist's view is introverted, and the economic geographer is extroverted. The economist focuses on the enterprise itself, and the geographer on the place of its location. As a consequence, the economist is primarily interested in how the features of the place affect the functioning, and in particular the possibility of economically safe development of a given enterprise, and the economic geographer is interested how the existence of a specific

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<sup>8</sup> More and more current in the dynamically changing local, regional and global market, social, natural and institutional environment, the issue of location-determined economic security of enterprises is presented in a series of books prepared under my supervision and published by the CeDeWu Publishing House. In addition to the two already mentioned publications (Kuciński, 2014b, 2017) these are: Kuciński, 2015b, 2017, 2018.

enterprise in a given place affects the characteristics of this place determining social life underway in it, and especially its economic manifestations. Thus, the economist is primarily interested in the prospectively dynamic approach, while the economic geographer in particularly a static approach.

Increasingly, however, it turns out that such a single view is *ex definitione* defective and insufficient, mainly because of challenges resulting from the specificity of modern economy. The location is generally no longer static, but it is a dynamic process of choosing and changing the place of conducting a given business activity. It has more and more different conditions. There are more and more different consequences, and not only for a given economic entity and the right place of its spatial location. In this situation, the ideal solution would be the integration of both methods and goals of practising the location analysis. It would be favoured by the complex academic identity of an economist who is both a geographer or a geographer who is also an economist, or at least is thinking like a professional researcher in economy and management. Its creation is by no means unrealistic and in many cases has already become reality.

The premise for shaping such a complex identity is primarily an isomorphic usage by the economic geography of the location theory and methodology of the location analysis created predominantly on the basis of economics and by economists. On the other hand, appreciation of the importance of the spatial dimension of the economy and the spatial conditions of its functioning and development is popular among economists, mainly due to M. Porter and P. Krugman, and earlier to W. Isard. The acceptance, and even a kind of fetishisation, of interdisciplinary approach to the study of economy and management is also significant.

Moreover, contemporary analysis of the location of enterprises requires an interdisciplinary, and therefore a holistic approach, benefiting from the isomorphism of science. The only thing is that it should be authentic, substantively justified, methodologically correct, cognitively and pragmatically fruitful, and this requires that it should be conducted by researchers with complex scientific identities and the resulting real competence to undertake and conduct such interdisciplinary analysis of the location of economic entities.

However, as such investigators are not easy to find, it would be an optimal solution to entrust location analyses to teams composed of economists, economic geographers, urban planners, spatial planners, sociologists, environmentalists, as well as lawyers, observing, and above all understanding the need for multi-level and multi-faceted, and at the same time comprehensive perception of spatial issues of the conditions and implications of taking up and running a business in a given place. Only such conduct of the location analysis of economic entities today has a cognitive and practical meaning, provided, however, that it is appropriately embedded in the intelligently and creatively used theory of location of business entities.

#### LOCATION THEORY AS A COMPONENT OF ACADEMIC IDENTITY OF THE RESEARCHERS OF THE LOCATION OF BUSINESS ENTITIES

An essential element of the researcher's academic identity is theory explaining the essence, conditions and functioning of the object of his research interests. It is the axis around which this identity is formed, it moderates it, or becomes the cause of its transformation. Academic identity, embedded in the broad context of his general and

specialist knowledge, determines the ontological, epistemological and methodological perspective of the undertaken studies and analyses. It tells you what to study, how to do it and how to report the results. What is important here is not only what constitutes the subject and content of this theory; the degree of its maturity is also remarkable, its genesis and evolution, the directions of its development and their premises, the controversies, possible gaps or understatements around it are also significant. The thinking that characterises the researcher of a particular problem is contextually shaped by this theory, while its perception and cognitive implications depend on the specificity of the academic, intellectual formation of a given researcher and the intellectual subsoil resulting from what he encounters.

A perfect exemplification of this process is how the location theory influences the academic identity of analysts trying to answer the question regarding what determines the specific location of business entities, how this placement works and how the place in which it is located and the relationship of this entity with its suppliers influence the given entity, cooperating parties, competitors and clients as well as social and institutional stakeholders.

It starts with the very origin of the location theory, which has evolved in relation to the need, cognitively and pragmatically determined, for explanation and, above all, understanding, the mechanism governing the search by economic operators for an optimal or at least satisfactory location from the point of view of economic efficiency, its evaluation and a possible adjustment, sometimes called regulation. Thus, the theory of location, since its beginning, has been an example of the so-called functional theory resulting from the generalisation of localisation behaviour of enterprises and aiming at the rationalisation of these behaviours. Also, as a practical theory, it pragmatically guides the academic identity of researchers undertaking various aspects of the location of entities economic. Such an understanding of this theory has also become a leading recommendation for its analytical applications and its inductively generated improvement.

Such a recommendation organising the location analysis also constitutes the fact that the location theory has always aimed at identifying the location factors and subliming those that at a given stage of economic development and in given technological and market conditions, as well as institutional conditions, were the leading ones, somehow determining a specific location. At the same time, it was about determining how this factor affects the actual and alternative costs of conducting a given business activity and their economic consequences, and capturing the secondary location factors deforming this impact, which makes the issue of the location to be considered holistically making holistic thinking a vital feature of the academic identity of its researchers.

Exposing the need to comprehensively analyse the location of business entities also results from the fact that the location theory, while being a microeconomic concept, seeks the possibility of simultaneously perceiving the spatial implications of a given location appearing at various levels of geographical scale. It treats the location as a factor forming or transforming the spatial organisation of the economy on a local, regional and macro-regional scale, and sometimes goes beyond the boundaries of national economic spaces. Thus, it perceives the issue of localisation regarding its feedback to the spatial structure of the economy of settlement and spatial units in which the given economic entity is located, or is being located, thus changing the location and spatial value of the place of its location because it affects its conditions. This, in turn, requires

localisation researchers who, as part of their academic identity, would consider a cybernetic and systemic approach to the systemically viewed subject of the study.

Paying attention to the economic implications of the impact of the leading location factor on the functioning and possibilities of development of an economic entity within a given location, the location theory is guided by the specific logic of the perception of spatial relations in the convention of analysing their equilibrium. It is at the same time a kind of microeconomy of space that considers the allocations of business entities and spatial balance through the prism of the price mechanism. It requires that analysts of the location of enterprises see it through the eyes of a microeconomist, for whom macro-economic, macro-spatial and regional aspects of a given location are a meaningful context, but only a context, not a subject of direct analysis. Direct analysis of this context is in the sense of the theory of location a regional science research field, which is complementary to the micro-economic analysis of the location of entities, economic analysis of the economy and management, as well as their spatial conditions. Location theory suggests that these are two different perspectives and two completely different approaches. Although they are the obverse and reverse of the issue of the location of economic entities, these two analyses should not be carried out simultaneously. Their goals are different, and they require different predispositions and intellectual competences from the researchers undertaking these analyses. The study of the impact of the environment on the enterprise requires the researcher to have more the academic identity of an economist, and the analysis of the impact of the company on its surroundings requires to look at this issue through the eyes of an analyst with a geographer's academic identity.

Conducting these analyses, one must remember that historically speaking, location theory has its roots in studies of agricultural land use, which indicates its geographical, rather than economic provenance, although the reasoning on which these studies were based, or actually the methodology that led to their theoretical generalisation, was concordant with thinking and instrumentation used by economists. It was because the 17th and 18th century political economy only perceived the issue of location, but the theory announced by J.H. Thuenen in 1826 (Thuenen, 1826) became the synthesis of these peregrinations. However, it did not have far-reaching heuristic, cognitive and practical implications for a long time. They appeared only from economics at the end of the 19th century, and their crowning was the theory of the location of industrial production plants published by A. Weber in the first decade of the 20th century (Weber, 1909).

It was an approach with all the features of reasoning that reached the essence and the subject of economics, or economic sciences as would be said today, because it shifted the emphasis from the analysis of space to analysis of time. However, it created the prerequisites for undertaking studies on industry-specific localisation behaviour of various types of economic activity and formation of their spatial organisation, directing these analyses towards the field of research of economic geography and regional science.

Thanks to these studies, previously treated paradoxically marginally by economic geography, the issue of localisation, being a somewhat *ex definitione* the essence of its research field, gained the full right of citizenship in economic geography, and for economic geographers it became essential, not to say the main subject of research interest in this discipline of science and scientific specialty. It was undoubtedly related to the growing awareness of the importance of spatial conditions for the functioning and

development of micro-economic entities implied by dynamic economic development. It was also a consequence of the fact that space and the components of the geographical environment necessary for taking up and doing business, as a result of this development became an increasingly limited and less accessible, and above all generating conflict resulting from the possibilities of their competitive applications.

No wonder then that the theoretical concepts that were fundamental to the contemporary analysis of the location and academic identity of its researchers appeared in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century, is somehow the result of the incredibly dynamic economic development of this country at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. The most spectacular theory of location developed by A. Weber (1909) and the theory of central places (centres) formulated by W. Christaller (1961), developed and modified in 1944 by A. Loesch (Loesch, 1961), got stuck without continuation, when the development dynamics of the war-devastated Europe weakened.

However, they have become an inspiration for American economists, geographers and regionalists facing the challenges posed by the spatial conditions and implications of the dynamically developing native economy. The works of German location theorists, translated into English in the 1930s, inspired research on the location of individual economic entities and types of economic activities, as well as on the spatial organisation of locally related systems of the same kind and various business entities competing for location and availability of production factors in such a structure (Hoover, 1962).

Undertaking such analyses meant that the theory of location ceased to be treated only formally; its utilitarian potential was noticed, and first of all, used, based on the implied patterns of reasoning and analytical recommendations. Generalising reflections emerging against these analyses, coupled with the knowledge that the theory of location in its original shape was based on neoclassical economics, led to a general theory of spatial planning, which is perfectly exemplified by the study of Walter Isard published in 1956 (Isard, 1965). They also helped to improve the partial balance models for different types of economic activity. They have also become a premise to consider location issues not only within national economic spaces but also, and sometimes primarily, within the framework of the global economic space treated as a kind of a global market for potential locations not perceived as a one-off act but as a process.

This process approach to a location means acceptance of its regulation by adapting the business activity to changing location factors occurring in a given location or searching for new location places offering it competitive conditions that translate into more beneficial economic effects. Thus, the location and thinking about it have become fluid in a post-modern way, and acceptable choices are increasingly becoming sub-optimal.

Such a modification of the classical or somewhat traditional approach to the location theory means that the axis organising the academic identity of the researcher analysing the location of economic entities and its economic, spatial, social, institutional and natural implications, and sometimes political, has ceased to be thinking in terms of optimisation requiring searching for the best possible localisation solutions for a given business entity, or assessing them from the point of view of whether they still are.

Acceptable locations are becoming satisfactory because of their level of utility, competitiveness, prospectively assessed economic security and satisfaction resulting not only from the material benefits but also intangible, especially those with axiological provenance and nature. Therefore, optimal solutions are not necessarily sought, but

the set of permissible solutions is accepted, which are within the thresholds set by the subjective level of aspirations and expectations of entrepreneurs, public authorities, local communities, but also location researchers themselves.

This approach effectively facilitates the theory of location, and above all allows clarifying and understanding the existing in practice forms of the issue of the location and locating of economic entities and the microeconomically, locally and regionally significant consequences. It means, on the one hand, a shift in reasoning from the alleged isotropic and homogeneous character of geographical and economic space to perceiving its real heterogeneity and temporal variability, and, on the other, hand replacing the abstract concept of an economic man, the entrepreneur (the decision maker) and the analyst of his locational behaviours, with the concept of a human being with flesh and blood having specific, institutionally determined values (Fierla, Kuciński, 2001).

It also requires perceiving the location not in terms of pointwise understood place but treating it as a particular solution in the locational space generated by a given economic entity, potential or real, not so much a set of places with which the given entity enters or will enter into economic and/or institutional relations, but more a spatial arrangement of various connections, flows, streams and dependencies of this type.

Therefore, it is like the same location theory, but nowadays it is entirely different as to the content and forms of its manifestation. The changing economic reality and the changing approach to taking up and running a business, and perceiving the impact of a specific economic, social, technical, morphological, spatial, institutional and natural characteristics on its closer but also further environment, causes the location theory to evolve, enrich itself and transform, but its essence remains unchanged, and this should be the core of the scientist's identity analysing the location of economic entities in its various aspects and from different points of view. The location analyst who uses this theory heuristically and operationally is, or at least should be, "stuck" in this theory and in the "path of its development". Moreover, his academic identity must be "stuck" in it, regardless of whether he starts the analysis as an economist, economic geographer or a representative of yet another discipline of science.

Location has become an extremely attractive cognitively and pragmatically object of study. Individual disciplines of science attempt to hijack it trying to analyse the location of economic entities, especially its conditions and implications, in their way as a phenomenon and as a process. Not doing so under ontological, epistemological and methodological recommendations resulting from location theory and not treating this theory as the basis of their cognitive actions, they are doomed to intellectual, cognitive and pragmatic defeat, although they may seem to have succeeded.

## SUMMARY

Abstract: Looking at how the theory of location has developed and evolved, and how important, not to say critical, element of the academic identity of analysts investigating the location of economic entities is, its determinants and all kinds of implications, influence the perception of the subject of analysis, one can come to a conclusion that this identity is, happens to be, and actually should be not so much complex, but somewhat nomadic. When analysing the location of business entities, its determinants and consequences, it is not about being a geographer and economist at the same time, but depending on the studied aspect of this location, be an economic geographer, or an

economist, sometimes a sociologist, psychologist, urban planner, regionalist or a lawyer, and therefore have a swinging academic identity. Only such an academic identity allows investigating in an interdisciplinary way such complex issues as the question of the location of economic entities undoubtedly is. However, the point is not to be interdisciplinary, based on a crude division of duties not upsetting the academic tribalism. To reach the essence of the complexity of the location, its conditions and implications, it is necessary that the researchers analysing the issue are likeminded. It requires deep intellectual fusion and mental cohabitation of the representatives of various disciplines, for whom the location is an element of the research field, but also those who look at this issue from outside of this field. Moreover, it is not enough to just intellectually flirt, sending each other conventional smiles, or even a kind of kisses suggesting kindness. It is necessary to have a physical closeness that allows the collision of thoughts driving us closer to learning the essence of the complexity of the problem under investigation. Also, there is a need for academic identity pushing the creativity of researchers dealing with a given issue towards the limits of intellectual efficiency, identity accepting the risk of cognitive failure, unrestrained when it comes to breaking the borders created by academic disciplines and institutional structures of science (Jałochowski, 2018). However, to be able to carry out such an analysis in a cognitive and pragmatic sense, one must be aware of the existence and reason of all possible prospects of perceiving the location of economic entities and analysing it, which should be unambiguously oriented but at the same time contextually conducted. The method of conducting this analysis is based on the academic identity of the researchers who are involved in it, but at the same time, this method transforms the identity. Of crucial importance here is the reasoning that determines the researcher's actions resulting from this identity, so much so that they become routine over time, marking his personality and destiny. Our thinking forms and determines how we are perceived by our environment, by our stakeholders, as well as by our social environment. So you have to look at what your academic identity is and whether you have one. It is essential not only because of what and how we do but above all because of who we are and who we are becoming doing scientific studies and research.

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**Kazimierz Kuciński**, professor, Warsaw School of Economics, Department of Economic Geography, full professor, a graduate of the Faculty of Production Economics at the Warsaw School of Planning and Statistics/Warsaw School of Economics (SGH), since 1972 a member of its research and teaching staff who specialises in economic geography. He received his doctorate in 1976, obtained his habilitation in 1989, and since 1998 he has been a professor of economic sciences. In the years 1994–2006 he was the director of the Institute of Functioning of the National Economy at Warsaw School of Economics, and since 2006 he has been the head of the Department of Economic Geography at this university. The subject of his research interests is the theory of economic geography, location of enterprises and regional development. He deals with the processes of globalisation and glocalisation, especially regarding the research field of geography of industry and geography of population. Recently, he has devoted particular attention to the methodology of economic sciences with particular emphasis on the way in which spatial aspects of economy and management are studied.

**Address:**

Warsaw School of Economics  
Department of Economic Geography  
ul. Rakowiecka 24, 02-521 Warsaw, Poland  
e-mail: kazimierz.kucinski@sgh.waw.pl