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SOCIAL-GEOGRAPHICAL ESSENCE AND CONTENT OF THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE REGION

The current stage of market transformations in Ukraine requires the changing of existing stereotypes and management. Expecting for administrative reform and economic regionalization of the state requires detailed attention to the scientific concept of "competitiveness of the region." Being economical in nature this concept requires social and geographical understanding. The paper traced the content and nature of the economic competitiveness of the region in social and geographical interpretation. Author presents the fragments of research model components of regional competitiveness. The effective influence of socio-geographical laws, patterns, factors and competitive advantages that determine the strategic potential of the region is figured on. The importance of individual studies of functional subsystems, industrial, social, recreation and tourism, natural resources, administrative and management, investment and innovation under the influence of social transformation is noted. Based on scientific generalizations, the author's definition of region competitiveness was suggested. It is defined by the author as an integrated concept that reveals the state, the process and the outcome of the territory as a socio-economic system. The basis of regional competitiveness is the potential of the territory able to function effectively on the basis of competition (social and geographical) advantages. The main goal here should be improvement of the region population quality of life. The work reveals the contribution of individual schools and social geographers' studies to the development of regional competitiveness. The importance of further development of the theory and methodology of social and geographical research competitiveness of the region is stressed.

Key words: region, competitiveness, competitiveness of the region, competitive advantages, development factors, region potential, functions.

Діана Гринюк. СУСПІЛЬНО-ГЕОГРАФІЧНА СУТНІСТЬ ТА ЗМІСТ КОНКУРЕНТОСПРОМОЖНОСТІ РЕГІОНУ

Проаналізовано шлях формування поняття «конкурентоспроможність регіону» в процесі пошуку його суспільно-географічного змісту. Здійснено аналіз існуючих підходів до визначення та запропоновано авторське тлумачення. Представлено схематичні фрагменти авторської моделі конкурентоспроможності регіону. Наголошується на важливості подальшого розвитку теорії і методики суспільно-географічного дослідження конкурентоспроможності регіону.

Ключові слова: регіон, конкурентоспроможність, конкурентоспроможність регіону, конкурентні переваги, чинники розвитку, потенціал регіону, функції.

Диана Гринюк. ОБЩЕСТВЕННО-ГЕОГРАФИЧЕСКАЯ СУЩНОСТЬ И СОДЕРЖАНИЕ КОНКУРЕНТОСПОСОБНОСТИ РЕГИОНА

Проанализирован путь формирования понятия «конкурентоспособность региона» в процессе поиска его общественно-географического содержания. Осуществлен анализ существующих подходов к его определению и предложено авторское толкование. Представлены схематические фрагменты авторской модели конкурентоспособности региона. Отмечается важность дальнейшего развития теории и методики общественно-географического исследования конкурентоспособности региона.

Ключевые слова: регион, конкурентоспособность, конкурентоспособность региона, конкурентные преимущества, факторы развития, потенциал региона, функции.

Introduction. It was the need of the society which determined the development of socio-geographical science at all stages of its history. The deepening of the process of market reforms in Ukraine requires the change of management stereotypes, planning methods and management principles. Equally important is the task of potential implementation of a particular region and the constant improvement of the quality of life of the regional community. Socio-geographic transformation, implemented on a regional and state levels, are particularly multidimensional, since this plane is intersecting interests of many sciences and scientific fields. Economization of socio-geographical perspective provides a scientific novelty, it can not be avoided due to the strengthening of economic laws at all research levels [8].

In the global economy each state plays a special role, determined, firstly, by international competition features and, secondly, the competitiveness of the country and its regions. In transformational society the reproductive process is characterized by instability. Constant change of competitive advantages requires changes in all components of the social process by introducing new models and competitive strategies in regional development regulation. It is this complexity and multidimensional space which define the subject in competitiveness study.

Analysis of previous researches and publications. Despite extensive usage of this concept in research there is still no single definition of sustainable competitiveness of the economy in general and the region in particular.

Ukrainian and foreign scientists have focused on different components of this multi-dimensional category, presenting them as the main criterion signs. Therefore, the definitions are ranging from purely technological, arising from extended treatment of firms competitiveness, to the detailed socio-economic, which consider competitiveness as a generic indicator of the socio-economic system stability, the level of its individual regions.

The scientific approaches of competitiveness are based on scientific results of the whole galaxy of prominent scientists from different fields of national and world science. In particular, in the field of social geography, geopolitics, economics, regional economics, regional management, market research, municipal management etc. The basis of this study were theoretical works of such scholars as L. Antonjuk, Ya. Bazyljuk, V. Bezuhla, P. Belenky, V. Heiets, A. Hradov, M. Dolishniy, Ya. Zhalilo, N. Kaliuzhnova, P. Lutsyshyn, D. Stechenko, L. Chernova, R. Shniper and others. The acquisition of classical foreign scientists were used as well – P. Krugman, M. Porter, M. Enright, J. Humphrey and others. The logic of socio-geographical processes and scientific approaches were partially taken from I. Gorlenko, F. Zastavny, S. Zapototsky, S. Ishchuk, K. Mezentsev, L. Niemets, Y. Oliynyk, M. Pistun, A. Stepanenko, A. Topchiev and others. The research of the region competitiveness forms a number of problems that require scientific understanding of socio-geographical science.

The aim of this study is to identify the socio-geographical nature of the concept of "regional competitiveness", the factors that determine its development and dependence on the impact of contemporary socio-economic environment. The formation of competitive regions deserves depth study and this process should take into account the impact of market factors in terms of current transformation processes in transitive economy countries and Ukraine.

Main material. The way from forming ideas on competition to understanding the competitiveness of countries and regions is quite lengthy and is associated primarily with the development of economics. At present the economic and geographic interpretation is very important. The historiography of the concept distinguishes schools and scientific trends, whose varied approaches were changing according to the needs of society, production and market.

The analysis of encyclopedic references confirms the relatively recent emergence of the investigated concept. Accordingly, the disclosure of its scientific sense is more confident with the generic "competition". "Competition (lat. concurrere – to compete, to face) - economic rivalry and the struggle between different actors (including producers and sellers of goods and services) for advantageous conditions of production and sales, for the appropriation of the biggest profits and other major targets. Competitiveness – an important driving force of the economic system, a component of the economic mechanism "[9]. However, for the sources of the Soviet period a negative attitude to the competition was prevailing and it was determined mainly as antagonistic form of

private producers economic competition.

Thus, **the generic term** competition in relation to competitiveness is the basic, procedural, technological, but its essence is economic and motivation as to its socio-geographical interpretation is absent. This concept is derived from economic theory and is the subject to a number of economic laws and principles. In the western economic literature the "universal" interpretation of competitiveness as the ability of a country or company to develop and produce products and services or higher quality or at prices significantly lower than competitors is spread. In the current economic encyclopedic publications [4, 14] the concept of competitiveness and the country's competitiveness, product and company (organization) are mostly differentiated.

Practically absent is the concept of competitiveness of industry and territory (region). These concepts were meaningfully revealed by one of the leading researchers of competitiveness economist M. Porter [13]. According to J. Black's economic dictionary – Competitiveness (competitiveness) is disclosed as a property to compete in products and services markets. According to Porter, the development of region competitiveness (and the state as a whole) has the following four stages: on the basis of

- inputs;
- investments;
- through innovation;
- wealth.

The first three provide economic growth, the latter - causing stagnation and decline.

It should be noted that in the last two decades, the international community through competent international organizations and representative collection is actively trying to draw attention to the competitiveness and participate in determining its semantic definition. Among the most influential international representation of issues that concerned the competitiveness of countries and regions should be noted: Institute of Strategy and Competitiveness at Harvard University (USA); World Economic Forum in Davos; International Institute for Management and Development in Lausanne; Board of competitiveness policy, USA; some aspects are investigated by Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The works in the context of critical analysis of known international approaches to the concept are presented in competitiveness studies by I.V. Isychenko, particularly in the study dedicated to socio-geographical essence of this concept [11]. Recently, in scientific studies, based on institutional approaches, much attention is given to the policy of regional authorities as one of the most important factors of economic development.

If the concept of competitiveness (or the level of competitive advantage) of company or industry is described in detail in the scientific economic literature, the problem of definition and assessment of the competitive advantages of the country or its regions is still poorly understood. It happens because region is a relatively new social and geographical object of subdivision. That's why, the region competitiveness is a popular scientific direction in modern society. The concept of "region competitiveness" is younger than the concepts of "competition" and "competitiveness"; and was introduced in

the scientific circle and gained further development relatively recently with the classic works of M. Porter, B. Eshaym, J. Isaksen, M. Enright, J. Dunning and others. All known types of competitiveness are implemented in the geographical area - within the territory, which is itself competitive. Thus, the concept of competitiveness can be used in describing the regions that make up the state. [16] Since the object of study of the area that fits the concept of the region and is therefore identified with it, let's track the essence of definitions and obtained academic experience of its use in the study of competitiveness of different rank areas. A broad and multifaceted use of the term "region" requires an examination of its content in the context of several sciences. The emergence and wide usage in economic and geographical terminology of the term "region" was considered quite common not long ago.

The term "region" is derived from the Latin "regio" (country, region) and in many Western European languages coincides with the term "district" or is very close to it. In Ukrainian science, this term was understood primarily as rural or urban area, i.e. the lowest administrative unit. Meanwhile, to call a region any area which can be found in publications of 80s, is totally unjustified. In foreign publications geographers, scientists use the term "region" both as a clear system of concepts and a scientific approach. Thus, US researchers Stephen S. Birdsall and John Florin noted that the term "region" as any other scientific category, satisfies only if "it can manage to describe a number of heterogenic facts and data and reduce them to common denominator. This concept may be, for geographers, basic and straightforward, can be based on one indicator, but can combine several as well" [3]. In their view, to be regarded as a region, a certain area should have clearly different natural conditions, economic and cultural features.

In traditional researches, region served primarily as the concentration of natural resources, population, production and consumption of the service sector, but is not seen as a unit of economic relations, a media of economic interests. In modern theories, region is investigated as multifunctional and multidimensional system. The approach to the region as "society" (community of people living in a particular area) highlights the reproduction of social life (population and labor force, education, healthcare, culture, environment, etc.) and the development of settlement system [2]. Recently, there are other approaches when the region is seen as a subsystem of the Information Society or a member of internationalization and globalization of the economy. Each of the approaches has the right to exist and to some extent is taken into account in the study. The Region in NUTS system (Nomenclature of Territorial Statistical Units) - an area of targeted, socio-economic recovery, which has to be optimized from administrative, social, economic, territorial positions and be structurally and functionally integrated in relation to the labor market, industrial and resource bases etc.

The Economic Encyclopedic Dictionary edited by S. Mocherny [9] provides the definition of the "region" as a large territory, characterized by largely identical climatic and economic conditions and direction of development of productive forces, taking into account so-

cial, demographic and other characteristics, economic and social infrastructures. Consequently, the development of the region is held on the basis of national and regional economic system laws that reveal the essence of regional economic relations. The evolution of the region theory reflects the growing role of intangible goals and factors of economic development in the process of region transition to a model of sustainable ecological and socio-economic development [2].

As it is known, at this stage, the main part of regional policy in Ukraine is the region (district). Regional policy is designed to promote the creation of appropriate conditions for the life of the territorial community, economic efficient use of local resources, development of mutually beneficial inter-industrial relations. It is at the regional (regional) level that the principle of regional security and economic self should be realized. It is still actual opinion that regions must be relevant socio-economic systems, balanced by the main functional subsystems: natural resources, population settlement, industrial, social, demographic, and environmental [12]. We believe that it is appropriate, to include administrative and managerial subsystem as well. Indeed, in the current situation of the new enhancement factors (globalization, clustering of production, regional economic integration, border cooperation, etc.), the subsystem proposed acquires a new quality by adjusting the balanced development of districts - regions. They occupy a central position (meso level) in the hierarchy of social and economic systems and combine the properties of macro, meso and microsystems. Accordingly, the research of region competitiveness can take place at different levels.

The concept of regional competitiveness, taking into account different aspects and levels of study, can consider modifications of the definition offered by A. Seleznev. The region competitiveness is, conditioned by the economic, social, political and other factors, position of the region and its individual producers on domestic and foreign markets displayed through indicators (indicators) that adequately describe such state and its dynamics. [15]

It is legitimate to also analyze the ratio of firms and regions competitiveness. It is practically proved that this "functional" approach using whether successful or failed business strategy, oriented to the regional level may improve or worsen the economic situation in the region. On the other hand the companies desire to keep competitive business will be associated with the constant organizational and institutional adaptation of all economic actors in the region. District competition is different from companies competition, because there is no such market, within which regions would be able to compete [6]. However, there is region competition because the regions on the initiative of regional governments try to influence investment strategies to attract new firms; in this version there is already competition. However, the competitiveness of regions differs from the national competitiveness: individual competitiveness indicators for countries make no sense at regional level, or are not measured in the context of region.

The experience of developed economic market countries rejects the hypothesis of reducing regional disparities due to economic growth. There is a regional "in-

novative procedure", which is the need to increase spending on innovation activities in depressed areas and relatively less able to attract budget and private sources of funding compared to economically developed regions. The main reason for the paradox is not only the lesser availability of funding sources, but also in the nature of national and regional innovation systems that contribute to innovation national competitiveness and its regions. According to Ukrainian scientist L. Antoniuk innovative regional competitiveness is the ability of business in the region to pursue an active innovation and thus affect the economic growth and increase the competitiveness of the territory as a whole. Consequently, the competitiveness of the region as opposed to the competitiveness of the national economy, differ by indirect regions competition within a single economic system [1]. The region is considered competitive if it is an important part of compa-

nies in improving the international competitiveness of the country.

When we apply a systematic approach to regional competitiveness it allows us to identify several areas of research, including: 1). *effective*, considering the results of operation of the region; 2). *factor*, considering the source region and the establishment of competitiveness; 3). *procedure*, taking into account the conditions of reproduction, goods and services, regional capacity. These areas occur on the basis of the mission and functions of the region, forming the basis of the definition of "region". Last time, of particular interest is a *factor* aspect. Economic processes in the region occur continuously, affecting the results of competitiveness, the latter in turn transformed into its factors (factors) and re-apply the results. These processes are implemented in the region functions (Fig. 1).

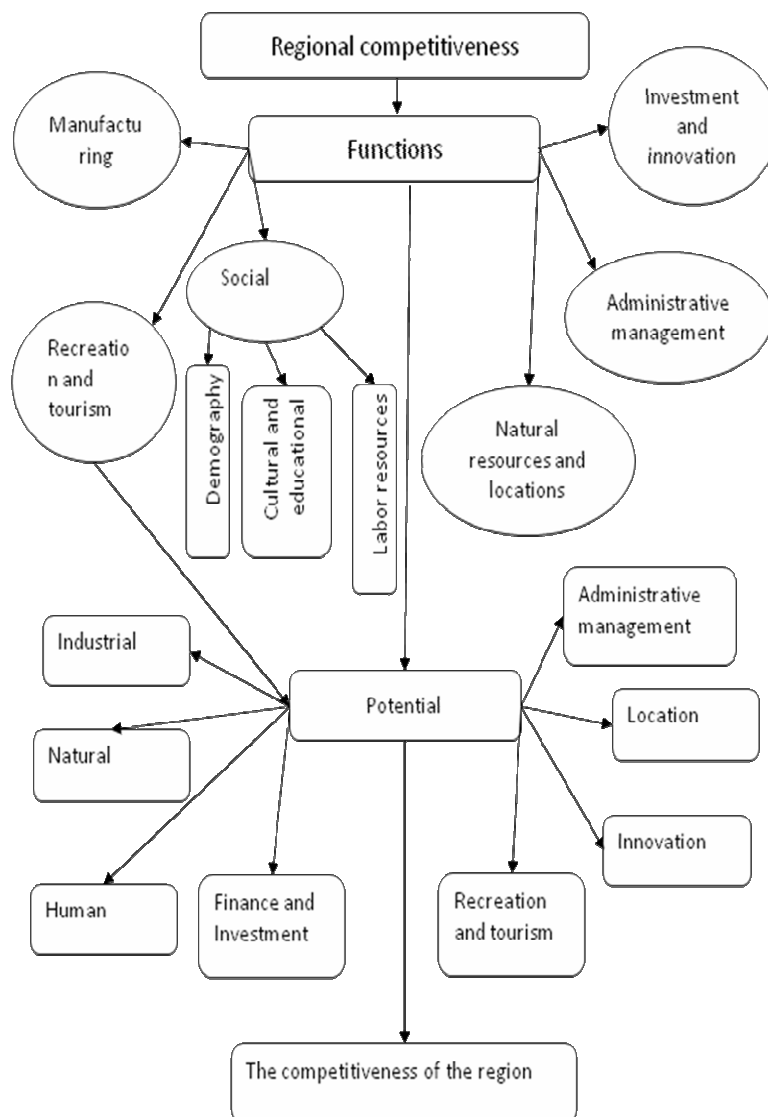


Fig. 1. Implementation components of region competitiveness (developed by the author)

So, factor competitiveness is driving force of this phenomenon that determines its nature and specific features [5]. The competitive advantage of the region - a global objective of economic strategy in the region and the national economy as a whole. Therefore, the com-

petitive status of the region - a prerequisite for a certain level of competitive advantage created by the combined effect of the strategic potential of a territory and determinants of national "rhomb" (i.e. economic, institutional and other conditions that forms in the region and the

country as a whole). [12] Consequently, regions that provide for the national economy competitive advantages, belong to competitive. Updating the competitive status of the region in the long term period is the main task of strategic program development. Investment and innovation activities in the region in this context should be seen as the process of maintaining a high level of competitive advantage.

The competitiveness of the whole region is an integral result of the competitiveness of all the constituent elements of a regional system in the performance of functions: social, economic, investment and innovation, management and administration, natural resource, safety and ecology of the region and so on. (Fig. 1).

According to Ukrainian economic geographer Isychenko I. [11], an attempt to approach the concept of competitiveness of the region from the standpoint of social geography led to a large number of issues and problems. In the context of the definitions reviewed the author offers his own final interpretation of the regional competitiveness as an integrated socio-economic category. It features a region as a complexly organized geosystem which functions and develops effectively, providing vital processes and reproduction of the population and creating the conditions for achieving the strategic goals for the region. Evident, in his opinion, is that the key positions of competitiveness is productivity, efficiency and profitability, contributing not only to population employment, but in the end to the high level of qual-

ity of its life. Particular attention should have an analysis of usage efficiency of region integral potential and its geographical location. The mechanisms for achieving the strategic objectives of the region are complex and controversial, requiring additional research. In modern conditions of Ukraine's regions development the search of the ways to improve their competitiveness is the main requirement for the national economy.

Summarizing the existing theoretical principles of socio-geographical position and with all the definitions mentioned above, the author proposes an interpretation of competitiveness of the region as a subject of study. According to the author, **competitiveness** – integrated interdisciplinary concept that characterizes the property of certain socio-geographic area (enterprise, industry, region, country) to sustained innovation development through the benefits of social and geographical factors under the influence of a number of economic, social and geographical laws of development that is motivated by the need to improve the population quality of life. Accordingly, the **competitiveness of the region** – multidimensional integrated concept that reveals the state of the process and result of the territory as a socio-economic system with certain capabilities that can function effectively in terms of investment and innovation system based on the benefits of social and geographical factors, taking into account the impact of economic and social laws, motivated by the need to improve its population quality of life. (Fig. 2).

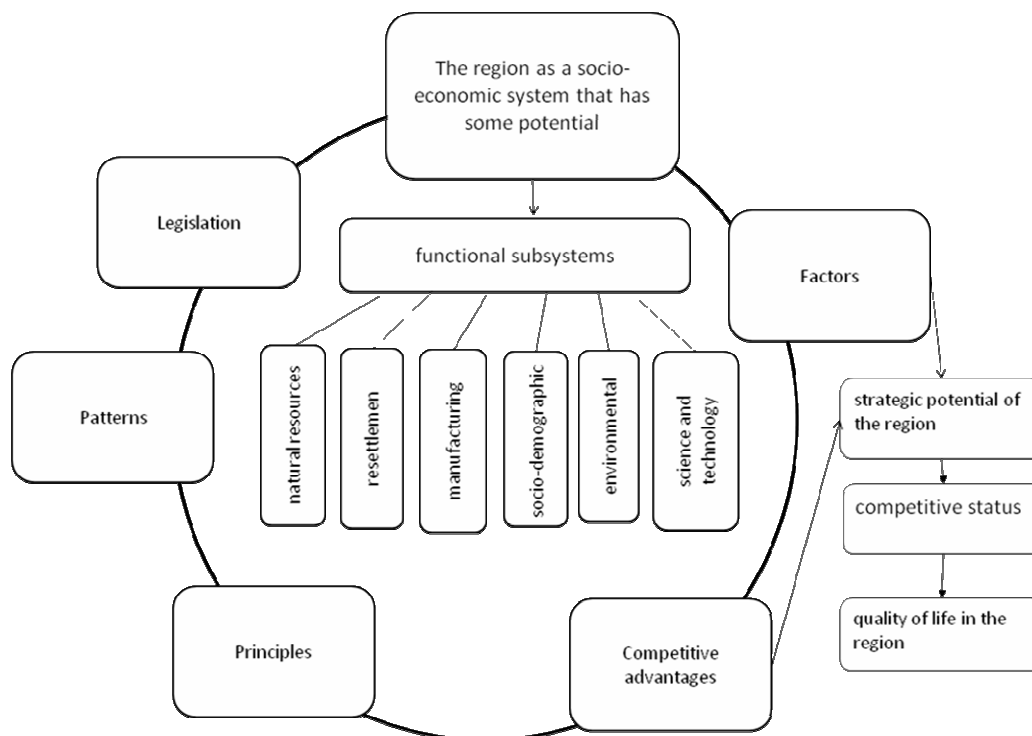


Fig. 2. Theoretical approaches to the study of regional competitiveness (developed by the author)

The competitiveness of the region is a relatively new concept in the scientific use and, therefore, determined by not absolutely established basic terminology, and underdeveloped methodological basis of research. The competitiveness of the region is found to have exclusively economic nature (origin). However, it is at the

present stage of social needs, under the influence of socio-economic transformation there is an urgent need for research of regional competitiveness by social geographers.

In Ukraine, this direction of research is in the plane of economists interest, mainly. Therefore, institutional

characteristics for this research is rather representative. Among the institutions that study the competitiveness of the region: National Institute of Strategic Studies of Ukraine; National Institute of International Security Defense Council of Ukraine; Institute for Regional Studies of NAS of Ukraine (m. Lviv), Institute of Economics and Forecasting of NAS of Ukraine; Council of Productive Forces of Sciences of Ukraine (until December 2010); Institute of Industrial Economics of NAS of Ukraine. Among the scientific institutions - Council on Competitiveness of Ukraine, International Center for Policy Studies, universities, etc.

The outpost of socio-geographical study of region competitiveness scientific problems and close or relevant aspects of this problem is the Institute of Geography of NAS of Ukraine and Kyiv Taras Shevchenko National University (social geography). Related to the certain aspects of competitiveness are the research activities of Ukrainian scientists of the Institute of Geography of NAS of Ukraine, L. Rudenko (theory and methodology of mapping individual aspects of phenomena), V. Nagirna (theory, methodology, geopolitical, agro-industrial, administrative component), S. Lisovsky (the concept of sustainable development), G. Pidhrushny (phasic-evolutionary approach to regional development, typology of regions), I. Hukalova (the quality of life of regions Ukraine), E. Marunyak (globalization processes and their impact on the regions of Ukraine), Yu. Kachaiev (territorial organization of investment), P. Makarenko (clustering of production) and others.

Among social geographers, whose scientific heritage is particularly useful in the format of this study are: O. Topchiev (Odessa, Mechnikov National University) – geographic laws, methods of social geographic research; L. Niemets (Kharkiv, Karazin National University) – theoretical principles of sustainable development strategies, social and geographical problems, theory and methodology of geographical research; M. Knysh (Lviv, National Ivan Franko University) – methodological aspects of the analysis of macro geographical position, regionalism and regionalization, globalization); S. Zapototsky (Kyiv, Shevchenko National University) – competitiveness of Ukraine regions [10].

Conclusions. The analysis of particular scientific approaches to differentiation of regional competitiveness

categorial-semantic features with other related concepts confirms the fact that this problem is quite common for economists research. It represents a concept as a certain, already achieved, economic status. This approach lacks the efficiency of the process of gaining competitive features. Overlooked are the specific characteristics of the area (region). Therefore, the most-used scientific definitions lack geographic part. Social geographers of Ukraine only start this scientific field, waiting to review the concept of the region from the position of administrative reform and the new economic zoning of Ukraine [7, 8].

The questions mentioned require separate socio-geographical research. Accordingly, socio-geographic theory of region competitiveness should be based on the area potential and on the functions which it performs. The studied social and geographical potential should be considered as the study of the territory and its features, and identify natural resources, labor, investment and innovation, production, recreation and tourism, administrative and management capacity, and so on. There is a need to consider the availability of basic idle assets, degree of urbanization, economic status on the basis of competitive advantage. Most scientists, involved in this problem, attached crucial importance to the position of the region or location and transferred the emphasis in the study from national to the regional or local level.

This contributes to the economic and geographical research component in the competitiveness of countries and regions. Ukrainian regions have different levels of competitiveness and the implementation of competitive advantage. This is evidenced by the presence of nearly two-thirds of the economically underdeveloped regions, considerable regional disparities in levels of production and quality of life. In this regard, solving these problems should be a key objective of the economic strategy of the state. Government policy aimed at improving the competitiveness of the economy of the state and its regions envisages a clear definition of the objectives, principles and objectives of all stakeholders - central government, regions and municipalities.

Hence, the need to develop the theory and methodology of socio-geographical study of the region competitiveness is one of the most important problems of modern geographical science, based on the requirements of Ukrainian society and state.

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