



Kraków, 22.06.2024

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### **Review**

of Doctoral Thesis written by **Anke Lasek** "The impact of return migration on entrepreneurial propensity and sustainability of related entrepreneurial activity in Poland (2007 – 2015)"

Submitted in 2024, Cracow University of Economics, Supervisor: dr hab. Jan Brzozowski prof. UJ and Auxiliary Supervisor: dr Magdalena Zajączkowska

### **I. PODSTAWA FORMALNA**

1. This review is submitted in response to the letter of prof. dr hab. Stanisław Popek, the director of the Doctoral School at Cracow University of Economics (22.05.2024). This review is based on regulations on Polish science and academic degrees and titles (Law of 20 July 2018 "Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce", art. 187 p. 1-2). The thesis is submitted within the field of social sciences in the discipline: economics and finance.
2. I received a printed manuscript of 253 pages (including bibliography and appendices, excluding abstract, table of contents, lists of tables, appendices and figures, list of terms and abbreviations) that meets formal requirements and can be a basis of my evaluation.

### **II. GENERAL REMARKS**

The thesis "The impact of return migration on entrepreneurial propensity and sustainability of related entrepreneurial activity in Poland (2007 – 2015)" was written

by Anke Lasek under the supervision of Prof. Jan Brzozowski and Dr. Magdalena Zajęczkowska (as an auxiliary supervisor). It is devoted to a topic important to entrepreneurs, the contemporary economy, and social sciences (in this case especially the discipline of economics and finance). The author's analysis may broaden our knowledge of return migrations, especially in the context of Poland.

My overall assessment is positive, as the work meets all the requirements that are essential for a doctoral dissertation; however, I believe that this dissertation (as every dissertation) has some weaknesses that I point out in my review. The author can use some of the suggestions formulated below to perfect her future projects, as well as to prepare publications or further research based on the material from this dissertation.

### **III. DETAILED REMARKS**

In my opinion, the thesis is a mature work that proves the candidate's knowledge and ability to conduct scientific research. To show possible ways of developing the concepts and thoughts connected with this thesis, in my review I will point out areas that may benefit from improvements. I treat the remarks below as an invitation to discussion during the public defense and an opportunity to perfect scientific proficiency.

#### **1. Topic and general structure of the dissertation**

The topic of this dissertation is interesting, important, and timely. Migration and the entrepreneurial activity of migrants is a topic of growing social and economic importance. Within this field, the analysis of return migration and the entrepreneurial activities of returnees may both bring new insights to existing scholarship and have practical relevance. I believe that such a topic may constitute a legitimate field of investigation in PhD research and is original enough to lead to interesting and valuable conclusions.

The dissertation is traditionally and logically constructed. It consists of six chapters (including two very short chapters: introduction and conclusions). It starts with the theoretical background and the presentation of context (chapters 2, 3, and 4), followed by a combined presentation of methodology and results (chapter 5). As far as the structure is concerned, I have some minor remarks. Firstly, a sharper

division between a precise and comprehensive description of methods and the descriptions of results could be beneficial for the clarity of analyses. Secondly, the empirical part (methodology and results) is much shorter than the theoretical one; a more balanced division would additionally show the value added by the author's study. I formulate some more detailed remarks in section III.4 of this review.

The thesis is based on sources from various disciplines, most of them located in two areas: 1) economics and finance, and 2) management and quality sciences. I believe that this is actually a strength of this doctoral dissertation, as the issue of migrant/returnee entrepreneurship is interesting and important for many disciplines. Thus, the candidate uses different disciplines to highlight more aspects and facets of the scientific problems discussed in the thesis. Such a multidisciplinary approach can constitute a potentially important source of inspiration and value.

The Candidate uses many disciplines as her inspirations, but it needs to be stressed that the thesis meets the requirements of the scientific discipline that was chosen as the main one for this work (economics and finance).

## **2. Assumptions, goals, hypotheses and research methods**

The main goal, three research questions, and three hypotheses are presented briefly in the introduction (and then referred to in Chapter 5). Both the introduction and Chapter 5 also include the description of statistical methods used in the candidate's study. These presentations are proper and meet scientific standards. The main objective of the thesis is defined on page 3 as: "to contribute to the study of entrepreneurship in the context of return migration, and in doing so, to fill a respective gap in the academic literature. Specifically, this thesis investigates the economic impact of voluntary return migration on entrepreneurial propensity and the sustainability of entrepreneurial activities upon return to a developed economy, using Poland as an example." This goal is somewhat complex and multidimensional, but the candidate's intention is quite clear. This goal is followed by three research questions and three hypotheses related to these questions.

Both the questions and hypotheses are quite well formulated. The first two pairs (RQ and H) are clearly and directly linked. However, I have some doubts about the third pair, as I am not sure why "sustained economic growth" is used in the

question. I would like some more comments on that and on the links between RQ3 and H3. Additionally, it would be useful to clearly describe the process of the development of hypotheses (in the intro or in Chapter 5); I assume they are based on existing scholarship, but now they are presented without explicit explanations.

The candidate decided to use quantitative methods to answer her RQs. I can agree with that choice, but again, a more elaborated explanation of methodological choices could be beneficial for the thesis and could better reveal its value. Existing datasets are used in the study (SD – Social Diagnosis, 2007–2015).

Despite my previous comments, I find that the assumptions, goals, and research questions are coherent, and the choice of methods is adequate. My assessment of the general methodology used in this work is positive.

### **3. Literature**

The thesis is based on numerous sources (listed on pages 202–246, and a very small font is used). These sources are thematically connected with the dissertation and rooted in many disciplines of social sciences (management, economics, migration studies, sociology, etc.). On one hand, the number of sources and their diversity is really impressive. On the other hand, I have the impression that not all the sources add significant value to the candidate's analyses and that the number of sources could be reduced if the theoretical framework were more focused (see also remarks in III.4).

The sources themselves are of good quality (reputable journals, good publishers, etc.); the author also uses some reports, statistical data, and studies by public institutions (e.g., European Commission).

It must be noted that the work required to analyze all the sources used by the candidate is impressive.

### **4. Content: merits, theoretical background and scientific value**

The dissertation starts with a short introduction (Chapter 1), where the candidate shows a research gap and basic assumptions of the study. It also presents the structure of the thesis; my suggestion would be to focus on links between certain concepts and chapters, not only on the description of the content. That would make it

easier to navigate through the text; later in this section, I point out why this is important for the thesis.

Chapter 2, "Theoretical aspects on international and return migration," presents a general overview of some aspects of migration important to this work. First, international migration, types of migration, returnee migration, and typologies of returnees are defined. This presentation is followed by some theoretical remarks on return migration (subchapter 2.2.). The author presents 14 theoretical approaches to return migration; it would be great to add how these approaches were identified. In some cases, the author identifies disciplines within which these concepts were developing, but sometimes it is not fully clear. Also, a direct comparison of all the approaches would add great value to this analysis (e.g., in the form of a table), and so would a summary with identification of major trends in theory development. To some extent, Figure 1 summarizes Chapter 2, but I believe that using more tables and figures could help streamline the narration.

In Chapter 3, the candidate presents the concepts of entrepreneurship, immigrant entrepreneurship, and returnee entrepreneurship. I appreciate the analyses on returnee entrepreneurship (subchapter 3.3, p. 104 – 117), and I believe this should be the core part of this chapter. Unfortunately, it is subchapter 3.1 on general entrepreneurship (p. 40 – 76) that plays a key role in this part, followed by 3.2 on immigrant entrepreneurship (76 – 103). I do not think that a long analysis of very differentiated concepts and aspects of entrepreneurship adds real value to a dissertation on returnee entrepreneurship. The historical analyses are interesting but typical, and not adjusted to the topic. This chapter would surely benefit from a more focused approach.

It is clearly visible that most of the concepts from 3.1 and 3.2 do not serve as a framework for analysis or interpretation of research results. Thus, their role in the dissertation is not crucial (and sometimes it is just marginal). I must admit, however, that such analyses of very basic concepts and approaches are quite typical for doctoral dissertations; sometimes it just helps candidates to understand the field and to learn its logic. In the case of this dissertation, I would suggest to reduce 3.1 to just a couple of pages and significantly shorten 3.2. The weakness of such change is that subchapters 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 have comparable structures, and such a change could

partly ruin it; but I believe the result would be worth it. As I mentioned, part 3.3 is crucial for the dissertation, and I believe it is well prepared and covers major discussions in this field. It clearly proves that the author not only knows her field but also can identify the most important concepts within it. That is definitely the best part of Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the presentation of the Polish context of migration and return migration. This part is crucial to understanding the study presented by the candidate. Just like in the case of Chapter 3, I think the analyses could be more condensed, and some sections could be reduced without harm to the dissertation. Particularly, the role of subchapter 4.2 should be clarified; for example, there is no need to analyze the SME sector in the 1920s. The introduction to this part should clearly show its role in the thesis as currently, it is not entirely clear what the key message is and how it relates to returnees. The value of Chapter 4 lies in its presentation of issues connected with return migration to Poland. This topic is rarely undertaken by scholars, so it is worth stressing that the Candidate has done a great job in broadening the knowledge on the topic.

I believe that Chapters 2 – 4 clearly demonstrate the candidate's proficiency and knowledge in the field she decided to study. The analyses are based on proper sources, and the reader may find a lot of valuable information in these chapters. My impression is, however, that the theoretical framework and main focus of the study are a little blurred. I would like the candidate to point out, during the public defense, the key theoretical concepts constituting the theoretical framework used in the study.

Chapter 5 includes remarks on the methods used by the author and research results. I've already suggested that a more visible division between the comprehensive description of methods and the description and analysis of results could be beneficial for this work (separate chapters). I appreciate the remarks on data availability; this topic is quite often discussed as Poland, even though it is now a significant target country for migrants (and for returnees), still does not have datasets that fully reflect the nature and diversity of the phenomenon of migration. The sections on data availability are followed by remarks on the construction of the econometric model used in the study and by the presentation of study results. These results are additionally summarized in a table, and the presentation is quite clear and

interesting for the reader. This presentations are properly done, and the model is well adjusted to the goals of this study.

The only thing I would avoid is referring to results in terms of economic growth and the impact on the shape of the Polish economy. The econometric model shows relations on an individual level (entrepreneurs' performance in terms of their income), and additional studies would be needed to clearly demonstrate returnees' impact on the economic growth of Poland. In my opinion, conclusions and analyses on returnee business failure risk are interesting and much better rooted in the study presented in this doctoral dissertation.

Conclusions are the last part of the thesis (Chapter 6, pages 197 - 201). This section includes a short description of results, research limitations, and suggestions for further research. What I miss in this part is a more comprehensive discussion with existing scholarship that would demonstrate the most important contributions of this study. How does it relate to existing theories? Why are so many theories used in the theoretical part not even mentioned in the conclusions and discussion?

For me, it is clear that this study brings new insights into our understanding of returnee entrepreneurship in the Polish context. However, other insights and contributions should be backed with stronger arguments to make the narration more convincing and to fully reveal the value of the study. I think that strengthening the argumentation in the last chapter would make the message of this work more visible. Despite these possibilities for improvement, the concluding part provides interesting information and demonstrates that the candidate has significant knowledge on the topic of the study. Thus, the general impression is positive.

## **5. Language and formal side of the dissertation**

The language and formal aspects of the doctoral dissertation are not primary criteria for its evaluation, but they do influence the overall perception of the thesis. Additionally, the quality of formal preparation is an element of the researcher's toolkit. In this work, the language is generally proper, clear, and easy to understand and follow. The author makes some minor mistakes (some language editing could be helpful here), but the overall impression is good. The work is also carefully prepared in terms of its technical and formal aspects. The bibliography is meticulously

compiled, and I appreciate the candidate's effort to ensure coherence in this part. In general, I find the formal side of the dissertation well-prepared.

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To sum up, the doctoral dissertation written by Anke Lasek fully deserves a positive assessment. It has many strengths that support such opinion, for example:

- Interesting and important topic; this topic is also novel and original, as it is relatively rarely referred to in the Polish context,
- Very good knowledge on scholarship on returnee migration and returnee entrepreneurship,
- Good presentation of the results of the study and the ability to design and conduct a research,
- Good preparation of the document.

This thesis has also some weaker points, like a little blurred theoretical framework, or other elements described by me in previous parts of this review. I am fully convinced that in the case of this dissertation strengths prevail.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Taking all requirements of Polish law into consideration, I can positively assess this dissertation. This doctoral dissertation meets the requirements for a PhD project. The author shows sufficient theoretical knowledge in the field of return migration and demonstrates the ability to conduct research. She also presents a multidisciplinary approach, using sources and inspiration from economics and management, as well as from other disciplines. The thesis offers an original solution to an important scientific problem. Taking all arguments presented in this review into account, I put forward a motion to admit Ms. Anke Lasek to the public defense of her thesis written in the field of economics and finance.



Beata Glinka

## Załącznik do recenzji rozprawy doktorskiej

Imię i nazwisko kandydata: **mgr Anke Lasek**

Tytuł rozprawy doktorskiej: „**The impact of return migration on entrepreneurial propensity and sustainability of related entrepreneurial activity in Poland (2007-2015)**”

Promotor: **dr hab. Jan Brzozowski, prof.UJ**

Promotor: **dr Magdalena Zajączkowska**

Recenzent: **prof. dr hab. Beata Glinka**

1. Ja, niżej podpisany stwierdzam, że recenzowana rozprawa doktorska **p. mgr Anke Lasek** spełnia warunki określone w ustawie Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r. (t.j. Dz. U. 2023 r., poz. 742, z późn. zm.) w związku ustawą z dnia 3 lipca 2018 r. Przepisy wprowadzające ustawę – Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce (Dz.U. z 2018 r., poz. 1669, z późn. zm.) i wnioskuję do Rady Dyscypliny Ekonomia i Finanse Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Krakowie o dopuszczenie **p. mgr Anke Lasek** do dalszych etapów postępowania doktorskiego.

**TAK/NIE\***

2. Ja, niżej podpisany wnioskuję o wyróżnienie rozprawy doktorskiej.

**TAK/NIE\***

3. Uzasadnienie w przypadku Recenzji z negatywną konkluzją (25-200 słów):

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*22.06.24*  
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data sporządzenia recenzji

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*Anka*  
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podpis recenzenta

\*niepotrzebne skreślić