

This doctoral dissertation focuses on a multidimensional evaluation of the impact of development strategies on sustainable urban development processes in the Małopolska Voivodeship. The analysis covered strategic documents prepared prior to the 2021 amendment to the Act on the Principles of Development Policy, i.e. during a period when local development strategies had an optional rather than obligatory character. Consequently, their preparation resulted primarily from the need to organize local development policy and enhance opportunities for obtaining external funding, rather than from a statutory requirement. The principal research problem concerns determining whether local strategic documents constitute a genuine instrument of territorial governance or whether they mainly perform a declarative and legitimizing function, serving to structure investment activities and facilitate access to external financial resources. Achieving the main objective required the application of an integrated research methodology combining multidimensional statistical analysis of the socio-economic development level with a qualitative content analysis of planning documents in terms of their internal coherence and substantive compliance with international sustainable development paradigms. An important element of the study involved the development of an original strategic coherence assessment tool enabling a systemic evaluation of the structural potential of strategies through the analysis of relationships between diagnosis, vision, objectives, and monitoring mechanisms. The research was further expanded through case study analyses, including interviews conducted with local government representatives and residents, which made it possible to confront the formal provisions of strategic documents with implementation practice and the social perception of local policy outcomes. The research process was complemented by an evaluation based on the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and utility, while also taking into account the statutory competences of local government units and the dynamics of changes within the national system of strategic and spatial planning.