

A review of the book titled “Changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the SMEs sector and their impact on the implementation of business processes”

**[original title in Polish: „Zmiany wywołane
pandemią COVID-19 w sektorze MŚP i ich wpływ
na realizację procesów biznesowych”]**

by Marian Gorynia and Joanna Kuczewska

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Marian Gorynia and Joanna Kuczewska’s work is a unique and insightful exploration of the multifaceted impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of business processes in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Poland. It delves into a highly significant and current topic, both in terms of economic theory and business practice, as it addresses critical issues that are essential for economic recovery and resilience in a post-pandemic world. The COVID-19 pandemic, a global economic shock, has led to unprecedented changes in the business landscape, including slowing down the globalization process referred to as slowballization, reorganization of global value chains, a decline in global foreign direct investment (FDI) flows, and acceleration of digital transformation. The pandemic’s impact on the economy is strong and multidimensional, and understanding this impact can guide companies in adapting to sudden environmental changes and formulating effective strategies in the face of uncertainty. The COVID-19 pandemic can be seen as a manifestation of the environment’s strong volatility, referring to the concept of black swans, i.e., events of momentous importance yet sudden, unprecedented, and difficult or almost impossible to predict.

The monograph precisely indicates the research objective, which is to identify and present the changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the business environment of Polish enterprises and the consequences of these changes in relation to their business processes. The emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is particularly valuable as SMEs are crucial to the economy, often more vulnerable to economic shocks yet also more agile. The book, structured into two main parts, first identifies and describes the external business environment changes caused by the pandemic and then examines the direct impact of these changes on business processes within enterprises. The criteria used to classify the factors that caused changes in the func-

tioning of SMEs during the coronavirus pandemic are indicated in the first part, primarily: entity criterion including individual, sectoral, and universal barriers; criterion of the source of barriers including demand and supply, and criterion of the nature of barriers including strategic and process, regulatory (legal-administrative), and human.

In addition, further criteria for identifying and organizing changes in business operations resulting from the coronavirus pandemic were proposed, including a criterion related to the short versus the long term, a criterion oriented to the inside of the company versus directed at the company's environment, or a criterion of qualitative changes versus quantitative changes. Moreover, a list of identified changes in the business environment of SMEs is presented, such as the macro-environment context; the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the functioning of markets, e.g., labor and financial markets; the impact of lockdowns and restrictions on the functioning of specific industries; the impact of COVID-19 on internationalization, globalization, regionalization, fragmentation of business value chains and systems, reorganization of GVCs, and acceleration of the digital transformation process; changing customer behavior; liquidity issues of business partners; resilience of start-ups; and the phenomenon of zombie companies. By categorizing and detailing these changes, the authors provide a robust framework for understanding the pandemic's multifaceted impacts.

The second part of the book is devoted to studying the impact of the changes identified and described in the first part on business processes in companies, such as the procurement and delivery process, the production process and the design and service process, the sales and marketing process, the distribution process, the after-sales service process, the human resources management process, and the strategic management process. This means combining the analysis at the macroeconomic and mesoeconomic levels carried out in the first part with the microeconomic analysis at the level of specific activities in companies. The authors assumed that changes that emerged in the environment were the cause of specific adjustments in business processes while noting that it is possible to reverse the order by identifying changes in business processes first and only later identifying trends in the environment from which these changes arose.

The research findings highlight that the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have affected different industries in varying ways, depending on their individual resilience levels. In the short term, these changes are generally viewed as barriers to development. However, as the effectiveness of the measures taken increases, so does the recognition of the development opportunities that the pandemic has created. The book also suggests potential areas for further empirical research, including the evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of changes in business processes that occurred due to the pandemic.

The great value of the book is that the conducted research made it possible to identify aspects that should be taken into account when formulating recommendations for the Polish SMEs sector in the context of changes in the business environment caused by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Authors, emphasis should be placed on the recommended individualization and flexibility in choosing a course of action suitable for a particular enterprise. At the same time, the direction of changes should be in line with the existing overall strategy of the company's operations, and individual changes should result from a SWOT analysis. Thus, activities should be tailored to the specifics of the company in each case and take into account the competitive advantages, as well as take advantage of opportunities to search for good practices through benchmarking. It is also worthwhile to cooperate with different types of stakeholders, such as cluster initiatives, chambers of commerce, and industry associations.

In conclusion, the monograph is a vital resource for understanding the profound effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Polish SMEs sector. It serves as both a reflective analysis of the past years and a strategic guide for future business operations. The monograph contributes significantly to the academic literature on crisis management, economic disruptions, and recovery strategies. Its practical recommendations, interdisciplinary approach, and empirical foundation add significant value to current economic and business research. The proposals are based on observed trends and data, making them highly applicable for SMEs seeking to navigate the post-pandemic landscape. The insights provided are valuable for policymakers, business leaders, and academics, making it a significant contribution to current economic research and practice.