

Markowski, Tadeusz

**Conference Paper**

## Polish cities in transition – balance of changes in spatial development -opportunities and threats arising from integration with European Union

44th Congress of the European Regional Science Association: "Regions and Fiscal Federalism", 25th - 29th August 2004, Porto, Portugal

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

European Regional Science Association (ERSA)

*Suggested Citation:* Markowski, Tadeusz (2004) : Polish cities in transition – balance of changes in spatial development -opportunities and threats arising from integration with European Union, 44th Congress of the European Regional Science Association: "Regions and Fiscal Federalism", 25th - 29th August 2004, Porto, Portugal, European Regional Science Association (ERSA), Louvain-la-Neuve

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/117149>

**Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:**

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

**Terms of use:**

*Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.*

*You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.*

*If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.*

Tadeusz Markowski

Department of City and Regional Management

University of Lodz

Matejki 22/26

90 237 Lodz, Poland

[tamarko@uni.lodz.pl](mailto:tamarko@uni.lodz.pl)

## **POLISH CITIES IN TRANSITION – BALANCE OF CHANGES IN SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT -OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ARISING FROM INTEGRATION WITH EUROPEAN UNION**

**Abstract:** The paper deals with urban development processes in Poland in the historical context. These processes are confronted with Western European urban development pattern. The author focuses its considerations on specific developments and distortion aspects like historical huge scale war devastations and large scale developments from the period of centrally planned economy. The influence of these events on dynamic and cycles of present-day urban processes and urban policy challenges is analyzed. In conclusions author suggests that Poland has own specific business and urban cycles, which makes Poland different than its neighboring countries. Past historical development has left is a strong footprint which should be taken very seriously in contemporary national urban policy.

### **Introduction**

This paper attempts to present the general principles governing the conversions that the Polish cities have been undergoing during the transformation process as well as to point out the opportunities and threats for our cities arising from the process of integration with the European Union. Various regularities of city development become apparent under different circumstances and with varying force. Sometimes they may seem surprising or even paradoxical to an observer. Many phenomena are succession processes – they appear as the city changes its size. This means that determining what is a rule and what should be treated as a deviation becomes very difficult, especially if

there is no appropriate empirical knowledge at hand. Searching for general principles governing the urbanisation processes must be carried out with several factors, such as city size, socio-economic conditions and the historical context (a factor of high relevance especially with regards to Polish cities) in mind. An analysis of the development processes in our cities allows a better understanding of the principles and problems facing a Polish city, primarily so when the analysis keeps the specific Polish history in mind. For the history is deeply enrooted in both the material as well as the spiritual heritage of our cities.

Carrying out detailed diagnostic research on the processes and conversions of Polish cities is practically impossible under the current provisions with regards to financing scientific research. Hence, our knowledge is to a large extent determined by stereotypes, personal experiences or partial research projects, carried out by devoted scientists or students preparing their master's theses and diagnoses prepared alongside physical plans or studies.

It is not our intention to carry out a full-scale analysis of Polish history and the impact that various events had on the shape of our cities and the way they operate. Due to the existing restrictions this paper is a synthetic approach, pointing out the need for undertaking new research efforts rather than a full cause-effect diagnosis. We are interested primarily in the current status of cities, which may be explained by the causes that are historical in nature. We also seek to find out how lasting these historically shaped conditions are in the contemporary and future physical development as well as in the collective recreation of social values. It has already been stated above that these factors have to be treated as conditions that are peculiar to Polish town-planning and the related urbanistic policies (created and implemented by both the state and the territorial units).

Before we go to deeper consideration some chosen aspects of development of polish cities between 1991 and 2000 will be presented. The total population of Polish cities at the end of the year 2000 amounted to 23,876.5 thousand, that is 61.8% of the population of Poland. During the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1991-2000) the absolute growth of the urban population amounted to only 260.0 thousand. It was ten times smaller an increase than in the 1980s (2,636.0 thousand).

Compared to the number registered at the end of 1990, the urban population in 2000 grew by 1.1%, while during the preceding decade it grew by 12.6%. A much lower birth-rate is the direct cause for such a drastic slow down in the growth of urban

population. During the 1980s many more people were born than died in cities – there were on average 145.1 thousand inhabitants per year more, while in the 1990s there were only on average 15.7 thousand more births than deaths in cities. In 1998 the number of births became smaller than the number of deaths in cities for the first time since the WWII ended. The negative birth-rate during the last three years of the 1990s (1998, 1999 and 2000) caused a decrease in the number of inhabitants of cities by 30.5 thousand.

The number of large cities (population of over 100 thousand) decreased from 43 to 42 in that period. At the end of the year 2000 these cities occupied 21,094 square kilometres, what amounts to 6.7% of the area of Poland. An average city in this group occupied 355 square kilometres. The density of the network of Polish cities is characterised by high spatial differentiation. The highest density occurs in the Southern and mid-Western part of Poland. The further to the North and to the East we go, the thinner the network becomes.

In 2000 an average Polish city (considering all cities) occupied 24 square kilometres and had a population of 27.1 thousand (Miasta w liczbach 2002).

### **Historical conditions and their impact on spatial peculiarities of a Polish city and the attitude of society towards the issue of spatial order.**

Understanding what a city is as a historical phenomenon, which has been preserved in a given and fixed material and social heritage is necessary to conduct an efficient town-planning policy. The transformation of a contemporary Polish city is greatly determined by the context of historical and political heritage, which has been preserved in the collaborative social consciousness and a developed space. Our attitude towards spatial order is surely different than that of our neighbours. At the same time we do realise that the influence of our neighbours' culture, the European culture, is surely reflected in the value system of Polish society, both in its spiritual as well as material heritage. This cultural heritage becomes apparent at all times in the forms of using space that are undertaken and certain forms of town-planning order or disorder that are recreated and repeated.

When analysing a Polish city two issues need to be brought to light: firstly, the tragic history of division between three neighbouring powers and, secondly, the

influence of different urban cultures (German, Czech, Russian and Oriental) on the spatial order, the results of which are still visible today. These influences are de facto closely related to the great systems of social values shaped within the Jewish-Christian culture and the Islamic culture. Hence there are certain types of cities (protestant, catholic, orthodox and oriental) with deeply enrooted spatial forms, characteristic of every city type.

There are also remnants of the Polish nobility's culture in the culture of our cities. Polish society has cultivated traditions of rural-farming and palace- or mansion-like ways of building throughout the entire time when Poland was partitioned between its neighbours. The palace culture has left its mark even on the cities of the industrial era. It is enough to see the so-called white factories in Lodz to realise that our attachment to the rural-farming tradition (in places where Polish traditions were kept up and cultivated) has been reflected in the designs of Polish industrial architects. The influence of the English industrial architecture is seen only in the later stage of industrialisation.

The fact that industrialisation occurred later than in Western Europe also influenced the attitudes and relationships between the bourgeoisie, other city dwellers and peasants. Industrial urbanisation of Polish cities was ensured by the influx of Western capital. Poles treated these changes as foreign. Both the working class which was forming at that time and the urban middle class which started to form itself later than elsewhere, were still strongly attached to rural traditions and culture. The fact that urbanisation started late in Poland and that it was only half-hearted meant that this state of affairs could go on. It is still a feature of a contemporary Polish city that, to a greater or lesser extent, the patterns of rural life are cultivated there. Many Polish families still have strong relationships with their relatives who live in the countryside. This is not surprising as over 30% of the population still lives in the countryside. This influence is clearly visible in the way that cities, particularly their suburban areas, are developed. This is where the traditions and behaviours that are typical for small farms, such as striving for self-sufficiency in meeting the basic needs, keeping small livestock and having a mess in the yard, are cultivated. Furthermore, the centrally-planned economy with chronic shortages of goods, which lasted until 1990, also supported such patterns. Even today the problem of growing unemployment means that the autarkic model of life is kept up in the suburban areas. This feature exerts a strong influence, which is still not

fully understood, on the way that urbanisation processes occur. What is more, it will continue to do so.

Polish cities are still a living testimony of the great national tragedies and wars that Poles had to face over the course of history. The traces of past events have survived to this day as peculiar economic cycles. They vary a great deal and are highly complex as a result of mutual influence exerted by material and spiritual destruction and asymmetrical demographic structures. In certain cases these cycles may be compared to a post-crisis echo – although fading it still causes specific economic, social and spatial cycles which to a large degree may be foreseen and which have specified time intervals. These cycles overlap with world-wide and national economic cycles causing the Polish economy and Polish cities to develop in a rhythm that is different than pointed out by the theoretical models describing the urbanisation processes, which are based on the examples of Western European cities. Getting to know these cyclical phenomena may surely be useful for increasing the efficiency of the town-planning policy.

The most notable examples of the historical disruptions include the migration of entire cities (or rather their inhabitants) from the East to the West after the Second World War. Also the heroic and very fast reconstruction of cities from the wartime destruction may be treated as one of the causes for these cyclical disruptions. Just like the gigantic programmes of constructing cheap housing that were implemented later. Such huge investment efforts cause, after a certain time, cyclical changes in demand for renewing the construction substance due to the fact that the technical and moral usage are highly concentrated in time. Although the development of low quality block housing may not be treated as a wartime disaster, the attempt at solving the housing problem by cheap blocks of flats constructed in the 60s and 70s will also come back at us, creating housing problems in 50-70 year intervals, regardless of the connotations assigned to this phenomenon in our history<sup>1</sup>. Also the cities of the industrial era were built in a relatively short time. A large share of their housing, mainly substandard housing, will become technically as well as morally worn out at the same moment of time. It is enough to mention the phenomenon of the quickly growing cities of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and realise how many inhabitants are going face this problem. These cities include: Lodz and its surrounding cities (Pabianice, Zgierz, Ozorkow, Zdunska Wola), the cities

---

<sup>1</sup> Examples of other countries exist where the housing issue has been solved in the short term only to cause various cyclical effects of political, social and spatial nature. Scandinavian countries, primarily Sweden, are prime examples here, T. Jacobson 1995.

of Upper Silesia, the cities developed during the inter-war period (Gdynia) or cities that have been developed within the Central Industrial District (Centralny Okręg Przemysłowy – COP), etc.

The communist system and its implications – the nationalisation of property and centralisation of decision-making – resulted in yet another phenomenon which is stronger in Poland than in other countries destroyed by the Second World War, especially those where the economy remained market-oriented. The cities that were not destroyed during the war were heavily exploited – a technical debt has been made as the building infrastructure in those cities was not modernised or repaired. It was at the expense of these cities that the other cities, ones that had been destroyed, were rebuilt.

Compulsory mass displacement of population from the East to the West after the war, together with a certain degree of uncertainty whether the Western lands will remain in Polish hands also led to technical exploitation of cities, spatial disorder and a negative change in the social system of values as far as using space was concerned. Some of the observers of social processes in that part of Poland say that only after the symbolic visit of the Pope, John Paul II, in Szczecin in 1987, the people living in that area began to identify themselves with their cities and took them into possession as their living environment in the full meaning of the term.

The domination of working class examples and behavioural patterns, lack of clearly defined political and intellectual elites as well as underdeveloped middle class in the cities are all phenomena which stem from the specific history of the nations living in the area of contemporary Poland. It is a result of struggles for liberation and national disasters (the November Uprising, the January Uprising) as well as attempts at destroying the Polish citizens by fascist Germany and the Stalinist regime.

So Poland is a society whose “pyramid of social classes” and the corresponding pyramid of social values, attitudes and behaviours are surely different from the average European counterparts as well as from all neighbouring countries. The deformed age pyramid and the deformation of the demographic structure on the map of Poland corresponds to the deformation of the settlement network and the deformation of spatial order. Multiple research projects carried out by demographers (Strzelecki 1994), geographers and town-planners, who assess the state of physical development, confirm this.

In order to understand the reasons for the lack of spatial order in Poland it is necessary to look at the history of Polish state. The history provides plentiful

explanations for such an attitude of the Poles towards spatial order and an especially unfavourable attitude towards public space. There is an entire cross-section of regionally differentiated value systems with regards to spatial order in Poland. The real socialist economy has also left its mark on our attitude towards spatial order. The value system which was shaped between 1945 and 1990 still exists and is replicated to a much larger degree than it seemed to be initially. The Poles still treat the norms and standards of spatial order, defended by public institutions, as restrictions imposed by alienated authorities. This was the case throughout centuries of our history. Our attitude towards spatial order has been created by the partitioning powers: Prussia, Austria, Russia, the fascist regime of the III Reich, the communist government of the Peoples' Republic of Poland. The chaos that is present in Polish space should therefore be treated as a sign of protest and lack of confidence in public institutions.

### **The process of urbanisation after 1990**

With the coming of the 1990s Polish cities entered a phase of dynamic economic, social and spatial restructuring. This was a direct result of introducing an open market economy, which was characterised by a growing global competitive pressure as well as an increased freedom of locating new activities in space. The opening of the economy resulted in a more dynamic spatial and social polarisation, sudden changes in the system of social values, an appearance of demagogic democracy etc. There are plenty more examples and every one of them has a direct or indirect impact on the changes in physical development. Characteristic features of this period were: an accelerated disurbanisation of cities within the administrative city limits and sub-urbanisation in the agglomeration's zone of influence occurring together with eliminating activities in the transition zone.

This phenomenon is on the one hand a formal confirmation of the prognoses formulated by Western researchers in the 1970s, which stated that disurbanisation would have to appear in the Eastern European cities sooner or later (L.H. Klaassen 1988), but on the other hand a decrease of the number of people living in the largest cities is rather surprising considering that Poland is a country where urbanisation is not yet complete and that the economy's restructuring towards the production- and service-based structure, which is characteristic for developed economies, is belated. We are facing an inevitable need of finishing the restructuring of Polish agriculture and

absorbing the surplus of the rural population into the urbanised areas. This is a key issue as far as the Polish model of urbanisation is concerned within the next 20 years. It seems possible to claim that a phase of accelerated urbanisation, which will increase the polarisation of the settlement system rather than upkeep the ideologically required balanced and sustainable development of the settlement network, has yet to sweep through Poland. We need to assume that the classic – described to minute details – historical urbanisation processes in developed economies, are distorted in Poland's case by the aforementioned opening of the economy to external competition as well as by the occurring system transformation. These factors, alongside the preserved elements of socialist economy, cause a variety of phenomena, which are not entirely understood by an average observer.

The jump in the urbanisation process that we are currently witnessing is confronted by the challenges of modern civilisation: shifting towards information-based society and globalisation of the economy. These challenges demand new qualitative changes in the urbanisation processes. We must be aware of the fact that the spatial and functional nature of cities is currently changing. This process, referred to as reurbanisation, occurs differently than it was defined and anticipated in the 1980s. At that time it was assumed that the inhabitants would return to the downtown zone due to the revitalisation policies aiming at recreating the urbanistic and architectural values (Klaassen 1980, Regulski 1982). The new phenomena accompanying the process of contemporary (re)urbanisation include:

- the development of the entire agglomeration while the number of people living within city limits is decreasing,
- a dynamic growth of a network-based the zone adjoining the agglomeration,
- an increased dynamics of daily pulsation of an agglomeration.

This is a world-wide process which is also occurring in the largest of Polish cities. The area of urbanised residential areas in Poland increased between 1990 and 1998 by 8.7%. This was accompanied by an increase of population by 1.27% - 1.31% in cities (Miasta w liczbach 2002 – Cities in numbers 2002). A characteristic feature, noted in large agglomerations, is an absolute decrease of the population in the central city accompanied by an increase of population in the surrounding cities.

The system of regulations in the field of physical development and social adaptation is lagging behind the dynamic changes that are occurring. Therefore, certain

transformations have a greater social cost than others. The constructive destructiveness of external innovations is much more dynamic in Poland than it is in countries that are leaders of development. This means that the positive effects of innovations may be observed in Poland after a longer period than in the developed economies. Also a lasting separation of spatial relationships between the place where product and process innovations act constructively and destructively is occurring more often. At the same time we need to bear in mind that an economy whose political as well as economic foundations are being transformed is characterised by high dynamics of changes in the economic structure, which results in an accumulation of divergence of spatial and functional structures. The scale of this divergence is large enough to consider this phenomenon to be characteristic of the cities of the post-communist era.

A specific form of physically noticeable changes is an appearance of economically unused huge areas containing post-industrial, post-military, post-railway (etc.) infrastructure. Often these areas are as big as 30 to 100 hectares, yet they are not used for any new purpose. This is not characteristic only of cities in a transforming economy. Such areas appear in all cities in developed Western countries. What is characteristic of a Polish city is that the divergence of functions and physical development has accumulated in a short period of time and concerns nearly all cities. The change of the spatial distribution of demand for the communal media services (water, sewage, heat) together with all the related economic and social consequences is another phenomenon, which accompanies these dysfunctions. Complex infrastructural barriers appear in cities where the rate of transformation is faster than average. Their complex nature means that they are both qualitative and quantitative in character. At the same time the average costs of running a city calculated for various groups of users is growing disproportionately to the decrease of demand caused by disurbanisation.

### **The city as a common good**

Futurists have been anticipating the downfall of cities due to development of information technologies for quite some time now. Despite their forecasts, the cities still exist, while the downfall of some cities is compensated by a dynamic development of others. The developing cities are cities, which have used the development impulses and were the first to enter a new trajectory of development of civilisation. The cities of a new era are world-wide innovation centres. The examples of such a path of

development include the Western cities of North America or Finnish cities, like Helsinki or Tampere, which have shifted their economic structure to services and technologies based on knowledge.

Therefore, I would not fear that a city is an ephemeric and passing category, that civilisation based on information will eliminate a phenomenon called “a city”. After all the need of grouping together arises from the very nature of human kind. We are capable to function properly only in a group. Technology allows a change in inter-human spatial relationships only to a limited extent. Can anyone claim that an Internet ball can replace the New Year’s Eve ball? It can be stated that technology provides the foundation for a change in concentration and dispersal of human activity with regards to its physical location. However, the contemporary urban systems are best described by time rather than by physical distance. Let us analyse the following example. Let us consider Warsaw in its current administrative city limits. The number of inhabitants decreased by 0.01% between 1990 and 1995, while the amount of residential areas increased by 2%, built-up areas by 5.5% and communication-related areas by 7% (The Status Report for Warsaw, 1997). If Warsaw was to be measured by the time it takes to drive through it by car in 1990 and now, then we would come to a conclusion that the required time is 100% longer than in 1990. The time-spatial structure of Warsaw is also greatly changed by the construction of a subway system. It causes a great jump in prices of land and property located alongside the subway system and its junctions. When Warsaw is looked upon from the perspective of the time function then it turns out that it grew to twice the size it was in 1990. So how cities should be measured? What measures are best suited to describe cities? Perhaps the measures we are currently using to describe urbanisation process belong to a past era? Thus the problem does not lie with the phenomenon of a city, but rather within ourselves, particularly within scientists who are still using the same old, traditional tools to analyse cities. But the subject of our research activities has already changed so much that we are not capable of seeing or explaining anything new with the use of those traditional tools.

The city economics points to the generation of external benefits by a group of users as a nature of a city. Thus the theory of external effects and the concept of a public good may be useful in explaining the nature of city’s duration<sup>2</sup>. It can be assumed that a

---

<sup>2</sup> There are many peculiar products in a city, which may be treated as public goods or mixed goods (see also Markowski 2001). They are defined as consumed public products. They are an important element of a localisation offer. The nature of localised public goods is such that the level of consumption of these goods depends on the structural and spatial features of a city and the related costs of overcoming the

city is a peculiar source of external effects, which have a club-like nature<sup>3</sup>. If so, then the benefits of agglomeration and urbanisation that are created by the users of a given territorial unit, referred to as a city, are a **common good**. However, it is not provided indefinitely. Such a good requires that the users take good care of it. Once such a good is lost the capability of generating a positive balance of external effects ceases to exist. Everyone loses. The history of civilisation teaches us that sabotage activities of certain users of space may lead to the destruction of such a public good. The system transformation in Poland resulted in changing the rules of the “game for space”. Gambling and sabotage activities became more frequent, resulting in excessive restrictions of access to public space and to the sites where public goods are generated and consumed. An uncontrolled exclusiveness of public goods’ consumption and an excessive competition for public goods mean that aggressive and greedy users of a city, who act beyond any social control, exclude others from using certain goods even though they do not use them themselves. Therefore, certain public goods, which are commonly created, are simply wasted. After all the local society needs to bear certain costs in order to create them. The social losses resulting from wastage of goods cause an increase in the costs of running cities, a faster downfall of cities, a lower rate of development and, finally, a crisis of the urban way of life. If a city still possesses strong internal mechanisms of overcoming a crisis (for example, the users in a given city have retained their innovativeness) then the positive processes of cyclical development are activated. If not, then the future situation is quite easy to foresee. The history of cities offers examples of certain places (locations of cities), which lost all their resources and driving forces of development, causing those cities to lose in the competition with other cities. Often the downfall of cities was initiated by natural disasters, wars etc. It is therefore not by accident that urban civilisation has invented and developed systems of regulations with regards to physical development of cities in order to protect the common interests of all citizens. It is enough to mention the Hammurabi’s Code, which is known to every architect or town-planner. Guarding the law was a privilege of

---

resistance of space. The costs of overcoming the resistance of space are internalised by benefits of some public goods. Therefore, the value of products which are available in a city (including public goods) may have a completely different value for the supplier and for the recipient. It is quite easy to imagine a situation when a positive external effect of consuming a public good completely disappears. The theory of public goods states that the level of cost internalisation is an important element of a city’s social product offer and influences the utility functions of both the consumers as well as producers.

<sup>3</sup> Club-like goods are public goods which have a limited scope of occurrence. One may consume those goods by entering into non-market interactions and relationships with partners. The creation and

different social groups in various periods of time – firstly it was up to individual absolute rulers, then these competencies were gradually ceded to various representative bodies, which were then transformed as the civilisation was progressing: from feudal types of government to urban bourgeoisie and, finally, to the contemporary democracy. As a consequence of these changes and of the need to regulate the market the contemporary town-planning has been developed and a physical development plan has been introduced as a regulative formula used in managing cities. Various regulations dealing with the terms and conditions of using land and erecting buildings are nothing more than instruments, which protect the public interest. These instruments however, require constant improvements and adjustments so that they correspond as best as possible to the new challenges posed by civilisation. In other words it is necessary that their formula matches the level of socio-economic development.

We understand that a more dynamic nature of socio-economic changes poses new challenges to spatial planning, regarded as a specific system of regulations. But in order to properly shape these tools and then use them well, those responsible for their creation need to familiarise themselves with what they are influencing. However, understanding the principles that govern contemporary cities is not an easy matter. These principles come about not only as a result of market-based activities, but also as a result of imperfect regulations created by the civilisation. This problem becomes especially pressing during periods of dynamic, non-continuous changes, occurring in the economy due to revolutionary innovations. It becomes particularly strong when the political providers of the “new regulations” adjust them to past events rather than to the new situation. It is therefore difficult to determine where the causes of any given phenomenon lie. The imperfect nature of regulations is also caused by the fact that more and more often they are created by lawyers and politicians, rather than experts in the field of urban affairs. This is so mainly because the cities are becoming more complex, hence more time, more resources spent on research and more experts are needed to understand them. Today it cannot be claimed that only the architect and the town-planner ought to make all the decisions with regards to a city. Economists, sociologists, geographers and managers are equally important. However, when the resources for research are scarce, it is obvious that the influence of experts on creation of new

---

consumption of these goods is subject to membership in a specified club (Markowski 1999). In this case – it is the city that should be considered such a club.

regulations will be limited<sup>4</sup>. But the costs of all legislative mistakes that are made are covered, in one way or another, by the whole society, which is not even aware of this fact.

We have to realise that a city is a joint obligation of many professions and societies. Various social groups need to come to a mutual understanding, they need to see and accept the principles that govern the development of cities as seen by different professional groups, including accepting the nature of “club-like goods” and agreeing on the need of defending it together. Only meeting these requirements provides urban societies with a chance for a lasting development. Protecting joint interests is like protecting the foundations, which allow a creation of various lasting competitive advantages that benefit the users of a city. Whether we truly care for proper protection and development of public goods that are used in the communal space or not, is verified in practice by a positive or a negative image of a city as seen by both its citizens as well as people from outside.

Protecting the common good that the city is means protecting it from an uncontrolled taking possession (privatisation) of the city. The post-socialist city that we have inherited from the real socialist economy did not leave enough public space for all its users either. The problem faced by Polish cities is derived from the fact that system transformation discharged new dynamic forces, which evade social supervision. Various barriers that are arising and competition, based on mutual sabotage, between users for short-term benefits means that an excessive level of exclusion of many other users from access to “club goods” occurs. A strong investor simply “buys” his access, often violating the interests of other users. High corruption is the price that has to be paid for an excessively restricted access to public space and commonly generated external benefits.

The global economic competitive pressure together with an increasing polarisation of incomes result in taking over public space, particularly easily accessible (well-communicated) space. For obvious reasons the supply of such space is greatly limited. Theoretically, easily accessible and well-communicated space ought to have many features of a public good. In Poland an access to well-communicated urban space becomes a peculiar barrier. This is so because the less lucrative business activities and economically weaker social groups are increasingly marginalised and excluded from

---

<sup>4</sup> The knowledge about cities may not be transformed directly into economic benefits in the short-term. Therefore, there is no political backing for financing research projects in this field.

access to such areas. These processes result in further economic, social and spatial polarisation in both a wider, national context as well as in the narrower, internal context of each city. The social costs of this phenomenon entail lowering the competitiveness of the entire economy. It can be observed even now that global competition causes multi-nodal (network) development of cities, which is not spread evenly between the surrounding areas and sometimes even causes their degradation.

Poland lacks market mechanisms for regulating access to space and external benefits generated by that space. If public authorities are unable to ensure a socially acceptable level of access to public space and supplies of public goods, which would ensure that the urban community will remain integrated, then they should not pretend to be “the fair distributor and supplier”, who acts for the society based on the received mandate. One of the available alternatives is to undertake conscious activities aiming at rationalising the access to public goods according to a market-oriented model. For example, the authorities may collect officially specified internalising fees. Price internalisation of public goods should provide financial resources necessary for transforming the physical development in a way that would restore the qualities of a city and strengthen its economic base, which should allow a continuous creation of conditions for generating external benefits and club-like (communal) public goods. If such activities are not undertaken then the authorities will be subject to strong corruptive influences. By succumbing to this pressure they will only increase the intensity of behaviours based on sabotage displayed by the most aggressive users of space.

## **Conclusion**

Poland, similarly to most “real socialist” countries but also to many other Western European countries, has gone through a period of “socialising governments”, which tried to fully and cheaply solve all social issues. However, the peculiarity of Poland and other countries belonging to the Eastern bloc comes from the fact that the totalitarian way of solving social issues lasted much longer than elsewhere in Europe. Hence the spatial impact has been much greater. It can be stated that every Polish city is polluted by real socialist approach to town-planning. The situation in Poland is special – we are a society that is standing on the crossroads – our system of values is undergoing

dynamic transformation. The economy and space of Polish cities have accumulated all shocks of transformation. The most important of them include:

- Growth of the number of cars;
- Development of supermarket model of trade;
- Fast development of heavy road transport;
- Development of telecommunications;
- Change of the economic structure due to the internal and external market forces;
- Increased economic effectiveness;
- Unemployment;
- Homelessness;
- Break down of the system of social values and social belief in the legal system;
- Break down of the public safety system.

The system transformation in Poland has weakened the position and role played by town-planning and spatial planning authorities. The crisis of physical development and disavowing the role of public planning as an instrument of making rational decisions<sup>5</sup> have had a strong negative impact on spatial planning. As a result the profession of a town-planner became depreciated and a gap of a generation appeared, which is now difficult to fill.

Looking back at what has been said above, and by no means claiming that the scenario of urbanisation processes in Poland in the face of the integration with the European Union is complete and correct, we can assume that most probably the polarisation of cities in the national context will increase. It will be caused by the adaptation of the cities' economic structure to the open uniform market.

Those of Polish cities, which are an internationally recognised tourist attraction or which are located nearby an attractive tourist site may well benefit from integration. Their economic base will be based on labour-consuming services characterised by low added value and operating on the edge of legality.

We can anticipate that there will be an increased inflow of immigrants to the downtown areas of large cities, who will settle in the socially degraded downtown areas as well as in the post-socialist blocks of flats that are becoming increasingly deserted. It is possible that conflicts may appear and grow in strength on the junction points of

transition areas and in new social enclaves. On the one hand public space will be privatised while on the other it will be devastated. The spatial mobility of the society will also increase. The great agglomerations will go through the new form of reurbanisation— that means that their spatial system will be pulsar and multi-nodal (network-like) in character.

Of course we also need to be aware of the chances for stopping the processes of devastating the infrastructure and for adjusting the path of its development to the new needs arising from structural changes. Gaining access to EU funding for the pro-social policies counteracting exclusion and social marginalisation are yet another opportunity.

The problems caused by the fast rate of economic transformation bring the following thoughts to mind. The system of regulations in the sphere of physical development ought to impose many new norms of behaviour and using space. These new solutions should be based on the positive solutions used in other countries. Perhaps such a suggestion may sound sinister to many Poles, who had to deal with many regulations forced upon them throughout the years. The transition towards democracy and the freedom of speech gradually uncover the scale of the devastation in the social system of values. It is therefore difficult to agree that our attitude to space should evolve gradually, that our system of values ought to be influenced only by the signals from the highly imperfect property market. Is there enough time for such an approach when we aspire to become a member of the European Union? It seems that there is not. There is however a realistic threat that the issues of spatial order will be downplayed by our politicians. This is a consequence of a simple fact. According to the provisions of the Treaty of Rome, spatial planning remains a domain of an internal policy in all member countries for the time being. So how should we begin to organise the many issues related to physical development, when there is no external pressure exerted by the European Union to achieve the mega-order? What should the regulations and norms *sensu largo* look like in order to ensure a synergetic improvement in all types of order? These are the fundamental questions, which have no easy answers and simple solutions, but which are particularly vital since Poland aspires to become a full member of the European Union. However, it seems possible to determine strategic areas on the junction of spatial, social and economic order where efforts should be concentrated, allowing the greatest synergetic changes in the value systems. Based on this, it is

---

<sup>5</sup> The social reaction and attitude towards planning may be easily understood as the totalitarian real socialist regime was referred to as „the centrally-planned economy”.

possible to prepare a strategy for reconstructing the system of physical development around the key relationships between the social, economic and spatial systems.

It seems that the quality of physical development is one of the key factors determining the social and economic order, whether we like it or not. Furthermore, it is relatively easy to introduce standards, administrative and penal rigours enforcing spatial order. It also needs to be emphasised that spatial order is perceived directly by the observer. It suggests to that observer that both the social as well as the economic order follow the spatial one. Caring for spatial order and aesthetics of our cities will surely be converted into economic growth. However, in order for that to be possible the way that the leading political elites reason needs to change. It is necessary that they accept all these values and principles as important goals of their political careers.

## Literature

1. Cymerman R., Gwiaździńska M., Grabowski R., 1999, *Wartość nieruchomości jako czynnik krejący zagospodarowanie przestrzenne (The value of property as a factor determining physical development)*, Olsztyn, ART. Press, Conference Materials, The value of property in managing space.
2. Z. Strzelecki, 1994, *Obszary deformacji demograficznej a sytuacja na rynku pracy (The areas of demographic deformation with regards to the situation on the labour market)*, University of Lodz.
3. **KLAASSEN L.H.**, 1988, *Mysł i praktyka ekonomiczna a przestrzeń (The economic theory and practice with regards to space)*, University of Lodz.
4. **JACOBSON T.**, 1995, *The elderly, social gerontology and political order, in: Remaking the welfare state*, ed. A. Khakee, I. Elander, S. Suneson, Avebury, Brookfield, USA, Hong Kong.
5. **Strategia rozwoju Warszawy do 2010 roku (The development strategy of Warsaw until 2010)**, *Raport o stanie Warszawy, etap I (The report on the state of Warsaw, stage I)*, 1997, Elipsa Press, Warsaw.

6. **Miasta w Liczbach (Cities in numbers)**, 2002, GUS (Main Statistical Office),  
Warsaw.