

## **Filip Springer**

*Miasto archipelag. Polska mniejszych miast*  
(*The archipelago city. Poland of smaller cities*)

Karakter Publishing house, Cracow  
2016, p. 320.

Ten years after implementation of the ‘coordinate system’ in 1965<sup>1</sup> Edward Gierek quite spontaneously has divided Poland into forty nine provinces what was a surprise for the all. The archipelago city is a documentary project based on which the publication has been created. All the inhabitants of the 31 archipelago cities joined to the surveys. The note located on the cover of the book by the publisher respectively introduces in content of the publication so I will quote it: ‘Thirty one cities, dozens

interesting interviews. Almost three million Poles lived in them. The author travelled through the whole country starting from Slupsk to Krosno and from Suwalki to Walbrzych to see how nowadays people live in the cities which in 1989 lost status of capital of the voivodships. He met their history and he was talking with the inhabitants, as well he met with the entrepreneurs, artists, activists and teachers. He was visiting local workshops and cafes, fallen factories and dynamically developing companies, stations and McDonald’s restorations. He was asking the people what are they proud of in their cities, what are they happy about and what they would like to ‘change’.

The structure of the review consists of two sections. In the first section there were presented generalizations concerning the analysed archipelago cities, in the second one there are problems related to functioning of the individual cities before and after the reform in 1989.

History of the cities can be considered in different ways: in terms of their economic, utility and communication values, it means everything what is measurable in economic

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<sup>1</sup>In the system the territory of Poland was divided into five reproducing zones wherein the basis to secrete the zones were boundaries of the administrative divisions. The zones have different size and nonsense of basing their boundaries on the administrative divisions appeared already in 1975 when there was introduced a new administrative division into 49 voivodships. It turned out then that some of the voivodships were in two or even three reproducing zones. *Coordinate system*, 1965 <https://wikipedia.org> (access 25th May 2017).

categories. They can be studied in terms of sociological issues. The city can be also analysed as a historical phenomenon following changes taking place in its organization, management structure and form of government.

The author notes that it is more difficult to observe the transition in a large city while in a small city it is easier. For example when a citizen has something to do in a city, he or she leaves a car, goes on foot and looks around the road. It makes that he or she sees better passage of the time and knows what changed.

Districts needing a rescue as a result of the passage of the time and the destruction are priceless for the city, they save its history. This is just purpose of the revitalization. Act of the revitalization dated 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015, Acts Journal dated 2017, position 1023 provides that an area of commune being in a crisis can be a subject of the revitalizations activities. The concept is abused as a name of different renovations, adaptations and modernizations. Meanwhile, the concept refers to actions taken in a large scale (districts, parts of cities) and in relation to many functioning areas of urban space such as architectural, social, economic, cultural, etc.

A city is the most important structure as a place of people's residence and aggregation of all other important buildings; the most important in

the whole architecture besides circuit of walls are good sections and design of streets, squares, areas along the fortifications and all other space and areas inside the city. The famous Italian architect Averlino wrote: 'the city should be beautiful, good and eternal (as Rome, note W.S.) to make this happen it cannot be cheap'.

The archipelago cities care their misfortunes. All of the cities were burning usually several times. In every one where rivers flow it was carefully marked level of water from the times of great flood. There was once passing some war front through each of the cities.

In the archipelago cities the modernization's urge mainly had to rely on:

- 1) Building of housing estates (Slupsk, Zamosc, Ostroleka, Leszno).
- 2) Complete reconstruction of downtowns (Ciechanow, Lomza, Wloclawek).
- 3) Formation of supermarkets and also shopping malls as a next civilization step of development of medium-sized cities (Bielsko-Biala, Kalisz, Konin).
- 4) Formation of educational objects like High Pedagogical College in Czestochowa, Teachers Study in Piotrkow Trybunalski, hotel in Chelm (there was not it previously), court building in Skierniewice, House of Technology in Radom, etc. The only fulfilled promise in relation to the archipelago cities after the reform

in 1989 there was formation of High Vocational Schools.

In the middle of the eighties of the last century started to appear changes and everything began from the fact, that in 1985 Michail Gorbachev took power in the Soviet Union. The Perestroika has begun. Poland was already struggling at the time with chronic deficiency of basic goods. It became clear that without changes neither socialism nor the political party has a chance to survive. It was necessary to transform the socialism into free-market economy. As an experimental training ground there was selected Slupsk city which is one of the most political party oriented cities in Poland, (the Slupsk experiment). The idea was to transfer some parts of the local economy to private entities. Slupsk and the whole voivodship became in two years a leader in the country in building of detached houses. The political party's authorities were proud of Slupsk's successes. Still in December 1988 there was carried out a reconstruction of the political party's leadership by advancing the ones who supported the free-market reforms and political party's pluralism. In February of the next year started the proceedings of the Round Table and in June there were organized elections to the contract parliament. The victory of Robert Biedron in 2014 in local elections was a shock for the politicians in Slupsk.

The author notices the fact, that today's Poland is first of all Warsaw, although it is not covered by the publication. All major central offices are located in the capital what influences on imbalance in development of the other regions. Meanwhile, it does not need to be like that as evidenced by the de-glomeration patterns among others in Germany, Sweden and Switzerland, where various central offices are located outside the capitals of the listed countries.

The archipelago cities according to the Author can be divided in terms of migration to:

- 1) Permanent Easter-Christmas migration (what should be explained that a person who is connected with the city visits it usually on the occasion of Easter and Christmas and also during a vacation leave).
- 2) Weekend cities located close to large resorts where there is possible to come back every weekend to home but it is also enough far away that daily commuting is not taken into consideration because it would be too inconvenient and at the same time costly.
- 3) Daily cities which are a supply base for larger cities and their 'bedrooms', for example Skierniewice (commute to work to Lodz or to Warsaw), hence the unemployment rate is at the level of about 6%.

Now we will focus on presentation of problems in the chosen archipelago cities.

According to many researchers of Zamosc the greatest merit of Zamoyski chancellor was that he managed to create an ideal city, however not foreign but Polish measure. Historians will point out after many years that although the individual buildings were arranged by Italian architect, each corner of the funded city is all Polish.

In 1974 the Polish government decided to start the housing construction program under the name PR-5. Its initiators meant to check the pioneer solutions before starting of global building of Polish settlements using the 'large panel'. There were chosen four cities where prototypical settlements had to be created. They were: Warsaw, Tychy, Cracow and Zamosc. The program was realised only in Zamosc. It is worth to notice that the present Government takes care of the problem proposing the society the '*apartment plus*' program.

The archipelago is jerked by two emotions. They are sense of harm and longing for what has passed. The best piano factory in Poland Calisia fell in 2007. In turn, Bielsko-Biala as well as other industrial cities had also its collapse which touched mainly the textile industry just like Lodz. The Lake District located north of Konin collapses in alarming speed. It is the price which is paid by the city for the opencast mining of coal in the past.

In turn, Lomza is the only city in the archipelago which has not rail-

way connection with the rest of Poland while there are four trains daily which depart from Suwalki. The transport has a decisive influence on development of the city that is why after the seventies there was noticed the second important inflow of financial resources on the communication infrastructure after the entry of Poland to the European Union.

There was no other city like Radom in the archipelago which did not go through such violent and painful de-industrialization. Today in the city the largest employers are local government institutions, the police headquarter, hospitals and the university. The list of collapsed companies includes among others: Radoskor, the Phones Factory and 'Lucznik' Metal Factories. The image troubles of the city started in 1976 when workers from the Radom factories decided to protest against planned by the government increase of food prices. Then there were riots. Two people were killed and almost 200 were injured, a thousand more lost their jobs. The riots shook the authority of the Gierek's team. Since the time Radom is a 'black sheep' among Polish cities. Significantly, the only one finished financial investment from the state's budget since then in the city was a prison.

In the conclusion of the study the Author forms causes that affect two possible scenarios of development of the cities in the next thirty years.

They are:

- retreat from the coal economy for renewable energy sources,
- aging of the society,
- shrinking of the cities,
- the technological progress,
- spreading of remote forms of work,
- decentralization of the power.

Influence of these factors can cause that we will have an optimistic scenario of 'flourishing city' or a pessimistic scenario of 'fallen city'.

Due to the limited volume of such type of publications the attention was paid only to the selected cities of the archipelago. The rest ones are equally interesting. Therefore, I encourage all the ones who deal with

the city both scientifically and practically in action to get acquainted with the reviewed book, especially taking into account the fact, that permanently it is spoken and written about reforming of our public life.

At the end I will use the quotation of C. Dickens, 'A story about two cities': *'It was the best and the worst of the eras, the age of mind and the age of madness, the time of faith and the time of doubt, the period of light and the period of darkness, spring of beautiful hopes and winter of desperations. Everything was in front of us and we did not have anything in front of us'*.

Wojciech Sońta

