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POLICIES AND PROSPECTS OF URBAN
REDEVELOPMENT IN POLAND*

1. INTRODUCTION

The population in Poland is spread more or less evenly across its territory, what can be accounted for both historical factors and recent development policy. There is, however, one important exception: the Upper Silesia Region. The Katowice voivodship (2.0 per cent of the country's area) is inhabited by 10.0 per cent of the total population of Poland. In comparison with other countries, the population of Poland is characterized by a high degree of ethnic homogeneity although there are certain differences in the demographic structure of some regions. The urban system is relatively well developed, with some regional differences in its density. The urban network is denser in the West and South. Some of the Western cities face the problem of decapitalization, which is not the case in the Eastern part of the country, due to the great investment effort in the post-war period undertaken in order to diminish the regional differences and improve the living conditions in the backward Eastern territories.

The mutual relations between the overall economic development and urbanization processes are strong and obvious. In the Polish case the three key terms describe these relations at the turn of the centuries: lagging urbanization, economic crisis and political/economic reforms. The paper is constructed around these three notions.

2. LAGGING URBANIZATION

The key problem in the course of socio-economic development is the relationship between industrialization and urbanization. Over decades the doctrine prevailing in the socialist countries. Poland obviously included, has been considering industry as a town—generating factor

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meaning that the construction of a possibly large industrial plant should provide the core to be later on surrounded by a settlement system including houses, services, infrastructure, etc. The fetish of industrialization forcefully advertised industrial growth as the only way toward development; therefore local communities as well as authorities felt compelled to subject their needs to the needs (in terms of land, infrastructure, manpower, energy, environment) of a prospective factory. The development-oriented mission of the authorities (Pajestka 1981) therefore met with approval among local communities thereby reaffirming the doctrinal foundations of their mission.

This strategy cannot be denied some positive effects. It resulted in creating the industrial basis for development, in restructuring the national economy, in improving the living conditions of the nation. However, now it can be seen that the negative effects of urban neglect vis a vis industrial development prevail. They could be divided into two groups:

(a) It causes inadequate, limited satisfaction of social needs, hampers the development of social infrastructure, cripples housing construction, public transport and services, increases environment pollution.

(b) Underdeveloped urban centres in turn bear negatively on the efficiency of the very system of production. The settlement system is incapable to provide the labour force. Estimates indicate that if the investment outlays earmarked for the generation of the productive potential staying idle due to manpower shortage had been transferred to the non-productive sphere (housing, services, transport infrastructure) then the same level of production would have been achieved and would have provided a much better satisfaction of social needs without so much social pathology and with greater stability of the sociopolitical situation. It should be added that the above remark concerns primarily great urban centres, in which over one half of the national industry and working class is concentrated.

These phenomena have been generally called as "lagging urbanization", lagging behind industrialization (Jałowicki, 1982). This term was coined within the research project "Diagnosis of the Space Economy of Poland", headed by A. Kukliński in the Committee for Space Economy and Regional Planning of the Polish Academy of Sciences in the years 1980—1983.

3. THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Elsewhere (Gorzelałak 1985, 1987, 1988) I have discussed the Polish crisis of the eighties from both national and regional perspectives, pro-

viding the statistical picture of major economic data and theoretical interpretations. It is sufficient to indicate here that by 1987 the national income reached the level of 1978, but in per capita values it is now still lower than 10 years ago. Accumulation dropped dramatically, allowing for not more than 50% of pre-crisis investment level. Foreign debt is a heavy burden for the national economy, limiting the possibilities for growth. What has to be presented in this paper in more detail concerns the impact of the deep economic breakdown on the urbanization processes and urban structures.

3.1. Migrations

The latest trends that made themselves visible after the year 1980 generally stem from a drop in the spatial mobility of the population. While in 1975—1979 an average annual rate of internal migration (the number of migrants per 1.000 people) was 26.7, it dropped steadily from 22.4 in 1980—1983 to 18.4 in 1984 and to 17.4 in 1985. Migrations to metropolitan areas and town—to—town as well as interregional movements have shrunk particularly. While in 1976—79 an average annual surplus of migrations in urban areas reached 218.8 thousand, the figure dropped dramatically in 1985 and was down to 116.6 thousand. Similarly, changes of town as a place of residence dropped from 380.6 thousand in 1980 to a mere 272.6 thousand in 1985 (Szul et al. 1985). Recently some reversal of this trend can be observed, but the pre-crisis mobility of population has not yet been restored.

The decreasing rate of mobility is a serious indicator because migrations as such are essential for adequate adjustment of the labour force to the demands for specific skills and volume. Of special importance is the fact that the big urban agglomerations, providing over 50% of national industrial production, were hit most severely by the breakdown of the internal migrations. The shortage of the labour force is mostly pronounced in these industrial—urban centres, thus diminishing the rate of overcoming the crisis (Gorzela 1987).

3.2. Urban technical and social infrastructure

The economic crisis is responsible for a rapid slowdown of the infrastructure development in towns, structurally underdeveloped according to the "lagging urbanization" phenomenon.

The big agglomerations still enjoy the highest standard of cultural and educational facilities. At the same time, they experience the most acute housing problem and face the greatest gap between the required

and actual capabilities of public transport, communications, the retail sale network, etc. These mostly affect the big housing estates on the outskirts of big cities sometimes crippling the life of entire towns (as e.g. Warsaw).

The smaller urban centres have too little possibilities for endogenous development due to the amount of accumulated needs that cannot be fulfilled by own sources, greatly cut down by the centralized economic system in which the local authorities have to operate. The investment of the enterprises — being a possible exogenous factor — are greatly limited in the crisis situation and the enterprises tend rather to expand their activities in already existing locations instead of looking for new sites, which would have to be equipped with infrastructure.

Overindustrialization of some towns in industrial regions hampers the development of these towns by utilizing too great share of their resources: labour, land, infrastructure, natural resources. The demand for the almost any industrial product under permanent shortages does not provide too much possibilities for closing the existing factories and thus creating opportunities for restructuring the economic profiles of these towns.

3.3. Limits to restructuring the national economy

Poland is still well before the restructurization processes, observed in some more advanced economies (Aydalot 1984; Hamm, Litsch 1987; Stohr 1987). The sector—branch structure is still based mostly on mining and heavy industries. The regional pattern of the country therefore does not change. The big town is still attractive, since it provides high income jobs and more educational, cultural and social opportunities.

It is a sad paradox that the restructuring of the economy is a condition for overcoming the crisis and that, at the same time, the crisis makes it almost impossible. There are, however, some possibilities to break through this vicious circle. They can be found in the reforms of the political and economic systems.

4. REFORMS

Since 1982 an economic reform has been introduced in Poland. It has been accompanied by changes in the political system, since a new economic order could not be implemented in an old, centralized political set up (Kornai 1980, 1986).

It is widely acknowledged in Poland that the political reforms are much deeper and faster than the reconstruction of the economic system.

The growing dissatisfaction with the results of the economic reform can be noticed. The outcomes of the reforms are identified by the public as inflation and market shortages, what is partly true, for the new economic mechanisms failed to provide a satisfying increase of production.

It is also widely assumed, also by the Polish scientific community, that the true, deep and fast reform is the only way to get Poland out of stagnation and civilisation regress. The reforms should be mutually related to the changes in the economic structures, in order to make the Polish economy more efficient, modern and competitive on the world markets.

The urban systems play crucial role in the process of changing the economy. On the one hand, they create conditions for new economic activities, providing labour, infrastructure and "climate" for innovations and technological progress. On the other hand, they depend on the prosperity of the industries they host, flourish and decline paralelly with them. Therefore the question about the shape of the Polish urban system after the reform and restructuring of the Polish economy is not a trivial one. We shall discuss this problem in the final chapter of this paper.

5. THE PROGNOSIS

Assuming that the reform is introduced promptly and consequently and that the territorial self-government powers are adequately expanded and social attitudes and values properly adjusted, we could try and outlook for the Polish space.

Proceeding from the above assumptions a probable picture of the changes in the geography of the development in Poland has been drawn. It envisions the following processes:

(a) Stagnation in the traditional industries in Upper Silesia, the reconstruction of the region and its deglomeration. It is not to be expected that the coalmining industry would follow the pattern soon but the process could start in metallurgy and some branches of the chemical industry. We should expect an outflow of population from Silesia as is already the case in highergrade occupational groups. The reconstruction would involve the transmission of manpower and assets to infrastructure both technical-economic and social. Similar processes, though on a smaller scale, will occur in Łódź. Stagnation of the textile industry is already seen in the developed countries and in Łódź it will proceed at a much quicker pace due to decapitalization of the productive assets. The evolution of economic structures will also be seen in Gdańsk and Szczecin

where the traditionally strong ship-building complex will be replaced with the so-called maritime services, processing and specialised high-technology shipyards.

(b) The strengthening of the position of big agglomerations, which are playing the role of cultural, technical and scientific national centres (except for Upper Silesia). It could be expected that particular agglomerations will specialise in their intellectual resources with Warsaw and Poznań as the leaders in technological progress together with their "ring-areas" of small and medium-sized firms — largely privately owned or of a "joint-venture" type advanced industries of the core.

(c) The strengthening of regions with diversified economic structures mainly in the Western part of Poland from Lower Silesia (together with the reconstructed Sub-Sudetic region) up north to Gdańsk. That part of the country has a much better developed urban system and more advanced infrastructure, providing better services for more efficient farming. Given the assumption that the new economic system will introduce some mechanisms of diversifying the development processes it could be expected that the Western part of Poland will have a much better situation than the Eastern part, mostly due to higher development of the urban system. The small and medium-sized towns will attract the greatest part of new population and economic activities in this part of the country, for these towns — opposed to big cities — do not face the infrastructural barriers.

(d) Deep changes along the Opole—Gdańsk line even accompanied by possible social conflicts and tensions, particularly in the South-Eastern part of the country (considerable release of the manpower from agriculture taking place in a situation of inability of the regional urban system to accept new population). A development opportunity for that region could be the growth of food-processing industries and rural services paralleled — where possible — by town growth. Along the border area there could be expected some population movements toward the northern regions.

(e) Further vigorous development of tourist and recreation services in the Lake districts and along the sea-coast, mainly in the North-Eastern part of Poland. Given a stagnation in agriculture of those regions for not favourable natural conditions, population outflow and relatively poor infrastructure on the one hand, and a necessity to maintain the ecological balance, on the other, tourism could provide the main chance in those areas. No fast growth of towns can be foreseen — and should be proposed — in these regions.

It is impossible to state to what extent these prospects will be ful-

filled. The prognosis presented here should be considered, however, as the desired scenario of the regional structure of the development of Poland in coming decades. It also creates new opportunities for the urban systems themselves to develop and satisfy the needs of the society.

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