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TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE SPATIAL STRUCTURE OF CITIES IN POLAND

Cities in Poland took their shape as a result of historic urbanisation processes. However, the present shape of their spatial structure has been to a large extent influenced by the principles of the planned economy which were in force for the forty years following World War II. The new conditions for administration and new principles of city management led to significant transformations in the structure and development of urban land use.

One of the new phenomena which will influence the formation of the spatial structure of cities is the market mechanism of differentiation of value of urban land as a result of the rental value of land. This mechanism results in the development of urban land based on its real value. The higher the value, the more intensively the terrain is used.

Local authorities in cities do not always perceive the relationship between the way of land development, the value of the land, and the communal budget. T. Markowski¹ shows that one of the reasons for such a situation is the lack of a property tax levied on the value of the real estate in possession. In general the management of urban terrain differs from the methods established in developed countries. Furthermore the relation between local spatial development plans and the future rental value of buildings is not yet obvious to many local authorities.

Besides differences in the rental value of land, another phenomenon that should be taken into consideration is the fast changes in the prop-

¹Markowski, T., "Główne tendencje rozwoju i problemy strukturalne polskich metropolii w nowych warunkach ustrojowych", [in:] *Gospodarka przestrzenna miast polskich w okresie transformacji*, T. Markowski and T. Marszał (eds.), Biuletyn KZKP PAN 182, 1998.

erty right structure of urban land, as well as privatisation in the investment sphere (including investment activities of foreign companies). Taking real control over urban space by local authorities is an essential element of this process. Also strong competition between economic subjects to obtain attractive locations in the city should be counted as a new phenomenon in the spatial development of cities in Poland.²

Transformations in the spatial structure of cities take place in all areas and mainly concern:

- the physiognomy of the city;
- the distribution of community facilities and businesses;
- the site of residential areas.

1. Changes in the physiognomy of cities

The change in the economic system and the introduction of a municipal (self-governmental) system of city management has caused a progressive process of physiognomic transformations of cities, especially visible in the city centres. The first changes had a rather superficial character and took place in the form of decoration, advertisement, etc. Next, new or completely modernised objects began to appear in the landscape of city centres (mainly banks), with significantly more attractive architecture and an incomparably higher standard of decor than earlier buildings. A considerably greater and deeper transformation of the scenery of cities is the result of the realisation of comprehensive modernisation programmes or the reconstruction of large parts of the city. As a rule, such activities were undertaken by the authorities of many cities in the area of the historic centre, which is treated as a showcase of the city. Such programmes giving the central districts a considerably more attractive and representative appearance have been realised in, among other cities, Wrocław, Opole and Łódź.

When observing the changes occurring in the physiognomy of cities during the first period of economic transformation, the following phenomena that triggered off the appearance of new elements in the scenery of the cities can be specified:

- The construction of new, elegant objects or the modernisation of existing buildings (mainly by banks and insurance companies) in the city centre;

² Węclawowicz, G., "Miasto polskie w transformacji - kształtowanie się miasta post-socjalistycznego", [in:] *XI Konwersatorium Wiedzy o Mieście: Zróżnicowanie przestrzenne struktur społeczno-przestrzennych w dużych miastach*, Łódź 1999.

- Change of the function of objects belonging to the former political authorities (e.g. Opole University being established in the headquarters of the Provincial Committee (KW) of the Communist Party, the stock market in Warsaw in the former building of the Central Committee);
- The development of bazaars in central parts of many cities;
- The placement of big advertisements on streets (supplanting former propaganda slogans);
- The modernisation and enlargement of the aesthetic values of central parts of cities by local authorities having financial means at their disposal;
- Change of the facades of commercial and service buildings.

2. Transformations in functional and spatial structures

The picture of the transformation of the spatial structure of cities shows significant changes in the range of the distribution of community facilities and businesses as well as the ways of using different pieces of land. This process manifests itself in their changing use. Most research in this field has been carried out on big agglomerations.

At the moment the process of initiation of a new social-economic model in Poland started, the structure of land use in big cities in Poland significantly differed from patterns found in Western-European cities. In a comparison made by Z. Ziobrowski³ of selected Western-European cities⁴ the reference point is the structure of the terrain in which investment has taken place. In these cities housing occupies 40-43% of total land use, terrain for service and business 10-14%, industrial sites 11-15%, land used for transport 18-21%, parks and recreational areas 10-15% and technical infrastructure 3.5-4%.

In large Polish cities housing does not exceed 40% of total land use (Cracow 40%, Warsaw 36%, Wrocław 38%). This is the consequence of the preference for the development of large districts with blocks of apartments and a very limited role of the construction of detached houses. Besides the excessive concentration of residential areas, another feature was the underdevelopment of services and recreational areas. Compared to Western-European cities, Polish cities are characterised by a larger share of industrial areas (16-22% of total land use). An analysis carried out at the beginning of the transformation period (1991) shows that the

³Ziobrowski, Z., *Mierniki jakości przestrzeni miejskiej*, Biuletyn KPZK PAN.

⁴Among others, cities like Nuremburg, Munich, Bonn, Zurich, and the Hague. That is to say, cities regarded as functioning efficiently.

share of land used for transport in Poland and Western-Europe is similar (18-21%). However, these areas were less intensively used in Poland due to the fact that the level of motorization and transport services was than only half of the current level.

Assessing the situation after ten years of a market economy and the new system of management of urban land, it appears that a gradual process of ordering and transformation of functional and spatial structures of Polish cities is taking place in the direction of the structures existing in Western-European cities. Research by different authors shows that the changes occur in both the service zones (especially in the city centres) and industrial and housing areas. The scale of these transformations and their speed differ depending on the existing circumstances in individual cities.

Changes appearing in central city areas

In particular the increase in the intensity of land use in city centres is visible. In the course of decades the functional and spatial structure of city centres had changed slightly. Since 1989 distinctive changes have taken place in the share of land used for different purposes. This is shown by research carried out in Cracow,⁵ Katowice⁶ and other large agglomerations. Besides the fast development of business establishments, the centres show an increasing amount of financial institutions, hotels, and travel agencies. Trade satisfying the basic needs of inhabitants is being replaced by exclusive businesses offering, among other things, expensive clothing and cosmetics. Gradually the housing function is limited in favour of the service function. Furthermore, highly profitable new flats appear in the centres in renovated tenement houses or apartments in old buildings.

A. Jelonek⁷ distinguishes, with respect to the transformation period, successive stages of the change of the location of the service net in the city centre. In the first stage private service and trade (mobile stalls, ex-

⁵Górka, Z., "Zmiany w strukturze funkcjonalnej centrum Krakowa w dobie transformacji społeczno-ekonomicznej Polski", [in:] *Region miejski. Centrum a peryferia w okresie transformacji politycznej, gospodarczej i społecznej*, VII Konwersatorium Wiedzy o Mieście, Łódź 1994.

⁶Tkocz, M., "Funkcje centrum a funkcje peryferii Katowic w okresie powstania miasta i współcześnie", [in:] *Region miejski. Centrum a peryferia w okresie transformacji politycznej, gospodarczej i społecznej*, VII Konwersatorium Wiedzy o Mieście, Łódź 1994.

⁷Jelonek, A., "Zmiany w lokalizacji usług w regionie miejskim w okresie transformacji", [in:] *Region miejski. Centrum a peryferia w okresie transformacji politycznej, gospodarczej i społecznej*, VII Konwersatorium Wiedzy o Mieście, Łódź 1994.

change offices) appeared in addition to the existing large state-owned trade organisations. During the second stage, the privatisation and liquidation of the large state-owned trade and service organisations took place, significantly increasing the possibilities for the sale or renting of premises. This stage showed a greater role of the local authorities in the formation of the spatial structures of the distribution of communal facilities and businesses. The third stage began after all existing trade and service premises were used. The competition between the users of the premises strengthened, and was won by subjects capable of paying higher rents. As a result the elimination of some of the institutions, whose function does not suit location in the city centre can be observed.

As was brought to attention when discussing physiognomic changes, central areas of the city are an object of special interest to local authorities in many cities because of their representative character. There is a number of examples of city authorities spending a considerable amount of money on comprehensive modernisation of streets and squares. However, such activities and their scale and range depend on the possibilities of individual local authorities as well as on their priorities. The neglect of public space is becoming a problem of many cities. B. Jałowiecki⁸ gives Warsaw as a negative example of the neglect of authorities in this field.

Residential areas in cities under the conditions of the new system

In large cities significant changes can be observed with respect to the residential areas. Generally, the level of housing supplies, their distribution, and their standard are fundamentally related to the city's possibilities for development. Local authorities should concentrate on these problems. In many cities the housing supply is one of the main barriers for growth (examples can be found in, among others, the Upper-Silesian Industrial Region (*Górnośląski Okręg Przemysłowy*)).⁹

Districts with large blocks of apartments. It should be kept in mind that as a result of housing policy during the forty-year existence of socialism, a considerable amount of apartment blocks of a low standard

⁸Jałowiecki, B., "Społeczne wytwarzanie przestrzeni w okresie transformacji systemowej", [in:] *Nowe uwarunkowania rozwoju i kształtowania miast polskich*, Biuletyn KPZK PAN, Warszawa 1996.

⁹Rajman, J., "Struktura przestrzenna ludności i osadnictwa aglomeracji katowickiej w okresie transformacji gospodarczej", [in:] *Agglomeracje miejskie w procesie transformacji VI*, Zeszyty IGI PZ PAN 46, 1997.

and a low quality of workmanship have come into being. Districts consisting of apartment blocks were produced according to the technologies popular in different periods (large blocks of apartments, large 'slab', "housing factories"). Gradually these degrade and require intensive renovation and reconstruction. More and more often the areas with large housing estates are numbered among buildings of a substandard quality, characterised by high exploitation costs and a short technical and social life-span.¹⁰

When considering the theme of housing preferences the worsening social opinion about the utility of apartments in blocks and the lowering level of satisfaction of the inhabitants of the housing estates have been mentioned. To a larger extent these districts will become areas of concentration of the economically weaker part of the population.

In Poland, as well as in other post-socialistic countries, the role of districts with blocks of apartments in satisfying the housing need is large when compared to Western-European countries. The gradual development of other types of buildings (mainly houses designed for use by one family) does not change the fact that for many years to come a considerable part of the city community will live in districts with such large blocks of apartments. This feature will distinguish post-socialistic cities from cities in other parts of the world. Although many countries have built blocks of apartments in some period, but only in Central Europe such a high percentage of the city community (sometimes 30-40%) lives there.

As mentioned previously, currently an accelerated process of degradation of districts with apartment blocks can be observed. This is especially visible in older residential areas. While perceiving the spontaneous development of business and service establishments, it is also necessary to notice the worsening state of the buildings and the disappearance of social infrastructure.

The character of institutions belonging to the social infrastructure located in residential areas is a consequence of the age structure of the inhabitants. This is the case in many – if not all – districts with large blocks of apartments (especially in medium-sized cities), where during certain periods only one large residential area was developed which was then populated by people of a similar age. As can be expected, this phenomenon has caused many problems connected with the needs in the field of social infrastructure. One moment there was a huge demand for

¹⁰Markowski, T., "Główne tendencje rozwoju i problemy strukturalne polskich metropolii w nowych warunkach ustrojowych", [in:] *Gospodarka przestrzenna miast polskich w okresie transformacji*, T. Markowski and T. Marszał (eds.), Biuletyn KPZK PAN 182, 1998.

day-care centres, then nursery schools, elementary schools etc. After several years the problem arose: how to use these buildings. Some of them were adjusted to other aims, while others are not used. Authorities more than once have used the vacant buildings for administrative purposes typical for city centres (e.g. the location of the Regional Employment Office in the building of a former day-care centre quite distant from the city centre in Opole).

One of the most important problems of spatial policy for urban authorities will be the transformation of the districts with large blocks of apartments into attractive and rationally developed areas. With regard to the scale of this phenomenon and the insufficient tempo of development of housing construction, it is not possible to allow the degradation of these districts, nor to leave them as residential areas of low quality. However, modernisation of these districts will be an expensive and long-term process.

The threat of the process of degradation. When discussing certain symptoms of the degradation process that appear in post-war districts consisting of large apartment blocks it should be emphasised that this process mainly threatens the old districts of large cities. A special category of old residential areas primarily threatened with degradation is tied housing owned by a company. This problem can, in particular, clearly be observed in cities of the Upper-Silesian conurbation where the share of tied housing owned by factories or coal mines in the structure of housing supplies is significant. For a long time such districts have been considered to be unattractive. This is caused by the fact that apartments that were abandoned for different reasons have not had new tenants since. In such a situation apartments have been assigned to families from the lower strata of society, which has changed the social composition of the district. Privatisation of a part of the apartments did not bring results in the form of renovation of buildings because the buyers were people without sufficient financial resources for undertaking such expensive modernisation projects (these processes have been analysed by L. Frackiewicz¹¹).

It has been pointed out by J. Rajman¹² that, although many districts with tied housing owned by factories and coal mines characterised by obsolete housing and a run-down technical infrastructure have been knocked down, the large share of the oldest buildings and their location

¹¹ Frackiewicz, L., "Jaka przyszłość dla śląskich zespołów mieszkaniowo-przemysłowych", [in:] *Rewitalizacja historycznych dzielnic mieszkalno-przemysłowych. Idee – projekty – realizacje*, N. Juzwa and K. Wódz (eds.), Katowice 1966.

¹² Fajman, J., „Struktura przestrzenna ludności i osadnictwa aglomeracji katowickiej w okresie transformacji gospodarczej”, [in:] *Agglomeracje miejskie w procesie transformacji VI*, P. Korcelli (ed.), Zeszyty IGI PZ PAN 46, 1997.

in the urban space are still significant constraints for the development of many cities of the Upper-Silesian conurbation.

Experiences of the cities in highly developed countries show that the degradation of certain areas is treated as a barrier to city development which requires an active policy from the side of the administration. With regard to the differences between those areas and the level of advance in the degradation process, different programmes for modernisation, rehabilitation, and revitalisation of city districts have been adopted. A basic conditions for implementing efficient policies concerning degradation processes are: monitoring of the implementation of such policies, making the correct diagnosis, and the possession of suitable legal and financial instruments.¹³ In the Polish reality such an instrument could be a law about renovation and modernisation of buildings. However, financial resources would also have to be increased.

New residential areas. After 1990 an increase in the importance of private construction has been observed. Society shows a considerable interest in the possibility of moving into such buildings, but due to financial barriers we do not observe faster development of areas with single-family dwellings.

An expression of the intensified utilisation of urban grounds is the development of apartment buildings in large cities on hitherto undeveloped grounds in the centre or in its vicinity. Generally the apartments are of a high standard (with a garage and other conveniences), and have a larger surface area than the apartments in the housing estates built during earlier periods. They are very expensive, but assure a high standard of living while being near the centre. This is of significant importance for people employed in business institutions located in the centre due to the inefficient transport systems in Polish cities.

Research carried out in the agglomerations of Gdańsk and Gdynia in the middle 90s¹⁴ shows that new housing consists mainly of single-family dwellings or apartment buildings appearing in the following forms:

- so-called good locations in old residential areas or on the outskirts of the city centres;
- supplementary locations in the districts with housing-association apartment blocks;
- new locations along arterial roads and near ring roads.

¹³Siemiński, W., "Problemy miejskich obszarów zdegradowanych w krajach rozwiniętych", *Człowiek i środowisko*, no. 2-3, 1999, p. 23.

¹⁴Dutkowski, M., "Transformacja gospodarki i zmiany struktury przestrzennej aglomeracji Gdańska-Gdyni w latach 1990-1994", [in:] *Agglomeracje miejskie w procesie transformacji I*, P. Korcelli (ed.), Zeszyty IGI PZ PAN 46, 1996.

Transformations within industrial sites

A consequence in Western-European countries of the principles of the market economy and the mechanism determining the rental value of land has been that the industrial activity that once could be found in the central areas of a city have been replaced by other competing enterprises. In Poland under the centrally planned economy where land prices practically played no role this process was hampered. Many industrial institutions could almost without limits occupy urban land, treating surplus grounds in their possession as a reserve. As a result a number of urban areas with advantageous location and a high level of accessibility were unused. The areas occupied by industry mainly consist of:

- Old industrial districts with a history going back to the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. These districts have not been reconstructed as was the case with many old industrial districts in Western-Europe. They have changed only a little or not at all. Such areas can be found in the vicinity of current city centres. Undoubtedly the transformation and development of old industrial districts is among the most important problems in the sphere of spatial management of many cities in Poland.
- Investments from the period of the so-called "socialist industrialisation". Usually these industrial zones are situated on the outskirts of the cities.
- A special case are urban centres which came into being as a support for industrial establishments in areas where new supplies of raw materials were discovered. For the needs of new investments land was occupied without significant financial limitations.

Phenomena connected with economic transformation such as development of the service sector, demand for land near the centre, and the already mentioned mechanism determining the rental value of land allow for the prediction that restructuring of industrial areas, especially downtown, is inevitable.

In the period after 1989, when the economic conditions have changed, a number of things happened causing the vacancy of part of the land occupied by industry. For example:

- liquidation of a number of factories;
- reduction of production in many firms;
- search for savings and additional financial resources.

As a consequence of these, possibilities for development appeared at the outskirts of many cities. The form and condition of existing development result, in general, in the need for significant outlays when adapting those areas for different uses.

Research concerning the transformations taking place in the spatial structure of land use carried out in different Polish cities shows a gradually proceeding change in the development of hitherto inefficiently used parts of industrial zones. Numerous wholesale firms and retail trade establishments appeared on the sites of liquidated industrial companies or still functioning companies trying to use their grounds and buildings more efficiently.

With regard to the scale of the problem and the quantity of old industrial sites (one of the most interesting and most widely researched fields), Łódź makes an excellent area for observing the process of spatial transformation. It must be emphasised that from the economic point of view industries are interested in disposing of a large part of their sites or in utilising them more effectively. Research by S. Liszewski¹⁵ in 80 industrial companies in Łódź shows that they possess a surplus of over 200 hectares of land and over 500 thousand square metres of superfluous office space which they would like to rent. An analysis of the development of industrial sites in Łódź in 1998 indicated that in the 1990s significant functional changes have taken place on this terrain.¹⁶ One of the processes observed is the ongoing replacement of industrial plants by services. This process is the strongest on areas in the vicinity of the city centre. The further away from the centre, the lower is the pressure from the service sector on the industrial sector. More recently developed industrial sites (developed in the 1960s and 1970s), being situated the farthest away from the centre, keep their productive character. Thus the use of industrial sites dispersed in the central areas of the city changes most quickly. In the newer industrial districts the users change, while the industrial function stays the same. A general outcome indicated by the research is that the speed of change and range of uses of industrial sites depends on the position of the land in the spatial structure of the city.

The example of Łódź also points at the tendency in some old industrial centres for the industrial restructuring to take the form of de-industrialisation. The spatial effects of this process show themselves in the form of abandoned industrial sites and industrial buildings remaining unused for a longer period of time.

¹⁵Liszewski, S., "Przemiany funkcjonalne i przestrzenne terenów przemysłowych Łodzi", [in:] *Aglomeracje miejskie w procesie transformacji VI*, Zeszyty IGi PZ PAN 46, 1997.

¹⁶Marczyńska-Witczak, E., Szafrńska, E., "Tereny przemysłowe w przestrzeni miasta i ich przekształcenia", [in:] *Spoleczno-ekonomiczne problemy aglomeracji Łódzkiej*, W. Michalski (ed.), RCSS BRR w Łodzi, PTG Oddział w Łodzi.

The dynamics of the described transformations have caused a clear reduction in the area used for industrial purposes. In the period 1988-96 the area used for industrial activities in the so-called internal zone of Łódź decreased by about 24%.¹⁷

The transformation of industrial sites has also been observed in other cities. An example is the so-called industrial district of Opole, where as a result of the location of supermarkets and many wholesale stores the area has begun to fulfil a trade and service function.

Analysis shows that the dynamics of the transformation of industrial sites would even be greater if the process did not face a number of (mainly legal and economic) barriers.

A certain threat for achieving a proper structure of land use can be land speculation. M. Kochanowski draws attention to the fact that not only industrial firms, but also other institutions (e.g. universities and colleges), rent land and objects originally transferred to them by the authorities. This has resulted in the use of these grounds and buildings in other ways than foreseen in the original spatial plan.¹⁸

3. Directions of change in the social-spatial structure of the city

An element of the described processes concerning the spatial structure of the city is the changing distribution of social traits. Studies of residential areas within cities have a very long tradition. Following the generally accepted classical models worked out on the example of American cities, residence areas with certain features such as wealth, family status, or ethnical origin create in the spatial structure of the city certain districts in the form of sectors or rings.

In Poland during the period of the planned economy, the accepted model of development of the construction industry and the conditions of allotting flats decided the spatial structure of the city community. Almost all types of people of different social status (education, profession, or income) found their way into districts with large blocks of apartments. Social status did not play a significant role in the location of people. Only institutional housing estates, the so-called districts with pro-

¹⁷Piech, M., "Przemiany przestrzenne i funkcjonalne terenów przemysłowych Łodzi w latach 1988-1996", [in:] *XI Konwersatorium Wiedzy o Mieście: Zróżnicowanie przestrzenne struktur społeczno-przestrzennych w dużych miastach*, Łódź 1999.

¹⁸Kochanowski, M., *Nowe uwarunkowania rozwoju i kształtowania miast polskich*, Biuletyn KPZK PAN 175, Warszawa 1996.

fessorial housing and similar areas, had some marginal impact on the general development model of residential areas.

A distinguishing feature that appeared in the spatial structure was the age of the inhabitants. People moved into the residential areas in a relatively short time after they were completed. A consequence of these processes is visible today in the differing demographic characteristics of the population in the spatial structure of the city. Research carried out during the first half of the 1990s in Wrocław shows a number of areas with an overrepresentation of population from a certain age group, especially in the residential areas built in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁹

Currently those districts are characterised by low birth and fertility rates because they are mainly inhabited by families already established. The highest birth rates can be found in the districts that formerly were villages which have been administratively attached to cities, which can be described with another model of procreation of the countryside population. Also death rates show a spatial differentiation, mainly resulting from the existence of areas where groups of people of older age are concentrated. These are found in the downtown areas and the older residential districts with detached houses. The concentration of population of an older age in the central districts of a city has been confirmed many times as being a characteristic feature of cities in many regions of the world. In this respect Polish cities do not differ much from Western-European or South-American cities. In Warsaw the percentage of older people in many urban units in the centre area will reach 30%, while the average for the whole city amounts to only 18%.²⁰ In the districts built in the 1970s currently the share of older age groups is minimal. The findings of studies concerning the socio-spatial structures of Wrocław and Warsaw can undoubtedly be repeated in many other Polish cities, where the settlement processes of individual districts took a similar course.

The growing differentiation of incomes and the liquidation of different types of constraints on the turnover of flats will cause a gradual differentiation in the socio-spatial structure of the city. The processes taking place lead to a spatial concentration of inhabitants of a city determined by the level of income and social status, followed by segregation of the community of housing estates. The poorest, not able to pay the rent, will gradu-

¹⁹ Górecka, S., "Przestrzenne zróżnicowanie struktur demograficznych ludności a poziom płodności i umieralności we Wrocławiu", [in:] *XI Konwersatorium Wiedzy o Mieście: Zróżnicowanie przestrzenne struktur społeczno-przestrzennych w dużych miastach*, Łódź 1999.

²⁰ Buczek, G., Gzell, S., "Gospodarka przestrzenna w Warszawie w okresie transformacji", [in:] *Gospodarka przestrzenna miast polskich w okresie transformacji*, T. Markowski and T. Marszał (eds.), Biuletyn KPZK PAN 182, 1998.

ally be pushed out into districts with buildings of a substandard quality. The better situated will move to districts with single-family dwellings. In general, from the social point of view, the old as well as the new residential areas will have a more and more homogeneous character.

The course of the processes mentioned above during the first years of system transformation has been documented by S. Liszewski²¹ using the example of the changes in the spatial distribution of the intellectual elite in Łódź. At the beginning (after the second World War) the area where the group qualified as the "intellectual elite" was located downtown because it was close to the institutions of higher education. The development of residential areas away from the centre caused the spread of these groups throughout the city. The dispersion of the place of living of this elite in the Łódź area progressed in a concentric manner. Liszewski pays attention to the fact that this social group always aimed at seizing the most advantageous places to live. This statement allows for the approximate prediction of the tendencies of localisation of the intellectual elite. In spite of the fact that during the first years of transformation the creation of attractive locations has not been observed, it can be argued that in the present circumstances new residential areas will be established with high standard flats for the better situated members of the intellectual elite.

Poor and wealthy districts are becoming a new feature in the spatial structure of the cities. Sociological research shows that the spatial concentration of poverty can be found in certain parts of the city. At the same time high-class residential areas are forming on the outskirts of the cities. Processes well established in American and Western-European cities will take place at an accelerated rate. It seems that some ideas and assumptions in the field of the socio-spatial structure, already regarded as classical, can find their counterparts in the processes currently occurring in Polish cities.

Local authorities should, at an early stage, recognise the problem of districts of poverty and counteract the creation of such enclaves.

Concluding remarks

This paper tried to pay attention to the most characteristic directions in the transformation of spatial structures of Polish cities since 1989. Undoubtedly the speed and scale of the transformation differs according

²¹Liszewski, S., "Elity intelektualne w przestrzeni miasta. Przykład Łodzi", [in:] *XI Konwersatorium o Mieście: Zróżnicowanie przestrzenne struktur społeczno-przestrzennych w dużych miastach*, Łódź 1999.

to each particular city. Intensification of certain features depends on local constraints to which the following belong:

- previously existing structure of usage of space, which has been shaped historically;
- structure of the economic base of the city, its condition and the direction in its transformation, as well as the situation on the labour market, which is connected with the state of the economic base;
- financial standing of the most important firms;
- attractiveness of the city to external investors;
- activities of the authorities in the field of realising a development strategy and the set priorities of that strategy (including the authorities' propensity to invest in the infrastructure and general development of urban space).

Clearly the list above does not consider the general constraints influencing the nature of spatial transformations in particular cities. In spite of the differing social and economic situation of cities, certain trends can be observed in the transformation of spatial structure:

- In comparison to the period of the planned economy, clear and sometimes radical physiognomic changes have taken place. This mainly concerns city centres, which in many cases are becoming similar to the Western-European city centres. More and more often these changes are not confined to "cosmetic" changes, but rather take the form of comprehensive changes in the whole infrastructure of large parts of the centre (buildings, pavements, roads, lighting, transport system, etc.).
- The housing plan carried out under the old system has ceased to function. Housing construction realised in the last few years has not taken place in the large residential areas. The new residential areas are rather small groups of houses using free space in the areas already built up. The amount of new housing is limited, however its quality is unquestionably higher in comparison to housing from the period of socialism. The role of single-family dwellings has been increasing.
- Symptoms of the process of degradation can be observed in certain areas of the city. This process is occurring in old downtown residential areas, tied housing residential areas belonging to factories, and in the long term may appear in the post-war housing estates.
- Old industrial sites, especially in downtown areas, have been occupied by service industries, while at the same time in many cases the amount of land offered or left by industry exceeds the development possibilities.
- Besides the dynamic development of the service facilities in city centres, as in many cities in many regions of the world, new trade and service centres are developing on the outskirts of the city. These cen-

tres are taking over part of the trade and service functions which used to be provided in the city centre.

- A process of the spatial segregation of residents according to social status has started, which will result in the creation of wealthy and poor districts.

As stressed in the introduction, some of the processes of spatial transformation mentioned above will occur as a result of the market economy. From the point of view of the interests of the local community, to some degree these processes are to be expected and desired, although some negative features have appeared. The role of local authorities and the government is to modify these processes, and not allow for the appearance of negative social and spatial effects. Thus, knowledge about the direction of the changes and their effects, together with the identification of threats, appears to be highly important as an indicator of essential administrative activities. Particularly at the local level.

A processes mentioned above have occurred much earlier in the Western-European and American cities. Thus, it is vital to study the role of spatial policy, the solutions applied, and programmes carried out in the cities which have developed under a market economy.

1. Introduction

The demographic and ethnical situation in the Opole region of Silesia (*Śląsk Opolecki*) possesses specific features not to be found in the rest of the country. The ethnical and demographic issues, especially foreign migration, has posed an important political, social, and economic problem in the Opole region practically since the 1960s. The ethnically and ethnically distinguishable group of native Silesians comprises 320,000, while in 1950 it numbered 418,300. Thus, due to distinct (internal and foreign) migration processes, a distinct ethnic and ethnical situation, and lasting family relations with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

Currently (1999) part of the native Silesians population (ca. 100,000) belongs to the Socio-Cultural Society for the German Minority in Śląsk Opolecki (*Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Niemców w Śląsku Opoleckim*), which brings together Silesians who consider themselves to be German. With the current state of ethnical knowledge it is difficult or simply impossible to collect detailed statistics of the number of people belonging exclusively to the German minority. However, the population of Silesians (about 320,000) can be estimated with great accuracy in the light of demographic research and general records.

From the beginning of the 1990s a specific problem has existed in the Opole region with respect to the German minority, which consists of over 200,000 people, while 100,000 of them possess a German passport. The