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CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES OF CITIES AND URBAN AREAS

Abstract: Contemporary transformations of urban and metropolitan structures are associated with many different issues and can become a subject of interdisciplinary research. The purpose of this article is to discuss some of these related to the problem of shaping urban structures of the Polish cities in the light of the sustainable development paradigm principles. As the starting point for these considerations the factors deciding about the transformation of the contemporary city were adopted. As the background of these the theory of the urban development cycle – described by Klaasen – was used. On this basis the key processes and challenges associated with metropolization and reurbanization of cities were presented. In result of these considerations the final conclusions, associated with the need of elaboration and implementation of the compact city policy (as the exemplification of the need of saving undeveloped spaces as the “rare good”), were elaborated.

Keywords: Metropolization, reurbanization, sustainable development, urban structure.

Introduction

Contemporary changes of urban and metropolitan areas are multidimensional and are also the subject of sociological, economic, geographical and urban research and studies. Particularly good summaries are found in works edited by Jałowiecki [2008]. Comprehensive and consistent shaping of urban and metropolitan areas – also with regard to sustainable development – is one of the key problems of the modern urban architecture¹. The issue has been the subject of numerous theoretical studies and those dedicated to design practice both in foreign and Polish literature. Individual issues are widely discussed in Poland by many authors (incl. S. Gzell, J. Kołodziejski, T. Markowski, A. Baranowski, T. Borys, W. Pęski), and have also been recently discussed by A. Zimnicka and M. Stangel. Yet, there is a shortage of studies of the

¹ A good example is *e.g.* the summary presented in: [Lorens 2005a].

problem in Polish reality, including the possibility of practical implementation of principles and rules of the sustainable development paradigm.

Also, even if researchers and practitioners dealing with urban planning widely discuss the new paradigm of spatial development, not very many studies discuss all aspects of this issue – both the rules of shaping space, space transformation decision-making processes, as well as implementation of planned actions. Theoretical and case studies produced in one volume are also rare.

The purpose of the study is to present the entire spectrum of issues related to reurbanization and metropolization of urban areas, also in the context of implementation of the sustainable development paradigm. Special attention was given to shaping space as one of the key problems of local and metropolitan sustainable development in Polish reality².

1. Reasons for contemporary urban transformation

Contemporary urban transformation is an effect of many economic and social processes in the modern world. One of them is globalization, which is a consequence of modernity [Sztompka 2002]. The process is currently considered as the main driving force behind the global economy. Also, globalization is a combination of many different processes – including urbanization. Its effects are important for the space, economy, and most of all – for the society [Keil, Ronneberger 2000].

Globalization focuses mostly on cities, which are affected the most. A tangible effect is the emergence of a new structure of spatial links related to the benefits given by large cities and peripheral areas, and also with the expansion of the international exchange network [Harańczyk 1998]. A new “global city” model featuring growth of social and spatial disparities and significant expansion of the hitherto small areas of extreme poverty and wealth in cities is emerging [Węclawowicz 2002]. In this context, city authorities often adopt a pro-development policy as a certain guarantee for successful long-term development. Different urban undertakings – prestigious urban projects – are at the heart of the policy. These are planned and implemented in accordance with different principles and rules, and they are currently a vital element of the spatial development policy of many cities [*cf. e.g.*: Lorens, Martyniuk–Pęczek 2011]. They are dedicated to the support of physical, economic and cultural restructuring of city centers or inner-city areas. They are often called “flagship projects” encouraging more complex urban or local transformations [Loftman, Nevin 2003]. Many such “flagship projects” involve transformation of urban public space, since – to be competitive – cities must “guarantee” settlement in time and space as opposed to “non-urbanity” of the global era.

² Reference to [Pęski 1999; Lorens 2013] must be made here.

The discussed globalization phenomena have a huge impact on shaping the urban structures as such. Special examples are North American cities, in which the transformation began the earliest and was the most intense. A similar evolution can also be seen in Polish cities undergoing rapid transformation and evolving towards a certain post-socialist model.

To conclude globalization, it can be stated that the spatial order is changing as follows [Marcuse, van Kempen 2000]:

- structural divisions in space are strengthening and inequalities are deepening and the social disparities are growing drastically;
- specific new (in terms of type and stage of development) spatial formations inside those structural divisions are being created;
- there are “soft” locations undergoing transformation – such as public space, where the changes are most clear.

On that basis, we can differentiate a range of new social and spatial formations typical for globalizing cities. Even if they are not new in nature, the novelty is the scale of their development. Many such formations may be described: the “citadels” of big business and main state offices, gentrified residential areas, exclusion enclaves (also the communities behind the gate), *edge cities*,³ enclaves and ghettos for the socially excluded. With respect to spatial links, we could also speak about emergence of urban regions relying on close cooperation and interdependence between the hitherto independent urban centers [Marcuse, van Kempen 2000].

As shown by the aforementioned summary, the developing global city model (and also the aspiring global city) – albeit not yet fully shaped and varying across the physical space of contemporary cities – carries serious changes in their spatial and social and economic structure. Transformation of urban structure also means far-reaching consequences for the systems that form them, including transport systems, public space systems and biologically active area systems – including leisure, park, and forest centers, and open areas forming a special ecological foundation of the city. In consequence, *metropolization* gets a new meaning – understood not only in economic, social and geographical sense but also in a spatial sense. New phenomena related to shaping each piece of space, such as regeneration of degraded structures, emerge against this background.

³ Understood as quite complete urban structures situated in distant suburbs and *de facto* not functionally connected with the main center.

2. The city development cycle and the contemporary transformation trends

The analysis of urban evolution of highly developed countries over the past decades and the current transformation proves that all contemporary urban organisms are changing cyclically, going through urban life phases described by Klassen. The cycle can be divided into the following phases: urbanization (where the population of the city centre grows faster than in the peripherals), suburbanization (where the population in the peripherals grows faster than in the city centre), deurbanization (where the entire metropolitan area loses its inhabitants) and last but not least reurbanization (in which the population of the city centre grows relatively faster than in the peripherals). The changes involve all cities, however are particularly meaningful for global cities or aspiring global cities. The cities of the global era – also called metropolitan cities – constitute new hubs in the settlement grid, dwarfing smaller urban centers [Jałowicki, Szczepański 2002]. In contemporary times, their urban structure was conditioned on industrialization or economic development relying on manufacturing [Chakravorty 2000]. Currently, urban transformation phases also depend on many economic processes, but this time on deindustrialization (closing down inefficient or obsolete manufacturing plants) *high-tech* development (the latest technologies) and development of services, especially production services. With deindustrialization, today's cities no longer link their economic future to traditional industries [Węgleński 2001].

After transformation, many urban industrial areas are decapitalized and are declining. The effect of deindustrialization has also produced dramatic social consequences such as very high unemployment rate, a huge rise in crime and physical decline of large urban spaces. Despite those negative effects, the processes provide opportunity for reurbanization of central urban areas [Kvorning 1996]. Still, the key factor deciding on transformation of inner-city areas is gentrification. We could speak about gentrification involving replacement of poorer inhabitants with wealthy middle class and gentrification involving replacement of weaker businesses pushed out from those areas with economically stronger companies. This latter phenomenon is called *corporate gentrification* or *manhattanization* [Majer 1999]. The development of gentrification and the space thematization [more in: Lorens 2006] paves the way for creation of new types of urban structure taking account of the development of consumption demand. These entail a new type of links: between culture and economics and between middle class consumers and global corporations [Zukin 1993].

Besides reurbanization, the key concept for understanding modern cities is *suburbanization*. It originated in the US in consequence of the key intensification of spatial development in large cities and peak of urban population growth (referred to as “the metropolitan explosion”) between 1921 and 1961. It defines collective settlement

of the middle class in suburban areas. Even if perceived as having a negative impact on the urban structure and the functioning of cities, it became one of the key boosters of spatial development in the US already towards the end of the pre-war period. Its peak is seen early 1950s. In the 20th century, the suburbs became (predominantly for Americans) a typical habitat identified with wealth and culture – as opposed to residential areas within large cities symbolizing communal neglect and pathology. For most Americans the central areas have long been seen as poverty and danger zones [Majer 1999]. Suburbanization – despite its greatest development in the US in the 1960s and 1970s – is currently also a key factor in polarization of the social and spatial urban structure. The phenomenon largely impacts the real estate markets and the economic activity of the historical inner-city areas. This means in-depth restructuring of urban space [Kesteloot 2000].

The marginal form of suburbanization is *deurbanization* – understood as a disappearance of the city as a limited spatial structure in favor of unlimited large functional regions. The lifestyle of the inhabitants may be described as “urban and rural continuum”. Smaller towns at the outskirts of large metropolitan regions are also developing. Institutions such as industrial parks emerge and the number of fully urbanized, multi-center metropolitan regions having no large cities increases [Majer 1999]. Currently, both those processes are pacing fast in Polish cities.

A contemporary city model shaped by the aforementioned processes may be called a divided, defragmented and much less clear structure compared to its modernist equivalent. The model very often has enclaves housing headquarters of global financial institutions neighboring to regions inhabited with socially excluded groups, peripheralization goes hand in hand with concentration, and the erstwhile industrial areas are being replaced with structures associated with various forms of consumption. In effect, the spatial urban form – being a product of many forces described above – is not entirely predictable. This is because new transformation processes overlap different situations in space, different ambitions and intentions of actors playing their roles in the space (architects, developers), and the existing urban spatial form significantly delays the rapidity and scale of change. It also has to be remembered that the global forces do not operate everywhere at the same time [Beauregard, Haila 2000]. The city form depends on the effects of confrontation of effects of global forces with local consumption patterns and specificity of the urban form [Clammer 2003].

3. The shaping of the sustainable urban development paradigm

The spatial planning problem – in the context of the above-discussed phenomena of suburbanization, *deurbanization* and reurbanization – is one of the key issues of sustainable development. This is because space – as an area, land surface – is considered as natural resource, which, if used and developed with infrastructure, creates

a break in the ecosystem, and the structures become an additional polluter [Stawicka–Wałkowska 2001]. The shaping of spatial structures largely impacts the environment and is conditioned on benefits and limitations ensuing from its character. The process is therefore bidirectional, albeit not confined to such simple relations. Development processes have their economic, social and political and institutional dimension, and the proper perception of such relations conditions the achievement of the intended goal. The goals may vary, albeit at the first sight the sustainable development seems to be in the foreground – in particular locally (in towns and municipalities) – which means that one is guided by three general rules [Baranowski 1998]:

- respect for resources due to their limitation;
- harmonizing ecological, social and economic development goals;
- long-term approach to analyzing, planning and implementing the development goals.

Spatial development sustainability also has local, regional or national dimension. Naturally, each of those levels has different issues. At the national level, drafting applicable regulations and promotion of sustainable development is a key. At the regional level – creation of regional development policy ensuring stable development which includes minimization of social and economic conflicts and tensions. At the local level – creating a spatial development model to suit local conditions and needs.

In Polish reality, sadly, spatial management is fragmented and oriented towards a passive relation between sectors – public (creating the management rules) and private (committed to implement its ambitions in market economy). The fundament of the philosophy is the current legislation imposing the obligation to make planning documents without precisely defining the rules of taking spatial management actions. We are then faced with a situation where cities and municipalities run their **planning processes** without thinking about **spatial development**. A certain exception in such action is the municipalities' commitment to work out a local development strategy in a spontaneous way without legislative regulations. In certain cases, there is still modest cooperation with the private sector in implementation of some development measures. The predominant model is mutual lack of trust and understanding on both sides.

Spatial management in the context of sustainable urban development should rely on a certain set of principles related to the adopted values. When we speak about sustainable development, we should follow its principles. There may be many such principles, also they may be ordered according to different classifications. The specificity of spatial management and adaptation of the principles of sustainable development should not be forgotten. They will follow from different systems of principles elaborated by various bodies, in particular programming documents of various EU policy agendas and pan-European organizations.

Urban development principles form part of the spatial development system. They also form a basis for creating graphic conventions, and activities in the space.

They are conditioned upon not only the general sustainable development paradigm but also the rules elaborated by various international associations and organizations of people involved in shaping the space. The first such organization was the International Congress of Modern Architecture, which in 1933 elaborated the principles of urban regeneration. The documents is known as The Athens Charter, and proclaimed *e.g.*:

- **urban functional segregation**, which caused a breakup of the compact structure;
- **development of new types of housing stock** – including structures free from traditional division into urban blocks of flats and the need to build a compact development – which caused creation of new large residential areas with blocks of flats or scattered development;
- development and hierarchical arrangement of transport systems with the declining role of urban public space;
- rejection of urban values of historical urban sites.

The consequence of implementation of the aforementioned rules was rapid change in social relations in the city, and creation of an “industrialized” development model assuming that smooth functioning of the spatial structure designed as a “machine” is the greatest good. We can still feel the effects of such philosophy in our cities today – to mention the mono-functional residential areas or large shopping malls being stopgap inner-city systems.

The origination of the sustainable development is also associated with the preparation of new documents – often resembling manifests – proposing rethinking the urban structure. At least four key studies should be mentioned:

- Green Paper on the Urban Environment – adopted in 1990 by the European Commission;
- European Spatial Development Perspective – adopted in 1997 by the Committee for Spatial Development of the European Union;
- The New Athens Charter – adopted in 1998 by the European Council of Spatial Planners;
- The Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities – adopted in 2007 by ministers of EU countries dealing in urban development and territorial cohesion.

In those documents many proposals for the modern design methodology were included – including building the municipal planning policy and for constructing graphic conventions. On this basis, it is possible to develop a cohesive set of spatial planning rules that may become a standard for architects and spatial planners.

As regards spatial management, we could speak about both fundamental guidelines and detailed principles. As regards fundamental guidelines, the following elements should be mentioned:

- rational use of space (also through intensification of the use of urban areas and regeneration of degraded sites);
- creating systems of protected areas;

- transport policy reducing transport demand.

With respect to spatial planning rules ensuing from the sustainable development philosophy, the following can be mentioned [after Baranowski 1998]:

- resource-efficient management, which includes non-urbanized space; the consequence of the idea is rationalization and intensification of the use of the areas under investment, including – regeneration of degraded industrial, residential and inner-city areas;
- minimization of functional and spatial conflicts, having negative environmental, social and cultural and economic impact;
- striving for multi-functionality of individual areas, which will help reduce transport demand and foster spatial, social and cultural integration;
- combining the complementary functions, which is to rationalize the resource and energy management and reduce transport demand;
- setting the directions of territorial development of urban investment taking account of their consequences for the functional and spatial structure of the areas under investment – this will help prevent negative side effects of new investment for the areas under investment;
- shaping the city identity and its individual areas, which will help improve the quality of city life and satisfy many needs of local communities.

The guidelines may be a foundation for the new spatial development paradigm, however they must be enriched with more detailed concepts and implementation methods.

4. Consequences for a Polish city

Unlike global cities, the contemporary character of Polish cities is largely an effect of socialist spatial planning and industrialization. In socialist countries this was “guided spatial planning” and “imposed industrialization”, and therefore not following from market processes but being a fruit of informed policy of the then authorities. Also urban development management was guided by central planning services with all its negative effects for the social structure and functioning. The features were common for majority of states of the people’s democracies. Urban industrialization in planned economy also significantly led to transformation of the social structure by laying down a new division of labor and foundation for the new social hierarchy. This was also related to reorientation of the quantitative and spatial allocation of housing to individual professional groups. Therefore, in cities developing under the socialist industrialization regime the spatial segregation was disappearing [Węclawowicz 2002]. Fortunately, Polish cities during the socialist era usually retained their historical character and did not subdue to the passively imposed ideology [Węclawowicz 2003].

The main goals of the *socialist city* (and therefore shaped largely by planned economy) – with respect to its urban structure – included settlement of people notwithstanding their own location and quality preference, monotony of architecture and unification of housing estates and excessive functionalization of spatial management, large empty or extensively used space in central parts of the city and areas with urban infrastructure which was an effect of ignoring the location value (in terms of the land price) and dominance – in investment policy – of large housing complexes in the outskirts of the city ignoring the need of repair of old areas and the development of social and commercial infrastructure [Węclawowicz 2002]. The above description should be complemented with the issue of planning quality of the socialist city structures. Sadly, very often the quality was low, since in post-war urbanization the key thing was the technical performance of structures for quick implementation of housing programs, and therefore a two-dimensional sketch of the plan instead of the shape of the space [Gzell 2003]. Upon introduction of market mechanisms and investment freedom the *socialist city* began to change quickly, however without becoming a classic *capitalist city*. One should rather speak about formation of a specific hybrid of both systems, the *post-socialist city*.

Specific transformation is also seen in the most sensitive areas – inner-city. Their intensity however depends on the economic success of the city in market economy. Equally important is transformation of a post-socialist city as a whole, especially with respect to the structure as a whole and anchoring (in the case of large cities) in the metropolitan structures. The trends may be described as development of urbanized areas with shrinking population within administrative borders, fast growth of zones located closed to urbanized areas and development of their network character, and growth of the dynamics of the functioning of the urbanized areas in a 24-hour cycle. In large urbanized areas we can also witness a downward trend in population of the central city and an upward trend in the surrounding cities [Markowski, Stasiak 2003].

A special form of physically perceived changes in Polish cities is the appearance of economically unused large areas of post-industrial, post-military, post-harbor and post-railway areas with areas often as large as 30-100 ha, for which there seems to be no new use. These often feature huge development potential both for their location and tradition of the place or significance for local identity [Mironowicz, Ossowicz 2005]. The phenomenon is nothing unique in the development of contemporary global cities – on the contrary – is it a sign of typical relocation or elimination of various structures losing their economic *raison d'etre*. A specific feature of Polish cities is that the discrepancy of functions and spatial management accumulated over a short time and – to a varying extent – concerns almost all cities.

Notwithstanding the above-described structural changes, the key importance in shaping the new contemporary and future appearance of a post-socialist city is the appearance of the middle class. Social and ownership transformation cause growing

residential segregation in the city structure according to the financial criterion. Areas having a poor social status or bad environment conditions or poor labor market availability are being deserted by more mobile population. Another new element of post-socialist urban space is also location of shopping malls, including hypermarkets and supermarkets [Lorens 2005]. The differentiation of the commercial and service offering in Poland runs at a high speed.

The above-described transformation of a Polish city, also the creation of a specific “post-socialist city” model, reflects a global trend of developing a new spatial structure model of global exchange network hubs – the global cities. The city model of the global era with its specific spatial structure will shortly become widespread and become a model for development of key urban centers participating in the exchange network – and surely some Polish cities.

However, not all cities undergo that process. Many of them – also the aspiring “global cities” or those whose development conditions do not allow to start competing on the domestic or European or global market – are being transformed into individual “oases of happiness” with a slightly calmer lifestyle compared to metropolitan centers. This choice, however, entails a different programming and demographic profile, the different identity of local community, and last but not least – a different investment potential and the buying power of the market.

5. Main processes and challenges in the context of metropolization and reurbanization of cities

Based on these considerations one could list a range of main processes of different scales, referring to urban development and transformation. In particular, this concerns supralocal processes and urban and local phenomena.

Supralocal processes may include:

- Crossing the borders – development of “functional areas” and relations with the region.
- Creating regional functional systems” – relying on the use of certain infrastructure or resource.
- Creating regional specificity, also using the potential of various centers.
- Creating supralocal links at the expense of regional and local ones.

However, with respect to urban phenomena and processes, the following should be mentioned:

- A liberal development model (albeit recently increasingly contested).
- Degradation and – progressing on a piecemeal basis – renewal of urban structures.
- Suburbanization and transformation of suburban areas – “enriching” of the porous suburban structure.

- Creating new solutions and systems – a sector-like approach.

On this basis, we can also define many local processes across individual “places” in the city:

- The interest in the “identity of the place” as a determinant of many local activities.
- Renewal, intensification, transformation, regeneration, renovation – many processes taken in parallel.
- Shaping and development of public space.
- Development of participatory processes – often accidental.

Conclusions

Conclusions about the spatial structure of the city as a whole may become a summary of the discussion on defining space management. The key element is the need to work out and implement the policy of building a compact city to save “rare good”, which is space. This means a need to take up three types of groups of activities leading to:

- integration of the urban development policy and complex management of the development of metropolitan areas;
- stopping the urban sprawl – commonly called suburbanization;
- the development of regeneration of degraded urban structures, and as a consequence, creation of an alternative placement of the new urban program for suburban areas.

The conclusions are of particular importance for urban regeneration – the renewal of urban structures such as introduction of new elements of the program to the already urbanized structures. The concept concerns the need to introduce environment-friendly solutions – also those minimizing different threats and increasing the efficiency of management of natural resources.

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