

FROM THE EDITOR

The political breakthrough in 1989 set in motion a range of processes that would fundamentally transform the organisation and function of spatial systems across Central Europe. After more than two decades of profound socio-economic and environmental transformations, *Geographia Polonica* has now initiated the publication of comprehensive papers dedicated to the above-mentioned issues. The Editor's intention is to publish a collection of papers on the theme, "Central and Eastern Europe a quarter of a century after the fall of the Iron Curtain: The outcome of change". The papers will cover the comprehensive analyses and evaluations of the phenomena, processes, and patterns that emerged in the post-communist EU member states. We want this volume of *Geographia Polonica* to be the best possible review of the current state of knowledge on the transformation across the region. In particular we would like to receive answers to the following questions:

What major features, trends and patterns of the transformation can be identified at different spatial scales? Can these be used to offer more general patterns, models or concepts?

What avenues were followed by a change in the functioning and development of the various sectors of the economy (including agriculture, industry, services, trade, tourism, finance, etc.), aspects of the social structure (biological, educational, occupational, etc.) and how researchers evaluate these changes from the point of view of policies on the development and planning of systems of territorial organisation?

What changes occurred within the mechanisms of functioning, forms of activity and specific spatial, structural and functional features and properties of socio-economic systems, for example in terms of settlement systems, spatial mobility, international migration, demographic structures (including the ageing of societies and depopulation of peripheral regions), functional interlinks, transport networks, daytime urban systems and labour markets, the urban-rural relationship, deindustrialisation, tertiarisation, social activity, etc?

What are the outcomes of the transformation in terms of quality of life and living standards and trends in their impact on the natural environment?

Given the broad scope of the central theme, it is only natural that the papers in this volume can hardly address all the possible aspects and problems. The dispersed studies have frequently been carried out with the use of diversified methodologies that are difficult to compare. Yet, the studies do not allow for a comprehensive and overall evaluation of different processes in some of the problem areas. It is significant that except for a few 'sectoral', fragmentary attempts (eg. a spatial adaptation of industry by T. Stryjakiewicz, or a theory of the post-socialist city by G. Węclawowicz), no exhaustive, complex theoretical concept has yet been developed that could explain the process of spatial transformation after 1989, in various spheres of human activity.

The current volume of *Geographia Polonica* features seven papers devoted to the

problems of socio-economic transformation occurring in the Central-East European countries. The first study is by Maciej Smętkowski (University of Warsaw) entitled "Spatial patterns of regional economic development in Central and Eastern European countries". The author attempts to provide the most up-to-date information about the basic processes associated with socio-economic polarisation and economic convergence, responsible for differentiation in the regional structure of the CEE countries. Findings from this research are not unequivocally clear, however the convincing arguments strongly support a hypothesis for the overall convergence process that takes place in particular countries. Nonetheless, one of the most important findings is that there exists a hierarchical diffusion of foreign capital from higher-order regional centres to the lower-order cities. This diffusion can avert the observed spatial disparities in development. The subsequent paper is entitled, "Control functions within large cities and foreign direct investment in the transport sector: Empirical evidence from Poland" by Zbigniew Taylor and Ariel Ciechański (Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization PAS). This paper is an attempt to prove the leading role of major logistical, economic, and transport corporations in Poland, as well as to find overall regularities in this regard. The author's conclusions seem to confirm the findings obtained by M. Smętkowski, because in spite of the high spatial concentration and the core-periphery model, there are some indications of a spreading of corporate headquarters. This spreading can be interpreted as a trend toward the reduction of regional disparities, at least in relation to the system: Warsaw - other metropolitan centres. It is difficult to predict whether this trend will be effective and long-lasting. Another paper, "Structural changes in Polish industry after 1989", prepared by Tomasz Rachwał (Pedagogical University in Kraków), provides strong arguments which confirm that regional disparities still remain an unresolved problem. The principal goal of the paper was to present those transformations taking place

with regard to the ownership, branch and spatial structure of industry of Poland. The article deals with the question of how the processes of industrial restructuring, undertaken during the years of economic transformation, contributed to adaptation of Polish industry to the market economy and to improvement of its competitive position in global and European levels. The potential for integration with global industrial networks is explored. This paper provides the foreign reader with a most exhausting and topical review of research results, as well as the most important findings related to spatial-economic processes going on in Poland after 1989.

Another paper, "Monitoring of changes in road accessibility at the municipality level in Poland, 1995-2015", presented by Piotr Rosik and Marcin Stępnik (Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization PAS), mainly concerns the problems of regional development. The authors offer strong evidence that due to facilitated transport accessibility, a decrease of regional disparities is noted. This observance is rather cautiously signalled in the aforementioned papers. The dominant 'paradigm', frequently employed in debates on regional disparities, is thus challenged. These debates often point out that polarisation and spatial disparities increase or at least still remain at the same level. It was an admittedly conscious choice to restrict the study to only a single country. Poland made a very good, 'clinical' example. In a relatively short period of time, Poland made considerable efforts to make up for a catastrophic technological and civilisational backwardness in road transport. Research results concerning the relationships between regional development and transport development in Poland, may provide conceptual and theoretical foundations for formulating more generalised conclusions.

Ewa Szafrąńska (University of Łódź) evaluated the effects of transformation in the residential housing sector. The paper is primarily dedicated to residential housing constructed using the industrial, prefabricated (large-panel) technology ("The transformation of large

housing estates in Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of communism"). The overall major problems associated with the changes going on in residential housing areas are represented. The paper's central objective is to identify those changes taking place during the residential housing transformation. The key factors shaping transformation of large housing estates from socio-demographic, economic, and social dimensions are pointed out. The study is based on comprehensive findings in the literature on the subject. For this reason, the study can be treated as a review and as a research model. The study provides us with extensive information about the processes involved in the transformation of large residential housing estates in Central-European countries after 1989.

The title of the next study is "Twenty-five years of humanising post-socialist housing estates" by the authors from Masaryk University and Palacký University, Olomouc in Czech Republic (Petr Šimáček, Zdeněk Szczyrba, Ivan Andráško, Josef Kunc). This paper and the previous paper complement each other. The authors deal with the social aspect of transformations, aiming *inter alia*, at pinpointing the special need for humanising post-socialist housing development. The article shows how the phenomenon of humanising housing can effectively increase the quality of life and improve the functioning of different civic amenities.

At the end of the main part of the current volume is the paper by Lucyna Przybylska (University of Gdańsk) and Izabela Soljan (Jagiellonian University). This paper concerns the very usual occurrence of giving a sacred character to space (landscape) in Poland as a result of the growing attention paid to the 'Polish Pope' - John Paul II (1978-2005) ("John-Paul-the-Second-isation' of the cultural landscape in Poland"). This paper brings new insights into the evaluation of social transformation taking place after 1989, in Central-East Europe, especially in Poland. Generally, it is the reverse phenomenon - desacralisation, that results from changes in the social attitudes to the Roman

Catholic Church. These changes are primarily caused by modernisation and the adoption of western cultural principles. From this point of view, the study by L. Przybylska and I. Soljan seems to be particularly interesting. The choice made to place this paper at the conclusion of the main part of the volume has a symbolic meaning, since it shows the meaning of individuals in social life and spatial transformations. Also this is a tribute paid to human geography.

After these seven main contributions, it was decided to include two other studies which supplement the main material from socio-economic geography. The first one is a research note by Piotr Eberhardt (Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization PAS) under the title "A vision for a future Europe according to a Russian map of 1914". Although this study reaches back to past history, i.e. to the years preceding World War I, it actually touches upon modern times, in the light of the recent geopolitical events in this region of Europe. This study compels us to analyse the ongoing processes with great deliberation and in the long-term, historical perspective. What we have observed in the two decades is only a part of socio-economic history. Whereas the map and the description prepared by the author of this Editorial ("Economic control functions in Poland in 2013") reveals quite a characteristic and even, in a certain sense, the symbolic current situation in Poland. Firstly, the ownership structure of the largest companies, with foreign corporations playing the dominant role in many regions, is described. Secondly, the hypertrophy of Warsaw where the headquarters of major companies are concentrated, is discussed. These factors carry serious ramifications for socio-economic development. Papers revolving around these problems will appear on many occasions in the future in *Geographia Polonica*.

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