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SOME REMARKS ON ECONOMIC BASE OF URBAN SETTLEMENTS IN METROPOLITAN AREAS OF POLAND

1. INTRODUCTION

Present-day mechanisms of socio-economic development of space, determined by the emergence of information-based society, technological advances and economic globalisation, created new conditions for Polish towns and regions. There is an ongoing spatial concentration, involving, on the one hand, enhanced growth opportunities for large cities and their peripheral areas, and on the other – expansion of international exchange. These change are accompanied by the process of metropolization, which is an embodiment of the concept of flexible spatial structures¹. Flexibility is a factor making it possible for regional

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¹ K. Kuciński, T. Kudłacz, T. Markowski, Z. Ziobrowski, *Zintegrowany rozwój aglomeracji a konkurencyjność polskiej przestrzeni*, Wyd. Komitet Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania Kraju PAN, Studia Vol. CXI, Warsaw 2002, p. 50.

structures to adapt to changing internal and external conditions (macro-spatial, national, international and global), and to eliminate or reduce spatial conflicts and development barriers.

What is still lacking in Poland, however, is the full awareness of the value of space, characteristic of developed European countries. Other, equally important deficiencies are superficiality and short-sightedness of the planning system and spatial economy². The quality of urban space largely depends on the manner of managing the metropolitan area within which a given city is functioning. Regrettably, local governments in Poland not always fully realize what their roles and tasks are in this respect. For example, there is no widespread tradition of public-private undertakings. Therefore globalization in Polish cities does not appear to be a safe, beneficial process. Today it mostly means a more intensive inflow of not the best models of arranging city space. Our towns may become areas of expansion of speculative capital, seeking to gain fast profits at possibly lowest cost, at the risk of their potential future degradation. The status of Polish cities as European cities is at stake.

2. ECONOMIC BASE – FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

The functional structure of a city and its economic (export) base are among major factors determining urban space today. This conception was first formulated in the early 20th century by Sombart³, a German economist. He defined a city as an economic phenomenon and a territorial community. He also argued that in order to function effectively and to develop dynamically, it must import food and other goods. Thus the economic base of the city consists in its inhabitants and those elements of their activity which make it possible to pay for the necessary imports⁴.

No contemporary city can function in socio-economic space in isolation from other towns, cities etc. They are all connected to form an internally linked system of towns – regions. A city provides goods and services to a larger or smaller surrounding area. These ties, being a manifestation of complementarity

² D. Kochanowska, M. Kochanowski, *Polskie miasta w procesie globalizacji. Studia Regionalne i Lokalne* nr 1(1)/2000, Wyd. Europejski Instytut Rozwoju Regionalnego i Lokalnego Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warsaw 2000, p. 47–53.

³ For more see W. Sombart, *Der Moderne Kapitalismus. Bd 3: Das Wirtschaftsleben in Zeitalter des Hoch-Kapitalismus*, München-Leipzig 1928, part 1, p. 399–423.

⁴ K. Dziewoński, *Koncepcje i metody badawcze z dziedziny osadnictwa*, „Prace geograficzne IG PAN” nr 154, Wyd. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich we Wrocławiu, Wrocław 1990, p. 124–131.

and spatial interactions, result in major settlement forms created by present-day urbanization – agglomeration, conurbation and megalopolis – which are in a state of permanent development and change.

Their development is taking place in three ways⁵:

- agglutination⁶, i.e. adding new spatial units, to existing settlement structures in a dispersed manner;
- emergence of new towns of various types;
- formal incorporation of specially designated and prepared new areas within municipal boundaries.

Anyway, regardless of the mode of transformations occurring in the settlement network one thing is certain – each urban unit is a system of interacting elements, having an in-built growth mechanism. According to the economic base theory, this system is comprised of two complementary types of activity. The first group encompasses those activities which are driven by the need for contacts with the external world. The second type of activities is necessary for the functioning of the town itself⁷.

A part of the inhabitants of a given area are engaged in production of goods and delivering services to local population and to external areas. This means that they also work for export (hence the term “export base” used in literature), and their work results in inflow of money to town. This group constitutes the exogenous sector (basic sector) in the town’s economy. The revenues generated by the exogenous functions of the settlement unit are used to import those goods and services which are not produced or delivered internally, but are essential for the functioning of the urban organism. Thus, activities oriented to the external market are *raison d’être* of a city the source of its revenues and basis for growth – its economic base. Another group, equally important for the existence of the city, comprises activities providing goods and services for internal

⁵ S. Liszewski, W. Maik, *Wielka Encyklopedia Geografii Świata*, Vol. XIX, *Osadnictwo*, Wyd. Kurpisz, Poznań 2000, p. 273.

⁶ This concept is taken from biological sciences, where it denotes the clumping together of dispersed cells. In the settlement context it is significantly affected by the transport network. Railway or bus routes are factors very favourable to new centres location. Agglutination of new settlement units to public transport routes results in urban expansion in the form of star.

⁷ See S. Illeris, *The role of service activities in regional development: Western and Eastern Europe*, [in:] *Urban and regional management in countries in transition*, (eds) M. Chatterji, R. Domański. *Studia Regionalia* nr 5, Wyd. PWN, Warsaw 1996, p. 267–285.

consumption⁸, but as they do not generate inflow of external capital, they belong to the non-basic sector⁹.

According to the main hypothesis of the export base theory, economic growth of a city depends on the level of its export activity, i.e. on effective demand external to the city for the goods and services produced by its resident population¹⁰. Based on this model, there is a distinction between revenues from export activities (basic activities) and from activities which meet a demand internal to the area, i.e. supply the resident population (non-basic activities). The basic sector, by providing export functions, creates the foundations of the economic growth of a city. The non-basic sector depends on the level of activity in the basic sector. The greater the sphere of influence of the city's exogenous functions, the greater the growth level, potential, and role in the regional or national economic system¹¹.

A proper model of the export base needs to present a detailed picture of the relationships and integrations that occur in the city's economy. Figure 1 clearly shows the interrelationships between the basic and non-basic groups of activities. For the exogenous sphere to function properly it is essential that the city has the right level of development and the right structure of the endogenous sphere, i.e. residentiary activities, considering the existing productive capacity, production relations and consumption model¹². It is thus a mistake, for which this theory has been criticized, to favour the basic (export) activity at the expense of non-basic activity, which is frequently the case if the theory is understood too narrowly. It is the residentiary functions performed by the non-

⁸ In literature on this subject different terms are used to denote these sectors. The exogenous sector is referred to as city-forming, basic or primary, and the endogenous sector – as local, non-basic, secondary, services, complementary, etc.

⁹ Some authors take a different approach to defining primary and secondary activity. For example L. H. Klaassen argues that the fact that a given enterprise, city or region is exporting while other centres are importing does not mean that they are produced by the given centre – they may as well be imported. It follows from this argument that it is not important whether a given entity is exporting or not. What is important is whether it can export or not. The very capability for exporting is sufficient reason to regard the activity of this entity as basic activity. For more see L. H. Klaassen, *Bieguny wzrostu w teorii i polityce ekonomicznej*, [in:] *Planowanie rozwoju regionalnego w świetle doświadczeń międzynarodowych* (ed.) A. Kukliński. Wyd. PWE, Warsaw 1974, p. 93–96.

¹⁰ See B. Gruchman, *Bariery rozwoju w teoriach wzrostu regionalnego*, [in:] *Bariery wzrostu w gospodarce przestrzennej*, Biuletyn Komitetu Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania Kraju Polskiej Akademii Nauk, nr 99, Wyd. PAN KZPK, Warsaw 1978, p. 14–16.

¹¹ For more see A. Dąbrowski, *Wybrane teorie rozwoju regionalnego i ich znaczenie w polityce ekonomicznej*, [in:] *Dylematy i osiągnięcia polskiej polityki transformacji gospodarczej*, (eds.) H. Ćwikliński, G. Szczodrowski, Wyd. Uniwersytet Gdański, Gdańsk 1995, p. 207–208.

¹² K. Kuciński, *Podstawy teorii regionu ekonomicznego*, Wyd. PWN, Warszawa 1990, p. 23.

basic sector that determine the quality of life of the resident population, as well as create infrastructural foundations for export activities, so it is wrong to attach undue importance to the latter group¹³.

Fig. 1. Economic base model

Source: author's elaboration based on S. Illerist itd., ed. M. Chatterji, itd. pp.279

3. EXPORT BASE AND URBAN FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE

The development of the market economy in the countries in transition and the accelerating process of globalisation have created a new context for the functioning of the entire settlement system. The changes that are currently taking place and their effects on the functional structure of small towns already are clearly discernible. The systems operating on areas of intensive industrialisation are undergoing radical transformation both in its functional and spatial aspects. The rate and direction of these changes depends, among others, on such factors¹⁴ as: the character of the area's existing functional and spatial structure, type of new growth-driving functions, size and location of raw-materials base, and adopted conception of local and regional development.

The functional sphere is changing most rapidly. As a result of the accumulation of functions new ones are emerging, some connected with the traditional functions, and some completely new. In many towns, especially old towns, there is an ongoing process referred to as succession of functions – successive replacement of functions in the dominant position. Occasionally the older central functions (e.g. agricultural or industrial) are entirely replaced by modern functions, suitable for the requirements of the economy identified with Schumpeter's fifth wave¹⁵. This process, defined in literature as mutation of functions, can occur in two situations¹⁶:

– where old function disappear, to be replaced by new (e.g. use is made of the hitherto unused resources or locational potential created by the industry that had been developed in the area);

¹³ J. Regulski, *Ekonomika miasta*, Wyd. PWE, Warszawa 1982, p. 52–53.

¹⁴ S. Liszewski, W. Maik, *Wielka Encyklopedia Geografii Świata*, Vol. XIX, *Osadnictwo*, Wyd. Kurpisz, Poznań 2000, p. 313.

¹⁵ See D.F. Batten, B. Johansson, *Dynamics of Product Substitution*, [in:] *Advances in Spatial Theory and Dynamics* (eds) Å.E. Andersson, D.F. Batten, B. Johansson, P. Nijkamp, Studies in Regional Science and Urban Economics nr 20, Wyd. Elsevier Science Publishers B.V. North-Holland-Amsterdam 1989, p.1–44.

¹⁶ K. Kuciński, *Podstawy teorii...*, p. 83.

– where old functions (types of activity) still exist, but have lost their primary importance in favour of new manufacturing activities, thus becoming secondary exogenous functions or residentiary activities.

The new basic functions consolidate the set of settlement units into one integrated, efficient system. Communities that had hitherto been stable and homogenous are transforming into heterogeneous communities with a high proportion of immigrant population. These changes are followed by changes in the morphology of individual settlement units and in the spatial structure of the settlement network and other network-type systems.

It should also be noted that the degree of openness is related to the size of the area and regional community. The smaller the size and the community, the higher the degree of openness and employment in the basic sector. As the town grows, the internal division of labour usually increases and the number of people employed in non-basic activities increases, too, which results in business exchange being increasingly carried out within the limits of the region. J. Ślodziak argues that in a city of 1 million inhabitants the basic/non-basic employment ratio is 1/2¹⁷. It is also assumed that ten new jobs in the basic sector lead to an increase in the work force by 30 people (10 in the basic sector plus 20 in non-basic activities) and a still greater increment in the city's population, because increase in the level of basic activities leads to the increase of total activity within the area. Thus determination of the size of the basic and non-basic activity groups in settlement units allows their functional structure to be defined and highlights the dual role of the economic base theory in this respect:

- it helps identify cause-effect and other relationships in the process of urban development, thus substantiating the claim that export functions of a city contribute to its rise and growth;
- it provides a theoretical foundation for the analysis of the functional structure of a city.

It is also important to note that cities having a diversified economic base with more than one city-forming function are more resistant to the impact of adverse changes in business climate and thus not as susceptible to stagnation as towns with only one dominant function. It is so because the functional structure of a city reflects its situation in geographical space, i.e. its relations with its immediate and more distant environment. It therefore follows from the economic base theory that the greatest threat to urban growth is the decline of the dominant industry or withdrawal of the investor on whom depends the economic development of the settlement unit. That is why specialists recommend diversification of the economic base. Numerous examples in the past decade,

¹⁷ J. Ślodziak, *Przestrzeń miasta i jej przeobrażenia*, Studia i Monografie nr 298, Wyd. Uniwersytet Opolski, Opole 2001, p. 66.

both at home and abroad, show that specialization processes in cities are accelerating, while the role of export functions constituting, as Jacqueline Beaujeu-Garnier defines it „the city's profession, its *raison d'être*”, is decreasing¹⁸.

Moreover, due to the effect of contemporary processes (such as integration, internationalisation, globalisation, development of knowledge – and information – based society, and intensification of networking) on the economic structure of the city, urban functions can increasingly be divided into specialized (city-forming) and standard. This refers to both the basic and non-basic sectors. Generally, specialized basic functions are developing more quickly, especially if they are carriers of technological progress and begin to dominate the standard functions. Specialized basic functions increase the town's sphere of influence and enhance its economic openness, particularly in the case of small towns, while standard basic foundations coincide with the functions of major urban centres. Functional specialization is also taking place in the non-basic sector, but to a much lesser extent. This process enhances the town's identity and stimulates the need for cooperation and exchange with other towns, which leads to creation of closer socio-economic links.

4. TRANSFORMATION OF SMALL TOWNS' EXPORT BASE POTENTIAL ACCORDING TO MODERN PARADIGM OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SPACE.

The world of today is functioning as a self-regulating system (as in communicating tubes). The development of mass transport, information revolution, and elimination of barriers to international exchange create a strong foundation for a growing depolarisation between societies and economic structures on an unprecedented scale¹⁹. Hence the main economic megatrend at the turn of the 20th century has been transition from national economies to a global economy. This results in increased intensity and range of international economic ties, as well as in changes in the spatial structure of the global market and economic potential²⁰. The need to formulate a new paradigm of regional

¹⁸ B. Rychłowski, *Struktura regionu ekonomicznego*, „Przegląd Geograficzny” vol. 39, nr 1, Wyd. PWN, Warszawa 1967, p. 53–58.

¹⁹ K. Karcz, *Proces dyfuzji innowacji. Podejście marketingowe*, Wyd. Akademii Ekonomicznej im. Karola Adamieckiego w Katowicach, Katowice 1997, p. 47.

²⁰ J. Kołodziejwski, *Strategiczna koncepcja przekształceń polskiej przestrzeni a wyzwania cywilizacyjne XXI w.*, [in:] *Współczesne problemy rozwoju regionalnego* (eds) T. Marszał,

development (reformed to as holistic, systemic, ecological or networked) is a result of radical structural transformations and new trends in socio-economic development of space, the most clearly discernible and generally recognized being²¹:

- Globalization, in the form of progressing interdependence and integration of national economies on a global scale;
- Acceleration of scientific and technological progress through recognition of the primary importance of such factors as knowledge, research and innovations;
- Growing awareness of the environment, which is recognized to be an important element internal to the enterprise, not external it;
- Key role of networks, being the result of information revolution, decentralisation tendencies and search for synergy effects;
- Dynamic development of higher order services as a result of metropolization.

The new situation of the market economy is often characterized as a new game, new rules or new strategies²². Each of these phenomena is an important factor determining modification of the way the export potential is made use of, especially in the case of small town, which due to its position in the surrounding space has more barriers to overcome in its development process than large metropolises, which constitute global links in international networks and take advantage of their nodal position.

Analysis of basic functions and external effects connected with the export potential shows that basic activities mainly develop as a result of absorbing external economies arising outside the urban system. These economies arise in consequence of the growth of the metropolitan area or region, the resultant market expansion and other effects, mainly external demand and external supply²³. They can be defined as 1st order external economies, because they guarantee development as such.

The external endogenous effects are also absorbed by the basic activities. These in turn generate external effects, which are partly retained within the town and in part transmitted to the external environment. The town thus becomes the

M. Opalło, Wyd. Komitet Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania Kraju PAN, nr 180, Warszawa 1998, p. 62.

²¹ I. Pietrzyk, *Paradygmat rozwoju terytorialnego* [in:] *Gospodarka przestrzenna i regionalna w trakcie przemian* (ed.) W. Kosiedowski, Wyd. Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 1995, p. 13.

²² L. Thurow, *The Future of Capitalism. How Today's Economic Forces Shape Tomorrow's World*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London 1996.

²³ *Miasto i jego władze. Studia nad ekonomiczną teorią rozwoju miast*, (ed.) J. Regulski, Wyd. PAN Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich Wrocław 1984, p. 61.

generator of economies external to its environment, so exogenous activity generates the above mentioned external, i.e. endogenous effects, and effects absorbed outside (i.e. by the environment), which might be called external exogenous effects. The external exogenous effects can also contribute to the increase of external macro-economic benefits to other towns or, more broadly, the entire economy.

Adaptation of small towns to the requirements of the market economy, beside the development of the service functions, will require new industrialization that will correct the shortcomings of the imposed socialist model of industrialization. Another factor affecting change in the character of the exogenous potential of Polish towns is integration with the urban system in uniting Europe. Harmonization of national urban systems in the European Union countries, despite changing configurations of links and emergence of hierarchical structures, is well under way and should also affect the Polish urban system. Towns in Poland need to adapt speedily and to secure good position in urban hierarchy. This is a process that largely determines the well-being and standard of living of the population, and in consequence the attractiveness and innovativeness of the economic base.

What should also be expected is that the degree of success in economic development will vary among urban settlements in Poland. So far it is the large metropolises with diversified functional structures that have derived most benefits from socio-economic transformations, while the losers are mostly small towns situated in economically depressed areas and monofunctional industrial towns. It is thus necessary to ensure that the process of polarization of economic benefits is not progressing so dynamically.

Future economic and social development of small towns in Poland depends on investment attractiveness of the metropolitan areas in which these towns are functioning. Research on investment attractiveness of towns in a market economy environment has a cognitive as well as utilitarian character. It also has the role of a self-fulfilling forecast. Research of this type stems from various researches into the functional structure of towns, typology and classification of the quality of life, etc.

When observing the phenomena which occur in the course of accelerating globalization processes, it can be reasonably expected that the existing differentiation will persist, or even deepen. Towns with already good competitive position (in the class of small towns) will increase their economic potential and enhance their investment attractiveness. The system of links between economic entities, market and the sphere of education will be significantly strengthened, as well. A question arises, however, to what extent developed small towns will contribute to positive changes in the metropolitan areas in which they are located. Experience of developed countries participating in globalization processes suggests that it is not only metropolises that generate

growth in surrounding areas, but also smaller settlement units situated in a given settlement system. This is due to exhaustion of resources in leading regions, the need to find new space for economic development, expansion of business, innovation diffusion and development of infrastructure of national importance. All these actions are often taken in the basic sector and strengthen its economic potential, often changing its character. Changes that have for three decades been taking place in the mechanisms of global economic growth have significantly modified the proportions of exo- and endogenous potentials of settlement units. Two processes seem to be of particular importance in this respect²⁴:

1. Change in the growth pattern, namely reduction of the role of resource - intensive industries in favour of services and so called knowledge - intensive industries;

2. Decentralization, consisting in diminished role of the state in managing growth processes in territorial systems, which is connected, among others, with the shrinking scope of the so-called welfare state.

In view of the above analysis it should be emphasized that the economic base of small towns will be improved through its modernization and integration into networked systems. Chances for dynamic growth are greater if network-type organization dominates in the metropolitan area rather than territorial organization, which means links, territorial openness, selectiveness, flexibility, nodes and tendency to decentralized ties, interpenetration, accessibility, formal and informal ties, micro- and macro-convergence and direct participation without the agency of representatives and intermediaries. Through collaboration, i.e. creation of networks of connections, towns acquire new skills (learning) necessary for conducting business activity, creating effective growth programmes and securing beneficial contracts, and create social capital, which is becoming an increasingly important driver of economic growth. However, in order that the growth potential of a metropolitan area can be used to full advantage, both the central city and the smaller towns should be surrounded by fairly well developed areas. Only those urban areas which not only have a well-performing central city, but also an environment fully integrated with it will achieve a leading position. Therefore it can be stated that exogenous potential should be regarded as a factor determining the development of the socio-economic structure of urban settlements. If this potential is weakened or significantly reduced, it can become a barrier to the growth of a given spatial unit, and in consequence lead to the disappearance of its growth-generating functions. Therefore, only those areas which make most effective use of internal

²⁴ G. Gorzelak, *Zewnętrzna interwencja jako czynnik rozwoju lokalnego*, [in:] *Studia regionalne i lokalne* nr 3/2000, Wyd. Europejski Instytut Rozwoju Regionalnego i Lokalnego UW, Warsaw 2000, p. 100.

resources and externalise them with the aid of the latest achievements of science and technology can count on achieving success.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis carried out above indicates that urbanization is one of the most striking features of present-day civilization. This process naturally has both positive and negative effects, but it unquestionably creates a new reality, called by some “the planet of cities”²⁵. The interrelationships between small towns in metropolitan areas are not yet strong enough to justify their being regarded as significantly affecting the process of socio-economic growth of the entire area.

Nevertheless, if necessary steps are taken aimed at development of a networked settlement system, it will be possible to meet the requirements of the modern global economy and will improve the competitiveness of Polish cities and their surrounding areas at the national and international level. Intensification of networking will also strengthen the export base of small towns, which, specializing mainly in services provision, should become the driving force of development processes. Competitive economic base of small towns, affecting their associated hinterlands, will contribute to the development and modernization of the basic activities in other territorial units functioning in the settlement system of a metropolitan area. There is a significant role for local governments in this respect – they should support these phenomena by actions aimed at efficient and fast convergence of development in the entire area.

To sum up, functional integration resulting from economic cooperation, hierarchical relationships and networking and advances in information technology is conducive to development of internally cohesive systems within the framework of metropolitan areas. The processes of spatial integration have a similar effect, and in extreme cases may lead to complete merging of previously isolated urban organisms and in consequence to the emergence of an integrated settlement system.

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²⁵ D. Szymańska, *Nowe miasta w systemach osadniczych*, Wyd. Uniwersytet im. Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, Toruń 1996, p. 5.

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