

Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis

Studia Geographica V (2014)

Agnieszka Kwiatek-Sołtys, Krzysztof Wiedermann

Spatial structure transformations in small towns in view of rehabilitation and gentrification processes

Abstract

During the time of centrally controlled economy Polish cities were shaped by processes and structures typical of a socialist state. When changes in the economic, social and political system in Poland begun, Polish cities and towns entered a transformation process.

The aim of the paper is to answer the question whether and to what extent spatial transformations of small towns in Poland show symptoms of gentrification. Authors analyse the problems of towns genesis, population changes, changes in the spatial and functional structures of towns as well as the modernization of the central districts of small towns in Małopolska Province. In view of present changes that take place in the structures of small towns in Europe and the widely undertaken actions towards the revitalization of small towns' centres in Poland, the authors attempted to analyse spatial, economic and social transformations in the light of wider processes of gentrification, however at the present stage of development of small towns it is difficult to speak of gentrification processes itself.

Key words: gentrification; Małopolska; rehabilitation; revitalization; small towns; spatial and functional development

Introduction

During the time of centrally controlled economy Polish cities were shaped by processes and structures typical of a socialist state, characterized by centralization, which significantly reduced the powers of local governments. This led to a subordination of urban space to ideological priorities. As a rule, urban area was industrialized or filled with residential units that were in line with the egalitarian city concept (Węclawowicz, 2003). When changes in the economic, social and political system in Poland begun, Polish cities entered a restructuring process. Introduction of market economy mechanisms, return of land rent and decentralization changed the methods of organization and management of urban space. The number of entities competing for urban space increased. Another significant factor affecting the transformation of urban space was the land ownership situation of urban areas and buildings (Kwiatek-Sołtys, 2010).

In this study, the authors attempted to answer the question whether and to what extent spatial transformations of small towns in Poland show symptoms of gentrification. Therefore, it seems important to elaborate on the concept of gentrification and on its changing meaning in the literature. Traditionally, gentrification was understood as the process of the middle class and upper class taking over buildings abandoned or inhabited by the working class, gradual rehabilitation of those buildings and the process of degraded or threatened by degradation fragments of inner-city areas being consistently transformed into areas inhabited by the middle and upper class and not showing any symptoms of degradation (Smith, Williams, 1986). The positive effect of gentrification is a significant improvement in the quality of urban space in these areas, while the negative effect, from the point of view of the society, is the significant change in the population structure caused by ousting the households with lower incomes (Jadach-Sepioło, 2007).

Contemporary processes of gentrification described in the literature referred to the big cities of the world and have not yet been widely discussed in the context of small cities. Some authors have limited the occurrence of gentrification to largest metropolitan cities in post-communist countries such as Prague (Matlovic, Ira, Sykora, Szczyrba, 2001), while noting that this process often occurs in the inner city and less frequently in the historical city core.

Limitations for the development of small towns' gentrification result from the lacking or significantly low incidence of certain functions characteristic of large urban centres. Such functions may include, for example, presence of a university, which promotes processes of gentrification. There is already a separate term for this phenomenon in the literature – studentification (Murzyn-Kupisz, Szmytkowska, 2012). Studentification is a spatial concentration of students (also in dormitories) that affects the cultural landscape of the city. And the concept here is not whether students are “quartered” in one place (e.g. in the city centre), but whether their presence adds color to the city. Therefore, a question arises whether the presence of students in some parts of the city can promote the processes of revitalization. Examples of Hamburg or Dresden show that the presence of students in poorer districts resulted in revival, increased security and more colorful appearance of those districts. On the other hand, there is often a tendency to create university campuses on the outskirts of large cities. At the same time, small towns in the immediate functional range of the metropolis offer more affordable and often better accessible accommodation for students.

In view of present changes that take place in the structures of small towns in Europe and the widely undertaken actions towards the revitalization of small towns' centers in Poland, the authors attempted to analyze spatial, economic and social transformations in the light of a wider processes of gentrification. Urban renewal in cities, including the smallest towns, may in fact result in starting the process of gentrification (Jadach-Sepioło, 2009), which can have particularly severe social effects in the case of small towns.

Demographic changes in small towns of Malopolska

The study group of small towns of Malopolska province includes 47 entities (2013). It is a very diverse collection of urban entities, in terms of origins, population size and dynamics, area, and functional and spatial diversity. All these elements have an effect on contemporary changes occurring in urban space.

Among small towns of Malopolska province, the oldest one is Stary Sącz, which received city rights in 1260. Other towns dating back to the thirteenth century include Skała, Kęty, Wojnicz, Nowe Brzesko, Miechów and Zator. A large group of small towns (17 entities) received city rights in the fourteenth century (including Wadowice, Myślenice, Biecz).

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, 6 small towns were founded in this area, the largest of which today is Limanowa. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the network of towns had expanded by 7 new entities (Sucha Beskidzka, Szczucin, Ryglice, Maków Podhalański, Niepołomice, Alwernia, Krynica Zdroj), and yet another one, Krzeszowice, received city rights before the World War II.

The post-war political and economic changes have led to the creation of nine new towns, almost all of them with specialized functions (health resort and recreation: Rabka-Zdrój and Szczawnica, industrial functions: Brzeszcze, Bukowno, Chełmek, Libiąż, Sułkowice and Świątyniki Górne).

Not all of the above-mentioned small towns in the province of Malopolska had urban functions continuously. Eight of the investigated towns lost their city rights in the nineteenth century or in 1934 and then regained those rights in the 1980s (Skała in 1986), 1990s (Alwernia in 1993, Nowy Wiśnicz in 1994, Ciężkowice in 1998) or even in twenty-first century (Czchów in 2000, Ryglice in 2001, Zakliczyn in 2006 Wojnicz in 2007, Szczucin and Bobowa in 2009 and Nowe Brzesko in 2011). The results of towns existing without their city rights, often since 1869/1870 or even since the 1930s, include the loss of urban functions, low rate of economic growth after World War II, the weakening role of the centre, etc. On the other hand, the process of restitution of city rights can be interpreted as a sign of increased economic and social activity of town's residents and authorities. As a result of changes associated with the development of industry, location of new industrial plants and construction of new housing estates, the centre of some cities shifted towards those developments. Such a situation can be observed in Alwernia, where the former market square serves only as a historic place today.

The size of the population is another factor influencing the differentiation of social and spatial transformations in cities. On the one hand, small towns have a quite homogeneous structure in this respect, however, the development of a town in size category up to 5,000 residents is different than the development of a town with population close to 20,000. The functional and spatial structure of larger urban entities is generally more diversified, although there are many homogeneous cities in this group in the Malopolska province, in which industry was the only basis of

economic development for many years (e.g. Libiąż). Another important factor is the dynamics of population, which often reflects the current condition of small towns.

In terms of population size, the largest of the investigated cities is Wadowice. Wieliczka exceeded the threshold of 20,000 inhabitants in 2010, thus formally becoming a medium-sized city. The group of the largest small towns of Malopolska province includes Kęty, Myślenice, Libiąż, Brzesko and Limanowa. The smallest urban entities in the region, not exceeding 5,000 inhabitants account for 38.3% of all small towns, with Zakliczyn being the smallest one, with a little more than 1,600 people. The smallest towns are the newly created ones or towns with restored city rights (Rajman, 2000–2001).

It should also be noted that in more than one-third of the cities studied there is a negative population growth, and in another 17% the population size is in stagnation. The process of depopulation occurs in very different entities. Reduction of population is noticeable in towns with various functions, especially in industrial cities like Bukowno, Wolbrom, Libiąż or Brzeszcze, or in the spa resort of Krynica Zdrój. Population decline can also be observed in multifunctional cities such as Wadowice and Kęty. The process of depopulation or stagnation occurs in urban entities with different geographical locations. It applies to both towns with agricultural function located north of Kraków (stagnant Proszowice, Słomniki, Miechów), and to towns with peripheral location (e.g. Wolbrom). This process is even visible in towns under the metropolitan influence of Kraków, e.g. Krzeszowice. Although in the years 2004–2012 the rate of population growth in Krzeszowice was 101.5, since 2008 the town recorded a continuous reduction of population, and only a slight increase in later years, which may, however, be only a statistical change, resulting from the different method of collecting data on permanent and actual place of residence of inhabitants, introduced by the Central Statistical Office. Stagnation and decrease of population in many of these cities can be caused by people moving to neighboring areas located in rural parts of municipalities.

At the other extreme are cities with increasing population. These entities are small towns located within Krakow metropolitan area (Niepołomice, Dobczyce, Świątniki Górne, as well as Wieliczka – not included in this analysis). In this regard, Niepołomice outdistances other towns (its population growth rate in the period 2004-2012 reached the level of 129). Świątniki Górne in the Wieliczka county took the second position in this ranking. It is located only a few kilometers away from Kraków, in the geographically and scenically attractive area of Wieliczka Foothills.

Today, the direct cause of the above mentioned disparities in population dynamics is mainly migration (Kwiatek-Sołtys, 2011). More than half of the surveyed cities represent depopulation types under Webb typology. Although twenty-one cities in the period 2010-2012 belonged to the development type (A-D), 10 of them are cities representing type A, so despite the negative net migration, the still/ traditionally positive population growth put those towns on a better position (e.g. Bobowa, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Czchów, Dąbrowa Tarnowska), as it was the case with depopulating towns of type H located in the southern part of the region (e.g.

Limanowa, Muszyna or Piwniczna). Moreover, it seems that in the case of small towns low net migration does not directly reflect the low attractiveness of the city due to the often favorable conditions for settlements and for building a new home (opportunity to purchase a larger parcel) in an area that is adjacent to the city but still formally rural area. This direction of development is indicated, for example, by changes taking place in Krzeszowice (the attractive Tenczynek).

However, for the entire group of small towns in the province of Malopolska it can be concluded that housing construction in these towns is of no significant extent. In terms of new dwellings completions per 1 thousand inhabitants, the clearly distinct first position is taken by the often mentioned Niepołomice (13 dwellings per 1 thousand inhabitants). Another town with a high rate is Myślenice (10 dwellings per 1 thousand residents in 2007). Locating the new housing on the outskirts of cities, away from the compact city buildings, which can be observed when analysing the distribution of multifamily housing (property developers housing), often exacerbate spatial chaos, increase the cost of both creation of new infrastructure and continued maintenance of the city.

Processes of modernization and gentrification

Transformations of internal functional and spatial structures in the light of gentrification processes should be considered in the *core-periphery system* (Baldwin, 2001; Borgatti, Everett, 1999; Freeman, 1979). The development of peripheral areas in some small towns also occurs in external areas associated with the development of rural areas adjacent to the small town. This phenomenon, referred to as *urban sprawl* (Brueckner, Fansler, 1983; Brueckner, 2000; Brueckner, 2001) developing spontaneously often aggravates the already existing spatial chaos and leads to excessive straggling of the small town, with undeveloped spaces often located in the central area or in its immediate vicinity. This process often makes peripheral areas more attractive to residents, although they are often areas unequipped for investment, lacking adequate technical and social infrastructure.

On the other hand, many towns are working on making their central districts more attractive (Kwiatk-Sołtys, 2007). Market squares and central areas are being redeveloped (Fig. 1). Studies suggest, however, that at the moment these changes apply only to the physiognomy of cities and do not entail any changes of functional or social nature. In small towns, there are clearly visible manifestations of unsustainable development, which, at the spatial level, include uncontrolled urbanization, architectural disorder, low construction standards, consolidation of unfavourable land ownership structure, lagging infrastructure for urban development, etc. (Markowski, 2009) as well as "unsuitable flexibility of management principles in central area in view of the need to introduce new, highly variable functions and the lack of adequate instruments to encourage efficient use of areas of the central zone" (Markowski, 2009). As noted by professor Markowski, unsustainable urban development is also reflected in the social sphere by depopulation of central areas of

cities, land speculation and inefficient land use in central zones, deficiencies in social infrastructure of urbanized areas.

Present activities of local authorities often result in an intensification of this process. Numerous investments in urban public space and infrastructure, investments for organization of residents' leisure take place in areas external to the city centers. Redevelopment of down town areas, often carried out simultaneously, causes limitations for the development of central functions in these areas. It is also the result of limiting the vehicular traffic in city centers and transferring it to ring roads bypassing down town. This process is often accompanied by moving of sales and service activities to areas with better transport accessibility. Transformation processes observed in the centres of small towns are further accelerated and strengthened by locating small shopping malls and large stores on the outskirts of towns. This is another factor limiting the attractiveness of the centre of the small town, whose "life", every day contacts and meetings of its residents were historically dependent on trade in the market square (Polko, 2013).

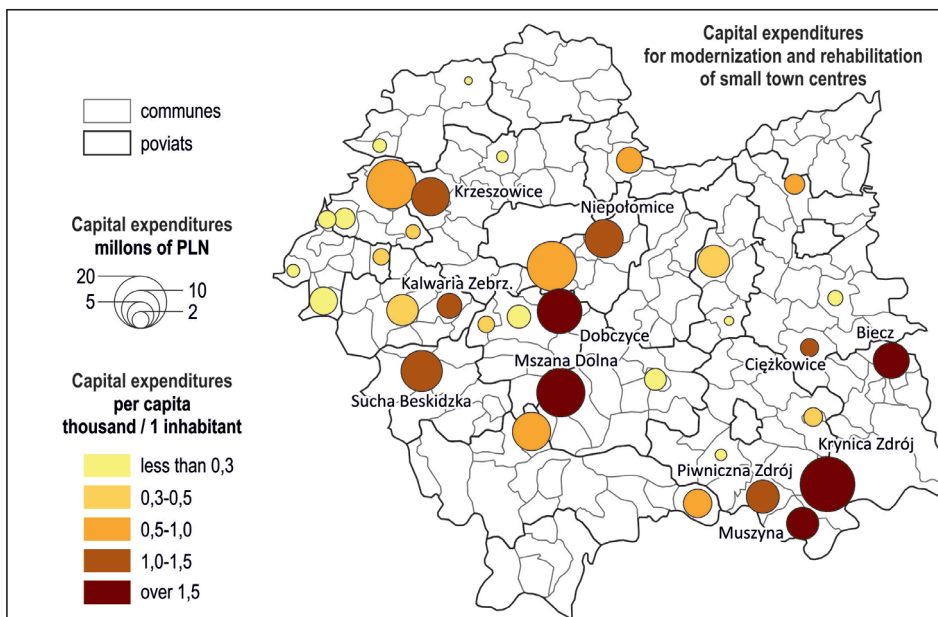


Fig. 1. Capital expenditures for modernization and rehabilitation of small town centers in Malopolska province in the years 2004–2012

Source: own study

Therefore, projects of modernization and renovation of market squares or central areas that are currently implemented in small towns cannot really be called a revitalization process, despite the fact that individual subsidized projects usually operate under this name. There are of course positive examples of full revitalization

process, where, after modernization of the area, a number of recurring artistic performances and cultural programs were introduced to attract residents and sometimes even visitors to the area (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Modernization and rehabilitation of Krzeszowice market square

Source: photo by A. Kwiatek-Soltys

Nevertheless, there is a long way from the fully implemented process of revitalization to gentrification of an area. This process is particularly difficult in small towns where the more affluent population usually lives in residential neighborhoods that are often located not far from the centre of the town. From the point of view of those residents, multi-family tenement buildings located in the centre do not seem to be attractive for residential purposes. It is hard to expect an exchange of population even after a thorough revitalization of the area. It should be expected that, even in the long term, processes of gentrification occurring in small towns in the province of Malopolska will be at most isolated cases and limited to less affluent population moving out from individual buildings located in the centre. But even in these cases it will be rather related to the location of new central functions (hotels, restaurants and offices) but not residential functions. Such situation has already taken place in Niepołomice (Fig. 3), where after the resettlement of people from the Royal Castle located in the centre and after the renovation of the castle, it was turned into a hotel, offices and showrooms of a museum.



Fig. 3. Modernization and rehabilitation of Niepołomice castle as an example of gentrification processes

Source: photo by A. Kwiatek-Sołtys

For Malopolska region, it should also be noted that some small towns have not yet begun to implement revitalization programs, thus not all entities are illustrated in Figure 1. This map shows investment expenditures made before the end of 2012. In some towns such as Zakliczyn investments in revitalization of the centre begun only in 2013. Other towns have planned to implement such investments in the near future. There are also cities (Maków Podhalański or Jordanów) with ready concepts and revitalization projects but they postpone their implementation until the construction of bypasses for the main roads running through market squares. In these cases it is not possible to speak of potential gentrification at this stage.

Conclusions

The analysis of the processes of modernization and revitalization taking place in small towns in the province of Malopolska presented in this article allowed the authors to formulate the following conclusions regarding potential processes of gentrification.

At the present stage of development of small towns it is difficult to speak of gentrification processes. Many investments made by local governments cause the historic central areas to lose their urban functions. New investments in urban centers usually improve aesthetic qualities of the area, but this is usually not sufficient for the location of new functions.

Housing emerging in areas peripheral to the town centre attract more entrepreneurial and mobile population, however, this population often seeks employment in larger cities. Residential substance of central areas often forms municipal housing resources that are inhabited by less affluent parts of the local community, and older, settled residents of small towns.

References

- Baldwin, R.E., (2001). Core-periphery model with forward-looking expectations. *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, 31, 1, 21–49.
- Borgatti, S.P., Everett, M.G. (1999). Models of core/periphery structures. *Social Networks*, 21, 375–395.
- Brueckner, J.K., Fansler, D. (1983). The Economics of Urban Sprawl: Theory and Evidence on the Spatial Sizes of Cities. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 55 (August), 479–482.
- Brueckner, J.K. (2001). Urban Sprawl: Lessons from Urban Economics. *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs*, 65–97.
- Brueckner, J.K. (2000). Urban Sprawl: Diagnosis and Remedies. *International Regional Science Review*, 23 (April), 160–171.
- Freeman, L.C. (1979). Centrality in social networks: I. Conceptual clarification. *Social Networks*, 1, 215–239.
- Jadach-Sepiolo, A. (2007). Gentryfikacja miast. Problemy rozwoju miast. *Kwartalnik Naukowy Instytutu Rozwoju Miast*, 3.
- Jadach-Sepiolo, A. (2009). Gentryfikacja w kontekście rewitalizacji. In: A. Zborowski (ed.), *Demograficzne i społeczne uwarunkowania rewitalizacji miast w Polsce*. Kraków: Instytut Rozwoju Miast, 125–135.
- Kwiatek-Sołtys, A. (2007). Place and role of the centre in the spatial structure of a small town in Poland. *Moravian Geographical Reports*, 15(4), 31–36.
- Kwiatek-Sołtys, A. (2010). The land ownership and land use structure of small towns in Poland. In: *Developpent durable des territoires: de la mobilisation des acteurs aux demarches participatives*. Sixieme colloque franco-polonais, Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, Clermont – Ferrand.
- Kwiatek-Sołtys, A. (2011). Barriers and factors of growth of small towns of Poland. *Elsevier, Procedia*, 19, 363–370.
- Markowski, T. (2009). Polityka miejska państwa cele, priorytety, instrumenty. *Przegląd urbanistyczny year 1*, 1
- Matlovic, R., Ira W., Sykora L., Szczyrba, Z. (2001). Procesy transformacyjne struktury przestrzennej miast postkomunistycznych (na przykładzie Pragi, Bratysławy, Ołomuńca oraz Presova). In: I. Jażdżewska (ed.), *Miasto postsocjalistyczne – organizacja przestrzeni miejskiej i jej przemiany*. Łódź: University of Lodz.
- Murzyn-Kupisz, M., Szymtkowska M. (2012). *Procesy studentyfikacji w przestrzeni polskich miast: na przykładzie Krakowa i Trójmiasta. Konwersatorium Wiedzy o Mieście*. Łódź: University of Lodz.
- Polko, A. (2013). Impact of shopping malls on the functional and spatial structure of communes in the outer metropolitan zone. In: K. Heffner, M. Twardzik (eds.), *The impact of shopping malls on the outer metropolitan zones (the example of the Silesian voivodeship)*. Warszawa: Studia Regionalia, 37, Polish Academy of Science.
- Rajman J. (2000–2001). Sieć osadnicza województwa małopolskiego w okresie transformacji społeczno-gospodarczej. *Folia Geographica Ser. Geographica Oeconomica*, 31–32, 61–79
- Smith, N., Williams, P., (eds.). (1986). *Gentrification of the city*. Boston: Bo Allen and Unwin.
- Węclawowicz, G. (2003). *Geografia społeczna miast*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Agnieszka Kwiatek-Softys, Ph.D., Pedagogical University of Cracow, Institute of Geography, Department of Socio-Economic Geography.

The member of the Polish Geographical Society, graduated with a Master's and Ph.D. in Geography. Since 1993 working at the Institute of Geography of the Pedagogical University of Cracow, lecturing on the geography of settlement, urban geography and urban tourism. Author of the book 'Small Towns of Malopolska Province in Transition'. Author's research interests concentrate on issues related to the functioning of small towns, the place and role of small towns in the urban settlement system, the demography changes and the quality of life of small towns as well as the development issues of small district towns and also spa towns. The very recent works deal with the problem of land use and the ownership structure of land in small towns.

Krzysztof Wiedermann, Ph.D., Pedagogical University of Cracow, Institute of Geography, Department of Socio-Economic Geography.

The member of the Polish Geographical Society. Associate professor in the Department of Socio-Economic Geography at the Pedagogical University in Krakow since 2007. His research interests are focused on the issues of local and regional development, urban and regional economics, urban restructuring and industrial districts with particular emphasis on relocation of industry and services, foreign direct investment and instruments in support of economic development – the special economic zones, industrial parks.

Contact details:

Agnieszka Kwiatek-Softys:

e-mail: akwiatek@up.krakow.pl,

adres/address: Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny w Krakowie,

Instytut Geografii Zakład Geografii Społeczno-Ekonomicznej,

ul. Podchorążych 2, 30-084 Kraków, Polska (Poland)

Krzysztof Wiedermann:

e-mail: kwiederm@up.krakow.pl

adres/address: Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny w Krakowie,

Instytut Geografii, Zakład Geografii Społeczno-Ekonomicznej,

ul. Podchorążych 2, 30-084 Kraków, Polska (Poland)