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*RURAL AREAS – A NEW SPACE FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT*

## **OBSZARY WIEJSKIE – NOWĄ PRZESTRZENIĄ DLA ROZWOJU MIAST**

*Key words: rural areas, special transformations, special relations*

**Słowa kluczowe: obszary wiejskie, przekształcenia przestrzenne, relacje przestrzenne**

**Abstract.** The purpose of this article is to present the influence of rural areas on the development of neighboring cities. The process of writing the article involved familiarizing with the existing land development plans of the analyzed units in question as well as the mutual correlation between them.

### **Introduction**

Due to Poland's economic transformations, spatial, social and economic changes can be observed in those rural areas which are located in the vicinity of large cities. These changes involve the structure of land ownership, the type, size as well as the form of building developments, social and technical infrastructure and social structure and social ties. Furthermore, new kinds of investments and new forms of business activity have occurred resulting in job creation. Municipal facilities are setting up means of shaping spatial order.

As a result of these transformations, rural areas are becoming similar to cities in terms of functionality, spaciousness and architecture. And since the number and type of "relations" between the settlements in question are rapidly increasing, it is possible to claim that rural areas (in the vicinity of cities) are becoming a part of those cities. Due to mutual relations and connections, these centers are becoming codependent, thus leading to their integration. Rural areas are becoming a new place for the development of large centers, as that is where people migrating from cities settle, where entrepreneurs invest and where the city's tired population seeks rest.

The purpose of this paper is to present the influence of rural areas on the development of its neighboring city. A precise inventory which was carried out in the years 2005-2008 as well as an analysis of building and land developments of 30 rural units which are situated in the immediate vicinity of Poznan have allowed to accomplish the purpose of this paper.

### **The problems of urban spatial development (on the basis of Poznan)**

From the beginning of the year 1990 there has been a constant, growing migration of people mainly from central areas of the city of Poznan. As a result of multiple, inconsistent and ill-considered political and planning decisions these areas have undergone negative transformations.

In the area of the city centre, there are deficits and threats that hinder the performance of the basic functions of that area. The main deficits of the area are: disintegration of its spatial structure, the deterioration and degradation of its functional structure and depreciation of substances. In this part of the city which is marked with a higher than average level of urban unemployment and a higher population of people entitled to social assistance. There is an above average population decrease in relation to other areas of the city, as well as an increase in crime<sup>1</sup>.

The dangers of this area include: the degradation of historical and cultural value of the area, the loss of symbolic, spatial, functional and socio-economic importance of the area as a central element of the urban structure. The City of Poznan is losing its importance as a metropolitan area as a center of the city and as the national link with Europe which could contribute to inhibit the overall

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<sup>1</sup> The Municipal Council of Poznan.

development of the city.

The reasons for this are several. Almost the entire stock of buildings of the area, which dates from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, has been going through a gradual process of depreciation for about 50 years now, which has led to the loss of its value as a residential area and has helped to start the process of negative social selection. There has been an excessive and uneven development of utility functions in the city center, which have supplanted housing functions. Attractive and intensively used shopping centers, service centers and eating places which are visited by residents from outside of the city center as well as by tourists are being located there. The formation of such places is accompanied by collapse and ravage of residential functions. The quality of residential areas is going down. They are inhabited increasingly by the economically weak sections of society. These groups, isolated from the representative and attractive areas of the city center, are not able to engage in particularly strong ties and identification with all of its space. They are also unable to create spatial, historical and cultural values. The sense of identity undergoes changes. Attractive, aesthetically satisfactory areas and facilities are becoming significant. While the awareness of space and isolated and degraded facilities has been lost.

The central areas of cities are becoming less attractive, not only in terms of place of residence but also in terms of the location of investment. One reason for this is the lack of significant repair work. The lack of such renovations weakens the competitiveness of the old stock in the real estate market and the housing market. The real estate market in Poznan is developing in one way, as both Polish law and politics, followed by financial markets, support the new construction market unilaterally. Its development, calls for the old process of „filtering” [Bilert 2006], which is responsible for uninhabited apartments, a decline in the location value of old districts of the city and there is no repair action being done.

Most urban areas require repair, renovation, conversion. An investor only seemingly bears the costs of construction investments. He actually, transfers them to the buyer i.e. the user. Occupants of renovated houses who are not able to take on these costs have to leave those houses. The investor, even if he provides the tenants with new residential locations, destroys the hard-to-rebuild local community ties and the residents' identification with their current living area.

A phenomenon of land degradation and depreciation of space and buildings occurs within the city center. As a result inhabitants are leaving those areas which in turn has a negative effect on the key area of the city. Connected with this process are the negative socio-economic phenomena as well as a threat to existing and well-developed administrative functions, housing, cultural, scientific, and shopping and service companies. The city center is becoming a less attractive area of residence due to the excessive amount of emissions caused by congestion and old heating systems or the existence of an all-navigable sewage system. Also, a significant issue is the poor condition of the transport system.

The reason for this may be the political and urban decisions made in the 1970s which have led to the disintegration of the city center and the devastation of the areas of Ostrow Tumski, Srodka and Chwaliszewo, and the area around the Old Town, drawing along the Warta River. As a result, there has been a reduction in the population of this area within a few years by over 20,000 people<sup>2</sup>.

Apart from the city center, a further area which is not very attractive to live in, is the neglected district of the nineteenth century buildings. These areas are characterized by underinvestment of streets and buildings and a significant increase in social pathology. They are intensively developed areas where the nineteenth century destroyed dwelling house is not adequately filled with greenery. These areas are perceived very negatively by residents and visitors. Buildings of the above mentioned features can be observed in the vicinity of Glowna and Opolska Street, Chwaliszewo, Srodka, Lazarz, Jezyce, inside an abandoned postindustrial slaughterhouse and above all in the area of Wilda.

Certain processes are beginning to occur in the city which allow it to become more populated and densely built-up [Slodczyk, Klimek 2003]. There exist problem areas in which there is: disintegration of spatial structure, degradation of the functional structure, depreciation of housing, uneven development of its usable function, a decline of housing functions and the lack of repair work. A lack of building land and arduous public transport are also becoming problematic. The

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<sup>2</sup> Data from The Municipal Council.

prices of land and housing are increasing.

Unfortunately, a great deal of business activity in the scope of trade and services, job creation in the field of culture, science<sup>3</sup> and administration, and caring for green spaces or good public transport infrastructure may not be enough to change the decision about the location of investments. Investors opt for rural areas (near cities) as they are tempted by lower prices, availability of land for housing and the proximity of services.

### Spatial relations and linkages between cities and rural areas

Within the spatial arrangement of a settlement pattern there a stronger and stronger connection between the city and the outskirts - the countryside. As a result of certain spatial relations, rural areas are being absorbed by cities (not administratively), and thus the boundary between these units blurs. This connection (*annexio Lac.*) stems from the business activity in a market economy, urban trends and doctrines, making use of the natural landscape, the location (especially the availability of public transport), and the performance and availability of technical infrastructure and waste management. These factors give rise to relations that result in the merging of units adjacent to each other.

These relations, to a great extent, come from the way operators function in a market economy. The difficulties in obtaining appropriate sites in the city (with access to good public transport and at a reasonable price) make investors locate their projects outside the urban areas of investing, near beltways and major cities. Examples of location of business activity are areas along the national road E-30 in the district of Tarnowo Podgorne and national road No 11 (district of Suchy Las). Consequently, areas of business activity are being set up in rural areas near cities by independent companies and those companies which are organizationally and spatially connected with the parent company located in the center of the city. A market for goods and services, employee commute and administrative activity results in internal and external connections. Examples of companies implementing such „connections” include: Good Food, Printing Glos Wielkopolski (Skorzewo), Nordenia Poznan Poland (Dopiewo), Lidl Poland (Tarnowo Podgorne), Poz-Bruk (Sobota), Volkswagen (Suchy Las), and other.

Rural areas are beginning to become similar to cities, by adopting a typical urban way of land and building development. As a result of urban trends and doctrines the differences between cities and rural areas are blurred. Due to the speed, intensity and architecture of the newly built housing estates and areas of investment the border, which has always existed between rural areas and cities, has now been blurred. The requirements and preferences of customers, for example, concerning the size or shape of parcels, affect the shape of the investment, the organization, and thus the appearance of the newly built-up areas. The form and intensity of building developments close to cities is transforming the rural landscape in an urban one. The difference between what is rural and what is urban, which was once very visible, is now becoming blurred. Fields, previously used for agriculture, are now filled with residential buildings (housing estates) and other developments which are, by no means, associated with agriculture. Examples of non-country organizations of suburban villages are Kozięglowy (Czerwonak district), Przemierowo (Tarnowo Podgorne district), Kamionki (Kornik district), Plewiska (Komorniki district). As a result of the adopted trends in urban design, rural settlements are changing their look and are adopting urban features. Uniform and well-organized housing estates with a clear geometry of buildings and streets are being formed. There are also changes in the structure of buildings, in architectural details, woodwork and in items of ornamentation. Rural housing estates are often regarded as housing developments of cities. These areas are sometimes even joined by a network of public transport.

Very important factors in the development of rural areas which are located in the vicinity of large cities are the positive aspects of the natural environment. These are factors which bind these centers to the central city agglomeration. They integrate them through back and forth movements of city dwellers who wish to make use of environmental resources in the form of lakes and forests as places of a one-day rest or a weekend rest. Thus, they are seasonal, temporary, single or

<sup>3</sup> Own Research (the inventory of the Old Town area and part of the city center carried out in 2005 and 2009 allowed to determine the amount and type of business activity). Because this analysis was not considered the main topic the article does not bear it. Available for inspection.

collective movements. Rural areas provide the residents of their cities with the opportunity to meet their needs of recreation and leisure. However, the over-penetration caused by vehicles and pedestrians often leads to the degradation of that environment. Environmental degradation caused by penetration is a complex change, which manifests itself not only in the plant cover, but also the soil and subsoil. Because of the intensity and repetitiveness of the penetration certain changes and progressive transformations take place. The consequence of this type of relation is the evolution of rural areas into „consumption landscapes” (consumption landscapes).

Undoubtedly, from a social point of view, rural areas are the new city development sites. Residents of cities migrate to suburban areas, which are more attractive in terms of the location of residential areas, often located near large areas of forest such as the Wielkopolski National Park (situated on the south-western border of the city) and the Zielonki Forest (in the north-east) or larger water bodies such as Lake Kiekrz and Lake Lusowskie. The most popular locations for housing investments in the vicinity of Poznan are: Rogalinek, Sasinowo, Wiry, Rosnowko, Puszczykowo as well as Czerwonak, Kliny, Mielno, Annowo, Owinska, Potasze. Migration of the urban population from cities to suburban areas is dictated on the one hand, by an increase in residents' income, while on the other it is the result of the deteriorating technical condition and the progressive degradation of both residential buildings in the city's old central districts, and of settlements built of prefabricated concrete on the outskirts of the city in the 1960s and 70s (which has been mentioned earlier). The inhabitants of large cities are more likely to settle in suburban areas, with a better quality of the natural environment, and definitely lower (compared with the city) land and housing prices. The decision to migrate is backed up with the fact that the city is a close center of services, education, culture, health, entertainment and jobs.

The decisive factor influencing the spatial relations and intercity transport, and most certainly conditioning the development of the units is the availability of public transport. It often determines the choice of location of investments or business activity. Unfortunately, the current level of investments in the area of public transport in major Polish cities, and especially on the outskirts of these cities, makes it impossible to handle intensive shuttle traffic between settlements. These roads also take over national traffic and transit, with the result that there are many difficulties with road traffic. The towns situated near city exit routes which have the most business activity are of the following: Suchy Las, Swadzim and Przemierowo. They are also centers of intensive housing as a bedroom suburb of Poznan. For these reasons, the traffic towards the northern and western parts of the city is very intense and cumbersome.

A further element which binds the rural centers to the neighboring cities is the technical infrastructure. The complex network of roads, railways, waterways, telecommunication and power lines, intersect in rural areas, often causing negative consequences in the form of spatial fragmentation of space. Urban areas are also, almost entirely, dependant on the resources of drinking water, occurring in rural areas. There are protected water-bearing stratum, water treatment stations and retention basins which have a significant impact on the environment and the economy of rural areas. Also waste management provides a strong connection and dependency between the two units. Despite the fact that, it is recycled more commonly, still a significant amount of waste is stored in landfills located in rural areas. Solid waste from the city of Poznan and its suburbs is exported to the landfills, located in Suchy Las, Owinska, Bialegi, Oborniki, Swarzedz and Dopiewo<sup>4</sup>.

### **Threats to rural areas due to a functional connection with the city**

The relations and connections between settlements do not only have a positive nature. Rural areas undergo rampant and uncontrolled transformations. As a result of the multiple functional connections as well as the ill-considered and inconsistent administrative and planning decisions, these areas have been subjected to negative transformations.

For many years, starting in 1990, settlement units in areas located in the immediate impact zone of large cities, have undergone changes in the spatial structure, but also in terms of functions and management. Society was interested in inhabiting the outskirts of a city, on the one hand because it was close and fast to the downtown area, while on the other hand, because of the positive

<sup>4</sup> Source: ALTRANS – a company specializing in the export of solid waste in the municipal district of Poznan and the city of Poznan itself.

aspects of the natural environment. The public transport system in rural areas has been and continues to be based on the network of the city at which it is located while the system has been expanded to include a network of mass transport. Moreover, the impact of urban areas on rural areas is so big that the development of the city, the decisions of its authorities which are related to spatial organization and management or investment policy have an impact on the economy of the latter. The proximity of cities affects the specification of services, treating the market of the adjacent unit as a market outlet, and consumer base. In rural areas located near cities, trade becomes more diversified.

Of course unfortunately, there are disadvantages of such a location. Firstly, land is often used unreasonably for new investment, roads, parking lots, buildings – at the cost of the open areas, leading to degradation of nature. Secondly, the accumulation of buildings with no open spaces in its vicinity, increases building intensity, noise and pollution. Thirdly, the amount of waste destined for disposal increases and so does the number of commuters travelling from their place of residence to work or school.

The research towns were once areas of low building development intensity, dispersion of service establishments and a poorly developed public transport system. Now their spatial structure and functions have changed. The differences between the urban and the rural areas are blurred. The surveys<sup>5</sup> which have been carried out indicate that the respondents, when choosing suburban areas as their place of residence, were driven by prices, availability, environmental aspects, services, nearby recreational areas, the style of the buildings, the nuisance caused by the neighborhood, access to the network of technical infrastructure, transport connections to the city and even opinions about the area. Investors, however, wishing to start a business, were interested in: the subject of the legal situation of land management, the high supply of customers (demand in the form of residence), the shape and size of the parcel, the land, land prices, good local physiographic conditions, positive aspects of the landscape, the neighborhood, the efficient official procedures as well as the proximity of service companies.

Unfortunately, one can observe the worrying phenomenon of land development chaos in these areas, in the form of highly dispersed building developments, road repair work, blurred boundaries between built-up areas and open ones, spoilt landscape which has a damaging effect on tourism, the freedom of style, location and forms of buildings, all of which evoke an architectural cacophony. These phenomena give rise to „unpredictability” of space and the lack of attractiveness, thereby discouraging serious investors.

Land development plans for suburban area are being drawn up under the pressure of land owners or investors. As a result, dispersed development settlements are being erected which are not integrated with the settlement network that has been shaped by history. This occurs as a result of the violent disintegration and disproportionate development of a particular part of the settlement unit. The small distance between the capital of the region and the district centers have led to the creation of strong relations complementary in nature. Poznan is the regions major job market as well as a place where you can achieve your objectives, especially those related to fulfilling the higher needs i.e. education, health and culture. Unfortunately, there is a lack of proper transport connections between the various settlement units and shuttle movement to and from Poznan is not taken into account in the development of suburban areas.

As a result of intensive and rapid development there is an imbalance between the proportions of the various functions of the suburban areas (between urbanized and open areas). There is also degradation of the landscape due to intensive development. Panorama views and ecological corridors are becoming built-up areas, there are changes in the lie of the land, the levelling of the ground. The lack of structured landscaping, especially in the newly built residential neighborhoods reduces the attractiveness of the area.

Social problems arise, as the local community is not integrated, there are no social ties. A reduction in the quality of life becomes insufficient, and still there is the poorly developed social infrastructure (poor accessibility and low standards of services) and poorly developed technical infrastructure (arduous commute to and from work / school, the lack of surfaced roads, lighting, bicycle lanes, lack of sidewalks).

<sup>5</sup> Results of surveys conducted in the villages where the research was carried out.

Rural areas are not just Poznan's housing base, but they are also its recreational commercial and service base. They also have an ancillary function- especially for locating some investment issues (heat and power station, water treatment plants, water intake).

Until recently, the suburban zone was considered a region with good transport accessibility, where the friendly policy of the municipality contributed to creating areas in which the spatial, structural transformations as well as those connected with civilization, occur as a result of higher socio-economic activity. They are areas with the capacity for further development of housing and services in which access to open areas, green spaces and recreational activities is virtually unlimited. However, the closeness and the relations connected with it cause certain risks and deficits [Staszewska 2008].

### Conclusion

Rural areas which are located in the zone of the direct impact of a city, are becoming new spaces for its development. The changes which occur in those areas, namely, the functional, spatial and architectural changes, integrate the centers, yet the relations and connections result in co-dependency. As a result of these changes and relations there is uncontrolled rural development which leads to extensive, chaotic and uneven building development and dispersed functions, which in turn often leads to monocultures and functional spatial monotony.

However, we are unable to prevent cities from growing. Rural units located in the vicinity of a large city are influenced by it. The small distance between a city and its district centers has resulted in the creation of strong relations which are complementary by nature. Poznan is the regions major job market as well as a place where you can achieve your objectives, especially those related to fulfilling higher needs i.e. education, health and culture. Rural areas are not just Poznan's housing base, but they also perform a recreational, commercial and service function.

It seems vital to keep spatial order, and too provide well-thought-out spatial, structural and functional solutions. Only then will rural areas become both new, necessary spaces, as well as orderly and attractive ones in the development of cities.

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### Streszczenie

*Duże miasta borykają się z wieloma problemami: dezintegracją struktury przestrzennej, degradacją struktury funkcjonalnej, dekapitalizacją substancji mieszkaniowej, nierównomiernym rozwojem funkcji użytkowych, z zapożyczeniem i pustoszeniem funkcji mieszkaniowych czy brakiem remontów. Problemowym staje się również brak rezerw terenowych pod zabudowę mieszkaniową czy nowe inwestycje, występują uciążliwości komunikacyjne, zwiększa się cena gruntów i mieszkań. Na obszarach wiejskich te problemy nie występują.*

Dlatego, w wyniku pewnych relacji i powiązań przestrzennych, obszary wiejskie będące w strefie wpływu dużego miasta, stają się nową przestrzenią dla rozwoju większych ośrodków. Pojawiają się oczywiście zagrożenia wynikające z funkcjonalnego połączenia z miastem, jednak zależności są na tyle duże, że nierzadko zaciera się różnica pomiędzy tym co wiejskie a co miejskie. W opracowaniu ukazano znaczenie jakie mają obszary wiejskie dla rozwoju sąsiadującego z nimi dużego miasta.

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