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THE PROCESS OF URBAN SHRINKING IN POLAND

PROCES KURCZENIA SIĘ MIAST W POLSCE

ABSTRACT: Urban shrinkage is currently a problem of urbanisation processes that characterise the contemporary urban settlement network in Poland and in Europe. Current demographic forecasts of the Main Statistical Office point to a reduction in the size of Polish population. Along with the general decrease in the country's demographic potential, the number of people in cities will also drop. The process of urban shrinkage will continue in the future and will have a considerable impact on the development of the cities. The effects of this process are diverse and mostly negative. The main issue in the paper is the shrinking of the cities in Poland. The paper presents selected aspects of demographic situation of cities. The period of the analyses covers the years 1990–2014.

KEY WORDS: city, population, process of urban shrinkage

Introduction

Urban shrinkage is currently a problem of urbanisation processes in Poland and in Europe. Reorganisation of economy and systemic changes in Poland, and subsequently – the process of integration with the European Union – have affected the structure and dynamics of the changes in the population of the country, especially in urban areas. Significant demographic changes are occurring in cities. They include, among others, lower birth rates, ageing of society due to the extension of average life expectancy, changing attitudes towards procreation in the young generation, which result in decreasing birth rates or increasing migrations for economic reasons.

The purpose of this paper is to identify main symptoms of urban shrinking within the area of population changes. The author has characterised the current situation in Polish cities in the context of depopulation phenomena and presented the dynamics of processes observed in this respect. In this paper, the process has been narrowed

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down to population changes, since this is the most significant indicator on the basis of which the scale of the discussed phenomenon may be identified. The analysed period covers the years 1990–2014. This period seems sufficiently long for the author to be able to capture the image of population changes that have occurred in the cities since the beginning of the transformation.

The essence, reasons and consequences of urban shrinking

Urban shrinking is one of the significant socioeconomic and spatial phenomena that characterise the contemporary urban settlement network in Poland and in Europe.

The term of urban shrinkage is a multifaceted, complex and diverse term due to the reasons and results, that is why it is hard to identify in an unambiguous manner. The term of urban shrinkage should be understood as the process in which the population of a given territorial unit decreases, whereas it should be noted that there are various depopulation trajectories, various factors that shape this phenomenon and various consequences (Ewolucja funkcji..., 2012).

According to the definition adopted by Shrinking Cities International Research Network (SCIRN), a shrinking city is a settlement centre with large population density, with more than 10 thousand inhabitants, where the population decrease has been observed for more than five years, with the intensity of more than 0.15% per year. A shrinking city is also such an urban area which has been affected by a structural crisis as a result of the progressing economic transformation process. The result of such changes is a deteriorating situation on the job market and social issues in such cities (Kurczenie się miast..., 2014).

The most measurable result of the urban shrinkage is a decrease in population. However, it does not always point to the multidimensional regression of a city. Certain difficulties in defining the dynamics of urban shrinkage outside the statistical and demographic terms is determined by a lack of uniform measuring devices as regards the symptoms of multifaceted shrinking of the cities (Kurczenie się miast..., 2014). A lower number of the inhabitants of a city may be directly due to the following factors: migration and adverse demographic changes as well as negative birth rate. Along with the reduction in the number of inhabitants, various social, economic and spatial problems arise, which remain in cause-and-effect relationship with the former.

The reasons behind shrinking of cities are various and numerous; it is assumed that the basic issue is the crisis of the local economy, most frequently related to the collapse of the previous economic base (Zarządzanie rozwojem miast..., 2013). The structural changes in Poland since 1990 have led to the process of changes in the economic structure of cities. As a result of systemic and structural transformation of the country, economy has weakened considerably in many urban hubs. When Poland opened to global processes, economic backwardness in many cities was disclosed and consequently, it was necessary to restructure their economies. Liquidation or collapse

of many enterprises affected the change in the economic function of cities as well as the change of the previous spatial, social and demographic structures. Adjusting to new market conditions was particularly difficult in cities with monofunctional production structure, where traditional branches of industry still operated. Also cities with insufficiently developed third sector (i.e., trade and services) and a lack of proper technical infrastructure were in an unfavourable situation. Collapse of the previous economic base of the city was the reason behind increased unemployment, impoverishment of society, social segregation and marginalisation, which in turn has led to depopulation in cities (Kurczenie się miast..., 2014; Przejawy i konsekwencje..., 2015). It should be noted that the abovementioned factor is important in the process of urban shrinking, but does not always constitute the principal issue.

The phenomenon of shrinking cities may be perceived in two dimensions, as actual shrinking, which means that both a city and its surroundings experience depopulation at a given time, and as “ostensible” shrinking, where the decrease in population in a given city is compensated by an increase in population in its suburban area (Kantor-Pietraga, 2014).

Considering the duration of the reduction in urban population as well as its spatial range, three types of shrinking cities may be specified (Kurczenie się miast..., 2014; Uwarunkowania i konsekwencje procesu..., 2015):

- the situation of lasting reduction in the population of the city and its surroundings, due to the economic crisis in the city, confirms the occurrence of multifaceted urban shrinkage,
- short-term decreases in the population of an urban area point to the need to monitor the situation further,
- periodical fluctuations in the population size, observed only within the city itself, may point to the need to conduct further in-depth research, which may lead to conclusions on the suburbanisation tendency in the process.

The consequences of shrinking of cities are multifaceted, among others: demographic, social, economic, spatial, infrastructural or political. Urban shrinkage therefore impacts many areas in the city. Demographic consequences of urban shrinkage manifest themselves in a decreasing number of population in a city as a result of reduced birth rate and migration. On the other hand, migration from cities has an adverse impact on economic processes. As a result, the development is slowed down or the consumption market suffers regression, the job market is limited or the number of business entities is reduced. Due to the decreasing number of inhabitants, the demand for new accommodation drops. Although the demand for new buildings is lower, there is additionally a low demand for accommodation on the secondary market because of inheritance.

The process of shrinking of cities has an adverse impact on the financial condition of municipal governments. The income of depopulated cities deteriorates. This is manifested, among others, in a lower own income of cities, due to both migration of inhabitants and liquidation of taxes on business activities (CIT, PIT, local taxes).

Adverse changes in birth rate, along with migration, affect shaping of demographic structures, which is particularly visible in the age structure of the population. There are fewer and fewer children and adolescents under 17, while the number of people at retirement age is constantly increasing. As a result of the reduced number of inhabitants in cities, including the inhabitants in working and pre-working age, the demographic load increases, the society is impoverished and the pension system is overloaded. Ageing inhabitants of cities also mean an increased demand for health care and social services, which directly impacts the increased expenditure of local government units.

Depopulation processes also lead to lower population density, which results in the increased unit cost of urban functioning, particularly the cost of maintaining and developing any infrastructure and reducing the indicators of its exploitation. Adverse results of depopulation may also include weakening the base for commercial services, social infrastructure and public facilities (Czarnecki, 2011).

Reduced population in central areas of cities will lead to changes in urban space. The number of empty, uninhabited flats will increase, as well as the amount of degraded area and unused facilities; the value of real estate will drop, as will the interest in new investments, which will consequently lead to the perforation (defragmentation) and shrinking of spatial structures. Sometimes whole urban districts are depopulated, which definitely reduces the attractiveness of such an area. At the same time, in the suburbs, the "sprawl" process continues (uncontrolled expansion of built-up area). This is a bottom-up process, which introduces spatial chaos, as well as a series of other consequences.

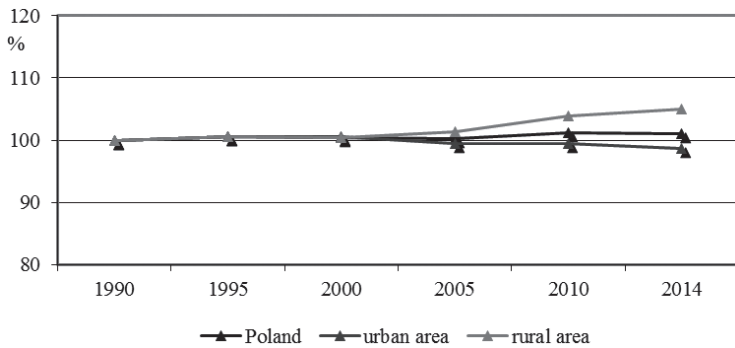
Shrinking cities in Poland are a diverse and complex phenomenon due to its reasons, consequences and spatial context. There is not one single model of urban shrinkage. In many cities, there is more than one reason for a reduction in population. This is why each city should have its own renewal strategy based on the specific social, economic and spatial context of the phenomenon.

Selected aspects of urban shrinking in Poland

The urban settlement network in Poland is subject to constant changes with varying dynamics and scope. The 1990s were a period of special changes in cities. In 2014, the settlement network in the country was composed of 913 cities of various sizes. Over 24 years, the number of cities in Poland has increased by 10.0%, (83 more cities than in 1990). Despite the increased number of cities, there followed a reduction in the urban population from 23 546 to 23 216 people. In the studied period, there was a reduction in the rate of urban population from 61.8% to 60.3%. It should be noted that in the studied period, the number of people in Poland slightly rose (by 1.1%), while the number of people in cities decreased by ca. 1.4% (1.5 percentage point), whereas in rural areas there was an increase in the number of people by 735 thousand, i.e. by 5.1 percentage point (Graph 1). The most important reasons that impact the current demographic

condition of Poland include migration (both internal and abroad) as well as lower birth rates. Internal migrations cause shifts of people within the country, between the city and the rural area. They do not cause a reduction of population, though; the number of people in villages increases, while in the cities it is reduced. Foreign migrations, on the other hand, cause a reduction in the number of people in the city and in the country.

Processes observed in the settlement network in Poland were of varying intensity.



Graph 1. Dynamics of population change in Poland in the years 1990–2014

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the Main Statistical Office.

It was a result of the changeable economic policy of the state as well as demographic changes. Spatial urbanisation systems were shaped differently in particular periods. In 1990, cities with fewer than 5 thousand inhabitants constituted 31% of all cities and held 3.4% of the total urban population. Between 1990 and 2014 the number of such cities increased; the share of the population of these cities in the total number of urban population also rose.

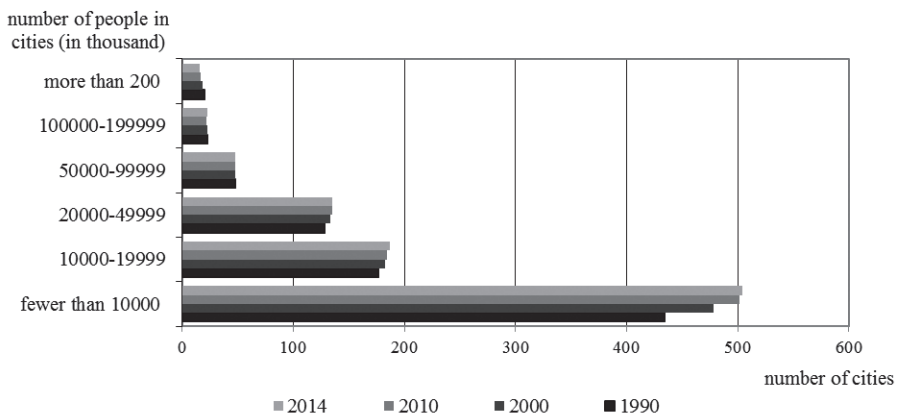
In 2014, the set of cities with 5–10 thousand inhabitants included 178 towns. These cities constituted 5.4% of the total number of cities in Poland. In this group, the increase was the slightest (1 more city in 2014 as compared to the studied base year). Equally small changes were observed in the demographic potential of these cities. In the analysed period, a slight increase in the population was observed in this group of cities, from 1 249.0 to 1 263.1 thousand. In the studied period, these cities were inhabited by nearly the same percentage of urban population.

A slightly better situation was noted among cities with 10 to 20 thousand inhabitants – their number increased by 10. Also the number of inhabitants increased by 162 thousand and the share of urban population in these cities in the total population slightly rose from 10.8% in 1990 to 11.7% in 2014 (Graph 2, Graph 3).

The settlement system in Poland at the end of 2014 included 135 medium-sized cities, from 20 to 50 thousand inhabitants. They concentrated ca. 15.0% of the total number of Polish cities, while their share in the total urban population was 18.1%. In the years 1990–2014, an increase in the number of cities from this group was observed.

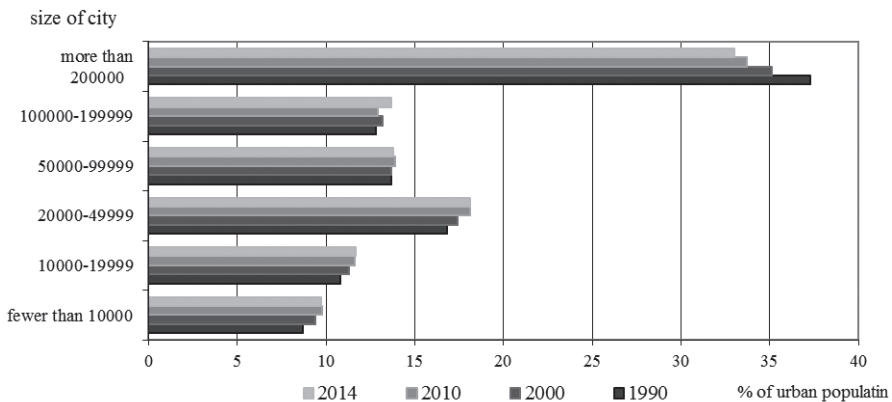
The number of inhabitants also increased from ca. 3 952.0 to 4 212.3 thousand. Also the share of the urban population in this group of cities in the total urban population rose from 16.8% to 18.1%.

What did not change, though, was the number of cities with 50 to 100 thousand inhabitants. In the analysed period, a slight decrease in the number of inhabitants in these cities was observed, from 3 221.0 to 3 213.1 thousand. It should be noted that the share of the population of these cities in the concentration level of the urban population in the country hardly changed at all. Similarly, in the researched period the number of cities with 100–200 thousand inhabitants did not change, while the number of inhabitants increased 3 004.0 to 3 170.3 thousand (Graph 2, Graph 3).



Graph 2. Distribution of cities according to the population in Poland in 1990–2014

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the Main Statistical Office.



Graph 3. Share of the urban population in size categories of the cities in Poland in 1990–2014

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the Main Statistical Office.

Large cities dominate in the settlement system of the country, especially cities with more than 200 thousand inhabitants. This group of cities includes:

- 5 cities with more than 500 thousand inhabitants (Warsaw, Krakow, Łódź, Wrocław, Poznań),
- 5 cities with 300–500 thousand inhabitants (Gdańsk, Szczecin, Bydgoszcz, Lublin, Katowice),
- 6 cities with 200–300 thousand inhabitants (Białystok, Gdynia, Częstochowa, Radom, Sosnowiec, Toruń).

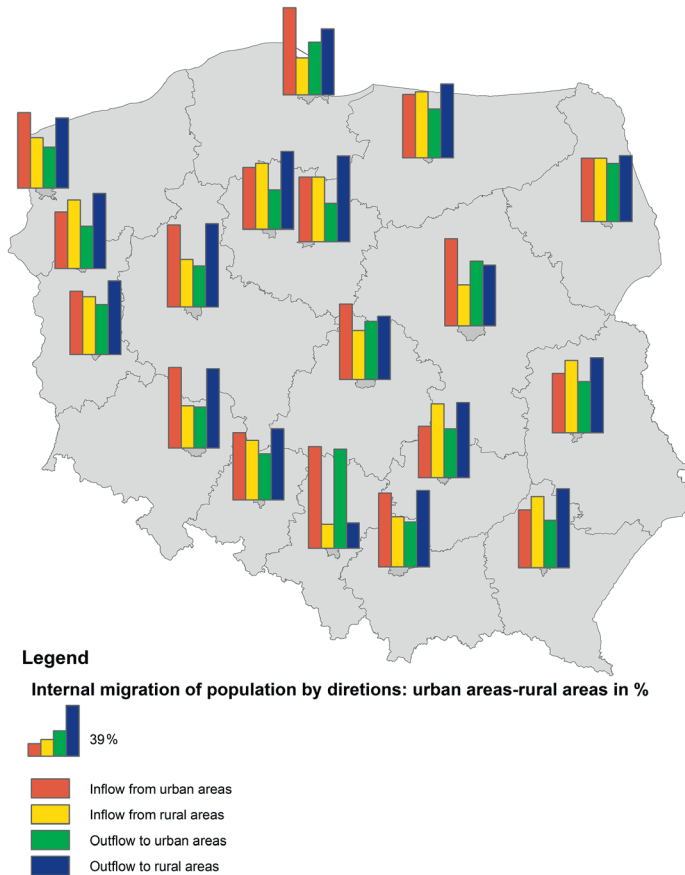
The weakened demographic dynamics since the beginning of the 1990s is expressly manifested in the largest cities, with more than 200 thousand inhabitants. With regard to this group, there was a reduction both in the number of cities and in the population. In these cities, the concentration of urban population dropped from 37.3% to 33.0%.

As mentioned before, the number of people living in cities is, among others, the result of varying birth rate and migration. In cities, these indicators in 2014 were negative, therefore they illustrate the reasons behind the reduced number of city dwellers. It should be noted, though, that migration shifts account for a decrease in population that is twice as large. The size of urban migration is affected by domestic, internal migrations between cities and villages: migrations from villages to cities (decreased significance of permanent migrations, in favour of migrations related to work or education) as well as the flow of people from cities to villages (the so-called *urban sprawl*). It should be emphasised, though, that the basis for the analysis of population shifts was a permanent change of residence. For a long time, urban areas experienced an influx of people, while since 2000, a reverse process has been observed. Currently, this phenomenon is visible particularly in the largest cities. This is so, because these cities experience the processes of population deconcentration, resulting from the suburbanisation process.

In 1990–2014, there was a visible change in the direction of the migrations. Until 2000, the dominant direction had been migration from the countryside to the cities. In the next years, the number of departures from the countryside decreased and from 2000 onwards, a reverse trend has been observed in internal migrations.

In 2001–2007, there was a visible increase in migration from the countryside to the cities and from the cities to the countryside, but it should be noted that the growth is more significant in the latter direction. The highest indicators of departures from the countryside to the city and from the city to the countryside were noted in 2007. The migration from the city to the countryside reached its peak at that point, i.e., 164.5 thousand people, whereas the migration from the countryside to the city reached the peak value of 116.6 thousand people.

Starting from 2008, a slight decrease in the migration from the countryside to the city has been observed, along with increased migration in the opposite direction. The previously dominant flow from the countryside to the city has been reversed. Since 2013, the indicators of migration in both directions have been decreasing. In 2014, the flow from the countryside to the city amounted to 98.6 thousand people, whereas the departure from the city to the countryside was 127.5 thousand people (Graph 4, Graph 5).

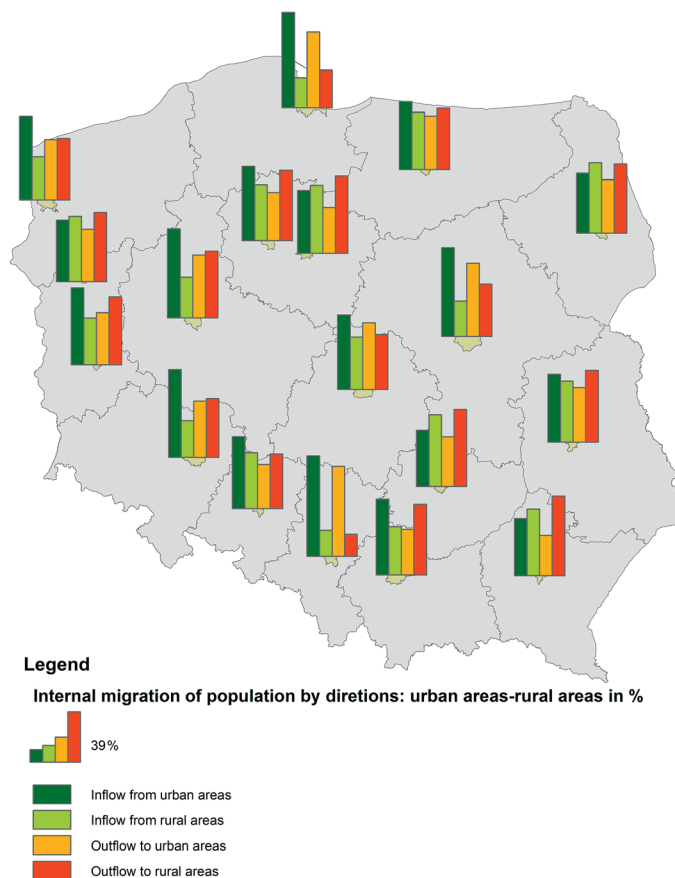


Graph 4. Internal migration of population for permanent residence by directions: urban area-rural area in 2000

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the Main Statistical Office.

In 2014, the birth rate growth factor in cities was negative mainly due to the lower number of births with the simultaneous higher number of deaths. In 1990–2014, the number of live births per 1000 inhabitants decreased, whereas the number of deaths increased (respectively: the number of births from 12.4 to 9.4; the number of deaths from 9.5 to 9.9) (Table1).

Depopulation concurs with changes in the population structure according to the economic age groups; depopulation means accelerated ageing, especially when it is due to migrations. The number of people in working and pre-working age decreases and the ageing process is intensified in society. Over the studied period, the population at pre-working age in Poland decreased by ca. 26% (in the cities – by 27%). It is also noted in the country that society is ageing and there is a constant growth in the number of pensioners. The process is complex and spatially diverse, and its progress



Graph 5. Internal migration of population for permanent residence by directions: urban area-rural area in 2014

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the Main Statistical Office.

depends on the stage of development of a given society. It follows from the data of the Main Statistical Office that at the end of 2014, in Poland, there were more than 7 305 thousand people at post-working age and the share of this group in the total population was 19.0% (in 1990 – 4 884 thousand and 12.8%, respectively). In the studied period, also in the cities, the rate of the eldest inhabitants increased. As compared to 1990, the number of people at post-working age grew more than twice (Table 1).

The demographic ageing process will continue, which is shown in the forecast formulated by the Main Statistical Office for the period until 2050 (Proгноza..., 2014).

In 2014, the demographic load of the urban population, as expressed by the number of people at non-working age per 100 people at working age, was on average 59 in cities and increased, as compared to 1990, by 29% (42 people at non-working age per 100 people at working age).

Table 1

Selected demographic data on cities in Poland

Details		1990	2000	2010	2014
Population	total in thousand	38 073	38 254	38 530	38 479
	including cities	23 546	23 670	23 429	23 216
Structure of population	pre-working age	6 600	5 307	3 998	3 876
	working age	14 209	14 984	15 302	14 568
	post working age	2 737	3 379	4 129	4 772
Number of people at non-working age per 100 people at working age,		66	58	53	59
Number of live births per 1000 inhabitants		12.4	8.9	10.3	9.4
Number of deaths per 1000 inhabitants		9.5	9.3	9.7	9.9
Birth rate per 1000 inhabitants		2.9	-0.4	0.6	-0.5
Migration per 1000 inhabitants		4.3	-0.9	-2.1	-1.8

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the Main Statistical Office

Considerable demographic changes will take place in Poland in the future. Current demographic forecasts of the Main Statistical Office show that by 2050 there will have been a general reduction in the population of the country (as compared to 2014 by 4 528 thousand, i.e., by approximately 12%), and at the same time, the share of urban population in the total population will have dropped. In the projection period, the share of urban population in the total population will drop from 60.3% in 2014 to 55.5% in 2050. At the same time, the age structure of the population is going to change. The group of young people in 2014 constituted 16.7% of the total population of the cities. By 2050, the number of people in pre-working age is expected to decrease in urban areas by 32%. With the decreasing total number of inhabitants, the share of elderly people in the age structure of the population will increase, while the number of children and people at working age will decrease.

In many Polish cities the first symptoms of depopulation have already been observed. While, at the moment, there are more than 23.2 million people in cities and in villages – ca. 15.2 million people, in 2050 there will be more than 15.1 million Poles in rural areas, and in cities 18.8 million (reduction by 19%). This will be the result of an uneven rate of dying. The reasons behind this situation include: ageing cities, lower birth rate in cities and intensifying suburbanisation processes, i.e., migration from cities to the country.

Considering, among others, the negative demographic trends observable in Polish cities, we can conclude that the process of urban shrinking has and will continue to have a significant impact on the city growth. Between 2000 and 2014, out of 39 cities with more than 100 000 inhabitants, 33 experienced a decrease in the population (Table 2).

Table 2

The dynamics of changes in population in the selected Polish cities

Cities with more than 100 000 inhabitants	Decrease/increase in population			
	2000/2005	2005/2010	2010/2014	2000/2014
Łódź Voivodeship				
Łódź	-3.9	-4.8	-3.4	-11.6
Masovia				
Radom	-1.5	-2.4	-2.0	-5.8
Płock	-0.9	-2.2	-2.0	-4.9
Warszawa	1.5	0.1	2.1	3.8
Little Poland				
Kraków	-0.3	0.1	0.5	0.4
Tarnów	-2.7	-2.9	-2.5	-7.8
Silesia				
Bielsko-Biała	-1.0	-1.2	-1.0	-3.1
Bytom	-4.0	-5.7	-2.8	-12.0
Częstochowa	-2.5	-3.9	-3.0	-9.1
Gliwice	-2.8	-5.8	-1.8	-10.1
Zabrze	-3.0	-5.1	-2.3	-10.1
Chorzów	-3.4	-2.5	-1.3	-7.1
Katowice	-4.1	-1.8	-3.1	-8.7
Ruda Śląska	-3.7	-2.1	-2.0	-7.6
Rybnik	-1.1	-0.4	-0.7	-2.2
Dąbrowa Górnicza	-2.1	-3.1	-2.1	-7.1
Sosnowiec	-3.6	-4.0	-3.5	-10.8
Tychy	-1.7	-1.3	-0.7	-3.6
Lublin Voivodeship				
Lublin	-1.1	-1.5	-2.2	-4.8
Subcarpathian				
Rzeszów	-1.4	13.0	3.3	15.1
Podlasie Voivodeship				
Białystok	0.9	0.8	0.4	2.2
Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship				
Kielce	-2.5	-2.8	-1.8	-6.8
Lubuskie Voivodeship				
Gorzów Wielkopolski	-0.3	-0.7	-0.3	-1.3
Zielona Góra	0.1	0.6	0.0	0.7

Table 2 contd.

Cities with more than 100 000 inhabitants	Decrease/increase in population			
	2000/2005	2005/2010	2010/2014	2000/2014
Greater Poland				
Kalisz	-1.1	-3.0	-2.1	-6.1
Poznań	-2.5	-2.2	-1.8	-6.3
West-Pomeranian				
Koszalin	-0.9	1.3	-0.6	-0.3
Szczecin	-1.3	-0.2	-0.7	-2.3
Lower Silesia				
Legnica	-1.6	-2.2	-2.0	-5.7
Wałbrzych	-4.0	-4.2	-3.7	-11.4
Wrocław	-0.7	-0.8	0.6	-1.0
Opole Voivodeship				
Opole	-1.7	-4.4	-2.5	-8.3
Kuyavia-Pomerania				
Bydgoszcz	-2.6	-0.4	-1.9	-4.8
Toruń	-1.0	-1.4	-1.0	-3.3
Włocławek	-1.6	-2.4	-2.6	-6.5
Pomerania				
Gdańsk	-1.1	0.5	0.2	-0.3
Gdynia	-0.2	-1.3	-0.7	-2.2
Warmia-Masuria				
Elbląg	-0.8	-1.9	-2.0	-4.6
Olsztyn	0.9	0.5	-0.9	0.6

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided by the Main Statistical Office

The greatest reduction in the population – of more than 10% – was observed in 6 cities, i.e., Bytom, Łódź, Wałbrzych, Sosnowiec, Gliwice, Zabrze. These cities were affected with a deep social and economic crisis as a result of the liquidation and restructuring of the so-called traditional industry.¹ The fact that the cities lost their exogenic economic base and therefore a large number of jobs were liquidated² resulted in the collapse of these cities along with a rapid decrease in the population. The cities – Wałbrzych, Bytom or Łódź – are among those which are shrinking the most in Poland.

¹ Łódź – textile industry; Bytom, Wałbrzych, Sosnowiec, Gliwice, Zabrze – heavy industry (coal mining, but also iron and metal industry, power industry, electronic industry, electric machinery).

² The unemployment rate in 2014 was as follows: Bytom (19.8%), Sosnowiec (13.2%), Wałbrzych (13.1%), Zabrze (12.5%), Łódź (10.7%), Gliwice (6.4%).

Urban shrinking as a challenge to the urban policy

Limiting the adverse effects of urban shrinking in Poland has been the subject of many debates for a few years now. It is very difficult to stop the urban shrinking processes, but it will be possible along with the introduction of deep changes in practice and adjustment of the approach to managing the development, space and spatial planning. The process of urban shrinking is multidimensional, therefore it requires that the authorities adopt a new perception on urban policy, on the principles of spatial planning and on the strategy of prospective targets. Overcoming the adverse effects of urban shrinking involves cooperation on different levels of public authority and local community, so as to develop comprehensive interventions involving the spatial, legal, functional, social and physiognomic structure.

The state policy responds to depopulation, among others, through the Concept for Spatial Planning 2030, the National Strategy for Regional Development 2010–2020: regions, cities, rural areas, National urban policy.

In the Concept for Spatial Planning 2030, the key national document related to the spatial planning of the country as a whole, the significance of demographic conditions for spatial planning is expressly highlighted. This issue follows from the need to introduce changes in the spatial planning, as indicated in the document, which was proved by an amendment to the law on local planning and development, introduced in 2015 (Harańczyk, 2015; Koncepcja..., 2010).

Also the National Strategy for Regional Development points to demographic challenges, which constitute an important factor affecting the development of cities and regions. The document points to the diverse scale of demographic changes both in individual cities and within whole regions (Bieńkowska, 2013). The main instruments of the national policy for regional development include, among others, creation of special economic zones offering convenient terms for business (tax reliefs), so that new jobs can be created, and restructuring old industrial centres. The zones have been located, among others, in the shrinking cities and regions such as Łódź, Wałbrzych or in Upper Silesia. The priorities related to urban policies, as defined in the National Strategy for Regional Development, also include the regeneration of problematic areas and the commencement of actions to stop the uncontrolled suburbanisation (Krajowa Strategia..., 2011).

The issue of demographic changes in Poland was also addressed in the National Urban Policy until 2035. This is the basic strategic document on the national level, endowed with the role of a complex reference point and guidance for urban policy. The strategic objective of the document is to enhance the ability of the cities and urban areas to create an economic growth, new jobs and to improve the quality of life. The document refers to all the cities, regardless of their size or location. Among the key challenges addressed by the National Urban Policy 2023, justified by the current demographic changes, one could enumerate the following (Krajowa Polityka..., 2015):

- counteracting social, economic and spatial degradation of the urban areas through integrated enterprises and actions aimed at the regeneration of the degraded areas,

- rational spatial planning, which includes counteracting the so-called urban sprawl and promoting the idea of a dense city,
- striving to achieve balanced urban mobility, which includes preference for environment-friendly transport, ensuring high-quality public service,
- preparing the cities for climate changes, combined with environment protection and increasing efficient energy use,
- counteracting depopulation and other adverse demographic processes,
- drawing on the increased activity of the inhabitants to drive the city growth,
- improving the collaboration and cooperation of local authorities in the urban functional areas,
- rational investments suited to the needs of the city.

The urban policy has also been enforced in the current programming period 2014–2020. According to the proposal made by the European Commission and in order to perform integrated urban actions, Poland has prepared solutions in the form of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI), the creation of which was aimed at increasing the involvement of cities in managing the EU structural measures.

Overcoming the adverse effects of urban shrinking is one of the key challenges to the urban policy and planning in Poland in the 21st century. Due to the presence of urban shrinking in Poland, it is possible to observe certain activities aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of the process.³ However, there are still no specific national or local strategies aimed at development in the conditions of urban shrinking. It will be crucial for urban centres to create a vision for their long-term development in the conditions of progressing urban shrinking.

The basic factor determining the success of actions aimed at preventing and counteracting depopulation will be the complementary nature of simultaneous and diverse activities performed by the administration and local governments on various levels. Another important task of the authorities in the cities and regions should be the collaboration with the inhabitants, proper process management and individual case-by-case approach.

Summary

In the studied period, covering the years 1990–2014, the total number of people in urban areas was decreasing. The decrease was particularly observed in cities with 50–100 thousand inhabitants, as well as in the largest urban hubs. Adverse changes were observed in the age structure of the population. Demographic processes that were going on for years have led to a reduction in the number of people at pre-working age

³ Some cities/regions have strategic documents that include challenges related to depopulation, such as “The Plan for Counteracting Depopulation in Łódź Voivodeship 2020”, or “The Programme for the Special Demographic Zone in Opole Voivodeship until 2020”.

in cities. Furthermore, the share of people at working age group and the percentage of people at post-working age increased.

Current demographic forecasts of the Main Statistical Office point to a reduction in the size of Polish population, as well as a reduction in the number of young people and people at the age that makes them available for work, and the general ageing of the population. Along with the general decrease in the country's demographic potential, the number of people in cities will also drop. The changes in the population structure in urban areas will be largely affected by the decreasing birth rate and migrations. Therefore, the process of urban shrinkage will continue in the future and will have a considerable impact on the development of cities. The effects of this process are diverse and mostly negative. A particularly difficult situation is observed in cities, where the reduction in the number of inhabitants causes adverse phenomena in local social, economic or spatial structures. This is why it is necessary to take well thought-out and effective actions and provide immediate support from the local authorities and from the government, so as to counteract the negative effects of the shrinking cities.

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PROCES KURCZENIA SIĘ MIAST W POLSCE

ABSTRAKT: Kurczenie się miast stanowi aktualny problem procesów urbanizacyjnych, które cechują współczesną miejską sieć osadniczą Polski i Europy. Obecne prognozy demograficzne GUS wskazują na spadek liczby ludności kraju. Wraz z ogólnym spadkiem potencjału ludnościowego kraju nastąpi spadek liczby mieszkańców miast. Proces kurczenia się miast w przyszłości będzie nadal postępował i będzie miał istotny wpływ na ich rozwój. Skutki tego procesu są zróżnicowane i w większości przypadków negatywne. Przedmiotem opracowania jest zagadnienie kurczenia się miast w Polsce. W opracowaniu dokonano analizy wybranych aspektów sytuacji demograficznej miast. W analizie uwzględniono przekrój czasowy obejmujący lata 1990–2014.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: miasto, ludność, proces kurczenia się miast