

Studies on the spatial-functional structure of a town on the example of Brodnica

Summary

A market economy has been restored to Poland since 1989. It is expected that it will liberate local socio-economic initiatives. Small towns will gradually regain market grounds for existence through imparting dynamism to the growth of the operation of servicing the surrounding area. At present, it seems that a particularly advantageous starting position has been gained by those small towns which, after world war II, acquired strong industrial processing plants of various kinds, often based on local resources; they are also carrying out privatisation quickly, especially of services, thus are bringing dynamism to the growth of the operation of servicing the surrounding area more quickly. Industrial operation, as regards its physical dimensions, will become more stable, and its proportion should decrease relatively; on the other hand, growth of the operation of services should be expected, and its proportion should increase relatively quickly. In the case of this group of small towns, particularly rapid growth can be expected in the nearest future because they are capable of rendering old development factors more dynamic, and at the same time of gaining modern ones. However, this requires the appropriate pro-development strategy to be chosen.

Today this problem represents an intellectual challenge, both for the elite and local communities, and for science. Which road for future development to choose? The goal of mutual efforts should be to discover socio-economic reserves existing in small towns, and then to define the conditions, possibilities and methods of activating them in the long term. The appropriate choice of the directions of future development and of the strategies for executing it is today a priority for the majority of small towns in Poland. The prosperity of local communities depends on this choice and execution, as does the fact whether, within the next generation, we will reduce the shocking disproportion in the conditions of life in comparison with those of communities from developed countries. The first step to achieve this is to make a diagnosis of the present state of the development of small towns, and of the factors which conditioned it. Only on the basis of such a diagnosis can the second stage be to make a prognosis of the choice of the most efficient directions of future development. Such a diagnosis should take into account the genesis of small towns, their historical transformations, location in the geographical environment, the state of the management and the structure of production, and the population and living conditions, all of which focuses on their functions hitherto. Only then can this base, together with knowledge acquired on the expected development tendencies (on

a macro scale) in the economy indicate those functions which can guarantee development in the future. The division of tasks between science and practice well illustrates the still valid claim by J. Kostrowicki (1957) that the role of geography is to draw attention to the shortcomings that are present, and even to indicate the necessity of more detailed research of a given problem, to determine the socio-economic reserves, and to draw conclusions as to the possibilities and methods for activating them. The task of practice, on the other hand, is to propose and execute concrete investment activities.

Brodnica, with a population today of 28,000 inhabitants, belongs to this group of small towns which enjoy particularly favourable conditions for further development. The town has many advantages, but also limitations, which in favourable conditions can bring dynamism to its development, but they can also hinder it. The reconstruction of a market economy places a range of possibilities and choices before Brodnica. The right choice of socio-economic activity which should be invested in today in order for it to bring profits in the future and guarantee the town a dynamic and harmonious development is of fundamental significance for Brodnica and its inhabitants.

The ideogram of the range of research carried out which includes the diagnosis, working hypotheses and their verification, and the indication of development perspectives are presented in table 1.1.

The arrangement of the paper corresponds to the hypotheses formulated and to the aims of the research. The paper consists of ten chapters. In the first chapter the foundations of research, source materials and review of literature are discussed. In the second chapter an analysis is presented of the geographical conditions for the creation, functioning and development of Brodnica. The third chapter contains an analysis of the spatial structure of the town based on a photograph of land use. In the fourth chapter the demographic and social conditions for the development of Brodnica are presented. The next three chapters (fifth, sixth and seventh) analyse the economic base of the town. In the fifth chapter the analysis of the economic base of Brodnica is presented on a broad basis. In the sixth and seventh chapters, however, a detailed analysis is presented of two exogenous functions which, in the authors' opinion, could in the nearest future be a strong stimulus for the development of the town, namely tourism (a specialised exogenous function) and post-primary education (a standard exogenous function). The eighth chapter contains an analysis of the socio-economic sphere of influence of Brodnica. It represents a synthesis of the current role of the town in creating a region, and can be used as the basis for the delimitation of its socio-economic region. The ninth chapter contains a study of surveys devoted to the perception of the town and conditions of living there by its inhabitants. In the last chapter a summary of the research carried out is presented and a critique is made of the domain of verifying the hypotheses raised and realising the aims of the research.

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