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## **RURAL SPACE AND THE CONCEPT OF MODERNISATION. CASE STUDY OF POLAND**

**Abstract:** The concept of development is included in the concept of social modernisation. In spatial analyses, including studies of rural space, it is most often used in the context of researching developmental stages. The purpose of this article is to present the most important concepts in assessing development and planning of rural areas in the context of social modernisation. Overview of different approaches showed that most of them used the premises of functional methodology. Functionalism in spatial studies (mainly economic geography and spatial management) was the most important trend in the identification and interpretation of social and economic phenomena. Reducing socio-economic reality mainly to the realm of spatial development and the adoption of methods of functional research has always accentuated the structural characteristics that emphasised the systemic coherence (harmony and spatial order). On the other hand, the concepts of modernisation in rural areas do not stress internal contradictions that cause social conflicts and tensions.

**Key words:** concepts, modernisation, Poland, rural areas.

### **Introduction**

The concept of development is included in the concept of social modernisation [*cf.* Szacki 1983]. Sztompka [2005, p. 130] believes that the concept of modernisation can be identified with progressive social change in which there is a definite trend in development of social processes. After World War II, the concept of modernisation has grown to become an ideology, as it evoked a vision of final order. The way of thinking about modernisation was based on the assumption that all underdeveloped societies should follow the path laid down by the already modernised countries and adopt a similar mechanism of change. The modernisation programme was, according to its supporters, building a better society, while the improvement of living conditions resulted from the adoption of a unified model of functioning of an individual within a system built according to a pre-determined model. Various interpretations of social modernisation were presented, depending on ideological preferences, social origin (such ethnic, religious, class), geographic location, *etc.* An explanation of why societies follow the path of certain modernisation changes or why a given vision of modernisation is preferred was widely discussed.

The traditional approach was largely dominated by interpretations referring to a larger or smaller extent to the evolutionary view of social change. Most of the approaches assumed that

the desire for progress is an inherent feature of the human psyche, leading to the inevitable process of modernisation (it is "natural"). The Darwinian interpretation stressed the phenomenon of elimination of social groups (due to competition), that fail to adapt to new requirements and conditions. Modernisation is therefore a way to avoid marginalisation or doom when coming in contact with a more attractive and modern way of life [cf. Sztompka 2005, p. 134]. In the materialistic approach, modernisation is explained by referring to the technological aspect of change. The theory of convergence (a variety of modernisation theory) assumes, for example, that the adoption of modernity is the same as the society entering a given model of technological advancement, which causes change in social, cultural and political organisation. This approach to modernisation means socio-cultural and economic uniformisation or homogenisation.

The ideological and political confrontation in the world after World War II meant that the issue of developing the vision of development, especially development through modernisation, was one of the greatest challenges for social sciences. The visions of modernisation and their justifications became a kind of *idee fixe* of all sciences that saw their own worth in the applicability of the results of their research to plan for the future [cf. Johnston 2003]. Chojnicki [1999] noted that the concept of socio-economic development is one of the fundamental conceptual categories of social sciences, including the disciplines that tackle the problem of spatial and regional analyses. According to the author, the concept of development is a series of targeted, irreversible changes in certain systems. These changes happen gradually under the influence of internal factors or the surrounding of the system. The geographic dimension of development involves targeted territorial transformations of social system, *i.e.* states, regional and local systems [Chojnicki 1999, pp. 269–270]. It was most often used in spatial analyses in the context of the examination of the state of development processes, especially in quantitative comparative analysis at different levels of territorial organisation.

The controversies over the concept of "development" and "modernisation" in social sciences also involve the studies of rural areas. One of the most important contemporary issues concerning the new interpretation of changes in rural areas is a departure from the identification of progress in these areas with the modernisation of agriculture. Gorlach [2004, p. 16] believes that in the case of the concept of "rural area", as opposed to the term "village", we cease to operate a comprehensive vision of social reality. The concept of a village emphasised mainly the homogeneity of the socio-territorial system (local community), while

“rural area” is distinguished according to a certain characteristic or a set of characteristics. The contemporary vision of rural development thus corresponds to an increase in heterogeneity of social and economic environment and the declining role of primary economic functions (agriculture).

In the discussion of rural development attention is paid to the kind of development factor (type of economic activity) and its spatial placement (Table 1). These criteria are the basis for the typology of development in these areas, especially in the context of the changing social and economic structures and the level of autonomy of rural development.

Table 1

Types of areas according to the type of development factor and its location

Criterion	Development factor location	
	in a given area	outside a given area
Single-function - primary production	Autonomous agricultural area	Dependent agricultural area
Single-function - manufacturing or services Multifunctional	Autonomous rural area	Dependent rural area

Source: [Gorlach (2004, p. 124, changed].

The approach to the modernisation of rural areas was mainly related to the adoption of appropriate location of development factor in the interpretation of change or projections of further transformations. The location of development factor is perceived in the context of a certain view on the direction and speed of modernisation of rural areas. I take the view that modernisation *in the strict sense* is based on the internal potential of rural areas. It thus stresses the autonomous character of rural environment (both natural and socio-economic), its uniqueness and its own path of development. The development factor cannot in such case be equated with just the endogenous conditions of modernisation. The development of the new (modernised, or improved, revised) structure of rural area may be influenced by various conditions, both internal (endogenous) and external (exogenous). They comprise certain socio-economic and ideological circumstances of change. The development factor in rural area is located within the rural area and is equated with certain reason for change stemming from the characteristics of the territorial social system, perceived as a solidified interrelation of the background (natural and material/technical) and the rural community (social structure, way of life, values, *etc.*).

The purpose of this paper is therefore to present some concepts of research and planning in rural areas after World War II in Poland and attempt to identify their factual basis in the context of social modernisation. The final part presents new ideas for rural development specified within the concept for spatial development of the whole country.

### **1. The rural area and the concept of spatial typologies of agriculture**

The visions of modernisation of rural areas in Poland were closely related to the accepted ideology of socio-economic development in a given period. At first, the studies of spatial variation in development of rural areas were mostly conducted within the context of economic geography, especially agricultural geography. The utilitarian character of these studies mostly stemmed from the development of the practical functions of the discipline and the development of the relationship between economic geography and spatial and regional planning, as well as different branches of economics (economics of agriculture, region, food management). Scientific studies were meant to co-create the plans for modernisation of economic structures in the central planning model. In this context, the chief task of geography of agriculture was the typology of land use, followed by the typology of agriculture. The practical aspect of this issue involved the support for changes in land use with the growing demand for food caused by the demographic development [Kostrowicki 1957, p. 10]. The pragmatism of agricultural geography was reflected in the definition proposed by Tobjasz [1957, p. 67]:

*agricultural geography deals with the use of the geographical environment by agriculture in different countries and regions. Its main concern is the socio-economic structure in agriculture and with a given level of productive forces, it indicates the existing and desirable agricultural production, taking into account public demand, the characteristics of geographic environment and the social cost of agricultural production.*

The identification of spatial types of agricultural geography included a number of tasks that were mainly meant to serve the development of the first large-scale, centralised plans for the development of agriculture and the development of rural areas [Kostrowicki 1957]. At that time, agricultural geography joined the plan aimed at modernising the structure of agriculture according to the premises of socialist economy. The key objectives of the agricultural geography included, among others, highlighting model and problematic areas of agricultural development. **The typology of agriculture was the method of determining the rules for**

**development in agriculture. Its practical aim was to find models for agricultural development.**

## **2. Rural space and functional typology of rural settlement**

The start of the works on the functional typology of rural settlements was related to the diagnosis of the situation and the development plan for small towns and their rural surroundings. The issue of activating small towns was raised more than 10 years after World War II. In the mid-1950s, it was noted that many small towns are dying functionally and demographically despite various state measures to nationalise commerce and craft. The loss of population in the towns was the result not only of losses caused by the war and the German occupation's hostility towards the Polish population, but also by the slaughter of Jewish population, whose activities served invigorate commerce and crafts sectors.

The project of mobilising local centres clearly involved the idea for modernising Polish rural areas and agriculture through socialising the means of production. This was further discussed in many studies concerning the reorganisation of the rural settlement network. One of the tools used to impact agriculture in the socialist economy (mostly individual and family-owned farms) was the economic and spatial planning. Its effects involved the creation of a new network of functional relations and were supposed to contribute to the introduction of state control functions into local socio-economic systems. The planning targets were included, among others in a study by Chilczuk [1963] entitled *The network of centres of rural social and economic relations in Poland (Sieć ośrodków więzi społeczno-gospodarczej wsi w Polsce)*. The author juxtaposed the new model of planning rural areas to the traditional rural network which had formed in the feudal and capitalist times in the 19th and early 20th century. Chilczuk [1963, p. 124] justified the purpose of his inventory study of the settlement network, *i.e.*

*the development of a model that not only would not affect negatively the current agricultural production of personal farms, nor the living conditions of the population, but would modernise them, while serving as a basis for future nationalised economy.*

Chilczuk's work involved a characteristic political context of the socialist planning process in Poland. The role of social sciences was to support spatial planning and the new organisation of settlement systems that would fit the centralised socio-economic policies. Due to the lack of total socialisation of agriculture (farmers' resistance), the socialist state had to organise a system of controlling the production and sale of food based on local centres. Until

the 1970s, it involved mandatory supplies from individual farmers. In this situation, a need arose for precise inventorying of local centres, institutions and equipment related to agriculture. The interference with settlement systems was in the case of many rural areas a change in the system of functional gravitational forces. The introduction of urban-rural districts and the placement of the seat of such district in a city was meant to tightly connect the bases of small towns with their local centres. This may be considered an example of forcing the gravitation of villages towards their respective centres through manipulations of administrative divisions.

The ideas for transforming the rural settlement network in line with the nationalised farming mostly originated with the planning community [cf. Tkocz 1998]. The resistance from small farmers resulted in the reconstruction of the rural settlement network occurring first in the areas under strong influence of large industrial investments. Golachowski [1971, pp. 55-56] argued that in Polish conditions, instead of looking for universal form multifunctional settlements, planning should be based on the concept of settlement complexes, where scattered units would serve similar functions, thus allowing for a wide choice of places of employment and services. Such a prospect of various kinds of the so-called agro-towns was developed by Tkocz [cf. 1971, 1980]. The author stated that agro-towns are a desirable form of concentrating invested areas, institutions and equipment in agricultural areas. This concept also involved a plan to rebuild Polish rural areas under the influence of the process of land nationalisation. It was assumed that nationalised forms of land ownership will prevail in agricultural economy, which would force a change in the rural settlement network. These plans were meant to lead to the elimination of private property in Polish agriculture and, consequently, to the destruction of rural areas as historical, cultural, social and spatial form of living. This program reflected the different elements of the policy of the communist authorities, such as the nationalisation of ownership, command-and-quota centralism, the equalisation of disproportions in living conditions through preferred mass manufacturing [Tkocz 1971, 1980]. **Rural modernisation was meant to include the targeted policy, which involved spatial transformations leading to the formation of agricultural manufacturing conglomerates and the integration of local settlement networks around nationalised commercial, housing and other functions.**

### **3. Rural space and the concept of multifunctional development**

The concept of rural space as a multifunctional area also had a modernisation character. The research programme of rural areas as multifunctional spaces was mostly pragmatic in purpose and was accompanied by the strive for developing delimiting and typological procedures in extensive works on the new concept of spatial development of the country. The initial purpose of planning rural areas was to identify their function, both in terms of studying their structure and the dynamism of change. The concept of multifunctional rural area is often used as a theoretical basis for planning or diagnostic studies performed on behalf of institutions in rural development programming [cf. Bański 2009, Bański *et al.* 2009].

The concept of multifunctional development has given rise to the discussion of rural modernisation. Studies on rural modernisation and socio-economic transformations are dichotomous [cf. Kamińska, Heffner 2011], *i.e.* much attention is given to the diagnosis and determination of change factors in transforming problem areas and economic success (progressive). During the first transformation, before Poland joined the EU, problem areas were mostly in focus. The concept of rural problem area has been extensively described in Bański's studies [e.g. 1999], although first attempts to determine its characteristics from the geographical point of view have been made in the studies of Falkowski [1990], Kulikowski [1992] and Skawińska [1993]. The concept of problem area most often originated from an analysis of relations between the quantitatively determined functions in a spatial system. As a result of his analysis, Kulikowski [1992] determined that the of agricultural area is derived from either the comparison of the levels of agricultural development of one area with the surrounding areas (the model problem) or the conflict in functions, where one of the activities is developing at the expense of the others (the faulty structure problem). The main objective of the study was to delimit the problem areas based on statistical material expressed as selected characteristics.

Works tackling the identification of success factors of rural areas are similar in concept. The authors are looking for developmental regularities that may determine the economic growth, identified using variables that describe the processes that increase non-agricultural employment, number of enterprises, investments, construction, income, agricultural modernisation, population with higher education or qualifications desirable in rural areas [cf. Głębocki, Kaczmarek 2005; Bański 2008; Czapiewski 2010]. After Poland joined the EU, studies of rural areas, especially agriculture, were done in the context of spatial variability in the absorption of structural funds [cf. Rudnicki 2009, 2010; Kacprzak, Kołodziejczak 2010].

**The problem of modernisation of rural areas is at its core a search for the right combination of functions for areas that can guarantee economic growth and an improvement in living conditions. The diversification of economic structure of rural areas is closely related to urban development. This model of modernisation (urbanisation) has a negative impact on the regional, rural peripheries (dependence).**

#### **4. The rural space and the concept of territorial cohesion - contemporary model of modernisation**

In the concepts for spatial development and development strategies (national, regional), rural areas are perceived as a diverse space. This diversity is represented primarily in terms of functionality and the level of socio-economic development. Development plans assume that the inhabitants of rural, as well as urban, areas should be able to participate in the development processes and have access to public services. In the case of rural areas, their territorial and functional cohesion with the cities should, according to the authors of the concept of change, stem mainly from functional changes, mostly related to multifunctional development [*Koncepcja...* 2012, p. 45; *Strategia...* 2011, p. 7].

The new typology of functional areas is, among others, a result of the influence of the integrates territorial approach, whose main characteristic is the use of endogenous potentials in functionally determined areas (territories) [*Koncepcja...* 2012, p. 178]. Hence, not all rural areas distinguished using formal (administrative) criterion will be included in functional rural areas. The National Spatial Development Plan 2030 [*Koncepcja...* 2012] presents two types of functional rural areas:

- located in the vicinity of large cities, thus participating in development processes (modernisation);
- located peripherally with respect to large urban centres, thus requiring support for development processes (see Table 2).



Table 2

## Characteristics of functional types of rural areas

Functional rural areas involved in development processes	Functional rural areas requiring support for development processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- located within a strong urban influence</li> <li>- specialised in non-agricultural functions integrated with the urban centre</li> <li>- commuting to work in the city</li> <li>- good access to public services</li> <li>- good transport accessibility to the city</li> <li>- close-area agricultural base</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- away from the main urban centres of the country</li> <li>- poor development of urban network or degradation of local centres</li> <li>- domination of employment in agriculture and public services</li> <li>- sensitivity to the crisis due to low diversification of economic functions</li> <li>- demographic and social factors (ageing of the population, unemployment, depopulation)</li> <li>- poor access to public services</li> </ul>

Source: Own study based on the *National Spatial Development Plan 2030* [Koncepcja... 2012, pp. 178-191].

**The approach to territorial cohesion has a dual character. On the one hand, it stems from the relation between a city and a village, and thus the functional subordination of the rural area (dependent rural development). The other type of cohesion applies to marginalised areas. In this case, cohesion means the integration of rural areas and their relationship to local centres (small towns) based on endogenous functions (daily local cycle). From this point of view, rural areas in the vicinity of large cities will experience intense modernisation. They will be characterised by a diversified functional base and social structure.**

One interesting issue for the purpose of this study is the local character of territorial planning in rural areas in the National Spatial Development Plan 2030 [Koncepcja... 2012, pp. 46-47]. In this document, the local dimension of rural cohesion refers to the integration of the rural settlement subsystem with a network of district centres. The territorial cohesion policy in this regard is meant to contribute to the improved access to public services, with concurrent increase in their number and quality in local centre. Small and medium-sized urban centres (local and sub-regional) should generate jobs, as the role of agriculture in providing rural employment is getting smaller and smaller. The improvement in quality of local job markets will surely become one of the toughest challenges for the improvement of living conditions and the prevention of functional degradation of rural areas. The lack of future development impulses that reinforce the local potentials in rural areas located further away from cities may lead to the strengthening of suburban zones of large centres not only due to migration of population from the cities, but may also contribute to the regional shifts between the peripheries of a region and the villages within regional urban areas.

## Summary

A historical overview of different approaches showed that most of them used the premises of functional methodology. Functionalism in spatial and economic studies (mainly economic geography and spatial management) was the most important trend in the identification and interpretation of social and economic phenomena.

Critics of functionalism emphasise that it is a conceptual system rather than social theory [Szacki 1983, p. 801]. Given the popularity of functionalism as a system of explaining reality and the number of studies that were created in its different currents, it was a direction that used a neo-positivist paradigm and had numerous benefits [*cf.* Sztompka 1971]. Maik [1992, p. 238] believes that it is difficult to determine whether the new models (*e.g.* dialectical) accurately explain the mechanism of formation of space. They have not tackled the problems in the focus of today's society, but have explained some aspects of phenomena that geographers and economists were interested in, such as the formation of settlement systems, the diversification of functional and spatial structures, *etc.*

Functionalism prefers teleological explanations, *i.e.* it focussed on the results of structural transformations. **The determination of regularities was done using a comparative method. This meant showing certain model (desirable) types of functional structure and those that differ from them in some ways. The use of functional typology (of settlements, areas) was related to the implementation of one of the most important purposes of research and spatial planning, *i.e.* the systemic identification of the whole at different levels of territorial organisation.** Reducing socio-economic reality mainly to the realm of spatial development and the adoption of methods of functional research has always accentuated the structural characteristics that emphasised the systemic coherence (harmony and spatial order). On the other hand, the concepts of modernisation in rural areas do not stress internal contradictions that cause social and economic conflicts and tensions. This is very important, as conflict resolution and social engagement in determining the direction of rural modernisation are largely beneficial. The most important factors include the rise of identity and awareness of the role played by the participation of citizens in the design of rural development.

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