

Women and development of industrial cities – conditions and mechanisms

The transformation period in Poland and the crisis of industrial cities that accompanied it were very diverse, both in cities with the same and different dominant branches of industry. Deindustrialization was a special phase in the development of industrial cities where, despite the crisis, there was a significant increase in the participation of women in the labor market, which was associated with the development of strategies for overcoming difficulties. One of the factors influencing the depth, scope and duration of this crisis are the activities undertaken by women. Both the ability to better cope with crisis situations and a greater willingness to cooperate, along with handling proactive and caring roles to the development of local communities, are attributed to women. What is the role of the city's features in activating women? What is the role of women in creating transformations of cities with a dominant industrial function?

The main goal of the project is to understand the mechanisms that shape dynamic relations between traits, attitudes and activities of women and the development of the industrial city. On the one hand, the conditions of industrial cities (social, economic or political) will be taken into account. On the other, the features of women – inhabitants of the analyzed cities – will be studied. Particular attention will be paid to human capital, aspirations and roles undertaken both within the family and for the benefit of local communities. Moreover, the research involves determining the nature of women leaders' activity in cities. The research will be carried out in four medium-sized industrial towns – Dzierżoniów, Mielec, Stalowa Wola and Zduńska Wola. The case study towns are characterized by a varied level of women's professional activity in industry, a different dominant industry and a different trajectory of development after 1989.

The addressed issue is extremely relevant, especially in the context of current very rapid changes, both economic and social, and the growing importance of the so-called "soft capital". At the same time, due to the fact that the deepest transformation of industrial cities in Poland took place in the 1990s, there is little time left to undertake research that includes exploring the unique perspectives of women who personally experienced this transformation and could have a real impact on its course.

My project addresses several research gaps identified during the critical review of existing literature: the knowledge gap stemming from insufficient research into women in industrial towns, especially the lack in literature of the continuation of D. Massey's research conducted in the 1970s in the UK. Moreover, the 'population' gap indicating overrepresentation of leaders and activists and inadequate representation of other groups of women in published research. Finally, the theoretical gap especially felt in the evolutionary approach to the path dependence/path creation theory where in the model of shaping of city development paths a diversified activity of various groups of its inhabitants (the human agency) was insufficiently elaborated.

The project has been divided into three main stages, the implementation of which will lead to achievement of the main objective and verification of hypotheses. In the first part, a typology of industrial towns will be developed. The second stage focuses on exploring the women's role in the development of industrial cities. In the third stage of research, the roles of female leaders in shaping the trajectory of industrial cities development will be recognized. The last project stage assumes the definition of mechanisms shaping the dynamic relations between the features and activity of women and the industrial city.

This study will be explored with the use of various research methods, such as: in-depth interviews with female local leaders of the studied towns, social network analysis, surveys on a representative sample of residents from industrial cities (CATI), as well as survey with men and women leaders from the units of local governments (CAWI) and meta-analysis of the subject literature.

Planned research will cover three periods in the development of studied towns: 'late' industrialization under state socialism (1970s-1989), transformation to market economy (1989-1999) and post-transformation period (2000-2019). This will capture the changes in the trajectory of the city's development, as well as the changes in relations and conditions between cities and women.