

LONG-TERM NATURE OF SUBURBANIZATION PROCESSES AROUND LARGE CITIES IN POLAND (HISTSUBURB.PL)

One of the most spectacular socio-economic phenomena is the suburbanization occurring nowadays in the surroundings of large cities in Poland and in other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The changes occurring in suburban zones are the subject of scientific research, deliberations of planners and local authorities, and media reports. Suburbanization in this project is understood as a stage of urban development and occurs when suburban areas grow at the expense of the city center, resulting from urban sprawl. One of the aims of the project is to draw attention to the question that in fact suburbanization processes in Poland are nothing new. The development of suburbs is a phenomenon typical for each development stage of large cities, so the origins of this process should be sought much earlier than in the 1890s, in the industrial era, or even in the Middle Ages.

The main objective of the project is to identify the suburbanization processes around large cities in Poland from the early 19th century to the late 1980s. The aforementioned period is identified as a preliminary stage for suburbanization processes occurring nowadays, initiated with the political and socio-economic transformation after 1989. It was assumed that contemporary transformations occurring around large Polish cities have entered the area of suburban zones that differ in the original structure of the settlement network and in the degree of advancement of suburbanization processes in earlier periods. The temporal scope of the project was divided into five periods, covering the years: [1] 1800-1841, [2] 1842-1880, [3] 1880-1918, [4] 1918-1945, [5] 1945-1989. The periods defined in such way are intended to correspond to the advancement of urbanization processes and to the successive milestones in the development of transport, which are the main driving force for socio-economic change.

At this point, one could ask what new contributions this project makes. In scientific terms, it provides a better understanding of the long-term nature and spatial effects of suburbanization in the surroundings of large cities, as well as the essence of this process. This is so important, because looking at the spontaneity, dynamics and scale of transformations occurring today in suburban zones, one cannot help thinking that this process is out of control. However, we intend to consider to what extent the suburbanization processes occurring nowadays are similar to the transformations that the suburban zones were already subjected to earlier (before 1989), and at the same time, whether the understanding of these processes and their effects may constitute a remedy for the spatial development of the suburbs today, including the reduction of the spatial chaos in the suburban zone.

One of the outcomes of the project is to be a website (histsuburb.pl), which will contain the most important information about the project, the results of the research, and provide a platform for exchange for people working on the issues of suburbanization and suburban zones. A series of popular science webinars is also planned, during which the results of research conducted during the project will be presented. It also seems that our research will serve as a starting point for further studies on the development of suburban zones, for example by applying for a project with an international research team that will focus on the phenomenon of suburbanization and its spatial effects historically throughout Central and Eastern Europe.