

Introduction

This volume of *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis Studia Geographica* covers nine articles presenting contemporary research problems in social-economic geography and in geographical education. The main aim of this publication was to acquaint the foreign reader with a wide array of research done in the Institute of Geography, Pedagogical University of Cracow. The set of articles was published on the occasion of International Geographical Union Regional Conference which will be held in Cracow in August 2014. The previous IGU Regional Conference in Poland was held in 1934 in Warsaw. The volume tackles the issues of methodology of geography, history of geographical thought, the issues of gentrification, housing development and urban sprawling in metropolitan areas as well the problems of tourism development, ethnic segregation. Finally, the last article is analysed motives for choice of geography as an additional subject in Mature examination in last years.

Zbigniew Ziolo in his conceptual article gave an insight into the functioning and changes of geographical space, allowing for the synthesis of research results of the specialised geographical disciplines. The proposed concept should be regarded as an attempt to seek a pattern of conducting research. It will allow for a holistic approach to processes of change taking place in the structure of geographical space. In the article the author showed that an important role in functioning and transformation of geographical space is played by the natural conditions that enable the formation of socio-economic and cultural processes in accordance with the rules of economic development and as a result of deliberate actions on the basis of socio-economic policy. Finally, the author divided the structure of the functioning and development of geographical space into three basic categories of space, namely natural (physical-geographical) space, socio-economic space and cultural space.

Witold Wilczyński showed the contribution of Eugeniusz Romer (1871–1954), a great Polish geographer, to human geography. The author showed the geopolitical concept of Romer on the individual character of Polish lands. According to the author, this concept should create the basis for a discussion concerning the international position of Poland.

Next paper attempts to answer the question whether and to what extent spatial transformations of small towns in Poland show symptoms of gentrification. Agnieszka Kwiatek-Sołtys and Krzysztof Wiedermann refer contemporary processes of gentrification to small towns in Małopolska province, showing its demographic changes and redevelopment. The paper written by Anna Winiarczyk-Rażniak and Piotr Raźniak shows diversification of housing conditions in two selected metropolitan areas: Warsaw, Krakow and potential Rzeszów Metropolitan Area. On the basis of housing conditions indexes, a typology of municipalities within the metropolitan areas was created. Finally, the fluctuations in the population and in the number of apartments in the area were analysed.

One of the most important features of modern urban areas is the process of decentralization of manufacturing activities, high-order producer services, cultural services as well as advanced informational services, usually accompanied by the process of residential suburbanization. On this basis, Sławomir Kurek, Tomasz Rachwał and Mirosław Wójtowicz tackle the issues of urban sprawling in the Kraków Metropolitan Area with particular attention paid on the changing role of industry as one of the key elements of development and metropolisation of cities in post-socialist, emerging economies. The process of industrial and commercial suburbanisation is shown with the use of data on employment, investment and location of shopping centres.

The following two papers presents research on tourism development. Renata Rettinger and Małgorzata Bajgier-Kowalska show the tourist potential of a historical city on the example of Pistoia in Tuscany and the possibilities of further development of tourist movement in light of the current tendencies of the world tourist market. The paper also includes an attempt to analyze the structure of a tourist product of the city of Pistoia based on its location as a neighbour of such large tourist centers as Florence or Pisa. The concept of tourism product on the example of a spa town of Krynica Zdrój in Poland is shown in the paper written by Sławomir Dorocki and Paweł Brzegowy. The authors point out that medicinal function of Krynica Zdrój spa resort was joined by leisure and recreational functions developed due to favourable natural conditions (mountains, forests and climate). They also refer to the concept of tourism cluster (or cluster of health and tourism) which involves the development of both medical services and tourism as well as sports, leisure, conference, educational and industrial functions.

Agnieszka Świątek identifies and describes the following symptoms of social exclusion experienced by Roma people in Poland: lack of tolerance in Polish majority, problems related to the functioning on the labour market and access to education, low standard of living as well as the need that some actions for Roma people in Poland be taken by governmental authorities. The author refers in the article to numerous results of current surveys on the attitude adopted by Poles towards Roma people, which prove intolerant attitude of Poles to this minority.

The final paper in this volume, written by Mariola Tracz, refers to the role of geography in the group of optional subjects to choose in School Leaving Examinations at upper secondary level (Matura exam) after the reform of education in 1999. The study shows the results of a survey carried out among those Matura grade students who chose geography for Matura in 2012. The gathered results also allowed the Author to estimate how the alterations introduced by Ministry of Education into the procedures of examination subjects' choice influence students' choice in relation to geography.

We hope that the articles from this issue of *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis Studia Geographica* will raise an interest in research done in the Institute of Geography of Pedagogical University in Cracow. We look forward to your comments and cooperation which may contribute to the improvement of our research and the quality of our journal.

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