

INTRODUCTION

Space and spatiality are the ideas that remain the main focus in geographical sciences and urban/rural planning. However, more and more often they become inevitable reference points also for scientists and practitioners representing other fields such as economy or sociology. The spatial context is especially important nowadays, when the growing polarization of various socio-economic phenomena is observed. Of course, to a certain point spatial diversity is a valuable feature. Due to comparative benefits, it enhances the economic development of territories by accelerating the flow of goods, money and workforce [Hejke, Klaassen 1979]. Differentiated costs, together with the landscape diversity, effectively stimulate tourism, providing considerable incomes and increasing employment in this sector. Moreover, spatial diversity should be regarded as an important heritage of the whole human kind. Differences between places and their inhabitants create new challenges for research, offering the possibilities of constantly enriching the scientific knowledge and culture. Finally, taking individual human needs under consideration, diversity, especially in its social aspect, allows for 'facilitating equal opportunities to all for a maximum degree of human self-realization' [Stöhr, Tödtling 1979, p. 135]. One could only imagine the influence of complete spatial monotony (or total unification of conditions, standards, land development, *etc.*) on human beings. Would there be enough motivation for people to act creatively and not to be affected by mental lethargy?

On the other hand, growing spatial disparities are becoming a more and more serious problem in the contemporary world. Some of the inequalities between and within territories, especially those of economic origin, constitute a direct reason for many negative phenomena observed nowadays – from 'everyday' crime to violence that may affect the whole nation, or even many countries. This could explain why the idea of territorial cohesion has become so popular recently. Unfortunately, although many years have passed, still there are no final conclusions about implementing this concept. Moreover, there is no consent as regards terminology and there are many unknowns in the methodology of measuring these phenomena. The whole process seems a slow, gradual and painful approximation rather than finding an effective solution for growing problems of spatial inequality. Furthermore, there is always the question where the borderline between still positive territorial diversity and already negative spatial inequality is? In other words, when does spatial cohesion/unification become disadvantageous?

In this volume readers may find papers referring to many of the phenomena and problems mentioned above. It starts with general references to major obstacles and recent advances in the methodology of measuring cohesion in its spatial aspect,

which is followed by remarks on co-operation of cities in metropolitan areas, indicating the need for rational land management and co-ordination of spatial policy in such territorial units. The next paper discusses the concept of smart growth, emphasizing its relations with the integrated planning and sustainable development, as well as its relevance for the future of cities. The following five articles, having the form of case studies, deal with the problems of spatial inequality and cohesion. The authors chose both larger areas such as urban region (changes in its socio-economic structure) and individual cities (Tbilisi and Lodz). The paper about Georgia presents an important social aspect of inequality, however, it differs much from other topics undertaken in this volume since it refers to the situation of internally displaced persons who suffer from ethnic conflicts. The last paper again addresses a more general issue, *i.e.* the influence of innovativeness on regional development.

References

- Hejke J. A. M., Klaassen L.H., 1979, *Human Reactions to Spatial Diversity: Mobility in Regional Labour Markets*, [in:] *Spatial Inequalities and Regional Development: A Framework*, H. Folmer, J. Oosterhaven (Eds.). Springer Science+Business Media, pp. 117-130.
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