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## **5. THE PAST AND CONTEMPORARY KEY RESEARCH ISSUES IN RURAL SETTLEMENT GEOGRAPHY IN POLAND**

### **5.1. Introduction**

Settlement geography of is one of the best developed research disciplines in human (socio-economic) geography in Poland. The evidence of unflagging popularity is the stable place of settlement geography in the university teaching programmes (Liszewski ed. 2010), releasing new text-books (e.g. Liszewski 2008, Szymańska 2009) and, above all, publications summarizing research achievements and proposals (e.g. Kaczmarek ed. 1998; Liszewski and Maik ed. 2005, Jażdżewska 2007, Suliborski 2010, Wójcik 2012a). Strong interest in settlement geography does not mean unanimity in regard to its nature, aim and perspectives. On the contrary, due to a wide scope of research settlement geography is characterised by an excess of ideas and research concepts. This is especially true of competing theoretical and methodological models, which main-

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ly refer to friction between neo-positivist and humanistic model of research in human (socio-economic) geography (cf. Chojnicki 1999, Jędrzejczyk 2001).

In the work devoted to key issues in settlement and population geography, published several near 10 years ago (Liszewski and Maik ed. 2005), the experts invited to the discussion in this field presented different approaches, both in determining the subjects of the discipline and its theoretical and methodological foundations. Apart from all considerations about how geographical description and interpretation of settlement phenomena should be conducted, relatively little interest in rural settlement was striking. This is not a new situation, because for more than 15 years Polish human (socio-economic) geography has noted lack of a deeper theoretical reflection on the essence of rural studies in the new social, political and economic conditions. Moreover, the number of empirical studies has significantly decreased. Marginalisation of rural settlement geography cannot be justified substantively. It rather stems from institutional and organisational problems, as well as the general preferences within the social science research (dominance of urban and metropolitan studies).

Rural settlement is an important part of the settlement network of the country. In comparison to many European states, from the formal point of view, Poland is among the countries with the highest rates of rurality index. Contrary to appearances, the problem of contemporary research in the Polish countryside is extremely interesting because of the very rapid economic and socio-cultural change over the past years (the UE enlargement).

The need for scientific interpretation of "belated" modernisation of the Polish countryside is not always seen by the geographical circles as an important research issue. This issue is not only important from the standpoint of recording and interpreting the phenomena occurring in the rural areas, but also as part of a general discourse on the condition of geography as a science. In the UK and USA in particular, rural geography has been subject to dynamic development over the last 30 years. In essence, the theoretical transformation that has affected this research area result from the deep

thought that has now been given to the very concept of the “rural” and “rurality” under new economic-political and social conditions, as well as from extensive reflection on how rural geography and human geography are in fact related, especially where the development of critical trends is concerned (Bunce 1994, Woods 2009a, b).

The main purpose of this chapter is to formulate the fundamental problems of development of rural settlement geography in Poland. The key issues for discussion were shown by, among others, S. Liszewski and W. Maik (ed. 2005) in the publication *Rola i miejsce geografii osadnictwa i ludności w systemie nauk geograficznych* (Role and place of settlement and population geography in the system of geographical sciences). Problems of the evolution of settlement studies primarily relate to the emergence of settlement geography as an independent discipline of geographical sciences and the relationship bonding it with other disciplines and methodologies of the Polish settlement geography, including the coexistence of traditional and modern research approaches.

## **5.2. The tradition of rural research in human (socio-economic) geography in Poland**

Modern geographical rural studies have different traditions of development and thus draw inspiration from diverse theoretical and methodological approaches (Wójcik 2009a, 2012a). Various methods of scientific description of rural areas in geography can be seen in terms of shaping the scientific schools (methodological pluralism) and the polycentric character of the development of human (socio-economic) geography in Poland. The specificity of rural research in geography after World War II was formed as a result of the adoption of revolutionary research programme at the methodological conference in Osieczna (1955). The direct consequence of the development of geographical specialisation was the division of geographical rural studies into sub-disciplines, i.e. agricultural geography and settlement and population geography.

The geographical studies of rural areas were usually interpreted from an agricultural point of view. Agricultural production, especially the spatial structure of agricultural economy, was the focus of agricultural geography. The dynamic development of agricultural geography in Poland was, among others, caused by the activity of J. Kostrowicki in the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organisation of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the International Geographical Union.

The scientific school of agricultural geography, active in the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organisation of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Warsaw), strongly influenced other national and foreign centres. Their research results were cited in major textbooks and journals in the field of agricultural geography (e.g. Pacione ed. 1986). The most characteristic feature of the Polish school of agricultural geography was its methodological practice and, above all, the procedures of typology and regionalisation (Szczęsny 1996 Czapiewski and Kulikowski 2005). Contemporary mainstream studies are primarily focussed on the multifunctional analysis of rural spatial structure (e.g. Bański and Stola 2002, Bański 2006).

The second tradition of geographical rural studies is related to the specialisation in settlement and population geography. Since the 1950s, settlement geography has been developing its own concepts and research methods. The result was a certain dualism in settlements studies. This dualism referred to separate development of research issues, i.e. morphological and functional studies (Maik 2005, Suliborski 2010). This division is also clearly marked in rural settlement geography, where the studies aimed to develop a morphogenetic typology (and regionalisation) of villages (e.g. Kiełczewska-Zaleska 1956) and a functional typology of rural settlements (e.g. Chilczuk 1963).

In recent years, the interest in morphological and functional studies of rural settlement has clearly decreased, although in the early 1990s proposals for further studies were formulated. They included local settlement systems (Maik 1993) and planning analysis of rural settlement network based on the concepts of "key rural settlements" (Drobek and Heffner 1994). Unlike urban geography,

rural settlement geography lacks new methodological proposals, especially those related to the dynamic development of social and cultural approaches.

### **5.3. Institutional dimension of development of rural settlement geography**

In contemporary Polish geographical literature, the discussion on the objectives, directions and methodology of rural settlement geography appears very rarely, usually when discussing the general characteristics of the achievements and changes in settlement geography (cf. Szymańska 2009, Liszewski and Maik ed. 2005, Szulc 1994, Rajman 1994). Due to a small number of researchers interested in transformations in rural settlement and very diverse research themes, there are no coordinated efforts to develop research programmes, nor any large-scale syntheses covering all research issues in rural settlement geography. The effect of such situation lasting for several years is a random selection of research problems, the inability to compare research and terminological confusion. In the post-war period, rural settlement geography in Poland developed in a polycentric manner. This means that morphological and functional issues of rural areas aroused interest in many research centres, which also led to pluralism of research approaches and concepts. This polycentrism of research, especially the pluralism in rural settlement geography, distinguished this branch from agricultural geography, which was rapidly growing in post-war Poland. Agricultural geography, although represented in the majority of Polish geographical centres (e.g. Warsaw, Toruń, Poznań, Wrocław, Lublin, Cracow), showed the primacy of the research team centred around J. Kostrowicki at the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organisation of the Polish Academy of Sciences. This domination was expressed in different ways, e.g. the promoted approaches, contacts with the worldwide geography, the size of the scientific team, the publishing achievements.

The contemporary marginalisation of rural settlement geography also obstructs the memory of the tradition of this research, such as morphogenesis or functions of rural settlements, which is especially apparent in the lack of continuity in scientific schools. Even settlement geographers do not always notice this field, and those who remember the tradition of such studies rarely specify the subject of research in this field. The opinions of the researchers about the place and role of settlement geography in the system of geographical sciences are very diverse (Liszewski and Maik ed. 2005). The following examples of the types of opinions can be distinguished:

1. Rural settlement geography has its own original research tradition but, in contrast to urban studies, it lacks reflection on the fact that reality is reduced to aspects of material property. Rural settlement geography should strive for social interpretation of these changes (A. Suliborski). There is no consensus as to how to rebuild a holistic approach to rural housing. Some geographers expressing the need for anthropocentric view of rural problems see the development of the research field in the evolutionary expansion of the scope of research to social aspects and integration of different approaches – morphological, functional, social – such as the “dualism of settlement phenomena” (W. Maik), or the concept of “function of a place” (A. Suliborski). However, some studies suggest a paradigm shift in settlement geography and a reconstruction of the humanistic approach (K. Rembowska, D. Jędrzejczyk).

2. Today's rural settlement geography may become a part of a comprehensive discipline which undertakes a variety of research issues in such fields as agriculture, agro-tourism and multifunctional development (J. Rajman, W. Kusiński), the more that settlement geography has been identified with urban geography (Z. Rykiel, J. Parysek). The research discipline of “rural geography” in the studies of settlement should continue the discussion on the functioning of local settlement systems (J. Rajman). Studies in rural settlement in geography now require more theoretical and methodological care and promotion as many issues are considered to be within the scope of rural geography (J. Rajman, P. Korcelli).

3. The division of settlement geography into urban geography and rural settlement geography is stable, and the research specificity of the two disciplines stems from the nature of the geographical environment – urban and rural. The extensive research scope of settlement geography makes it ideal to play a particularly important role in the development of interdisciplinary research programmes including both urban and rural areas (S. Kaczmarek). Rural settlement geography needs theoretical reflection and stimulation of empirical research as, unlike urban geography, it is currently in crisis (I. Sagan).

Dynamic development of urban studies led to the emergence of an extensive area of geographical research – urban geography (Maik 2005, Liszewski 2008). At the core of this area are the traditional research approaches – morphological, functional and socio-ecological, but the fundamental theoretical and analytical advances are associated with their criticism and proposals for new social and cultural interpretations of social life in urban (spatial) forms. The transformation of the whole discipline (from settlement geography to urban geography) proceeded relatively smoothly, without major controversies surrounding the differences between the sectoral and problematic concept of division of geographical sciences.

In the case of “rural geography”, the situation is more complicated, although the issue of shaping this new discipline is rarely undertaken in the geographical discussion. In his 2002 article in the *Geographical Review* (*Przegląd Geograficzny*), J. Bański stated that the changes that occur in the field of geographical research on rural transformation in Poland authorise the commencement of study as part of a new research discipline (in our country), namely “rural geography”. J. Bański (2002) argues that “rural geography is a discipline that studies all forms of human activities occurring in rural areas”. Understood in this way, rural geography will be a complex of specialised geographical disciplines that investigate rural areas, such as agriculture geography, settlement geography, population geography, geography of services, transport geography.

The thought process relating to this proposal should consider whether the specified scope of the discipline corresponds to rural geography or geography of rural areas. The answer to this question involves not only highlighting the specific rural environment, but also the formation of the research traditions of Polish scientific schools and the approaches and methods they use (Wójcik 2012a).

After 1990, there have been major changes in the geographical directions of research in rural studies. The first characteristic phenomenon of these studies was the reduction of interest in rural settlement geography. It stemmed largely from the lack of continuation of intensive studies of rural settlements after the retirement of eminent scientists representing various academic centres (e.g. A. Zagożdżon in Wrocław, S. Zajchowska in Poznań, E. Kwiatkowska in Toruń) and the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organisation of the Polish Academy of Sciences (M. Kiełczewska-Zaleska, H. Szulc).

This lack of continuity of generations in many geographical scientific schools involved in studies of rural settlement, and thus the lack of promotion of the vision of rural geography as seen from the perspective of settlement, leads to the advantage of views derived from the tradition of agricultural geography (different theories and methodologies). The evolution of agricultural geography relies on the integration of new issues of the development of rural areas, such as rural entrepreneurship, alternative sources of income of the farming population, agro-tourism, technical infrastructure, land use and land management, the income situation of the municipalities ("gminy"), EU structural funds, success in rural areas, etc. The methodology combining different aspects of human activity is based on the concept of the rural area as a multifunctional space (Kostrowicki 1976, Stola 1987).

Today, geographical rural studies are characterised by a huge disparity between the agricultural tradition and its contemporary dimension in the form of the concept of a rural area as multifunc-



tional space, which is a dominant opinion, and the researchers perceiving the problems of rural development from the rural settlement perspective (Wójcik 2012a). The objectives of rural geography in Poland should be equally based on the achievements of both agricultural geography and settlement geography, not only in terms of research issues but also in terms of the methods developed.<sup>1</sup>

Today, rural geography in Poland can be understood in two ways, namely:

1. Rural geography in the broad sense, i.e. as geography of rural areas, the economic perspective of which was largely shaped in the tradition of geographical study of agriculture and is based on an empirical model of a scientist orientation using quantitative description of the structure and spatial organisation.

2. Rural geography in its strict sense, as rural settlements geography, which broadens the scope of its interests into social and cultural issues, mainly in the micro scale, and prefers to use qualitative methods.

This study uses the stricter sense, i.e. it focuses on the traditional and novel concepts relating strictly to geographical research of rural settlement.

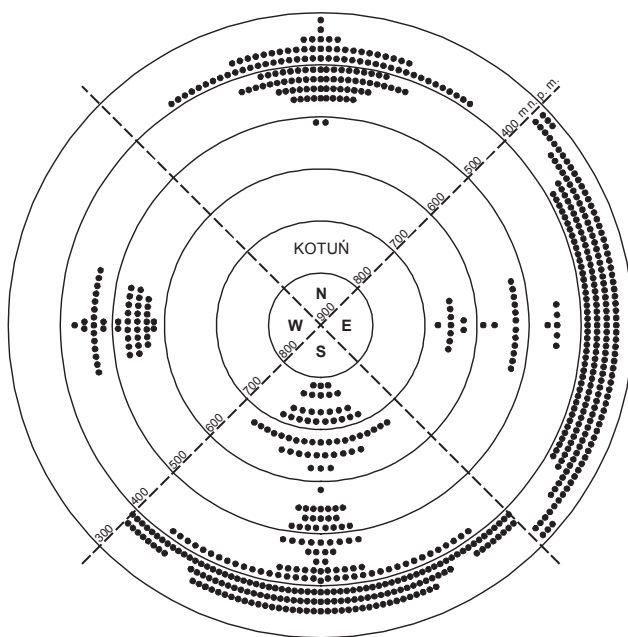
#### **5.4. Rural settlement geography in traditional research models**

Traditional research models in rural settlement geography are connected with two major scientific programmes, i.e. the studies of morphology and functions of rural settlements. The following can be identified among the most important research models in rural settlement geography:

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<sup>1</sup> For example, agricultural geography and rural settlement geography formulate differently the programme of functional studies (Wójcik 2012a).

1. Rural settlements as a spatial location (Figure 5.1). Studies on the location of settlements were mainly conducted as part of the research programme of the development of settlement processes in Polish historical regions (e.g. Leszczycki 1932, Dylík 1948a, Szulc 1963). Explanation of the settlements location took place largely in the context of the diversity of natural conditions, especially since most geographers focused on the preindustrial period of the settlement changes (environmental determinism).

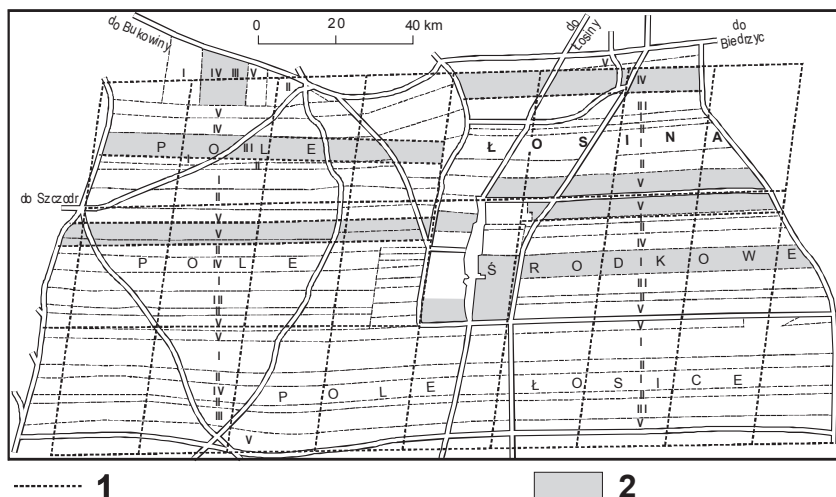


**Figure 5.1.** Distribution of farm on Kotuń mountain according to altitude and geographical direction

Source: elaboration by S. Leszczycki (1932, p. 22)

2. Rural settlement as a morphological structure (Figure 5.2). The fundamental aspect of the analysis involved the search for pat-

terns in the spatial structure of settlements. Using retrogressive and comparative methods, settlement development processes were reconstructed. Moreover, morphogenetic typology of settlements and hamlets were carried out in different regions of Poland (e.g. Kiełczewska-Zaleska 1956; Szulc 1988).



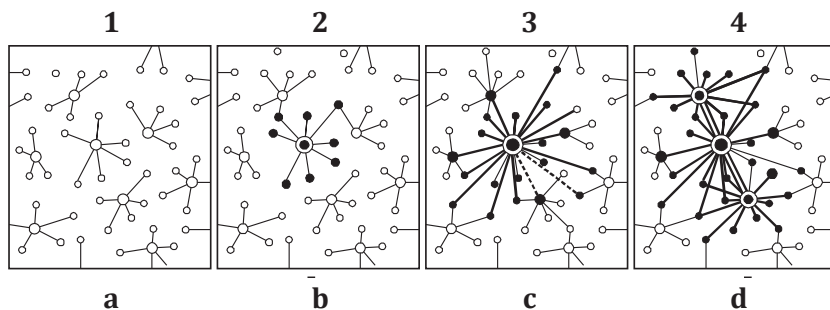
**Figure 5.2.** An attempted reconstruction of the village planning principles in Budziejowice

1 – reconstructive lines, 2 – fields of the same width

Source: elaboration by H. Szulc (1963, p. 43)

3. Rural settlement as part of the settlement network (Figure 5.3). The key work that undertook the issue of development of rural functions and determined their role in creating a functional hierarchy of the settlement network is a study by M. Chilczuk (1963). It introduced the hierarchical division of selected rural settlements based on “the index of centrality”. The work on this issue was also published by A. Zagożdżon, who described the concept of settlement

complexes, i.e. groups of settlements related to an overriding function. A. Zagożdżon (e.g. 1964) not only formulated the definition of a settlement complex, but also developed a theoretical basis and methods of delimitation of such complexes within the settlement network.



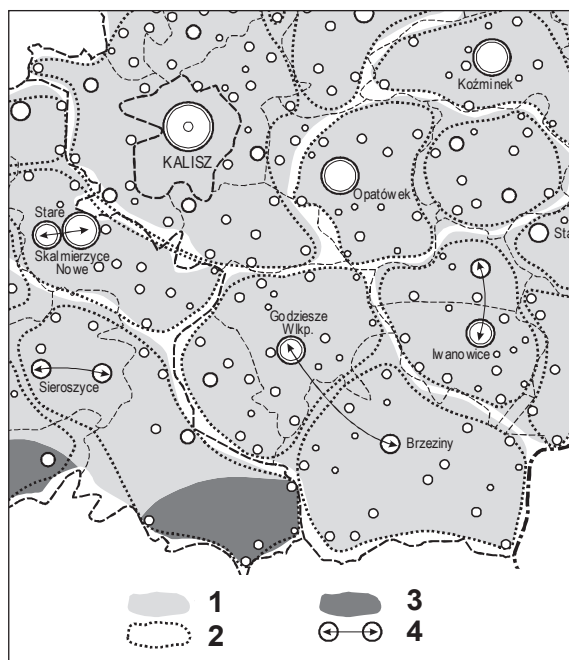
**Figure 5.3.** Phases of development of a settlement complex according to A. Zagożdżon

1. Phase preceding the investments, 2. The initial stage of transformation, 3. The further stage of development, 4. The formation of a polycentric system

a – traditional settlement network (service and agricultural functions), b – introduction of new exogenous functions (industry), c – centre growth, longer commutes, d – consolidation of a settlement complex

Source: elaboration by A. Zagożdżon (1974, p. 222)

4. Rural settlement as part of a settlement system (Figure 5.4). In-depth functional analysis of settlement network expanded the concept of settlements networks with the theory of the settlement system. W. Maik (1976) treats the concept of settlement system as superior to the concept of settlements networks. The adoption of the concept of the system as a study method leads the main research issue to determine the extent to which the settlement network is a system or a subsystem (Maik 1976).



**Figure 5.4.** The functional and spatial structure of service complexes  
(part of a map)

- 1 – service complexes of a higher order, 2 – service complexes of a lower order,
- 3 – the scope of influence of centres from outside the complex,
- 4 – auxiliary centres for service functions

Source: elaboration by W. Maik (1976)

### 5.5. Contemporary geographical perspectives of rural settlement geography in Poland

Over the last 20 years, urban geography in Poland has developed many new research ideas, mostly related to the development of social, cultural and humanistic approaches (e.g. Sagan 2000, Jędrzejczyk 2004,

Rembowska 2008). Since the 1970s, many research concepts of settlement research have entered Polish settlement (urban) geography. In local Polish conditions, they took an original character appropriate to the specific cultural traditions of the country and the development of human geography. In some concepts, structural approaches develop in a creative way (e.g. Maik 1988, Suliborski 2010), while others challenge the pattern of the existing theoretical and methodological changes (e.g. Jędrzejczyk 2001, Rembowska 2002). Most modern concepts are universal in nature, i.e. their assumptions can be used in both urban and rural studies.

As in the leading field of research, namely urban geography, the development of the rural settlement study is cumulative, i.e. through the imposition of new solutions and methodological orientation on the accepted research approaches (Maik 2005).

The character of the physical and social environments (urban, rural) determines the specificity of the structure of the research programme within the relevant concepts. The concepts that may constitute a potential source of inspiration include the following:

1. The concept of local settlement systems, whose usefulness and attractiveness in explaining the settlement as a whole is based on a combination of two components in the local system, and thus in the settlements:

- community – the theoretical basis derived from social and socio-spatial concepts which express social structures and processes;
- material (physical) structure – the theoretical basis derived from the functional and spatial concept (Maik 1993).

The inclusion of the broad concept of a settlement system (the functional programme) and the broad concept of locality into the concept of local settlement system can, according to W. Maik (1993), become a tool for the analysis of everyday life that goes on in a particular unit of the settlement. The advantage of this approach is the treatment of settlements as socio-territorial entities and the identification of their role (function) for the wholes at higher levels of the organisation of the settlement system. Another important issue to be addressed in the concept of local settlement sys-

tems is the focus on everyday life (daily cycle) as a factor structuring spatial behaviour, human motivation, social diversity and territorial identification (Maik 1993).

2. The concept of residential environment. Residential environment is defined as a set of places of residence identified through a set of elements of the socio-economic and natural surrounding essential for humans and surrounding these points as well as of relations between the elements and places of residence and inter-element relationship (Suliborski 1976, Kaczmarek 1996). The attractiveness of this overall approach to rural research is primarily connected with the analysis of the content (function) and form, which underpin the social assessment of residential environment, as well as a synthesis of information within the internal space, such as an apartment or a building, and external space, such as land or housing estate, of residential environment.

3. The concept of the "function of a place". Although the premises of this concept were formed on the basis of urban geography, it contains so many universal ideas that it can also be safely used in studies of rural settlement. The specificity of such studies lies primarily in the treatment of a settlement unit in the category of a place as a socio-territorial identity (Suliborski 2001). A rural settlement, like a small town, is a place at the local level, and its durability and internal organisation is based on social ties. A unit of settlement, in this case a village, as part of social space is a place of dwelling, or being, and acting. A place has a specific spatial form defined by the changing lifestyles (Suliborski 2001). The concept of the function of a place underlines its socio-cultural nature. The function of a place – a village, a settlement, a town – is a multifaceted concept, combining different geographical approaches, including functional, morphological or socio-cultural ones.

4. The concept of human ecology. Identification and interpretation of the contemporary transformation of rural settlement in Poland cannot ignore many aspects of social life. In the traditional geographic concepts of rural settlement research, the greatest emphasis was put on spatial, functional and economic differentiation.

Social aspects were usually reduced to the analysis of the spatial structure of professional characteristics of the population, migration etc. It is worth considering how the society, with its specific needs and system of values, creates space of a modern rural settlement and how this space shapes social relations and structures (Wójcik 2010b). Villages, particularly suburban ones, are becoming increasingly complex in terms of society. The coexistence, such as cooperation or competition, especially in small rural communities, of different social groups with different lifestyles, needs, aspirations and ways of perceiving the environment or space, etc. is an interesting issue.

5. The cultural concept. The universalism of this research approach results from the treatment of a human as a starting point to reflect on their biological, social and cultural aspects (Jędrzejczyk 2001, Rembowska 2002). A humanistic way of interpreting the human world can also be developed on the basis of research of rural settlement. Humanistic geography paying attention to the axiological and aesthetic sphere might look differently in villages where the diversity of lifestyles, views and activities is growing. Countryside, usually associated with the process of “long duration”, is currently experiencing rapid socio-cultural changes, e.g. an important aspect is the change in the ratio of rural inhabitants to land. A rural settlement as a cultural creation can thus be viewed through a prism of images of residents of this place, their experience of everyday life and the values assigned to different components of the environment (symbolic space).

## **5.6. The evolution of the concept of rural settlement studies as seen in the Łódź geographical research centre**

Settlement geography is one of the most important disciplines in human (socio-economic) geography in the geographical centre of Łódź. Intensive development of this discipline is associated with the scien-



tific school (economic geography) shaped by Professor L. Straszewicz. Geographers from Łódź were mainly interested in the structures and processes shaping a large city. A lot of in-depth morphological, functional, social, political and other studies were done in this respect (cf. Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz and Liszewski 1993).

Despite the prevalence of urban studies, rural settlement also attracted much interest, though it was often considered in relation to the city (e.g. studies on local centres, suburban zone). The research centre in Łódź was also characterised by its lack of interest in agricultural geography. The modern consequence of this lack of wider recognition for agricultural geography at the University of Łódź is a considerable fragmentation of rural settlement studies according to the institutional divisions, i.e. between the units (faculties) specialising in historical, social or tourism geography. This results in an absence of broader, comprehensive reflection on the research programme on rural settlement, and thus the lack of a large integrated research team.

The purpose of this section is to present the evolution of the rural settlement research. The studies in this area, present in Łódź for almost 70 years, may be considered a representative model of the formation of concepts and research programmes in Poland, especially considering the fact that a complex (full) research profile, which included morphological, functional, social and cultural issues formed here. In the case rural settlement studies there are the following research questions:

- 1) natural conditions of diffusion of rural settlement and the morphogenesis of the villages;
- 2) the functions of rural settlements and the urbanisation of rural areas;
- 3) socio-economic and cultural aspect of rural transformations.

Please note that the above sequence also shows the development of research and their cumulative nature, i.e. from the interest in physical (material) aspects to a growing attention paid to the social and cultural aspects of settlement.

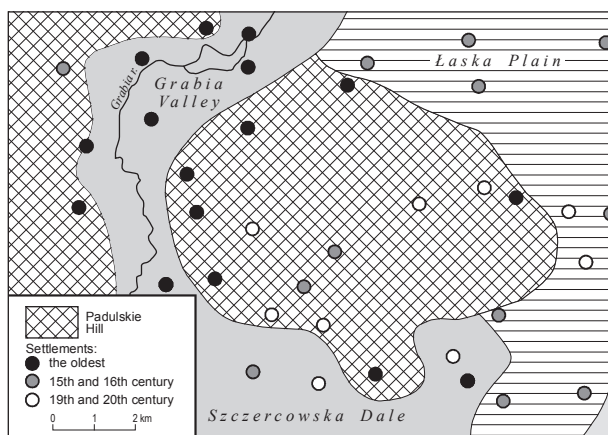
Ad 1. The problem of the relationship between location and spatial diffusion of settlements was an inseparable part of almost all landscape studies developed in interwar Poland. These studies have focused on a comprehensive assessment of the so called "settlement procession", i.e. the diffusion of settlement in history against the background of the natural environment.

One of the most conceptually and substantively interesting post-war works concerning the location and spatial development of the settlement network over time was published by J. Dylik (1948a), the founder of the geographical research centre in Łódź. In the interwar period, J. Dylik (1939a, b) was closely interested in the problems of prehistoric settlement near Łódź and the phenomenon of industrial development of the city. The main goal of J. Dylik's work (1948a, p. 7) was to define the sites of younger and older settlements, as well as the referral of certain phases of settlement development to the quality of environmental space, mainly the morphology of terrain. J. Dylik attributed the regional scale "procession" of settlement mainly to the variations in physical environment. J. Dylik (1948a) assumed the relationships designed by him in the whole territorial units (region) should be proved in topographical studies, thus highlighting, above all, the significance of vicinity for the settlement expansion.<sup>2</sup> The presentation of settlement process was meant to inform the readers that, until the industrialisation period, the direct vicinity of Łódź was the least developed area of the whole area. An important role was played by the comprehensive characteristic of the location of villages in the natural areas distinguished

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<sup>2</sup> An attempt to assess this concept in micro scale was recently made by M. Wójcik (2009b) in his work on the areas around Łowicz (in Łódź region). The results indicate that, in terms of topography, the supposition of J. Dylik that settlement processes were determined by factors similar as on the region scale. They can surely include the lie of the land, the hydrographic network, soils and the vicinity factor. The transition to a more detailed scale reveals more factors, which lie on the side of anthropogenic environment. These may include the type of ownership, the status of early development, the level of advancement of socio-economic process, as well as political and administrative decisions.

by the author (Dylik 1948b). In each natural region, J. Dylik calculated the proportional share of given rural settlement types according to the time of their creation, which serves as a basis for constructing a synthetic map of settlement development (Figure 5.5). This technique enabled the author to confirm the thesis of gradual filling of poorly-developed areas before the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century with rural settlements.



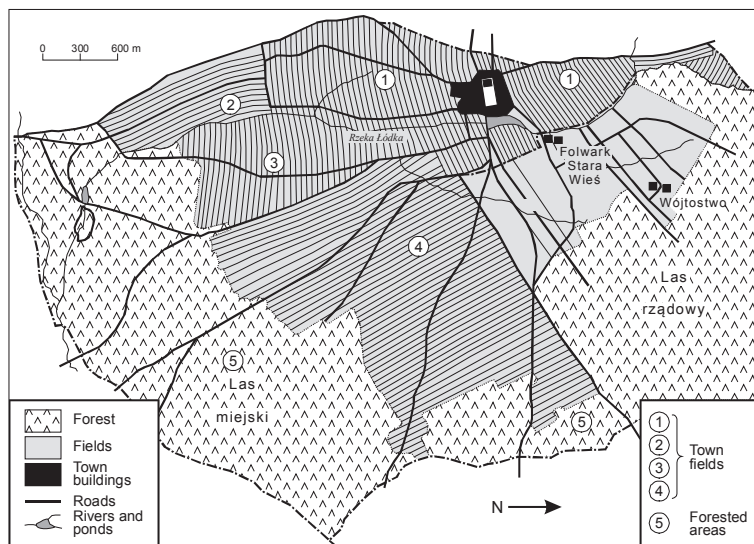
**Figure 5.5.** Development of settlements on the plateau

Source: elaboration by J. Dylik (1948a, p. 34)

Some of the arguments developed by J. Dylik were continued in the works of M. Koter in the field of historical settlement geography. M. Koter was especially inspired (cf. 1994, pp. 24–25) by the concept of index monuments as an analogy to index fossils, i.e. architectural forms that allow us to make conclusions concerning the development of settlement in a given area. Index monuments, their form and geographic location help us reconstruct the process of settlement and the cultural landscape of historical periods.

This concept of studies on settlement diffusion is complemented by morphogenetic studies. Such studies primarily focused

on the role of rural settlement in the formation of a plan of a large city (Łódź). They concentrated on an analysis of the plans of contemporary cities, as well as the attempts at explaining the origins of complex (merged and transformed) settlement systems that are a stage in the evolution from simple (rural) systems (Figure 5.6). These work concerned both the reconstruction of old settlements and fields. M. Koter (e.g. 1969, 1976) identified the remains of rural settlements in the structure of Łódź, rapidly developing under the influence of industrialisation. The interpretation of spatial development of the city includes not only the information about the origins of the main centre of development, but also the history of neighbouring villages (Koter 1969, p. 42).



**Figure 5.6.** Schematic layout of the medieval agrarian structure of agricultural Łódź

Source: elaboration by M. Koter (1969, p. 32)

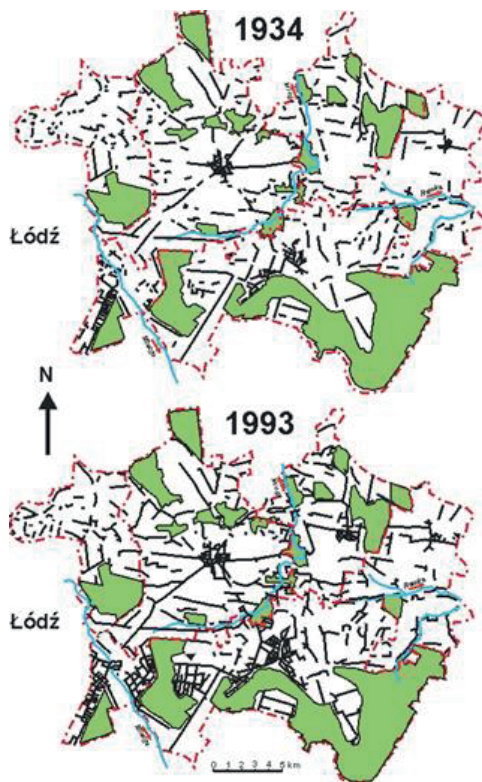
In recent years, there have been in-depth studies on the role of rural settlement systems in the morphological evolution of cities in

Poland in the past (Kulesza 2001). M. Kulesza showed that many small towns (especially established in the Middle Ages) grew out of old villages, which is still visible in the plans of these cities. These studies have recently been extended to the typology and morphogenetic regionalisation of villages (Figlus 2013). A big advantage of this work was that it determined the relics of the forms of old villages which, due to the peripheral location of the area relative to the centres of the former Polish historical regions, retained many of their original elements (Figlus 2013).

The works on modelling the settlement network may also be considered a part of morphological research. The concepts of studying the construction of settlement network have a long tradition, and the issue of identifying the spatial form of a network of rural settlements was one of the important problems of human geography (and, later, economic geography) since the beginning of studies on rural settlement. The use of cartographic analysis to classify settlements was an important element of both approaches. Modelling settlement networks and determining the complexity of their construction was matched with maps of appropriate scales (survey and topographic). The geometric simplification of the construction of the settlement network performed on small-scale maps was mostly done using spot and surface modelling methods. Based on more detailed cartographic layouts showing morphological plans of settlements and fields generalisations were made using graph notation.

The concept of morphological analysis of a settlement network as a system of lines mainly involved the identification of the basic features of geometry of settlements shown in topographic maps (cf. Figure 5.7). The morphology of rural settlement networks was primarily a kind of generalisation based on a cartographic map in a given scale (mainly 1:100 000) already created using appropriate methods of topographic presentation. The linearity of settlement expresses (generalises) a certain type of rural development, where individual permanently developed plots are located next to one another. In the Łódź research centre, some methodological assumptions were used in the works of J. Kotlicka (1976) on the transformations of settlement network

under the influence of industrialisation in Bełchatów powiat (district) and of M. Wójcik (2006a) on the analysis of the formation of a settlement belt of an agglomeration (Figure 5.7). The methods of generalisation were also used in the morphological studies of villages being transformed under the influence of recreation functions (Matczak, e.g. 1991), the modelling of space in a large suburban village – former town (Jażdżewska 1999) and the transformations in the functions of villages under the impact of disagrarisation (Wójcik 2006a).



**Figure 5.7.** The formation of a settlement belt of an agglomeration in view of the methods of linear generalisation

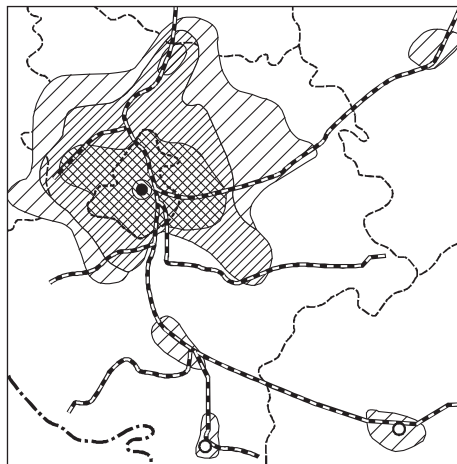
Source: own elaboration based on M. Wójcik (2006a)

Ad 2. The main field of research on rural settlements at the University of Łódź is associated with a functional concept. The beginning of studies on the functions of rural areas after World War II was related to the development of settlement network, especially within the studies of local centres.

A broad discussion on the role of local centres, including villages, in the organisation of socio-economic life was mainly conducted between the representatives of research teams that started comprehensive studies on various aspects of the influence of external functions of settlement in the 1960s (Musiał 1967). From the turn of the 1950s and 1960s until the beginning of the 1990s, the concept of local centres was one of the leading methods of identifying the functional variation in rural and small town settlement. One of the most important forums for discussion was the “Łódź” conference, which took place in 1966 under the name “Local centres” (Straszewicz 1967). Its main aim was to systematise the current views on the organising functions of local settlement networks, as well as a scientific discussion (recorded in a report by Batorowicz 1967). Thorough research on local centres presented by the employees of the former Department of Economic Geography (including Dziegieć 1967, Liszewski 1967, Zając 1967, cf. Figure 5.8) from Łódź and Opole regions are still a prime example of field work that resulted in the identification of functional relations between the local centre and the base (and the determination of the scope of influence).

Geographers from Łódź and other scientific centres had a significant contribution in highlighting the role of the so-called spontaneous movement of population and the functions of centres shaping them (e.g. a marketplace), as opposed to the works conducted based on formal (administrative) information, such as the study by M. Chilczuk (Pączka 1967, Kozłowska 1969). In addition to the research on the functional diversity of rural areas included in the research programmes on local centres, some of the studies focused on the problems of the rural settlement network (Figure 5.8). An extensive

analysis of equipment in former collective villages in Łódź region was done by E. Dziegieć (1976) who used the method of analysis of central functions widely accepted in the 1960s. The author determined the local centres within a rural settlement network, whose rank was mainly explained by their administrative age (Dziegieć 1976, p. 181).



**Figure 5.8.** The scopes of influence in the light of traffic measurements in town Nysa

Source: elaboration by S. Liszewski (1967)

The functional current in geographical and settlement studies also formed the concept of suburban village. The concept of the suburban area, similarly to many concepts in settlement geography, was formulated with planning and urban studies (cf. Straszewicz 1954, 1985). The concept of suburban village, like the concept of the city in settlement geography, was closely related to the functional theory (cf. Suliborski 2010). The description of the nature and socio-economic variability of suburban village was most often done by identifying its function, e.g. feeding (cf. Straszewicz 1957), residential and leisure (e.g. Matczak 1985, cf. Figure 5.9).



Geographical studies on suburban village focus primarily on the analysis of the spatial structure based on a set of measures and indicators of development, as well as the construction of the model of its structure or a model of changes in this structure, with a possible expansion of research to include the quality of life aspect (cf. Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 1991, 1998, Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz et al. 2010, Wójcik 2008a). These works provide a rich factual material and knowledge about the transformation of the socio-economic structure of suburban villages during the deconcentration of some of the socio-economic functions in urban regions (suburbanisation).

The geographical research centre of Łódź also has a significant impact on the development of the concept of tourist urbanisation of the countryside (Figure 5.9). Attempts at synthetic conclusions relating to the range and mechanism of transformations of villages under the influence of tourism were made in mid-1980s (e.g. Matczak 1986, 1987, 1991, Dziegieć 1988). E. Dziegieć (1987, p. 23), based on the review of the literature and his own research, claimed that the impact of tourism and recreation in rural areas is one of the most important factors of transformation, and the variability of rural settlement or the origins of new forms of tourism settlement can be presented in the form of gradual changes associated with the severity of relevant phenomena (tourist traffic). The western model of transformation (from rural farming through agri-tourism into the rural tourist settlement), described mainly based on the work of French geographers (cf. Dziegieć 1987), was used as a reference point in the comparison with the corresponding processes of development of rural tourism space in Poland (cf. Dziegieć 1987, 1995). One of the factors in the formulation of theoretical bases of tourist urbanisation were the studies by S. Liszewski and his research team on the origin and development of recreation settlement in the vicinity of a large city, done in the Łódź agglomeration. S. Liszewski (1987, p. 33) described the model of research, which included a the directives for explaining the origins of the forms of tourist settlements. The author also described the developmental stages and pointed

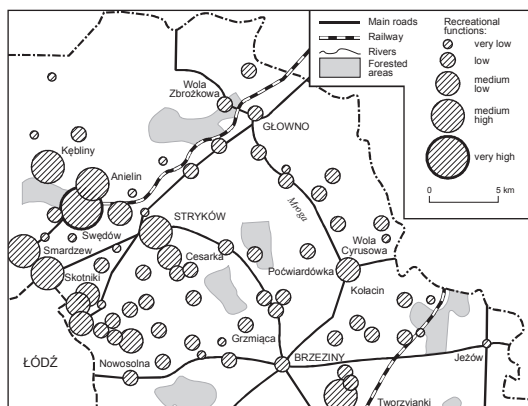
directions of transformation of recreational settlements (mainly functional and spatial). An important element that synthesised these studies was the development of not only a model of transformation over time but, above all, a model of transformation of spatial forms (e.g. Dziegieć 1995, Liszewski 2005, Włodarczyk 2009).

An attempt to develop a mechanism for the tourist evolution of rural areas was developed by S. Liszewski (1995) in the context of the debate on the concept of tourist space. S. Liszewski (1995, p. 91) believed that the main subject of study for tourism geography was the tourist space, and the studies on its character and variability constitute the identity of this subdiscipline of geography. One important element to help crystallise the concept of research was the determination of the criterion for distinguishing the tourism sub-space in geographical space. The development of tourist space was presented as a process of functional adjustment or functional change of other sub-spaces as a result of the influence of human tourist activities. The types of tourist space were distinguished based on the character of tourist activity and the degree to which it shapes the geographical space (Liszewski 1995, p. 95). The types of space are thus also stages in its transformations, from exploration, tourist penetration and assimilation, to colonisation and urbanisation.

The stage of tourist colonisation, the process of intense use and permanent tourist development, is of particular importance for the preservation of tourist function (Liszewski 1995, pp. 97–98). Tourist urbanisation ends the stage of colonisation, and the transformations are thus multi-level. The stage of colonisation by tourists ends with the phase of permanent residence. The verification of the hypothesis of the crucial role of tourist colonisation in the spatial and functional transformation was attempted by many authors in Łódź (cf. Wojciechowska 1998, Włodarczyk 1999, Szkup 2003).

In the 1990s, more attention was given to the social dimension of tourist pressure (colonisation), such as the opinions of various groups of people related to the tourist area (cf. Wojciechowska

1998), psycho-social features of the creators of leisure function (cf. Szkup 2003, Wojciechowska 2009), an analysis of the behaviours of the “actors” of tourism development.



**Figure 5.9.** The typology of a settlement with recreational function in the suburban zone of Łódź (part of map)

Source: elaboration by A. Matczak (1985, p. 308)

Nowadays, the dominant method of studying the multi-functionality of rural areas is the methodological model developed in late 1980s and early 1990s (Stola 1993). Based on this model, the functional and spatial structure of rural areas in Poland was determined again after the first stage of rural economic transformation (Bański and Stola 2002, Czapiewski 2010). In the case of the Łódź region, no in-depth studies were conducted in this regard, with most efforts concentrated on the different levels of socio-economic development in rural communes based on a wide range of indicators (cf. Wójcik 2006b, 2008c, Jażdżewska 2007). The main conclusion of this research was related to the vast differences in development level, that could be explained mainly with the advancement of the rural urbanisation process (differences between the centre and the peripheries of the region). Some studies tackled the relationship between

the development level and the diversity of social capital in certain counties (cf. Jażdżewska and Frykowski 2009).

Due to the traditions of settlement research and the development of methodology in settlement function studies (cf. Suliborski 2010), an assessment of the multi-functionality of rural areas was made within the concept of the economic base (Wójcik 2008b, 2010a, 2012). In the case of rural areas, the identification of their functions, from a formal point of view, requires the treatment of spatial reference unit as the sum of the constituent settlements. In this approach, the functions of a rural area are the sum of the activities carried out in all the settlements, or villages (divided into endogenous and exogenous). The identification of economic functions of rural areas within the concept of economic base should be treated as complementary to other approaches showing the multi-functional development of rural areas, especially the concept of rural area as a multi-functional space. One of the advantages of this method of identification is the reliance on employment statistics and thus the opportunity to interpret the economic bases of rural areas in the categories of the development of local employment markets (Wójcik 2012b).

Ad. 3. The development of dialectical and personalistic models since the early 1980s has been the answer to the formulation of new research problems that could not be satisfactorily solved using functional models. These problems concerned the deepening of self-knowledge of the society (the growing self-awareness) related to the process of space formation (Maik 1992). One of the first works related to the problem formulated this way was a study on the living conditions and quality of life of the inhabitants of a village near Opoczno and their spatial interpretation (Rembowska 1990). The methods used in this work largely departed from the formalism of studies based on the official demographic and economic statistics.

W. Maik (1988) related the critique of geographical functionalism mainly to the formalism of functional methods. According to the author, the functional structure of settlements is dual in nature, i.e. it can be explained on the macro level (settlement functions) and

the micro level (social interpretation of the functions). The study by M. Wójcik (2008a) concerning the social and economic transformations in the villages of the Łódź agglomeration is one of the few works to tackle the challenge of a realistic approach to settlement phenomena in studying (suburban) villages. Two main research objectives were specified in this study. The first objective was to determine the direction, pace and types of relevant processes, and to identify their structural and social conditions. The second objective was to attempt to verify the concept of realistic presentation of the dualism of settlement phenomena, which involves the possibility of combining two research perspectives (structural and social). It has been shown that human activities are affected by the state of development and the type of settlement system. In contrast, the level of development of a settlement system is a reflection of the various roles of people (social and economic) operating within the system. On the basis of a number of primary sources (a query in offices of rural communities) and social studies (interviews), it was determined that permanent migrations of population are an important factor in creating diversity in demographic processes in the communities of Łódź agglomeration. It was also noted, that social activities in villages located in direct vicinity of a large city leads to transformations that manifest on a structural level in the development of functions of certain areas (from simple to complex). In the outer zone of an agglomeration, where human activities involve waiting and survival, functional stagnation can be seen (Wójcik 2008a).

More recently, studies have been expanded to include social and cultural aspects. There has been more focus on analysing the behaviours and perceptions of rural areas by the long-time and newly-come inhabitants. Attempts were also made to determine the transformations happening in local communities under the influence of investment funded by the EU (Wójcik 2010b). In contrast to macro-scale studies, both Polish and foreign, micro-scale studies show that the diversity is even greater and applies to all neighbouring areas. The results confirm the findings included in other works, especially in sociology and anthropology (cf. Kajdanek 2012,

Mantey 2011) concerning growing social atomisation, mutual distrust of human groups and the clash between the expectations (search for the ideal living conditions) and the reality of urbanised countryside, especially the lack of satisfaction in one's neighbourhood ("cultural incoherence"). As a result of the influx of new residents to the suburban villages, former farming communities evolve towards social and spatial disintegration (Wójcik 2013).

### **5.7. The concept of regional geography as the basis for the integrated study of rural settlement**

The concept of regional geography refers to a comprehensive and territorial dimension of research (synthetic approach). During the formation of the classical form of regional geography, the relationship between the concepts of "region" ("regionalism") and the "countryside" ("rusticity") was evident (19<sup>th</sup> century). Today, it is difficult to understand, especially because of the dominance of urban forms of living, mainly in the context of the development of metropolitan areas. In our Polish conditions, this relationship is still clearly visible in remote areas where small towns and their agricultural surroundings ("countryside") form certain wholes – socio-economic micro-regions. In geographical studies, this thought this was included in the works of P. Vidal de la Blache, where the term "pays" meant a country, but most often described a certain familiar area – a region, which was combined with his interpretation in visual categories (landscape – "paysage"). The concept of "pays", however, had a strictly rural dimension, while "paysan" meant native, or a peasant. The rusticity reflected the relationship between man and nature, while the "spirit" (nature) of national or regional identity was sought for in the broader provincialism or rural landscape (cf. Archer 1993, Plit 2005). The specific nature of rural life is reflected in the landscape (area) which, as P. George (1959, p. 15) wrote, is the result of rational and deliberate human impact on the natural environment. The specificity of this life is variable in

different dimensions of time and space. It used to be identified by the relationship between a farmer and nature, and exemplified in the individuality of certain landscapes (P. Vidal de la Blache). Nowadays, as rural lifestyles become more diverse, these relationships become more complex, which is manifested in the various types of space, including landscape structures (physical space).

This new way of framing research problems relates to the concept of region as a real social object or an ingredient of social reality and a spatially delineated whole (Chojnicki 1999, p. 328). Z. Chojnicki (1999, pp. 328–329) describes these different ways of viewing the properties of a region developed as part of the “new” regional geography as the social orientation in the concept of a region as an object. Region is considered in a social context as part of social structure and development.

The problem of formation of the specifics of social environment should be formulated within the systemic concept of settlement. In such a case, particular attention is paid to the social and spatial behaviours stemming from the historical continuity of some specific characteristics of functioning within the local structure, which can include the proximity of social environment, the spatial practice related to the proximity of nature and the limited range of spatial mobility. The functional concepts describing the diversity of professional structure of settlements evolve towards the perception of social needs and the spatial behaviours originating from them. Similarly to the cities, villages are the “arena” of social processes (cf. Lisowski 1998), where the units (people) meet not only social, but also environmental (natural) structures. Therein lies the fundamental difference in the formation and interpretation of the specific characteristics of rural life in the conditions of increasingly decreasing importance of production functions (mainly agriculture).

A significant difference between urban and rural areas, as interpreted in terms of the specificity of their importance in the settlement system, is based on the role of nature in creating its socio-territorial individuality. The relationship between the humans and their surrounding, where nature has not been significantly transformed,

is the basis for the creation of different lifestyles. This approach to the problem expands the previous geographical research programmes to include the understanding of countryside in the categories of human living environment.

The theme of socio-spatial diversification has never been seriously tackled in the geographical studies of the countryside. Geographers have focused primarily on the diversity of socio-spatial structure of cities. These works, as well as substantially close sociological studies, were part of the strong movement of human ecology (cf. Pióro 1982a, Węławowicz 2007, Jałowicki and Szczepański 2009). The lack of interest of rural human ecology mainly originated from the homogeneity of rural environment. Polish economic geography, focused on the means and effects of production in rural areas, did not tackle the problem of socio-spatial diversity, leaving it to the sociological and anthropological studies (cf. Piotrowski 1982).

One key element in the identification and interpretation of socio-spatial diversity is the background of legal and social relations in land ownership. In rural space, the concept of human ecology has a real sense, according to the original assumptions of H. Barrows (1923), arising from the relationship between the natural, social and material structures.

Countryside is home to the collective and individual life, and the term “habitat”, used frequently in human geography in relation to the location of a portion of a village inhabited by humans, has a deep social and cultural meaning. The processes of social differentiation of rural areas are reflected in rural settlement, its variability, growth and decomposition in every era – feudal, industrial and contemporary – post-production. Z. Pióro (1982b, p. 49) calls these historically-shaped spatial complexes with different material (physiognomic, development standard) and social characteristics “ecological nests”. A “nest” is characterised by homogeneous physical and spatial features of settlements, as well as social and professional features of the population. Unlike the “urban” tradition of studying social areas, the term “nest” used in relation to countryside



is a better fit for the scope of research (micro), the linear and spot methods of generalising the social and spatial systems and, above all, better reflects the nature of the phenomenon of “blending in” of the countryside into the environment. Some key research tasks included in the solution to this problem are:

- determining the origin of a village in the context of the search for the traces of social processes and economic development in natural environment;
- defining the role of settlement units (functions) within the functional structure of the settlement subsystem of the area and the morpho-functional changes in time, along with an indication of their natural and socio-economic conditions;
- determining the social structure and the directions of its transformation in rural settlements;
- identifying of the socio-spatial structure in a rural settlement by identifying the ecological “nests” (linking the physiognomic features of building the development of settlement plots with the social features of their inhabitants);
- determining the spatial and temporal activity of the rural population (“the daily path of life”);
- determining the social relations existing between the inhabitants of the village (forms of cooperation and planes of resulting antagonisms and conflicts);
- identifying the basis for community behaviours, including social participation in the formation and functioning of local government.

## 5.8. Conclusions

Rural settlement geography in Poland has an established position among the research disciplines of human geography, although it requires more attention in terms of both continuation of traditional research concepts and the development of new directions and approaches.

The study of rural settlement in Poland cannot ignore many aspects of rural social life. An interesting issue little known by rural settlement geography is the problem of transformations of rural communities (e.g. quality of life and lifestyle). Increasingly, villages no longer play production functions, more often helping to fulfil the needs of many different social groups, which intensifies the consumption of rural space. An important platform for further development of rural settlement geography is to increase the concept combining traditional morphological and functional patterns with the approaches interpreting changes in the forms of land use and human activities (functions) in social and cultural categories.

The modern transformation is the process of gradual theoretical and methodological shifting of the discipline, mainly related to the generational change. The development of the currents of critical scientism, based mainly on structuralist methodology, as well as anti-naturalist approaches, form a new perspective in rural studies. The reflection on the methodological tradition in rural studies in geography and the interest in new (social and cultural) directions in human geography lead to the assumption that we should attempt to try different approaches, while seeking methods to discover the specific features of rural life in the circumstances of advanced disagrarisation of the countryside.

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