

mgr inż. Jolanta Jóźwik

**THE PREMISES OF URBANITY AND THE ROLE OF GRANTING
THE URBAN STATUS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SETTLEMENT UNITS
IN CONTEMPORARY POLAND**

SUMMARY

Recently, there has been a noticeable increase in the aspirations of many localities for formal legal recognition of their urbanity. In the last few years alone (2018-2023), more than 50 new towns have appeared on the map of Poland, most of which had urban rights in the past. There is still a debate about what urbanity means for small towns, and whether the urban status should be restored to all the towns that were deprived of it by the tsarist decree of 1869. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to answer two fundamental questions: what is the basis for the identification of towns in contemporary Polish conditions from the point of view of local government units, and what is the role of the change in the status of a locality or commune from rural to urban, and whether this change represents an important developmental impulse for the settlement units that have undergone such a change.

In relation to the issues raised, the dissertation tested three research hypotheses. The first hypothesis was that the degree to which the premises of urbanity are fulfilled is influenced by the genesis of the town. Towns without urban traditions fulfil the premises of urbanity to a greater extent than restituted towns. The second suggested that there are more expected benefits than losses associated with the acquisition of urban status, although these are mainly subjective benefits of an immeasurable nature. The third, on the other hand, suggested that the acquisition of urban status changes the existing character and pace of development. Settlement units develop faster after the change to urban status than before.

The spatial and temporal scope of the study was determined by the nature of the subject matter and the objectives of the study. The research material was analysed at the national level, in relation to all newly established towns, as well as at the local level, in relation to individual settlement units. In order to make a detailed identification of the current premises of urbanity and to establish a catalogue of expectations associated with a settlement unit obtaining the status of a city, 56 newly established towns in Poland between 1999 and 2018 were studied. They were divided into restituted towns, i.e. those which had already had urban status in their history, and towns without urban traditions, i.e. those which obtained the urban status for the first time. A detailed review and comparison was also made of the documentation relating to the procedure for granting urban status to a locality, including in particular the applications with their annexes. A dynamic multivariate comparative analysis was used to determine and compare the nature and rate of development of the settlement units before and after obtaining urban status, extending the scope of the study to include the municipalities in which the towns under study were located. The results of the type and rate of development of the municipalities and towns were compared with the reference group. The analysis of the level of socio-economic development of the settlement units was dynamic in nature and was studied for variable ten-year periods, which influenced the need to determine the level of development of the analysed units and their control groups for the years 1995-2021.

The empirical part of the study allowed conclusions to be drawn and the research hypotheses to be verified. The research has revealed the existence of a number of inconsistencies and ambiguities in the terminology of the legal provisions relating to changes in the territorial division of the municipal level. The results also indicate that the premises of urbanity is understood differently by both national and local authorities, and also that there is a certain correlation between the genesis and the degree of fulfilment of the premises of urbanity. It has also been shown that the administrative change itself, from the applicants' point of view, has more expected gains than losses, with both image and development benefits. It was also found that, contrary to expectations, the granting of urban status does not play a key role in shaping the further development of settlement units. It is therefore inappropriate to equate the granting of urban status with the dynamic development of settlement units and to assume that this administrative change will always be a significant development impulse.