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## **2. THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY IN POLAND, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE CENTRE OF GEOGRAPHICAL STUDIES IN ŁÓDŹ**

### **2.1. Social geography – the vision and research objectives of the discipline**

Since the beginning of the emergence of social geography as a geographical discipline, there was no substantial agreement as to its scope and research purpose (see e.g. Jackson 1983, Gregory 1981, Cloke et al. 1991, Thrift 1996). This situation is typical for most geographical disciplines, especially within human geography. In contrast to the other social sciences, the difficulty in defining the subject and the definition of the relevant parts of human geography stems from its very essence, especially the ambition for overall explanations (holism). Geographical specialisations reproduce the characteristics of the whole science, which historian F. Braudel (1971) call a tendency for “global visions”. This kind of “possessiveness” of

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particular areas of knowledge is often considered in relation to the dialectic of forces which equally integrate and disintegrate. In the case of geography, the problem is more complex. If we assume that this distinction in subject is determined by the method, the independence of geography may be considered doubtful, which in turn undermines its independence of other social sciences, often with shorter tradition in development and research. It is easiest to claim, that geography is the discipline practised by geographers and, by analogy, that social geography is practised by social geographers. The entity orientation (concept) raises many reservations, especially from researchers that seek geography's origins in the theoretical and methodological point of view based on Kant's philosophy (neo-Kantianism) and perceive nature as widely as the creators of classical geography, especially as a consensus between natural and human sciences (see Wilczyński 1999).

The great discussion in world literature concerning the bases for the separateness and subject matter of social geography took place in late 1970s and early 1980s. It had at least two important contexts. The first involved the theoretical and methodological transformations, including the questioning of the naturalistic model in human geography which dominated research in late 1950s and 1960s. The second context was related to social transformations, especially concerning the sense of unfairness in the division of goods, access to elite positions, power etc. (Neo-Marxist tendencies).

Experts in the history of the development of social geography, especially in the Anglo-American society, do not give a clear answer to the question of what social geography is. R. Panelli (2009) shows different traditions and contexts that influenced the emergence of social geography and claims that it was and still is a very diverse discipline. However, an important conclusion resulting from an in-depth analysis of the functioning of the discipline is that its nature depends largely on institutional, philosophical and social circumstances (Panelli 2009, p. 194). Social geography therefore takes different forms depending on the culture in which a researcher is brought up and works. It is very important, since, as we will show, the character of Polish social geography (studies, theoretical mod-

els) is different from the comprehension of this field, especially in the intellectual centre of its development (Great Britain).

In view of the thematic and cultural diversity of researchers, a wide vision of social geography is usually assumed, both in epistemological and ontological sense. In the epistemological sense, social geography permits any scientific methods and practices, which are used to describe society in relation to space (territory, landscape, region, place). In the ontological sense, social geography is treated as a superstructure of geography, one of the many concepts overcoming divisions, especially those that separate nature and culture.

In his outstanding work, F. Braudel (1971, p. 250), concerning, among other things, the relation between social sciences, claimed that geography builds its uniqueness by putting the relationship between societies and space as the central point of its studies. The author wrote about this as follows: "Geography in all its fullness seems to me a spatial study of society or, to make it even more full, a study of society through space".

We can consider if the nature of social geography, as construed by F. Braudel, really lies in the articulation of spatial matters of societies, which uses methods to identify its uniqueness as a science ("a study of society through space"), while undermining its independence of other social sciences. There is also a question of equality between a "spatial study of society" and a "study of society through space". The first is concerned with the distribution and differentiation of social space (the study of social chorology), while the latter suggests treating space as a causative factor (explaining spatial phenomena), "a special spatial factor" with which to approach the analysis of societies.

While the thematic concept of social geography, despite its weaknesses, has been increasingly accepted, especially by those geographers who broadly understand the subject matter and objectives of the discipline, there are still vast differences between them in theoretical and methodological terms. In the 1970s, with the contestation of positivist geography, two main visions (approaches) emerged, based on Marxist philosophy or exposing the humanistic philosophy (see Johnston 2003, Blunt 2003).

**Table 2.1.** A summary of contrasting traditions and results in social geography

Tradition	Foci on social issues	Types of social geography produced
Regional	Social life and relations are interconnected with other (physical and human) dimensions of the region under consideration	Integrated descriptions of specific areas or regions demonstrating how local society was interwoven as a tapestry or interrelated environmental, demographic, economic + cultural dimensions
Neo-positivist spatial science	Social life can be understood as a functions of universal processes and laws that link society and space	Statistical descriptions of existing patterns of society operating over space (e.g., migration, poverty and affluence) Mathematical models assisting scholars in hypothesizing, testing + predicting relations between social groups + space (e.g. ethnic concentrations, housing markets, and social service needs)
Humanist	Social life is seen as individual and contextual (rather than universal) and understood via experiences and meanings that individuals and groups will assemble about their lifeworlds	Text-rich accounts individuals + groups' experiences and the values + meanings they ascribe to everyday life the places to which they are attached
Marxist	Social life is recognised around the material conditions and relations that sustain a society Critique of social conditions and processes sustaining capitalism was initially common	Theoretical critiques of how society is organised + regulated to enable capitalism to be reproduced Case studies exposing unequal, social power-relations + material conditions faced by contrasting classes in capitalism Geographies of social conflict at both inter-class + intra-class levels
Feminist	Social life is recognised as organised around the gender divisions and relations that shape and reproduce a society Critique of patriarchy and gender inequalities was initially common	Theoretical critiques of the unequal gender relations reproducing patriarchy Case studies of women's unequal life experiences (e.g., access to housing employment and struggles over identity) Later considerations of hegemonies + diversities of masculinity that help shape women's and some men's lives

Source: R. Panelli (2009).

After more than 40 years of transformation following the paradigmatic revolution of the late 1960s and 1970s (see Harvey 1973), the number of approaches has multiplied. R. Panelli (2009, p. 186) lists six such traditions (approaches) that produce the different types of social geography (Table 2.1).

In Polish human geography, an attempt at systematising the methods of socialising geography was made by A. Lisowski (e.g. 1990, 2008a, b), who based it on the subject matter organisation. The work of the author shows that we can distinguish at least three approaches, namely:

1) social geography is a specific approach to the subject of human (socio-economic) geography, such as the transport geography, industrial geography, settlement geography, agricultural geography etc., which emphasises the role of a human (society) in the creation of economic space (adaptation of techniques of social studies in geography). This interest is usually limited to the study of various human activities in relation to the quality of life and the application character of research;

2) social geography is a type of interdisciplinary social science, which can be the basis for the integration of human geography (socio-economic geography). In this approach, social geography is a new concept in human geography, but not the only one, as such competitive concepts as the “new” cultural geography, “new” regional geography, humanistic geography;

3) social geography is the discipline of human geography with a clearly delineated research object and goals (social geography *in the strict sense*). This narrow understanding of social geography brings it closer to spatial sociology and environmental psychology. The distinction between the geographical and the non-geographical is very difficult and often depends on the institutional affiliation of the researcher.

In this chapter, we assume the third (narrow, strict) understanding of social geography, as a discipline of human (socio-economic) geography, equivalent to other disciplines of human geography, such as agricultural geography, settlement (urban) geography, industrial

geography etc. We understand it as a discipline, which explains the structure and social processes in their spatial (territorial) dimension and focusses in its explanatory layer on the process of social creation of various forms of human environments (landscapes, regions, locations) and relations that connect humans to their surroundings (environment).

In this study, we develop three theses, which determine the main points of discussion and formulated conclusions.

Thesis 1. Social geography in Poland is diverse in terms of methodology and undertaken research problems. Most of the works undertaken by social geographers are empirical.

Thesis 2. The main difference between social geography in Poland and social geography of the Anglo-American world is the lack of radical orientations based on Marxist philosophy in Polish studies and limited interest in postmodern and feminist orientations. However, a neo-positivist trend based on objective (quantitative) methods is strong. Social geographers in Poland choose “safer” topics, avoiding political and ideological entanglements.

Thesis 3. Cultural circumstances are an important barrier to the development of social geography in Poland. In the United Kingdom and the United States, the intensive development of social geography stems from a long tradition of social subjectivity conditioned by their democratic system and the development of civil society. In post-socialist countries, including Poland, the mentality of researchers (commitment to scientism), who shun evaluative and critical judgements as they used to in the totalitarian system, is a significant obstacle to the development of social geography.

## **2.2. Origins of social geography in Poland**

Indication of the start of the study in a particular discipline is usually a very difficult task. This problem also applies to Polish social geography, which borrowed the majority of its research concepts from world (Anglo-Saxon) literature and enriched them with local experi-

ence. We may say, that the development of this branch of geography, as well as the human (socio-economic) geography as a whole, was dependent, mainly in theoretical and methodological terms, while the empirical works maintain the specificity of local and regional circumstances.

The experts in Polish human (socio-economic) geography stress, that social geography was first distinguished as a separate branch of geography by Stanisław Nowakowski in the interwar period. This researcher, working in the University of Poznań, distinguished in the 1930s a discipline he called socio-geography, connecting its origins to the influence on the Marxist philosophy (Nowakowski 1928, 1934–1935). Institutes of geography in Poland at the time were dominated by the followers of anthropogeography, so there was no place for any views that contradicted the classic scheme of studying the relationship between humans and the (geographical) environment and the focus on physical structures, especially the physiognomy of settlements (cultural landscape). The Institutional development of geography in independent Poland in the years 1918–1939 (between the two world wars) was too short to allow it to adapt more widely the different approaches of the social sciences, and provide their wider critical assessment. Since the mid-1930s, first syntheses of the achievements of Polish geography, including human geography were made. This was accompanied by greater reflection on the impact of different concepts of geographical and social sciences on the research by Polish geographers and attempts to systematise this knowledge (cf. Zaborski and Wrzosek 1937–1939, Nowakowski 1934–1935, Pawłowski 1938).

In post-war Poland, social geography and its history has always been subject to political changes that accompanied both its creation and influenced the nature of theoretical and methodological base and research content of the discipline.

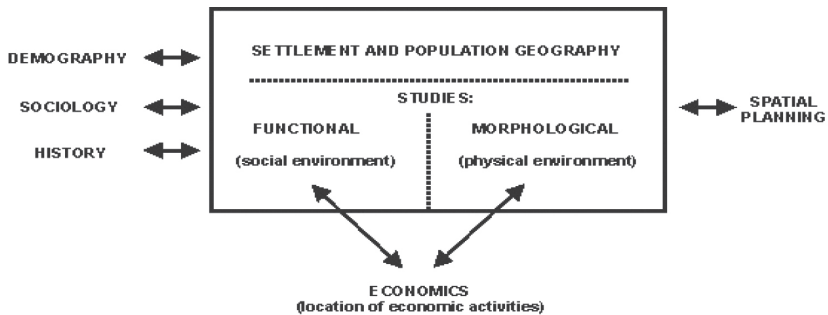
After World War II, in the communist period, the first attempts at really socialising human geography and consequently separating social geography, have been unsuccessful (cf. works by Dobrowolska 1948). The main reason was the imposition of the communist

model of development on Polish science and the society at large. Z. Rykiel (2011) calls the overall transformations of that time, regardless of the assessment of such transformations, the only fully successful scientific revolution in the history of Polish geography. Since the late 1940s and over the entire 1950s, human geography (pre-war anthropogeography) was subject to theoretical and methodological reorientation, whose spectacular effect was the introduction of a new official name – economic geography.

Economic geography, in addition to cognitive and practical, also had ideological functions. Its practical purpose, related to the policy guidelines, was to use geographical knowledge to design and justify the socialist economic development plans. In order to efficiently implement the practical functions, economic geography was divided into four main sub-disciplines – the geographies of industry, agriculture, transport, and settlement and population. W. Wilczyński (2011, p. 28) described this change as an expression of the prevalence of Marxism-Leninism in the sciences and the dominance of scientism. As a result of this transformation, humans construed in humanistic, historical and philosophical dimensions disappeared from economic geography (cf. Jędrzejczyk 2001, Rembowska 2006b, Suliborski 2008). Under such political conditions, there was no chance for social geography to become one of disciplines of geography. In the scheme of geographical sciences organisation penned by S. Leszczycki (e.g. 1975), one of the leading personages shaping the organisational and substantive grounds for Polish geography, there was no social, cultural or political geography, nor humanistic geography that was already being developed in Anglo-Saxon countries. The concession nature of progress in economic geography in Poland was also due to the selective transfer of knowledge from abroad. Until the end of the 1970s, most quotes were from Soviet works and the works of the socialist countries, with limited and selective quotes from beyond the “iron curtain”, mostly from works that did not tackle any social issues and only concerned economic or methodological issues with low ideological and political involvement.



The issue of functions of settlement units within the settlement and population geography, construed as forms of economic (professional) activities of the inhabitants was a kind of substitute for social studies (Figure 2.1). The contemporary subject range of the settlement and population geography is best reflected in the diagram penned by K. Dziewoński (1990), who equals the functional trend with the studies of the social environment of settlements.



**Figure 2.1.** The diagram of the research of settlement geography

Source: K. Dziewoński (1990)

The origins of social geography in the People's Republic of Poland (the communist period – 1945–1989) should be traced back to the works of researchers working at universities, who tried in many cases to combine elements of pre-war anthropogeography with the current models of economic geography, as well as with some aspects of methodology of social sciences, especially sociology.

Roughly speaking, one can point to the dual source of Polish social geography in the communist period (late 1980s and early 1990s). The first source is mainly the work of researchers dealing with the problems of transformation of the settlement network and economic structure of the regions, whose basics of research have been formed before World War II (anthropogeography). The second

lies in the studies selectively adapting in Poland the assumptions and methods mainly created in the Anglo-Saxon community.

The first attempts at identifying the sources of social geography in the People's Republic of Poland were made in the early 1970s (cf. Golachowski 1975). S. Golachowski (1975, p. 9) associated its formation with the interdisciplinary studies of the industrialisation and urbanisation of rural areas. In his reviews of literature, the author would refer to Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian works in behavioural geography, by then using the positivist methodology. He claimed that the range of the concept of social geography overlaps with the range of socio-geography and social ecology. This way, as one of the first authors, he pointed out the relationship between geographical and sociological studies. Much later, the problem of the junction of the two disciplines was also raised by Z. Rykiel (1991a, p. 10), who thought that the sources of social geography should also be traced back to the reflections of sociologists analysing the relationship between the society and space.

The scale and methods of research are also important for the issue of identifying the sources of social geography. Field studies of small settlements (mainly rural) and the use of social interviewing techniques (in addition to traditional testing methods of settlement structures), have played a key role. In geography, pioneering studies in this field were led by M. Dobrowolska and her team. Compared to many formal national and regional studies of economic structures, the works of M. Dobrowolska were her original contribution to the theory of economic region. M. Wójcik (2012), writing about the theory of rural geography in Poland, points out that by starting a discussion with the industry-preferred model of the development of geography, M. Dobrowolska (1958) had a very different vision of economic geography. According to her, the social and economic transformations of rural areas are an issue for interdisciplinary research (Dobrowolska 1958, p. 94), while its purpose is "the integral recreation of the existing reality" with all of its facts, taking into consideration the inter-relation between phenomena and processes. Her approach was a geographical response to the demands of some

sociologists (such as K. Dobrowolski), who preferred local fieldwork and believed that such point of view allowed them to better capture the overall context of social and economic transformation.

There was a short period favourable to scientific discussion of social geography during the so-called “Carnival of Solidarity” (1980–1981) when, due to the great civil movement against the communist system, talks about the problems of social and local development, self-organisation, etc. were started. The key role in shaping social geography was played by the Institute of Geography of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Warsaw), especially the young generation of geographers. The “Dangerous Minds”, as the initiators of the reform are called by Z. Rykiel (2011, 2014), were advocates of starting a wide-ranging discussion not only about the state of geography, its institutional structure, but also about familiarising a wider audience with the progress of novel and little-known (in Poland) disciplines of geography, especially the humanistic and radical approaches of human geography.

A conference in Rydzyna (1983) organised by the young generation did not lead to any breakthrough or reform of the institutional base of geography, but brought about some scientific results. Despite the hostility of some part of the community, social geography based on the ideas imported from democratic countries was accepted, albeit not without reservations. A lasting positive effect of the intellectual “unrest” of young geographers was the initiation and consolidation of the awareness of the importance of social geography among geographical disciplines.

It is also difficult to overestimate the impact on the interest in social geography wielded by the translations of articles appearing in leading geographical periodicals all over the world and their publication in the Review of Foreign Geographical Literature (*Przegląd Zagranicznej Literatury Geograficznej*), which was published and edited primarily by the staff of the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organisation of the Polish Academy of Sciences (cf. Table 2.2). An important role in introducing the, often complex, theoretical and methodological problems was played by the comments by the

editors of subsequent volumes, that explained the context for the creation and development of various research trends, interpreted results etc. Over 10 years of publishing articles in the field of social, cultural and humanistic geography (1980–1990) contributed to the overall increase in the theoretical awareness of the representatives of socio-economic geography and the spreading of the idea of socialising geography in Polish universities. Owing to the opportunity to use the theories and methodologies of social geography created in foreign centres, Polish socio-economic geography of the 1980s also influenced the geographers in other socialist countries.

**Table 2.2.** Issues of the Review of Foreign Geographical Literature (Przegląd Zagranicznej Literatury Geograficznej) dedicated to social geography

Year of publication	Volume themes
1980	Selected problems of urban geography Socio-spatial structure of cities and urban agglomerations
1981	Social geography
1983	Time-geography
1984	Progress in social and economic geography in Anglo-Saxon countries
1986	Behavioural geography
1987	Medical social geography
1989	Geography of perception

Source: own elaboration.

More than 10 years after the publication of the article by S. Gólachowski, one of the first advocates of the separation of social geography in Poland as one of the disciplines of geography, the first Polish textbook for teaching this subject was created. It was written by S. Otok (1987) of the University of Warsaw. As Z. Rykiel (1991a) writes, the definition of social geography it proposed was normative and applied more to the vision of its development than the actual state. The organisation of the content of the textbook proposed by

S. Otok was loosely related to numerous trends in social geography being developed in the United Kingdom or the United States, especially those with anti-scientific orientation. The author's reflections concerned the spatial circumstances of social development, the social factors in regional development or the social aspects of environmental protection, which he justified by referring to selected foreign geographical works.

The vision of social geography presented in the textbook was more closely related to the current (in 1980s) functions of economic geography, which was more and more often called the socio-economic geography, focussed on the studies of regional and local structures in the face of a prolonged crisis (cf. Table 2.3).

**Table 2.3.** The structure of the *Social Geography* textbook by S. Otok (1987)

Chapter	Title of chapter
1.	Directions in the developments of social geography
2.	Spatial factor in the research of social development
3.	Spatial social diversity in regional policy and planning
4.	Social infrastructure in the development of spatial planning
5.	Social perception of quality of life
6.	Social aspects of environmental protection
7.	Studies on regional differences in social situations
8.	Preferred directions of research in the social geography of the world
9.	Social geography of the crisis period of the 1980s

Source: own elaboration.

It is worth noting, that the range of contents that the author presents shows social geography in a way that corresponds to the first concept distinguished by A. Lisowski (2008a), i.e. as economic geography expanded with some social concepts. The vision of social geography presented by S. Otok was loosely related to the many currents, mainly developing in the Anglo-Saxon countries. At that time,

it was politically influenced and largely reflected the situation in which economic geographers participated in interdisciplinary studies on the assessment of social infrastructure and the development of social regional planning (cf. Kukliński 1983).

To some extent, the overall political and institutional circumstances of geography in the early 1980s had a negative consequence in the nature of tackled problems. The volumes of the Review of Foreign Geographical Literature (Przegląd Zagranicznej Literatury Geograficznej) devoted to social geography, as well as in the scientific studies, were mainly devoted to the neo-positivist tendencies (e.g. the socio-spatial structures of cities, human behaviour).

The original, as compared with their Anglo-Saxon and former socialist counterparts, activities of Polish researchers who started modernising the basis of geographical functionalism, were also important for the development of social geography of the time. Their works tackled the theoretical issue of socialising functional studies, deeming the social dimension of the development and transformations of territorial structures as key in discovering the mechanisms behind the formation of socio-economic reality. Such works may include the following:

- 1) the concept of “duality of settlement phenomena” (Maik 1988);
- 2) the concept of “territorial social system” (Chojnicki 1988);
- 3) the concept of “function of place” (Suliborski 2001).

Until the end of the 1980s, however, no problems were tackled within the anti-scientistic orientation, the radical and humanistic geography, i.e. the currents that related to the spheres of ideology and values. The most radical social geographers chose to emigrate (K. Dramowicz) or their key and critical works were published abroad (e.g. Rykiel 1988). While humanistic geography has developed a bit more, albeit with a big delay relative to the beginning of Polish transformations (cf. Jędrzejczyk 2001, Rembowska 2002a, b), the radical trend in Poland never emerged for good. We can list at least for reasons for that:

- 1) the initial selection of less ideologically involved research problems discussed in the neo-positivist model (genetic factor, 1980s);

2) the persistence of Polish institutional geography, including the divisions, which reflected the power relations in science, i.e. the reproduction of the social structure and negative selection of academic staff (structural factor);<sup>1</sup>

3) the general lack of understanding of theoretical concepts by geographers based on neo-Marxist philosophy (the theoretical consciousness factor);<sup>2</sup>

4) weak links between the geographers and the practical area, understood not only as a collaboration with institutions of economic development and planning, but also with the organisations, especially NGOs, which are an expression of the functioning of civil society (research practice factor).

The free development of social geography was only possible from the late 1980s and 1990s and was closely related to the political transformations that have happened and are still happening in Poland. However, the modern development is very different from the one in Western countries with long traditions of democracy. The transition from a repressive (totalitarian) order to a democratic order allowed for tackling new research problems that could not, for obvious reasons, be discussed under communist rule. The development of scientific research, however, encountered other barriers whose origins lie in the previous socio-political system. They are two-fold: institutional and theoretical-methodological, and their nature is essentially social. Institutional barriers arise from the fact that Polish science, including geography, has not undergone any substantial transformation since the communist times, that would break the previously formed relations. Other difficulties are caused by the fact that the replacement of dehumanised research models based on the analytical philosophy of science (mainly neo-positivism) with pro-social approaches also referring to the philosophy of humans and culture (see Chojnicki 2000) that more adequately

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Z. Rykiel (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Marxism, not only in the scientific community, has mostly negative connotations in Poland due to the selective use of its provisions by the ideologues of the communist regime.

describe new social and economic situation of the country, was possible only to a small extent. It encountered resistance from the habits and preferences of the communities ruling the institutional structures of geography. These difficulties were compounded by the overall theoretical and methodological weakness of Polish geography, strong disintegrating tendencies and the mechanism of negative selection of personnel, which supports the status quo in terms of authorities and ways of thinking.

### 2.3. Key areas of research in Polish social geography

Social geography in Poland has some main trends of interests. Polish geographers have already made several attempts at distinguishing them (e.g. Rykiel 1991a, Lisowski 2008a). Z. Rykiel (1991a, p. 11) conceptualised Polish social geography according to the paradigmatic criterion and distinguished five tendencies according to the models of explanation, i.e. classic, dogmatic, positivist, dialectic and personalistic. The author proves that Polish social geography always had some theoretical and methodological form that referred to both certain concepts of the philosophy of sciences and the social and political situation in the country. The historical and problematic analysis presented by A. Lisowski (2008b) is similar to the work by Z. Rykiel. The former relates his considerations to social geography construed very widely and includes its model nature. In A. Lisowski's approach, social geography is equivalent to human geography and can be treated as a superstructure for different branches of geography (economic, cultural, humanistic etc.). On the other hand social geography in its narrow (and strict) sense is related to the positivist and, to some extent, dialectic model. Both authors (Rykiel 1991a and Lisowski 2008a, b) distinguish several main groups of subjects in Polish social geography. By analysing their reflections, we can list the following research problems and relate them to the following representative works (see Table 2.4).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The table does not include the works of geographers from the University of Łódź, as this issue is discussed in a later part of the chapter.



**Table 2.4.** The main research problems of Polish social geography and their representatives

Research problem	Representative works
Socio-spatial structure of cities and regions	Piotrowski 1966, Węclawowicz 1975, 1988, 2007, Gaczek 1979, Jagielski 1978, Rykiel 1989, Jaroszewska-Brudnicka 2002, Janc 2006
Socio-spatial disparities, the living conditions and quality of life	Jałowiecki 1982, Prawelska-Skrzypek 1991, Małuszyńska 1991, Zborowski 2005, Więclaw-Michniewska 2006, Węclawowicz 2001, Rykiel 2000, Rydz 2001, Sagan and Czepczyński 2001
Spatial preferences and behaviour, social attitudes	Pióro 1977, Słodczyk 1981, Rykiel and Szajnowska-Wysocka 1989, Domański and Libura 1986, Matykowski 1986, Gwosdz 2001, Szymańska and Pappelbon 2001
Perception of space and geographical imaginations	Bartnicka 1986, 1989, 1991, Wojciechowski 1986, Rykiel 1991b, Domański and Prawelska-Skrzypek 1986, Libura 1988, Sagan 1998, Madurowicz 2007
Territorial identity	Rykiel 1985, 1999, Prawelska-Skrzypek 1990, Domański 1991, Matykowski 1996
Territorial communities (localities)	Sagan 1991, 2000, Kotus 2001, 2007, Lisowski 2004

Source: own elaboration based on literature (including Rykiel 1991, Lisowski 2008a, b).

## 2.4. The contribution of the centre of geographical studies in Łódź to the development of social geography

Geography was one of the founding faculties of the University of Łódź (1945) and played an important role in shaping the academic life of the city and the region. In the 70-year tradition of university education in Łódź, the geographers working here have developed

almost all branches of geography, both in its natural and socio-economic aspects (cf. Liszewski 2008). The uniqueness of the modern Faculty of Geographical Sciences, as compared other geographical units in Poland, stems from its size (extensive organisational structure) and the larger number of socio-economic departments than the physical geography departments. The current position of socio-economic geography in Łódź is the result of the research problems widely defined and discussed by the founder of the Łódź school of socio-economic geography, prof. L. Straszewicz (mainly 1960s and 1970s). The most important feature shaping the specificity of this scientific school was the primacy of settlement studies, which was reflected in the interests and results of works from L. Straszewicz's students (S. Pączka, M. Koter, E. Dziegieć, S. Liszewski, J. Dzieciuchowicz, A. Suliborski, T. Marszał). Since the 1960s, the main trends in research were related to spatial structures and industrial location factors (mainly textile industry), morphological and functional structure of urban areas.<sup>4</sup> Research was mainly conducted in Poland, the region and Łódź, which is now one of the most thoroughly studied cities in Poland (cf. Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz and Liszewski 1993, Liszewski 2008).

By identifying the process of internal problematic transformation of settlement (urban) geography, W. Maik (e.g. 2005, 2012) pointed to two important factors. The first one results from the duality of settlement phenomena, with geographers becoming interested in local communities, not just the diversity of material environment (physical structures) (Maik and Stachowski 1995). The studies of socio-spatial structures are therefore an expansion of the existing geographical studies of the morphological and functional structures. The second variable is the increasing theoretical and methodological awareness, and thus the developing interests, e.g. in the concept of social ecology or social space.

The creation and development of social geography in Łódź perfectly fit the process of transformation identified by W. Maik. It de-

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<sup>4</sup> The history of geographical studies in Łódź has been comprehensively described in recent years by S. Liszewski (2008 and others).

veloped primarily as urban social geography and was an effect of a cumulation of knowledge formed by overlapping new research problems onto traditional interest in urban issues.

The development of social geography within settlement studies was thus evolutionary in nature. Modern studies have been significantly expanded to include a wide range of geographic social issues, and the researchers working in Łódź are still one of the leading groups in Poland, even though this subject matter developed later.

The beginnings of social geography in Łódź are primarily connected to the verification of the premises of geographical functionalism. These considerations were largely intuitive (with scarce usage of foreign literature due to its limited availability) and were an example of a search for new methodological solutions that went beyond the quantitative and formally recognised structures of cities of the socialist economy era. Such ideas may include the concept of housing environment unique to Polish literature (Suliborski 1976), as well as works on the spatial diversity of housing conditions (Dzieciuchowicz et al. 1972). The research done by J. Dzieciuchowicz concerning housing conditions resulted in the following years in an attempted synthesis in the form of zoning of housing conditions in Łódź (1976, 1980), followed by a study of the degree of segregation and redistribution of population according the such criteria as social characteristics (e.g. 1983, 1989).

The evolution of the views of Łódź geographers was mostly related to the gradual humanisation of contemporary studies in economic space. A change in the functional model of urban studies was sought, that would involve the transition from the functions interpreted from an economic point of view to more anthropocentric explanations. In this respect, we can distinguish at least two approaches, namely:

- 1) a redefinition of the city in terms of territory and space and the proposal of perception and interpretation of the city by geographers from the point of view of a human being as a creator, user and an active participant (Suliborski 2001, 2010). This is

reflected in A. Suliborski's concept of "the function of place", which includes a proposal to identify functions of a city in a social dimension (apart from morphological and economic dimensions). The social dimension concerns awareness and is generated by the relationship between humans and places (Suliborski 2001). This concept is empirically verified using chosen types of urban areas, such as cemeteries (Suliborski 2005) and old industrial districts (Suliborski 2011);

2) an interpretation of studies of spatial diversity (spatial structure) in cities in terms of living conditions, which is primarily meant to detect spatial inequality of conditions and explaining their origins (Liszewski 1988, 2004). This concept was formulated in the late 1980s and 1990s and was related to a broader research programme, which dealt with a post-socialist city (Liszewski, e.g. 2001). The programme was implemented on the basis of a number of empirical studies (in Łódź), e.g. a study of the spatial structure of housing conditions (Liszewski 1995, Kaczmarek S. 1996), the daily path of life of the inhabitants of the city (Kaczmarek J. 1996).

Social geography in the strict sense started being developed more extensively in Łódź in the 1990s, and the studies were mostly empirical. Hence, it is first necessary to pay special attention to the works that discussed the theoretical and methodological issues (except those listed above concerning the living conditions and the function of space). The most important issues tackled in the theoretical and methodological studies included:

1) conditions and possibility of transformation or rejection of the positivist model in the view of anti-scientistic (anti-positivist) approaches in geography, especially the development of studies on local and regional identity, living conditions, interpretation of space in humanistic terms (cf. a selection of works by Rembowska 2013, Kaczmarek J., 2001, 2003);<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Aspects of theoretical and methodological variability in geography were discussed in *Basic ideas and concepts in geography* (Maik et al. 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011a, b, 2012). These works include a wide range of publications from the researchers working in Łódź.

2) the applicability of the geobiographic approach in social geography in the context of discussions on the essence of human geography (e.g. Kaczmarek 2005);

3) the social dimension of the functioning of the region and the role of such approaches in building unity of geography (Suliborski, e.g. 2003, 2008, Wójcik 2011, Suliborski and Wójcik 2011);

4) the moral aspects of spatial inequalities and the application of such research approaches in the scientific interpretation of Polish cities, as well as the application of new concepts to the study of social diversity in cities (Kaczmarek S. 2004, 2010, Kaczmarek J. 2004b, Szafrńska, 2012);

5) rural social geography and the possibility to reinterpret the concept of rural space in the context of the variable paradigm of human geography, including the development of social and humanistic approaches (e.g. Wójcik 2009, 2012);

6) the territorial bonds between the youth and the city (Szkurłat 2004);

7) the studies of the religious space of the city and role of religion in shaping urban space (e.g. Klima 2011, Dzieciuchowicz et al. 2004).

8) the perception of urban space (landscape), social conflicts and pathologies in space (Mordwa 2003a, b, 2013, Tobiasz-Lis 2013, Dmochowska-Dudek 2013).

Contemporary empirical researches in the field of social geography in Łódź are diverse in terms of problems and performed by several scientists. An attempt to list them according to their subject matter (problems) is included in Table 2.5, followed by examples of works.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Listing all articles and other studies is beyond the scope of this chapter. Such comprehensive list can be found in the listing of publications by the employees published on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Faculty of Geographical Sciences of the University of Łódź (*Publikacje...* 2011).

**Table 2.5.** The key research areas of social geography at the Faculty of Geographical Sciences of the University of Łódź, and selected (representative) work

Research problem	Representative works
The living conditions and quality of life	Rembowska 1990, Liszewski 1995, Kaczmarek S. 1996, Kaczmarek J. 1996, Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 2004, Jażdżewska 2004, Marcińczak 2004, 2006, Suliborski and Wójcik 2010, Klima et al. 2010
The socio-spatial structures	Liszewski 1999, Rembowska and Ślipek 2002, Wolaniuk 2003, Janiszewska 2007, Jażdżewska and Frykowski 2008, Szafrąńska 2006, 2007, 2008, Marcińczak 2007, 2009
Perception of space, environment and region	Mordwa 2003a, b, Szafrąńska 2003, Marcińczak and Siejkowska 2003, Klima et al. 2006, Rembowska 2006a, b, Sobczyński 2001, Tanaś 2008, Tobiasz-Lis 2008, 2010b, 2013, Tobiasz-Lis and Wójcik 2013a, Wójcik 2006, 2007
Attitudes, opinions and preferences	Groeger 2004, 2013, Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 2007, Jażdżewska and Frykowski 2006, 2009, Mordwa 2010a, b, Suliborski and Kulawiak 2006, Szafrąńska 2010, Tobiasz-Lis and Wójcik 2013b, Sobczyński 2000, Adamczewska and Szkurłat 2008
Social pathologies in space	Wolaniuk 1997, Kaczmarek J. 2004b, Marcińczak and Siejkowska 2004, Mordwa 2003a, b, 2007, 2013
Territorial awareness and identity (local, regional, national)	Rembowska 2002a, b, Barwiński 2013, Kaczmarek J. 2004a, Klima et al. 2004, Szkurłat 2003, Wójcik 2010c
The socio-spatial conflicts	Baraniak 2005, Dmochowska-Dudek 2010, 2013
Territorial communities	Kaczmarek S. 2001, Wojciechowska 2007, Mularska-Kucharek 2010, Rykała 2011, Tobiasz-Lis 2010a, Wójcik 2008, 2010a, b

Source: own elaboration.

## 2.5. Conclusions

The formation of social geography in Poland should be considered with reference to internal and external determinants of its development. Contemporary research problems, the treatment of research methodologies and theoretical concepts are undoubtedly closely related to the models stemming from the Anglo-Saxon geography. However, it is worth noting that while social geography abroad is part of extensive ideological and evaluative discussions, Polish social geography represents the behavioural trend under string influence of neo-scientistic methodology, which is caused by both the cognitive conservatism of the researchers and the prevailing social structure of Polish scientific community. The existing consensus based on models accepted in early 1980s and motivated by concession (selective) access to information is still hard to overcome. The dominance of quantitative methods and the lack of a broader theoretical (philosophical) reflection maintain mental *clichés* cause the research problems of social geography, both in theoretical sense and in the number of active researchers, to be taken over by other branches of science that are stronger in terms of theory, such as sociology, social anthropology or economics. The current reorientation of socio-economic geography towards spatial economy and management is, in our opinion, a kind of return to the known cognitive and methodological contents characteristic to the old economic geography in a new packaging and using modern research technologies (computers). The simultaneous lack of willingness to perform in-depth theoretical reflections (also characteristic of the entire Polish socio-economic geography) and the failure of social geographers to undertake major research challenges could lead to a crisis of this discipline in the institutional structure, followed by the regression in research, both in Poland and Łódź.

We should hope that over the years, when the political, social and economic transformation is at last completed in Poland, full openness to ideas and free exchange of thoughts between

geographers with various views will finally emerge. It seems that it could become an impulse to undertake new theoretical and methodological challenges and to solve the growing socio-spatial problems in the country.

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