

# Anna Cychowska

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## The demographic processes in the towns of seaside provinces in Poland during political system's transformation

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ANNA CYCHOWSKA

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TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF KOSZALIN

**THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROCESSES  
IN THE TOWNS OF SEASIDE PROVINCES IN POLAND  
DURING POLITICAL SYSTEM'S TRANSFORMATION**

**ABSTRACT.** The herein study presents the demographic processes taking place in the towns of seaside provinces in Poland from 1988 to 2000. 103 urban units situated in the Pomorskie and Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeships have been taken into consideration. The author presents the towns' development as far as their number, population and the factors influencing the changes at the time under research are concerned. This essay introduces changes in the towns' structure, urbanization level and population density. Intensity of birth-rate, mortality-rate and population growth have been analysed together with the migration inflow and outflow. An attempt has been made to answer the question which of the above factors played the crucial part in the changes of the actual population growth in the seaside provinces.

**KEY WORDS:** demographic processes, urbanization, population density, birth-rate, migrations

**INTRODUCTION**

Towns in Poland entered a new phase of urbanization in the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, because in a greater number of towns population decrease is observed. The urbanisation index is decreasing, and the number of rural population is increasing much faster than it was predicted. This is caused by the declining migration inflow from the rural areas and the simultaneous outflow increase from towns to the countryside, mainly because of the growing cost of living. This phenomena is accompanied by a systematically declining birth-rate, which is negative in towns.

The situation of people moving to the suburbs is becoming more and more common, especially in the larger towns, where the centre is more often associated with retail outlets and services.

These changes were the reason why the author made an attempt to study the topic of demographic processes taking place in the towns of seaside provinces in Poland in the period of the political system's transformation. The aim of this study is presenting the causative factors of the population's changes in the seaside towns. The subject matter of the research are 103 urban units situated in the area of two seaside provinces; 42 in the Pomorskie Voivodeship and 61 in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship.

The years 1988 and 2000 are the time boundaries. The year 1988 shows the state just before the period of the political system's transformation and the final year was marked by the availability of verified statistics data.

The analysis was based mainly on the materials published by the Central Bureau for Statistics in Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Gorzów Wlkp., Koszalin, Piła, Słupsk and Szczecin.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF TOWNS FROM 1988 TO 2000

2,708,900 people lived in 103 towns of the seaside provinces in Poland at the end of the year 2000, which constituted 11.3% of the total urban population in Poland and 68.9% of the total population in both of the provinces under research. In comparison with the state from the end of the year 1988 it shows the increase by 119,800 people, i.e. 4.6%. This growth was bigger in the area of the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship (5.2%) than in the Pomorskie Voivodeship (4.1%).

In the same time the share of the country inhabitants increased by 65,300 people i.e. 5.6% (3% in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship and 7.7% in the Pomorskie Voivodeship). The rural population increase was thus bigger than the population increase in towns. In the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship the growth was 3.0%, in the Pomorskie Voivodeship 7.7% (3.6 percentage point more than the urban population increase) which consequently caused a decline of the urbanization index from 69.0% in 1988 to 68.3% in 2000. In the area of the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship the level of urbanization grew insignificantly by 0.4 percentage point and in 2000 figured 69.6% with the average for Poland 61.8%. The Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship is thus more urbanised than the Pomorskie Voivodeship. The difference figured 1.3 percentage point in 2000.

A higher population growth than the average for the Polish towns in total, i.e. 3.0%, at the time under research was characteristic to towns situated in the Polish seaside. The highest increase was noted in Reda (the Pomeranian), where the number of people grew by 62.3% in 12 years, and then in Sianów (the West-pomeranian) by 24.4%. However, the number of people did not grow in all of

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the towns under research. In 13 of them a downturn in the number of people was observed at the end of the period studied (7 in the Pomeranian and 6 in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship). The greatest drop was noted in Sopot (the Pomorskie Voivodeship) i.e. 12.6% and Nowe Warpno (the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship) by 10.9%.

Until the mid-eighties the preserving high population growth and the considerably high – although from the beginning of the eighties declining – rural population inflow was conducive for the development of towns. As a result the number of people in towns was growing rapidly, which was reflected by an increasing urbanization index. In 1988 both the population growth and the migration balance in the two provinces reached a considerably high level. The values per 1,000 people were duly 3.9 and 2.5 per mill (the average for both provinces together).

Table 1. Changes in the number of towns in 1989–2000

TOWNS WITH THE POPULATION (IN THOUSANDS)	THE TOWNS OF SEASIDE PROVINCES		
	31.12.1988 STATE	INCREASE OR DECREASE (-) OF THE TOWNS' NUMBER	31.12.2000 STATE
Total	98	5	103
Below 5	35	2	37
5–10	17	-	17
10–20	21	3	24
20–50	18	-1	17
50–100	3	-	3
100–200	1	1	2
200 and more	3	-	3

*Source:* Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Bydgoskiego 1989, WUS, Bydgoszcz 1989, s. 43–48; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Elbląskiego 1989, WUS, Elbląg 1989, s. 48–53; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Gdańskiego 1989, WUS, Gdańsk 1989, s. 460–464; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Gorzowskiego 1989, WUS, Gorzów Wlkp. 1989, s. 34–38; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Koszalińskiego 1989, WUS, Koszalin 1989, s. 38–40; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Piłskiego 1989, WUS, Piła 1989, s. 42–46; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Słupskiego 1989, WUS, Słupsk 1989, s. 48–50; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Szczecińskiego 1989, WUS, Szczecin 1989, s. 47–51; Miasta w liczbach 1999–2000, GUS, Warszawa 2002, s. 33–170.

In the years 1988–2000 the process of population development considerably slowed which was a result of the declining birth-rate, especially in the late-nineties and the increasing migration adverse balance. The increase in the population number was not steady in the whole period under research. From the mid-eighties, the birth-rate was systematically decreasing and in the nineties a deep birth depression occurred. The birth-rate decline concerns the whole Polish population and both

provinces, however it is more intensive in the towns. At the same time, the economy transformation process and the resulting difficulties in the job market caused a considerable decline of people migrating from the countryside to town. It is worth pointing out that in both provinces, in towns likewise, a high unemployment rate is recorded. In both provinces under research as a result of these changes 95.5% of the total urban population increase from the years 1989–2000 happens in the years 1989–1996, and the share of the period between 1997 and 2000 figures only 4.5% (in the Pomorskie Voivodeship it calculated duly 92.9% and 7.1% whereas in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship 98.1% and 1.9%, respectively).

The number of the towns in the years 1989–2000 increased by 5 and at the end of 2000 there were 103 of them. The town structure according to the value measured by the number of people did not undergo a considerable change in the period under research (Table 1.). The increase in the number of towns was caused by bestowing civic rights. On the other hand, the increase of the medium-sized towns (10,000–20,000 people) results from the larger inflow of people from very big cities and the rural areas. The population inflow from the countryside is no longer as high as it used to be in the seventies and early eighties.

Table 2. Changes in the number of urban population in 1989–2000

TOWNS WITH THE POPULATION (IN THOUSANDS)	THE TOWNS OF SEASIDE PROVINCES				
	31.12.1988 STATE	INCREASE OR DECREASE (-) OF THE POPULATION			31.12.2000 STATE
		1989–2000	1989–1996	1997–2000	
Total	2,589,173	119,773	114,421	5,352	2,708,946
Below 5	107,897	6,215	4,528	1,687	114,112
5–10	125,171	-4,868	-6,463	1,595	120,303
10–20	289,576	53,985	52,379	1,606	343,561
20–50	614,495	-11,992	-16,559	4,567	602,503
50–100	225,250	-39,120	-40,147	1,027	186,130
100–200	105,553	108,309	108,820	-511	213,862
200 and more	1,121,231	7,244	11,863	-4,619	1,128,475

*Source:* Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Bydgoskiego 1989, WUS, Bydgoszcz 1989, s. 43–48; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Elbląskiego 1989, WUS, Elbląg 1989, s. 48–53; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Gdańskiego 1989, WUS, Gdańsk 1989, s. 460–464; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Gorzowskiego 1989, WUS, Gorzów Wlkp 1989, s. 34–38; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Koszalińskiego 1989, WUS, Koszalin 1989, s. 38–40; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Piłskiego 1989, WUS, Piła 1989, s. 42–46; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Słupskiego 1989, WUS, Słupsk 1989, s. 48–50; Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Szczecińskiego 1989, WUS, Szczecin 1989, s. 47–51; Gminy w Polsce w 1996 r., GUS, Warszawa 1998, s. 35, 63–64; Miasta w liczbach 1999–2000, GUS, Warszawa 2002, s. 33–170.

## POPULATION DENSITY AND CUBIC LATTICE IN 2000

At the end of the year 2000 towns in Poland covered 21,164 km<sup>2</sup> which accounted for 6.8% of Poland's area, 353 km<sup>2</sup> per one town on the average. In the seaside provinces towns covered 5.9% of the area. The density of the town lattice was varied in both provinces which was a result of a different number of towns in the provinces under research. The Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship had a bigger density of town lattice, where the coefficient was 375 km<sup>2</sup> per town, while in the Pomorskie Voivodeship it was 435 km<sup>2</sup> per town.

The Pomeranian towns comprised in 2000 4.8%, whereas the Westpomeranian towns 6.9% of the total town number in Poland. Small towns, whose population does not exceed 10 thousand comprised in the Pomeranian province 42.9%, in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship 59% the average for the country being 52.8%. 8.7% of total urban population in the Zachodniopomorskie and the Pomorskie Voivodeships lived in these towns.

Bigger towns with 50 thousand inhabitants or more comprised 10.5% of the total number of Polish towns, while in the Pomeranian 11.9% and 4.9% in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship. 61.7% of the urban population in the Pomeranian and 49.9% in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship lived there. Among the towns with such population there are 4 towns with the number of people above 100 thousand (Gdańsk, Gdynia, Koszalin, Słupsk, Szczecin) two of them with over 400 thousand inhabitants. What is more, Gdańsk and Szczecin are in the group of the biggest seven cities in Poland as far as population is concerned after Warszawa, Łódź, Kraków, Wrocław and Poznań.

An average town in Poland (2000) covered 24.1 km<sup>2</sup> and had 27,100 inhabitants. In the Pomeranian province an average town is bigger than an average Polish town and in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship the town population is higher. The due values are 25.9 km<sup>2</sup> and 35,800 people in the Pomorskie Voivodeship and in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship 22.4 km<sup>2</sup> and 19,800 population.

The average population density for a town in the Pomeranian province was 1,380 people per km<sup>2</sup> and was higher than the country average (1,129 people per km<sup>2</sup>). What is more, it was considerably higher than the Westpomeranian average which figured 885 people per km<sup>2</sup>. In the Pomeranian province there is a high number of towns with population density exceeding 2,000 people per km<sup>2</sup>. There were 12 such towns in 2000 which was about 30% of the total town number in the Pomeranian province, whereas in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship only one town (Gryfino) had such high population density despite the fact that there were 19 more towns in the latter province. Peak values were recorded in Tczew (2,751 people per km<sup>2</sup>) and in Krynica Morska (13 people per km<sup>2</sup>).

## COMPONENTS OF THE ACTUAL POPULATION GROWTH

A decline of the birth-rate which started in the mid-eighties was accompanied by an increase in mortality rate. A decreasing mortality rate along with the intensifying birth-rate recession was then characteristic to the nineties. As a result of these tendencies there was an acceleration in the rate of population growth's decrease. This is a common phenomenon for Poland, but more evident in towns where since 1998 the mortality rate has been higher than the birth-rate for the first time in the post-war period.

209,400 children were born in Polish towns in 2000 which means a decline by 111,700 (34.8%) in comparison with 1988. In towns under research the decline of the birth-rate's absolute figure was 1.5 percentage point lower than the average in Polish towns at that time. In both provinces between 1988 and 2000 the birth-rate decreased by 33.5% on the average. An over 40% birth-rate decline was recorded in 29 towns, in 4 of them: Sopot, Lipiany, Resko and Suchań (the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship) even over 50%. Only in 4 out of 98 towns a birth-rate increase was noted (in this specification towns that did not exist in 1988 were omitted). These were Drusy, Reda in the Pomorskie Voivodeship and Człopa, Dobra in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship.

The value of the birth-rate coefficient (apart from 2 towns) fairly decreased by 35% in the Pomorskie Voivodeship and by 36.5% in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship; the average for Polish towns being 36.7%. The lowest decline of this factor was recorded in Dobrzany, Chociwel, Biały Bór (over 50%) and in Suchań and Resko (over 60%). These towns are situated in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship. It is worth pointing out that Biały Bór has one of the highest female population which does not result in the birth-rate intensity.

The absolute number of deaths increased in Polish towns including the seaside provinces at the time under research. The average national increase accounted for 3.3% while in the Pomorskie Voivodeship it was 1.8% and in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship 16.5%. Per 1,000 people the mortality-rate increased by 11.5% in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship. The value of the death-rate coefficient decreased on the average in Polish towns including the Pomorskie Voivodeship, where in 19 out of 39 towns a decline was recorded and in the others an increase in the mortality-rate. The peak values occurred in Skórcz – a decline of the death-rate coefficient by 59% and on Hel an increase by 83.9%. In the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship it was Dobrzany with a decline by 70.2% and Międzyzdroje with an increase by 388%. In total the value of the death-rate coefficient increased by over 100%.

In the area under research the population growth between 1988 and 2000 decreased both in absolute numbers and the coefficient value. In the Pomorskie

Voivodeship the decrease accounted for 87.9% in absolute numbers and 89.1% in the value of the population growth coefficient. In the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship the duly values were 98.9% and 98.3%. From the above it is evident that the decline of the population growth was bigger in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship. It is also confirmed by the number of 20 towns which had a negative value of population growth at the end of the period under research whereas in 1988 a higher death-rate compared to birth-rate was not recorded in any of them. In the Pomorskie Voivodeship there were 5 such towns while in Sopot negative population growth was noted at the beginning of the time under research.

Town-directed inflow's decrease by 40% and a decline in the outflow from towns by 23.4% were observed in towns of seaside provinces in migration movement at the time under research. A bigger decrease in the inflow occurred in the towns of the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship while outflow's decline in the Pomeranian. As a result of these changes the migration balance per 1,000 people decreased between 1988–2000 in all seaside towns. However, it was 6 points bigger in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship whereas in the Pomeranian it was 0.9 percentage point.

### SUMMARY

Unemployment, fierce competitiveness in the job market, financial status' deterioration in Polish families, habits and mentality changes especially as far as young women are concerned resulted in a rapid decline of the birth-rate in the nineties. This is a common phenomenon for Poland, but more evident for urban than for rural population. The intensifying birth-rate recession in towns along with a quite steady mortality-rate resulted in an acceleration in the rate of population growth's decrease.

Growing unemployment and housing recession in towns contributed to a considerable decrease in the inflow of rural population to towns. Moreover, the growing cost of living in towns, transport development and a higher number of motorists have become an impulse for urban population's resettlement in rural areas. This common phenomenon can be more easily observed among young population and city-dwellers.

As a result of these changes, population depletion by natural and migration movement was recorded. Consequently it leads to slower urban population's increase or even to a decrease in the number of city-dwellers. This is followed by a systematic decline in the urbanization level.

A persistent few per mill population growth and a rural migration credit balance occurring on the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century resulted in the bigger increase of population in the rural areas compared to urban ones. It should be hoped that



economic upturn in towns will take place in the near future and will make them more attractive both for their inhabitants and rural population.

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## CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Anna Cychowska  
Technical University of Koszalin  
Department of Economics and Management, Faculty of Demography and Statistics  
Kwiatkowskiego 6E, 75–343 Koszalin  
[e-mail: [acychowska@wp.pl](mailto:acychowska@wp.pl)]