

# Through The Decades - Changes in Social, Economic, Legal and Planning Determinants of Residential Development across Decades - Evidence from Suburban Areas in Poland

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**Abstract.** Poland has experienced many political, legal, social and economic transformations. For the last twelve decades, this country was under foreign partition, in the war, under the influence of socialist system with centrally planned economy and finally regained autonomy and rapidly introduced market economy. Each epoch had its own characteristic, that can be recognized also in the residential buildings development. Therefore, the authors focused on the social, economic, legal and planning conditionings that shaped the development of the residential buildings with the most characteristic periods: pre-II world war, 50-ties, 60-ties, 70-ties, 80-ties, 90-ties and XXI century. Some of them are visible in the still existing residential buildings, especially in the suburban villages. The most recent process that can be observed in the study area is urban sprawl. Since the beginning of the XXI century, urban population in Poland has been gradually declining, while suburban villages transform into ‘urban-like’ districts. The aim of the study was to arrange and present in the decade-by-decade manner, the social, economic, legal and planning conditionings that were valid in particular periods. It was realized by correlating information on the contemporary social trends, economic conditions, legal framework and planning regulations. Presentation was enriched by the examples of the buildings developed in the accordance with the contemporary restrictions.

## 1. Introduction

*“To understand the contemporary world, one has to look back, observe the emergence of developmental processes in the past and analyze their evolution across the centuries.”* Waław Ostrowski [1].

Throughout the ages, the landscapes of most countries in the world have undergone tremendous changes as a result of social, economic, political and legal phenomena. Historical events have also left a visible mark on land management in Poland. In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries alone, Poland experienced annexation, two world wars, a socialist regime, the transition to a free-market economy and membership in the European Union. Each of these periods brought economic, social and political changes that influenced human settlement patterns, including residential construction. The way in which humans satisfy their housing needs and the influence of external factors on the type of erected



buildings, their location, size and style have been widely researched, including in pre-war Poland [2, 3, 4]. Rural settlement has never been thoroughly examined in the post-war period when Poland was being rebuilt from ruins. Research into the spatial layout of rural settlements was undertaken only after most Polish cities had been reconstructed. The problems and challenges associated with rural settlement were described by many authors, among them Dobrowolska [5], Uhorczok [6], Stasiak [7], Chilczuk [8], Michalak [9], Szulc [10], Kielczewska-Zalewska [11] and Tkocz [12]. At the same time, Western researchers turned their attention to the relatively new phenomenon of suburbanization, namely a population shift from the urban core into suburbs [13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18]. This trend was also identified and described in Poland [19, 5, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25]. A review of the literature suggests that spatial transformations are an interdisciplinary phenomenon that should be analyzed from various angles. This article attempts to examine complex changes in suburban landscapes over time. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was divided into periods characterized by distinctive architectural styles: the pre-war period (before World War II), 1945-1949, 1950s and 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Social, economic and political processes that influenced residential architecture in the examined time intervals were analyzed. Selected residential buildings that were erected in suburban areas in the examined periods and were preserved almost intact were described.

## 2. Results

The social, economic, legal and planning factors that influenced suburban residential architecture in the analyzed periods are presented in Table 1. To prepare following Table 1, Authors conducted careful research of relevant literature and adequate legal acts (Appendix A).

The listed determinants of residential development left a visible mark on the Polish landscape. The best preserved buildings from the 20th century can be found in suburban villages.

Table 1. Determinants of suburban residential architecture between 1900 and 2017.

Determinants of residential architecture	Pre-war period
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The local population was characterized by ethnic and cultural differences due to the inflow of settlers to Polish territories that were regained from foreign powers;</li> <li>- both the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church played an important role and were represented in the local population, as demonstrated by the number of religious buildings and structures belonging to both religious denominations;</li> <li>- overpopulation in rural areas: there were 81 residents (up to 300 in the south) per 100 hectares of arable land and grassland in Poland vs. 49 in Germany, 64 in Czechoslovakia and only 36 in Denmark [26, 27];</li> <li>- rural-to-urban migration;</li> <li>- unemployment in cities.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Polish agriculture was heavily based on agriculture, and 64% of Polish people were employed in agriculture [28];</li> <li>- predominance of family farms and small farms with the area of up to 2 ha;</li> <li>- land owners lived in manor farms, granges and palaces;</li> <li>- the construction of housing was costly (timber and red brick were the only available construction materials);</li> </ul>
<b>Planning regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- land was privately owned and often mortgaged, for example in East Prussia;</li> </ul>
<b>Legal regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- legal regulations applicable to housing differed across the annexed territories: they were most stringent in the regions annexed by Prussia and Austria (land consolidation, construction was allowed only along roads with utilities access, strict architectural and urban planning standards) and were most relaxed on the territories occupied by Russia;</li> </ul>

	<p>Selected legal acts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland of 16 February 1928 on construction and housing;</li> <li>- Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland of 6 March 1928 on the preservation of historical monuments;</li> <li>- Regulation of the Minister of Public Works of 23 April 1930 on urban planning;</li> </ul> <p>Types of plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- regulatory plans (general and detailed);</li> <li>- development plans (regional, municipal, general and detailed, urban expansion programs);</li> </ul>
<b>Urban development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- housing crisis after World War I. In 1921, the average occupancy was 2 inhabitants per room and 4 inhabitants per a single-room apartment [28];</li> <li>- high-density housing;</li> </ul>
<b>Rural development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- high prices of land and shortage of construction materials: single-family homes generally comprised 1-2 rooms.</li> </ul>

1945-1949	
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Post-war migration: expulsion of German citizens, inflow of repatriates and settlers from regained Polish territories;</li> </ul>
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· short-term foreign aid (as a member of the Soviet Block, Poland was forced to refuse further aid);</li> <li>· predominance of small, inefficient farms that were heavily taxed and unable to increase their output;</li> <li>· farms were nationalized and turned into workers' cooperatives;</li> <li>· housing shortages (households vacated by Germans were occupied by new settlers);</li> <li>· post-war hardship: shortage of construction materials, shortage of funds for housing construction and repair;</li> <li>· uncertainty of ownership and high risk of investment;</li> <li>· ineffective financial market;</li> </ul>
<b>Planning regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· attempts to improve the management of agricultural land were made in various parts of Poland;</li> <li>· farm size was limited to 5 ha (2.8 ha in practice) in eastern Poland and 7-15 ha in western and northern Poland where land was more available [29, 30];</li> <li>· limited sale of land;</li> <li>· privately-owned farms and properties were nationalized and managed by the State Land Fund;</li> <li>· temporary ownership rights were introduced;</li> </ul>
<b>Legal regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Decree of 2 April 1946 on centralized urban planning;</li> </ul>
<b>Types of plans</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· zoning plans (national, regional, municipal);</li> </ul>
<b>Urban development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· cities were rebuilt from ruins, often with the use of salvaged materials;</li> <li>· new housing was developed largely for the needs of the centrally planned economy, mainly industrial workers [28];</li> </ul>
<b>Rural development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· scarcity of construction materials, most manufactured materials were used for the reconstruction of cities;</li> <li>· construction of improvised housing with any materials at hand [31].</li> </ul>
1950s – 1960s	
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Post-war population growth and high demand for housing;</li> <li>· gradual colonization of rural areas;</li> <li>· second wave of German migration (family reunification program of 1956);</li> <li>· internal migration – inflow of hired labour to State-owned enterprises, collective farms and agricultural cooperatives;</li> <li>· rural-to-urban migration;</li> <li>· development of recreational functions in suburban areas.</li> </ul>

<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· establishment of State-owned farms and agricultural cooperatives in rural areas;</li> <li>· high taxes to generate revenues for modernization and development;</li> <li>· limited access to construction materials, agricultural machines and equipment;</li> <li>· collective farming and transfer of rural revenues to urban areas, which contributed to rural poverty;</li> <li>· uncertainty resulting from lagging modernization;</li> <li>· labour migration to cities;</li> <li>· ineffective financial market,</li> <li>· ineffective real estate market,</li> <li>· scarcity of construction materials which were sold on a consignment basis;</li> </ul>
<b>Planning regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· limited sale of land;</li> </ul>
<b>Legal regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Resolution No. 817 of the Executive Council of 1 December 1951 on authorization for urban development and architectural plans;</li> <li>· Act of 31 January 1961 on urban planning;</li> <li>· Construction Law of 31 January 1961;</li> <li>· Act of 31 January 1961 on rural areas zoned for development;</li> <li>· Act of 14 July 1961 on land management in urban areas and housing estates;</li> <li>· Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 31 January 1961 on the return of expropriated agricultural property;</li> <li>· Act of 15 February 1962 on the protection of cultural heritage;</li> </ul>
<b>Types of plans</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· zoning plans: national, regional, municipal, directional, prospective, multi-stage, general and detailed;</li> <li>· reinstatement of housing cooperatives;</li> </ul>
<b>Urban development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· land-use planning in urban areas to create housing estates, industrial zones, downtown areas and public green areas;</li> <li>· industrialization, high population growth and migration led to rapid construction of low-quality housing;</li> </ul>
<b>Rural development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· elimination of privately-owned agricultural estates and large farms;</li> <li>· establishment of State Agricultural Farms and construction of apartment blocks for hired labour.</li> </ul>
	<b>1970s</b>
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Third wave of German migration (1975);</li> <li>· continued labour migration from rural areas;</li> <li>· progressive ageing of the rural population as young people, discouraged by rural poverty, migrated to cities;</li> <li>· rural population decline and dynamic growth of urban areas;</li> </ul>
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· development of industry and the growth of job markets in cities – rural-to-urban migration;</li> <li>· elderly farmers donated land to the State Land Fund;</li> <li>· scarcity of construction materials;</li> <li>· ineffective financial market;</li> <li>· ineffective real estate market;</li> <li>· introduction of agricultural loan schemes – loans for the purchase of machines and equipment were offered to farmers who signed crop production contracts;</li> </ul>
<b>Planning regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· limited sale of land;</li> <li>· maximum farm size was 20 ha, and minimum farm size was 8 ha;</li> <li>· construction standards were centrally prescribed, modernist architecture and low-cost solutions were recommended;</li> <li>· introduction of the <i>agrocit</i>y concept with the aim of gradually eliminating the rural fabric [32];</li> <li>· legal gaps enabled rural dwellers to erect residential and farm buildings on agricultural land without applying for changes in land-use type;</li> <li>· land management plans and building plans did not have to be approved by the responsible authorities [32];</li> <li>· changes in Poland's administrative division;</li> </ul>

<b>Legal regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act of 6 July 1972 on land zoned for the construction of single-family homes and farm buildings and the division of property in cities and housing estates;</li> <li>Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture of 22 May 1973 on compensation for nationalized land and the sale of building plots in rural areas;</li> </ul>
<b>Types of plans</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>zoning plans: national, regional, municipal, directional, prospective, multi-stage, general and detailed;</li> </ul>
<b>Urban development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>social and economic pressures and migration led to rapid construction of housing, and the scarcity of construction materials significantly compromises the quality of newly erected buildings;</li> </ul>
<b>Rural development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>development of housing for hired labour and workers commuting to cities.</li> </ul>
<b>1980s</b>	
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural-to-urban migration;</li> <li>population growth;</li> <li>the strict construction laws of the 1970s were relaxed, which contributed to new trends in architecture, such as homes with steeply pitched roofs;</li> </ul>
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>housing construction projects were not cost-effective (prices were centrally imposed, maintenance costs could not be reliably estimated);</li> <li>ineffective industrial sectors and the resulting shortages;</li> <li>limited availability of building plots increased the popularity of multi-generational homes where every generation occupied a separate storey;</li> <li>homes were often built with remittances from family members working abroad;</li> </ul>
<b>Planning regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>limited sale of land – most land was owned by cooperatives;</li> <li>strict limits on living space were introduced, and house plans were often based on falsified data;</li> <li>zoning plans;</li> </ul>
<b>Legal regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act of 26 March 1982 on the protection of agricultural land and forests</li> <li>Act of 12 July 1984 on urban planning;</li> </ul>
<b>Types of plans</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>plans were developed in two stages: 1. planning goals, 2. draft plan;</li> </ul>
<b>Urban development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>high-density development in downtown areas;</li> <li>efforts were made to improve the quality of new housing and upgrade old housing;</li> </ul>
<b>Rural development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>chaotic urban sprawl;</li> <li>growing popularity of suburban cottages.</li> </ul>
<b>1990s</b>	
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lenient attitude towards construction laws during the transition from a centrally-planned economy to an open-market economy;</li> <li>new homes were larger to compensate for cramped living conditions of the socialist era;</li> <li>explosion of individualism after years of State control – new houses had steeply pitched, asymmetric roofs, numerous annexes and flat roof dormers. Stairs became an important element, and new buildings featured habitable attics or mezzanines [33];</li> <li>- population decline (higher than after World War II);</li> </ul>
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>decisions to buy or build property were based on financial considerations, such as the price of land or maintenance costs;</li> <li>the legal situation of private farms improved when restrictions on property inheritance were abolished;</li> <li>development of financial (mortgage loans) and real estate markets;</li> <li>construction materials became widely available;</li> <li>high unemployment and social inequality (luxury homes neighbouring dilapidated buildings of the former State Agricultural Farms);</li> </ul>
<b>Planning regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the implementation of the Act on the management of State-owned agricultural property on 1 January 1992 and the privatization of housing enabled farmers and tenants to use these</li> </ul>

	resources for non-agricultural purposes without having to pay conversion fees or additional charges; · uncontrolled changes in land use in rural areas led to chaotic development of residential and farm buildings. Many farmers purchased ready-made building plans and erected buildings with the use of the available materials. Homes were often built in locations not zoned for residential construction [32];
<b>Legal regulations</b>	· Act of 7 July 1994 on urban planning · Construction Law of 7 July 1994 · Act of 21 August 1997 on real estate management
<b>Types of plans</b>	· local land use plans were developed by municipal authorities; · municipal plans were no longer obligatory;
<b>Urban development</b>	· low population growth in urban areas; · competitions for public space management projects;
<b>Rural development</b>	· chaotic urban sprawl; · development of recreational functions in suburban areas.
<b>21<sup>st</sup> century</b>	
<b>Social</b>	· Reverse migration from urban to rural areas; · higher population mobility – international migration; · country houses became a popular alternative to apartments in the city; · growing popularity of an eco-friendly lifestyle; · homes were custom designed to minimize their environmental footprint (energy-efficient and passive houses);
<b>Economic</b>	· Poland joined the European Union; · lower unemployment; · availability of EU funds and flow of remittances from family members working abroad; · availability of financial services for property buyers and developers; · tax breaks and deductions for home owners; · market prices;
<b>Planning regulations</b>	· gradual development of new zoning plans;
<b>Legal regulations</b>	· Environmental Protection Law of 27 April 2001; · Act of 27 March 2003 on spatial planning and land management;
<b>Types of plans</b>	· local land use plans were developed by municipal authorities;
<b>Urban development</b>	· gradual depopulation in large cities; · availability of EU funds for development projects.
<b>Rural development</b>	· urban-to-rural migration; · development of urban-style housing estates in rural areas; · availability of EU funds for development projects.

### 3. Conclusions

The aim of the study was to present the social, economic, legal and planning factors that influenced residential architecture in Poland in the analyzed periods. Data corresponding to the examined time intervals, including contemporary social trends, economic conditions, the legal framework and planning regulations, were gathered and reviewed. Examples of buildings characteristic of the examined eras were presented. This approach was used to develop a chronological presentation of factors and events that shaped the Polish residential landscape. The struggle for housing required immense effort from ordinary citizens who faced hardship throughout the evaluated decades, and those efforts can be visibly traced in suburban villages. The partitions of Poland introduced a characteristic system of rural settlement. Red brick houses erected by German settlers have survived to this day on regained territories. Many residential houses were dilapidated due to economic hardships of the post-war period and the socialist era. Today, suburban villages host a variety of architectural styles, including makeshift housing built for workers of State Agricultural Farms, ostentatious villas of the

1990s as well as energy-efficient homes of the 21st century. A visit to Polish suburban villages will take a perceptive observer on a voyage through time.

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## Appendix A

### Legal acts:

- Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej z dnia 16 lutego 1928 r. o prawie budowlanem i zabudowaniu osiedli. Dz.U. 1928 nr 23 poz. 202 (Polish) Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland of 16 February 1928 on construction and housing
- UCHWAŁA Nr 817 PREZYDIUM RZĄDU z dnia 1 grudnia 1951 r. w sprawie zatwierdzania projektów urbanistycznych i architektonicznych (Polish) Resolution No. 817 of the Executive Council of 1 December 1951 on authorization for urban development and architectural plans.
- Dekret z dnia 2 kwietnia 1946 r. o planowym zagospodarowaniu przestrzennym kraju. Dz.U. 1946 nr 16 poz. 109 (Polish) Decree of 2 April 1946 on centralized urban planning
- Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej z dnia 6 marca 1928 r. o opiece nad zabytkami. Dz.U. 1928 nr 29 poz. 265 (Polish) Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland of 6 March 1928 on the preservation of historical monuments;
- Rozporządzenie Ministra Robót Publicznych z dnia 23 kwietnia 1930 r. o sposobie opracowania planów zabudowania. Dz.U. 1930 nr 41 poz. 362 (Polish) Regulation of the Minister of Public Works of 23 April 1930 on urban planning;
- Ustawa z dnia 31 stycznia 1961 r. o planowaniu przestrzennym. Dz.U. 1961 nr 7 poz. 47 (Polish) Act of 31 January 1961 on urban planning
- Ustawa z dnia 31 stycznia 1961 r. Prawo budowlane. Dz.U. 1961 nr 7 poz. 46 (Polish) Construction Law of 31 January 1961
- Ustawa z dnia 31 stycznia 1961 r. o terenach budowlanych na obszarach wsi. Dz.U. 1961 nr 5 poz. 30 (Polish) Act of 31 January 1961 on rural areas zoned for development
- Ustawa z dnia 14 lipca 1961 r. o gospodarce terenami w miastach i osiedlach. Dz.U. 1961 nr 32 poz. 159 (Polish) Act of 14 July 1961 on land management in urban areas and housing estates
- Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 31 stycznia 1961 r. w sprawie zasad i trybu rozliczania się w przypadku zwrotu wywłaszczonych nieruchomości rolnych. Dz.U. 1961 nr 5 poz. 34 (Polish) Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 31 January 1961 on the return of expropriated agricultural property
- Ustawa z dnia 15 lutego 1962 r. o ochronie dóbr kultury Dz.U. 1962 nr 10 poz.48 (Polish) Act of 15 February 1962 on the protection of cultural heritage
- Ustawa z dnia 6 lipca 1972 r. o terenach budownictwa jednorodzinnego i zagrodowego oraz o podziale nieruchomości w miastach i osiedlach. Dz.U. 1972 nr 27 poz. 192 (Polish) Act of 6 July 1972 on land zoned for the construction of single-family homes and farm buildings and the division of property in cities and housing estates
- Rozporządzenie Ministra Rolnictwa z dnia 22 maja 1973 r. w sprawie odszkodowania za przejęte na własność Państwa tereny budowlane oraz zbywania działek budowlanych na obszarach wsi. Dz.U. 1973 nr 20 poz. 117 (Polish) Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture of 22 May 1973 on compensation for nationalized land and the sale of building plots in rural areas
- Ustawa z dnia 12 lipca 1984 r. o planowaniu przestrzennym Dz.U. 1984 nr 35 poz. 185 (Polish) Act of 12 July 1984 on urban planning
- Ustawa z dnia 26 marca 1982 r. o ochronie gruntów rolnych i leśnych. Dz.U. 1982 nr 11 poz. 79 (Polish) Act of 26 March 1982 on the protection of agricultural land and forests
- Ustawa z dnia 7 lipca 1994 r. o zagospodarowaniu przestrzennym. Dz.U. 1994 nr 89 poz. 415 (Polish) Act of 7 July 1994 on urban planning
- Ustawa z dnia 7 lipca 1994 r. - Prawo budowlane. Dz.U. 1994 nr 89 poz. 414 (Polish) Construction Law of 7 July 1994

- Ustawa z dnia 21 sierpnia 1997 r. o gospodarce nieruchomościami. Dz.U. 1997 nr 115 poz. 741 (Polish) Act of 21 August 1997 on real estate management
- Ustawa z dnia 27 kwietnia 2001 r. Prawo ochrony środowiska. Dz.U. 2001 nr 62 poz. 627 (Polish) Environmental Protection Law of 27 April 2001Ustawa z dnia 27 marca 2003 r. o planowaniu i zagospodarowaniu przestrzennym Dz.U. 2003 nr 80 poz. 717 (Polish) Act of 27 March 2003 on spatial planning and land management