

STRATIFICATION OF INCOME IN REGIONS AND CITIES AS A DILEMMA OF MODERN ECONOMICS AND A SAFETY BARRIER

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Abstract:

Aim: Author presents all changes to economic activity trigger, inter alia, social divisions in all cross sections as safety barrier. Growing expansion processes featuring a new development paradigm necessitate a search for better living conditions as well as a demand for high consumption. This mere diktat of the new economy makes the potential of the rich grow continually to the detriment of the poor. It is becoming an essential threat to security of different nature. We may even say that such a situation weakens security. This is confirmed by a growing number of people living on the breadline, the poor and the homeless.

Design / Research methods: The publication is a case study based on national economy in Poland. Author uses in this paper statistical methods and comparative analysis between social stratification and economic stratification on region level.

Conclusions / findings: The article should be aware that stratification of income in cities resulting from the determinants described above shows that the Polish reality observes a significant and growing process of various intensity as not all areas have prepared sufficient potentials of their own for such dynamic changes. The weakness of public finance and the social policy directly shaping social safety poses an additional threat whose costs are borne by common citizens. It is confirmed by administration disproportions related to a size of the territory, the number of population, unemployment, the condition of the infrastructure, education, a brand of a city (capitals), districts, communes.

Originality / value of the article: Stratification of income in regions and cities in Poland as safety barrier.

Limitations of the research: The work does address the problems of safety barrier in Poland.

Keywords: social and economic stratification, regions, safety
JEL: O12, O47

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1. Introduction

The issue of safety has been dominating everyday social and economic life recently and is becoming even fashionable. Though it seems justifiable due to more and more innovative crime methods (a terrorism threat, a free flow of goods, services, people, cybercrime, organized crime etc.) less attention is devoted to various kinds of professional discussions, debates or consultations regarding economic threats triggering these dangers often leading to financial and social stratifications, poverty or even exploitation. We very often encounter the so called “plagiarism of threats” involving their generation in one country and spreading onto another. The media often presents them in an emotional way which additionally contributes a fear element. These processes may be also interpreted as elements of controlled commercialisation (e.g. presenting constant threats, a growing number of safety experts) reaching consciousness of the society often deformed to trigger a necessity of counteracting them. Rarely do we talk about costs of undertaking various actions incurred by the public sector.

This counteraction assumes various forms and methods however it seems that the most significant one involves building algorithms enhancing awareness about threats on the global, national, regional and local levels.

The above situation also leads to a phenomenon that the contemporary social and economic reality of atomizing social bonds is accompanied by a trend to individualize reflected by enhanced education, a growth in employment in education and which is more interesting former “safety employee” (retired armed forces workers, advisors, consultants, coordinators, proxies) are becoming *knowledge workers*. On one hand it seems justified as such a process fits into the definition of an economic growth identified with a decrease of social importance of active people, on the other hand the scale of threats does not seem so huge to redefine the term “safety”. Obviously, it should be emphasized that the term is assuming new values from the economic, sociological, legal and social point of view.

Thus economics of the contemporary world is giving rise to new threats. More often we have to deal with family crises, an increasing number of addicted people, the poor, the homeless, people living on the breadline. This in turn means that the nature of threats which we face is varying and often results from global threats individually perceived.

This paper aims to indicate the necessity of reducing financial and social inequalities

triggering threats of economic nature mainly.

2. Social stratification theory

The problem of social stratification was already analyzed by K. Marks and then first of all by Max Weber, Emil Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. In Poland, an analysis of social stratification was also conducted by such eminent scholars as Florian Znaniecki, Józef Chałasiński or Stanisław Ossowski (Kłoskowska 1981). The problem of social stratification was already analyzed by Karl Marx and then first of all by Max Weber, Emil Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. In Poland, an analysis of social stratification was also conducted by such eminent scholars as Florian Znaniecki, Józef Chałasiński or Adam Ossowski.

Social stratification is one of the most general concepts. In the broadest sense, these are all vertical aspects of social structure, which means that this concept can cover all kinds of inequalities. Thus, the stratification can be various forms of hierarchy, divisions, distances, barriers, understood as objective phenomena, for example inequalities resulting from income distribution. The stratification is also all the behaviors and attitudes that characterize superiority or resulting from a sense of inferiority, as exemplified by social self-esteem, identification with the working class or middle class, hierarchy of prestige and other aspects of individual consciousness (Nowak 2009; Davis, Moore 1945: 243).

Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore show that principles of social stratification mechanisms, assigning them a universal dimension, valid regardless of spatial and temporal conditions. This theory is designed to explain social facts - it was to answer the question of why inequalities exist, as a fact with which you simply have to be reconciled. They replied that inequality is a necessary condition for the normal functioning of social organisms (Davis, Moore 1945). Davis and Moore justify their theory with the following arguments:

- a) the functioning of the society is based on the division of work with hierarchically separated positions and occupational positions about their unequal validity (the possibility of replacing roles)
- b) more important place in social stratification requires more expenditure (requirements, investments in given units)
- c) the condition of efficiency is filling the posts with appropriate units – there must be a

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remuneration mechanism that will encourage the right people to perform the appropriate roles.

- d) proportionality of remuneration to prestige and validity of the position
- e) the effect of these mechanisms is the defined distribution of prestige and pay as well as the effectiveness of selecting the desired units.

Davis and Moore treat stratification as the result of the relationship between demand and supply for resources important to society (the rare and highly-valued qualifications of individuals are the most rewarded) (Davis, Moore 1945).

Talcott Parson widened the look of Davis and Moore. Stratification is treated as an element of the global system (“Social stratification is a generalized aspect of the structure of all social systems and links closely with the level and type of system integration as such”). According to him, stratification is the result and reflection of the common system of values, which results from Parson’s acceptance of the fundamental premise of the expediency of all actions. The main determinants of social stratification are political affiliations and ideology, while the classic attributes of achieved positions related to education or income level go down in the background (Parsons 2009). Parsons’ theory grew out of the influence of European sociology at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, among which the main place falls under the influence of Max Weber and Emil Durkheim. Parsons went beyond the boundaries of one discipline, reached for related social sciences, and also transferred interests to the field of natural sciences.

He was reluctant to the ideology of Marxism. In the field of economics, the concepts of Walter Sombart, Thorstein Veblen and Alfred Marshall influenced him most strongly. Parsons valued these theories for trying to analyze issues from the borderline of economics, sociology and social psychology (Bokszański 2012).

Parsons developed his sociological theory based on very diverse elements. He synthesized them by adopting the theoretical concept of action as the general plane of reference for analyzing social phenomena. The concept of acting as a conscious and purposeful act of the human individual, shaped by external social influences, most closely associate this theory with the position of Weber on the one hand, and Durkheim – on the other hand. A dynamic concept of social reality as a result of the activity of a person striving to satisfy natural needs in the work process, the forms of which are determined by society and culture,

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However, Parsons' works gained much greater publicity. Parsons has both supporters and numerous critics. Critics. C.W. Mills, in a book devoted to the state and perspectives of American sociology, chose Parsons as the main subject of criticism against the overgrowth of abstract tendencies of the creators of general "great theory".

Parsons' fundamental theoretical concepts, which crystallized in the early 1950s, can be closed in the following short description. The basic plane of reference for the analysis of social phenomena is the concept of human action, understood as a system. The activity is carried out in a situation which consists of an active subject and his human partner, participating in mutual reactions and objects. Parsons' theory grew out of the influence of European sociology at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, among which the main place falls under the influence of Max Weber and Emil Durkheim. Parsons went beyond the boundaries of one discipline, reached for related social sciences, and also transferred interests to the field of natural sciences. He was reluctant to the ideology of Marxism. In the field of economics, the concepts of Sombart, Veblen and Marshall influenced him most strongly. Parsons valued these theories for trying to analyze issues from the borderline of economics, sociology and social psychology. Parsons developed his sociological theory based on very diverse elements. He synthesized them by adopting the theoretical concept of action as the general plane of reference for analyzing social phenomena. The concept of acting as a conscious and purposeful act of the human individual, shaped by external social influences, most closely associate this theory with the position of Weber on the one hand, and Durkheim – on the other hand. A dynamic concept of social reality as a result of the activity of a person striving to satisfy natural needs in the work process, the forms of which are determined by society and culture.

At the beginning of the 20th century F. Znaniecki in Poland, along with Parsons, formulated a general sociological theory, according to which social action is a social system and an element of more complex personality systems, relations of social groups. However, Parsons' works gained much greater publicity¹. Parsons has both supporters and numerous critics. Critics. CW Mills, in a book devoted to the state and perspectives of American sociology, chose Parsons as the main subject of criticism against the overgrowth of abstract tendencies of the creators of

¹ <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/Parsons-Talcott;3954534.html> [25.03.2018].

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general “great theory”.

Parsons’ fundamental theoretical concepts, which crystallized in the early 1950s, can be closed in the following short description. The basic plane of reference for the analysis of social phenomena is the concept of human action, understood as a system. By commencing operations of any nature and scale, the acting person must, according to Parsons, decide whether the activity will be:

- a) focus on immediate emotional or emotional-neutral satisfaction,
- b) associated with a specific aspect of the situation, e.g. one partial role of the partner or the overall situation,
- c) will it treat the subject of activities as an example of a universal category, or refer to it in a manner dictated by personal particularities?
- d) whether it will take into account the status assigned or the partner status achieved,
- e) will adopt an egoistic orientation, dictated by self-interest or collectivistic, taking into account the collective interest.

All logically possible combinations of these ten variants are, according to Parsons, to define a fundamental and characteristic way of every social system, culture and personality. The personality of the relationship with this concept arises first of all the problem why these and only these variable features of actions, arranged in pairs of alternatives, have similar functions. Pattern variables are intended to serve both the analysis of social systems of great dimensions as well as culture and personality (Trzebiatowski 2012).

At present, I will analyze the income diversity of society understood as economic stratification and determine the feedback between economic and social stratifications.

2. Economic stratification as a social threat

Diversity is a natural feature of each society. Some people claim that it is often a source of social development and the strength of the society. In overall, the phenomenon of stratification in the society regarding one feature is referred to as social stratification. However social stratification with respect of economic terms may be so clear that it slows down social development and causes conflicts. Thus in the context of social sciences we may differentiate the following inequalities (Wójcik-Żołądek 2013: 1):

- economic (income, employment, property, living conditions),
- social (education, prestige, lifestyle, participation in culture, social capital),
- political (refers to differences in sharing power, civic engagement).

Although treating income as the only dimension of social inequalities is a simplification, the literature on this subject considers it as the most important measure of these inequalities, a benchmark of a social status and a determinant of opportunities in all life sphere (beginning with living conditions of individuals and households, access to health care, securing children with appropriate education, participation in culture, access to the internet).

Considerations of social inequalities most often accompany analyses of poverty and social exclusion. Three approaches may be differentiated here as presented by table 1.

Table 1. Approaches towards perceiving causes, roles and consequences of social inequalities

Approach	Characteristics
Elitist	The elitist principle of legitimizing social inequalities claims that there are social groups better than others (e.g. aristocracy) which due to their birth should take a higher position in hierarchy and enjoy privileges not available to people from lower levels of the social ladder.
Egalitarian	This approach is based on opposition against social inequalities and privileges of some groups demanding satisfaction of specific needs of all members of the society.
Meritocratic	This approach assumes that inequalities are justified socially as long as they are deserved. The principle of equal opportunities providing the basis for the meritocratic model is not followed in practice as individuals do not start with the same positions in a race for a higher social status and related privileges. Success is subject not to personal effort but inherited wealth, access to education or family environment which passes down a defined cultural capital and differentiates life opportunities.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Contemporary globalization is treated as a phenomenon leading to a growth in interdependency between particular economies, territories and societies. It makes particular countries want to do common business. Apart from advantages it has disadvantages displayed in some areas of social and economic life with different intensity and dynamics. They first of all comprise unemployment, migration of the youth, the lack of immigration policy, an increase in threats of cybercrime or a crisis in a public finance sector. It must be emphasized that they cause growing social inequalities which tend to deepened despite a positive image of globalization popularized by the media.

Most EU states are characterized by small stratification. The situation in Poland is

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surprising where the result is 13,5:1 in favour of the richer part of the society. This ratio is the highest in Europe. It significantly deviates from other states in Central Europe despite apparent similarities of economic situations.

In 2014 according to estimation 7.4% of our society lived below the poverty line in Poland which constituted 2.8 ml people. This number accounted 7.4% of the entire society².

The reason for this may be sought in numerous determinants however the most significant one is constituted by a system transformation began in 1989 involving rejection of the former socialist system by the economy and the society.

Whereas 2015 observed a slight drop in the value of an extreme poverty rate and a relative poverty rate. In both cases the drop as compared to 2014 did not exceed 1%. In 2015 every fifteenth person suffered from extreme poverty while every sixth endured relative poverty. The statutory poverty rate between 2014-2015 remained on the same level reaching about 12%. Reduction of poverty in Poland in 2015 concerned most population groups. The most significant improvement was observed among households of people living on non-profit sources (other than pensions and ill-health pensions), large families (over 4 kids to keep) and among inhabitants of smaller towns inhabited by under 20 thousand. A significant growth in poverty was noticed in households living on agriculture.

The above problems translated into a quite dynamic process of stratifying income in the society, mainly in regions and their capitals – voivodeship cities. According to the data of the Central Statistical Office over the recent years³ the biggest percentage of people living in poverty is in warmińsko-mazurskie voivodeship where it amounted to 14.8%. It means that every sixth inhabitant of this region lived below the breadline⁴ (only expenses for humble food and keeping a small flat). Commuting expenses and cultural expenditure are not included. This is twice more than the average in the country. The second place was taken by świętokrzyskie voivodeship where 10% lived below the breadline. The best situation was in Silesia and in the remaining voivodeships the situation was as follows:

- świętokrzyskie 12.2%,
- podlaskie 10.9%,

² At the end of quarter 1 in 2014 in Poland according to the Central Statistical Office, the minimum subsistence for a one-person household amounted zł 540 whereas to a 4-person household zł 1458.

³ The mean from 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015.

⁴ This amount established by the Institute of Labour and Social Affairs covers only basic needs.

- wielkopolskie 10.1%,
- kujawsko-pomorskie 9.5%,
- podkarpackie 8.7%,
- lubelskie 8.2%,
- opolskie 8%,
- lubuskie 7.8%,
- mazowieckie 7,7% (Warsaw 5.2%),
- zachodnio-pomorskie 7.2%,
- pomorskie 6.5%,
- małopolskie 6.6%,
- dolnośląskie 5.6%,
- łódzkie 5.4%,
- śląskie 4.7%.

The above data shows that the extent of extreme poverty continually grew over the recent years in voivodeships: warmińsko-mazurskie, świętokrzyskie, wielkopolskie, kujawsko-pomorskie opolskie, lubuskie, małopolskie, dolnośląskie. It decreased in voivodeships such as: pomorskie, łódzkie, lubelskie, podkarpackie, mazowieckie. In regions like: podlaskie, zachodniopomorskie, śląskie it remained on the constant level.

The above data shows that Poland belongs to much poorer EU societies. The percentage of the poor is quite interesting in Greater Poland. Though this region has had the lowest unemployment rate over the recent years, in numerous sub-regions it was very high (e.g. in Konin district 17.35%, Złotów district 15.1%). Obviously, unemployment favours poverty. For instance in 2014 among households with one unemployed person 15% lived on the breadline whereas in households with two jobless persons – 33% („Dziennik. Gazeta Prawna” 2015).

Poverty in particular regions (including capitals of metropolises and agglomerations) and sub regions (including capitals of sub-regions – districts) is also affected by urbanization in particular regions of our country. Poverty in villages (11.8%) is twice greater than in towns (4.6%). Impoverishment also favours low paid jobs. That is why in regions of lower income there is more poverty. It is interesting that Greater Poland is among them with a GDP *per capita* 8% higher than the national average but remuneration lower than 10%. This fact was confirmed by

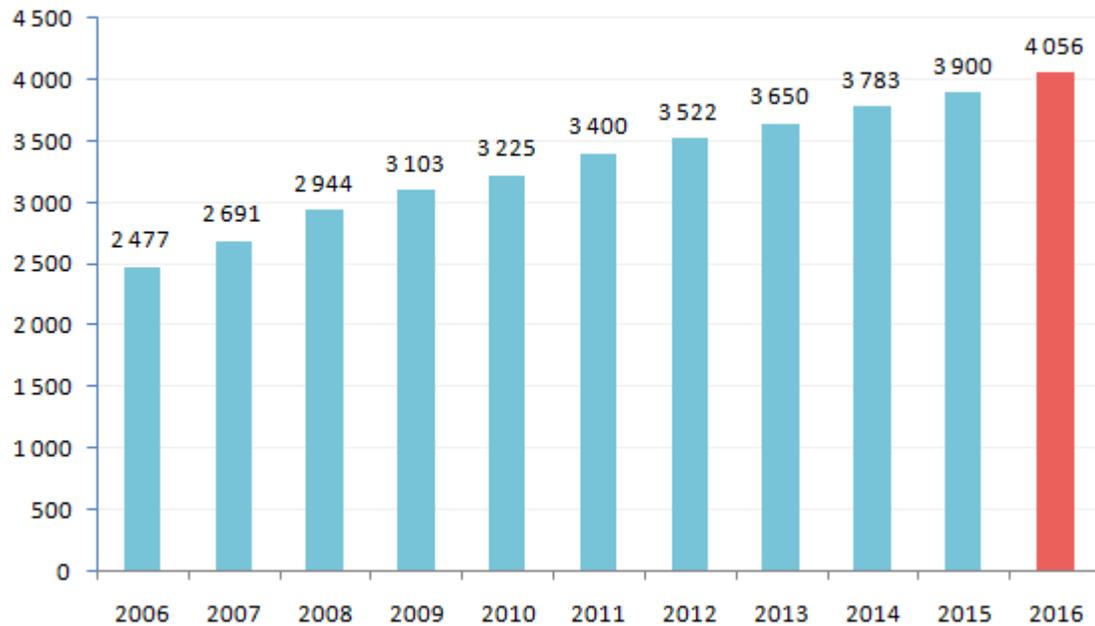
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2014 when an average gross remuneration (in zł) amounted as follows:

- mazowieckie..... 4934,
- śląskie..... 4105,
- dolnośląskie..... 4049,
- pomorskie..... 4018,
- małopolskie.....3703,
- zachodniopomorskie.....3653,
- opolskie..... 3638,
- łódzkie..... 3621,
- lubelskie 3608,
- wielkopolskie..... 3600,
- podlaskie 3553,
- kujawsko-pomorskie..... 3440,
- świętokrzyskie3438,
- podkarpackie 3414.

According to the above specification, an average monthly gross remuneration amounted to zł 3783.57.

It should be obvious that the above situation may be improved by reduction of unemployment in Poland which encourages the growth of remunerations. From the perspective of an average salary in the national economy in 2016 opportunities arise to improve such state of affairs. It is significant that an average monthly gross salary in the national economy in 2016 amounted to zł 4047.21 i.e. by 4.0% higher than in 2015 and by 6.96% higher than in 2014. Figure 1 present the above:

Figure 1. Average gross remuneration in the Polish national economy over particular years

Source: author's study based on the data of the Central Statistical Office of Poland.

However we measure poverty, it should be said that practically the same factors influence it i.e. unemployment, poor education, living in the country, a lot of children in the family. According to the Central Statistical Office about 60% of severely poor people in Poland % is constituted by villagers (whereas it is 40% out of the entire population) and one third of the extremely poor population is under 18 years. In metropolitan areas the poorest constitute only 1% of the society whereas in rural areas it 12 times more.

The literature on the subject uses various ratios for measuring economic inequalities perceived as inequalities in the income distribution, expenses or salaries. The Gini coefficient is one of the most often used ones⁵ also called Lorenz concentration index expressed by the following pattern:

$$G(Y) = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (2i - n - 1) \times Y_i}{n^2 \times Y}$$

Y_i is the value of i – th observation (e.g. an income of i -th household),

Y is the mean of all Y_i observations (e.g. an average income of households).

⁵ It is a very interesting tool which may be used to describe a degree of income equality in the economy.

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The scale is up to 100, the lower the value of the coefficient, the lower stratification.

According to the Eurostat (Gmurczyk 2013) income stratification in Poland became more acute over the first years of 21st century. In 2000 the Gini coefficient in Poland amounted 30 whereas in 2005 it was 35.6. In 2012 its value reached 30.9. At present it is on the level 28.5. The inter-quintile ratio of income stratification rose to 4.9 which means that the income total of 20% of the richest households was almost five times higher than the income total of 20% of households with lower incomes. Consequently the data of the Eurostat shows a significant drop in income stratification in Poland as compared to 2005. It is somehow justified as after Poland's accession to the European Union the intensity of implementing European assistance programmes grew for the benefit of local governments and inhabitants of local communities.

Based on the above the Polish social and economic reality pictures an intergeneration nature of social stratification. It is reflected in the type of civil and legal agreements, self-employment and micro-companies artificially set up – employers' response to high non-pay related costs of work and competition challenges. Low remunerations constitute one of advantages which Polish companies have in winning international markets and attracting foreign investors to the country. In practitioners' view, the economy is like a "locomotive" dragging an economic growth. However this growth seems to be weaker and weaker and resulting from growing costs of labour, a high structural unemployment functioning on a very low level of the public sector. Additionally, as experience shows, the state is also responsible for imposing a pay competition through public procurement. Employing people on the so called "junk contracts" led to bankruptcy of sub-contractors and suppliers seeking to decrease operating costs and became pathologically common⁶. Considering these circumstances, frequent changes to the public procurement law as well as the reform of employment system in our country seem necessary as these areas generate more and more economic and social problems. We may say a "negative induction" occurs reflected in the fact that low pay makes people migrate and such a situation does not contribute to starting a family and a childbirth. This way the economy is losing specialists as well as employees starting a career. This has an impact on the Social Security to increase a generation gap.

Income stratification translates into a pathological dimension of consumption. It must not

⁶ Under the programme for construction of roads and motorways this way higher unemployment appeared in the construction industry.

be the case that e.g. 5% of the richest people is responsible for 40% of consumption expenses. The wealthy mainly spend money on luxury goods and producers of luxury goods find it difficult to keep pace with demand. They do not buy things which could boost the economy (refrigerators, washing machines). The impoverishing middle class does not spend money on them either. Under these circumstances there is no sustainable demand for products and services. Such a situation leads to a stagnation if the purchasing power does not increase meaning the wealth of the less rich. This in turn will not create new jobs.

The above approach may be confirmed by the Polish social and economic reality picturing six times more consumer bankruptcy in the first half of 2015 as compared to the previous years. According to the data collected by *Bisnode Polska* (Mazurkiewicz 2015), people aged between 30 and 39 constitute 26.7% however more than every fifth Pole is over 60 years old. Out of all bankruptcies 22% is constituted by over 60 year olds. There are probably a lot of reasons to this but one of the most important ones involves incurring liabilities not necessarily in banks⁷. It should be emphasized that the loss of a job may contribute to this. In terms of provinces bankruptcies are as follows: The most people out of 30-39 year olds over 10%) lived in: mazowieckie – 28.3%, śląskie – 11.1%; 5-10% located in: wielkopolskie – 9.8%, kujawsko-pomorskie – 8.9%, zachodniopomorskie – 7.1%, łódzkie – 6.6%. Remaining provinces like: dolnośląskie, małopolskie, podkarpackie, pomorskie, świętokrzyskie, lubelskie, opolskie, lubuskie, warmińsko mazurskie, podlaskie achieved the rate below 5%. The simple economic equation shows that large discrepancies in income may be dangerous to the economy. According to the research in societies characterized by greater equality people live longer and are healthier, children have better results at school, citizens trust each other more and are more involved in social matters. Consequently these societies witness less crime.

3. Safety in Poland as 21st century challenge

Safety is strictly correlated with social stratification occurring in big, medium and small Polish towns. As in 2012 2.4 million Poles lived in extreme poverty and in the first quarter of 2014 the number was 2.8 million (with the income below zł 540) it means that internal safety may be exposed to a growth in crime related offences targeted at the property necessary to secure the living of each citizen placed in this group of income and his or her family. If in the Eurostat's

⁷ At the end of 2014 the Poles incurred a debt of zł 41 billion.

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opinion 17% of Poles is threatened with poverty because they are living in households where the average income is lower than 60% of the average income in the state, it may mean that every fourth citizen of our country lives below the social minimum. Thus it should be emphasized that Poland spends the least on children among EU states (75% of children live in excessively populated density whereas 25% is undernourished; see Lewkowicz 2015). Such worrying data may trigger juvenile delinquency.

The above situation results, *inter alia*, in social deficiency of families, emotional callousness, inheriting poverty or a family breakdown. That is why due to poverty social exclusion occurs. It should be emphasized that it increases the distance between particular social layers leading to a failure to satisfy needs, individual frustrations translating into populist behaviour in the society. These problems are accompanied by: multiple children, addictions (drugs, abuse of alcohol), disabilities (physical, psychical, mental), loneliness (no family relations especially when it comes to low pensions), growing in single parent or broken families. A low education status leading to unemployment (the lack of competences needed for finding employment in the labour market).

On the basis of the above considerations it should be said that there are social pathologies and social reorganization. Thus we should agree with B. Hołyst who says that „economic phenomena occurring on the macro-scale always affect a social life including social pathologies in the region, a town, a company and often in each family” (Hołyst 2013: 146). In view of developing a regional policy, social disorganization leads to social local conflicts.

Discussing the issue of safety in view of developing cities in Poland it should be noted that “the urban network comprises 886 cities with 665 towns under 20 thousand inhabitants. They constitute 75% of the entire number of towns in the country. They are verified in terms of size and functions. They differ with a geographical location, development of urban functions and reactions to contemporary processes (globalizations, a financial crisis). A lot of cities and towns face a typical phenomenon like stagnation of population or a decrease in the population” (Kwiatek-Sołtys 2006: 223). The above situation significantly determines stratification. The number of small and medium towns in the region decides about its quantitative and qualitative structure and the economic strength at the same town. A region may also be economically peripheral through excessive social stratification of its cities.

In view of financial stratification (of income) in Polish cities we should refer to our

membership to the EU. At present, the European Parliament has underlined that urban areas play a significant role in achieving strategic goals of sustainable development. It is in urban areas where ecological, economic and social aspects permeate most strongly. Cities gather a lot of problems related to environment protection but they are also a driving force to the economy, a place of doing business and making investments. The attractiveness of European cities contributes to strengthening their potential of economic growth and creating new jobs. However due to stratification of incomes in the EU cities social problems occur. Social exclusion, ethnic segregation, a housing shortage, a growth in crime mainly related to drugs, unemployment, a grey area, poverty and others are more and more evident. It may mean that European cities enter a crisis stage. Such a situation especially when it comes to small towns in Poland causes greater barriers in development. It is manifested in worsening a business, social and ecological environment due to the lack of financial resources. Area studies define it as “regional patches” where depreciation of growth and development take place. The thesis of asymmetry on the financial, social, political and special levels is confirmed.

Domination of modern cities is often called metropolization which is a very dynamic process aspiring to enhance efficiency of large cities and their neighbouring areas. It involves developing a new spatial structure not only cumulating the world’s potential but also changing previous relations between the centre and the environment. It is significant to social stratification in the entire state and first of all in cities of the region. It is worthwhile quoting M. Castells’ view saying that „an economic fate of a country no matter if it is USA or China depends on achievements of a metropolis regardless of a provincial mentality of the environment” (Castells 2009: 461).

In the near future metropolises will use their own facilities which means that they will treat their development as the main objective. Whereas local governments will be responsible for development of farther environment. It may be considered unfair and egoistic as metropolises grew thanks to the entire region and from the historical point of view their position results from actions of smaller towns in the region. We come across hierarchy (segmentation) of territorial systems where on the top of a pyramid there are metropolises and metropolitan areas then semi-peripheries and peripheries. Members of upper classes on the top using a private health system, private schools are not motivated to take care of a high level of public services. Such a situation makes our economic reality witness stratification of cities which is directly reflected in

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economic, social and political stratification. The “effect of a tunnel” between a life in a large city and a small town is created.

4. Conclusions

We should be aware that stratification of income in cities resulting from the determinants described above shows that the Polish reality observes a significant and growing process of various intensity as not all areas have prepared sufficient potentials of their own for such dynamic changes. The weakness of public finance and the social policy directly shaping social safety poses an additional threat whose costs are borne by common citizens. It is confirmed by administration disproportions related to a size of the territory, the number of population, unemployment, the condition of the infrastructure, education, a brand of a city (capitals), districts, communes.

Identification of the above conclusions together with threats allows us to appeal to an economic policy of the state. The omnipresent market mechanism affecting cities requires public institutions to coordinate it. Further stratification of income may lead to a complete closure of such centres and their marginalization. In particular medium and small towns require a greater and more decisive need of increasing the role of the state in strengthening public investments as the basic instruments of a social policy.

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