

Between City and Countryside: The (Un)Sustainable Development of Peri-Urban Areas of Large Cities in Poland – The Case of Warsaw

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Abstract:

The paper investigates the dynamics of spatial development in the peri-urban area of Warsaw, Poland. It focuses on the processes of suburbanization and urban sprawl occurring along the administrative boundaries of the city and its neighboring rural municipalities. Drawing on spatial data from 2014–2024, the study identifies zones of the most intensive border residential development and analyzes the morphological characteristics of emerging housing patterns. The research reveals a fragmented and functionally monotonous urban fabric, heavily reliant on individual transportation and lacking in public infrastructure and services. These patterns contradict the principles of sustainable urban planning. The study introduces the concept of the “urban fringe zone” as a hybrid space where urban and rural features intersect, and proposes a typology of development forms based on density, continuity, diversity, and multifunctionality. The findings underscore the need for integrated spatial planning across administrative boundaries and advocate for the formal recognition of peri-urban zones as distinct planning entities to better manage urban expansion and mitigate its negative environmental and social impacts.