Zmiany pokrycia terenu w wybranych gminach Beskidów w drugiej połowie XX w. na podstawie analizy zdjęć lotniczych

Changes in the land cover in selected communes of the Polish Beskidy Mts, in the second part of the 20th century, on the base of aerial photographs analysis

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The goal of the research presented in this article is qualifying the influence of natural conditions and of the differentiated economy management upon the changes in the land cover in four gminas of the Beskid mountains in the II half of the XX century.

Four gminas were the object of the research: Rajcza and Zawoja – representing the Beskidy Zachodnie (west range), and Uście Gorlickie and Komańcza – representing the Beskidy Wschodnie (east range). Chosen were gminas which were of similar spatial implementation, population density and economy profile in the 30-ties of the XX century.

Factors causing changes in the land cover of the gminas under discussion were divided into two groups: natural and politico-economic.

To natural factors, included were as follows: lithology, relief and soils. From politico-economic factors, considered were: population displacement operations of the world war II, displacement of Ukrainian and Łemko populations in the period of 1944–1947, socialist economy of the years 1950–1980, decrease of profitability of agricultural production carried out in severe natural conditions, and influence of tourism upon the development of respective gminas.

To specify the influence of politico-economic factors upon transformations in land cover, the changes which took place in the areas subjected to displacement operations – gminas Komańcza and Uście Gorlickie were compared with the changes which occurred in gminas, in which socialo-economic development occurred evolutionally – gminas Rajcza and Zawoja.

Aerial images taken in three periods of: 1952–1956, 1969–1974 and 1995–1999, and archival data referring to the economy of gminas constituted the basis for the analyses of changes in the land cover in the gminas under investigation. Also data referring to the implementation status of the terrains under discussion in 1935 (obtained from the topographic maps elaborated in the years 1935–1938 in the scale of 1:100 000) were used.

Basing on aerial images, maps of land use in chosen time sections were elaborated. Also, numerical model of the terrain was developed for each gmina, which was then used for producing maps of: the elevation above sea level, gradient of slopes and slope exposure. Soil and agricultural maps in the scale of 1:100 000 were used for the elaboration of simplified maps of soil and farming complexes. These data enabled elaboration of natural environment valorisation of gminas under discussion, from the point of view of their farming usefulness. Also, conformability of forms of the land cover which occurred in respective time sections with the potential usefulness of natural environment understood as the aggregate natural factors, for the farming land use, was analysed.

The elaboration showed two mechanisms of the development of lands under investigation in the II half of the XX century. These mechanisms were launched by the events of the World War II and by the resulting from it political transformations of the years 1946–1947, however they were rooted in the past far and had an ethnographico-socialo-economic foundation.

In the gminas of Komańcza and Uście Gorlickie changes in the land cover were of stepwise character and were mainly caused by politico-economic factors. Displacement operations which caused disturbances in the economic and settlement structure of the area under discussion led to a set back in the development of the gminas under the analysis, to the impoverishment of the local population, and under-investment of the terrain, which are observed up till now. Terrain implementation was in many cases discordant to the natural environment, however, the reduction of farming lands of individual farmers took place in a slower pace because of limited possibilities of finding an alternative income source.

In the gminas of Zawoja and Rajcza, changes were of gradual transformations character, adjusting the gminas’ profiles to the natural environment potential and to the changing socio-economic standing. Annotated transformations were the result of complementary influence of environmental and politico-economic factors. Reduction of farming lands was correlated with the development of the tourist service basis and with the change of To sum up, it can be stated that politico-economic factors played a substantial role in the transformations of land cover of the gminas under the investigation. In Rajcza and Zawoja agricultural policy and tourism should be reckoned as the most vital factors. In Komańcza and Uście Gorlickie – displacement operations which took place in 1946–1947 and which led to a deep discordance between the economic development of the eastern and western gminas.