

## Socio-economic space and the new face of globalisation

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The aim is to identify and indicate the directions of transformation in the globalization process and the changing role of socio-economic space in this new phase of globalization, associated, among others, with the increasing regional character of global processes.

**Methodology:** The article employs a broad critical analysis of the subject literature, assessment of secondary data, and expert opinions.

**Findings:** The article indicates that in recent years, the globalization process has undergone significant transformations, resulting in an increased importance of socio-economic space in location decision-making.

**Implications and recommendations:** The findings suggest that current development processes must increasingly take into account local and regional networks and supply chains. The remoteness of suppliers from domestic markets leads to increased uncertainty and higher business operation costs.

**Originality/value:** The value of the article lies in linking the rising uncertainty in global markets with the need to redefine spatial security, which entails the construction of new socio-economic relationships.

**Keywords:** globalisation, socio-economic perturbations, space, development, location

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## 1. Introduction

Globalisation is a phenomenon that began to occur in practically all areas of today's economy (and not only) at the turn of the century, having an ever-greater impact on the contemporary world. It can

therefore be said that it has taken on a *catch-all* nature (that is it grabs hold of everything and is comprehensive on a worldwide scale), as today it is recognized at the level of states, regions, sectors, markets and firms, and in addition connects these aspects into one mechanism. As a result, globalisation takes place concurrently in many areas of life, and is stimulated by various separate but interwoven actions taken at the same time in various spheres of human activity (social, economic and political) (Malinowska & Kucharska, 2006, p. 6). At the same time, the dynamically changing complexity of this process and its interconnectedness with other key socio-economic phenomena means that it is impossible to clearly define the moment that can be considered as its beginning (Churski et al., 2017, p. 27).

The current picture of this process is not as clear as was perceived at the turn of the century. Its intensity began to fade after the global financial crisis in 2007. Today, after many successive negative events and phenomena (e.g. the pandemic, war in Ukraine and Gaza, tensions in US-China relations and climate change) whose course and continued effect have been dramatic for the functioning of various areas of the economy, we can observe significant changes in this process. In fact, the phenomenon of de-globalisation is often mentioned. In practice, we can observe relatively significant, almost revolutionary transformations to this process, which do not however mean its end, but are instead shaping a new face for globalisation.

Undoubtedly, the new tendencies in globalisation entail significant changes for individual elements of the socio-economic system, including in particular for space and its individual units.

The aim of the article is to identify and indicate the directions of transformations to the globalisation process and the change in the position of socio-economic space in this new phase of globalisation, related among others to an increase in its spatial nature (dimension).

To achieve this aim, use was made of broadly critical analysis of the subject literature and the opinions of experts.

## **2. Globalisation in the face of new socio-economic challenges**

The globalisation processes occurring in the worldwide economy are responsible for the fact that the technological revolution is spreading ever more dynamically in socio-economic space. Today, it is shaped primarily by the intensive innovation process occurring in the ICT sector (including the mass media), which stimulates growth in the flow of information. Importantly, this process results in a reduction in the costs of this transfer. ICT has become a kind of infrastructure (basis) for globalisation processes. Important factors conducive to the growth of globalisation are those of a socio-economic nature, i.e. the unification of consumer needs and values, which translates into the uniformity of global demand for individual goods and services (Dach, 2002, p. 25). Globalisation processes began to take place particularly quickly in the field of economics – which was conducive to the creation of the global economy. The manifestation of globalisation processes is the growing interdependence of economic processes both on the global scale as well as in individual countries or in smaller spatial units. This has been accompanied by the phenomenon of deregulation in individual national economies, resulting in an increase in the flow of capital and technology (including innovation). As a result, in changing the course of economic processes, globalisation has contributed to the creation of the new global economy, in which ultra-modern technologies become predominant. Globalisation began to be seen as the basis and cause of the creation of the new economy, characterized by the domination of services, founded on investment in intangible production factors, accompanied directly by an increase in employment in knowledge-based sectors of the economy (related to information and telecommunication technologies). This resulted in the creation of the information society, where the fundamental production factor is knowledge, which is directly responsible for significant changes in all fields of socio-economic life.

Attention has also been drawn to numerous negative phenomena in globalization processes (the dichotomy of global growth, ecology, the pauperisation of significant groups of people, etc.), for which transnational corporations have principally been blamed. The attitudes they represent are often

ambiguous, that is in highly developed countries they adopt the attitude of *pro publico bono* – financing cultural and artistic events, supporting charitable organizations, and acting to protect the environment. Meanwhile, in underdeveloped countries their actions in many cases feature immoral practices (Kotyński, 2007, p. 31). Moreover, corporate slogans about reducing barriers and increasing economic freedom on a global scale translate in practice into putting pressure on underdeveloped countries to abolish national regulations (employment protections, duty, limits on the export of profits). This translates into an increase in possibilities for exercising various types of pressure, which often transforms into blackmail, on regional and local communities in order to introduce solutions and legal provisions that protect the interests of the corporation. As a result, they often take control of local resources in order to drain them completely. As the result of such action, globalisation leads to reinforcing the division of labour across the globe, in which developing countries (underdeveloped countries) merely supply raw materials or low-processed goods produced by employees with low qualifications, and at the same time become sales markets, often for goods of lower quality or at inflated prices (the case of HIV medicine in Africa). The broadly negative effects of globalisation were described by Stiglitz (2007), who pointed out, among other things, unfair rules of the game introduced by more developed (wealthy) states, which leads to an unequal distribution of the economic benefits of globalization and the imposition of insufficient systemic solutions on many developing countries (e.g. The Washington Consensus), etc.

The negative experiences of recent years (the pandemic, numerous tensions, crises and armed conflicts, Russia's attack on Ukraine, tensions in political and trade relations, climate change and the accompanying natural disasters, etc.) have revealed how sensitive global supply chains are to this type of disruption. In particular, the increasing excessive dependency of global supply chains on the spatial concentration of producers: e.g. before the pandemic 40% of supplies in the electronics industry and 80% of supplies in the pharmaceutical industry came from China (Ziółkowska, 2021). This was due to the fact that organizations focused excessively, almost ridiculously, only on minimising costs, without paying attention to security and certainty, widely promoting the Just in Time system, in which maintaining warehouse stock is abandoned entirely (Banaszyk et al., 2021). In the second half of 2024, the new supply chains became diversified through regionalisation, meaning that they become shorter and closer geographically, and the role of so-called critical reserves is increasing. This is because the above-mentioned negative phenomena that shook the world economy not only caused the suspension of the production of goods in the above-mentioned locations in crisis situations, but later, through transport bottlenecks caused by a sudden increase in orders, limited capacity of logistics hubs and the introduction of sanctions, led to interruptions in the supply of many products and raw materials. As a result, hyper-globalisation, in which the overarching goal was a global economy, is in retreat, and we can only hope that it is replaced by a better form of globalisation and not the autarchy of nation states. Fears of *decoupling*, that is severing of the economic and trade ties that have connected us so far, have increased considerably in recent years. It should be remembered that after the shock caused by the global crisis in 2007-2011, symptoms began to appear that were dubbed *slowbalisation* (*slow globalisation*). However, at the 2019 Davos Economic Forum just before the pandemic, there was broad discussion of globalisation 4.0, which to a large degree related to the increasing role of BRIC countries, and whose assumptions were to be based on the energy revolution, the green and climate revolution, as well as further intensification of the technological revolution (Góralczyk, 2022). At the same time, the annual World Investment Report 2020 of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development indicated that the coming decade would be dominated by the search for sub-suppliers located in closer proximity and the shortening of supply chains. The automation of the most work-intensive production activities will encourage such attitudes, and will limit the impact of labour costs on the location of economic activity. As a result, according to the report, areas (countries) with poorly developed economies would suffer due to the fact that they had previously based their development strategy on attempts to find and gradually reinforce a position for themselves in the supply chains huge global corporations. O'Neil (2022) identified the factors that influence the locating of investments on the American market, underlining the importance of regionalisation and individual regions or countries

(e.g. Mexico) in counteracting global turbulence. By analysing the changes taking place in the contemporary world, she shows that countries which cooperate extensively with neighbouring countries gained a competitive advantage (using examples in selected regions of Europe and Asia). In O'Neil's opinion, it is regional production chains that increase product competitiveness, as they can be based on varying skills, labour costs, raw materials, financing and market access. As a result, we not only have lower prices thanks to economies of scale and higher quality thanks to specialisation, but also products that become more competitive, which translates into a higher pace of growth in intensively cooperating countries (regions).

In light of these phenomena, two increasingly important processes in investment location are discussed, i.e. *nearshoring* and *reshoring*. The first refers to actions in which countries move the supply chains of key goods to states in closer proximity, both geographically and politically. The second concerns the relocation of production to the home country, though this is not about deglobalisation, but about the next stage in globalisation, which focuses on regional networks.

To sum up, it can be said that globalisation itself, despite certain fluctuations, is identified as one of the principal drivers of creating a knowledge-based economy, with the growing importance of ultra-modern services and dynamically increasing investment in intangible product factors, remaining in close interaction with the growing need for employees in the knowledge-intensive sectors of the economy (related primarily to ICT). At the same time, creation of the information society, in which one of the most important production factors is knowledge, has led to ongoing, significant, multi-directional and growing transformations in all areas of socio-economic life. It should also be noted that the technological revolution itself does not constitute an element sufficient enough for globalisation processes to increase. Nevertheless, it can increasingly limit the effects of the physical borders of individual states, therefore it can be assumed that there are no places of any economic significance that are not under its influence. However, globalisation still encounters numerous barriers of various nature, political and social, cultural and mental, commercial and moral. The attitudes of individual groups, as well as entire societies, must contribute to overcoming and removing these barriers. However, as noted, among others, by Zawajska (2021, p. 64), during the pandemic, especially at the beginning, there was strengthening of the doctrine of nationalism and protectionism, and even isolationism, which was particularly evident in relation to vaccinations and the field of intellectual property rights. It should be remembered that until the outbreak of the pandemic (2019), the main axis of scientific discourse (including in economics) were issues related to globalisation, focused above all on identifying its benefits and drawbacks, as well as its opportunities and threats. This was accompanied by the belief (at least in the Western world) in the growing unification of the development level of individual economies and cultural proliferation, which directly reinforced the position of the economy both in practice and in theory. COVID-19 reminded us that, similarly to many other such cases from the past (e.g. the epidemic of so-called Spanish flu caused by the H1N1 virus in the years 1918-1920), there are no universal or certain solutions that guarantee stable and continued economic growth, neither on a global scale nor in individual countries, and even less so on a small scale, i.e. in regions or local units. Such phenomena result in an increase in the feeling of danger and a growth in uncertainty (the so-called culture of fear), which is reflected in the formulation of new concepts and theories related to it, e.g. the concept of risk society or chaos theory.

At present, as discussed by numerous authors, the cumulation of negative factors shaping the current and future socio-economic situation has recently reached such a scale that the need to use science to rationalise civilization becomes justified (Banaszyk et al., 2021).

### 3. Space in globalisation

To sum up the considerations presented so far, one may venture to say that the ongoing globalisation is a process that characterizes the last turn of the century and results in significant transformations in the functioning of various entities and institutions, including spatial units. This is particularly important

in relation to spatial units, as the course of the globalisation progress is conditioned by the world geography (location) of production potential, constituting the basis for the directions and structure of global flows of goods (Wieczorek, 2022).

It would also seem important today, in the middle of the third decade of the 21st century, that the change in the management paradigm accelerates changes in the existing legal status and the political emancipation of local and regional communities, manifesting themselves even in extreme attitudes such as protectionism and even isolationism and autarchy. Noteworthy in this context is the statement by Bell, according to whom the paradox of the contemporary state is that it is too small to cope with global challenges, but at the same time too large to effectively resolve regional and local issues (Szczepański, 1992). Therefore, spatial units are gradually taking over some of the competences previously reserved for central state authorities. This is taking place in a slow process of decentralization. This phenomenon is the result of the greater structural flexibility of these units, their significant adaptive potential in answer to increasing multidirectional changes in the surroundings, and growing competitive pressure. At the same time, in addition to economic entities, new entities become new players on the market, which must face increasing threats, but also competition with other spatial units, as well as economic entities with regard to obtaining financial resources.

For these reasons, competitiveness in the functioning of spatial units has become not only a need but also a challenge. At the same time, at the level of such units, and in the face of increasing external threats, it is necessary to restore social ties and the sense of collectivity, which is an answer to the growth in turbulence in the surroundings and the resulting increase in the scale of uncertainty of action. The fundamental task of the authorities of such spatial units has therefore become to undertake actions that are aimed at activating endogenous social potential, primarily in directing it towards creating a regional and local entrepreneurship climate.

Therefore, it can be said that the ability of local communities to create development processes by using specific endogenous resources becomes the basis for the success of spatial (territorial) units (Gaczek & Komorowski, 2005, p. 51).

At the same time, a process that has intensified under ongoing globalisation since the beginning of the 21st century is the relocation of economic activity. Currently, we can observe an increased migration of various types of investors, often inspired by the search for cheaper (more optimal) conditions for economic activity, whose behaviour can be called nomadism.

The question that arises is whether such phenomena are exclusively negative, and who becomes the victim?

In the subject literature we often encounter the claim that in the long term, the phenomenon of relocation is beneficial for highly developed countries. This is justified by the fact that it is not only the international division of labour that is changing, but its structure that is also undergoing transformation. This is due to the fact that in highly developed countries, simple jobs not requiring high qualifications are being replaced by those requiring higher qualifications, which has direct consequences for the entire economy and is the result of the shaping of new patterns of behaviour in the country's society. Additionally, it should be remembered that today, the continuous growth of poorly developed countries or regions is best achieved by investing in IT infrastructure, which is unfortunately very expensive. Such infrastructure is therefore usually treated as a lower priority in societies with a low level of education.

The future economic development of individual regions and the prosperity of their societies depend on their openness to constant change and the extent to which they adopt new solutions in all areas of life. Also important is whether they are able to exploit their unique endogenous resources in a globalizing world. A high level of local and regional implications will therefore be the basis for success, which will however mean living in conditions of continuous change (turbulence) and uncertainty.

One must agree with Woroniecki that an economy based on knowledge comprises two interlocking skill sets, i.e. the process of creating knowledge and its productive implementation (Woroniecki, 2007).

Only those communities that master these two activities in the most rational way will achieve the greatest success.

In light of the findings to date, it can be assumed that location advantage is an important factor in the activities of international entities. At the same time, the location of economic activity by an international investor is usually related to an influx of innovation, of course on condition that it is not characterized by the domination of simple low-cost production factors. This is of course dependent on non-mobile location advantages, which are currently in essence (scope). These include, for example, both mineral resources and a cheap poorly qualified workforce, but also unique specific resources not present in other locations on such a scale and of such quality. Knowledge capital models therefore point to the possibility of separating the location of knowledge-based assets, the production costs of which are the highest, from the place of production (Cieślik, 2005, pp. 53, 54). As a result, thanks to this dual location, there is a transfer of benefits and costs between the place they are created and the location of the place where the knowledge resources of a given entity will be situated.

In analysing the development of spatial units in the ongoing globalizing economy, it should be underlined that this is connected to (dependent on) the integration of contemporary economies, accompanied by technological progress, all of which decides on a unit's place not only in the national economy but also in an international dimension, with the direct manifestation of this phenomenon being the products and services provided by this unit. It should be realized that in the case of a decided majority of spatial units, their development is correlated with the functioning of international corporations. This dependency is related to the phenomenon of global resourcing (understood as the decision-making process of transnational corporations) and manifests itself not only in an increase of location possibilities for such a corporation, but also the outsourcing and offshoring that accompany such a decision, the effect of which is the participation of local entities in the international trade and labour market. Poniatowska-Jaksch (2007, p. 140) also points out that in location decisions of this type, corporations usually choose spatial units characterized by a higher level of development in terms of the size of the internal market or communication accessibility at various levels. In poorly developed spatial units this type of phenomenon (as well as others, e.g. isolationism, reluctance with regard to external investment, crime, corruption) may result in the lock-in effect, causing exclusion and increasing alienation resulting in economic regression. This process is accompanied by a low degree of adaptability to new operating conditions. However, it should be remembered that it is not always globalisation that is solely responsible for such a situation. For example, in the IMF report *World economic outlook*, it is technological progress and not globalisation that causes an increase in income inequality, which also translates into spatial disproportions (International Monetary Fund, 2017).

#### 4. Conclusions

To sum up the considerations so far, it can be noted that space as an economic category plays a key role in shaping contemporary socio-economic processes. Various types of theories expressed periodically in various works about the end of the importance of space in the economy should be considered false. For example, at the turn of the century, in the book *New rules for the new economy*, Kelly (2001, p. 85) argues that the various types of publications on the end of space in economic analyses were one of the biggest mistakes made in that period and were based on the description of the formation of the new economy. At the same time, it should be remembered that space is also subject to significant changes and differs significantly, for example from that considered in Ricardo's differential rents. Although it is true that the basis for its description is still assumptions formulated by Ptolemy and others, today space is above all a qualitative category that has a significant influence on economic processes, while the recent negative phenomena referred to in the text consolidate its role. The basis for the continued role of space in the economy is the fact that it is primarily a social category, subject to the same transformations as civilization as a whole. These statements allow us to respond to David Harley's concept relating to the compression of time and space (Czerny et al., 2007, p. 15). As the

experience of recent years shows, neither time nor, more importantly, space have finally been eradicated from considerations on economic development. They take on a new, often qualitative dimension, while new important elements appear relating to the impact of space on economic development, which have not been taken into account so far.

Lisowski also rejects the thesis about the end of space in contemporary socio-economic life as a result of the unification of the world and the rapid development of telecommunications. In contradicting this thesis, which is false as it is inconsistent with reality, he cites the position of philosophers who claim that “space is precisely that aspect of the world or type of being which in theoretical and artistic approaches is currently undergoing surprising metamorphoses, becoming more complicated and enriched with new dimensions, and at the same time becoming a container of individual things and processes which increasingly better accommodates their multiplicity and diversity” (Lisowski, 2003, p. 9).

One should agree with the author that “the issue of space will most certainly continue to be a subject of scientific debate for a long time to come” (Lisowski, 2003, p. 10).

It should be emphasised that in recent years, globalisation as a process has undergone significant transformations which have had a direct impact on the increase in the importance of space in the various dimensions of the contemporary economy. The source of these changes should be seen in the new approach to globalisation, in which location decisions are no longer merely the result of narrow economic calculations, but stem from analysis of a range of other factors and conditions, above all of a political and military nature. The intensification of these transformations significantly changes the approach to spatial analyses, not only strengthening them, but also deepening their scope.

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## Przestrzeń społeczno-ekonomiczna wobec nowego oblicza globalizacji

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### Streszczenie

**Cel:** Celem jest identyfikacja i wskazanie kierunków przekształceń procesu globalizacji i zmiany pozycji przestrzeni społeczno-ekonomicznej w tej nowej fazie globalizacji związanej m.in. ze wzrostem jej regionalnego charakteru.

**Metodyka:** W artykule wykorzystano szeroko krytyczną analizę literatury przedmiotu, ocenę danych zastanych oraz opinie ekspertów.

**Wyniki:** Wskazano, że w ostatnim okresie proces globalizacji ulega istotnym przekształceniom, co skutkuje wzrostem znaczenia przestrzeni społeczno-gospodarczej w podejmowaniu decyzji lokalizacyjnych.

**Implikacje i rekomendacje:** Poczynione ustalenia wskazują, że obecne procesy rozwoju muszą uwzględniać w coraz większym zakresie lokalne i regionalne sieci i łańcuchy dostawa. Oddalenie dostawców od naszych rynków powoduje wzrost niepewności i kosztów działalności gospodarczej.

**Oryginalność/wartość:** Wartością artykułu jest zestawienie wzrostu niepewności na globalnych rynkach co przekłada się na konieczność przeformułowania przestrzennego bezpieczeństwa a wiąże się z budową nowych relacji społeczno-gospodarczych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** globalizacja, perturbacje społeczno-gospodarcze, przestrzeń, rozwój, lokalizacja

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