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## **URBAN RECYCLING: SPACES FOR LEISURE IN POLISH URBAN BROWNFIELD SITES**

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Research on the role of culture, entertainment and tourism in the redevelopment of post-industrial areas and, indirectly, in urban development, are conducted in France (e.g. Gravari-Barbas 2004, 2013; Raffin 2007), Great Britain (e.g. Evans 2005; Maitland & Newman 2009) or in the U.S. (e.g. Campo & Ryan 2008). In Poland, urban renewal and regeneration have become a popular area of research, even though the existing studies rarely focus on leisure-led redevelopments. This is partly because this kind of regeneration is relatively new in Polish cities. Although a number of post-industrial sites has grown tremendously since the beginning of the 1990s as a result of a collapse of industry caused by economic and political transformation, initially they remained wastelands or the old buildings

were simply demolished. Then, in the late 1990s, the most common redevelopments of such areas included reuse for manufacturing or for commerce and warehouses (Domański 2001). In the recent years, however, the number of successful conversions led by leisure increased. As the redevelopment of post-industrial sites remains a key problem in many Polish cities (Kowalczyk & Derek 2015), this regeneration path requires further exploration and assessment. This issue was addressed in the research project entitled "Urban recycling. Spaces for leisure in Polish urban brownfield sites", carried out in 2012-2014 at the Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies, University of Warsaw, by Marta Derek (project leader), Andrzej Kowalczyk and Adam Mielczarek (sociologist, Jagiellonian University in Kraków).

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**VARIA: PROJECT REPORT**

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## The objective and research framework

The project was aimed at analysing redevelopment of urban brownfields towards spaces for leisure in Poland (brownfield sites were considered as formerly industrial, infrastructure, port, etc. areas). It addressed the following questions: (1) What is the mechanism of redevelopment of urban brownfield areas in leisure spaces? (2) How do these spaces of leisure function in urban brownfield sites in Poland?

Leisure spaces in urban areas were defined as those designed for the needs of entertainment, culture, relax, sport..., i.e., activities connected with spending free time in urban space (Derek 2014). The research consisted of two stages. In the first step, we carried out a desktop research of tourism and leisure facilities that have been introduced in urban brownfields in all Polish cities of over 100 000 inhabitants (39 cities). It required combination of different data sources: literature, internet, direct contacts with city halls (by phone and e-mail), promotional materials of cities, etc. This step led to selection of three case studies: Łódź, Włocławek and Warsaw. We sought to explore whether leisure-led redevelopments have similar mechanisms although the cities selected as the case studies experienced totally different problems and deindustrialization in each case had various consequences. Łódź was a typical industrial city, with a branch structure dominated by a textile industry, which clearly marked itself in the spatial and functional structure of the city (Kaczmarek 2001). The decline of the industry caused the still ongoing economic and demographic crisis. Much smaller Włocławek was also a typical industrial city (116 thousand inhabitants). In this case, however, the negative effects of the decline of the industry were strengthened by losing city's administrative status of a capital of the region in 1998 due to a territorial reform, which deepened the crisis. In Warsaw, although it was one of Poland's biggest industrial centres (Misztal 1998), deindustrialisation did not lead to a great crisis and was not the most important problem of the post-socialist

transition. Indeed, Warsaw improved its position after reintroduction of a market economy due to its status of a capital city, a diversified economic structure and a rapid development of the service sector.

In the second step we carried out the fieldwork in each of our case studies, which resulted in providing a detailed inventory of tourism, leisure and cultural facilities in all post-industrial sites in these cities, including a photographic documentation. Furthermore, we interviewed (in-depth interviews) 18 key local stakeholders and actors, i.e. people managing these areas, representatives of the enterprises and institutions present on the site, as well as local government representatives, local activists and experts embedded in local context.

## Results

Desk research allowed to identify 116 post-industrial areas in 33 out of 39 cities, where 134 different leisure facilities were found. Although it is not a complete list, it provides a general overview of the functions which were developed in the postindustrial sites.

The most popular directions of redevelopments were shopping and entertainment malls (28 malls were identified on the post-industrial areas) and museums (20). Other popular directions are gastronomy (identified in 16 places), culture (15), entertainment (15), sport and recreation (13) and art galleries (11). Up to 51% of the functions were introduced between 2000 and 2009, and another 27% between 2010 and 2013, compared to 12% in the 1990s and 10% before that time. This shows that the trend is relatively new.

In **ŁÓDŹ**, the detailed inventory of post-industrial areas and buildings still *in situ* was conducted on the basis of the "Book of Łódź Factories" (*Księga fabryk Łodzi*) by J. Kusiński, R. Bonisławski and M. Janik (2009). All the factories and factory complexes documented by them (around 200 in total) were analysed, and it was found that in 35 of them 85 leisure facilities were developed. Almost half of these activities related to gastronomic functions

of one kind or another. In some cases, there is a single activity per locality (e.g. a restaurant in the former plush weaving mill in Gdańska Street, or a dancing school in the former cotton mill at 21 Wigury Street); while other old factory complexes bring together several leisure activities. The latter are first and foremost "Księży Młyn" (the former mill manufacturing cotton products owned by Karol Scheibler) at No. 1 Plac Zwycięstwa; the old Ramisch mill at Nos. 138/140 Piotrkowska Street; the old Richter mill premises at 17 Stefanowskiego Street; or the *Widzewska Manufaktura* at 135 Piłsudskiego Street. In addition, former factory complexes now play host to two massive entertainment and shopping centres in Łódź, i.e. *Galeria Łódzka* and *Manufaktura*.

Łódź was one of the pioneers in Poland regarding conversion a former plant or mill to a museum<sup>1</sup>. However, this was a unique example, as most industrial plants and other premises continued to operate until the early 1990s, at which point many collapsed due to transition from centrally planned economy to market economy in Poland. Former industrial areas mainly located in the city's central district then became a major problem. These sites in fact evolved through several distinct stages, given that they first played host to *avant garde* night clubs popular enough to even attract young people from other Polish cities. However, any makeovers required for this were impermanent and not far-reaching. In contrast, a huge breakthrough came with the 2006 opening of the *Manufaktura* centre on the site of Izrael Poznański's old mill complex. This conversion made it abundantly clear that very attractive use could be made of the city's industrial heritage. Nevertheless, that example also showed that it required vision and persistence on the part of one person, who eventually succeeded in finding a suitable investor-developer.

<sup>1</sup> As early as in 1955, the so-called "White Factory" (*Biała Fabryka*) building of Ludwik Geyer had been designated as a museum, on which the renovation work began in 1958. Still in operation today, the Central Museum of Textiles (*Centralne Muzeum Włókiennictwa*) opened there in 1960.

*Manufaktura* represents one of several kinds of mechanisms by which the old industrial areas of Łódź are transformed that could be identified and analysed via the research procedure described. Two others are exemplified by OFF Piotrkowska (the old Ramisch Mill, acquired by a foreign investor in 2003, wherein the approach allowing entertainment space to arise was inspired by the activity of an association engaging in cultural activity there), as well as *Wi-Ma* (the former *Widzewska Manufaktura* that exemplifies activity on the part of an owner seeking to attract young people involved with culture and art and different activities of benefit to society; see Derek (2015) for more details). Both areas come within the *Łódź Kreuje* Strategy for the promotion of creative industries that is being developed and promoted currently. However, in both cases, the development of activity associated with culture and entertainment was basically a consequence of external circumstances, rather than a strategy prepared in advance. Furthermore, in both cases there was a very prolonged period during which decisions and documentation agreed with the City Hall were being awaited, while the first case was also afflicted by the economic crisis, which emerged just as the developer had put together the documentation. The designation of premises for leisure was in both cases an idea by which empty space might be 'filled' temporarily, and an image for these places generated; as opposed to some kind of targeted or planned function being discharged in the longer term.

Yet another identified type of transformation mechanism applies to the *EC1-Miasto Kultury* development, which is a key element in the makeover of the area around the Łódź-Fabryczna Railway Station and the generation of a so-called "New Centre of Łódź". In this case, the city authorities are introducing functions among other things associated with leisure on the site of a former power plant. However, the research shows that this new flagship urban development is (as one interviewee put it) 'at a crossroads'. This description reflects its lack of a functional programme, as well as the

huge sums needed for the upkeep of this building belonging to the city authorities.

Exceptionally important questions determining the direction and means of makeovers and transformations relate to ownership; and quite often this is seen to reflect the manner in which the plants and mills involved went out of business. The identified mechanisms by which ex-industrial parts of Łódź have been transformed most often bring to light the huge role in the transformation of city space played by developers; at the same time as they stress the lack of a strategy, idea and policy *vis-à-vis* these areas on the part of the city. Discussions held make it clear that the city's policy is only formulated in respect of areas belonging to the city itself. As an official at the Office of the City Architect said: "Policy based on the utilisation of that part of the heritage directly linked with the mills is now basically coming to an end, since (...) either the buildings have already been sold off, or they are the examples already mentioned that have now been converted, are in operation, are completed". At the same time, this problem is seen quite differently by the owners of these areas, who speak of the need for the authorities to extend support to their activities.

The functional programme introduced in relation to all of the conversions referred to above (and in fact to many other buildings) is only addressed to local inhabitants to a vanishingly limited extent. The recipients of the initiatives and activities being pursued tend to be inhabitants of other parts of the city or else incomers from beyond; often young people who have learned from the Internet (above all *Facebook*) about what is going on in the formerly industrial space.

An urban-planning inventory carried out on formerly industrial areas of Warsaw reveals that 112 leisure activities are being engaged in on the sites or premises of 40 old industrial areas. However, as many as 41 of these are located within the Służewiec-based "Southern Industrial and Warehouse District"<sup>2</sup>. A clear

majority of other identified buildings and sites are located on the margins of the capital's central area, in Wola and North Praga Districts, or else on the edges of the city overall (in Ursus). More than half of all activities associated with the leisure zone (62 in all) serve gastronomic functions. Old industrial buildings also house 11 clubs offering music, 6 museums, 4 art galleries and 3 entertainment and shopping centres.

The research proved that there were some examples of conversions that had taken place in Warsaw, in which activity in the leisure sphere served *de facto* in the promotion of the given area, thanks to the generation of a suitable new image for the given place. The most spectacular example is *Soho Factory*, on the site of the former *Pocisk* Ammunitions Plant, which – thanks to the vision of one person – is changing into residential and office space with elements also serving leisure activity.

Another quite popular direction taken by transformations involves the introduction into post-industrial sites of quite specific activities requiring large areas that are at the same time inexpensive to lease or purchase, and relatively readily adapted to new and different functions. At times, matters of further significance may be the chance for rather free use to be made of the premises in question (which is not for example mattering too much if a production hall is adapted to serve as a centre in which messy paintball can be played); or the need for a certain 'atmosphere' to be imparted (of significance where clubs offering music or other artistic activity are concerned).

The matter of the utilisation of formerly industrial areas is one that basically goes unnoticed by city authorities – as Deputy Mayor of Warsaw M. Olszewski put it, in an interview: "In my view, the issue of post-industrial areas in Warsaw never has been and probably

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tion of post-industrial heritage. For this reason also the area has been regarded as a single formerly industrial site, there being no way of recreating the limits of the area once built up in this way (and in fact no sense in doing so either, considering that most new buildings have been erected from scratch).

<sup>2</sup> This is a special case: little is left here of the old buildings, so it is not possible to speak about the utilisation

never will be much of a headache for the City Mayor, and that is something that distinguishes us from Katowice and Łódź, for example". Studies make it clear that the city authorities do not feel they should interfere with the space in question, which can be managed successfully by investors in the context of activity engaged in on the free market. This therefore denotes in Warsaw – as in Łódź – the deferment upon developers of many decisions concerning the spatial development of the city.

Likewise in Warsaw as in Łódź, a large share of the formerly industrial buildings to which leisure activity has now been introduced are not designed to serve local inhabitants, but rather incomers from other districts of the city, or indeed beyond. Many of the cases represent particular kinds of enclave in what are otherwise poorer formerly industrial districts, with little or no influence on the wider surroundings being exerted (examples might be Soho, the *Centrum Artystyczne Fabryka Trzciny*, clubs located along 11 Listopada Street, and so on). What is also characteristic for Warsaw is the fact that many former production facilities and factories underwent destruction as investment activity was pursued, with new buildings appearing in their place. Given these circumstances, the Warsaw cases cannot be said to be part of the trend whereby industrial heritage is put to use through the assignment of new functions.

**Włocławek** emerges as a particular case, since industry there goes on playing a very important role in the sense of both economic significance and presence in the city space. It is probably for this reason that the city does not define itself as 'post-industrial', with interviews conducted making it clear that inhabitants there continue to anticipate the city's return to an industrial function on the larger scale. As a respondent noted, when asked about the transformation of old industrial areas: "It's all going with quite a bit of resistance. I don't know what the reason for that is, but alongside a lack of money there is probably some kind of mentality of hanging on to the idea that that industry is the only function there could be in Włocławek".

The work carried out shows that industrial areas of the kind under study are above all present in the centre of Włocławek. This is not so much the result of any breakdown in industrial production and collapse of plants post-1990 as it is a reflection of earlier planning activity in the 1970s which brought a transfer of industry beyond the centre to new industrial and warehousing districts in the eastern part of the city. That meant processes of redevelopment on formerly industrial sites in the centre taking place as early as in the 1970s (for example, by 1972, the *Linodrut* factory buildings had already been made over into the Kujawy Hotel; Wróblewski 2001).

In Włocławek, activity associated with leisure is of only limited significance to the transformation of post-industrial areas. In the course of the research it proved possible to identify just 9 post-industrial areas which were playing host to 3 premises offering overnight stays, 2 museums, 2 serving recreational functions, 1 shopping and entertainment centre and 1 culture centre. It is the last two new developments that are the most spectacular ones assuming greatest significance for the city's inhabitants, above all on account of their locations in the city's spatial configuration and functions served. The service-related and residential complex plus shopping and entertainment centre that is *Wzorcownia* arose at the initiative of a private local investor. In turn, the site of the old Faience Factory and *Ursus* Mechanical Enterprise was designated for residential and service-related functions in the 1997 Local Plan. The first development – on part of the Mechanical Enterprise site – was the *City* shopping centre, with *Wzorcownia* not opening until 2009. This building is in the very centre of the city, located between the railway station and the central city square. The role in the transformations taking place in this part of the city has thus been considerable: the new construction has taken in open public space in Grodzki Square, and this has indeed become a place for inhabitants to meet, in accordance with the plan. The *Centrum Kultury Browar B* development was not up and running until May 2014,

and is a new urban development offering diverse activities associated with culture. However, for the necessary adaptations to the new role to be pursued, the local authority first engaged in the purchased of the site of the old Bojańczyk Brewery, which had been parcelled off to many separate owners. Located on the river, on the edges of Włocławek's central area, the development has come to epitomise the concept of city-centre and waterside regeneration (as an employee of the City Office put it: "Because EU money came along for this kind of regeneration and redevelopment work, the city took the action it was able to take, i.e. confined to public space, given that that was all we could touch. And that means the streets, the Boulevards, the Old Market Square and the Bojańczyk Brewery"). Time will tell how far this development will go towards changing the image of the degraded city centre.

## Conclusions

To sum up, functions associated with leisure can be seen to have become a key goal of the transformations of formerly industrial areas that have taken place in Polish cities. While as recently as in the 1990s, the old factories and mills would have tended to be demolished and have their places taken by entirely new buildings, Poland was also reached by a worldwide trend for emphasis and value to be attached to industrial heritage – and its adaptation to serve new functions. The mechanisms underpinning the relevant conversions and makeovers taking place in Poland are and have been varied. For several years now, Łódź has been pursuing the idea that former factories and mills, and complexes thereof, should be made use of and given new functions. However, it is still only possible to identify a few examples of total reorientation of function achieved and completed successfully. This is largely because the transformations involved depend very much on form of ownership, as well as on the financial capabilities of the investor. A lack of funding for regeneration may frequently combine with the absence of suitable legal solutions to ensure

that actions are taken on the small scale (e.g. with parts of an area leased out to different firms and institutions, without any development of an entire building or site having taken place). There is at the same time a conviction that, since a decided majority of the old factories and mills are now in private hands, and since many of these are indeed playing host to new activity, the city is not basically facing any problem here at all.

In Warsaw, matters of the formerly industrial areas have not been at the forefront of urban policy. A great many of the old sites were simply levelled, with new functions assigned and pursued at sites redeveloped from scratch. Where industrial heritage remains, and where leisure activity has been introduced, it is a utilitarian approach that has been applied (relating to the specific opportunities that old industrial buildings may offer), or else a marketing-based one (whereby activity in 'authentic', original buildings can be thought to allow a distinct(ive) place on the market to be occupied).

Far smaller in size, the city of Włocławek is still very much suffused by the industrial city paradigm, so it remains difficult to invoke any mechanisms by which formerly industrial areas might be up for transformation. Furthermore, the needs of inhabitants as regards leisure activity are limited in a city so much smaller than the other two.

Though some of the Polish projects analysed follow Western models, it is possible to find still other transformation mechanisms not described in the foreign literature (e.g. far more limited commitment to the change process on the part of local authorities; with Western European cities being imitated as far as the aesthetics and functions go, though not when it comes to the methods of management and adaptation of offers to local recipients).

All of the examples analysed also indicate more general problems associated with the conversion or transformation of urban space. They make it clear that it is not only in respect of regeneration and redevelopment processes, but also as regards processes of urban development in general, that legal conditioning

(or above all the lack thereof) can prove of such huge significance, along with a poor spatial planning system and matters of ownership. At the same time, weaknesses in urban policy on physical development are to be noted, with it emerging in each case studied that the local authorities see this as being confined to buildings in city hands. Łódź is also seen to be bedevilled by exceptionally protracted

administrative procedures that have proved very effective in blocking many proposed investments.

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