

The Former “New Socialist City” in the Neoliberal Condition – The Case of Tychy in Poland

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Introduction

The post-socialist heritage of the cities of East-Central Europe, particularly after 1989, became the source of several economic and social problems which generated constraints and obstacles for their future development. Tychy, however, while featuring all the typical elements of socialist legacy, represents a relatively good standard of living (in regional context) and remains a competitive, prosperous and attractive place for living.

So the question arises which former elements contributed to the prosperity of the city, and which new democratic and liberal concepts have had the most important impacts. The main research question concerns the explanation of how this post-socialist city has been adapting to the contemporary political, social and economic conditions and to the challenges of the future.

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Map 14: Tychy – the current division of the city into districts, settlements and estates with indication of the downtown area



Source: Studium, 2013

New town concepts versus the concept of the socialist city

The new town of Tychy was designated in October 1950, by a governmental decree that followed the principles of the Upper Silesian Industrial Centre's regional plan [GOP]¹. The general aim was to re-establish the industrial production ability of the core area of Upper Silesia, which was destroyed during World War II. This strongly urbanised area concentrated the traditional heavy industry and mining and was responsible for serious environmen-

¹ Also called as the master economic plan of the Upper Silesian Industrial Region (GOP –Górnośląski Okręg Przemysłowy). One of the important elements of such a plan concerns the formation of several satellite towns around the core “black country” – the coal basin area is already densely populated and concentrates old industrial infrastructure and a high level of environmental pollution.

tal pollution. For example, large wasted and polluted areas remaining from the mining activities contributed to the environmental deterioration of existing settlements. So the next priority of this regional plan was to create a sort of surrounding “suburban zone” which will be devoted to new and better housing and modern industry. Such a policy, named as “de-glomeration” represents the ideological background for the location of new cities and housing estates (like Tychy, Pyskowice, Tarnowskie Góry, Zabkowice).

Subsequent development took place in the rural areas south to Katowice, near the small town of Tychy, which received the municipal right in 1934, and had a population of 10,000 inhabitants. The basic urban planning instrument was a spatial master plan (formulated in 1953, while the construction started in 1950) of a rigid urban composition based on geometrical axes, that was initially targeted towards a population of 120,000 inhabitants (*Wejchert, 1970, p. 23.*). This town, from the very beginnings has been designed as a socialist city, although, with the passage of time, not all the assumptions of the original plan were fully implemented. The main modification concerns the delay in service infrastructure provision, increasing the scale of buildings (blocks of flats) and the size of housing estates, the change of construction technologies and materials from traditional ones toward more and more prefabricated ones. While the master plan was completed in 1953, the construction of the first housing complex called ‘A’ (built in the typical socialist realistic style for around 6,000 inhabitants) started a year earlier (*Adamczewska–Wejchert, 1985, p. 75.*), which can be ironically regarded as a symptom of the proficiency of the socialistic centralised planning.

Rapid expansion of the city caused changes in the administrative boundaries several times by including adjacent rural areas. In addition, the first decades of city development were often shaped by ad hoc decisions that bypassed regional planning decisions. In 1964 the central government completely stopped the development of the city, directing the potential of (state owned) building companies for the reconstruction of housing in other cities. This halted the construction of new cities in Poland till 1971 when it was resumed, but in the 1970s only apartments without service facilities were built causing substantial shortage (*Nowakowski, 2013*).

Nevertheless, as M. S. Szczepański writes (1993, p. 2.) the city of Tychy was created as the embodiment of the new socialist principles of urbanisation and architecture. The new city of Tychy (together with Jastrzębie Zdrój located in the southern part of Silesia and the new town of Nowa Huta, erected near Cracow) was used by the authorities to reinforce the supremacy of socialism as a political system as well as a progressive urban culture. The new city of Tychy is described as probably the most successful example of post-war urban development in Poland (Golany, 1976, p. 94.).

The contemporary townscape of Tychy consists of a broad range of formal architectural solutions, from historical to post-modernistic and fashionable up-to-day ones (Lipok–Bierwiaczonek, 2014, p. 24.) but the preserved composition of the first spatial master plan, grounded on a strict geometrical concept of a large scale, dominative centre surrounded by numerous massive satellite housing complexes, still and clearly reminds us of its conceptual fundament: the city is the prime emblem of (socialist) progress. Since 1952 the city has been under constant construction, the master plan has been, and still is, verified but its basic concept, as S. Gzell noticed (2000), have remained unchanged (however, due to the administrative interventions, certain elements were caricaturised).

The prime assumption was that the city should differ from the 19th century capitalist town. The International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM: 1928-1959) advanced the cause of ‘architecture as a social art’ by promoting the architectural principles of the Modern Movement (later called modernism). Architecture was considered a political tool that should be used to improve the world, basically through the design of buildings and through urban planning. The contradiction between the old and the new approach to design, architecture and city planning was also expressed by vocabulary – a modern city was called the new city. The city of Tychy – as it is named today – was from 1951 to 1973 called ‘the New Tychy’. Pre-fixed by the adjective new qualifies the city as a modernistic one, and today explains why since the beginning of the 1980s criticism of ‘Nowe Tychy’ (the New Tychy) has become in Poland a vivid tradition. Nevertheless, as remarked by S. Gzell (2000), the city of Nowe Tychy still belongs to the same group as the new British cities, Stockholm’s satellites and the city of Brasilia.

There is a common agreement that the location of the city was decided according to the political decision of the communists to

produce better living conditions for the working class labour force of the Upper Silesian old industrial region. The region was formed under former capitalist regimes. As a result, according to the first deep research on Tychy as a socialist city *M. S. Szczepański (1993, p. 1.)* claims that this city “... served as a model of how to solve the housing problems in a socialist society”. In general, the original concept, based on the Charter of Athens, at the beginning (1950s) modified the function of the new city by limiting it to housing and recreation and treating the new town as a dormitory of Katowice or its satellite (*Szczepański, 1993*).

The rationalities behind the location of the new town close to old Tychy was based on several factors. Among them the most important was the convenient accessibility of the existing coal mines in the region for future labour force, the lack of the damaging impact of mining (popular in other Silesian industrial cities), low air pollution and much better environmental conditions, good access to potential recreational areas (Pszczyńskie forest, and Lake Paprocany), open and unconstrained space for planning and new constructions.

The industrial city as the model for the socialist city

In Poland, parallel to the ideas of the socialist city, a concept of social housing estates (*Brakalska, 1948*) has become very famous. Social housing estates were considered as an instrument of social change and especially to improve the living conditions of the working class (*Syrkus, 1976*). The implementation of this concept of housing in the Polish cities after World War II resulted that almost all urban development was carried out nearly exclusively in the form of such a housing estate. Virtually every town had its “socialist” quarter, consisting of post-war housing estates (communal or cooperative) or groups of settlements. The most typical socialist town was Tychy, created almost from scratch in the period of real socialism. At the end of the eighties, which also marks the end of real socialism in Poland, the city was rated by some as an urban wonder of the world, and by others as a concrete slum (*Szczepański, 1991*).

The national and regional context

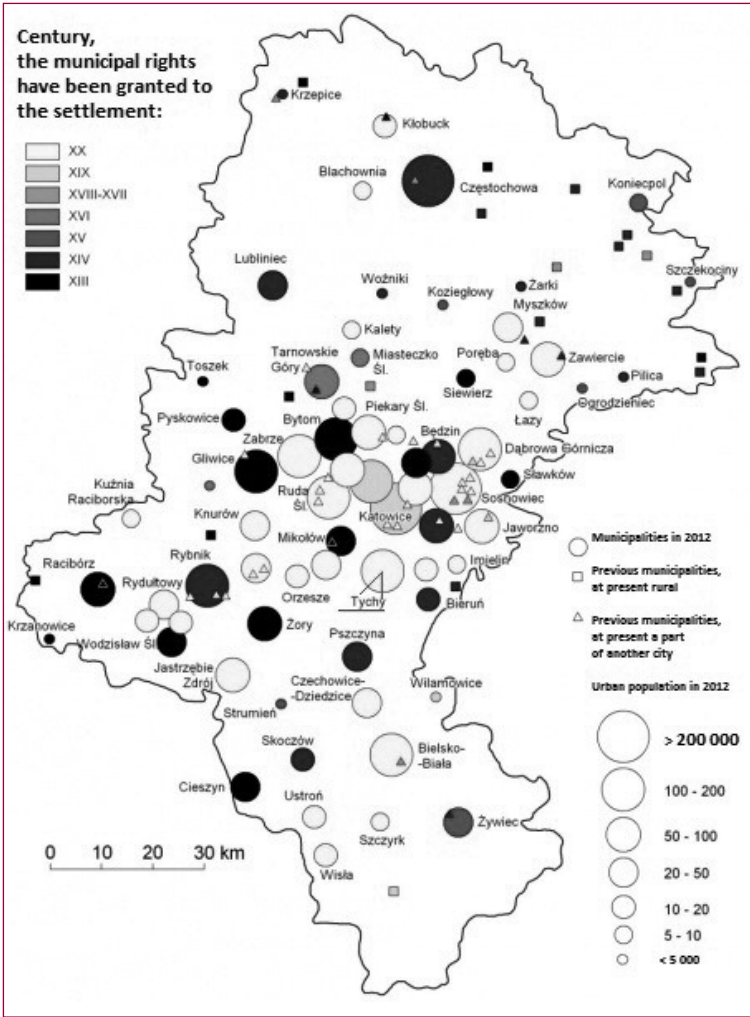
Silesia (voivodeship) covers the area of 12 331 km², and is inhabited by over 4.7 million people, which represents 12.4% of the total Polish population, hence it is Poland's most urbanised and densely populated region. The geographical location of Silesia combined with its resources, both natural and anthropogenic, has a big impact on the formation of socio-economic processes and settlement structure. As far as the regional context is concerned, an analytical description of the socio-economic transition of the Silesian region, was given by J. Runge (2009), who underlines the observed evident aberrations from theoretical concepts of social-economic transformations, as well the specific characteristics of the regional urban structure of the area (such as cities losing their spatial integrity, becoming amorphous organisms).

The urban structure of the region clearly differs from the typical urban structures of contemporary Poland, mainly due to the historical conditions. The process of urbanisation in Silesian Voivodship (i.e. the Upper Silesia) was bolstered in the middle ages in two phases: a decisive in the 13th century and a complementary in the 14th and 15th centuries (the creation of so called 'new towns') and then it was again strongly intensified in the period of the industrial revolution (*Map 15*).

The pathways of economic growth and regional development in transition economies are strongly influenced by national and regional policies. The scale and dynamics of socio-economic transformation were fuelled by economic globalisation, that for more than three decades has been transgressing the national boundaries. But, as has been noticed by Krტიčka (2013), the local comparative advantages of post-industrial cities, like low production costs and relatively high skilled workforce were generally not sufficient for establishing long-term economic growth and competitiveness without a necessary political (structural) support, on national (and sometimes also on regional) level.

The case of Tychy well exemplifies the dependences of the recognised urban development pathway regulated by both levels of governance, the national and regional one. Due to the fact that the contemporary structure of regional self-government was legally introduced almost a decade later (1998) than the local one (1990), the dependences of policies on the state seem to be more

Map 15: Distribution, genesis and the demographic size of the cities of the Silesia region



Source: Based on the map published by Silesian Encyclopedia – http://ibrrs.pl/mediawiki/index.php/Plik:Miasta_mapa1.jpg

significant, at least before the accession to EU (2004). According to the results of the econometric research by E & Y (*Raport, 2011, p. 40.*) the establishing of SEZ branch in Tychy, may be regarded as the key factor of the city's current economic stability. Hence, the Bill of SEZ (1994), that grounded the national system of special economic zones, shall be regarded as the most important impact on the development of Tychy executed on national level after 1989.

Tychy as a socialist city in the period of socialism

Imposed ideological priorities in the architecture and spatial structure of the city did not lead to the formation of local communities or to identifying with the city or neighbourhoods. M.S. Szczepanski's investigation of that time reveals some of the social consequences which were reflected in the spatial differentiations that distinguish socialist cities from the towns formed in Western Europe (in the second half of the twentieth century). Essential features of socialist cities include the irrational and wasteful use of space; the existence of over intensively used areas (for example, housing estates) together with empty spaces as a reserve for future expansion. This caused a spontaneous appropriation of space, especially public space, by some social groups, expanding the "self", e.g. by creating home gardens (*Szczepański, 1991*). In the case of Tychy it concerned the church and the workers' hotel. It was reflecting the situation that in the cities of socialist Poland, it was possible to observe attempts to eliminate the sacred space which frequently caused social conflicts. Followed with spontaneous persistence (in spite of the official spatial plans) or the appropriation of space and the creation of new spaces of worship in places were not anticipated in the plans.

Since 1970 Tychy has been among the towns dominating in Katowice conurbation's population with the percentage share of 3.8. According to the results of the study by Runge (2008, p. 67-68.) the share of Tychy's population grew constantly throughout the period of socialism (as well in the phase of transformation), reaching the highest level of the share in population structure of the conurbation by 5.6%, in the year 2005.

Studies conducted in the late 1980s (*Szczepański, 1991*) revealed the social composition of the new socialist city. Most of the residents came from the Upper Silesian Industrial District, but a large part of them were migrants from other, mainly agricultural regions of Poland, but also re-emigrants from Belgium, France and Germany. A specific group constituted families repatriated from the Soviet Union (in 1958), who were settled in housing estate C (which was under construction that time and these families account for around 50% of the inhabitants of this estate), and the workers' hotels, which as determined by M. Szczepanski (1991) were the social ghettos (in the early 1990s around 7000 employees lived in dormitories and boarding houses).

An important social feature that shaped the city was the lack of the citizens' social integration. In spite of the new and relatively modern technologies, though, due to the unfavourable structure of the functional pattern of urban space social integration has been marginal. This is particularly true in the case of housing estate (sets of blocks of flats: C, D, E, O, N and M, F) areas². The spatial pattern of the core city formed according to the ideological doctrine was based on the radical separation of the place of work from the place of living (as required by the Charter of Athens). The negative impact of such spatial pattern forced inhabitants to long commuting to work. In addition, the lack of the shaped symbolic space, services, cultural and recreational facilities had limited the development of the local community. As a result the inhabitants' identity with their place of living was very poor. Only two residents of 100 respondents identified Tychy as a "homeland", and 25 would immediately have moved beyond Silesia if they had had the opportunity (*Szczepanski, 1991, p. 60.*). In the 1980s Tychy was generally treated as a bedroom for Katowice and as a temporary place to stay.

In case of housing estates (blocks of flats) located on the outskirts of the city, the situation was more strongly differentiated. The most extreme case, shown by M.S. Szczepanski (1991) was the complex of housing blocks R (Regina) inhabited by 5,000 people, which was equipped only with one small grocery store, a newsstand and one nursery organised in physically connected apartments. Better conditions for social integration were physically and organisationally formed in the complex of housing blocks named K, which was equipped with several every day services.

In 1973, the "Polski Fiat" factory³, which in 2009 became the largest factory of Fiat in Europe, was located in Tychy (and Bielsko Biała). Such a factory generated a large demand for labour, from the very beginnings it diversified and reduced commuting to the central part of Silesia to some extent, and pushed further housing development in the southern direction.

² The first housing estate of the „New Town Tychy” was named „A” (Anna) and the next estates, consisting a complex of block of flats as well, constructed in the following years were named using the alphabet letters B, C, D, E etc.

³ The production of „Polski Fiat 126p” lasted till 2000, than the models Uno, Siena and Palio Weekend, Panda, Seicento, Fiat 500, as well Ford Ka II and Lancia Ypsilon II were made.

The sociological assessment of the new city of Tychy as a “socialist city” expresses disappointments. First of all it has not created conditions for the emergence of a strong community that would identify itself with the place of residence. The architectural structure had a uniformed, totalitarian and egalitarian character, which only provided institutional and efficient management control tools over the residents. The seeds of local communities emerged only in those parts of the city where the imposed norms, ideologies, doctrines and plans were not implemented (*Szczepanski, 1991, p. 64.*). It is characteristic that in spite of their relatively hard living condition the inhabitants of Tychy were aware that living conditions in other Silesian cities were much harder.

The post-1989 challenges

The political change of 1989 generated the immediate transformation of the socialist city of Tychy. One of the first elements of abandoning the socialist city features was the rebirth of democratic local self-government, which made the – that time extremely rare – decision to reduce the administrative area of the city. As a result in 1991, 5 former neighbourhoods: Bieruń, Bojszowy, Kobiór, Łędziny and Wryy again became administratively separate communities (gminas) from proper Tychy. (*Map 16*)

Before the division the territory of Tychy was approximately 271 km², and the population was about 191 000. Although the territory of Tychy was decreased by 65% to the area of 87.72 km², after the dissociation the population of Tychy decreased only by 30% to approximately 133 000 inhabitants. Due to that administrative changes outside the city most of the troublesome coal mine industry was left aside and the density of population almost doubled, hence Tychy entered the phase of intense socio-economic transformation in a much more compact urban form.

Many street names were changed from communist heroes to the historical patrons of democracy in Poland. The same evolution as the changes of street names concerns the landscape and monuments. In this “socialist city” the establishment of numerous elements of sacred spaces (like churches) has particular significance.

The most dramatic challenge connected with post-1989 transformation, which was unknown in the previous political system, concerns unemployment. This phenomenon associated with the

Map 16: Location of Tychy with its neighbouring communities (in dark grey) in relation to the borders of Katowice – the regional centre of Silesia.



Source: The authors' own edition

transformation was much more serious on the whole country scale than on the local scale – in the town of Tychy. In the last decade on the national scale unemployment declined from 17.6% in 2005 to 9.8% in 2015, on the regional scale (of Silesia) for the same period the decline was from 15.4% to 8.2%. In the case of Tychy the progress was much larger, unemployment dropped from 12% in 2005 to only 3.9% in 2015. In spite of that increased unemployment has remained the most important factor of generating poverty and different social problems.

Despite the systematic decline (in the last decade) the number of people in need of social assistance involves 1,098 families. In general, the main cause why people seek assistance (72.22%) was unemployment. In addition, in 2014 pending the feeding program benefited 3,664 people and as part of the so-called “tasks own

communes” i.e. financed from local authority budget, including assistance in the form of targeted benefits supported 2,293 families, representing 3.7% of the population. The structure of the receivers of social assistance concerns first of all 57,46% single-person households, 19.35% of single-parents families, 9.72% families with many children, and only 13.47% is full families (*Pomoc–Społeczna, 2014*)

One of the serious challenges is the demographic crisis characterised by the gradual decrease of the population from 133 760 in 1995, to 128 621 in 2014. In terms of economic categories, the share of the post-working groups jumped from 9.9% in 1995 to 19.1% in 2014. In case of the pre-working age citizens, we observe a radical drop from 29.2% in 1995 to 16.6% in 2014. Only in the case of working age population was an increase noticed between 1995 and 2010 and since then their number has gradually been decreasing (*Table 18*).

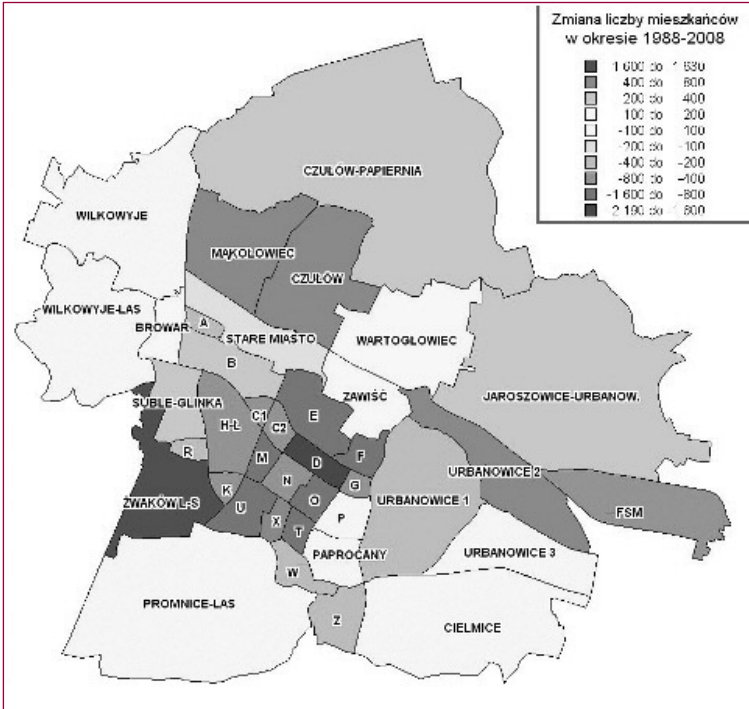
The forecast for 2035, however, looks more challenging. A decrease will occur in all economic categories: for the pre-working category (0-17 years of age) will drop by 31.7%, for the working age (of 18-60/65 years) will drop 28.5%. While the share of retirement age people will increase by 27.1%. So the aging of Tychy’s society is one of the future challenges of the local self-government, although,

Table 18: Population in Tychy by economic categories (1995-2014) (people; %)

Years	Population				w %		
	Total	in pre-working age	in working age	in post-working age	in pre-working age	in working age	in post-working age
2014	128 621	21 408	82 654	24 529	16,6	64,3	19,1
2012	129 112	21 187	85 851	22 074	16,4	66,5	17,1
2010	129 386	21 122	88 191	20 073	16,3	68,2	15,5
2005	131 153	23 107	90 721	17 325	17,6	69,2	13,2
2000	133 463	29 545	88 730	15 188	22,1	66,5	11,4
1995	133 760	39 117	81 443	13 200	29,2	60,9	9,9

Source: Statistical Office, Bank Danych Lokalnych – www.stat.gov.pl

Map 17: Change in the number of Tychy inhabitants (1988-2008)



(Source: *Studium uwarunkowań i kierunków zagospodarowania przestrzennego miasta Tychy*, pp.47, <http://bip.umtychy.pl/index.php?action=PobierzPlik&id=122571>)

the disadvantageous structural change of Tychy’s demography has not been considered yet as a key development factor by the authorities (in January 2016 only half of the 35 municipal decision makers interviewed identified the ‘rapid aging of the population’ as one of the ‘only three’ crucial development factors).

The characteristic transformation represents the new way of strategic planning, visible in the document: “Urban Strategy of Tychy till 2020+”. In addition to the involvement of experts, it takes the social participation into account more and more seriously. A wide range of local actors are invited to participate in identifying and solving problems, in the formulation and implementation of the planning and building strategy. For example, during the consultations in the framework of workshops the proposed solutions were approved according to the principle of consensus.

The survey on 1000 Tychy citizens prepared in 2009 by P. Rojek and G. Gawron (2011) on the perception of the city demonstrat-

ed the post-socialist development. According to this research 60% of the respondents declared strong, plus another 35% average identity with Tychy. In addition, 65% would not move permanently to another city with their family even if they had such an opportunity. Respondents assessing particular elements of the living conditions put shopping opportunities, access to consumer services and public transport among the best features of the city. Relatively good ratings were given to educational opportunities, the business environment and availability of public administration. The lowest assessment concerned the state of communal economy, housing and environmental protection.

These studies based on the semantic differential technique (analysis of several pairs of opposite adjectives, positive and negative) showed an extremely positive image of their city. The highest values obtained such adjectives defining the city as: “mine”, “green”, “nice”, “comfortable”, “well connected city”. The only negative adjective used, was “dispersed city” (*Rojek–Adamek–Gawron, 2011*).

Economic development on regional and city scale

Tychy is a city located in the Katowicki sub-region which, according to the Institute for Market Economics (*Nowicki, 2014*), was at the top in investment attractiveness for industrial activities in 2013-2014 among Polish sub-regions, however, in terms of attractiveness for service activities it came third place. Such attractiveness is based on the high density of road infrastructure, access to the international airport, proximity to the A4 motorway, above-average availability of the western border, well-developed transport and logistics sector, large resources of high qualified employees, high number of vocational graduates, available Special Economic Zone, very large number of companies with foreign capital, very high performance and relatively low share of protected areas. On the scale of the whole region (Silesian Voivodeship) it is one of the strongest (after Warsaw) in Poland. Silesian Voivodeship is generating 12.4% of Poland’s GDP. In general, “The Silesian Voivodeship is rich in natural resources such as hard coal, deposits of zinc, lead, methane, natural gas, marlstone, chalkstone, and natural break-stone, as well as medicinal, thermal and mineral waters. The existing raw material base led to the creation of

Poland's one of largest industrial regions. (...) Hard coal mining and iron and steel industry were undergoing deep restructuring. Reduced employment rate and improved efficiency are some of the effects brought by the transformations implemented in mining. Metallurgy, on the other hand, has been affected by essential changes in forms of ownership and management structure. The result is nearly complete privatisation of the industry. Now in the process of restructuring, traditional Silesian industrial branches created the basis on which branches connected with their operation were developed, that is, first of all engineering industry, equipped with appropriate machines and experienced staff. After the difficult transformations introduced in the first years of the nineties, the industry entered numerous foreign markets and now is a crucial element of the industrial landscape of the Voivodeship. (...) Restructuring in the recent years has caused systematic changes in the economic structure of the Voivodeship. The whole industry reports a decreased share of mining and metallurgy, which until recently were predominant in the economy of the Voivodeship, and an increased share of the electro-engineering industry, the information technology industry, power industry and, reporting the most rapid growth, the automotive industry (the region is Poland's largest car producer) and food industry" (Nowicki, 2014).

Evolution of the social and occupational structure

According to the survey from 2013, nearly 70% of the inhabitants declare a strong sense of connection with the city, and only every fiftieth person claims that they do not feel bound with Tychy. Only 14% of respondents, mostly young people, would take into account the possibility to leave Tychy permanently, for professional, family or household reasons. At the same time 80% of residents assessed living conditions positively, while only 1.1% of respondents had the opposite opinion. The vast majority of residents attributed high marks almost to all analysed indicators of the quality of life which are associated with consumption and access to services. The lowest rates, however, were recorded in the assessment of job opportunities and development entrepreneurship (*Strategia Rozwoju Miasta, Tychy 2020+*). Employment in the industrial sector still prevails. (*Table 19*)

Table 19: Structure of employment in Tychy (according to the Polish Classification of Activities (PKD 2007))

Years	Number of employed persons				
	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Industry and construction	Sections G H I J	Sections K L	Other services
2005	478	18 706	7 311	1472	10 099
2006	430	21 147	7 564	1456	9 535
2007	428	24 712	7 473	1513	10 074
2008	423	26 982	8 342	1980	10 395
2009	412	26 285	8 608	1950	12 052
2010	257	26 183	8 846	2078	12 240
2011	534	25 034	8 357	2603	10 503
2012	253	25 311	8 295	3050	9 695
2013	251	22 996	8 128	3085	10 678

Source: Central Statistical Office, Bank Danych Lokalnych – www.stat.gov.pl

Sections G, H, I, J – “Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles”, “Transportation and storage”, “Accommodation and food service activities”, “Information and Communications”

Sections K, L – “Financial and insurance activities”, “Real estate activities”

The perception of the post-1989 problems and crises in the light of interviews

The interviews revealed the majorities of real social and economic issues, problems and challenges. The most striking and characteristic element of the transformation concerns the concept of democracy itself. One of the respondents while stating that the immediate first issue concerns the management problem, the local community of the city has been “receiving independence”. Such a strong statement was in different, more moderate ways confirmed by all respondents. The administrative changes connected with the introduction of new local self-government in case of Tychy, have reduced the former territory by dividing it into 3 administrative units, with one proper Tychy urban area making the town more compact and easier to manage. Particularly important was the for-

mation of separate communities which includes the territory of the coal mines in the outskirts. As a result in all the statistics the population of the proper Tychy city area has dropped to around 130 000 instead of 190 000 inhabitants under previous administrative divisions. The reduction of Tychy's territory also brought positive changes, at present Tychy is no longer an amorphous town, it is much easier to form a close relation between inhabitants and the town they live in. Current administrative structure on the sub-regional scale also proved to be very good. The sub-region of Tychy (Subregion Tyski) consists of 12 communities. Each of them has their own development plans in which the coordination of the responsibilities of self-government is distributed – they are delegated to the particular communities to serve the whole sub-region. This is a unique situation and a rare example of good cooperation between local self-government authorities on the country scale. It concerns the share of the budget as well. Such cooperation is voluntarily accepted by all participating communities and supported by the regional self-government (Silesian Voivodship).

Identification of the socio-economic problems of the transformation

The positive noticeable changes include the improvement in the service sector, particularly the much easier access to daily products. By general opinion such a development has substantial significance in the ameliorating living conditions in the city; however, the full saturation of the market has not been reached yet.

Unemployment as one of the typical problems of the whole country appeared in more moderate ways in Tychy. While mentioning unemployment as a problem respondents immediately mentioned the development of the free economic zone, which has contributed to the reduction of the initial appearance of unemployment. The special economic zone, organised and located in Tychy was the main factor concerning the change of the city's life. Such a localisation decision has commonly been assessed as an adequate choice that protected the majority of the inhabitants from the negative effects of the economic transformation. Nevertheless, it is necessary to mention that some segregated areas do exist with unemployment problems. One example is the district of Tychy named: "Czułów – Osada", inhabited by app. 350 people, where due to its privatisation the large local paper factory stopped to be

the main employer of this neighbourhood. Consequently the structural and long term unemployment in case of the inhabitants of that settlement since the mid-90s led to a deep urban decay of that part of Tychy. Unemployment as a basic phenomenon, just after 1990, has also been reduced thanks to the spontaneous formation of individual entrepreneurs. In addition, like in other urban areas in Poland, the phenomenon of “spontaneous market” appeared. The most popular form was just selling different goods: from hands, pavements, tourist stalls, or primitive temporary kiosks. Transformation of such spontaneous economic activities into more civilised market forms has been gradually organised by the local authority. The privatisation of the ground floor levels of blocks of flats and converting them into commercial units (usually shops) became frequent and visible trends till now. This phenomenon was frequently named as “ground floor capitalism”.

In all the interviews the general attitude in connection with the post-1989 system changes is positive. Tychy certainly belongs to the category of cities which are the winners of transformation. For the respondents Tychy is “a good place for living, better than other parts of Silesia”. Constant comparisons are characteristic to the regional context of Upper Silesia, the region dominated by severe environmental problems, old technical infrastructure and the congestion of old industrial production and which region is currently the largest producer of coal in Europe. Tychy is among those cities which have the ability to adopt themselves to the demands of market economy and could develop service functions to the surrounding region, which is rarely the case in Silesia.

In case of Tychy one of the “good practice” examples is the self-government initiative (grassroots initiative) to revitalize and create the regional railway as tools to serve surrounding areas. It is worth to emphasise that this innovative initiative was launched in spite of the unfavourable legislation conditions. This only involves the partnership between Tychy’s self-government and the railway company. Such local policy maintains the regional position of Tychy as urban centre on regional scale. Currently Tychy serves three surrounding counties like: Pszczyński, Mikołowski and Bieruńsko-Lędziński, having all together around 400 000 inhabitants.

The characteristics of the socio-spatial polarisation and inequalities

The assessment of the current socio-spatial differentiation is usually very general. In most cases it is assessed as “equal” or “balanced”, however, sometimes some problematic areas of lower status or problem areas are named. As an example, respondent referred to the “Czułów – Osiedle (i.e. estate)” in the vicinity of the old paper factory. This former paper factory “patronage” estate currently consists of 8 blocks of flats and is inhabited by around 350 people and is characterised by the quick rotation of inhabitants, concentration of poverty and social exclusion. Currently this estate is owned by the city, and serves as a municipal social housing facility. Interestingly this estate is close to the very wealthy neighbourhood.

At the beginning – the first decades of the city, residents constituted a conglomerate of people of different origins and cultural background, which generated the conflict associated with their altering social norms and adaptation to urban lifestyle. It was a substantial problem particularly for the migrants from rural areas. In spite of this diversity of origin and social affiliation the conflicts between those social groups gradually ceased to be relevant due to the progressive integration.

Some respondents just deny socio-spatial inequalities: “In Tychy there is no clear division between good and bad neighbourhoods”, however, they indicate some exceptional cases of poverty in Tychy and particularly in other cities of Silesia, or say “There are no larger diversities in Tychy, you cannot see “glaring poverty”. This phenomenon is visible more expressively in Katowice. Poverty in Tychy is represented by dispersed single buildings that do not dominate their neighbourhood. Such a district appears in Gliwice, but not in Tychy”. Sometimes respondents stress that: “people of different social status use well designed public space together”. The interviewed described Tychy as a town composed of settlements (estates) of mixed socio-economic structure, where wealthy and poor live ‘together’, giving several examples, such as Czułów, Wilkowyje, Paprocany, Stare Tychy or estates B, C, P or O.

In spite of the prevailing assessment that Tychy currently represents a relatively equal (or balanced) social structure, respondents identified the different positions of miner-, worker-families and intelligentsia families, and also admitted that visually noticeable economic disparities are present in Tychy.

Attitude towards the existing social and spatial diversity remains surprising. A rather frequent reaction to the question about the existence of social differentiation or inequalities is denial, or while confirming such facts, the respondents attempted to reduce their significance. First of all the majority of respondents deny the existence of inequality in the public space, in the official public life of the town, but allocate such problems to the practices of everyday life. Some respondents mentioned extra-large luxuriously equipped cars in use and the shopping behaviour of inhabitants as most visible signs of current differentiation.

Frequently, the ownership, quality and location of housing were regarded as signs of social differentiation. In general, the development of private housing is blamed for the increase of social differentiation, particularly the formation of ‘gated communities’ promoted by housing developers and suburban development in the form of urban sprawl. The participation in mass events organised in the public spaces of the city where usually the dominative majority of the participants is composed of poor inhabitants with less income was also given as a significant symptom of social differentiation. At the same time, respondents pointed out the relationship of the quality of the public space in the city with the presence of people from different social groups in it: good design (of medium standard, acceptable by the middle and upper class) has an inclusive potential. Two public spaces – Baczyński sq. (in the city centre) and Lake Paprocany esplanade⁴ (at the outskirts) were mentioned as empirical evidences for that in Tychy by the interviewees, these places are frequently used by socially diverged inhabitants in great numbers.

The comments concerning the demographic structure, particularly an increase in the share of elderly people in the city’s population are most popular signs of social differentiation. Surprisingly, unemployment is very rarely mentioned in case of Tychy, just like the level of education and generally access to education.

⁴ The urban design of the Paprocany’s Lake Esplanade by RS+Robert Skitek Office, got the Grand Prix price as the Best Public Space of the Twenty-fifth Years of Democracy in Poland awarded by the Society of Polish Urban Planners, as well the best Public Space in Silesia Region in 2015 awarded by the Self-Government of the Silesian Region.

While a large proportion of respondents denied social differentiation in a certain way, they easily and more precisely identified the spatial allocation of rich and poor areas. Particularly two areas are more frequently mentioned; part of Czułów (Osada) representing the poverty stricken area and Paprocany as a rich and the best area.

The wealthiest area in the socio-spatial structure of Tychy consists of (in general not so sharply) separated areas. According to the respondents the wealthiest population live in the historically oldest part of the city (i.e. Stare Tychy), on Paprocany estate (an area of prosperity, and “good address” dominated by individual houses); on Z1 estate (constructed from the beginning as a comprehensive urbanistic concept); in Mąkołowiec area (characterised as wealthy estate but unplanned with a chaotic spatial pattern) and in smaller enclaves in the areas of Czułów, Wygorzele, Suble, Jaroszowiec.

The poorest inhabitants are concentrated in dispersed enclaves and in general in the high multi-storey panel buildings or communal housing stocks. The oldest section of the new city estates A, B, C and D currently concentrate more pensioners (mostly former miners) and elderly people, so some poverty is visible in those areas. The same is true for the high-rise buildings in the southern part of Tychy’s downtown (estates named H and M). Some smaller enclaves of poverty were identified by respondents in the housing estates near the streets of Katowicka (Czułów – Osada), Leśna, Browarowa, Świerkowa (communal housing). It concerns as well settlement H (inhabited by former employees of the FIAT factory), and settlement C (which concentrates the social group dependant on social assistance). The rest of the city – the large majority of the city territory – is inhabited by average and generally well-to-do population. In terms of socio-spatial differentiation respondents also compared relatively low differentiation in Tychy in relation to a much larger differentiation in other Silesian cities.

The impact of European integration and globalisation processes on the economic prosperity of the city

The inflow of foreign capital to Tychy was gradual. It was not a linear process but there were some intensive periods of changes in investments. The previous existence of the Fiat factory and its con-

tinuation in the car production has been positively perceived all the time as a chance, even under communism, to change the original mining and dormitory character of the city. At the beginning the processes of the industrial reconstruction prevailed. The turning point after the transformation of 1989 was the formation of the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Tychy that attracted the majority of the inflow of new foreign investments. (foreign capital invested in Tychy came from Italy, USA, Japan, Republic of South Africa, Great Britain, France, Portugal)

The evaluation of the impact of international and generally foreign companies on the economic development and prosperity in the city was much differentiated. In case of salaries a part of the respondents claim that they are higher in case of companies with foreign owners, others say that they are lower than in companies owned by Poles. In general, the public opinion is that salaries are higher in foreign companies. In reality, since one of the objectives of the international companies is the search for lower paid labour, in reality they pay lower wages to their employees in comparison to Polish companies, when the salaries of workers, technicians, administrative staff and middle-range managers are concerned. Generally, respondents confirm the opinion that international companies search mostly for low-paid labour with just basic vocational training, and accessibility to labour resources of this kind was the most important element of the localisation decision for them in this particular country, region and the city. The majority of the respondents recognised the impact of SEZ on the exceptional upgrading of the city's competitiveness and the reduction of the investors' risk, which was already mentioned in the study, as a key factor of the (relative) good condition of the present labour market. There is important differentiation concerning the quality of the labour force, education and skills. The majority of the interviewees claim that they are better in international corporations. Respondents often deny the importance of the differentiation of salaries according to the division between foreign and Polish companies, or state that they have no adequate knowledge and information. International investors demand workers mostly for simple manual jobs, which was fulfilled by the commuting labour from neighbouring communities. Tychy inhabitants, however, representing higher skills and better labour qualifications than the majority of the population in the neighbouring communities tend-

ed to look for jobs rather in Katowice. Nevertheless, the existence of international companies has a considerable impact on the diversification of job opportunities.

In general, the future and the prosperity of the city depend, to a high extent, on global market and development tendencies generated outside the city and the sub-region. It was mentioned that the urban development of Tychy has created good conditions for international companies to start their activity. As an example one of the respondent mentioned the location of the printing company delivering the nationwide daily issue of “Gazeta Wyborcza” – a popular Polish newspaper and the call centres for the whole world.

Conclusions

In the post-1989 democratic transformation the rebirth of the local self-governments and their reaching maturity during the last 25 years have the basic importance. The last decades of Tychy’s positive development indicates, however, thanks to the new forms of governance, a new relationship between civil society (which is still not fully formed in the case of Tychy) and the formal structure of local government. Gradual implementation of the subsidiarity ideas has created a favourable atmosphere among the inhabitants, which is essential for a post-socialist city like Tychy in order to be able to respond to future challenges. The city is on the good way to build up its new image and its new economic base. In the case of Tychy regarding the formation processes we can see the conversion from a coherent plan pattern domination to a more “organic” development, characterised by the domination of spontaneous adaptation to the evolving demands of inhabitants and adopting external impacts of the political, economic and social situation.

On the basis of the conducted empirical research it can be noted that Tychy is an example of great changes occurring both through the far-reaching strategic decisions of the municipal government and owing to the specific features of the socio-spatial structure of this city at the beginning of the transformation process, which also consisted of a properly (consequently) planned urban pattern.

From the international comparative research of the post-socialist cities (*Węclawowicz, 2013*) we can draw the conclusions, which could be applicable in the case of Tychy as well, that various

strategic perspectives are necessary at appropriate spatial levels, and the formation of coalition between citizens, local and external investors and local authorities is needed in order to shape the cities. The last decade of institutional activities concerns mainly the observation, recording, acceptance or adaptation of the chances for development resulting from the domination of the ‘invisible hands of the market’.

The city development spatial plan (Studium 2013) primarily suggests focusing strongly on actions to increase the position of Tychy in the hierarchy of regional economic centres, which is associated with the expected abolition of tax preference for investors active in SEZ (hence the re-location of present industry is predicted, and expected). The development priorities of the city also include slowing down the outflow of people, especially the working-age population and the creation of conditions conducive to the socio-economic factors of improving fertility rates and attracting new residents.

Conservation and exhibition of objects, public goods of modern culture and urbanity highly relevant to the identity of the city (created mainly as the result of the planned urbanisation after 1950) slowly become highly valued by Tychy’s society (monuments, buildings and areas of contemporary urban compositions, like the ‘Green Axis’ of specific rank in the urban composition).

The vision of the future is, basically, the ‘clever continuation’ of the main directives of the socio-spatial composition of the ‘historical new city’, including the strict delimitation of dominant functional zones of residential, commercial or industrial assignment, that’s very much typical for the invincible modernistic approach to urban planning.