Case Study Presentation and Development: From Theory to Practice and Re-exploration

Old Polesie borough in Lodz (Poland)

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Workshop #1, 26 June 2020, Leuphana University of Lüneburg
Urban context – city of Lodz

- Inhabited by 767 residents at the beginning of the 1820s,
- In 1821 granted the status of ‘an industrial town’,
- Attracted textile-skilled migrants from Brandenburg, Czechia, Saxony, Silesia and Greater Poland,
- 20 000 residents in 1842; 500 000 residents in 1914,
- After 1945 – geographical centre of Poland; still textile city with a growing importance of HEIs,
- 1990s – rapid deindustrialisation and socio-economic decline; but also organic, un-aided growth of SMEs, led usually by former mid- to senior-level managers and technologists from the bankrupt state-owned companies,
- Public-led urban restructuring 1990s/2000s – Special Economic Zone, FDI (especially BPO and IT), EU funds after 2004; megaprojects (New Centre of Lodz, EXPO bid attempts


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Urban context – Old Polesie

- One of Lodz inner city boroughs
- No. of inhabitants: ~ 36,000 (~ 5% of Lodz’s population)
- Developed on 1860s as an effect of rapid industrial city expansion
- High population and building density (> 3000 pers./sqkm, towards ~ 2300 pers./sqkm Lodz’s average)
- Significant housing mix with an equal share of municipal and private flats
- The least green part of the city
- Social and neighbourhood activities carried out intensively from 2009 onwards
- Social pressure resulted in the inclusion of the area in the official revitalization actions (~ 50 million Euro allocated for the next 10 years = ~ 5% of municipal yearly budget)
Urban context

Source: MPU Lodz

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Struggle for urban commons – a driver for action in Old Polesie

– Despite improving quality of life in the city „in general”, there are:
  – Still large social disparities (so called „enclaves of poverty”)
  – Many „spots” of the poor quality of urban amenities
– Old Polesie borough faced the following challenges:
  – Getting local children out of poverty
  – Very little urban greenery
  – Streets dominated by car traffic
  – Negligence in the quality of public spaces’ facilities (pavements, ponds, benches, street poles and lighting)
  – Lack of local cultural events and community centres
– „Socially engaged” – association based on regular volunteers (only 1 FTE), its community centre is attended by approx. 200 children and youth
Nature, type and scope of entrepreneurial activities

- Primary motives of action are **individual** factors – self-realization and improvement of own comfort of life
- **Deficiencies in urban commons** are very often identified as a key driver for action
- Main institutional actor in the Old Polesie – Socially Engaged – since 2013 as a formal association
- The founders of Socially Engaged identify themselves as entrepreneurs in a **broad (so „blurred”)** sense
- The leaders perceive their role to add entrepreneurial element to all the ideas and projects
- They do not perceive other organizations as rivals – they are aware of the role of entrepreneurial ecosystem but...
- ... their vision is not (yet?) popular with the residents.

Types of activities

- **Main:**
  - Community-led and cultural centre („Meeting Place”)
  - Development of urban greenery
  - Improving the quality of public spaces
  - Being the intermediary between the officials and the citizens
- **Occasional:**
  - Cultural Neighbourhood events (garage sales, initiatives „taken over” by other activists)
  - Strengthening local identity (promotional activity, publication of guides)
  - Sourcing local entrepreneurs for local initiatives
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Source: https://www.facebook.com/SpolecznieZaangazowani/photos/
Summary

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<th>What is “entrepreneurial”</th>
<th>What is “not”</th>
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<td>- “Intermediary” ways to govern the urban commons (E. Ostrom, 1990)</td>
<td>- Problem with coordinating public investment and public tenders’ delays</td>
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<td>- Ability to reach a wide range of stakeholders (working class residents, middle class residents, children, activist, local public authorities, planners, etc.) – the beginning of entrepreneurial ecosystem creation</td>
<td>- No new “anchor” businesses and bigger revitalization projects</td>
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<td>- Strengthening liveability conditions and business opportunities through public spaces and social services (urban amenities as positive externalities)</td>
<td>- Few „pure business” effects (minimal value added)</td>
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<td>- Efficacy in raising public funds</td>
<td>- Fragmentation of entrepreneurial activity, difficulties in persuading existing entrepreneurs to benefits of cooperation and clustering</td>
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<td>- Awareness Old Polesie will only come to life through the rebuilding of social ties and identities (J. Jacobs, 1961)</td>
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<td>- Adding value by place marketing “products” (guided tours, cultural activities, guides)</td>
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