

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

Old Polesie borough in Lodz (Poland)

Mariusz E. SOKOŁOWICZ
mariusz.sokolowicz@uni.lodz.pl



**FACULTY OF
ECONOMICS
AND SOCIOLOGY**
University of Lodz



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)

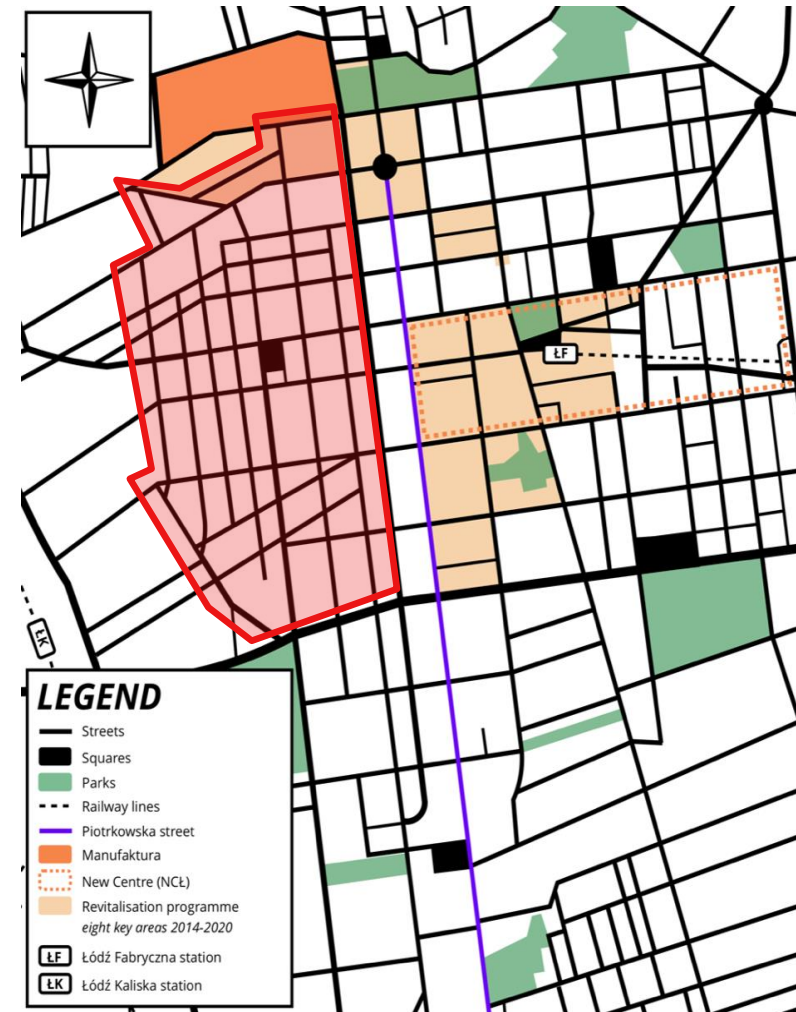
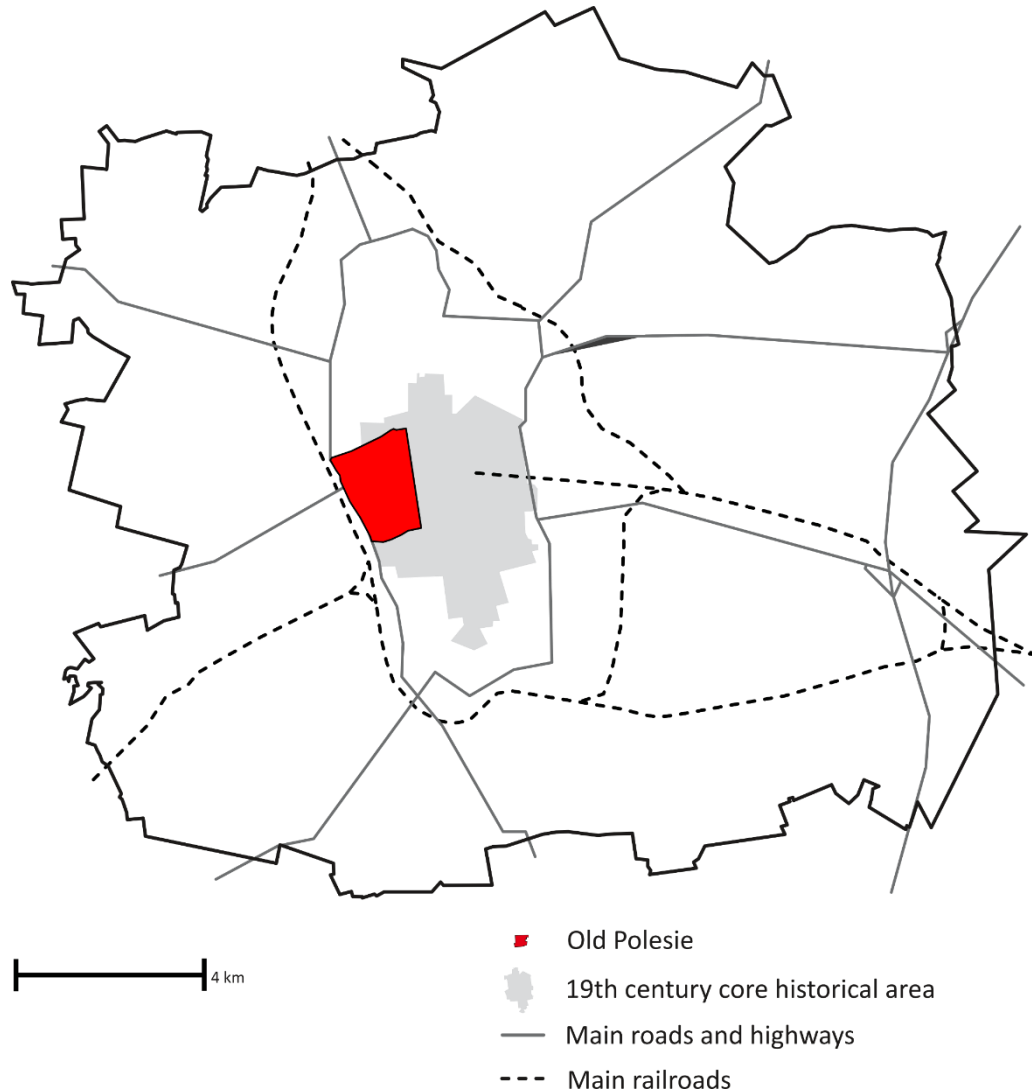


For more, see: Zasina J., Sokołowicz M.E., Nogalski S. (2020). *Lodz City Tour. The Changing Nature of the Urban Restructuring of a Post-Socialist Industrial City*. "disP-The Planning Review" 56(2), pp. 8-19; **to be released in July 2020**

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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



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



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/SpolecznieZaangazowani/photos/>

Summary

What is “entrepreneurial”

- „Intermediary” ways to govern the urban commons (E. Ostrom, 1990)
- 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
- Strengthening liveability conditions and business opportunities through public spaces and social services (urban amenities as positive externalities)
- Efficacy in raising public funds
- Awareness Old Polesie will only come to life through the rebuilding of social ties and identities (J. Jacobs, 1961)
- Adding value by place marketing “products” (guided tours, cultural activities, guides)

What is “not”

- Problem with coordinating public investment and public tenders’ delays
 - No new “anchor” businesses and bigger revitalization projects
 - Few „pure business” effects (minimal value added)
 - Fragmentation of entrepreneurial activity, difficulties in persuading existing entrepreneurs to benefits of cooperation and clustering
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