

METROPOLITAN PERIPHERIES OR THE ISSUE OF REVITALISATION OF CITIES

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Abstract: Intensive development of the Upper Silesian region in recent years has resulted in the official establishment of the first urban organism in 2017 - the metropolis. The Upper Silesian and Zagłębie Metropolis is a diverse region which currently covers 41 communes. The subject of this paper, however, is not so much a description of differences as an attempt to capture the pace and course of revitalisation taking place in cities selected for analysis, in order to answer the question of how they affect the development of those cities and whether the fact that they belong to the same urban organism, which is the **metropolis**, determines their relatively balanced development. The following cities have become the subject of the comparative sociological-economic analysis in the selected area: Katowice, Zabrze, Tarnowskie Góry, Bytom and Ruda Śląska.

Keywords: metropolitan area, social city space, revitalisation, cultural heritage, sustainability.

Introduction

In 2017, the first Polish urban organism – the Metropolis – was officially established in Silesia. The Upper Silesian and Zagłębie Metropolis currently brings together 41 communes.

Such a large area is strongly diverse internally, which is an unquestionable asset of this region. However, the following question arises: is there a chance for the equal development of all the areas belonging to this region in such a diverse organism?

Each of the cities of the Upper Silesian region, despite functioning in a relatively consistent area in cultural terms, focuses on different ways of its development, placing importance on the potential being its greatest value that distinguishes it from others.

The analysis of the phenomenon of development of communes affiliated with the Metropolis in question has been limited to a few examples of cities concentrated around the centre of the Metropolis, i.e. Katowice.

The study is of an explanatory and descriptive character and is a kind of comparative urban study, mainly related to the revitalization of urban brownfield space in the cities of the current Silesian-Zagłębie Metropolis selected for analysis. The research methods adopted for his needs indicate a qualitative type of research using observation techniques and content analysis. The research was supplemented with an analysis of professional literature in the field of urban regeneration problems and in the field of sociology and economics of urban space.

1. Unified diversity, or the significance of the cultural function in the process of urban development and revitalisation

On the basis of his research on the creative industrial potential of the cities of the Upper Silesian urban area, Professor Andrzej Klasik of the University of Economics in Katowice already concluded a few years ago that it is possible to build and promote the development of:

- Katowice as a city of high culture, music and music industry,
- Bytom as a city of performing arts and cultural events in the post-industrial scenery,
- Zabrze as a city of industrial monuments and post-industrial tourism,
- Chorzów as a city of entertainment and leisure (Klasik, 2014).

The undisputed leader in the region is the city of Katowice, which was awarded in as many as 6 categories, in the latest report on urban development prepared by the British journal "Financial Times", among others because the city authorities put a great emphasis on the development of the so-called leisure industry and creative industry, which turns out to be extremely important for potential investors who are interested in "what their employees will be able to do after work" (Financial Times, 12.03.2019).

The city of Katowice, which has also been awarded the title of a UNESCO Creative City in the field of music, boasts a wide range of cultural and musical events.

Professor Andrzej Barczak of the University of Economics in Katowice agreed with the report prepared by the Financial Times, saying that "Katowice, Chorzów, Sosnowiec are among the best... These are the cities in Silesia that in the previous years changed significantly and became administrative and cultural centres" (Dziennik Zachodni, 12.04.2019).

A question therefore arises: why are some cities in the region successful and others are not, especially in relation to those belonging to the newly established Metropolis?

In one of the publications by the Institute of Urban and Regional Development in Kraków, we can read, among others, about the significance of the cultural function in the process of urban development and revitalisation:

"The deindustrialisation process began in the 1960s in Western Europe. In Poland, the industrial function was maintained until the 1990s. The industrial heritage that was not taken care of was subject to gradual degradation. In the 21st century, the revitalisation of these areas

was undertaken. It turned out that former industrial buildings are an attractive place for cultural activities. Cultural institutions have started to give a new identity to these places and made it possible to use post-industrial buildings for other functions" (Siwirska, 2017a, p. 131).

After World War II, the authorities of European cities focused on taking urban regeneration measures and stimulating economic growth. Cultural policy was ignored and therefore not treated as an instrument of economic development. It was changed in the 1960s. Consequently, it was noticed that the culture can serve as a tool for making the city's economy more diverse, and thus increasing the economic attractiveness of the individual, creating new jobs and a better image of the city, which attracts new investors. They started to invest in the so-called flagship projects, i.e. construction of new or adaptation of (most frequently) post-industrial buildings that were to become a symbol and initiator of the economic development of the individual (Siwirska, 2017b, p. 131).

Some cities in the Upper Silesian region are an excellent example of this type of investment. One of them, where the most successful projects of this type were carried out, is Zabrze, which is currently hailed (as predicted by Professor A. Klasik) as a Polish capital of industrial tourism and is considered to be one of the most attractive tourist destinations (!) in Poland.

In addition to the well-known historic Guido Mine, the underground tourist route beneath the city, namely the Main Key Hereditary Adit, which was awarded with the Main Prize in the category of cultural heritage protection and revitalisation, is also a great attraction.

It is also important that this type of revitalisation, in this case, has led to the development of other initiatives that were significant for increasing the attractiveness of the city, related to the location of prestigious cultural events in their area, using the original space.

Tarnowskie Góry is another example of a city which tries to attract tourists and consistently builds its economic potential for this purpose. The historic city with a long-term industrial traditions has focused on revitalisation, development and promotion of its post-industrial facilities. The Historic Silver Mine and Black Trout Adit located in the city have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List and currently attract crowds of tourists, which clearly translates into the successive development of the city's attractiveness.

Today, the cultural creativity of the city is a globally recognised asset that determines the rank, value and attractiveness of the place. The previous Creative Cities Annual Meeting, organised in 2018 in Katowice, which is currently one of the three UNESCO Creative Cities in Poland, was also devoted to these topics.

It is also due to the emphasis placed on the development of creative industry that the city of Katowice is currently ranked as one of the most important cities. It is enough to mention the Katowice Culture Zone located around the sports and event hall "Spodek", which also includes revitalised post-industrial facilities of the former "Katowice" mine developed into the buildings of the Silesian Museum and one of the most modern music buildings in Europe, namely the building of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra. These facilities became the venue for prestigious cultural events.

On the other hand, however, the lack of appreciation of such an important area of life as widely understood culture, including cultural heritage promotion, often results in serious consequences such as peripheralisation of cities.

Kazimierz Krzysztofek writes: "The culture of a city is reflected in the character of the space which is a chronicle of the life of a city and a record of its history. A city is both a product and an expression of culture, simultaneously creating a specific environment for the promotion of culture and its fullest expression, thanks to the possibility of confronting many trends and direct access to various forms of its expression" (Krzysztofek, 2005, pp. 37-39).

It is therefore unlikely that any city could develop its metropolitan or big-city functions without regard for cultural development and respect for its historic heritage.

In order to relatively equalise development opportunities of the cities belonging to Upper Silesia, an administratively mutual metropolitan area was created in 2017.

It is worth remembering, however, that the opportunity offered by belonging to a mutual organism – the metropolis – does not absolve city authorities from the responsibility for the implementation of an effective urban policy in individual communes.

While some cities can properly appreciate and use their cultural potential (such as aforementioned Katowice, Zabrze or Tarnowskie Góry), some seem to be permanently deadlocked.

As we can read in the publication devoted to the **20th** anniversary of the political change in Silesia: "The success or failure of the undertaken revitalisation challenges are also affected by a level of social capital and active citizenship. Some communes have successfully seized the opportunity they had encountered after the local government had been re-established. However, other remain in strange deadlock, strenuously trying to make a civilisational leap that is most clearly reflected in the lifestyle of inhabitants, the aesthetics of cities – their cleanliness and order" (Tyrybon, Ślęzak-Tazbir, 2011a, p. 171).

It may seem that cities with a centuries-old tradition and an extensive historical centre (the old town) are in a privileged position, because this area aims at developing places that are naturally attractive in aesthetical and cultural terms. One of the examples of medieval cities of this type in Silesia is Bytom.

The post-war period saw a reckless policy of mining under the city, resulting in the destruction of the most interesting historic buildings in districts. Nevertheless, the city has always had a significant position on the cultural map of Silesia due to numerous cultural initiatives and the location of one of the most prestigious cultural institutions – the Silesian Opera.

The period of the local government reconstruction after 1989 turned out not to be kind to the city. It was related to a very rapid restructuring of industry, which resulted in a massive increase in unemployment, social pauperisation and migrations. For Bytom, it was one of the most difficult periods in its history; therefore, when the city had been allocated with a special

pool of funds as part of the Silesian Regional Operational Programme for 2014-2020 for the comprehensive revitalisation of the city, EUR 100 million, there was hope.

Despite such enormous support, one year before the Programme was completed, it turned out that the allocated funds had not been fully used and the opportunity for development passed by.

Despite a few investments made with the support of the allocated EU funds, both cultural and social, Bytom lags behind the dynamically developing cities of the region and does not record any significant successes on any level of development, although a few years earlier it had an opportunity to "develop its performing arts and cultural activity in the industrial area" (Klasik, 2014), mainly due to the presence of the Department of Dance Theatre of the National Academy of Theatre Arts in Kraków (currently Dance and Movement Theatre Rozbark). The lack of a climate favourable for the development of significant cultural initiatives has led, among other things, to the fact that the Academy is currently considering a shutdown of its department in Bytom.

2. Revitalisation process of some urban areas in Silesia

According to its definition, revitalisation is a process of spatial, social and economic changes aimed to bring an area out of a crisis and lead to its development, which includes increasing the quality of life of the local community, improving the state of the natural and cultural environment and restoring the spatial order; what is more, it is also aimed to achieve economic revival and restoration of social bonds (Tyrybon, Ślęzak-Tazbir, 2011b, p. 168).

According to Andrzej Majer, revitalisation is "a notion that is notoriously overused to describe all types of renovation, adaptation or modernisation, even those conducted on a minor scale. It is confused with restoration, adaptation, preservation and reclamation [...]. Construction activities are the most important components of revitalisation, but they cannot replace it; this way, failure to understand that people whom this issue concerns are just as important as those activities is constantly revealed" (Majer, 2014, p. 59).

The observation of some Silesian cities proves that architectural revitalisation is not always accompanied by effective social revitalisation. The renewal of degraded urban areas does not always mean giving them new functional significance.

An example of such unsuccessful revitalisation practices also includes investments made in the area of Ruda Śląska.

One of the most spectacular and, as it may seem, successful examples of revitalisation of attractive post-industrial areas in Ruda Śląska was the implementation of a project concerning the renewal of the historic Ficinus workers' settlement.

Ficinus is a historic workers' settlement, which is one of the oldest preserved patronage buildings in Upper Silesia. The settlement is unique and original because natural sandstone obtained from the surrounding quarries was used as the building material.



Figure 1. Ruda Śląska – Ficinus workers' settlement. Source: www.kolemsietoczy.pl/familoki-osiedla-robotnicze-slask-gornicze-najlepsze-mapa-ficinus.

As the only area in Ruda Śląska, the *Ficinus* workers' settlement is currently included in the list of the Industrial Monuments Route, and is facing the threat of exclusion from the Route due to obvious negligence and lack of social and cultural mobilisation.

"For years, Ficinus has not met certain requirements specified by the Marshal Office of the Silesian Voivodeship as an institution supervising the Industrial Monuments Route. The threat that Ruda Śląska will virtually cease to exist on the Route is real" (Pilocik, 2015).

The "*Andrzej*" Shaft, a historic hoisting tower that was modelled on a defensive castle tower, is also a unique object in Ruda Śląska. The photograph below shows that it is still undeveloped and devoid of any function, constituting a "socially empty" area.



Figure 2. Ruda Śląska – historic "Andrzej" Shaft. Source: author's own elaboration.

Another infamous example of partial – only – revitalisation is the lack of development of one of the most interesting objects in Poland, which is the Europe's oldest department store – *Kaufhaus* – in Ruda Śląska. The modernisation of the department store located within the

settlement together with the neighbouring buildings of the settlement did not entail any significant changes in the development of the settlement or new functions that could revitalise this area and make it more functional.



Figure 3. Ruda Śląska – historic department store *Kaufhaus*. Source: www.rudaslaska.naszemiasto.pl/artykul/ruda-slaska-na-osiedlu-kaufhaus.

It may seem that such objects – gems – in the city devoid of other cultural and tourist attractions should become the apple of the authorities' eye, who should make every effort to promote them as a city's symbol and thus use them to revitalise the city's cultural space.

The lack of a clear aura conducive to the creation and support of the so-called creative industry in the city, which attaches a functional and social value to interesting urban spaces, and underestimating cultural heritage, which shapes the character and the specificity of a place (a type of *genius loci*), are probably the reason why the metropolisation process there is the slowest compared to the adjacent cities. The situation also affects the economic condition of the city, which due to the poor cultural and entertainment offer, is not attractive both for potential investors and for representatives of the widely understood class of creative people.

3. Importance of social space in the city development

"Social space of a community is the area that the community uses and shapes and with which it links a system of knowledge, ideas, values and rules of behaviour which help it to fully identify with this area. This area becomes a social space only when it is used by a specific community and its use is subject to specific rules of social behaviour" and further "... *cultural area* fulfils a proper role towards its group (community) only when the group (community) can freely, intensively and systematically use it. Only in such conditions can this area be a place and a catalyst for vital cultural processes. [...] in favourable conditions, specific areas can become areas of culture, and – in unfavourable ones – they may lose this role" (Wallis, 1980, p. 7).

Bohdan Jałowiecki, a leading Polish researcher of urban space, refers to the meaning of a place in social space and writes: "Places are spaces defined on a map that have their own name and differ from others due to their materiality and identity. So what is the uniqueness of places?"

The important features that determine the creation of a place include the location and beauty of the landscape, rich history seen in unique works of architecture, the legend of famous people who lived and created in the place, the specific work that is developed there or important, and sometimes unusual events that were committed to the memory of all. In this way, places become important not only for an individual, but also for a wider community" (Jałowicki, 2011).

Even for an architect, urban planner or economist, the city image will never be complete without the special "superstructure" of the living urban fabric.

The "living" city is above all a cultural richness, which is superimposed on the material elements of space, and creates a sense of place, belonging, identification with space. In other words: a sense of identity. It is people that give the atmosphere, character and meaning to places. Without paying respect to such a significant value of a city as widely understood cultural heritage, it is difficult to expect successes in other areas of the city life.

Charles Landry defines a creative city as a process that requires people to change their way of thinking and functioning to the one that enables them to understand the development of a city and solve its problem in an integrated manner. He emphasises that the essence of a creative city is its sustainable development, and this concept is currently one of **the key concepts in urban development science**. Balance, according to Charles Landry, is not only concerned with environmental and ecological issues, but also with widely understood psychological, economic and **cultural** balance, so that the urban space inspires new thinking and allows sustainable forms of creativity to be created (Landry, 2013, p. 36).

4. Summary

Every city is a complex organism composed of different elements. In order for the city to develop properly, it must take care of development in every sphere. The development of every city depends on the values that create its specific character: tourism, culture, religion, industry. However, this does not mean that city development planning should focus only on one branch of "specialisation", neglecting or ignoring other branches.

Observations of some cities of the Katowice urban area – today also known as the Upper Silesian and Zagłębie Metropolis – suggest that not all cities have a comprehensive vision of their development.

It is enough to look at the cities in the region to see that the most successful ones are those that aim at promoting cultural heritage and the development of the so-called "creative industry", making their space attractive enough to attract entrepreneurial and creative people, who are the primary driving force of cities.

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