

Rebuilding the post-socialist cities in the age of neo-liberalism – issues and challenges for the planning profession

Piotr Lorens, Gdańsk University of Technology, Poland

1. Introduction

Since the fall of the socialist system in 1989 cities in Central and Eastern Europe were undergoing rapid changes of different nature. These included the new economic realities of development (namely: reintroduction of the market system), new political doctrine (namely: neo-liberalism) and new approach to social development (namely: withdrawal from the policy of the “welfare state”). These effected in severe consequences to the urban development processes, which were exposed to entirely new situation.

The concept of this paper is to deal with the wide range of issues and phenomena associated with the present challenges which post-socialist cities have to face. These include topics in “catching-up” with the “fast-forward” globalization processes occurring in leading regions of the world as well as with “catching-up” with the modern planning workshop.

2. New phenomena in the post-socialist realm

In result of the social, economic and political changes of the late 1980-ties and early 1990-ties, a number of new phenomena occurred within the post-socialist cities. These included the ones of the structural importance – like decline of the traditional industries (and – in consequence of this – abandonment of the numerous industrial sites) – as well as ones depending on individual choices and preferences of the societies or local communities – like rise of the suburbanization of housing and commercial developments as well as emergence of the urban regeneration ideas.

But the socialist cities (meaning: cities influenced by the processes of “forced industrialization” and “steered urbanization” effecting from the political decisions and not the market-based ones) were not ready for these changes. This not only relates to the willingness and ability to face new development trends and determinants, but also to the observed social and economic shortages. Among them one should mention the issues of low levels of income (in example, even 20 years after the economic transformation the average salary in Poland is four times lower than in its immediate neighbor, Germany), lack of economic power of the local economies (very weak economic base of many communities, lack of economically strong companies potentially willing and being able to take the leading role in the process) as well as lack of major development impulses for most of these cities (meaning no major “driving forces” for substantial change). All of these decide about the different nature of problems the post-socialist cities have to face, and which also create new challenges and issues to the planning profession.

At the same time many of these challenges are confronted with the development trends characteristic to the highly-developed economies as well as expectations of the societies willing to live lives similar to the ones known from the west-european countries. This also relates to the housing and shopping patterns, which effects in rapid changes of the spatial situation of the post-socialist cities.

The latter ones are associated with rapid development of the new urban structures which were developing as a result of housing and commercial structures shortages. Therefore, despite the transitional period and many economic difficulties, the cities in Central and Eastern Europe were undergoing major spatial transformations, and many of these were resulting from the unique changes of the socio-economic system. During the last decade these processes were additionally influenced by the processes of globalization and metropolization, which can be already clearly visible in the cities of Central and Eastern Europe.

In the majority of cases these processes were associated with the small scale of new interventions and developments of different nature. This resulted from a number of reasons, which included a huge risk of developing the bigger structures, confrontation with problems regarding obtaining larger scopes of financing and – finally – impossibility of buying numerous small pieces of land from separate owners. At the same time the new political doctrine of neo-liberalism led towards creation of the unusual in the highly-developed countries system of acceptance to any development that occurred and enabling the almost every investor to realize his/her development concept. This new phenomena effected in rise of the fragmented structures, consisting of numerous but separately planned and developed buildings and complexes, with many “urban voids” of different nature. Besides this, thanks to the passive policy of the municipalities and willingness to “express the freedom of the owners”, the urban landscape of these cities started to lack any order. At the same time the planners’ duties were limited to creating the “development opportunities” instead of comprehensive development policy.

3. Trends in urbanization

As described above, the current urbanization practices are associated with domination – or even over-dominance – of the free market. At the same time, new products are required on this market – both in terms of housing and other types of urban program. But only in few cases they are developed in the inner-city locations. All these aspects describe the picture of the urbanization model we have to deal with in post-socialist cities. This chapter includes a few remarks concerning this model, which – of course – may evolve in a bit different way in each of the cases. Many of the observations are based on the analysis of the Polish cities, which can serve as the good example of the processes described within this paper.

3.1. Lack of cooperation between public and private sectors in urbanization processes

As stated in the paragraph above, due to the policy of the Polish state and most of the local municipalities, the private sector activities are not influenced in any way by public sector. I mean, they are not influenced with financial participation that can change the program or character of the development – but of course each of the project needs to follow the planning regulation concerning the size of the building or the complex of new dwellings, the type of land use and other building regulations.

This situation is associated with the fact, that the public sector – again, thanks to the money shortage – is not able to play the active role in the real estate market. Unlike many west european municipalities, only very few local governments in Poland are able to develop and maintain a large amount of public housing stock. And if they are able to do so, usually they focus on a hundred percent municipal housing, constructed to house the poorest and homeless families. This means that a great majority of new housing, and nearly all other developments are being built with private money only. And of course the buyers have to pay the market price for this. In fact, Polish municipalities used to have a lot of public housing stock – but during last decade most of it was privatized or is under privatization. This happens because the buildings are usually in bad condition and need major improvements. And the municipalities have no money for it, so – they usually to transfer it for almost nothing

into the hands of current users. This shifts the maintenance and up-keep problem to the building communities.

At the same time, all public infrastructure – like schools, roads and so on – are being built with the public money only. There is very little experience with public-private partnerships, and only in few cases private developers of the large-scale projects contribute some money for infrastructure improvement. But this happens only when a new road connection has to be developed in order to connect the site of the project to the existing road network. This happens due to lack of expertise and experience with cooperation – which is characteristic to both partners. Municipalities are afraid to get involved in the public-private enterprises, and have no knowledge how to do it safely and properly. At the same time, private sector is – in many cases – very short-sighted, and not interested in development of the public infrastructure. Such the projects need not only partnerships when under construction, but also – during day-to-day operation. The best example of this tendency is a little housing complex outside Gdansk – where the developer designed a bit of the social infrastructure for the inhabitants, including a little basin with a fountain, and with system of lighting-up the buildings. In a short time all these elements were decided to be uninstalled, as neither the municipality nor the housing associations (the formal owners of each of the buildings) were willing to pay for their maintenance.

3.2. *Housing needs and market responses*

Poland is one of the few European countries with still huge housing needs. This relates both to the standard of existing housing and to the amount of flats available per capita. This means that both the quality and quantity of apartments need to be tremendously increased. Such a situation is the outcome of the not sufficient amount of housing constructed in the post-war times, and lack of major modernization efforts in the pre-war housing stock. Therefore, there is a market for all kinds of housing, but still the price of the square meter of new apartment plays the key role. And – unlike west-european countries – there is no habit to rent the apartment. This is costly for the renters and polish law creates some problems for flat owners willing to rent them out. In result, only in big cities and in academic centers one can find a larger offer of apartments for rent. But the majority of people – who look for the housing adequate to their needs – is usually trying to buy a flat on their own. And – besides some tax incentives (which – by the way – are not any more in use) – there is no state or municipal support. The developers have to pay the market price for the land and for all materials and services. In result, the potential customers have to pay full price for the newly purchased apartment.

As the price is still the key issue, the developers try to offer a sufficient product for the customers. And the main criteria is the price. In order to make the offer attractive, they try to cut down the costs. And the only way they can do it is to buy the cheaper land. This means that majority of cheaper housing projects are located far away in the suburbs of the cities, and – in many cases – in the areas of the surrounding municipalities. And what is characteristic, these are usually multi-story houses, not the single family houses. Unfortunately, the clients of these do not take into account other costs of living in the suburbs – like transportation to the centers (there is usually no public transportation), very low quality of roads, lack of social infrastructure and no public facilities – like schools. All of these are in the inner cities or large housing districts developed in the 70-ties and 80-ties.

At the same time there is some market for the upscale apartments, which is limited to the big cities or to the popular summer resorts. In example, in Sopot or Mikolajki – very popular summer destinations – many of these apartments are purchased by rich as the second or summer apartments. But the regular inhabitants of these cities very rarely are the customers of the developers building these projects. And what is characteristic to the city-center projects, they are usually developed on the empty plots, and do not utilize the degraded areas – like post-industrial ones. They are also costly, and the potential developer has to pay

– among others – also for the clean-up of the area, which makes the project problematic from the financial point of view.

High cost of land in the inner cities makes building new city-center housing very costly, and available only for the rich. Therefore, if anyone would like to buy a modest flat there, has to look for the second-hand apartment. This means that most of the people, interested in buying the new flat, have to go to the suburbs – or take the risk of costly renovation and decide for the second-hand offer. The same relates to single-family housing.

3.3. *New challenges – emerging types of urban program*

Besides housing, there is a whole variety of new types of urban program, that appeared in Polish cities after 1989. the most important part of these are new shopping facilities. Besides them, one should mention offices as well as new leisure and office facilities.

As far as shopping is considered, it is necessary to remember about on-going differentiation of the clients and market offer. In the mid of the 1990-ties the customers were looking for the cheap offers, which were provided by large-scale supermarkets, located usually outside the cities. It was necessary to have a car to go there. They were offering cheap products, although at the beginning seemed to be attractive also for the more demanding clients. In time, this offer was also differentiated, and the cheapest segment of the market appeared. The offer for more rich people started to move to inner areas. And – in the end of 1990-ties – the new shopping gallerias started to appear in the central cities and in their close vicinity. As they gathered the offer for the middle class, their owners were able to meet the costs of running their businesses in the city centers. In result, the offer on the market is now very diverse, and each of the market segments tend to locate in a different part of the urban area. Again, this happens with little influence from the municipality – it usually reacts only when the political problem with the local shop-keepers arise.

The same situation can be observed in the case of offices and leisure and sports facilities. New office centers of different standard arise, and the most expensive ones locate in the hearts of the cities, while the lower classes facilities – in the outskirts. At the same time the new phenomenon arised – which is the connection between the development zones and transportation nodes. New office complexes arise in the close proximity to airports or major transit roads.

Unlike offices, new leisure facilities tend to fulfill empty spaces within the existing city centers. The attempt to locate large portions of such the program outside city structures was not successfull. Both new hotels and multi-screen cinemas are being constructed in the already urbanized areas, usually in association to existiong centers or other cultural facilities. I.e., in the Gdansk agglomeration there were four major new cinema complexes constructed after 1989, and two of these were located in the central areas of the cities. One of them was developed – along with the major shopping center – in the heart of the housing district from the 1970-ties. And only one – least successful – was developed outside the urban structures. The same relates to the hotels – they locate in the central areas or in the countryside, usually utilizing abandoned palaces and noble men houses.

And – finally – there are not many new sports facilities, but they also tend to locate in the existing urban structures. This comes out from the close proximity of their clients – inhabitants of the city. And still the population of the suburbs is not so numerous to provide a strong clientele for such the facilities.

3.4. *Problems with degradating inner urban areas*

As the effect of the urbanization processes, and of the de-industrialization of the cities (which started to take place in the mid of the 1990-ties) – the inner cities started to suffer from some degradation and urban blight. But – what is interesting – this did not mean lowering the

prices for the land. The market still indicates that inner city areas are most expensive ones, even besides the fact that most of them need major clean-up process. Also, in some cases the land titles are not clear, or the plots need major infrastructure upgrade. The best example of this is the Granary Island in Gdansk – the most attractive building site in the whole agglomeration, also very expensive – but nobody will invest there unless there is a new infrastructure connection to the plots.

Besides those post-industrial sites – there is a shrinking amount of the un-built areas, which are the effect of war-time destruction. The best case is the area around the Palace of Science and Culture in Warsaw, which – once a vibrant city district – is now a huge empty site. But this is one of the few sites like this left – all around one can see popping up new office and hotel towers. But this building boom happens only in Warsaw – all other cities are still waiting for their chance.

3.5. Emerging concepts in urbanization

Although the free market dominates the urbanization process, it also brings rapid changes in demand and supply. People not only want housing – they start to look for housing in some kind of style. And they are not fooled any more by “cheap copies of real cities”, sometimes offered by developers. They want to live really urban life. This comes out from great societal changes, that take place in Poland since 1989.

Among them one should mention the huge differentiation in housing needs. There is a new group of singles, willing to live on their own, and not willing to compromise their standard of living. Another group can be described as young couples with no kids, or older couples whose kids are already mature enough to live on their own – all of them rediscover the values of the city life. And in their cases it is not important to have an apartment as such – they look for some special offers. Besides these, one can mention the whole variety of different lifestyles, that tend to emerge in the society. All of these decide about the rapid growth of alternative urbanization scenarios.

3.6. Growing importance of urban regeneration

As the societal needs get differentiated, so does the market offer – this is the old rule of free market. And in the pure market-led urbanization in Poland it is also true – in regard to new urban program. But at the same time there is a large portion of the society not willing to change their living standard, but to maintain the existing one. They are usually housed in the buildings developed before the Second World war, which – in general – were not maintained properly during the post-war times, and were not undergoing any major renovation. Therefore, in last decades Polish cities started to face another problem – problem of decaying housing structures, which starts to be a general problem for the society and cities. During last few years many conferences, research works and seminars were devoted to analysis of this problems and search for the best possible solutions.

In general, this problem has three dimensions. One of them is related to already in bad technical condition pre-war structures. In these cases the renovation efforts should keep as a goal technical upgrade of the material substance, and solving some of the over-population problems. Second dimension is associated with the post-war housing, which – in majority – is the prefabricated large-scale housing. Usually it still does not suffer major technical problems (but they will appear soon), but is degraded morally and socially, with many social problems. And finally it is necessary to mention still waiting for redevelopment post-industrial, post-harbor, post-railway and post-military areas, which – as mentioned in the previous chapter – usually are ready for development, but suffer from underdeveloped infrastructure.

First regeneration programs are usually perpetuated by private sector, which is interested in developing the new market products in a form of lofts and / or “stylish” offices or restaurants. But these initiatives are supplemented by “spontaneous” regeneration – like i.e. acquiring the

old factory halls for the purposes of artists' workshops. Due to such efforts the face of such the run-down districts like Praga in Warsaw and Młode Miasto (Young City) in Gdansk started to be altered.

3.7. *Development of gentrification processes*

Besides regeneration, in some parts of the cities considered to be extremely attractive one can observe the starting of the gentrification process. This is possible due to the fact that – after the war – these areas were usually populated by mix of the inhabitants, both with relatively high and low incomes. And after the economic and political transformation, when the housing market was re-established (before 1989 selling or buying the flat in the free market was rather complicated, as the majority of the inhabitants did not have a title to the flats – they were considered as “renters”), some of the city districts started to be considered more attractive to others. This natural process led to the differentiation of prices in the second-hand market of flats. The flat – due to its good location – could cost even twice more than the same kind and quality of apartment, located in the district considered as unsafe. And – thanks to the same location factor – some of the flats seem to be even unsellable.

But thanks to introduction of these market mechanisms and privatization of flats (both municipal and belonging to the so-called housing cooperatives) it is possible to map the prices of the flats, and find out which of the cities or districts are more attractive to others. And in the case of the most attractive – and most expensive – the prices started to go that high, that many of the inhabitants started to sell their apartments in order to buy more convenient one at the cheaper price somewhere else. This process is not yet very visible – as most of the transactions in the market are made due to the fact that the previous owner of the flat had died or decided to move to other city. But the results are astonishing – the “good” districts and cities are getting even better, and the “bad” ones – much worse. At the same time some of these “bad” districts – due to the attractive location or pre-war architecture of the buildings starts to be considered as potential site of regeneration processes. But – as mentioned in the previous paragraph – these processes are still not well developed.

3.8. *The practice of urban sprawl*

The major problem in sustaining urban form is the issue of suburbanization. It contributes heavily to the dispersion of urban program and urbanization of virgin areas (so-called green fields). Although this phenomenon is well known all around the world, in Polish cities it started not longer than 20 years ago. And its dynamics allows asking the question about the future of proper urban areas. But in order to find out the way of controlling this process one has to research on the reasons why it happens.

One of the reasons why suburbanization happened in Polish cities is the tradition of socialistic urbanization. It was based on massive construction of entire housing districts, with no respect to such the things like land cost or efficient use of space. This policy was also included in the planning documents, which constitute the basis for contemporary urbanization. This happened due to a number of reasons – but the major thing is that there were no major forces (both at the municipal and state levels) interested in stopping dispersion of urban program. Therefore, the regulations included in the planning documents reflecting the “spatial growth” model as the necessary policy were not regarded as wrong or improper.

Another reason for suburbanization was associated with the fact that no local forces interested in undertaking costly regeneration projects under free market conditions. One has to remember that in Poland – until 2004 – there were no funds or state subsidies available for urban regeneration projects.

3.9. *Cost of land as the key factor in decision making process regarding urban development*

As there is no municipal or state intervention in the urban development process, the whole decision process is in the hands of private investors and developers. And – as they usually build new houses or urban complexes for external clients – they have to cut the costs, as the price of renting and/or buying new space is in Poland (and in most of post-socialistic countries) the key factor deciding about the consumers' choice.

As the price is still the key issue, the developers try to offer a sufficient product for the customers. In order to make the offer attractive, they try to cut down the costs. And the only way they can do it is to buy the cheaper land. This means that majority of cheaper housing projects are located far away in the suburbs of the cities, and – in many cases – in the areas of the surrounding municipalities. And what is characteristic, these are usually multi-story houses, not the single family houses. Unfortunately, the clients of these do not take into account other costs of living in the suburbs – like transportation to the centers (there is usually no public transportation), very low quality of roads, lack of social infrastructure and no public facilities – like schools. All of these are in the inner cities or large housing districts developed in the 70-ties and 80-ties.

High cost of land in the inner cities makes building new city-center housing very costly, and available only for the rich. Therefore, if anyone would like to buy a modest flat there, has to look for the second-hand apartment. This means that most of the people, interested in buying the new flat, have to go to the suburbs – or take the risk of costly renovation and decide for the second-hand offer. The same relates to single-family housing.

4. Challenges for the planning profession

Within the circumstances described above one could mention a number of the challenges that planning profession has to face. These include mostly ones being outcome of the transformation process, which deeply affect the contemporary model of urban development of post-socialist cities.

4.1. *Changes in administrative structure*

During last twenty years the Polish legal planning system was evolving heavily during last two decades. Also the major changes took place in the field of spatial administration. Before 1989, Poland was divided into 49 provinces, and each of them was managed by the government official – so-called “województwo” or – simply speaking – governor. And each of these were divided into municipalities of different size, which also included cities.

First major change took place in 1992, when the local government reform was introduced. It included the re-creation of self-government, along with giving them the spatial planning power. But – as indicated in the above chapter – they did not make much use of this, except some of the big cities. And still many competencies – like issuing the building permits – was in the hands of post-socialistic structure of “regional offices”, which were the remnants of the counties (abolished in 1975).

Another reform took place in 1998, when the institution of counties was re-introduced. They incorporated the powers of the above-mentioned “regional offices”, as well as the responsibility for managing the public infrastructure (like roads, high schools, hospitals) at the over-local level. But the counties do not have any spatial planning power, except administrative duties in the field of building process. The only improvement in the spatial development area was noted in the big cities – where the mayor become also the head of the county. This gave him a bit more power in controlling the building process.

Within the framework of this reform, also the regional administration was reformed. The amount of provinces was reduced from 49 up to 16, and the responsibilities of the governors were – to large extent – limited. At the same time the regional self-government was created (it never existed in Poland before), which become responsible – among others – for regional planning and development. In its hands there is the duty to prepare the regional development plans and strategies, as well as preparation of the plans for the metropolitan areas. But these planning competencies are not very strong, as still the most of the power is in the hands of the municipalities. And they are often not interested in cooperation with the next-door partners. The best example of this is Gdansk and Gdynia – both cities are not able to cooperate in the field of infrastructure development, and also they do not tend to work together in the planning area

4.2. Lack of state intervention in urbanization processes

Besides administrative and legal changes, along with the political and economic transition the Polish state decided to withdraw from most of the forms of governmental support to urban development. It was supposed to be replaced by local programs and policies, prepared and implemented by municipalities. The post-socialistic governments believed that the best decisions concerning local communities can be made only at the local level. This belief was followed by intended decentralization. But this process related only to duties – not to money distribution. In result, many of the tasks were transferred to the local and regional governments, but the state did not provide financial basis for carrying them out. And again, the bigger cities – with much broader economic basis and more opportunities to attract investors and capital – had a better position in this situation than small urban and rural communities. But even in the case of big cities – as many tasks had to be financed – it was not possible to find enough money even for the necessary infrastructure improvements. In fact, until now the municipalities are struggling with heritage of socialistic model of urban governance. And – among the main problems – one can find i.e. degradation of large amount of housing stock (as they were never renovated after the war), underdevelopment of infrastructure (especially in the field of water supply and sewage collection, but the main problem is associated with underdeveloped road network and very poor quality of many of them) and many others.

According to these two processes – decentralization of power and struggling with the socialistic heritage – neither of the possible actors (which means the central government and municipalities) had interest and money to introduce any kind of support system for urbanization (or re-urbanization) processes. Therefore, they were left for the market, as some of the liberal politicians (and also – planners) believed that free market will do its job and clear the situation. But they forgot that free market looks for the cheapest and most efficient ways of fulfilling the economic tasks, and not necessarily takes into account the social and environmental aspect of the development process.

In result, for the whole period since 1989 there was no single state program aiming in influencing the urbanization processes. The best example is so-called urban regeneration act – the parliamentary initiative to support the urban regeneration processes. Works on this documents were conducted for over ten years by now, and still noone is able to predict when they will be finished. And – at the same time – local municipalities do not intend to influence the urbanization processes, which in many cases have the overlocal dimension. They are usually focused on providing the legal framework for developers, as new developments mean new tax inflows. And all other planning principles are usually left aside.

4.3. Evolving (stagnating) planning system

Urbanization process in Poland is also heavily dependent on the planning system, which was changed a few times in the recent thirty years. At the beginning of the economic transformation – in the early 1990-ties – the municipalities had to do with the planning documents originating from the socialistic times. They usually included “large-scale growth” model of urbanization, which showed no respect to environmental or economic issues. The

most important element in them – agricultural areas slated for building up – was associated with providing new areas for construction of the new housing estates. What was also interesting for this type of plans was the fact that no inner-city areas (especially industrial ones) were considered as potential redevelopment areas. It is also important to mention the basic outlines of the planning system. It was based on the planning act from 1985, which included the necessity of development of the “general plan” for the municipality (indicating what type of land use is supposed to be allocated in the particular area; it also included the specific types of urban program, that were supposed to be located on the specific sites – like i.e. public infrastructure). This system was based on the fact that the only serious investor in the times before 1989 was the Polish state, and no major private investments were taking place. Besides these “general plans”, some local municipalities were in possession of “detailed plans”, which were indicating almost the architectural shape of the whole districts. It was possible to plan like this, as – again – only the central government was considered as the investor, and the plans were not intended to be the planning basis for any private investments.

This “planning heritage” – when confronted with development of free market processes – made suburban areas extremely interesting for new development, especially for new housing. But the local municipalities – re-created in 1992 – did very little or nothing to stop this process – in fact, they were not considering this as a problem. Still valid planning documents were considered as good element of the urban policy (which was not completely wrong way of thinking), but the mayors or city boards did not really think about any type of comprehensive urban management.

The first major change in this field took place in 1994, when the new planning act was accepted by the Polish parliament. It included the idea of abolishing the old plans, and introduction of the new types of planning documents. Since this time, the whole area of the municipal planning started to face major changes. The development idea for the whole area of the municipality was supposed to be included in the new type of the planning document – so-called “study of conditions and directions of urban development of the municipality”. This new type of document – unlike the previous “general plans” – was not legally binding document, and as such could not serve as basis for issuing the building permit. At the same time the new act introduced the “local plans” – legally binding documents, stating the conditions for urban development in the particular sites. But – what was surprising – the new planning act prolonged the validity of old “general” and “detailed” plans up to 1999. This allowed the continuation of the previous policy of rapid suburbanization. But what was even more surprising, the municipalities insisted on prolonging these plans for even longer, and – thanks to the further amendments to this act – the “old” plans in their majority remained valid until the 2003! So – for almost fifteen years after the change of the political and economic system, the “socialistic” planning heritage decided about the directions of urban development in Poland! The outcomes of this process seem to be hardly reversible, and still the municipalities try to follow the urban policy that was developed in the 1980-ties.

Another change took place in 2003, when another new planning act was accepted by the parliament. But it did not change the major elements of the system – rather it changed some specific planning procedures, and introduced widely the so-called “administrative decisions” – which are intended to serve as legally binding planning documents in the areas where there is no “local plan” accepted by the local councils. And – as not many municipalities are interested in development of these “local plans” (they are costly in preparation and the procedure of their approval is long-lasting) – at the moment the major part of spatial development in Poland is based on these “administrative decisions”. This creates many problems for developers, and also – many opportunities for corruption. And what is even more thrilling, the current planning act – considered as very imperfect, but introduced just two years ago – is subject of complete change into the new one. Such the tendency creates great uncertainty for local governments, developers, investors etc., and does not allow

creation of the ordered urban structures. In effect, many new phenomena occurred in the spatial situation of the Polish cities. Many of them can serve as the bad examples of urbanization processes, but one can regard some of the as the positive ones as well.

Among the bad effects of the changes in the planning situation one should mention lack of the legally binding planning document for the entire area of the city. This brings a high degree of uncertainty for many investors, developers or simply land owners, who simply do not know what can be done with their land. And such a situation can be found in many of the cities, which – in many cases – blocks the development process. This was also associated by the lack of “local plans”. In result, i.e. in the case of City of Cracow at the beginning of 2004 only 5% of the city area had the legally binding planning document. All the rest of it was ruled – or rather one should say – not ruled – by the “administrative decisions”. This of course created chaos in the building industry, and many developers had to wait or hope for the quick decision by the city on issuing the “administrative decision”.

On the contrary, some good effects of these changes were also noted. Among them one should mention the processes of re-planning of the old industrial sites, which started the processes of urban regeneration. As mentioned in the following chapters, this process is not really well developed by now, but one can note a change in thinking. This happened due to fact that municipal planners started to see the local problems, not only – the general ones, common for the entire cities. Another good effect of this situation is the appearance of the new planning quality – in these rare cases where the municipalities prepare the “local plans”, they usually include the detailed solutions, made in the regulatory way. This brings the new planning philosophy, and gives hope for the more ordered space in future.

5. New role for planners

In this situation the planning profession has to face new tasks. These include: rising the awareness of the municipalities and citizens regarding the outcomes and effects of the situation, development of the new pro-active planning approach at the local level and – finally – developing the new planning tools allowing better control of the development and more effective architectural coordination. But the main issue is to re-introduce the planning values to the process of urban development.

5.1. Reintroducing the “planning values” to the profession

As stated above, one of the key challenges for the profession is to reintroduce the set of values to the profession. This need comes from the fact that after over twenty years of ne-liberal doctrine the planners are self-limiting to the roles defined by the politicians, developers and land owners. In result, the planning profession is limiting itself to the “regulatory-planning” making profession, which puts the planners in the role of passive bureaucrats following the instructions of the politicians. And these instructions are frequently the result of the

These values have to include the issues of sustainability, livability and quality of urban landscape. Planning in the post-socialist cities cannot capitalize on the present qualities of the urban environment as frequently these are very low and/or limited to only selected historic areas. At the same time these issues have to be redefined in the context of the post-socialist realities. Therefore, one has to take into account not only the traditional definition of these elements or the ones known from the west-european countries, but also the post-socialist realities and pre-conditions.

5.2. *Involving local communities in the decision-making processes*

Besides the issue of “planning values” one of the most important challenges for the planning profession is appreciation and understanding the value of the public involvement into the decision – making process, but with the understanding of limits and problems associated with these. One has to remember again about the specifics of the post-socialist communities, where the real meaning of land ownership was just recently reintroduced and which is now associated with absolute freedom to do whatever the owner wants to do with his or her property.

Therefore, in the post-socialist communities planners have to deal not only with spurring the involvement of the communities, but also with redefining the land ownership concept in the realities of the societal and political change after the communist period. These also include the need to redefine the role of the planners in this discourse, as many of them do not understand or appreciate public participation at all, and – in result – are unable to use this tool effectively. In result, the limited exercises in involving the local communities in the decision-making process are not perceived as encouraging.

5.3. *Developing the pro-active planning workshop*

But at the same time planning profession has to be redefined in order not to serve only as the part of the development process, but rather as the vehicle for spurring, programming, facilitating, controlling and managing the development. Therefore, planners need to rediscover the fundamentals of the profession, but – at the same time – work out the professional workshop appropriate to the issues and challenges posed both by the post-socialist realities and globalization processes.

This has to be associated with the adaptation and restructuring of the entire contemporary planning and urban development workshop. But beforehand the planners have to understand that “traditional” planning is just not enough – in order to play the active role in the development process they have to get involved in shaping the development mechanisms and learn how to use them to achieve the above-mentioned “planning values”.

6. Conclusions – post-socialist cities in the age of hyper-dynamic urban context

As one can note, restructuring planning profession in the post-socialist countries and – being part of this – rethinking the post-socialist cities (although this can be perceived and understood the other way round) is the enormously complex issue, dealing with changing development realities as well as with changing the planners’ mentality. This is made even more complicated when noting that we are not in the state of steady growth, but in the times of “hyper-dynamic” urban context – meaning that crisis and growth periods are mixed and heavily influenced by many factors. Therefore, rethinking planning profession is quite a complex issue in the post-socialistic context. The good examples of how complex this can get is the case of China – where the modern planning workshop is fully confronted with the “traditional” hierarchies and ways of dealing with the urban matters.

But at the same time this “state of flux” provides an interesting environment enabling change. The best example of this can be found in the case of countries like Russia or others, not yet fully facing many of these changes. In this case the transformation process will be much more rapid and to large extend influenced by this “hyper-dynamic” situation. But one has to remember that the best way to deal with this is not to “copy and paste” of the western models, since many of the local realities make these irrelevant and unacceptable. So the post-socialist cities and planning communities have to reinvent planning on their own, adapting many of these models to their own realities.