

PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
PRESERVATION AND IMPROVEMENT  
OF HISTORIC TOWNS

SREMSKI KARLOVCI  
12<sup>TH</sup> – 13<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2016

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ТРЕЋА МЕЂУНАРОДНА КОНФЕРЕНЦИЈА  
ОЧУВАЊЕ И УНАПРЕЂЕЊЕ  
ИСТОРИЈСКИХ ГРАДОВА

СРЕМСКИ КАРЛОВЦИ  
12–13. МАЈ 2016. ГОДИНЕ



*Publishers*  
Provincial Institute for the Protection of Culutral Monuments,  
Petrovaradin  
Municipality of Sremski Karlovci

*Издавачи*  
Покрајински завод за заштиту споменика Културе,  
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*Circulation*  
300

*Тираж*  
300

*Printed by*  
ЈП Službeni glasnik, Belgrade, 2017

*Штампа*  
ЈП Службени гласник, Београд, 2017

ISBN 978-86-80929-36-1

ИСБН 978-86-80929-36-1

The publication of the monograph was supported by the Provincial Secretary for Culture and Public Information of the AP Vojvodina

Издавање зборника помогао је Покрајински секретаријат за културу и јавно информисање АП Војводине.

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# Development Possibilities of Historic Towns in Shrinkage - Case Study of Łódź, Poland

## INTRODUCTION

**N**owadays, more and more cities have different types of shrinkage: from population decline, the decline of city economy and various urban activities, the shrinkage of the quality of urban life, the rise of crime and delinquency, and, maybe the most perceivable, the decline of city image. All these phenomena can be described as an urban shrinkage [1]. Although this term is relatively young, the phenomenon of urban shrinkage is not a novelty – numerous cities has faced decline from the beginning of civilisation. Nevertheless, the frequency of urban shrinkage is a new issue and especially related to Western societies [2].

The appearance of urban shrinkage is particularly often in Europe. More than half of European urban areas are losing population [3]. In the case of post-socialist space in Central and Eastern Europe, it is a prevalent urban pattern with some sudden and unexpected consequences [4]. The cities in former East Germany are very illustrative examples of urban shrinkage<sup>1</sup>. As a result, more 80% of major post-socialist cities show the “symptoms” of urban shrinkage [5].

The phenomenon of urban shrinkage has also influenced on old city cores in many post-socialist cities. Generally, the arrival of capitalism and free market has reinitiated the interest of different actors for old city cores in Central and Eastern Europe, which consequently has led to various projects of urban renewal and revitalisation [6]. Despite these intentions, in the case of shrinking cities, existing demographic and economic shrinkage has disabled or has noticeably slowed the renewal and the revitalisation of their old cores.

However, there are the cases of the shrinking cities which have given a lot of efforts to overcome their deteriorated position in the last years. They have succeeded to slow or

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<sup>1</sup>Some East-German cities have lost more than 20-30% of their population after the fall of communism. In extreme examples, demographic decline has been more than 50%.

even prevent further urban shrinkage. The case of Polish city of Łódź will be presented in the paper. After three decades of constant urban shrinkage, this city has become place for significant urban projects, which try to change former city image. The majority of these projects are related to the renewal and the revitalisation of its very spacious old city core with many historically valuable buildings and ambient areas.

The example of the best practice in Łódź is very important for the paper. Its aim is a critical analysis of these projects, which can contribute to the development of both city and its historic core. The result of the paper is the set of guidelines for the urban development of historic cities in shrinkage. At the end, these guidelines should be important for cities in Serbia, because many of them recorded population loss by the last national census in 2011 for the first time [7], which is one of the main “signals” of urban shrinkage.

### CONCEPT OF SHRINKING CITIES

Becoming very common phenomenon globally, urban shrinkage is a significant and very complex challenge which triggers different fields, such as urban and spatial planning, economic and social development, cultural studies, etc [2] [8]. Great challenge is how to govern a city in the time of less investments and threatened competitiveness [9]. This is even more problematic if it is known that the circumstances and the patterns of urban shrinkage are usually mutually different and regionally “marked” [4].

This was the main reason to develop the concept of shrinking cities. It quickly gained an international character. Following the aforementioned stance about the different patterns of urban shrinkage, the concept has proposed various actions to deal with this phenomenon. They vary from very “rigid” interventions, such as the demolition of unused buildings, to more alternative ones, in the fields of art and design. All actions can be counted through two opposite approaches.

The first approach is linked with the acceptance that city do not need to return all key elements of urban shrinkage to previous level, such as the previous number of urban population or the level of some economic activities (industry, trade, etc.). H.Schlappa thinks that [controlled and planned] shrinkage is more expectable development “trajectory” that growth for many European cities [10]. This approach has several names/theoretical concepts, such as “smart shrinkage”/“smart decline” [11] or “Right-sizing” development of city [12]. The actions proposed by these theoretical concepts are mostly based on the demolition of unused buildings and infrastructure. Urban greenery, open public spaces or free space for new enterprises are often planned to cover newly-obtained space, which indirectly increase the quality of life for existing population. Thus, these actions intend to

stabilise local demographic and economic conditions as a final result. In the other hand, the implementation of the aforementioned actions is usually very complex due to the resistance of local communities. Hence, the first approach is more common in well-developed countries with strong governance and economic and fiscal mechanisms and longer history of urban shrinkage. United States of America and Germany are good examples for it.

The second approach refers to the intentions of city to achieve the state before the appearance of urban shrinkage by the main indicators (population, economic activities). Here, two solutions can be identified:

- The support for the development of mixed economy in the case of those cities which had the previous development based on one dominant economic activity. Famous examples are former mining cities in remote areas [13], as well as traditional heavily industrialised cities in post-socialist countries [14]. Hereby, it is expected that new economic growth will further boost investments, open new jobs, and, consequently, enable the “return” of population in city;
- More alternative solutions of city development are connected to the redirection to new and specific users of urban space, such as “retirement cities” [9], new-university cities, the cities dedicated for tourists or cities which are transformed into artistic colonies. The last two examples are more adequate for smaller cities and towns.

## **HISTORIC CORE IN POST-SOCIALIST SHRINKING CITIES**

It has been already said that post-socialist transition of those societies in Central and Eastern Europe has initiated a new interest for historic cores. This has been reflected through the numerous projects of the urban renewal and regeneration of the entire cores or some particular areas inside them. Flagship projects have appeared as a special stimulus to this redevelopment, with the aim to reframe city image in wider context: national, regional and global [6]. They are usually big projects that seek huge financial support and include many actors. All these factors always go beyond city level.

However, this solution cannot be easily applied on cities in post-socialist countries. These projects have not enabled new growth; they neither have prevented other negative consequences, such as poverty, social injustice or exclusion [10]. In the case of some cities, the improvement of living conditions and the rise of gentrification have been noticed in some outer housing areas, but no in historic cores [15]. The phenomenon of the “discharge” of the cores has appeared in these cases [16]. Simply speaking, the complexity of the process of the renewal and revitalization has proved as a significant restriction in the development of historic cores.

In accordance to this experience, the introduction of long-term elements for the governance and development of historic core has positioned as a better solution than the use of short-term programmes in the form of few huge projects [10]. For instance, one of the main recommendations is the establishment of the institutes for the (urban) renewal of historic areas as special bodies responsible for this issue. It is important to accent that these institutes are becoming the place for interconnection between various incentives and development programmes. This setting indirectly potentiates more qualitative, prompt and mutually compatible actions in urban renewal [14].

## ŁÓDŹ AS THE BEST PRACTICE OF POST-SOCIALIST SHRINKING CITY – SHRINKAGE AND REDEVELOPMENT

### Rise and shrinkage of Łódź

Polish city of Łódź is chosen as a case study in this research. It is an often “polygon” for the research of post-socialist conditions [17]. Łódź can be describes as both young and old city. Key factor for its development was textile industry, by which it was well-known across Europe [18]. The city was rapidly developed side by side with industrial revolution in the second part of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Demographic numbers are a good illustration for this intensive growth. For example, there were only 13,000 inhabitants in Łódź in 1840. However, the city had more than half of million inhabitants before the First World War. Łódź was known as a “Polish Manchester” in that time. Moreover, it was also one the biggest, the most developed and very multicultural cities in the Russian empire [17]. The development of the Łódź was continued after its inclusion into re-created Poland in 1918, albeit slower. The city met the fall of communism in 1990 with very developed textile industry and with circa 850,000 inhabitants.

Similarly to the growth period, the shrinkage of Łódź has been also fast and sudden. Textile industry – the symbol of the city – almost disappeared even in the early 1990s, which has had very negative impact for the entire urban economy. This has caused demographic shift towards sharp decline. Łódź has lost a lot of people in the last 25 years – the number of inhabitants was a little above 700,000 in 2015, i.e. it has been decreased for 20%. Despite this rate has been slowed in recent years, the city still loses the population [19].

Even though Łódź does not possess a buildings and ambient older than 19<sup>th</sup> century, its historic core, which was formed in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, is very spacious and with many valuable historic monuments. Many of them belong to industrial heritage. But, many of these buildings and complexes are also in negligent and ruined state. Furthermore, it is easily to find “broken-down”, empty areas in the heart of the city.

## Strategy of the urban renewal of the historic core of Łódź

The cotemporary strategy of the urban development of Łódź is based mostly on the creation of the new image of the city through the recognition and the renewal of its traditional values [17]. This also includes new interest for the historic heritage and the former multicultural character of the city<sup>2</sup>. Being the perfect reflection of former glory, historic city core has become a “polygon” for the formation of new ambient, which strives to clearly represent its new image [17].

Before the description of three key urban projects in historic core of Łódź, it is important to emphasise that urban renewal has not been attached only to this space; many projects cover the other parts of urban area and they are ranged from those with national, regional and city importance to very small ones. For example, Łódź has prospered in the last years due to huge national projects. The city became the main road junction of Poland 2012; two major highways which connect the north and south as well as the west and east of the country cross at the northeastern edge of the city. Then, city airport recently got a new terminal by the support of Łódź province, which has enabled several new international flights.

PROJECT 1 – “MANUFATURA” CENTRE<sup>3</sup> is the first big project in the historic core of Łódź. This is a complex of the former textile factory of famous jewish entrepreneur, Izrael Poznański, with total surface of 110,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The entire complex was renewed 2006 as a public-private partnership. In accordance to the partnership, the complex is multi-functional and divided into the entities with private or public ownership.

The complex consists of mostly renewed buildings: hotel in the highest structure, the building with restaurants, small theatre, French cultural centre and three museums (museum of art, museum of the former factory, and city museum). The only significant new building is huge shopping mall with multiplex. Special value of the entire complex is the network of open spaces with modern design. They include inner court, mini-park and several inner streets for various open-air facilities.

PROJECT 2 – PIOTRKOWSKA STREET is a very long (5 km) and the main retail street in Łódź, which has been transformed into pedestrian line recently. It halves the city into western and eastern part. This street has always been a centre of the city, but it has returned its old glory by the recent renewal project. Actually, Piotrkowska Street was similar to other streets in Łódź till 1990. After this year,

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<sup>2</sup>Poles, Jews, Russians and Germans lived together in Łódź till the Second World War.

<sup>3</sup>The data is collected from professional visit of the site and from official website ([en.manufaktura.com](http://en.manufaktura.com)).



the transformation of the street has happened by the support of special foundation. The street was pedestrianised during the 1990s and the restoration of historic facades has completed in the later years. At the same time, the revitalisation of service economy has happened along the street – many new retail, tourist and service facilities have opened their doors. Only after this, “functional” transformation, the street is becoming alive and the part of everyday for Łódź people. Despite this progress, there are still buildings along the street which are just renewed in their ground floor and where their main façade is the only refurbished; in contrast, these buildings are empty in upper floors and with unkempt inner façades. Similarly with this fact, the most of inner yards are also in bad state.

PROJECT 3 – “ŁÓDŹ FABRYCZNA” RAILWAY STATION<sup>4</sup> is a huge project in progress, since the 2012. It refers to the construction of the entire quarter and it includes the new building of the main railway station and nearby structures and open public spaces. The new complex is also planned as a new major terminus for public transport in Łódź. Thus, nearby buildings will be organized to form new city business zone, which should link the city economically with global level. Huge entrance square is planned in the front of the main station and big park will be located on the north side of the building. The last thing is especially important for the city which has not had sufficient green areas in historic core.

## CONCLUSION

If some shrinking city wants to start coping with urban shrinkage, the first step is probably to reject the stance that urban development is the same as urban growth and to understand that urban shrinkage can also be encouraging for its redevelopment [4]. Historic cores in post-socialist shrinking cities in Europe are certainly an important factor for their development, because these cores are an already inherited advantage in comparison with the other cities. However, the existence of the core is not a warranty for urban development. The case study of Łódź shows that the city needs more efforts - planned and strategic approach in the case of its historic core has fulfilled expectations, obtaining more benefits in relatively short time.

Moreover, it is necessary to accent that simple direction towards physical aspect/”good design” is not enough for the realisation of the real “liveability” of historic core. The explained case of Piotrkowska Street in

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<sup>4</sup>The data is collected from professional visit of the site and from official website ([www.dworzec.lodz.pl](http://www.dworzec.lodz.pl)).

Łódź proved to be successful after the move of retail sector here, i.e. after functional revival. The first project – “Manufaktura” project – guides to the positive practice of public-private partnership, which can be a “win-win combination”. Of course, if it is organised in the right way. In explained project, it significantly contributes to the straightening of historic core through the production of new jobs and the formation of new meeting places and hence the inclusion of new users.

The case of new railway station in Łódź is not only illustrative as a representation of the emerging of “new city gate”, but it is also a reference for the making a new city node, where both transport hub and new business headquarters are merged. Thus, it shows how accessibility can fuel the rise of knowledge-based global economy.

Finally, the entire presentation of Łódź can be a role-model for many cities in Serbia. It is an issue due to many of them are shrinking now. The prompt recognition of urban shrinkage as a challenge or a problem is crucial here. If it will be led strategically, the negative consequences of urban shrinkage can be reduced or even omitted. Some characteristics of urban shrinkage, such as free and cheap urban space, can be even positioned as advantages at the same time.

The historical cores of shrinking cities can also play significant role in redevelopment process due to their transformation into (re)new(ed) centres for tourism and consumerism is easier than reindustrialisation of those cities. Aside to the case of Łódź, some cases in nearby countries can also be supporting. Pécs in Hungary became very attractive due to the status of a European capital of culture and accompanied works on city renewal and revitalisation. This was a new incentive for both tourist development and the improvement of living conditions for domestic people. New social groups were especially welcome<sup>5</sup>. Similarly, Timișoara in Romania has achieved evident success with the big urban-renewal project of the entire historic core *intra muros* in the last year<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Pécs has started to profile as a university city in Hungary by newly-opened high-education facilities and departments.

<sup>6</sup> Both examples have been significantly supported by European funds.

In the end, special challenge will be the upgrading of historic cores for the introduction of modern-day business facilities and the enabling of better access for both citizens and new visitors. The attraction of international, national and regional level will be probably key factor for such development. The case of Łódź is a good illustration for it.

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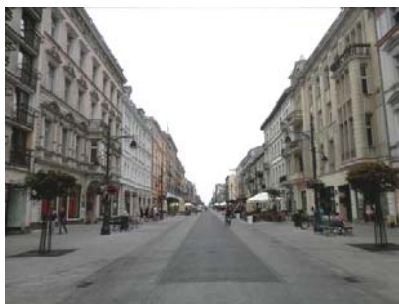
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**Figures 1, 2:** Łódź – the building in ruined state and “broken-down” areas in historic core (author: Branislav Antonić)



**Figures 3, 4:** “Manufaktura” complex: hotel and inner court on the site of the former factory (author: Branislav Antonić)



**Figure 5:** Renewed Piotrkowska Street in Łódź (author: Branislav Antonić);

**Figure 6:** The project of Łódź Fabryczna railway station (source: investmap.pl)

## Развојне могућности историјских градова у опадању - Студија случаја Лођа у Пољској

**Сажетак:** Једно од највећих достигнућа постсоцијалистичког урбанизма у Централној и Источној Европи сигурно је пробуђено интересовање за историјске градове, занемарене током претходног, социјалистичког раздобља. Ово интересовање могло се уочити код различитих актера; нови капиталистички предузетници су препознали погодности тржишне привреде у овим привлачним местима, грађани су поново открили вредност традиционалних амбијената, градске управе су пратиле ове токове развоја са новим улагањима у дате просторе, који су били остварени кроз нове планове и пројекте урбаниста, архитеката и других стручњака.

Ипак, дати урбани развој није се остварио у свим историјским градовима постсоцијалистичке Европе. Као посебно озбиљан случај могу се уочити историјски градови у опадању, где је велико привредно и демографско опадање онемогућило или веома успорило општи развој, па тиме и обнову и оживљавање њихових старих језгара.

Због тога примери историјских градова у опадању који су успели ово да превазиђу нису бројни. Један од таквих примера је Лођ у Пољској. То је стари индустријски град са великим историјским језгром из времена ране индустријализације, који је током постсоцијалистичке трансформације изгубио свој индустријски карактер. Као последица јавило се опште опадање и осетно смањење броја становника, што се посебно одразило по пропадање старог језгра Лођа.

Међутим, последњих година покренути су велики развојни пројекти на нивоу града и његовог историјског језгра, којима се тежи његовој регенерацији. Због тога Лођ све више постаје узор за историјске градове који имају проблем са урбаним опадањем. Циљ овог рада је критичка анализа ових пројеката, који могу допринети како развоју града у опадању, тако и његовог историјског језгра. Резултат представљају смернице за урбанистички развој историјских градова у опадању.

**Кључне речи:** Урбано опадање, постсоцијалистичко наслеђе, историјски град, Лођ, кључни развојни пројекти

CIP - Каталогизacija у публикацији  
Библиотека Матице српске, Нови Сад

711.523.025(082)

**INTERNATIONAL Conference Preservation and Improvement of Historic Towns  
(3 ; 2016 ; Sremski Karlovci)**

Proceedings of the Third International Conference Preservation and Improvement of Historic Towns, Sremski Karlovci 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> May, 2016 = [Зборник радова са] Треће међународне конференције Очување и унапређење историјских градова, Сремски Карловци, 12–13. мај 2016. године / [editor Dubravka Đukanović]. - Petrovaradin : Provincial Institute for the Protection of Culutral Monuments ; Sremski Karlovci : Municipality, 2017 (Belgrade : Službeni glasnik). - 641 str. : ilustr. ; 24 cm

Radovi na engl. i srp. jeziku. - Tiraž 300. - Стр. 8-11: Предговор / Зоран Вапа = Foreword / Zoran Vapa. - Bibliografija uz svaki rad. - Rezimeji na srp. ili engl. jeziku uz većinu radova.

ISBN 978-86-80929-36-1

а) Градови - Историјски центри - Зборници  
COBISS.SR-ID 313765895