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This group took an original narrative approach to understand Wrocław and its regional context as a basis for their proposals of desirable change. The narrative – of which an extract is given below – was interspersed with the description of Wrocław and its region, included in the introduction to the third student task of understanding Wrocław as a whole and addressing overall city structure.

- > Piotr and his family are from Gdańsk. They are considering to move to Wrocław, as Piotr has been offered a job in the financial industry. He is speaking with his old friend, Marcin, who studied at university in Wrocław 20 years ago, and had chosen to remain in the city since then. Piotr is asking Marcin for advice on the city – the areas he might want to move to, job opportunities, leisure and quality of life.

Marcin: Piotr, great to see you! How was the trip here? You came by train, didn't you?

Piotr: Marcin, wonderful to see you too. I was going to take the train, but then you told me the trains are slow and unreliable... and I was even considering flying... but in the end, I decided to drive. The city seems well connected. It was easy to get here.

Marcin: Yea, it is. The road system is good, although the traffic is terrible, especially when the students are around... and the tram system is good too, but we joke that no matter where you are going, it always takes at least an hour!

Marcin: So tell me, what did you think of the city so far?

Piotr: Well, I know that the city has a lot of cultural monuments, bars and very nice squares and islands. I have to admit, I wasn't quite sure when I had entered it! It seems all spread out... and with a lot of construction going on.

Marcin: Yea, there are huge projects going on, mainly shopping centres and business parks on the edges of town, where most of us with families are. On the one hand, it's great because you can drive around and do your shopping in one place. It's also great for some of the guys I know who work out there, because it's close to where we live, but on the other hand, there aren't so many nice cafes and things to go to... we miss that a bit since we moved out of the city centre.

IDENTIFYING GAPS

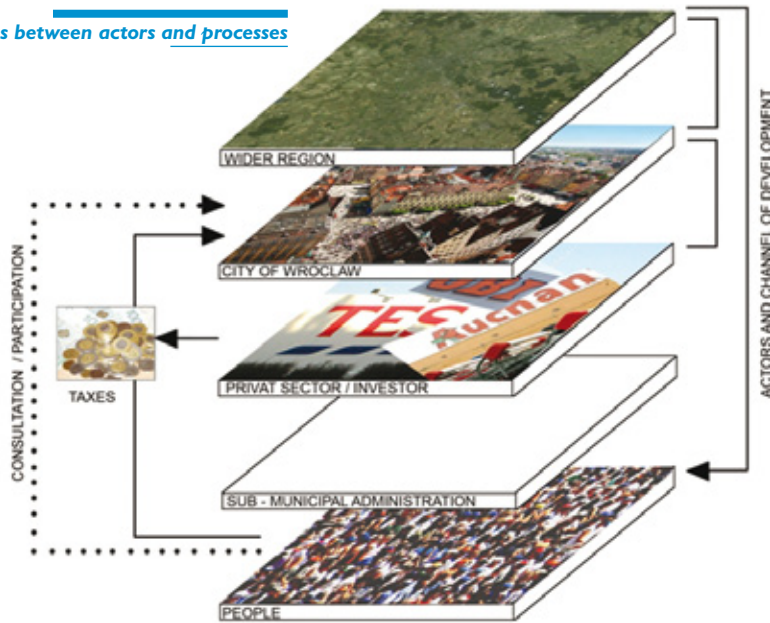
Wrocław has a clear typology of urban patterns, each with its advantages and gaps which influence economic, social and cultural opportunities. The city centre provides spaces for diverse intermingled economic and social activities. A second typology consists of modernist tower block housing estates with vast open spaces between them where social interaction is taking place despite the surroundings. The third major typology consists of linear and mono-functional business developments, characterised by large scale building blocks constructed along main roads, isolated from existing surroundings with minimal opportunities for common space and social contact.

Linear and large scale development patterns are currently the most common form of development in Wrocław. This new trend can be interpreted as a new form of 'main street' writ large, where the car replaces the pedestrian, and the 'shopping shed' replaces small scale shop fronts. This fabric has gaps of social interaction and cooperation. The further from the city centre, the more 'gaps' become apparent, such as time taken to reach new destinations, larger building blocks preventing penetration, longer gaps between developments, fragmented disconnected land use, such as industrial parks and shopping centres located next to vacant agricultural land, villages from another era, gated business premises and enclosed technology parks.

FILLING IN THE GAPS

Our proposal to fill the gaps is to densify the urban fabric, make better use of semi-public spaces, greening the city in strategic locations and involving the citizens actively in this process. Practical examples are to replace destroyed housing blocks and renovate dilapidated buildings to retain residents in central areas, to add 'fine grain' elements to semi-public spaces of which users would have ownership, to establish better connections within large scale high density housing estates and connect them better to their surrounding landscape, to reuse industrial heritage sites for production using state of the art technology, to fill in driveways and parking lots with cultivated greenery, raise people's awareness of opportunities to improve their neighbourhoods, including to develop their own creative activities. These ambitious interventions to improve the physical fabric of the city of Wrocław require clear policies, popular agreement and a governance structure capable of implementing change in the short medium and long term. A spatial strategy

Gaps between actors and processes



for coping with city growth does not suffice. The city needs to strengthen existing mechanism governing development plans and procedures to create development structures which lead gradually to a diverse evolution.

OVERALL CONCEPT OF THE CITY

Our spatial concept of the city aims to achieve a gradual governance of existing land use, coordinated with a strategic vision of development and inter-connecting structures. This strategy tries to prevent the creation of islands of mono-functional uses, with no links to the surroundings, placed predominantly along the main routes and in the outskirts of the city. It also aims to remedy the existing disintegrated spaces where commercial and industrial complexes are lacking human scale, public realm and leisure facilities, and are segregated from their surroundings. We also seek to establish important landmarks and public areas within existing villages to revitalise the local communities.

A wider strategy is to set up cooperation among the different municipalities rather than competition by establishing an inter-municipal planning system for large scale investment with significant impacts on the entire city and its region. This should prevent land hoarding for potential investment leaving wide gaps in the urban pattern and lead to a more effective use of land.

Problem examples



Linear peripheral development



Large building blocks



Un-coordinated development



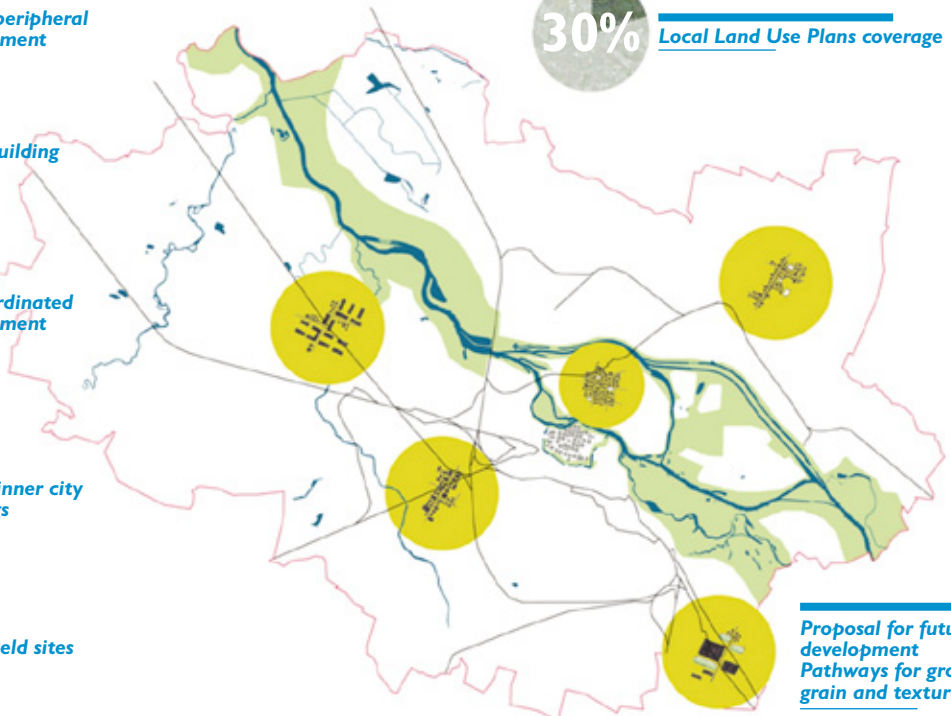
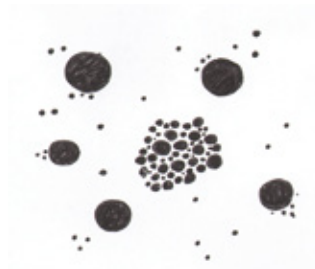
Vacant inner city buildings



Brownfield sites



The „backyard“ phenomenon



Proposal for future development Pathways for growth, grain and texture