

PART 3

INTRODUCTION
WROCLAW'S CITY
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&
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- > Wrocław, the capital of Lower Silesia, is the fourth largest city in Poland with 640.000 inhabitants estimated in 2004. It lies on the Odra River and four other small rivers (Bystrzyca, Oława, Ślęza, Widawa) connected with the Odra River in the city. Wrocław is an important industrial, transportation and communication centre for all Southern Poland. The city was partly destroyed at the end of World War II; it has been reconstructed and some of the damaged historical buildings have been restored.
- > Situated strategically between Prague, Warsaw and Berlin, Wrocław has a well developed transportation infrastructure that connects the metropolis with the whole of the continent and beyond. A road network is running east-west and north-south, intersecting in Wrocław. The A4 motorway, running east from Dresden and Berlin through Wrocław, Opole, and Katowice, is the main artery of the region. An international airport is located just six kilometres from the city centre, offering regular flights to Warsaw, Frankfurt, Munich, Düsseldorf, as well as cargo services.
- > Wrocław is also connected to the European system of waterways. The Odra links the city with the Baltic seaports of Szczecin while a network of canals and the Elbe provide access to Berlin and further to Western Europe.

PHYSICAL STRUCTURE

Wrocław is a beautiful city of regional significance in the province of Lower Silesia in south-western Poland. The city enjoys a relatively high standard of living, particularly with regard to transport, public amenities and recreation. It is penetrated by five rivers, offering scenic riverside walks and unique 'urban islands'. The restored city centre, with its fine-grain structure and public spaces fosters a vibrant social life with many bars, restaurants, shops and galleries and contributes to the identity of the city. In addition to the more 'traditional' visual heritage of the city centre, a number of industrial structures provide striking visual reminders of the city's industrial past. The city centre contains a number of derelict and unoccupied buildings, as well as a number of brownfield sites, some supporting partial activities, with others lying vacant in central locations.

New types of spatial development and patterns occur as Wrocław expands beyond the city centre. Beyond the central district, linear development occurs along the main roads, predominantly in the form of large building blocks accommodating large outlets and business parks in areas entirely oriented to the car user, despite the occasional bus or tram stop. Other parts of the city are organised in districts and villages, some of them unaffected by city development.

Different districts built during different periods are mostly mono-functional and are not properly connected between each other spatially and socially. Large industrial and commercial structures emerged after the transition period which constitute some 25% of the entire built up area.

ECONOMY

- > Wrocław is a dynamic city from an economic perspective. Its performance in terms of GDP formation is almost double of the overall Polish rate. While it reached an impressive growth of +16% in 2007, the global economic and financial crisis seems to have reduced the pace of economic growth to around 6%. Economic effects of rapid growth reduced unemployment from about 20% in the early 1990s to about 6% in 2010 but Wrocław should remain aware of the global depressed economic context.
- > Wrocław has a strong economic base in finance, automotive and electronics industries, information technologies and tourism. Wrocław is the third most visited city in Poland after Warsaw and Kraków with more than 2 million visitors per year. It is the second largest centre of financial services in Poland and attracts 30% of the companies in the Lower Silesia Region (48% trading companies and 47% foreign capital). Over 4,000 foreign companies have invested in projects in Wrocław, with major presences in finance, automotive and electronics industries.

KNOWLEDGE BASE

- > After Warszawa and Kraków, Wrocław is one of the country's leading academic centres at a regional and national level. 22 different academic institutions within the city attract approximately 130,000 students each year, nearly 1 in 7 inhabitants. The universities are well known for their academic specialisations in engineering, humanities, art, business and finance which attract students from all over Poland.
- > The large number of students in the city has a significant impact on the economy and daily life of Wrocław. This dynamic creates a youthful and vibrant atmosphere, with some drawbacks for transportation and traffic congestion. Although university buildings are located all over the city they are concentrated in the northern part adjoining the Rynek.

DEMOGRAPHY

Demographic data indicates a rather stagnant population, with a population of 643,000 inhabitants in 1991 slightly decreasing to 632,000 inhabitants in 2009. The city also forecasts a negative natural growth. While 66% of the population is in the 18-64 age group, close to 19% of the inhabitants are in the 65+ age group and close to 15% are below 18. 30% of Wrocław's inhabitants are single. 22% were living in social housing in 2004. Although this picture is consistent with general European trends of an ageing society, it has to be noted that Wrocław also boasts a large student population.

HISTORY

Wrocław dates from the 10th century and was flourishing during medieval times, although it was subjected to many different rulers from different nations and confessions. At the beginning of the 19th century a new way of life with people from different nationalities was introduced to the city which had already an identity as one of the western European cities. Under Polish rule since the Second World War and populated by immigrants Wrocław had undergone socialist realism that affected the entire way of life of people living there, as well as the physical and social development of the city. The new reality lasted for over 45 years and whole new generations were educated in that way. Since transition in 1989, the regime changed to a liberal market economy which left its mark on the city since then.

GOVERNANCE

There are seven departments responsible for different aspects of city development in Wrocław. Of those, the department of Architecture and Development is most actively involved. It is subdivided into three departments, with one responsible for urban planning in general (Wrocław Development Office). It is worth mentioning that 30 percent of Wrocław is covered by local area development plans. An investor can approach the city looking for land, but not all departments and subdivisions are involved in this negotiation. It takes place between investor and senior officials of the architecture and development department, without necessarily inviting private sector stakeholders and other departments into the dialogue. Additionally, an investor may consider investing in land in one of the surrounding municipalities with a low tax base outside the city boundaries. As the city's legal framework is not divided into more localised administrative units, capable of owning land and raising taxes independently, spatial and economic development is controlled by a top-down process without strong consultative mechanisms. Local residents and neighbourhood associations are passively informed about development concepts through newspapers and via the city website. They are only involved when concepts of development are in the final stages of implementation, rather than at the conceptual stage.