

Concepts Of Urban Renewal in an Aging Society in the XXI Century – Case Studies in Polish Cities

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1 ABSTRACT

In the twenty-first century many cities are at risk of losing the ability to function properly, due to progressing demographic changes. This is particularly evident in the European developed countries, where, in the cities, one observes an increasing number of senior citizens and a decreasing number of young people, both facts being the causes of the process of ageing. In modern world, we all depend on cars, while their availability to the elderly may be restricted. This results in the seniors having limited access to city services and other facilities, hindering integration with the rest of the society and exposing them to the risk of social exclusion. Modern cities require rearrangement and renewal so as to satisfy the needs of senior citizens. The purpose of this article is to indicate what actions are taken with reference to the ageing population in selected cities in Poland and what general concepts of urban renewal may be said to emerge out of these actions. The survey of Polish case studies will be compared and contrasted with similar initiatives involving age-friendly urban renewal which have been carried out in Barcelona and London as a part of the Age Friendly Cities project. The author is looking for trends and transformations in contemporary urban development taking place in Polish cities with reference to the aging population, in order to gain knowledge on what is missing in contemporary functional and spatial structure in the city and today's state of research on the subject.

2 INTRODUCTION

We are witnessing the emergence of a new era which will alter the methods of energy production. Industry will be reasonably minimized, changing the social system: there will be more and more elderly people and fewer and fewer children. This trend is associated with progressive demographic change that includes aging of the population which has been clearly visible in Europe and the U.S. for some time, affecting almost every aspect of life, from economy to culture, including the functional and spatial structure of cities. The following table shows the implications of spatial and socio-economic demographic change which include: migration, declining birth rate and ageing of the population.

Demographic change	Spatial consequences	Socio-economic consequences
Migration	Abandoning the cities and moving to other locations or suburban areas - in turn, the lack of demand for developing services leads to the shrinking of cities and suburbanization	The economic potential in the region is reduced due to migration; increase of imbalance in public finances caused by the loss of tax revenues from the working population
Declining birth rate	Decline in population contributes to the increase in empty living spaces; lack of demand for service development	Closing schools, kindergartens unemployment among teachers, paediatrician
Ageing population	Increasing number of the elderly generates demand for the development of medical care, specially adapted living spaces for the elderly; development of services aimed at this social group	Collapse of the pension system; high expenditure on welfare for the retired; weakening of the economy's growth potential; losing the most energetic, enterprising and well educated.

Table 1: Demographic change and its spatial and socio – economic consequences

3 AGEING OF THE POPULATION IN THE SPATIAL CONTEXT

Ageing is a permanent feature of all visions of the future that take into account the growing number of the elderly. By 2050, most European Union countries, including Poland, may see significant changes in the demographic structure of the population. Eurostat demographic forecast indicates that by 2050 the amount of the retired population (over 65 years) in EU countries will have increased by 70 percent, causing a 12 percent decline in the number of working population (15-64 years). As a result, the ratio of the working population to the retired, which now is four to one, will only be two to one in 2050, causing difficulties in obtaining sufficiently high tax revenue needed to provide for the senior citizens. So far, the debates on how to deal

with ageing properly have focused on issues such as pensions and social security, health and social care at a national level. But now, a new approach to the challenges and opportunities posed by an ageing population gradually emerges in the European Union. We are dealing with an innovative, broader definition of the problems of ageing, including a number of issues:

- Pensions and income.
- Economy and employment.
- Health care and other services.
- Rights of individuals.
- Housing and communities.

One can notice among local authorities a growing awareness of the importance of introducing specific policy in areas such as: housing, transport, urban renewal and taking into account the growing diversity of needs of the elderly, the lonely, the disabled and those living in the poorest areas of cities. The process of ageing and its socio - economic consequences have become the objects of attention of demographers, politicians, sociologists, psychologists, geriatricians, architects, as well as urban and spatial planners. The fact that this process is an important aspect of spatial planning should not be overlooked in the global debate on the social effects of ageing. Not only will Polish society not avoid ageing, but the demographic changes in Poland will occur even faster than in other EU countries. By 2050, Poland will have recorded a rate of decline in the number of people of working age twice as high as the Western European countries. However, the Polish have not been yet affected by the urban problems that resulted in the shrinkage of the cities in Britain and Germany. On the other hand, many cities in Poland have been affected by the ageing of the population. This concerns mainly the post-war housing estates and blocks of flats of the 1960s and 1970s This is mostly due to the fact that in the last decade the financial situation of Poles has significantly improved. They have more and more cars, more and more leisure time and they increasingly move outside the cities.

As in many European cities, the phenomenon of suburbanization exists also in Poland. People move outside the city to have more living space, at the expense of increased commuting time. In Poland, local authorities do not seem to express proper concern about attracting and keeping residents longer in cities so that they could continue to invest or spend their money both on housing and urban life, while migration to the suburbs causes transformation of their surrounding which leads to the degradation of natural environment. Suburbanization incurs additional costs related either to creating new building sites in the countryside, building new roads, schools and kindergartens, or to accessing remotely located educational facilities and services. Life of a pensioner in suburban areas can be very difficult and complicated, due to limited access to services, health care, cultural events and entertainment, which may have a negative impact on the well-being of senior citizens alienating them from the social life.

4 KEY TERMS

In order to clarify the issues of ageing in relation to urban renewal it is necessary to specify the key terms: the ageing of population and urban renewal. Old age and ageing are concepts that have not been clearly defined by either the natural or social sciences. The first of these concepts is treated as a static phenomenon, a phase of life, the other is a process. Old age as a stage or status in life is static; ageing, however, regarded as a developing process, is a dynamic phenomenon. Progressing socio-economic changes, rapid technical progress (e.g. information technology), increased standard of living, development of medicine all contribute to the extension of life expectancy. As a result, the number of elderly citizens grows faster than the number of the new-born.

Ageing has changed over the centuries both in terms of its pace and form. The pace of ageing in the first few centuries AD was characterized by relatively small changes in the length of human life. A person between 27-35 years was already considered elderly. But in the twentieth century a significant change in the length of human life occurred. In 1950 the average human life expectancy was 47 years, and in 2000 it increased to 65 years. Predictions show that by the end of this century, average life expectancy will have exceeded 80 years. To put it differently, in the period from 2005 to 2050, in Europe, the percentage of people over 65 years old (according to Eurostat estimates) will increase from 17 % to 30 % of the total population, while the percentage of people below 24 years will fall from 30 % to 23 %. Currently in Poland 13 % of the population

represents retirement age and by 2020 this figure will have increased to 25 % and, consequently, in 2030 one third of the Polish population will be retired. It follows that the pace of aging has been accelerating rapidly with an impact on spatial planning, what can rebound negatively on European cities.

Urban renewal is the key issue in contemporary urbanism. Its aim is to improve the quality of life of all citizens and increase the competitiveness of cities on a regional scale. Urban renewal is understood as adjusting the city to the changing needs of individuals and urban communities. Renewal is a social process that concerns the city's architecture, technical infrastructure, as well as legal, economic, administrative and political issues. Bearing in mind the changing needs and aspirations of future seniors, it is necessary to adapt the cities, in terms of their functional and spatial structure, to the ageing society, and, in a broader sense of the urban policy addressing the needs of older people, to motivate the elderly and encourage them to use what the cities offer, contributing to their integration with society. These actions are conducive to raising awareness, creating new jobs, developing the local economy, and improving living conditions in society. If the elderly are to become a significant social group in the cities whose needs and decisions will influence the structure of property market or services, then local authorities should provide them with favourable conditions of living, because otherwise they are at risk of not only losing the ability to participate in social life but also to function as individual beings.

5 CASE STUDIES

5.1 Age-friendly cities project

In Europe, numerous declarations pronounced by international organizations and governments, as well as academic conferences and innovative research programs contribute to the widespread attention drawn to this issue. The world community forums and organizations such as the UN, EU, OECD and many of their agencies have intensified their actions to respond to the challenges of the ageing population. In Western Europe many countries worked out methods and techniques of urban management with reference to ageing. New non-governmental international organizations such as the "Age-Friendly Cities" (created by WHO in 2002) are established and developed. WHO encourages local governments to plan age-friendly cities. An age-friendly city should adapt its structures to the needs of the elderly. For example, buildings in an age-friendly city should be equipped with elevators, non-slip flooring, ramps, etc. The city should also provide an adequate system of public transport (low floor vehicles, clearly displayed bus routes numbers, priority seats for the elderly). In addition, most service centres in the city should be located on the ground floors of buildings. These facilities should ensure that older people feel their needs to be acknowledged and satisfied. The "Age-Friendly Cities" program identifies the main elements of the urban environment, supporting active and healthy ageing. These are:

- access to public transport,
- friendly urban spaces and buildings,
- social support and medical care,
- location and availability of services,
- communication and better use of information technology,
- employment and social and civic participation,
- overcoming social exclusion,
- building intergenerational relationships by sharing the urban space.

5.2 Age Friendly Cities urban policy in Western Europe

Age Friendly Cities is a partnership of 35 cities from all over the world whose aim is to make urban communities better, healthier, and safer for the elderly to live and thrive. In some of the major Western European cities that take part in the project, such as London and Barcelona, the effects of ageing have already become a more serious issue than in Poland. However, as a result of participation in the Age Friendly Cities project both of them implement a policy of urban renewal with an emphasis on the needs of the senior citizens. The following section presents some of the selected projects of urban renewal carried out in those cities.

5.2.1 Barcelona

Currently, citizens of retirement age (65 and more) make up to 20,5 % (334,273 people) of Barcelona's population. The city has experienced fundamental changes in the structure of its population during the last three decades. There has been a significant decrease in birth rates, and a simultaneous sharp increase of the population of 65 and over. In spite of the gradual increase in the birth rate during the last decade, the youngest segment of the population (0-14 years) makes up to only 12 % of the overall population, while in 1981 it was 21,3 %. The number of citizens of 65 and over increased from 234.033 in 1981 to 334.273 in 2010, which means an increase of 40 %. The total number of Barcelona citizens decreased in that period by about 9 %. Both tendencies explain the relative increase in the number of the elderly citizens in Barcelona which grew from 13,4 % in 1981 to 20,5 % in 2010.

Access to public transport

In order to improve and facilitate the access to public transport for the senior citizens, the city officials prepared a class of documents aiming at coordinating transport-related issues: Mobility Pact: Urban Mobility Plan 2006-2012 integrated with the Mobility Act 2003 and the Sustainable Mobility Plan as well as encouraging participation of various organizations. The documents are supposed to be the instruments of urban renewal, which should facilitate the access to many places and services around the city for the elderly. This plan embraces four major issues:

- safer mobility and sustainable development (reduction of the number of car accidents and car-related pollution);
- sustainable mobility and natural environment protection: minimizing pollution (Kyoto Protocol; easier accessibility with less harmful effects on the environment);
- equal mobility (a right to mobility for all the citizens, regardless of their financial capacities and their physical fitness)
- efficient mobility related with the economic aspect of sustainable development (the ability to access every location in the city using any means of transport available).
- As a result of approving other documents related to transport, several actions were taken in the city:
- eliminating the parking of cars and mopeds on the pavements, as they used to take too much space as well as trouble the senior citizens and increase the risk of accidents,
- widening pavements in order to create a safe and comfortable pathway – defining the minimal width (for those who need additional support tools such as canes, walkers or wheelchairs)
- introducing elements of street furniture (benches, posts, railings, etc.) that separate pedestrian areas from those restricted for vehicle traffic
- improving the general accessibility: lowering curbstones near pedestrian crossing, installing escalators and elevators
- placing visual cues near pedestrian crossings informing and reminding about the need to look around for approaching vehicles before crossing the road (especially useful for those suffering from dementia or Alzheimer disease)
- eliminating bikeways located between bus stops and bus lanes
- reducing public transport fares for senior citizens

Friendly and accessible urban spaces

One example of a tool of urban renewal created by the local authorities is the Green Strategic Plan, which, along with the Safety Plan, responds to many of the demographic challenges. The plan introduces new ideas about the use of parks in the city and about the development of some functionality solutions that were earlier consulted with the elderly. The city's policy is to recognize that both parks and urban greenery in general are areas of social integration that can generate new functions and encourage new activities.

Green Strategic Plan

Barcelona is a city which requires renewal of its green space in order to improve the quality of life. The city officials recognize the emergence of new problems and challenges such as conservation of biological

diversity, climate change and various social needs. In order to respond to these challenges, some new concepts of urban green space and its relation to the city's ecology and to the social infrastructure are needed. These concepts should refer to managing regional green space conservation, communication and education, historical diversity of the region, social and health-related issues, and the structure of environmental services.

The aim of the Green Strategic Plan is to take long-standing actions (5-10 years). The strategic areas included in the plan are:

- Designing large-area green spaces in accord with the ideas of sustainable development and taking into consideration such elements as environmental services, integration and the risks related to climate change
- Improving communication by means of green belts
- Encouraging the use of allotment gardens; responding to new public needs; enabling interaction and conservation of green spaces
- Preserving and appreciating the historical heritage of allotment gardens
- Conservation of the natural heritage and of the biological diversity
- Managing the green spaces in accord with the principles of sustainable development
- Offering online courses informing about the value of green spaces in the urban area
- Educating about green spaces

Housing development

The Senior Citizens Advisory Council in Barcelona has prepared a document (Assisted Housing Plan) which aims at providing seniors with a choice of their place of residence and to ensure that medical care and social security are easily accessible and located in its proximity. One of the sections of the document is devoted to the topic of housing, encouraging construction of new housing estates that would provide all the necessary services for the elderly. In order to facilitate their accessibility for the elderly, some plans of subsidizing elevator construction were introduced. These housing programs combine ideas aimed specifically at the elderly with those for the general public, related to other urban projects in various areas around the city. The city renewal plan is an excellent example of a successful attempt to encourage adaptation and integration of the new apartments or estates in a new environment. Its purpose is to create new intergenerational housing estates in order to encourage and maintain contact between different generations. The plan focuses on the specific housing needs of the elderly and on the ways of adapting new apartments to their needs by means of various forms of housing benefits and assistance, including accessibility of various initiatives such as subsidies to interior adaptation or the elevator construction. In the social housing system, the residences for the elderly in a difficult financial situation have a usable area of 40-42 square metres (bedroom, living room, kitchen and a specially designed bathroom), and common areas located on the ground floor and accessible for all the residents. The project is intended for the citizens over 65 years of age who do not need special care or assistance in their daily activities, but who need to change their place of residence due to problems with service accessibility, or whose annual income is lower than 250 % of the IPREM income indicator, which is currently 24,604.43€.

The aim of other programs is to improve the senior citizens' conditions of life and service accessibility. They include removing structural barriers in order to facilitate access to some buildings and public spaces, the interior adaptation program (removing architectural barriers, elimination of dampness, sanitary renovation, etc.). The main point of this project is to guarantee that senior citizens do not lack the basic necessities of life. This also refers to those among the elderly with restricted autonomy, for the disabled, for those with lower income and those who cannot be under the care of their families. Barcelona's officials have established the Housing Office Network, whose aim is to inform and to manage all the housing-related issues. In the neighbourhood of Poble-Sec there are over 300 elderly people living on their own and isolated from the rest of the society because of a lack of elevator. To overcome this, the authorities have introduced a system of living assistance - a list of medical centres that take care of such people. The project is called "Let's get out and about" and it enables participation in weekly trips accompanied by other seniors and volunteers. The main aims of the projects are: improving the quality of the direct environment of the elderly, guaranteeing

decent housing conditions and renewal of the public spaces, along with stimulating cooperation based on social bonds. It also promotes better relations with the environment with reference to culture, entertainment, sport and health. The project consists of three stages:

- 1) Accepting citizens and integrating them with their environment
- 2) Adaptation - improving accessibility to various facilities in the vicinity of the place of residence (medical facilities, banks, pharmacies, markets, services)
- 3) Integration - the residents make use of services and participate in the social life of their communities

Intergenerational Neighbourhoods

The aim of this plan is to develop and to popularize housing projects based on criteria that encourage building relations between their occupants by means of making use of common interior and exterior areas, as well as utilizing those architectural features which all residents, regardless of their age, can jointly use. The access to services is the key element, and, thus, designing and developing housing estates whose aim is to promote intergenerational relations of the tenants is of utmost importance. Another crucial issue is to rationalize the use of accessible spaces and areas, develop energy saving, as well as promote the use of renewable energy. In order to achieve these goals, the Association of Architects of Catalonia has taken certain actions that aim at popularizing the aforementioned ideas, raising the local authorities' awareness of the issues, and involving some private entrepreneurs in the project.

5.2.2 London

London has conducted a research (in accordance with the principles set down by WHO) related to age-friendly city issues in the northeast boroughs of Waltham Forest and Newham. Several actions whose aim is the renewal of the aforementioned boroughs were taken as a part of the Age-Friendly Cities project.

Access to public transport

Improving access to public transport is often considered as a key to becoming a successful Age Friendly City, as it makes it possible for the elderly to go outdoors, integrate with other residents, and to make use of the necessary services. Some elements of an age-friendly public transport implemented for residents over-60s include: fare reduction which makes it possible for the senior citizens to use the public transport, adapting the buses needs of the disabled, or the introduction of a door-to-door taxi service for people with limited mobility who cannot use buses.

Friendly urban spaces

The research has shown that both boroughs can offer an age-friendly physical environment. In most cases, streets and squares were equipped with appropriate streetlight; the pavements were clean and had lowered curbs, as well as ramps for wheelchairs; the car parks had a proper ratio of disabled parking spaces.

Social support and medical care

Just as in the case of Barcelona, the support of local authorities, who organize certain activities and initiatives for senior citizens, is of utmost importance. The research shows that involvement in social life is absolutely necessary for the elderly. Establishing cultural centers is one of the most important factors that could contribute to achieving this. Cultural centers located in the city area offer a wide spectrum of social events and activities. Moreover, they facilitate access to medical care and other services.

5.3 Actions taken in polish cities with regard to the aging of the population

In Poland, some cities are beginning to implement age-friendly policies, as the issues related to the aging population start to play a significant role in various spheres of public life. The changes in the attitudes of Polish pensioners demonstrated by the growing popularity of services targeted specifically at them such as easy to use mobile phones, bank accounts or summer trip offers. One of the new services is the reverse mortgage which allows them to save money rather than spend it on costly housing rents. In addition, cities start many initiatives for the elderly. Krakow, for example, was the first city in Poland, to join the Coalition for the Digital Inclusion of the 50+ Generation M@turity in the Net. Several interesting projects are carried out in the city including Krakow for Seniors, or the Senior Friendly Place competition. Lesser Poland is the only region in the country which promotes active ageing, having organized a prestigious competition for the Senior of the Year five times so far. Poznan has launched a recreation place for seniors only. In Poland there

are about 350 Universities of the Third Age, and hundreds of senior clubs. However, these examples of initiatives are aimed mostly at the active and healthy among the senior citizens. The most difficult problem to solve is to provide care for the impaired. Some cities, such as Krakow, Stargard Szczeciński and Sopot, see the growing number of the elderly in the city as a challenge and carry out actions that are directed at improving the living conditions of senior citizens, participating in research programs and projects, implementing appropriate policies.

5.4 Krakow – urban transport for the elderly

Krakow is one of the most important cities in the southern Poland, belonging to the region of Lesser Poland, which in comparison with other regions in Poland will age more slowly. One of the city's activities aimed at counteracting the negative social effects of aging is to participate in the European project AENEAS "Attaining Energy-Efficient Mobility in an Aging Society," under the Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) program. In principle, the project has become the basis of reference for other international projects in the area of urban mobility of the elderly. The project aims at improving the attractiveness of sustainable transport as well as raising public awareness of the senior citizens' needs and problems related to travelling. Its purpose is to encourage seniors to make greater use of energy-saving forms of transportation such as public transport, cycling, or hiking. This ensures that the elderly have much more independence and flexibility in comparison to using only a private car. Driving can be difficult, sometimes impossible for the seniors who need to find a more attractive, alternative solution that they will be able to use. Krakow continuously renews its fleet of public transport through the purchase of new vehicles, such as buses and trams. The old ones are often replaced with new low-floor vehicles. They also have more secure equipment within the vehicle, including priority seating for the elderly. Additional handrails are placed near the doors. There is also an electronic visual and audible information about bus stops on the route in a growing number of trams and some modern buses. Since July 2007, residents of Krakow have had the opportunity to use TELEBUS, an innovative service by means of which passengers can call a dispatcher and book a bus pick-up at a desired destination. The Polish - Italian initiative is a pioneer in introducing "flexible bus routes" (DRT) in Poland. The service is also a very good example of technology transfer and know-how on public transport on the international scale. One of the key benefits of "flexible bus routes" is a new, positive image of public transport in Krakow, which is associated with its flexibility and adaptability to customer needs. Soon after the service was launched, it was used by about 300 customers per month, but in a relatively short time the number rose to 2000. Above all, the real reason of its success was the positive change in the attitude of the inhabitants of these districts to the new public transportation offer. To sum up, City of Krakow conducts urban renewal with reference to ageing of the population by:

- improving the safety and attractiveness of public transport,
- raising public awareness of the problems of the elderly,
- organizing various community outreach projects for the seniors.

5.5 Stargard Szczeciński – assisted living residences

Stargard Szczeciński is a medium sized city in north-western part of Poland. It is the third biggest urban center of West Pomeranian voivodeship in terms of population and one of the oldest Polish cities. One of its problems is a decreasing trend of migration to the city and negative population growth. As a result, the number of older people increases. In recent years in Poland, seniors have become an increasingly important group of consumers in the property market. More and more concepts for the creation of settlements and neighbourhoods for people of advanced age appear. These projects offer elegant middle-class housing estates located in close proximity to the metropolis, where architectural solutions to make life easier for the elderly are introduced and where easy access to medical care is provided. This allows seniors to spend their retirement in a place that gives them a sense of security. The residences of many Polish pensioners are not only too big and too expensive, but often they are not even suited to their needs. Moreover, the elderly often suffer from loneliness. At the same time, housing designed specifically for seniors and tailored to their needs constitutes only a small percentage of the total national construction. An example of this is housing for seniors in Stargard Szczeciński which was the first of this type to be designed and built in Poland. The building was founded by the Society for Social Housing which implements many social programs, including: housing for children from orphanages and for the disabled, as well as housing for people older than 55 years

of age. This is the first type of assisted living residences established in Poland and designed for people living there under the care of specialists. Living in assisted apartments provides the conditions for independent functioning in the environment and integration with the local community. Although the houses are located far from the city centre, and near some green areas, there is no problem with access to the services which are typically located in the centres of cities, as the assisted living residences consist of multi-family buildings with service centres and shops on the ground floors. Two-storey house consists of three segments whose scales and forms harmonize with those of neighbouring buildings. They are joined by an extended circulation path which is the axis of the complex and which merges into one whole, not only the three segments, but also the common areas. The building structure is fragmented, and the individual segments are separated from each other. As a result, they make an impression of almost independent, free-standing blocks which also blend harmoniously with the surrounding countryside. The main goal of the designers was to create a place which provides the residents both with the necessary intimacy and with the possibility of integration with their neighbours. Consequently, three types of space can be distinguished in the building: public, semi-public and private. Design work was preceded by public consultations and interviews with people who were potential tenants. During these meetings it became clear that one of the biggest problems was the lack of technical facilities, and the danger of not being able to call for help and being stuck somewhere in the building. In consequence, the system by means of which they can communicate with the volunteers who live nearby, as well as with a physician and a nurse, was created. Ultimately, in the next stage of implementation, a room for nursing procedures will be located in one of the buildings. The building in Stargard Szczeciński is a unique example of social construction, where design solutions are entirely subordinated to the program and the nature of the investment. The investor's and the designer's sensitivity to the problems of the tenants has resulted in the response of the residential environment to the needs of the senior citizens.

5.6 Sopot – public spaces

Sopot is a small city between Gdansk and Gdynia, in the middle of an agglomeration with almost one million inhabitants. The city, known as the "summer capital of Poland," is situated between the feet of the surrounding hills and the Bay of Gdansk. Due to its special micro-climate and abundant reserves of mineral water, Sopot has managed to preserve its special character and has become a famous tourist destination known throughout Europe. In addition, Sopot is one of the demographically oldest Polish cities, with a steady rate of decline in population. In 2009, for nearly 37,500 people, more than 24 % were of retirement age. Such age structure poses many new challenges to the social relations and the integration of residents. Sopot is located by the sea and has some features of a spa resort, so it could likely be a senior-friendly city and a model not only for other Polish cities, but also for the European ones. To achieve this goal Sopot uses the opportunities offered by a number of EU programs, aimed at seniors, as well as cooperation with international charities, such as the "Lions Club", "Rotary" and "Zonta". Since 2008 city of Sopot has participated in the Q -Ageing (Quality Ageing in an Urban Environment) project, whose purpose is to bring the public space to the needs and limitations of older people and to develop comprehensive, transnational solutions to the problems arising from the ageing of society in areas such as: vocational guidance for people over 50 years of age, health, entertainment and social integration of the elderly, architecture and infrastructure solutions tailored to the needs of senior citizens. Work on the preparation of the Project, initiated by a partnership of governments, institutions and NGOs from five countries (Hungary, Germany, Poland, Slovenia, Italy), began in February 2008. Sopot's priority areas are architecture and infrastructure adjusted to the needs of people with limited mobility. Local authorities take actions within the framework of the project with the support of several institutions and organizations, such as the Municipal Centre for Social Welfare, Sopot Center NGOs, local NGOs or Sopot University of the Third Age. One of the pilot projects in Sopot entails the creation of a map the city's architectural barriers and to develop guidelines to get around them. So far there have been no other attempts at devising a similar guide that would identify architectural barriers for the elderly or the disabled. It should be noted that the map of barriers is not to be merely a city map with inconvenient points marked on it. In fact, it has a rich, dynamic database containing information about the type of problem that is occurring, its detailed description and location, the proposals of possible solutions, as well as potential transport cost estimates, the hierarchy of urgency and the approximate time of arrival of an emergency service. The map will be one of the strategic documents of the city as the primary tool to assist in decisions relating to the source of investment financing, acquisition of external resources and introduction of local laws. On the barrier maps one can find mainly public facilities and urban open space

elements (e.g. streets, bus stops, parks, squares), and possibly other publicly accessible places (such as: shops, cafes, restaurants and historical buildings). More importantly, the map is a dynamic tool, and seniors themselves, as one of the most involved groups, will be able to report additional locations by means of user friendly computer terminals which are a part of the second pilot project of Q-Ageing. In some locations, there will be senior-friendly computer terminals with free Internet access which use appropriate software support (e.g. for the visually impaired). Administrators of these sites will serve to help and support those using the terminal. This will help to create the first points of the network of sites, where the senior inhabitants will be able to socialize and establish a form of mutual aid - while remaining in a safe and friendly environment. The two pilot projects will be accompanied by an awareness-raising campaign for the citizens informing them of the specificity of the social problems of the elderly. The campaign will combat social isolation of seniors and fight the prevailing stereotype of an elderly person. All of the accompanying measures are also designed to encourage seniors to go outdoors and take part in leisure activities in public places in the city.

6 CONCLUSION

These cases show that in recent times Polish local authorities in many cities have recognized the challenges of an ageing population. The growing interest in this subject among the local governments and in the academia results from their understanding of its importance in social life as well as from acknowledging the need for a long-term planning. For cities to become age-friendly it is necessary to face many different social, economic and spatial challenges.

The Polish cities participate in some of the European Commission's projects, such as AENEAS, Q-Ageing, etc. This can help to specify the course of action necessary in appropriate adaptation of the city to the needs of an ageing society. Major European cities, such as Barcelona and London implement urban policies that refer to various spatial issues related to carrying out age-friendly urban renewal. The urban renewal in the aforementioned cities is conducted in a comprehensive way and embraces many social, economic and spatial issues. The Polish cities unfortunately lack such a thorough approach which requires high-level coordination and integrity. Actions are taken in a selective and partial manner; they often refer only to very specific issues, such as housing and building of new estates for the elderly. There is no coordination of these actions on a national, regional, or even local scale. Property developers with necessary means to build such estates would often choose suburbs as its location. In effect, extending or building new infrastructure in the suburbs is essential, or otherwise, senior citizens are prone to face many difficulties related to the access to the basic necessities of life. Such approach to urban renewal results in isolation, rather than integration of the elderly. Resettling them to the suburban areas reduces their participation in social life and contact with their community, intensifying their isolation, even if they are provided with higher physical comfort. Moreover, most of the offers and services targeted at the elderly would still be located in the centres of cities, causing difficulties communication and limited accessibility.

Urban renewal with reference to the ageing population is understood as adapting the city to the changing needs of the elderly. It should, however, take into consideration such spatial planning which enables flexible shaping and using of the urban space. In other words, it is especially important to consider the functional flexibility of certain facilities: e.g. kindergartens that could easily be transformed into community centres for the elderly, and housing designed for the elderly could easily be adapted to the needs of the single residents (one person households), etc. Moreover, in order to be age friendly, cities have to notice the complexity of each of the factors. For example, social services - clubs, cultural centres are extremely important, but without adequate transport they will not function well, because older people will not be able to access them easily. Public toilets will be accessible if they are always open and well-maintained.

Any approach to creating age-friendly city should be comprehensive, hence, while speaking about the renewal of cities with reference to the ageing population, one should consider renewal on various levels covering different activities: social, economic and spatial. Urban renewal should also address the social participation of older people. Sociologists point out that ageing brings a profound change in almost all important relations. Senior citizens are an important but often neglected part of society. Encouraging mobility and more active lifestyle benefits all seniors, and the idea of age-friendly cities means a better quality of life for everyone. This approach can be described not only as an integrated urban renewal which includes both housing construction projects, institutions, networks, social infrastructure facilities and

technical support in the city, but also as a qualified restoration of the existing building structure and meaningful integration of new constructions with the existing ones, as well as economic and social renewal of the city. These actions can lead to long-term improvement in the quality of lives of all citizens, regardless of their age.

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