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The urban local centre: from the centrally-planned economy to the capitalist city. The experience of the Ursynów district in Warsaw

ABSTRACT

The polycentric structure of the city reflects the role of various stakeholders, public and private, in shaping the urban development and life quality. The paper investigates the role of the public and private sector in creation of the local centres in neighbourhoods, hubs concentrating the services and amenities indispensable for modern life. The analysis is based on the case study of the Ursynów district in Warsaw, designed and constructed mainly in the 1980s, but with several infrastructural, housing, and commercial investments realised after 1989. The study encompassed the location of local centres, their functions, and spatial forms. The findings demonstrate that both public and private sectors play intertwined and significant roles for the local centres and create a synergy effect in such areas. The results of the study also show the evolutionary nature of the local centres' development. The main elements of the design persist, but the market-oriented economy and decentralised democratic institutions allowed them to continue the original plans, while making the local centres more attractive and richer function-wise than it was possible during the centrally-planned period.

Keywords: urban development, local economy, public utilities, local centre, polycentric city, Warsaw
JEL Classification Codes: H4, H7, H8, O2, R5

Introduction

An urban structure is a tangible image of intangible social hierarchies, institutional relations and economic trends. For centuries, city centres have assembled the most important functions, resulting from the intertwined forces of the market and of the authorities (i.e., the political power). Even today, cities' architecture gives testimony to the importance associated with the societal, religious, and political values in the form of shrines, monuments, altars, courthouses, townhalls, palaces, exchanges, stores, and market squares. The industrial revolution, fast urbanisation, the growing role of democracy and state have changed spatial urban patterns. Three main trends can be considered to have the largest influence on cities: (1) the role of the market; (2) the welfare state and democratisation of the urban space; (3) the growing scale of cities.

The paper investigates the role of the public and private sector in creation of the local centres in neighbourhoods, hubs concentrating the services and amenities indispensable for modern life. The chosen case study is the Ursynów district in Warsaw, designed and constructed mainly in the 1980s, but with several infrastructural, housing, and commercial investments realised after 1989. The goal of the study is the investigation of the role of the pre-1989 and after-1989 period in shaping the currently existing local centres. Two hypotheses are proposed. The first one states that both public and private sectors play intertwined and significant roles for the local centres network and create a synergy effect in such areas. The second hypothesis relates to the transition period and the author argues that the development of the local centres had evolutionary nature. The market-oriented economy and decentralised democratic institutions allowed them to continue the original plans, while making the local centres more attractive and richer function-wise than it was possible during the centrally-planned period.

Urban history recognises several planning goals, mostly economic and political ones. Since the industrial revolution market forces have become more important than traditional political decisions, which previously made and unmade whole cities [Norwich, 2016]. Through this process, urban planning became less symbolic and more rational [Schumpeter, 1995]. Parallely, the quality of housing conditions, accessibility of education, healthcare, and basic stores and services gained more and more interest from several stakeholders, a movement often related to the ideas of Robert Owen [Owen 1857; Gordon 1994]. The most fruitful period was the early 20th century. After the ground-breaking visions of the Howard's 'garden-city' more practical proposals followed: the CIAM manifesto [*Karta Ateńska*, 1933] and the idea of the neighbourhood units by Perry. These influential models will be discussed in the context of the Polish school of architecture and the ideas which impacted the original spatial structure of the Ursynów district. The continuity of the way of thinking proposed by urban planners and social scientists in the early 20th century are in themselves an important example of how urban planning develops consistently (albeit with various difficulties and even thwarts) through different political, economic, and institutional eras.

The welfare state, increases in wages, and the importance of democratic values requested many more numerous facilities serving education, public health and similar uses. It also increased the purchasing power of urban dwellers (more in Western than in Eastern countries) resulting in the growing demand and the following supply of stores and retail. All these factors led to reduced inequalities of the neighbourhoods in the 1950s and 1960s in Europe, both in the cities of Western capitalist countries and in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), despite deep political and economic differences. The post-war urbanisation also made several cities too large to have just one urban centre, which would aggregate all important public and main commercial functions. Several spatial patterns appeared, including urban sprawl and edge cities, and polycentric networks of local centres. The Ursynów district provides an interesting case study of the large housing estate, carefully planned but with the shortcomings and delays characteristic for the centrally-planned economy. After 1989 it became the area of several public and private investments and rectifications. Today it is a good example of the polycentric or 15-minute city, a promising ground for further research regarding current challenges, resulting from the COVID-19 health crisis. Possible lines of broader investigation are also proposed in the paper.

Warsaw, as several other Polish cities, can support findings about the role of the public and private sectors in the transition period after 1989. The paper presents the role of reconstructing of the local government and democratic institutions, investigated mainly through the presence of such public investments as transportation systems, schools, and healthcare. Private sector-driven rectifications of the local centres can be observed in housing investments, increased numbers of stores and commercial services, and in some instances even in the office space.

Methodological approach

The presented results are based on the case study analysis concerning the Ursynów district in Warsaw, in its current administrative form. The analysis encompasses twelve local centres. The presented network is based on a two-step identification process. The first was carried out during the work for the recommendations published in 2015 for the municipal Warsaw Local Centres Programme [Happach, Sadowy, 2015]. The second step was taken during the research regarding changes and the evolution of Warsaw local centres in the years 2017–2020. The list is the result of double-checking the original list according to the newly tailored criteria [Sadowy, 2018] and a new field research to identify emerging centres.

In the chosen centres, the following analyses were conducted: (a) establishing their limits; (b) analysis of their location within the district and vicinity of such important elements of space as the transportation system and housing areas; (c) analysis of the uses present in the centres and their location within specific centres; (d) the number and role of the private and public entities in the centres; (e) the period in which specific functions appeared in the centres.

The analysis was based on *in situ* analysis and observations, analysis of the maps available on-line (Google maps and maps provided by the City of Warsaw), studies of the existing literature, and public sources regarding the history of specific entities and/or areas.

A local centre is a spatially well-defined hub of various uses, located in such a vicinity that it is convenient to visit them all on foot, preferably on the way to or from the station of the public transport, within 10–15 minutes' walk from the residential area. It provides for everyday needs of local communities. Such physical accessibility, supporting spatial, and socio-economic equality is widely recognised as an important feature of a modern city [Ryan, McNally, 1995]. In order to test the two proposed hypotheses, the character and evolution of the local centres were studied. The features included in the investigation encompassed the time when the local centres came into use (before or after 1989); spatial and architectural character of the local centres and their relation to the construction period; evolution of the uses present in the local centres before and after 1989.

The municipal programme of local centres, initiated in 2015, provided a methodological framework for the definition of a local centre and for the identification of such hubs in the urban structure [Happach, Sadowy, 2015], which was subsequently developed and tailored within the framework of academic research [Sadowy, 2020]. The current shape and functions of the local centres will be compared to Perry's original ideas for the neighbourhood unit.

The Ursynów district was chosen as a case study for the following reasons. As the analysed area was planned and in a large part constructed during the centrally-planned economy era, it presents an almost pure case of the urban structure and network of services planned and provided by the centralised state. On the other hand, after 1989 it was also an area of strong interventions, both market- and public-driven. The opening of the first metro line in Warsaw (M1, a public investment) represented a significant incentive for private investments, encompassing housing, shopping centres, cultural venues, and several other commercial ventures. At the same time, the increasing presence of the local government influenced the accessibility to the social infrastructure. Thus, the district poses a very good case for investigating the role of several stakeholders in the last 40 years shaping the complex urban economy.

Idea, the state and the market. Forces shaping European cities after WWII

As stated before, cities have been shaped for millennia by political and economic powers [Norwich, 2009; Lees, 2015; Storper, 2013; Kennedy, 2011]. After WWII, the role of the state in urban planning and urban policies was much bigger than during the two decades preceding the greatest catastrophe in Europe in the 20th century. The early 20th century situation in cities was the result of rapid and market-driven urbanisation, poor housing, lack of healthcare, and low purchasing power of the working class. After WWII, several cities had to be rebuilt and the need to revive the economy fuelled the industrialisation and urbanisation. In Europe,

approx. 52% of inhabitants were urban dwellers in 1950, in 1960 this number was over 57%, to exceed 63% in 1970 [Our World in Data online, n.d.]. Under the welfare state it was also necessary to provide utilities, such as drinkable water, central heating, electricity, which were since then perceived as mandatory. Significant public investment had a big influence on the spatial structure of cities. New housing districts were created and the existing built environment was improved according to the new architectural, social, and economic paradigms.

Ideas from the 1920s and the 1930s shaped the need for new neighbourhoods. Several critical urban problems had to be solved, overcrowded flats and poor health conditions in the first place. Architects as well as other specialists promoted the importance of decent living standards, adequate usable space, daylight, and fresh air helping to fight diseases [Sherman, 2007]. In the late 1940s and in the 1950s urban design was strongly influenced by the pre-war goals and ideas, such as the CIAM (*Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne*) manifestos [Karta Ateńska, 1933] and Perry's neighbourhood unit [Perry, 1937], the influence of which continued in the 1960s and 1970s and were still present in the 1980s' construction of housing estates. Their implementation was made possible by the state regulations replacing the *laissez-faire* development from the pre-war period, often criticised by socially-oriented architects and people involved in actions towards better living conditions [Syrkus, 1976]. Pre-war ideas found their realisation during the 'glorious' thirty years of combining market prosperity and the welfare state between 1945 and 1975 [Fourastié, 1979].

Modern concepts of neighbourhoods arose from the combination of theoretical and applicable work. Important case is Perry's concept of the neighbourhood, developed while he was working (from 1909 till his retirement in 1937) for the Russell Sage Foundation, established in 1907 "for the improvement of social and living conditions" in the US. His ideas were first presented in 1923 as a lecture entitled *A community unit in city planning and development* at a meeting of the American Sociological Society and the National Community Centre Association [Patricios, 2001] and in the full form in 1939 [Perry, 1939]. In the same year in a book review Ogburn outlined one of the most important Perry's thoughts that "house is not an isolated unit, it is part of the community" [Ogburn, 1939]. Perry's concept encompassed originally five elements: clear boundaries; a system of internal streets (access to shops and public transportation); specific types of land uses (separation of residential use from the industry and business); the presence of a central area (with a school and other community facilities); provision of open space (recreational and green areas). They were later re-shaped and tailored but within the same logic [Perry, 1939; Patricios, 2001]. It is worth mentioning that community facilities were located in the heart of the neighbourhood, separated from the commercial part (stores), which was to be located at the outer corners. Boundaries were to be provided by arterial streets around the neighbourhood. Perry's ideas were introduced into urban planning as soon as they were presented and, e.g., influenced British public housing estates built in 1918–1939; they were recognised worldwide, for example in Chandigarh (India), Osaka (Japan), Brasilia (Brazil) as well as in several residential neighbourhoods in Canberra (Australia) [Choguill, 2008].

The Athens Charter [*Karta Ateńska*, 1933] constitutes the most influential manifesto of several CIAM meetings. It focuses mostly on the living conditions and the impact of housing design on inhabitants' health and well-being. It refers to the public utility, stating that "the distribution of community services related to housing is arbitrary" and that "schools, in particular, are frequently sited on busy traffic routes and too far from the houses they serve." Clearly, schools are focal points in this line of thinking, similarly to Perry's proposal. The functions present in local centres are discussed in *The Charter* in relation to the recreational needs of inhabitants. The authors recommended that "all residential areas should be provided with sufficient open space to meet reasonable needs for recreation and active sports for children, adolescents, and adults," as well as there should be new open spaces "used for well-defined purposes: children's playgrounds, schools, youth clubs and other community buildings closely related to housing."

These ideas also influenced the Polish school of architecture. Yet, the linear design proposed by the CIAM for the apartment buildings favoured rather good interior conditions over urban patterns. Therefore, the space organisation purposed for socialising and easy access to commercial and public services was of lower importance. Some Polish architects in the 1930s, the late 1940s and the early 1950s adapted similar concepts or the new, more social-friendly forms of 'social neighborhoods' [Syrku, 1978] e.g., Helena and Szymon Syrkus, and Barbara Brukalska [Brukalska, 1948; Kania, 2010]. What is relevant for the presented analysis is the role of the public stakeholder. Better living conditions, especially for the poorer communities, required public regulations regarding open green and recreational spaces. Public intervention was needed to protect these areas from being used for other investments, resulting in a dense structure, typical for the 19th century city. Some utilities, including schools, cultural venues, and healthcare centres, could be provided by the private sector or self-organisation, but to fulfil the needs of complete inclusion of society into the education and healthcare system, again, the intervention of the public sector was indispensable.

All these rules influenced the development of European cities, both in Western and CEE countries. In Western Europe the public sector regulated the market and influenced urban development through several mechanisms of the welfare state. They encompassed public investments in infrastructure and public utilities, social housing, and the development of research and academic environment for urban planning. There were several agencies serving this purpose. However, as the significant part of investments came from the private sector, market rules were always playing a part in the whole process. Commercial stores and services in neighbourhoods depended on the private sector and entrepreneurial activities. Urbanisation and improvements in living conditions were also supported by the strong economic trigger, i.e., the Marshall plan. It provided financial support from the US for the reconstruction of Western cities and its economy, but most importantly, supported the 'mixed economy' with a strong market but also stable and reliable democratic institutions of the welfare state [De Long, Eichengreen, 1991]. All this created very good conditions also to provide a 'mix' of facilities for neighbourhoods, both from the public and the private sector.

In Poland, as in other CEE countries, for a few decades the public sector-controlled research, architectural studios, as well as all investments. The whole process of urban development was instigated and regulated by the central administration. This control involved the decisions regarding the location of new cities; the number of inhabitants (regulated via the permits to live and work in a particular city); flat design dedicated for a specific number of the persons in one household (well-known M-2, M-3, and M-4 symbols). The process of a mass fabrication of housing units resulted in large housing estates. The design also encompassed utilities to be provided within estates, from health centres to local stores and bars.

However, the concept of the neighbourhood centre was often compromised by delays and lack of funds and in the end only part of the proposed uses were in fact provided during the centrally-planned era. The transition initiated in 1989 radically changed the situation, introducing two new important players: the market (including both developers and buyers) and the local government. New institutions and several emerging entrepreneurial ventures fostered a very different environment shaping the neighbourhoods. The Ursynów district experienced several stages of such development. Today it may be analysed as an example of the institutional, social, and economic transformation evident in urban space and architectural achievements.

Ursynów district: a network of local centres

The area of Ursynów became part of the Warsaw administrative area in 1951, during a process of significant enlargement of the Polish capital. Several poorly populated areas of predominantly agricultural character were incorporated at the time. In the past Ursynów district just before WWII there were pprox. only 3,000 inhabitants [Krawczyk, 2001]. For some decades the area of today's Ursynów district was divided between a few other districts, and it gained the current administrative form in 2002 [GUS, 2009]. The expansion of the territory of Warsaw was associated with plans to construct large housing estates during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s using the prefabrication technologies in all new districts. The main concept of Ursynów as a complex of neighbourhoods for approx. 150 thousand dwellers was decided already in the 1960s. To define the final design, architectural competitions were held, an approach also not untypical for such ventures. The construction works began in the mid-1970s. In the late 1980s most of the housing investment plans were fulfilled, as well as huge infrastructural works, including waterworks and sewage. They constituted the basis not only for the originally planned large housing estates but also for construction, which followed and should be treated as one of the most important factors of the area development [Sadowy, 2019]. Other elements, mostly public facilities such as schools and health centers were delayed and only some of them were realised before 1989. For, example, the construction of the originally planned hospital began as late as in 2019. Also, the works regarding the metro line, which started in the early 1980s, were still ongoing when the transition began.

The evolution of Ursynów will be presented through its system of local hubs, called local centres. They are part of the larger polycentric urban structure of Warsaw. Polycentricity became a significant urban feature in recent decades and the body of literature regarding its role and influence on the socio-economic situation of the city-dwellers has also been growing [Kloosterman, Musterd, 2001]. Polycentric urban structures are present all over the world and interesting studies were carried out both in North and South America [e.g., Clark, 2000; Garcia-López, Moreno-Monroy, 2018; Kingsley, Stough, 2021], Asia [e.g., Liu, Liu, 2018; Zhang, Sun, Li, 2017; Hosseini, Pourahmad, Ziari, 2019], Europe [e.g., Schwanen, Dieleman, Dijst, 2003; Bentlage, Müller, Thierstein, 2021] and Australia [Crosato, Prokopenko, Harré, 2021]. While it is important to keep in mind the differences between factors present in US or Chinese megacities and European cities, the body of literature presents the context and the significance of such a trend. Studies present findings regarding various aspects of polycentricity, including the role of mobility of commuting, which has already quite a broad scope [Bentalge, Muller, Theirstein, 2021; Jun, 2020]. At first researchers focused mostly on the residential areas, later following with studies on the industrial locations and even the role of the polycentric logistics networks [Heitz, 2017]. Societal and economic aspects were also investigated, including the interlinkages between the spatial structure and income segregation [Garcia-López, Moreno-Monroy, 2018], general economic performance [Zhang, Sun, Li, 2017], as well as the environmental costs [Huang, Liao, 2021]. In Poland the findings include varied scales of the investigated areas, from the polycentric agglomeration of the Tri-City [Szmytkowska, 2014] and the Silesia region [Blazy, 2008] to the more detailed study of the commercial local centres [Damurski, 2020]. The presented research describes the polycentric phenomena, focusing on the character of the identified local centres, their character, time span needed to create their current form and the role of the actors from public and private sector in their shaping. Such a local perspective has also gained significance in urban studies and urban economics [Kasinitz, 2007; Zukin, 2007].

An important feature of a local centre is its multi-functional character. It allows various groups of inhabitants to find stores and amenities they look for. Thus, the local centre must be also kind of a social hub, where people differing in age, status, and lifestyles can meet, even briefly. Inclusive character of the local centre must also be represented by public space connecting various stores, services, and facilities. It was agreed among the experts and supported by the general public involved in the process in 2015 that e.g., shopping malls, even encompassing several functions, as such do not create local centres.

The elements present in a local centre may be divided into three groups:

- public utility (schools, libraries, cultural, health centres and similar);
- commercial entities (stores and services, including private healthcare and education);
- transport hubs accompanied by additional functions, mostly small-scale stores and services (among which metro stations play the most prominent role).

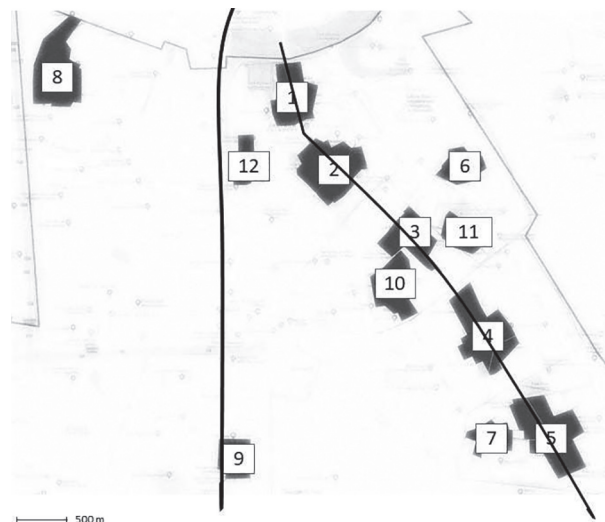
Therefore, several types of buildings and premises constitute a centre. Among the urban/architectural forms the following are present in various centres:

- independent monofunctional buildings (mostly schools and supermarkets);
- independent multi-functional buildings (with no residential use);
- stores and utilities located on the ground level of the residential buildings;
- small kiosks or similar temporary constructions used mostly as the newspaper stands, fruit and vegetable stands or flower shops;
- open-air street markets.

Among twelve local centres identified in Ursynów at present, there are six which already existed, although in much more modest form, before 1989 (numbers 1, 4, 6, 10, 11 and 12 on Map 1). Usually, they were already multi-functional at the time. Their core consisted often of a small or medium-sized 'pavilion' – often a two-storey building serving as a complex of the stores and services. One of the local centres (number 12 on Map 1) was created around the Megasam store, a well-known in Ursynów predecessor of a contemporary supermarket, opened in 1980.

The other six local centres emerged after 1989, two of them quite recently. All of them underwent development, thanks to the transition period. Location of all local centres is presented on Map 1, together with two main transport lines: Puławska St., with very intense car traffic between Warsaw and surrounding towns and suburbs, and KEN Bld/M1 metro line, linking the district with the city centre, but also serving mobility within the area.

Map 1. Location of the local centres in Ursynów district in 2020



Source: Sadowy, Biernacka, Grzymała, report on the statutory research *Rola samorządu terytorialnego w pobudzaniu lokalnej przedsiębiorczości i aktywności społecznej na przykładzie programu Warszawskie Centra Lokalne* No KZiF/44/18.

Local centres vary regarding the number of local stores and services. A good example is the number of such necessities as local grocery stores, including those specialising in fruit and vegetables. In some centres, e.g., Puławska/Kajakowa Sts., Romera St., or Metro station Imielin there are just a few of them, while on the other end of the scale such centres as Metro

station Kabaty and Natolin there are respectively 20 and 16 local stores. The exact number of these facilities per local centre is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of the grocery stores in local centres

No	Local centre	Number of the grocery stores
1	Metro station Ursynów	6
2	Metro station Stokłosy	12
3	Metro station Imielin	3
4	Metro station Natolin	16
5	Metro station Kabaty	20
6	Nugat St.	3
7	Market Stryjeńskich St.	8
8	Kłobucka St.	8
9	Puławska/Kajakowa Sts.	1
10	Dereniowa St.	11
11	Cynamonowa / Grzegorzewskiej Sts.	8
12	Romera St.	3
13	total	99

Source: Sadowy, Biernacka, Grzymała, report on the statutory research *Rola samorządu terytorialnego w pobudzaniu lokalnej przedsiębiorczości i aktywności społecznej na przykładzie programu Warszawskie Centra Lokalne* No KZiF/44/18.

The number of stores depends on several factors. One of them is the density of the surrounding housing area and the number of inhabitants. Another is the footfall resulting from the passengers of the metro line, other means of the public transportation, or lack of it in such area as car-dependent suburbs around Puławska St. The purchasing power of local communities might also influence local demand for stores, although it might be more prominent in regard to other utilities than grocery stores. The last but not least factor is the availability of the sites, buildings, and smaller units for entrepreneurs and potential shop-owners. In this respect the intertwined impact of former planning (metro line), public investment (metro line construction in the 1990s), and private development (dense residential area along KEN Bld) is very prominent in the Ursynów district.

Evolutionary character of the transition of Ursynów

Local centres, which appeared before 1989, were planned together with large housing estates to provide basic services for local communities. Surprisingly, they consisted mostly of commercial uses, small stores, and service points, with the afore-mentioned Megasam among them and not of public utilities, which in a significant part were delayed. Table 2 presents the architectural typology of local centres together with their most typical uses and the period in which they were dominant or appeared during the analysed time frame.

Table 2. Architectural typology of local centres, their typical uses, and the period of construction

Type of the dominant architectural form in the local centre	Type of use	Period of construction
Independent monofunctional buildings	Schools and supermarkets	Before and (mostly) after 1989
Independent multi-functional buildings (so-called pavilions)	Multi-functional (often present: restaurants, post offices)	Before 1989
Stores and utilities located on the ground level of the residential buildings	Several uses, dominated by commercial uses (stores and services)	Mostly after 1989
Small kiosks or similar temporary construction used mostly as the newspaper stands, fruit and vegetables stands, or flower shops	Press, fruit, vegetables, flowers	Before and after 1989
Open-air street markets	Mostly: fruit, vegetables, flowers, but accompanied by other shops	Mostly located in 1990s

Source: own work.

The M1 metro line, as it could be expected, is one of the strongest factors stimulating the local centres' creation. It has a direct impact (footfall provided by the high number of passengers at each station) but also triggered the development of multi-functional buildings in its vicinity. Among five centres located around metro stations in Ursynów, only in one (Ursynów, number 1 on Map 1) the main elements were constructed before 1989. Still, currently, it is one of most dispersed and poor function-wise centres along the whole metro line. It consists mostly of the cultural centre and a few grocery stores located in a building from the 1980s, complemented by a library nearby and a few stores in the residential building constructed after 1989. The next station, Stokłosy, provides an interesting combination of new commercial investments and urban spaces designed at the original stage of the Ursynów project. Two walking lanes were proposed by the designers and today they still function very well, serving small stores, popular local restaurants and even hosting some temporary stands in warmer parts of the year. The centre's role was strengthened by new buildings, which followed the original plan of the lanes. Two new and much larger buildings were constructed close to the metro station, with office spaces at their higher levels and commercial utilities on the ground floor and on the -1 level of the metro station entrances. Together with three public libraries in the vicinity and a pretty attractive public space not far away, the Stokłosy local centre became the heart of the district. It won this position over the Imielin local centre, also located around the metro station. In spite of even supra-local significance (HQ of the district administration in a new and rather attractive building as well as a multiplex, the only cinema in Ursynów), Imielin remains less developed local centre, partly due to the fact that administrative building and the multiplex pushed all other functions further from the metro station.

The Natolin Metro station has grown significantly since 1990s, yet the original retail passage remains its prominent and very popular part. It is worth noting that the passage (Pasaż Natoliński) was planned by the architects similarly to the passages in the vicinity of metro station Stokłosy. Pasaż Natoliński was complemented, or even completed by the buildings constructed in the 1990s, similarly to two other Stokłosy passages, which were constructed

after 1989. The Kabaty local centre, although located around the first metro station, is mostly developed thanks to the new, after-transition period. Practically all the buildings surrounding the station were constructed after 1989 and provided retail space at the ground level of residential buildings. Two office buildings offer additional space for not only residential but also work purposes. Today, the Kabaty local centre is the most multi-functional local centre in Ursynów, including also sports facilities, health centres, school, and a public library. It signifies the importance of utilizable space for local stores and services, as it is the richest local centre in Ursynów in this respect.

The influence of the metro line surpasses the limitation of a walking distance from the stations. Some more 'peripheral' local centres (numbers 7, 10, and 11 on Map 1) are located within the area of its impact. It is mostly a result of residential investments, which are located close enough to the metro line for a walk or a short bus trip. They result from the density of the area around this most expedient mode of transportation. The urban structure typical for the large-scale estates is characterised here by fluid public space, leading easily from one street to another and by the walking-friendly environment, as planned by the original designers. It supports the development of local centres even in some distance from the metro line. This process is additionally enhanced by the network of modern and constantly improved bus lines connecting residential areas and metro stations.

One of the discussed local centres emerged from a very typical form of the early transition period, a local market (number 7 on Map 1). It owes its durability to the permanent architectural form, not extremely attractive in the aesthetic terms, but orderly, clean, and generally pleasant, including rows of kiosks with covered passages between them. It gained the role of the local centre also thanks to the complementing stores and services in the surrounding buildings.

Two local centres, located near Puławska St., emerged quite recently (numbers 8 and 9 on Map 1). Their origins and forms differ. Kajakowa St. is one of the small drives perpendicular to Puławska St., in the area where single-family houses prevail. As presented on Map 1, such areas are seldom a favourable environment for local centres. Emergence of this one is due to the public investments in local health centres, public libraries, and cultural centres. It lacks more commercial uses because there is no appropriate retail space in the vicinity. Some complementary functions (e.g., a restaurant and a post office) are located across Puławska St. Kłobucka St., on the other hand, is experiencing significant housing development, with accompanying functions. It is mostly triggered by the office and housing development in the Mokotów district, however, there are also some local public investments and utilities, such as social housing, public library, and a social/cultural centre operating at the district level. These two cases also present a combination of private and public investments, the latter coming not from the centrally governed state but from the decentralised level of local government.

There are several points of interest for a comparison between the local centres created before 1989 and since. The presented findings answer the following questions:

- Were there elements of the local centre present before 1989?
- If yes, what was their character in terms of functions (public utility or commercial use)?

- What new functions have appeared since 1989?
- What is the architectural and spatial character of the centres shaped before and after 1989?

The local centres in the Ursynów district and the period of their creation are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The comparison of the Ursynów local centres before 1989 and after 1989

No.	Name/location	Before 1989	Since 1989
1	Metro station Ursynów	small-scale department store; local cultural centre; and public library	metro station; new stores and services
2	Metro station Stokłosy	none	new location for the existing public library metro station; new stores and services; office; public secondary school
3	Metro station Imielin	none	administrative centre of the district; metro station; cinema (multiplex); restaurants; sports centre
4	Metro station Natolin	retail passage (part of the one existing at present)	metro station; new stores and services; public school (primary)
5	Metro station Kabaty	none	metro station; new stores and services; public library; sport centre; private school (primary)
6	Nugat St.	small-scale department store	public library; public school (primary); restaurants
7	Targowisko przy Stryjeńskich	none	local market (permanent in small pavilions); new stores and services
8	Kłobucka St.	none	new stores and services; public library; social services
9	Puławska/Kajakowa Sts.	none	health centre; public library; public school (primary); cultural centre
10	Dereniowa St.	small-scale department store; public school (primary)	new stores and services; restaurants
11	Cynamonowa/Grzegorzewskiej Sts.	small-scale department store	administrative centre operating for several years; former and new stores and services
12	Romera St.	Megasam store	public library; Museum of Ursynów; public school (primary); new stores and services

Source: own work.

Several public and private investments realised during the transition period followed the lines proposed by the initiators and designers of the original neighbourhoods. The construction of the metro line, the most important trait of the contemporary Ursynów, was initiated in the 1970s. However, the first train reached the city centre from Kabaty metro station in the 1990s. The role of KEN Ave. as the main street with abundant retail space also takes its beginning in the original design. Still, it took the transition to the free-market state to provide both the supply and demand, which allowed the street to develop as the commercial ‘backbone’ of the district. It is one of the best examples of the relation between long-term public projects, such as the transportation system, and the commercial ventures. It is also worth mentioning that the latter encompass a variety of private entities – from individual street vendors, to local entrepreneurs to international companies (chain stores or cinemas).

Several schools, sorely missed by young families of Ursynów residents in the 1980s, also were not founded before the 1990s and some even later. One of the best networks of public libraries in Warsaw was founded before 1989, but flourished thanks to the programmes supporting public libraries after 1989, adaptation of new premises for their needs and modern management. Thus, this success was also based on the mixed cooperation of the public administration, at the city and the district levels, engaged and highly qualified workforce, public and private financial support. Last but not least is also a bottom-up pressure or expectations from the general public. The Ursynów district benefits from the educated dwellers, often representing the managerial class, academia, or free professions. Libraries create an interesting network within the local centres, giving an opportunity to explore and recognise several centres.

Lack of a public hospital is being remedied and still has a way to go, even as the building has been opened under the pressure of COVID-19. The network of local health centres was, on the one hand, modernised and developed by public actors, but on the other hand, also complemented by commercial healthcare centres. Similar phenomena occurred regarding the educational services, sport and recreation. There are several green areas and open-air gyms, but the private sector is also present in this respect. Gyms, clubs, or even commercial swimming pools attract numerous customers, while the original plan of the district supports biking, jogging and long walks.

Summary

Both hypotheses, one regarding the intertwined role of the public and private sector, one regarding the evolutionary character of local centres development, were verified by the presented study. There is no red line between urban patterns pre- and after-1989. The role of the existing large-scale estates was crucial to provide the backbone of the network of local centres. They were fortified by new investments, mostly housing with retail premises on the ground floor. There are only a few larger supermarkets in Ursynów and only one of them is located in the vicinity of the local centre (in Kabaty). The role of the main artery, consisting of the metro line and KEN Ave. is very clearly legible.

The public sector played a very important role in the development of the network. Municipal (or even national) investment in the M1 Metro line is the most important development factor, however, the decentralisation and local management provided good quality public services. Some other public investments at the local level became triggers for new local centres.

The private sector, on the other hand, is seldom a trigger for local centre emergence, but is indispensable for their functioning. It provides both the space in newly constructed buildings and the shops and services, which are located in them. Open-air markets are specific types of ventures, which flourished mostly in the 1990s and still remain very popular among Warsaw inhabitants. Ursynów does not differ in this respect. Such venues are also present in the district,

although only some of them are in fact elements of local centres; the most permanent in terms of the architectural form were in fact developed into the local centres in their own right.

Several stakeholders influenced the current urban form of Ursynów and its local centres. In the 1970s and 1980s there were decision-makers of the centrally governed state, but also architects and researchers who operated as best as they could with the existing technology and funds. After 1989 three other groups gained significant influence over the Ursynów development: the local government, market players (developers, entrepreneurs) and the general public, 'voting with their feet' for preferences to live in this southern part of Warsaw. A stakeholder who persevered through all these radical changes were local housing cooperatives, main owners, and significant investors in the area, who were also owners and managers of some cultural facilities. It is to be seen how the relations between the public and private sectors will shape urban space in the future. It is also to be seen what role the state may play in the future, hopefully, as an innovative and democratic player. The state already supported the development of Ursynów, as the metro investment is in part funded at the state level. As some argue, emerging challenges must be faced by the state administration [Godlewska, 2018].

Regarding the original ideas of the CIAM and Perry's idea of the neighbourhood, some similarities and some differences might be observed about the local centres network in Ursynów.. Typically for Ursynów local centres, and differently to Perry's concept, commercial and public uses are not spatially separated in local centres but support each other due to their vicinity. No well-defined boundaries exist to divide neighbourhoods into smaller units focused around their centres, but local centres are rather lively hubs, enticing further development and entrepreneurship. Streams of passengers of the public transport as well as walking and biking allow them to benefit from the mobile local community. However, as stated by Perry and the CIAM experts, it is crucial to provide varied services (commercial and public) as well as the high-quality public and recreational space.

Local centres created together with the original large housing estates were already multi-functional, contrary to the CIAM and Perry's idea of public (community) facilities as the main elements of the neighbourhood hubs. Praise is due to the architects and planners of the period, as the original local centres, as humble and impaired as they seem today, provided a basis for new, more robust ones and were not, in fact, so different from what we expect today. Aesthetics and architectural forms of Ursynów local centres were created during the prefabrication period and later in the 1990s and the early 2000s. These are not the most impressive architectural achievements, yet the specific character of the district provides quite a friendly and attractive environment, especially thanks to green areas, which now, after a few decades later, fulfil the expectations of their planners and designers.

The lesson to be learnt for the future is the complex relation between public and private sector, which makes the existence of the local centres network possible. Another important finding is the twofold nature of the successful urban evolution. On the one hand, it requires durability and continuity of the projects. The metro line is a good example, together with the user-friendly spatial structure of walkable paths and network of the green areas. It has taken

years for them to develop and reach their designed form, which today provides quiet and attractive green space among the buildings. On the other hand, the flexibility and openness to change is also indispensable. The presence of the available retail store, places for open-air street markets and similar spatial assets attract entrepreneurs and allow them to develop their ventures. Integrity (in terms of consistent and durable ideas for the neighbourhoods) and flexibility (in terms of adapting the space for new needs) must go hand in hand. Last but not least, the recommendation based on the Ursynów analysis is the combination of the commercial uses and a possibility of enjoying sports, culture, or leisure free of charge.

Ursynów went through several phases decisive for its current form. It still proves to be a magnet for new inhabitants [Panorama, 2019] and its attractiveness is not unlike other similar neighbourhoods, e.g., Służew [Celińska-Janowicz, 2010]. Currently, Ursynów consists of a combination of the large housing estates from the 1970s – 1980s and investments from the later transition period. The general framework of this district, which comprises the network of the local centres, is in accordance with the contemporary concept of walking-friendly environment. Especially the presence of public utilities and various services is crucial for modern definition of neighbourhood proposed by some urban planners, e.g., as: “a housing unit, consisting of residential buildings and other necessary functions (services) and green areas, completed by a school, nursery, and a playground within a walking distance” [Chmielewski, 2001]. In times of the COVID-19 pandemic, such an urban structure proved to be resistant and user-friendly, as some preliminary findings point out. Still, this aspect requests further studies. As some new findings show, the decentralisation of facilities, organisation of the transport system and public services will probably play a key role in supporting public health safety in the future [Pisano, 2020; Pierantoni, Pierantozzi, Sargolini, 2020]. The quality of not only indoor living conditions, but complex urban systems at the local level might prove an important field of further research and implemented strategies.

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