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#### INITIAL PERCEPTION OF WHAT WROCLAW IS

- > The first impression of Wrocław is a city of many parts. Despite its organic medieval development on the Odra river, historic circumstances and planning practices resulted in scattered, isolated, often disjointed parts.
- > Most recognisable is the medieval centre with its market square, the traditional 'core' of the city which functions as a lively centre. There are also many pockets of 19<sup>th</sup> century houses, situated not far from the centre. Other interesting built forms include garden cities from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, now pleasant, middle class residential neighbourhoods. Scattered among this urban tissue are many industrial sites, often abandoned and unused. These brownfield sites may burden the urban fabric, but they have great potential for reuse and redevelopment as industrial heritage. Housing and planning from the communist era range from 1950s prefab medium rise to high-rise tower blocks built according to modernist planning principles with much vacant space between and around the blocks, disassociating them physically and socially from their surroundings.



The current ecological and historical protection zones

The built up parts are separated by 'sharp edges', or indeterminate green spaces and 'allotments' which are very characteristic of Wrocław. The city is rich in green spaces and its location on five rivers, together with their flood planes is determinant for the city structure.

The city is undergoing incredible growth evidenced by the construction of new housing, highways, a football stadium for Euro 2012 and many large-scale multinational retail centres with regional importance. These developments tend to be located on the city outskirts, in line with recent tendencies towards sprawl, possibly as a result of Wrocław and its officials wishing to assert stature after decades of economic stagnation and ideological indoctrination. However, Wrocław would benefit from deeper reflection on how to address the city's needs, instead of following trends described below.

#### MAPPING OUR PERCEPTIONS

We undertook physical analyses of the city's natural structure, historic heritage, transportation system and spatial distribution of these functions to understand the spatial pattern of Wrocław.

We mapped the ecological and historic protection areas which form boundaries for urban development. We also studied the urban structure highlighting the clustered, 'multi-centric' urban pattern of housing estates with industry on their periphery. We tried to integrate transportation, ecological, historic heritage and urban pattern, highlighting the salient features.

#### PERCEPTION OF WHERE WROCLAW IS GOING

Contemporary Wrocław seems to have emerged from an absence of proper negotiating channels among stakeholders and vested interests. Poland's administrative structure, reformed in 1999 decentralised political and administrative



The current urban pattern

responsibilities to different layers of local authorities, new provinces and counties, cities and communes, the latter in charge of local land use and land management plans. Wrocław seems to be struggling to fit into its new role, had difficulties in enforcing its newly granted authority, notably in front of developers, which explains featureless sprawl, proliferation of unsustainable shopping malls and car dependent developments on the outskirts. Loosely regulated market forces and erroneous ideas about post modernity may encourage growth which may ultimately lead to an erosion of Wrocław’s identity.

**OUR VISION OF WHAT WROCLAW COULD BECOME**

- > Wrocław seems to implement easy, quick-fix, and physical solutions. In our view, a more comprehensive, inclusive approach would strengthen Wrocław’s existing assets by taking full advantage of its unique character and features.
- > The current urban pattern of diverse clusters interwoven by green areas should be strengthened through the development of compact neighbourhoods. The resulting polycentric urban structure would have to ensure adequate connections between these areas, while preserving their unique characteristics and their relationship with natural features. Development should be directed to existing urbanised areas while restrictions should be applied to reverse the trend of sprawl and to curb extensive growth. We believe that if such policies are effectively implemented, Wrocław will be a more cohesive, pedestrian-friendly, public transit-oriented – and therefore sustainable and truly 21<sup>st</sup> century city.
- > Development focusing on existing space within the city will include many brownfield sites whose re-adaptation and reuse is consistent with more compact residential development. Such development should also take advantage of existing human and cultural capital within the city. In particular, universities make a significant contribution to the city and their potential should be maximised. Students constitute a large percentage of the city’s residents, and the city should make efforts to retain their enormous human capital. Besides all the necessary structures to support academic activities, the city should also foster investment into more innovative, creative and knowledge intensive industries. Brownfield areas, including large industrial sites with heritage value, could be adapted and rehabilitated for reuse,

as their location is particularly favourable for these types of activities. This would be an excellent way of taking advantage of Wrocław’s untapped potential while also preserving the industrial tradition of the city.

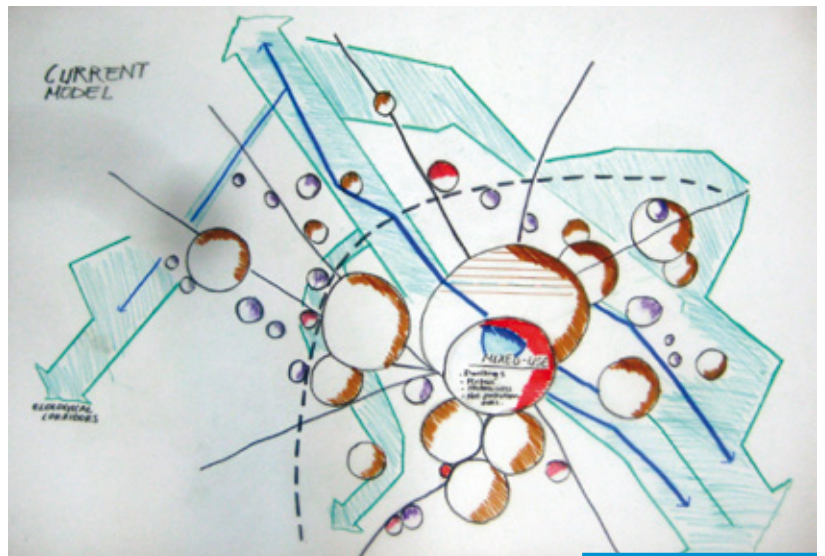
All the suggested actions require forceful decision making. Inadequate governance is arguably the primary reason for the recent market led, short-term based development of the city, possibly due to the fact that the decentralisation process is very recent. Different levels of administrative authority have still to complete their independence from the national level and assert their function and authority more forcefully.

Wrocław’s local authorities would therefore do well to formulate a shared and integrated vision of the city’s growth, one which would consider all the aspects necessary for sustainable development: economic as well as social and environmental. It is this kind of common vision for Wrocław’s future which can form the basis of a strong local decision-making level, particularly during the negotiation of new activities and projects with different stakeholders.



**The current transportation lines**

based on Development Framework from Wrocław Development Office



**The current model of the city**