

*dr Ewa Kubejko-Polańska*¹

Katedra Polityki Gospodarczej

Uniwersytet Rzeszowski

The role of local self-government in stimulating urban development in the context of the construction of age-friendly cities and the concept of Silver Economy

INTRODUCTION

The ageing urban population in Poland is becoming a common phenomenon, although in different regions it takes on a different pace. This diversity is the result of a number of local and supra-local conditions and factors (or barriers) of development. Therefore, there is no single universal concept of development, which could make the ageing process a catalyst for positive changes in a given territorial unit. It is certain, however, that diagnosing and satisfying the needs resulting from this fact lies within the competence of local communities. One of the key issues is, therefore, the activity of local governments in the implementation of urban policy and the creation of local strategies in the ageing society.

Urban development should be a continuous and comprehensive process, thus urban policy must take into account the widest possible range of actions, because without facing the challenges of the demographic changes, the deterioration in the situation of the elderly can be expected. It pertains to both the social and economic dimension of their daily functioning. This will inevitably be a barrier limiting economic development of urban centres, and consequently the whole region. For this reason, local self-governments should make an effort in pursuing the creation of solutions tailored to the challenges of contemporary and future demographic situation they face.

It seems necessary, therefore, to implement strategic solutions for the so-called age-friendly cities to urban policies, which will create a number of opportunities to use the broadly understood potential of older people, in other words the concept of the Silver Economy. These two areas of the challenges

¹ Address: e-mail: ekubejko@ur.edu.pl

of urban policy, i.e.: creating an age-friendly city and the development of the Silver Economy should be considered complementary as mutually reinforcing paths of development.

This paper attempts to identify areas of strategic intervention in the context of urban adaptation to the phenomenon of ageing residents. It was accomplished through the analysis of the diagnostic and projection parts of all current development strategies formulated for at least powiat cities in Podkarpackie Voivodship. The aim of the study was also to verify whether and to what extent local authorities of individual towns undertake concrete arrangements regarding the direct elimination or reduction of the negative effects of an ageing population and the use of the potential of the Silver Economy.

The cities covered by the analysis were selected according to their role in the settlement system of the region. A significant part of the functions performed by the cities of this rank of administrative hierarchy should be treated in terms of central functions (according to W. Christaller's Central Place theory) [Sokołowski, 2006, pp. 41–45]. This means that these cities offer a range of supra-local functions for non-urban areas. Thus, the development of a concrete city depends largely on the size of the demand for goods and services reported by people residing and gravitating to the city from its surroundings. Therefore, the expansion of functions in the Silver Economy sector is a very important area of strategic interventions aimed at ensuring the proper position of individual cities in the socio-economic area of Podkarpackie Voivodship.

AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES AND DEVELOPMENT OF SILVER ECONOMY

The most complete explanation of what is the meaning of age-friendly cities, and local self-government in particular, and how they should function, is included in the document of the WHO Global Age-friendly Cities and Communities Network: Age-Friendly Cities: a Guide [Global Age-Friendly Cities... ([http](#))].

According to M. Żakowska the word 'Age', which forms the phrase 'Age-Friendly Cities' is a verb and determines the ageing process, in which the representatives of all generations are actively involved. Thus, only the society which recognizes this experience as a shared experience, and which creates its social character in a collective and cross-generational way, has a chance to be age-friendly society [Żakowska, 2014 p. 3].

The cities that support active ageing are defined as age-friendly cities. This is possible by providing optimal conditions for health, safety and participation in order to raise quality of life of older people. In practice, it adjusts its structures and services so that they are available to the elderly and respond to the requirements of the residents with diverse needs and possibilities [Global Age-Friendly Cities..., ([http](#))].

Due to the fact that active ageing is a lifelong process, the age-friendly city is not only friendly to the elderly. An important voice in the debate was given by P. Kubicki to the necessity to design universal and rational adjustment of public space and to identify opportunities and risks related to the development of local social policy, geared to the needs of all residents [Kubicki, 2014, pp. 7-8].

The process of adapting cities to operate in the new demographic conditions is associated with a number of challenges of urban policy. Local communities should seek effective ways of their implementation, using the new paths of socio-economic development. The implementation of new solutions for age-friendly cities requires strategic thinking, which also uses the broadly understood potential of the elderly, i.e. the Silver Economy.

The concept of the Silver Economy comes from the mainstream of scientific research called gerontechnology, which covers a plurality of issues of an interdisciplinary character, related to technology and the process of ageing, and its primary goal is to improve the everyday life of older people [Graafmans et al. 1998, p. 3].

The concept of the Silver Economy has two meanings according to S. Golinowska. The first consists in demonstrating the economy evolving in the direction of the needs of older population without its special interventional direction. The second shows the possibility of using the ageing population to such an orientation of the development in which the change in the structure of needs of the population and a certain rise in their activity could become a source of economic progress and growth. Both the social and economic component of the Silver Economy are equally important. The social importance of the concept is to face the needs and aspirations of an ageing population, whereas the economic one is to indicate the benefits of activating demand and supply factors. Demand factors represented by seniors include the purchasing power and consumption with a significant potential for economic growth. In contrast, the supply factors include longer work, higher qualifications, experience and stability of life [Golinowska 2014, p.19].

The concept of the Silver Economy, defined as an economic system aimed at exploiting the potential of older people and taking their needs into account [Silver Economy Network. ..., ([http](#))], has been understood more widely with time. According to P. Szukalski, the real thinking in categories of the Silver Economy begins with the move beyond the narrowly defined target groups, i.e. the individual seniors. The potential clients of the Silver Economy, aside from entities, should also include groups and organizations. This is important, because satisfied needs 'are not so much the needs of seniors but the structures dealing with seniors' [Szukalski, 2012, p. 7].

In transnational terms, the characteristics and directions of development of the Silver Economy are determined by the so-called Bologna Process. The document indicated that the active preparation of the economy to the new demographic ratio is a chance to improve the quality of life, economic growth and competitive

Europe [*Bonn Declaration...*, ([http](#))]. The development of the Silver Economy is also one of the recommendations of the report *Europe's demographic future* issued by the European Commission [*Europe's demographic future...* ([http](#))].

In Poland, the implementation of all kinds of solutions included in the senior policy is useful in the implementation of the concept of the Silver Economy. Developed in 2014, *The assumptions of the long-term Senior Policy in Poland* define the main objective of senior policy in the area of the Silver Economy, i.e.: to promote the development of effective solutions tailored to the needs and expectations of older people [*Assumptions...* ([http](#))].

According to experts from the Adam Smith Centre, Poland can gain a competitive advantage in the new “silver” branch of economy due to attractive prices along with a high level qualifications of medical care personnel. Regions can naturally gain a new regional specialization, and hence the positive economic dimension [Rudnick, Surdej, 2013, p. 3]. M. Golinowska emphasizes that the implementation of the concept of the Silver Economy for the development strategy of the region may be an additional factor in its dynamization. However, this requires targeting a large scale of infrastructural investments in the region. This in turn necessitates an increase in the possibility of the regional authorities' impact on local decisions in the field of directions of investment and the ability to coordinate activities of regional character both in the central-regional and regional-local dimension [Golinowska, 2014, p. 28].

In this context, the local dimension of the strategic planning and the implementation of the concept of the Silver Economy is of particular importance. In the development strategies projected by the local self-government, interventions should result from the priorities of local policy. The prevention of adverse effects of demographic changes and the use of the potential of the Silver Economy should be undoubtedly treated in a similar way. This is the area of intervention which could bring significant and lasting multiplier effects to particular local systems. Thus, if the assumptions of regional development concepts should produce concrete results, they have to be included in the strategies of socio-economic development of lower levels local governments. These documents should be characterized by a high degree of compliance of objectives and directions of strategic actions.

PROBLEM OF AGEING POPULATION IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

In recent years a debate on demographic forecasts in Poland has been an extensively analysed topic in the strategy papers at all levels of local government units. Podkarpackie Voivodship, which is currently in a relatively favourable demographic situation compared to other regions in Poland, will increasingly be

affected by the effects of advanced ageing population in the next several years. The problem is in particular relevant to cities and urban areas, where the rate of adverse demographic change is higher than in rural areas. Projections of population change for cities of Podkarpackie Voivodship illustrate the dynamic increase in the percentage of the population aged 60+ (Fig. 1).

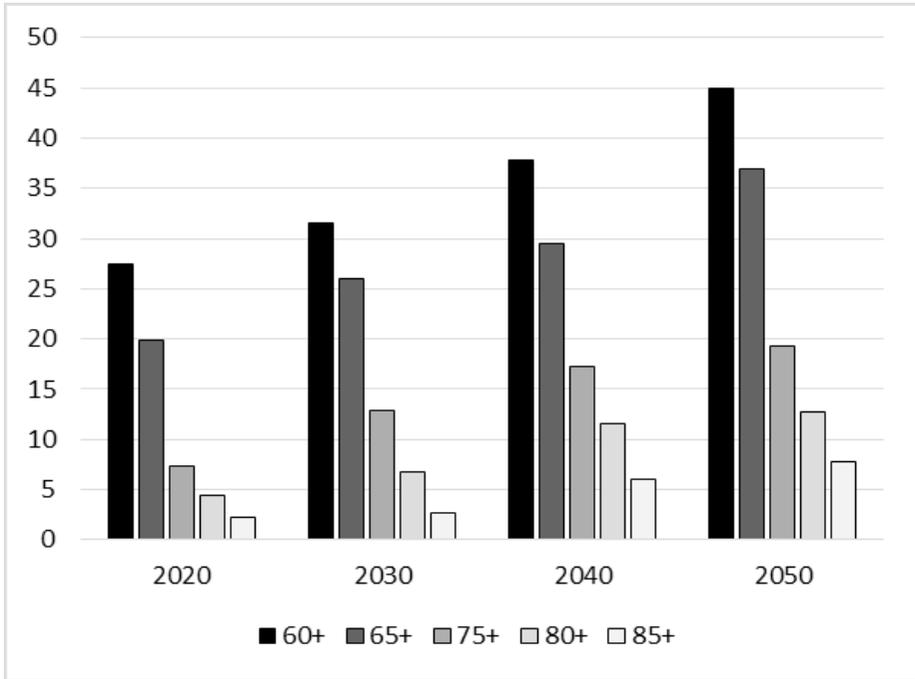


Figure 1. Population projection by age groups for cities of Podkarpackie Voivodship in the year 2050 (in percent).

Source: Own study based on *Proгноzy ludności do 2050 roku dla powiatów oraz miast na prawach powiatu*, GUS 2014.

According to forecasts, in 2050 the number of people aged 60+ will exceed 50% of the total number of inhabitants in urban areas of Brzozów, Jasło, Leżajsk, Sanok, Stalowa Wola poviats and Tarnobrzeg. In other poviats of Podkarpackie Voivodship the situation will only be slightly better. Rzeszów will be an exception, with the rate projected to stay at the level of 39%. Even the simplest estimates of the population projections [*Proгноzy ludności...*, (http)] produced by the Central Statistical Office, should strongly influence the imagination of local authorities, and also the urban policy and effective strategic planning. Breaking some of the barriers to development is a key to boost the economic growth. These include undoubtedly the ageing population, which is a factor limiting the role of the human capital.

Table 1. Analysis of the development strategy of powiat towns and cities with powiat rights in Podkarpackie Voivodship

Town	Strategy paper	The ageing population identified as a weak point of the city	Silver Economy in the area of city development opportunities	Strategic activities dedicated to seniors	Number of areas *
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
Strzyżów	Strategia Rozwoju Gminy Strzyżów na lata 2016–2025	Yes	No	Yes	5
Jarosław	Strategia Rozwoju Miasta Jarosławia na lata 2016–2020	Yes	No	Yes	5
Stalowa Wola	Strategia Rozwoju Miasta Stalowa Wola na lata 2016–2022 z prognozą do roku 2027	Yes	No	Yes	5
Mielec	Strategię Rozwoju Społeczno-Gospodarczego Miasta Mielca na lata 2015–2020 z prognozą do roku 2025	No	No	Yes	4
Brzozów	Strategia Rozwoju Gminy Brzozów na lata 2014–2024	No	No	Yes	4
Tarnobrzeg	Strategia Rozwoju Miasta Tarnobrzega na lata 2014–2020	Yes	No	Yes	4
Ustrzyki Dolne	Strategia Rozwoju Gminy Ustrzyki Dolne 2015–2025	Yes	Yes	Yes	3
Rzeszów	Strategia Rozwoju Miasta Rzeszowa do roku 2025	Yes	No	Yes	3
Krosno	Strategia Rozwoju Miasta Krosna na lata 2014–2022	Yes	No	Yes	3
Łańcut	Strategia Rozwoju Miasta Łańcuta na lata 2015–2020	Yes	No	Yes	2
Przemysł	Strategia Sukcesu Miasta Przemysła na lata 2014–2024	Yes	No	Yes	2

1	2	3	4	5	6
Przeworsk	Strategia Rozwoju Miasta Przeworska na lata 2015–2022	Yes	Yes	Yes	2
Sanok	Zrównoważona Strategia Rozwoju Miasta Sanoka na lata 2013–2024	Yes	Yes	Yes	2
Lesko	Strategia Rozwoju Miasta i Gminy Lesko do 2020 roku	Yes	No	Yes	1
Nisko	Strategia Zrównoważonego Rozwoju Gminy i Miasta Nisko na lata 2014–2020	No	No	Yes	1
Jasło	Strategia Rozwoju Miasta Jasła na lata 2007–2020	No	No	Yes	1
Kolbuszowa	Strategia Rozwoju Miasta I Gminy Kolbuszowa na lata 2014–2020	Yes	No	Yes	1
Leżajsk	Strategia Rozwoju Gminy Miasto Leżajsk na lata 2015–2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	1
Ropczyce	Strategia Rozwoju Gminy Ropczyce 2014–2020	No	No	No	-
Dębica	Strategia Rozwoju Miasta Dębica na lata 2014–2020	Yes	No	No	-
Lubaczów	No current development strategy	No data	No data	No data	-

* Cf.: table. 2.

Source: Own elaboration based on implemented researches.

The awareness of local authorities of the discussed cities in Podkarpackie Voivodship, in terms of being confronted with the key problem of the ageing society, is indisputable. This was confirmed by the analysis of the descriptions of the socio-economic situation of 16 poviat towns and 4 cities with poviat status (included in various parts of the diagnostic development strategy). On that basis, this barrier has been considered one of the most important challenges of local politics in all 20 cities. In 18 of them, the ageing population has been

identified as a weak point of the city in SWOT analysis developed for individual territorial units (Table 1).

The problem of the increasing number of elderly people, given its scale and inevitability, had to become the subject of discussion and interest of both the community and local authorities. However, rapidly expanding “Silver Economy” was not considered a chance for socio-economic development in most cases. None of the 20 analysed documents states literally that the development of the Silver Economy could have a positive impact on improving the economic situation of the city. Only in 4 cities (i.e.: Ustrzyki Dolne, Leżajsk, Przeworsk and Sanok) the specific reference to the potential of demographic change can be seen. These are mostly opportunities related to the creation of new jobs in the view of the growing need for social and health services of inhabitants. Only in one city (Leżajsk), the opportunity for local development is found in a friendly city for the elderly.

Given the analysis of socio-economic situation of cities, one could expect that the widely understood Silver Economy and the creation of solutions compatible with the assumptions of the so-called age-friendly cities will be a field of strategic actions in all the surveyed centres. In order to verify whether city authorities have made any arrangements for the direct elimination or reduction of barriers to development, i.e. the ageing population, a general analysis of the projection part of all current development strategies of these cities was conducted. The survey included only those expectations of achievements and planned activities that were directly related to the analysed problem. For this purpose, eight areas related to the life in the age-friendly cities were used, also referred to as key aspects of adapting cities to the phenomenon of ageing residents [Global Age-friendly Cities..., ([http](http://))]:

- public spaces and buildings,
- transport,
- housing,
- social participation,
- respect and social integration,
- civil participation and employment,
- communication and information,
- community support and health services.

This rule was adopted due to the fact that the packages of objectives, priorities and actions included many arrangements, which have an indirect impact on improving the functioning of the local economy, and, therefore, increasing the standard of living of the urban population. However, the socio-economic challenge of this magnitude, which is the designing of a friendly city for the elderly and counteracting the negative effects of the ageing population, should be the subject of special attention of decision-makers.

Table 2. Areas of strategic actions in parts of the projection strategy for the development of the powiat towns and the cities with powiat rights in Podkarpackie Voivodship.

Areas of actions	Strzyżów	Jarosław	Stalowa Wola	Mielec	Brzozów	Tarnobrzeg	Ustrzyki Dolne	Rzeszów	Krosno	Łańcut	Przemysł	Przeworsk	Sanok	Lesko	Nisko	Jasło	Kolbuszowa	Leżajsk	Ropczyce	Dębica	Total	
Community support and health services	X X	X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X			X		X	X X			X	X				19
Respect and social integration	X	X	X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X		X	X		X		X X	X						17
Public spaces and buildings	X	X				X	X	X	X	X X		X										9
Social participation	X	X	X	X	X	X			X													7
Civil participation and employment			X						X X													3
Housing					X							X										2
Communication and information	X	X																				2
Transport				X																		1
Areas	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-
Activities	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	-	-	-

X – projected action or strategic task

Source: Own elaboration based on implemented researches

The implementation of the concept of the Silver Economy and the concept of age-friendly cities to the development strategy was not included in comprehensive and multi-territorial terms of any of the 20 analysed strategies. None of the local governments also specified this area as a strategic potential of priority objectives (main objectives). The visions of cities contain only general references to high quality of life in cities, which is more understandable. Assumption of taking concrete actions aimed at the development of the Silver Economy or aimed towards the development of age-friendly cities have been included in various degrees in the areas of strategic planning. The synthetic approach to the strategy of actions of local governments planned in projection parts, grouped and categorized according to the adopted eight areas of action, is presented in Table 2.

The analysis made it possible to identify areas of strategic actions in particular cities and outlined a clear image of the situation in powiat towns and cities with powiat rights generally treated as a specific level of local planning.

The areas most commonly pursued in projection parts of the development strategy are actions related to the support of community of elderly people and the preparation of a wide offer of health services adapted to their needs. These actions are included in the areas of strategic planning at the regional level (*Strategia Rozwoju Województwa – Podkarpackie 2020*). The second area covers respect and social integration. A set of activities and the strategic tasks related to the perception of the elderly by other residents is a prelude to a positive and extremely desirable changes in thinking about ageing and old age. Another group of actions of the local governments in the area of public spaces and buildings was mainly actions related to the elimination of architectural barriers in the cities. Ability for older people to move (independently) as long as possible in the cities is an important contribution to building the concept of age-friendly cities. Also, what is worth mentioning is the need, strongly emphasized in some urban centres, to increase the involvement of seniors in the life of the city, that is in the area associated with social participation.

The areas of strategic planning that require far more attention from the local authorities are those associated with the possibilities of voluntary and professional work, civil participation and employment, housing creating physical environment of a senior, trouble-free transport and extremely important issues related to communication and information for seniors.

CONCLUSION

The formulation of development strategies containing appropriate “objectives and priorities” supports further rational developmental decisions and structural transformations in the city, according to the changing social, economic and spatial conditions. It is difficult to infer the extent to which the authors of the development strategy of poviats towns and cities with poviats rights of Podkarpackie Voivodship identify the proposed objectives and activities with the assumptions of building the Silver Economy. This should be the subject of further scientific inquiry because in many cases the understanding of this concept resolves itself to development planning and meeting the needs of its social dimension. The economic aspect of the Silver Economy is ignored or significantly marginalized in many cases. In order to ensure the possibility of sustainable, uninterrupted social-economic development, it is important to design strategic actions taking into account both the social and economic component.

In the strategies of urban development the efforts of local authorities towards new strategic solutions for the so-called age-friendly cities are visible. However, there are areas that require additional investment and strategic thinking. Cities should be prepared to perceive the ageing process and the increasing number of seniors as a development opportunity, and this should be done in a comprehensive way, and adequately to the pace of changes.

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Summary

The ageing urban population in Poland is becoming a common phenomenon, although it takes a different pace in different regions. Therefore, it seems necessary to introduce in urban policy new strategic solutions for the so-called age-friendly cities, which in turn creates a number of opportunities to use the widely understood potential of older people, that is the concept of the Silver Economy.

This paper attempts to identify areas of strategic intervention in the context of adapting cities to the phenomenon of the ageing population. This was done through the analysis of diagnostic and projection parts of all current development strategies developed for at least poviat towns in Podkarpackie Voivodship. The aim of the study was also to verify whether and to what extent local authorities of individual cities make concrete arrangements regarding the direct elimination or reduction of the negative effects of the ageing population, and the use of the potential of the Silver Economy.

The analysis made it possible to identify areas of strategic actions in individual cities and showed a clear picture of the situation in poviat towns and cities with poviat rights generally treated as a specific level of local planning. In the strategies of urban development the efforts of local

authorities towards new strategic solutions for the so-called age-friendly cities are visible. However, there are areas that require additional investment and strategic thinking. Cities should be prepared to perceive the ageing process and the increasing number of seniors as a development opportunity, and this should be done in a comprehensive way, and adequately to the pace of changes.

Keywords: urban policy, urban development, Silver Economy, ageing population, Age-friendly cities and Communities

Rola samorządu terytorialnego w stymulowaniu rozwoju miast w kontekście budowy miast przyjaznych starzeniu i koncepcji srebrnej gospodarki

Streszczenie

Starzenie się ludności miast w Polsce staje się zjawiskiem powszechnym, choć w różnych regionach przybiera inne tempo. Konieczne zatem wydaje się wprowadzanie do polityki miejskiej nowych strategicznych rozwiązań dla tzw. miast przyjaznych starzeniu (Age-friendly Cities), co z kolei stwarza wiele możliwości wykorzystania szeroko rozumianego potencjału osób starszych, czyli koncepcji srebrnej gospodarki (*silver economy*).

W prezentowanym opracowaniu podjęto próbę określenia obszarów interwencji strategicznych w kontekście przystosowania miast do zjawiska starzenia się mieszkańców. Dokonano tego poprzez analizę części diagnostycznych oraz projekcyjnych wszystkich aktualnych strategii rozwoju, opracowanych dla miast co najmniej powiatowych w województwie podkarpackim. Celem przeprowadzonego badania była również weryfikacja, czy i w jakim stopniu władze lokalne poszczególnych miast podejmują konkretne ustalenia, dotyczące bezpośredniej eliminacji lub zmniejszenia negatywnych skutków starzenia się społeczeństwa oraz wykorzystania potencjału srebrnej gospodarki.

Przeprowadzona analiza umożliwiła określenie obszarów strategicznych działań w poszczególnych miastach oraz nakreśliła czytelny obraz sytuacji w miastach powiatowych i miastach na prawach powiatów traktowanych ogólnie, jako konkretny poziom planowania lokalnego. W strategiach rozwoju miast widać inicjatywy władz lokalnych na rzecz wdrażania nowych rozwiązań dla tzw. miast przyjaznych starzeniu. Istnieją jednak obszary, które wymagają doinwestowania i strategicznego myślenia. Należy odpowiednio, czyli kompleksowo i adekwatnie do tempa zachodzących zmian, przygotować miasta do postrzegania procesu starzenia się i wzrostu liczby seniorów jako szansy rozwojowej.

Słowa kluczowe: polityka miejska, rozwój miast, srebrna gospodarka, starzenie się społeczeństwa, miasta i gminy przyjazne starzeniu

JEL: O21, R58