

**Anna Janiszewska**

University of Lodz

e-mail: anna.janiszevska@geo.uni.lodz.pl

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**SENIOR-ORIENTED POLICY  
FOR THE AGEING SOCIETY OF THE CITY OF ŁÓDŹ  
POLITYKA SENIORALNA DLA STARZEJĄCEGO SIĘ  
SPOŁECZEŃSTWA MIASTA ŁODZI**

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**Summary:** The article explores the issue of senior-oriented policy carried out in Łódź. Actions undertaken as part of this policy are especially crucial in contemporary times due to the major demographic changes occurring in the city. The article discusses selected demographic problems of the city, including the ageing of the society, showing their changeability in time and space. The juxtaposition of the spatial arrangement of the facilities which undertake actions benefitting the elderly with the areas of high concentration of seniors' homes shows that the access to the former is satisfactory. On the other hand, taking into account the range of actions related to the senior-oriented policy, a unique innovativeness in regards to the issue does not appear to distinguish the city of Łódź from other cities.

**Keywords:** social policy, senior-oriented policy, ageing of society, demographic rate of ageing, Łódź.

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł podejmuje problematykę polityki senioralnej prowadzonej w Łodzi. Działania podejmowane w ramach tej polityki są ważne szczególnie współcześnie z powodu zachodzących w mieście głębokich przemian demograficznych. W artykule zwrócono uwagę na wybrane problemy demograficzne miasta, w tym starzenie się społeczeństwa, pokazując ich zmienność w czasie i przestrzeni. Analiza rozmieszczenia placówek prowadzących działania na rzecz ludzi starszych z obszarami wysokiej koncentracji miejsc zamieszkania seniorów wykazała, że dostęp do tych placówek jest zadowalający. Natomiast biorąc pod uwagę ofertę działań w ramach prowadzonej polityki senioralnej, należy podkreślić, że miasto Łódź nie wyróżnia się na tle innych miast wyjątkową innowacyjnością w tym zakresie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** polityka społeczna, polityka senioralna, starzenie się ludności, indeks starości demograficznej, Łódź.

## 1. Introduction

The demographic situation in our country has recently become a topic widely discussed not only in various academic or journalistic works, but also in strategic documents. In the *Raport Polska 2030*<sup>1</sup> which was the base of the preparation of the Long-term National Strategy, the major demographic problems in Poland have been diagnosed. These mostly included the ageing of the population, which will unavoidably lead to the deterioration of the relationship between the number of people in pre-productive and post-productive age in the next two decades. The ageing process is the effect of, among other things, the decline in fertility; even if the situation would change and, in the end, the tendency to have children would increase permanently in the next couple of years, it may change only within the next half a century, but will not improve by 2030. The dilemmas regarding the demographic situation include the utilization of the potential arising from the increase in lifespan and the costly socio-economic effects of changes on the level of age structure.

The knowledge of the directions of demographic processes is the starting point for any further search regarding the possibility of meeting the social expectations which will surface in the next couple of decades. In this regard, the nation's social policy is faced with major challenges. The policy needs to be treated as a complex whole, yet it should be remembered that it comprises numerous and various social programmes or social detailed policies – starting with labour market regulations through mandatory insurances against social risks, broadly-defined public healthcare, education and housing to various forms of public help and social care. What they all have in common is the involvement of the state, but the latter also has a multi-faceted character including, for instance, the legal limitations of an employment day and the public institutions that control the compliance with the regulations, free medical care in public hospitals, public funding of free homeless shelters run by charities [Szarfenberg 2008]. According to A. Kurzynowski social policy is “the activity of the state, self-government and non-governmental institutions aimed at shaping the general working and living conditions, pro-developmental social structures and social relations based on equality and social justice, favourable to the fulfilment of social needs to the extent possible”<sup>2</sup> [Kurzynowski (ed.) 2003, p. 11].

The progression of the ageing of the Polish society led to the creation of the Principles of Long-Term Senior-Oriented Policy in the Years 2014–2020 [MPiPS 2012]. This document defined senior-oriented policy as the whole of purposeful actions conducted by the local administrative authorities of all levels and other organizations

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<sup>1</sup> The report was prepared by the Board of Prime Minister's Strategic Advisers established in 2008, which is the Polish Prime Minister's opinion-forming and advisory body. The document is a green paper, which means that its purpose is not the presentation of final propositions of specific solutions, but mostly initiating public debate on the developmental solutions in Poland.

<sup>2</sup> All quotations are rendered by a translator.

or institutions which fulfil the tasks and take up initiatives that shape the conditions for dignified and healthy ageing. The purpose of the Polish senior-oriented policy will be to support and provide the possibility of active and healthy ageing while leading an independent, self-reliant and satisfying life, even with certain functional limits. The assumptions, despite their framework character, are a concrete set of actions necessary to the Polish senior-oriented policy and aimed at a wider audience – primarily, the society which, due to its competences and potential, is the key element in the building and development of the policy of active and healthy ageing.

The social policy with regard to the older generation is examined from two points of view: as policy “with regard to old age” (old age policy) and policy “with regard to the elderly”. In the first case, the subject of the study is the phase of life, in the second – the community of people who have reached old age. In Polish literature, both types of policies have been clearly described by B. Szatur-Jaworska [2000, pp. 119 ff.]. The social policy with regard to the old age is described as the kind of social policy whose purpose is to “aid individuals in dealing with developmental crises and situations typical, in specific historical conditions, to this phase of life; ensure that old age has a position equal to other phases of life and shaping its positive image in the social awareness” [Szatur-Jaworska 2000, p. 120]. Policy with regard to old age understood in that way is not fully carried out in Poland. The actions undertaken for the population of the elderly often lack comprehensiveness and long-term nature.

The second aspect of social policy is the policy with regard to the elderly. In this case, due to the differences in the stands on the subjective and objective scopes of social policy, literature lacks an explicit definition of this policy. B. Szatur-Jaworska defines it as the policy whose purpose it is to “create, now and for the future, the conditions for fulfilling the needs of the elderly and shaping proper relationships between the older generation and the younger ones by making the elderly more independent of the younger, preventing the marginalization of the elderly and shaping the relationships of intergenerational solidarity” [Szatur-Jaworska 2000, p. 119].

The rules of the social policy with regards to the elderly are the result of the value system typical of the doctrine of social policy [Rysz-Kowalczyk (ed.) 2002, pp. 139, 140]. The most important rules that govern the social policy with regard to the elderly are:

- 1) the rule of support (subsidiarity),
- 2) the rule of the comprehensive assessment of needs,
- 3) the rule of localness.

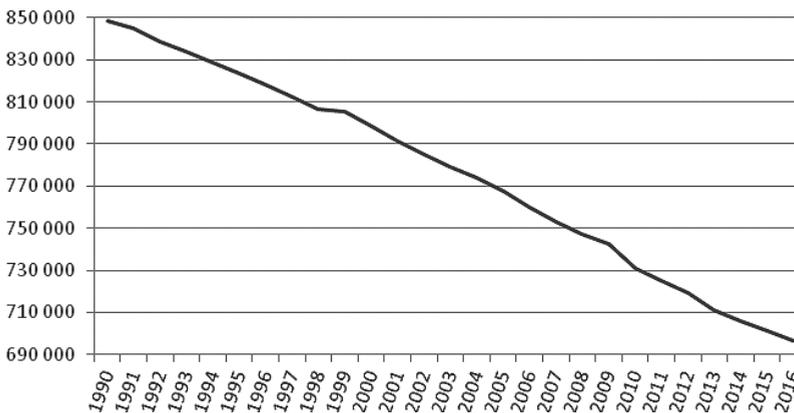
The rule of support stipulates the assumption of a specific order in which various institutions provide support for individuals unable to fulfil their needs by themselves. Subsidiarity means moving tasks from the macro level to the level of regional and local subjects that help in social cases. This tendency is associated with the view that actions on the local level are better for solving social issues than the national care programmes. Moreover, such actions intend to develop social solidarity while utilizing the civil sector. The rule of the comprehensive assessment of needs stipulates the necessity of

conducting a comprehensive analysis of the situation of the local community, assessing its health condition, life and family situation, income, etc. [Błądowski 2002, p. 177]. The rule of localness arises from the subsidiarity rule. Localness enables a better fulfilment of general purposes of the policy with regards to the elderly. In specific cases these purposes correspond with the local needs and possibilities. According to P. Błądowski “the local social policy with regard to the elderly can be described as undertaking various actions for their benefit, conducted in the area where the local self-government is the authority and as part of the government’s delegated tasks and local or own initiatives” [Błądowski 2002, p. 177].

The article discusses the issue of senior-oriented policy carried out in Łódź. The actions undertaken as part of this policy are especially important in contemporary times due to the major demographic changes occurring in the city. The article presents the selected demographic problems of the city, including the ageing of the society, showing its changeability in time and space. At the same time, these, as well as depopulation, are some of the most crucial threats to the development of population from the perspective of actions carried out by the population policy. The work exemplifies the applications of various solutions and instruments of the senior-oriented policy in Łódź.

## 2. The ageing of the population of Łódź and its spatial diversity<sup>3</sup>

Currently, Łódź is becoming depopulated – it started a number of years ago, the depopulation processes were first observable in the early 1990s (Figure 1). The downward trend in population numbers is stable and the forecasts predict that in 2050 Łódź will be home to just over 484 thousand people. In the years 1990–2016 the demographic potential of the city decreased by nearly 152 thousand people (from



**Figure 1.** The demographic potential in Łódź, 1990–2016

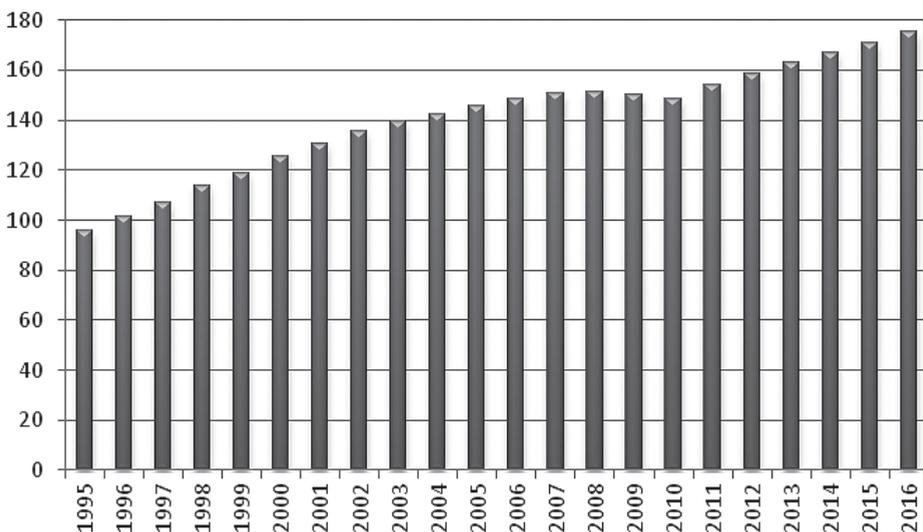
Source: personal elaboration on the basis of the Local Data Bank (BDL).

<sup>3</sup> Fragments of this sub-chapter were published in [Janiszewska, Dmochowska-Dudek 2017].

848.3 thousand to 696.5 thousand), which signifies a 17.9% population drop. The observable deep demographic regression in the city is caused, on the one hand, by the results of the political, social and economic transformations and, on the other, by the evolution of the demographic reproduction process and the population's migratory behaviours [Dzieciuchowicz 2014; Szukalski 2010].

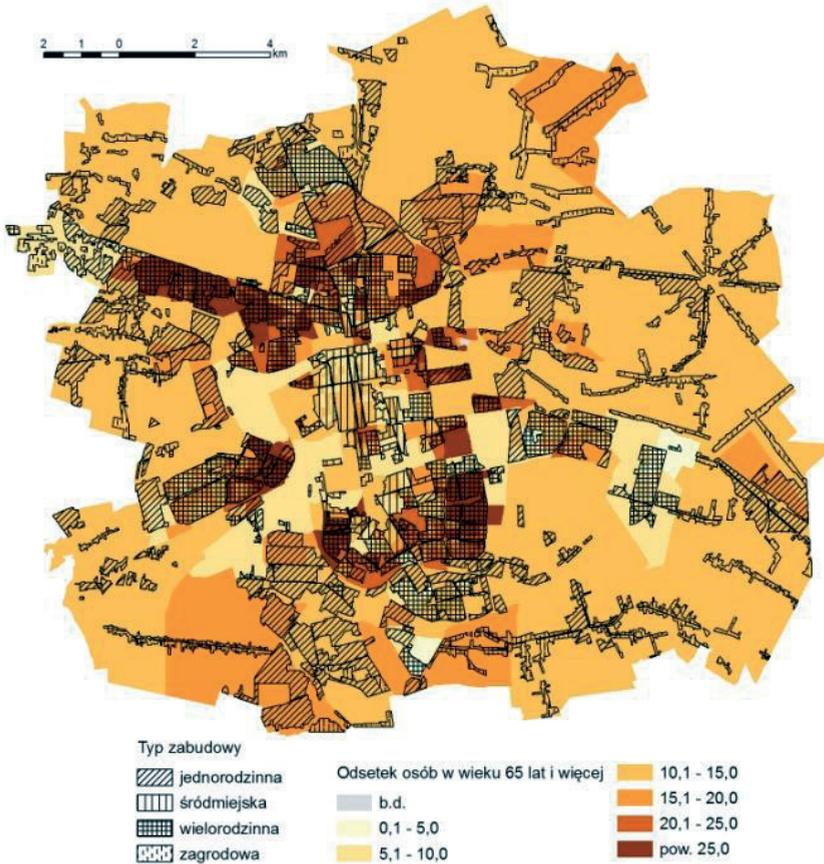
The changes in population numbers are a result of the rate of natural and migratory increases – in the case of Łódź, both these components of total population growth were negative for the last 10 or so years, although the natural population drop visibly surpassed the migratory drop. Therefore, the unfavourable demographic situation in the city was mostly the result of the decreased reproduction expressed by the number of deaths exceeding the number of births.

The depopulation processes that began in the 1990s in Łódź were accompanied by the changes in population structures, including age structures. In the mid-1990s the percentage of children and youth aged 14 and younger was higher than the percentage of people aged 65 or higher. Since then, a gradual decrease in the number of people aged 0–14 and the increase in the percentage of the elderly have been observed. In 2016 the subpopulation of children and youth constituted just under 13% of all the city inhabitants, while the percentage of the elderly was higher by more than 9 percentage points (21.5%). The high level of population ageing in Łódź is indicated by the rate demographic of ageing which was lower than 100 only in 1995 (Figure 2). Since then, its values were higher than 100, which means that the number of the elderly exceeded the number of children and youth. In 2016 the rate demographic of ageing was very high – it reached more than 175.



**Figure 2.** Rate demographic of ageing in Łódź, 1990–2016

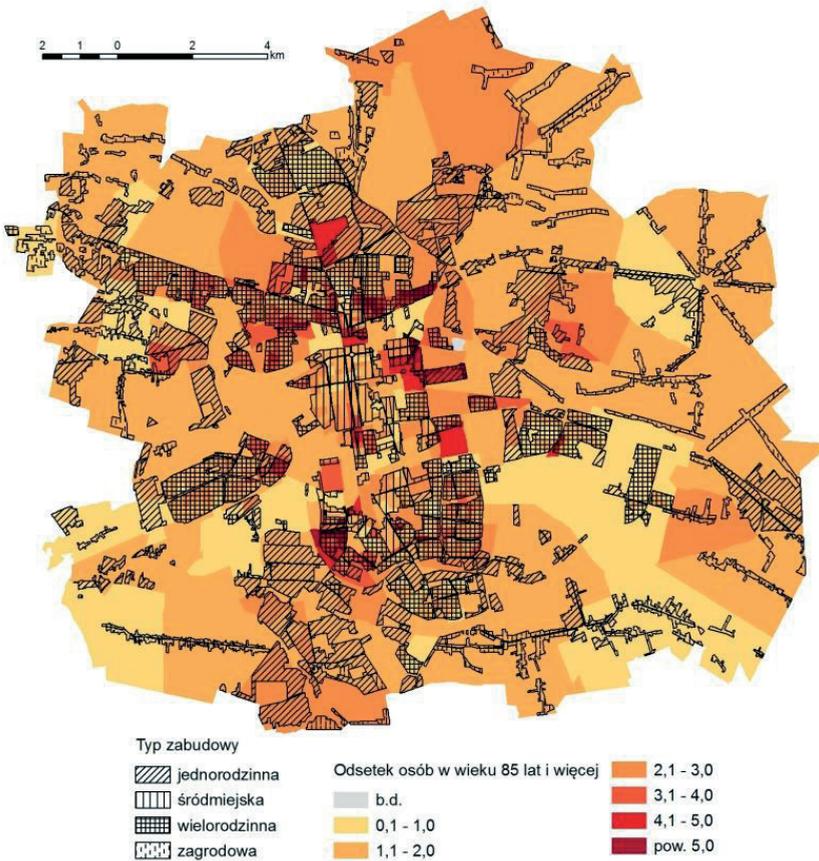
Source: personal elaboration on the basis of the Local Data Bank (BDL).



**Figure 3.** The percentage of people aged 65+ in Łódź in 2011, by census areas and housing types

Source: personal elaboration on the basis of the National Census (NSP) 2011.

Areas where people aged 65+ relatively predominate can be observed in Łódź if the statistical regions are taken into account as reference units. The highest results exceeded 25% of this age group among all of the population in a given census area (Figure 3). These areas concentrate around the city centre. Their biggest group was located in the following district units: Teofilów, Żubardź, Stare Miasto Bałuty, Zarzew, Zachodnia Dąbrowa, Nowe Rokicie and Retkinia. The above-mentioned areas with the highest percentage of the elderly in Łódź are areas with multi-family housing, blocks of flats. The oldest city residents, people aged 85+, resided in the census areas in the following district units: Stare Miasto Bałuty, Doły, Nowe Miasto, Nowe Rokicie; their percentage in the general number of the population exceeded 5% (Figure 4). These are the regions where multi-family housing or, to a lesser degree, single-family or city centre housing predominates.



**Figure 4.** The percentage of people aged 85+ in Łódź in 2011, by census areas and housing types

Source: personal elaboration on the basis of the National Census (NSP) 2011.

### 3. Selected actions taken for the benefits of the elderly in Łódź

In *Polityka Społeczna 2020+ dla miasta Łodzi* (the 2020+ social policy for the city of Łódź) two of the most serious demographic problems of the city have been diagnosed; these were depopulation and the ageing of the residents. Nine spheres of actions directed at young people, families with children and the elderly are enumerated among the so far implemented undertakings. The authors of the document emphasize that “the answer to the diagnosed challenges of demography should constitute a supplement to a complex approach determined on the level of the country, due to the civilization-related nature of the occurring changes. The actions undertaken by the city in this regard should be interdisciplinary in nature and should relate to a broadly-defined notion of social policy. Since the problems have

intensified in Łódź, the city should fulfil such tasks with a higher intensity than other Polish cities” [*Polityka Społeczna...* 2016, pp. 22, 23].

The mission of the social policy of Łódź reads: Łódź includes. The senior-oriented policy of the city was entered in the strategic area – the successful support of demography. Stopping negative trends. This strategic area included both the aims regarding the overcoming of the causes of the demographic crisis (preventative) and counteracting its effects (adjustable). The former include the actions helping improve fertility in the families in Łódź and stimulating the settling of new residents in the city. The latter include tasks undertaken for the seniors who are a major part of the Łódź community. There are three purposes to both these aims:

- to create better conditions for giving birth and bringing up children in Łódź;
- to build and promote the attractiveness of Łódź for the new residents;
- to include the seniors, as an important and active group, in the development of Łódź.

The actions presented as the third aim are a continuation of the earlier programmes that have been implemented since 2012. These include, for instance, the “Activization 60+” (“Aktywizacja 60+”) programme which aims at stimulating and sustaining a comprehensive and multi-faceted activity in the circles of the seniors, with the seniors themselves assuming the roles of organizers to the greatest possible extent. The following actions were undertaken as part of this programme:

- District Centres for Active Seniors (Dzielnicowe Centra Aktywnego Seniora) were established,
- the Board for senior citizens (Zespół ds. Seniorów) was established,
- the Senior City Council (Miejska Rada Seniorów) was established,
- the Commission of Citizen Dialogue for the Demographic Policy and Inter-Generational Cooperation (Komisja Dialogu Obywatelskiego ds. Polityki Demograficznej i Współpracy Międzypokoleniowej) was established,
- a web portal aimed at the seniors of Łódź was created,
- the Senior City Card (Miejska Karta Seniora) project was launched,
- the New Technologies – Courses and Computer Workshops (Nowe Technologie – Szkolenia i Warsztaty Komputerowe) project was launched,
- the “60+ voluntary service (“60+ wolontariat”) project was launched,
- “Łódź Senioralia” (“Łódzkie Senioralia”) were organized,
- a method which helps the seniors change their apartments was introduced,
- cooperation with non-governmental organizations, senior clubs, Universities of the Third Age, etc. was conducted in the seniors’ name,
- an international cooperation as part of the WHO Healthy Ageing Subnetwork was conducted.

The improvement in the activeness and social integration of people aged 60+ should be based on the fulfilment of tasks which help create the conditions favourable to the activeness of the elderly in various dimensions, such as: health, sport and recreation, urban tourism, education and culture as well as professional and social

activeness of seniors. **Centres for Active Seniors (Centra Aktywnego Seniora)** are a multi-element, interdisciplinary project, socio-educational in nature, whose purpose is to shape the seniors' habits of spending their free time actively and creatively, developing skills, learning how to manage in new situations or adapt to the modern realities. The centres are located in each of the five districts of Łódź (Figure 5). Their offer is divided into four subject sectors available in all the centres. Those are:

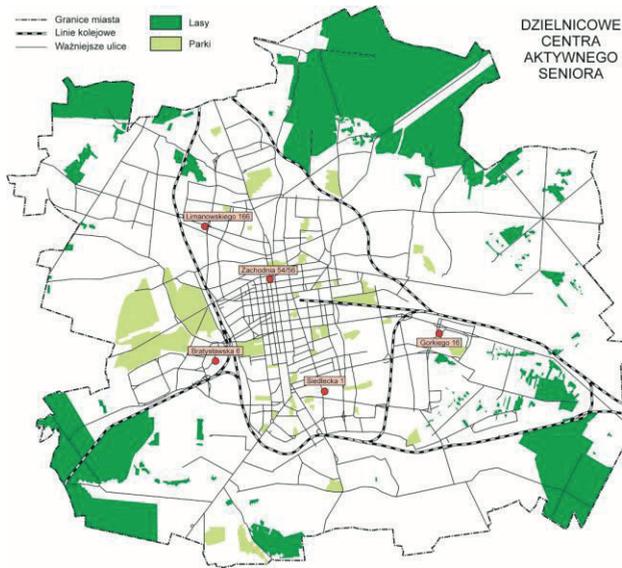
**1. The Academy of the Third Age (Akademia III Wieku): Foreign language courses** – English, Italian, German; memory trainings; workshops and educational classes which help improve skills in graphics, drawing and painting; handicraft workshops; workshops with a gerontologist; psychology workshops; meetings with doctors, dieticians, stylists; the Academy of Law (Akademia Prawa) – a cycle of meetings with lawyers; dance workshops; Inter-District Debate Club of the Senior Academy (Międzydzielnicowy Klub Dyskusyjny Akademii Seniora); film workshops for seniors; music workshops for seniors and lectures on literature, theatre, film, the history of Łódź and the region.

**2. Active Senior (Aktywny Senior) : Recreational gymnastics for seniors;** Physical Activity Recreational Courses (Kursy Rekreacji Ruchowej) – Nordic walking, yoga, tai chi, pilates; Senioriade – Spartakiade (Senioriada – Spartakiada) – sports competitions for seniors, yoga active music therapy, outdoor integration meetings, trips around Łódź and the region.

**3. New Technologies (Nowe Technologie): Computer workshops,** “Seniors in the web” (“Seniorzy w sieci”) workshops, photography workshops, the academy of robotics, and in plans for the future: computer clubs and internet cafes.

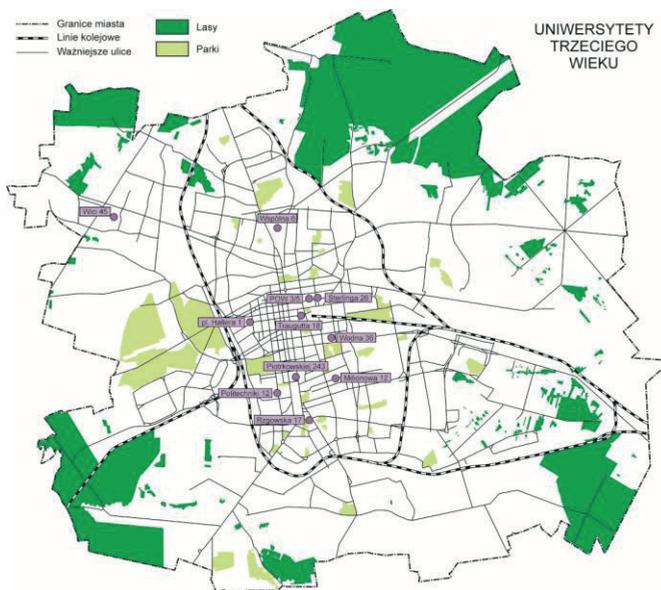
**4. Culture:** Good Book Club – a Book Discussion Club (Klub Dobrej Książki – Dyskusyjny Klub Książki), “A Home Songbook” (“Śpiewnik Domowy”) – vocal workshops, “An appointment with a song” (“Spotkanie z piosenką”) – concerts of classical and popular music, performances of bands, exhibitions, film screenings and theatre performances, author meetings, “Humour and songs” (“Humor i piosenka”) – performances by cabaret teams, Meetings of Amateur Artistic Senior Bands (Spotkania Amatorskich Artystycznych Zespołów Seniorów).

There are 11 functioning Universities of the Third Age in Łódź (Figure 6). They offer a wide range of lectures as well as hobby-related courses, provide an opportunity for development, the exchange of thoughts, inspire to fulfil the needs, including those health-related within a given organism's range of possibility. They are a kind of an intellectual adventure which colours the greyness. These facilities function near universities and higher education institutions (University of Technology, Medical University, University of Humanities and Economics, University of Pedagogy, University of Computer Sciences and Skills) as well as other educational facilities (secondary schools and high schools) and concentrate mostly in the central part of the city.



**Figure 5.** The spatial arrangement of District Centres for Active Seniors in Łódź

Source: personal elaboration on the basis of the data of the City of Łódź Office (UML) (<http://uml.lodz.pl/dla-seniorow/projekty/dzielnicowe-centra-aktywnego-seniora/>).



**Figure 6.** The spatial arrangement of the Universities of the Third Age in Łódź

Source: personal elaboration on the basis of the data of the City of Łódź Office (UML) (<http://uml.lodz.pl/dla-seniorow/informator-60/uniwersytety-trzeciego-wieku/>).

Senior clubs supplement the offer of integrating and supporting the activeness of the elderly, but also providing them with good company in the vicinity of their places of residence. Senior clubs are simply meeting places for the elderly. They are informal groups, spontaneously established and run by the seniors themselves, although usually they are supported by the units in their vicinity. The majority of the clubs is established near non-governmental organizations, cultural centres, housing associations or District Councils and parishes. According to the data of UMŁ, there are 27 such clubs in the city: 6 in Widzew area, 7 in Górna and Bałuty area, 2 in Śródmieście and 5 in Polesie (Figure 7). The highest number of clubs, 9, is established near Polish Association of Pensioners and the Disabled (Polski Związek Emerytów, Rencistów i Inwalidów), five is supported by housing associations and the remaining ones – by trade unions and cultural facilities.



**Figure 7.** The spatial arrangement of senior clubs in Łódź

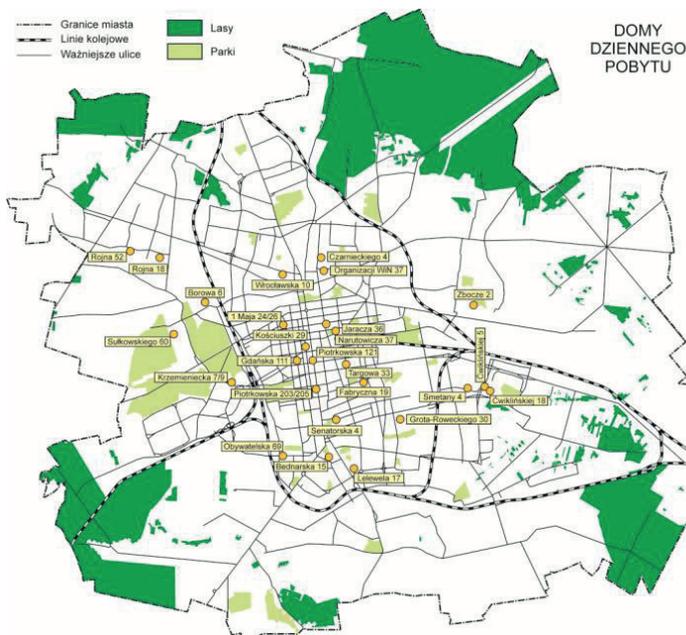
Source: personal elaboration on the basis of the data of the City of Łódź Office (UMŁ) (<http://uml.lodz.pl/dla-seniorow/informator-60/kluby-seniora/>).

As a part of the “Activity 60+” programme, a Senior City Card (Miejska Karta Seniora) project was launched, with 30 thousand cards issued so far. It is an offer for people 60+ years old and residing in Łódź, but also those that have a centre of lifestyle-related business there, such as a centre of personal or economic business (close personal or economical connections).<sup>4</sup> Senior City Card entitles the bearer to

<sup>4</sup> By the directive of the President of the City of Łódź, no. 4331/VII/16.

use offers, concessions, discounts and promotions especially prepared for the seniors by institutions and companies. The partners include rehabilitation centres, restaurants, sports and recreation centres, beauty and hairdresser's salons, cinemas, museums, theatres, online shops and many others.

Other institutional forms of improving the activeness of seniors in Łódź include daytime houses. There are 20 Daytime Houses in the city – 18 public and 2 private ones (Figure 8). These facilities have, in total, 930 vacancies. Approximately 1000 people make use of them in a rotational manner each year. Daytime Houses provide help to those people in the post-productive age who do not work professionally, unemployed pensioners or unemployed disabled people. They help organize their free time and make them socially active by: providing them with a place to stay and rest – a Daytime House, which fulfils their social and cultural needs; organizing classes which help sustain the participants' mental and physical activeness depending on their needs and limits as well as the possibilities of a given House; providing full board.

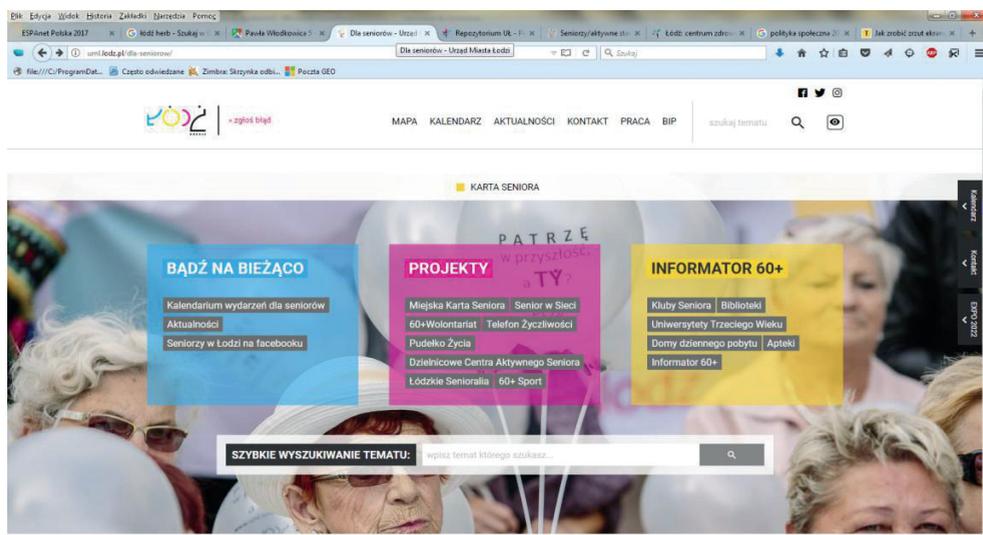


**Figure 8.** The spatial arrangement of Daytime Houses in Łódź

Source: personal elaboration on the basis of the data of the City of Łódź Office (UML) (<http://uml.lodz.pl/dla-seniorow/informator-60/domy-dziennego-pobytu/>).

Another form of increasing the activeness of the people of the so-called third age are actions such as: 60+ Voluntary Service (60+ Wolontariat) or the Kindness Phone Line (Telefon Życzliwości). The former is dedicated to people who intend to be informed about the current events in Łódź, want to spend their time actively,

participate in interesting undertakings, meet new people and use their knowledge to help their peers. The project's guiding principle is to create a group of Leader Seniors who share the knowledge gained during monthly meetings with their peers, families and friends. The Łódź Kindness Phone Line is an undertaking of competent and involved groups of volunteers who share their knowledge and kindness with their peers in difficult circumstances. Senior volunteers take turns in answering the support helpline, which can be an antidote to loneliness, can help solve certain legal, social and other problems.



**Figure 9.** A screenshot of the City of Łódź Office (UMŁ) webpage

Source: personal elaboration on the basis of the data of the City of Łódź Office (UMŁ) (<https://uml.lodz.pl/dla-seniorow/>).

It seems that the crucial element of the senior-oriented policy in Łódź is the improvement of the social image of old age through the promotion and the provision of information for and about the seniors. The promotion of their positive image can occur, for instance, via the events organized or supported by the self-government, aimed at presenting the seniors' achievements and potential. These events should encourage an active lifestyle, both individually and socially. One element which helps improve the image of old age is a website for seniors – the first one in the country, which appeared at the official website of the city of Łódź (Figure 9).

## 4. Conclusions

Senior-oriented policy has several primary objectives: maintaining the independence of the elderly; ensuring that the conditions for the seniors' own activeness and the

activeness directed at others are favourable; shaping the way of thinking about the elderly, old age, the intergenerational relations [Szukalski 2015]. In Łódź, all forms of this policy are being fulfilled to various degrees, in accordance with the guidelines written in *Założenia Długofalowej Polityki Senioralnej na lata 2014–2020* [MPiPS 2012].

Łódź is a city with a high level of demographic old age, and it has major requirements related to the senior-oriented policy since the potential beneficiaries of this policy, people aged 65+, amounted to over 150 thousand in 2016. The phenomenon of population ageing is spatially diverse, it occurs mostly in areas with multi-family, block of flats housing or, to a lesser degree, single-family or city centre housing. It should also be remembered that the seniors are not a homogenous community, and the needs of each of the three subpopulations of the elderly (“the young elderly” – 65–74 years old; “the older elderly” – 75–84 years old and “the oldest elderly” – above 85 years old) slightly vary. Therefore, the offer for the seniors should take into account the specificity of their needs, which is different for those who are in the process of stopping their professional activities and the seniors over 90 years old. Additionally, the institutions of the senior-oriented policy should be arranged spatially, so as to enable an easier use of these forms of facilitating senior activeness. The juxtaposition of the spatial arrangement of these facilities with the areas of high concentration of seniors’ homes shows that the access to the former is satisfactory. On the other hand, taking into account the range of actions related to the senior-oriented policy, a unique innovativeness in regards to the issue does not appear to distinguish the city of Łódź from other cities.

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