

CASE STUDY

Information Platform for post-industrial and degraded areas in Silesia (OPI-TPP)

New companies often struggle to find a good location to settle in, and post-industrial sites represent an untapped potential for future economic development. In Silesia, the regional government and a local research institute developed a data source on abandoned industrial sites. Spatial development experts and potential investors can now access key information related to more than 1,000 sites in Silesia.

DESCRIPTION

Location: Silesia, Poland

Type of action: Mapping tool

Actors: EU, Marshal's office, local research institute

Financing conditions: 85% EU fund, 15% Marshal's Office of Silesia Voivodeship

Fund(s): ERDF



KEY POINTS



APPROACH

- Development of a user-friendly mapping tool to provide information about degraded post-industrial areas, ensuring a flow of information to investors and thereby overcoming the information scarcity regarding post-industrial sites



ENABLING CONDITIONS

- Availability of EU fund and governmental contribution for the implementation
- Partnership with local research institute
- Built onto an already existing database of spatial information



CHALLENGES

- Development of database was labour and time intensive
- Challenging updating process and data gathering
- No formal monitoring of use and impact



ACHIEVEMENTS

- Data collection of 1,000 sites
- Managing to approach target groups (investors, spatial developers)
- Increasing public awareness on the issue



POST-INDUSTRIAL SITES IN SILESIA

There are a large number of unused and post-industrial sites in Silesia, many of them close to urban areas. However both for city planners and private investors, the lack of data on these sites has proven to be a major hurdle in the economic development of the region. In particular, the lack of information on the condition and degradation level of the sites has been an obstacle to attracting investors.

Introduction

Many coal regions in Europe have experienced an overall decline in industrial activity, particularly since the coal and steel industries are closely interlinked. Consequently, post-industrial sites and ruins of former factories can commonly be found in coal regions. Despite being seen as a symbol of decline, post-industrial sites represent an untapped potential for future economic development. New companies wanting to settle in the region often struggle to find a good location; these sites offer unused land that is in principle available, often close to city centres.

Also in Silesia, Poland's most important coal mining and steel manufacturing region, a large number of unused and post-industrial sites exist. For city planners and private investors, the lack of data on these sites has proven to be a major hurdle in the economic development of the region. In particular, the lack of information on the condition and degradation level of the sites has been an obstacle to attracting investors.

Against this background, the Marshal's Office of Silesia Voivodeship, in partnership with the Central Mining Institute (Główny Instytut Górnictwa-GIG) in Katowice, created a web-based database on more than 1,000 post-industrial sites. The database covers elements such as the presence of residential buildings, agricultural activity, and environmental conditions, including if the area is contaminated, if water sources are available, or if the site is a landfill for waste, etc.

The OPI-TPP tool is part of the region's Spatial Information System (RSIP): a publicly available GIS-based database which supports public administration and municipalities. The main target groups are investors and experts who are responsible for city development and spatial planning.

The collection of the data was attained partly from the RSIP system and partly from external sources (through personal contact and surveys filled-in by landowners). The collected data has been continually fed into the tool. The tool not only allows for quick access to key information, but there is also the possibility to create complex, advanced reports. Although the database already covers several environmental and social aspects, it will be supplemented with further sections, such as the estimated cost of the revitalisation process or the area's value, providing a wider range of information to potential users.

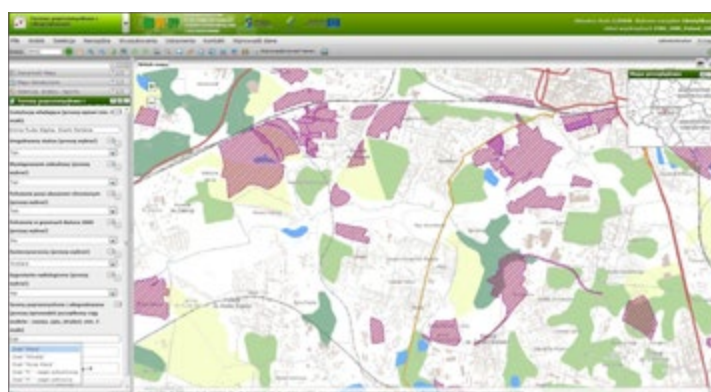


Figure 1

INFORMATION PLATFORM FOR POST-INDUSTRIAL AND DEGRADED AREAS IN SILESIA (OPI-TPP)

Source: <https://opitpp.orsip.pl/imap/>

Achievements

Within a web-based tool, key information of about 1 000 degraded areas has been collected and made available to the public in an easy-to-access database. According to the implementer of the tool, it has been used in spatial planning for urban recovery plans and by investors to get information before entering an area.

1 000

POST-INDUSTRIAL SITES

Key information of about 1 000 degraded areas has been collected and made available to the public in an easy-to-access database.

Through the availability of data on the environmental condition of the sites, formal procedures can be sped up, e.g. for granting environmental approval or for the implementation of reclamation projects.

Additionally, both the data collection process and the public availability of the data has increased awareness in the region of the necessity of post-industrial site conversion.

Challenges

Developing the database was quite labour and time intensive. It required three years and two employees to develop its current status. The developers faced some difficulties during data gathering, such as finding available data related to technical infrastructure or the type of waste in specific areas. Furthermore, data has been fragmented, often across national, regional and local authorities, which made individual enquiries necessary, particularly to landowners.

A still existing challenge is the need to continuously update the tool, which again requires resources as no automatic update mechanism or reporting procedures are yet in place.

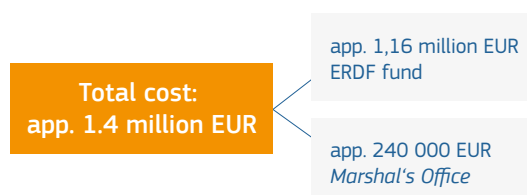
Furthermore, there is no monitoring system for the tool in place. Thus, it is difficult to evaluate the success and impact of the tool (e.g. Who is using it? How often? With how much success?).

Enabling conditions

The project was 85% financed from EU Regional Development Funds (ERDF). The remaining share was provided by the Marshal's Office of Silesia Voivodeship.

The tool was developed in partnership with a local research institute, the Central Mining Institute, which brought in both the capacity to build the tool and to gather data.

Sources of data regarding geological, environmental monitoring and water cadastre aspects are largely based on the already existing database of the spatial information system. Complementary data was collected with the contributions of site managers/owners.



Further Reading

The tool: <https://opitpp.orsip.pl/imap/>

<https://dtek.com/content/files/jan-bondaruk.pdf>

General assessments about Silesia:

http://regionsbeyondcoal.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2018_11_From_restructuring_to_sustainable_development_The_case_of_Upper_Silesia-1.pdf

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/ema_coal_regions_-_21.05.2019_pl.pdf

IMPORTANT LEARNING POINTS

- Centralised and open-access data on post-industrial sites can support and speed-up reclamation processes, spatial planning and help to attract investors to coal mining regions.
- However, data gathering processes are very effort intensive and costly. This includes initial data collection and long-term update processes.
- For the web-based tool developed by the Marshall's office of Silesia, the key success factors were: i) partnering up with a local research institute in developing the database, ii) accessing EU (ERDF) funding, and iii) efficiently building upon existing information and databases.

Platform for Coal Regions in Transition

The Platform for Coal Regions in Transition is an initiative by the European Commission.

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