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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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### **The influence of informal civic initiatives on shaping urban space. The example of Lodz**

There are many stakeholder groups with different objectives and needs who are involved in the process of shaping urban space. In recent years, with the shift in spatial planning from a dichotomous division into public and private sectors to a multi – actor space shaping process, the role of the community representatives has become particularly visible. It should be recognised, however, that civic engagement is often limited in literature to the formal activities of third sector organisations, which leads to a limited perception of the sources of civic engagement. In fact, the so-called ‘undiscovered sector’, which includes the non-formalised, grassroots activity of city inhabitants, is increasingly developing.

The subject of this dissertation are therefore civic initiatives undertaken by informal groups of inhabitants. The case study in this respect is Lodz, as a city with a complex history and identity, whose new development strategy is based precisely on the idea of co – creating the city (‘Lodz Development Strategy 2030+. Co – Created City). The main aim of the dissertation is to explain the impact of civic initiatives undertaken by informal groups on the shaping of the urban space of Lodz. The main objective was assigned with six specific goals relating to various dimensions of grassroots social activity and their significance for the shaping of public spaces.

The structure of the paper is divided into two main sections. The first part presents the broad research context, covering the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the research problem and the analysis of grassroots social activism as an object of social research. This part also discusses the legal framework for the development of informal activism. The results of the analyses in this part of the thesis can be found in chapters one to three. The second part focuses on a detailed analysis of the case of Lodz, with a particular focus on the local conditions that influence the level of social engagement of the inhabitants

and the tools of cooperation between the city authorities and informal groups. This part also contains the results of field research on the distribution of social initiatives in the urban space of Lodz and their perception by the local community, which constitutes the content of chapters four and five.

Summarising, the dissertation provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of grassroots, non – formalised social engagement in city shaping processes. The findings indicate the growing importance of the stakeholders analysed, as well as the evolving roles of both themselves and other stakeholders involved in city shaping and management processes. More studies of this phenomenon are essential, especially in the context of contemporary urban studies.