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## Urban Area Revitalisation Programme Implementation Conditions in the Province of Warmia and Mazury

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**URBAN AREA REVITALISATION PROGRAMME  
IMPLEMENTATION CONDITIONS IN THE PROVINCE  
OF WARMIA AND MAZURY<sup>1</sup>**

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Key words: revitalisation, town.

**A b s t r a c t**

This paper identifies the major factors that are the conditions for implementation of local urban area revitalisation programmes. Studies conducted in selected towns of the province of Warmia and Mazury showed that the availability of own and external funding for project implementation, accumulation of social problems in the areas subject to revitalisation, the size and diversity of entities involved in the revitalisation process and the lack of comprehensive legal regulations concerning revitalisation process organisation (absence of the *Act on Revitalisation*) were the most important factors influencing the revitalisation processes among those implementing and coordinating the programmes.

**UWARUNKOWANIA REALIZACJI PROGRAMÓW REWITALIZACJI OBSZARÓW  
MIEJSKICH W WOJEWÓDZTWIE WARMIŃSKO-MAZURSKIM**

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Słowa kluczowe: rewitalizacja, miasto.

**A b s t r a k t**

Celem opracowania jest identyfikacja głównych czynników warunkujących realizację lokalnych programów rewitalizacji obszarów miejskich. Badania przeprowadzone w wybranych miastach województwa warmińsko-mazurskiego wykazały, że z punktu widzenia realizatorów i koordynatorów programów rewitalizacji najważniejszymi czynnikami warunkującymi procesy odnowy miast są: dostępność własnych i zewnętrznych środków finansowych na realizację inwestycji, kumulacja problemów zaangażowanych w proces rewitalizacji oraz brak kompleksowych uregulowań prawnych, dotyczących organizacji procesu rewitalizacji (brak ustawy o rewitalizacji).

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## Introduction

Contemporary towns are frequently challenged by the problem of developing degraded monumental, industrial or former military areas which have lost their functions. Revitalisation is one of the options for activating such an area.

The urban area revitalisation process is a complex category referring to activities by numerous entities undertaken in many areas of town functioning focused on simultaneous attainment of social, economic and spatial targets of its development.

This initially purely medical term meaning “restoring the life” (*re* + Latin *vitalis* meaning *lively, life-giving*) (*Słownik...* 1991, p. 746), was transferred to the domain of architecture and urban planning. The term revitalisation in relation to the urban areas started being used to describe the planned activities of local entities initiated mainly by the local government, encompassing not only modernisation and adaptation of the degraded terrains and structures, but also social and economic activation of such areas.

The term *revitalisation* is the most popular term used in the literature for the phenomenon of comprehensive renovation of the degraded areas in towns used by authors such as: J. Kromer (2010), W. W. Fritz, E. Joder Timothy, J. Mumphrey (1995), O. Dziekoński and K. Baczyński (2004), P. Lorens (2007), Z. K. Zuziak (1998). In the English language literature, this phenomenon is also referred to as *urban regeneration* (*French: regeneration urbaine*), a term which is used by, among others, Ch. Landry (2008), P. Roberts and H. Sykes (2008). In the Polish literature, the term *urban renewal* can be found in publications by Z. Ziobrowski (2008), among others. However, the term revitalisation reflects the full, multi-aspect nature and complexity of the discussed process of social, economic, spatial and cultural transformations occurring within the crisis area subject to such transformations.

Revitalisation is a process of planned actions initiated and undertaken by local entities based on a comprehensive diagnosis and assessment of the status of available resources (social-cultural capital, economic capital, including the financial and spatial-environmental capital) as well as the needs of the local economy for their development but also the conditions and potential resulting from being in a certain local, regional, national and global environment. This involves the stimulation of existing functions of the urban areas defined as a crisis area or giving it new functions for the purpose of activating it for the general development of the entire town (local development) (FARELNIK 2011, s. 96).

Given this definition of urban area revitalisation, the question arises as to whether the local authorities that are frequently the revitalisation programme initiators and operators are aware of the complexity of the revitalisation process and whether they are able to identify the key factors that condition the success of undertaken actions.

## **Methodology of study**

Surveys conducted in the towns of the province of Warmia and Mazury in 2010 formed the basis for the urban area revitalisation process analysis. Within this framework, analysis of the contents of 57 local revitalisation programmes (LRP), implemented in towns of Warmia and Mazury during the years 2004–2010 was conducted. Additionally, interviews were conducted with revitalisation programme operators or coordinators (most frequently, they were mayors of the towns or town administration office employees involved directly in coordination of the LRP, designated by the mayor or president).

It should be pointed out that, as of 2004, the number of revitalisation programmes in the towns of Warmia and Mazury has been increasing continually. During the years 2004–2010, 20 revitalisation programmes were developed; in 2007, 32 programmes were under implementation, in 2008 – 40, and in 2009 – 54. In 2010, only 6 towns did not have an LRP (Biała Piska, Miłomłyn, Młynary, Ruciane-Nida, Sępolewo and Zalewo). The other towns had one or more revitalisation programmes planned for the period of 2007–2013 or even until 2020.

Representatives of 22 towns<sup>2</sup> participated in the survey based on conducting interviews with the revitalisation programme operators. This group included 4 towns (Młynary, Pasym, Ruciane-Nida, Zalewo) declaring successful implementation of planning instruments other than LRP local development. In the town of Kisielice, the revitalisation programme available was not implemented as a consequence of limited own funds for investments and in Miłomłyn the revitalisation programme was under development. In the remaining 16 towns, the information necessary for conducting the evaluation of conditions and level of the undertaken revitalisation activities implementation was provided. Those included 12 small towns (with populations under 20,000) – Barczewo, Braniewo, Górowo Iławeckie, Mikołajki, Morąg, Nidzica, Olecko, Orzysz, Pasłęk, Pisz, Tolkmicko and Węgorzewo, 2 medium-sized towns – Mrągowo and Bartoszyce and 2 cities (exceeding 100,000 inhabitants) – Olsztyn and Elbląg.

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<sup>2</sup> The enquiry for consent for conducting the survey was addressed to mayors and presidents of all 49 towns and cities in the province of Warmia and Mazury. A positive response was received from 22 towns and cities.

## Motivations for development and factors conditioning implementation of the local revitalisation programmes

Attainment of the following goals was indicated as the leading motivation for the development of local revitalisation programmes: upgrading the quality of living in a given area (indicated in 13 towns), area image change (10 towns), ensuring population safety (9 towns), architectural renovation (8 towns), protection of the existing material culture and landscape values (8 towns), preventing area marginalisation (8 towns), renovation of housing resources (5 towns), creating spatial conditions for town development (4 towns), creating new jobs (4 towns), requirement of drafting the LRP in applying for the funds from the EU programmes (3 towns), integration of the area with the rest of the town (2 towns) and natural environment condition improvement (1 town). The structure of motivations for drafting the LRP in the towns of Warmia and Mazury is presented in Figure 1.

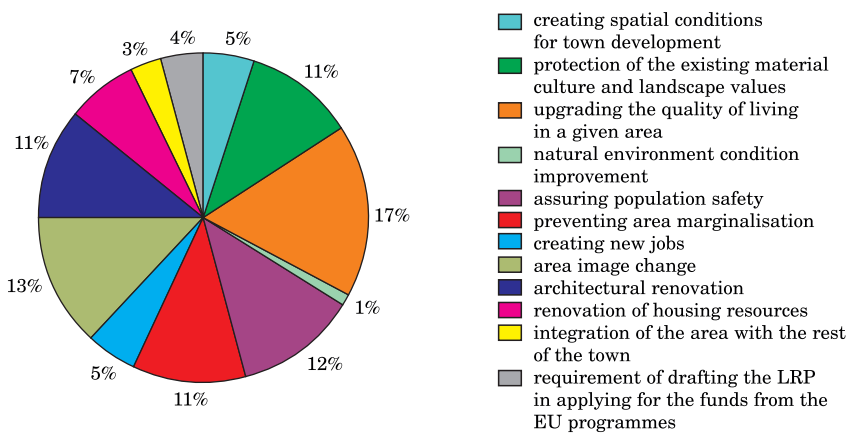


Fig. 1. Motivations for drafting the local revitalisation programme according to the respondents  
Source: FARELNIK (2011, p. 212).

The diversity of motivations for selected local revitalisation programme development may result from the necessity of formulating sustainable town development. By frequently undertaking very far-reaching interventions in the degraded areas, town authorities aim not only at the urban quality improvement, but also at solving social (poverty, social pathologies) or economic (low level of entrepreneurship, unemployment) problems. Elaboration and implementation of a revitalisation programme consistent with the assumptions of other municipality development planning documents, without

neglecting the social, cultural, spatial and environmental issues, is a manifestation of the integrated town development planning.

The goals of local development which could be attained through revitalisation activities were identified by the respondents consistently with the assumptions of the following strategic documents: the town development strategy, local development programme, enterprise development programme, town marketing strategy, multi-annual investment programme, study of conditions and directions of physical development of the municipality, local physical development plans and the environmental protection strategy.

The degree of correlation between the local revitalisation programme goals and the goals of other documents used in the town development planning, according to the revitalisation programme coordinators, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
Consistency of the local revitalisation programme goals with other planning documents

Document type	Local revitalisation programme				
	economic goals	social goals	spatial goals	environmental goals	cultural goals
Development strategy	****	****	****	***	***
Local development programme	***	***	***	**	**
Enterprise development programme	**	*	*	*	*
Town marketing strategy	*	*	*	*	*
Multi-annual investment programme	***	*	*	*	*
Study of conditions and directions of physical development of the municipality	*	*	***	*	*
Local physical development plans	*	*	***	*	*
Environmental protection strategy	*	*	**	*	*

Correlation of the LRP goals with other documents:

\*\*\*\* – very high

\*\*\* – high

\*\* – moderate

\* – low

Source: FARELNIK (2011, p. 213).

In the opinion of the LRP operators, the undertaken revitalisation activities served the attainment of most of the goals included in the development strategy and in the physical planning documents (study of conditions and

directions of physical development of the municipality and local physical development plan). Most frequently, the revitalisation programmes elaborated were identified with the attainment of economic, social and spatial goals while attributing a lower rank to environmental and cultural goals. According to the opinions from a few towns (e.g. Olsztyn), development goals were treated equally, according to the principle of an integrated and holistic approach to urban development planning.

Among the key factors conditioning the local revitalisation plan implementation, the following were the most frequently indicated:

1. Availability or limited availability of funds (indicated in 14 towns), related to the revitalisation investment financing capacity (frequently, given the nature of the area and structures, e.g. encompassed by conservation protection or requiring very costly reclamation works) from own budget funds. Towns, particularly the smallest ones, have difficulty obtaining sufficient funding for other investment activities. The importance of this limitation was also highlighted in the context of applying for support from the European Union funds for which providing an own contribution to the investment project represents a condition for obtaining the support. The possibility of obtaining investment project co-financing from structural funds available not only for revitalisation frequently forces the towns to make choices between projects for implementation – to choose a revitalisation project or a “green field” investment project.

2. Accumulation of social problems in the area covered by revitalisation (indicated in 12 towns) that require complex, long-term, systematically-implemented social activation programmes to limit the problems of social exclusion poverty, social pathologies and improvement of the level of residential safety. These are problems with different backgrounds, frequently correlated with long-term unemployment and, as a consequence, solving them or limiting their negative consequences is not an easy task. Consequently, the effective revitalisation is (and should be) evaluated from the perspective of the level of attainment of social and cultural goals, among others, the upgrading of living quality in the revitalised area.

3. The number of entities participating in the revitalisation process (indicated by 6 towns) which may be an element hindering undertaking and implementing the local revitalisation programme or even making it impossible, particularly if there is a lack of cooperation and dialogue skills among the local economy entities. In comprehensive planning of spatial renewal and socioeconomic activation of a town area, the involvement of numerous entities representing various interest groups – residents, entrepreneurs, local authorities, etc. is necessary. Building relations on so many levels may be seen as a hindrance to local revitalisation programme implementation. On the other

hand, however, compilation of such multi-directional activity of entities implementing social, economic, cultural and spatial goals allows the achievement of additional benefits from the revitalisation process that are not just the sum of the individual outcomes of individual actions, but also provide the effects of synergies.

4. Involvement of local leaders in the revitalisation process (indicated by 6 towns) that may be of key importance, particularly at the stage of planning the development based on problem area revitalisation. Participation in formulating the programme assumptions and later active participation in the implementation of specific projects builds a feeling of identification with revitalisation goals and conditions the sustainability of the long-term outcomes. This is particularly important from the perspective of reversing unfavourable social phenomena and urban degradation of an area subjected to renewal.

5. The issue of unemployment (indicated by 6 towns) that should be correlated with implementation of one of the fundamental economic goals of revitalisation, which is economic activation of the area. Given the current situation in the labour market of the province of Warmia and Mazury, where the unemployment rate is 20.1% (statistics presented by the Central Statistical Office in December, 2011) the problem of lack of jobs is seen in the surveyed towns as difficult to solve, also from the revitalisation programme perspective.

6. A long-term LRP implementation programme compared to the term in office of the authorities (indicated by 5 towns) is seen as a potential hindrance in the achievement of the intended long-term outcomes. Changes to the local government leadership in municipalities may mean changes in the town investment policies, e.g. favouring implementation of new investments using undeveloped areas (as less problematic and more effective economically).

7. Disorder in the real estate ownership structure in the revitalised areas (indicated by 5 towns) may represent a significant hindrance to revitalisation process implementation in the areas that, from an architectural, social-cultural or economic perspective, are particularly predisposed to it. Clear legal status of ownership represents a necessary condition for undertaking the revitalisation intervention.

8. Legal regulations (indicated by 4 towns) – a transparent system of revitalisation intervention instruments, is particularly important from the perspective of developing the spatial order in town centres and giving a new quality to the public spaces and is an important factor in revitalisation process planning and implementation. Fundamental regulations concerning this area could be provided by the *Act on Revitalisation* planned in Poland since the 1990s.



9. The attitude of the local community to the LRP (indicated by 4 towns) may range from disapproval and opposition through a neutral attitude to a positive attitude – approval and active participation. Only with the latter, similar to the situation of involvement of the local leaders in the revitalisation process, does it become possible to consider achieving the sustainability of the economic and social outcomes.

10. The complexity and multi-aspect nature of the revitalisation process (indicated by 4 towns) are characteristics that require from those implementing a local revitalisation programme more time and effort in drafting it and considering the interests of many local economic entities as well as the specificity of the areas in which they function (reside and conduct service, trade, cultural, educational, advisory and other activities). Revitalisation programme implementation represents a complex undertaking involving many entities and impacting numerous areas, as a consequence of which those characteristics are frequently seen as serious hindrances.

11. Difficulties with attracting external investors are treated as a limitation in the attainment of the economic activation goal in the revitalisation process (indicated by 3 towns). Local government authorities see their task here in the form of creating favourable spatial location conditions, e.g. providing appropriate infrastructural facilities (construction of roads, tele-information and transmission networks, etc.) and economic conditions resulting from the accepted enterprise support programme or the support and promotion of innovative activity programmes.

12. The activity of organisations supporting the actions undertaken by the town in the area of revitalisation was indicated as a factor contributing to obtaining positive implementation outcomes by only 2 towns. Such a platform for exchange of experience and promotion of good practices has been built in Poland thanks to the activities of, among others, the Revitalisation Forum Association – an organiser of seminars, conferences and publisher of materials on revitalisation experiences in Poland and worldwide. None of the towns in Warmia and Mazury, however, is a member of this association. Towns of the region, although they collaborate with various entities (e.g. partner towns) in many other areas, in the area of revitalisation this collaboration is minor and is frequently limited to informal contacts at the stage of planning and considering the use of revitalisation instruments. The use of experience from training programmes on revitalisation and study tours was only indicated by the City of Olsztyn.

13. Transparent housing policy of the state was indicated by only 1 town as a factor conditioning the revitalisation process. This could be the result of identifying the process more with attainment of social-cultural, spatial or economic goals than with limiting problems such as the so-called “refurbishment gap” in Poland or upgrading the standards of housing units.

The key factors conditioning the local revitalisation programme implementation according to revitalisation operators and coordinators are presented in figure 2.

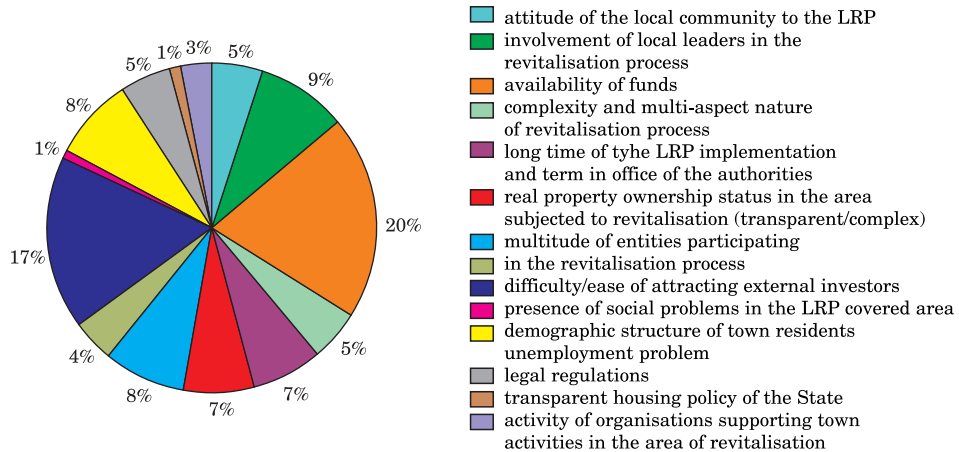


Fig. 2. Major factors conditioning revitalisation of urban areas according to the respondents  
Source: FARELNIK (2011, p. 217).

Units of the local government and their associations, where the local authorities are the initiators and coordinators of revitalisation programmes, as well as private entrepreneurs, housing condominiums and cooperatives, tertiary schools, non-government organisations and churches, were the main entities involved in the implementation of revitalisation programmes in the towns of the region. Revitalisation, in most cases, encompassed historical objects (such as a castle, town house, city hall, water tower, palace, etc.), residential buildings, particularly in the areas of concentrations of blocks of flats, buildings housing organisations and associations, schools, theatres, former military barracks, former industrial buildings (warehouses, production halls, etc.), churches and other objects of a sacral nature.

In the surveyed towns, the impact of the following revitalisation process outcomes on the development of the town was rated the highest:

a. in the economic domain:

- unemployment limitation,
- increased revenues from the real estate tax,
- inflow of the external investment capital,
- increase in revenues from tourism,
- increased enterprise,
- newly-established shops and service facilities,

- b. in the social-cultural domain:
  - decreased crime,
  - limiting the problem of poverty,
  - limiting social pathologies,
  - residential housing standard improvement,
  - local community integration,
  - town image improvement,
  - increase in the number of participants in cultural events,
  - care for the cultural heritage condition,
- c. in the spatial and environmental domain:
  - improvement of transport access,
  - introduction of a new order to public spaces,
  - decrease in the noise level,
  - decrease in the air pollution level,
  - decrease in the soil and water pollution level,
  - increase in the area of greenery.

Coordinators of revitalisation processes ranked the outcome of revitalisation improving the image of the town as being the most important (7% of total points awarded in evaluation of outcomes), introducing new order to public spaces (6.8%) and caring for the condition of the cultural heritage (6.2%). The lowest scores were given to outcomes related to the natural environment protection domain: decrease in the noise level (3.3%), decrease in the level of soil and water pollution (2.3%) and increase in the area of greenery (0.5%). It should be noted that in the evaluation of the revitalisation outcomes, the importance of social-cultural and spatial outcomes ranked the highest, while slightly less importance was attributed to economic outcomes.

## **Conclusions**

The conducted surveys indicate that local authorities use the revitalisation programme as a town development-shaping tool increasingly often and with increasing awareness. Consecutive initiatives of drafting new plans or updating the existing revitalisation plans use the experiences acquired earlier, while the goals formulated for revitalisation programmes represent the development of goals approved in other documents. The revitalisation coordinators see this process as highly complex, engaging many types of local entities and offering outcomes in various domains of the town activities (spatial, economic, social and cultural). The key conditions for implementation of local revitalisation programmes are concentrated in the organisational, financial and legal domains. As a consequence, the most important factors conditioning successful revitalisation of a selected urban area are:

- the attitudes of the local community to the LRP,
- the activities of the local leaders and organisations supporting the revitalisation activities of the town,
- the availability of funding from the budgets of towns and external funding (e.g. the European Union funds),
- the skills of the authorities in coping with accumulated social and economic problems as well as disorganised real estate status in the revitalised areas.

Additionally, effective revitalisation of urban areas can be hindered by the absence of comprehensive legal regulations (e.g. the *Act on Revitalisation*) and a transparent housing policy.

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