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**THE IMPORTANCE OF REVITALISATION PROCESSES
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOWNS
IN THE PROVINCE OF WARMIA AND MAZURY**

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Key words: revitalisation, local development, town.

Abstract

Polish towns face various problems, such as unemployment, marginalisation and social exclusion, migration and damaged and neglected social fabric in towns. The aim of the paper is to show the revitalising actions which comprise the process of comprehensive spatial, economic and social restoration of degraded urban areas.

**ZNACZENIE PROCESÓW REWITALIZACJI DLA ROZWOJU MIAST WOJEWÓDZTWA
WARMIŃSKO-MAZURSKIEGO**

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Słowa kluczowe: rewitalizacja, rozwój lokalny, miasto.

Abstrakt

Miasta polskie borykają się z wieloma problemami, np.: bezrobociem, marginalizacją i wykluczeniem społecznym, migracjami, zniszczoną i zaniedbaną tkanką miejską. Celem artykułu jest wskazanie działań rewitalizacyjnych, będących kompleksowym procesem odnowy przestrzennej, ekonomicznej, społecznej zdegradowanych obszarów miejskich.

Introduction

The greatest problems associated with globalisation, that the Polish towns face, include: increasing mobility of the population, growing size and range of migration, concentration of the population in towns, aggravated problems of marginalisation and social exclusion and, what follows, increasing disintegration of local communities, restriction and chaos in urban spaces and the so-called “residential gap” or low quality of the natural environment.

Perceiving the functions of a town through its ability to satisfy the basic needs of its inhabitants is insufficient. Of increasing importance is the competitiveness of towns, which comprise the network of towns in a region, country or even the entire globe. As a consequence, there is a specific market of the products offered by a town, which are chosen by investors, potential inhabitants and tourists. Urban centres strive to attract new investment projects, capital, tourists and wealthy, educated inhabitants. In order to achieve this, they make use of their strong points and assets, such as attractive urban spaces. Unfortunately, many towns are affected by the problem of the low quality of urban space (e.g. centres and ancient living quarters). The need to improve the quality of life can be addressed by revitalisation of a selected area of a town.

Revitalisation is a complex process, which involves multiple entities and which produces results in many spheres. Revitalisation can be defined as a comprehensive process of restoration of an urban area whose space, functions and substance have been structurally degraded, bringing about a crisis situation which hinders or renders impossible any proper economic and social development of the area as well as the sustained development of the entire town. Revitalisation primarily aims at restoration of the previous functions of an area which has been degraded socially, economically and environmentally or changing its functions into new ones. Therefore, revitalisation is the process of spatial, economic and social change whose aim is to overcome a crisis situation in an area and which leads to development in the broad sense of the word¹.

Objective and methodology of the study

The aim of the paper was to present the concept of revitalisation as a tool which enables town development in view of the changes taking place in its surroundings.

¹ More on the subject in: *Odnowa miast...* (2000), *Rewitalizacja miast.* (2004), Ustawa o rewitalizacji oraz wspieraniu remontów i niektórych inwestycji budowlanych (draft, state as of 04.10.2006 r.).

To do this, a systemic and analytic research procedure was adopted. The systemic approach consisted in conducting literature studies in local development and revitalisation of urban spaces; the analytic approach – in analysing the process of revitalisation in selected towns of the Province of Warmia and Mazury.

The study dealt with 49 towns in the Province of Warmia and Mazury – especially small towns with populations of up to 20 thousand. The analysis covered the process of revitalisation conducted in the years 2004–2006 and the plans contained in local revitalisation programmes for the years 2007–2013.

Research results

In the Province of Warmia and Mazury there are 49 towns, 77% of which are small towns, with populations of up to 20 thousand. According to the data for the year 2005, the largest group are towns with populations of up to 5 thousand: Młynary, Sępól, Kisielice, Zalewo, Miłomłyn, Frombork, Pasym, Bisztynek, Miłakowo, Tolkmicko, Pieniężno, Ryn, Jeziorany, Mikołajki, Biała Piska, Górowo Iławeckie, Korsze and Ruciane-Nida. The next group are slightly larger towns, with populations from 5 to 10 thousand: Reszel, Susz, Orzysz, Barczewo, Olsztynek, Lidzbark, Lubawa, Orneta. Larger than them are: Biskupiec, Dobre Miasto, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Węgorzewo, Pasłęk, Gołdap, Morąg, Nidzica, however, their populations do not exceed 15 thousand. Then there are towns of up to 20 thousand, such as: Olecko, Lidzbark Warmiński, Braniewo, Pisz. Medium-sized cities (20–50 thousand) include: Działdowo, Mrągowo, Bartoszyce, Szczytno, Kętrzyn, Giżycko, Iława, Ostróda, with only the last two having more than 30 thousand inhabitants. The largest cities in the region are: Elk (55,793), Elbląg (127,415), Olsztyn (168,431).

Characteristic features of the towns of Warmia and Mazury include growing disproportions between the main city in the region and other urban centres. The main problems faced by the towns in the region are:

- a high unemployment rate,
- unfavourable migration outflow,
- changing demographic and occupational structure of town dwellers,
- low income of the population,
- poor condition of the infrastructure (including historical objects),
- insufficient residential resources, with a significant share of blocks of flats,
- large post-military areas which need new functions assigned to them,
- low level of economic activity,
- poor access to communication facilities,
- poor interest from external investors.

It is therefore reasonable to take actions aimed at curbing destabilisation of the structure of urban centres in the region. Revitalisation is one of such actions.

The most important aims of a town revitalisation process include:

- improving the quality of life in the area,
- protecting the existing values of the material culture and landscape,
- ensuring the safety of the population,
- preventing marginalisation of the area,
- creating new jobs,
- changing the image of the area,
- architectural restoration,
- integration of the area covered by revitalisation programs with the remaining part of the town,
- improvement of the condition of the natural environment.

Owing to the interdisciplinary nature of the process, the results of revitalisation are seen in many spheres: urban, economic, social, ecological, etc. The dualism of revitalisation effects is closely linked to the economic and cultural sphere, which is shown in the following illustration.

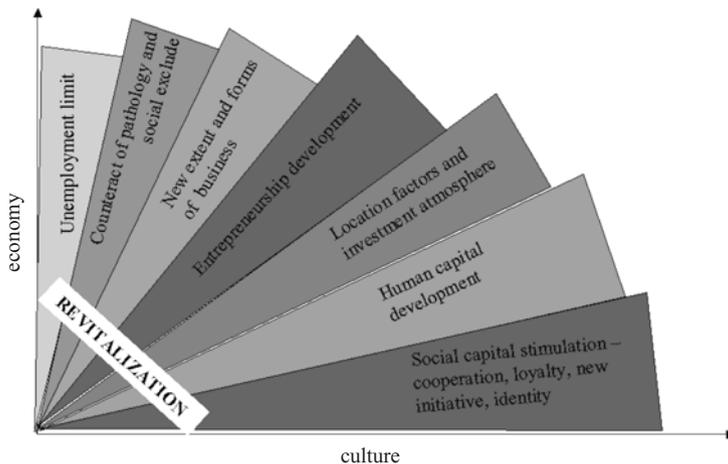


Fig. 1. Selected results of relations between the economy and culture in the process of revitalisation
Source: The authors' analysis.

The effectiveness of revitalisation depends on multiple factors, such as: coherence with the plans which are fundamental to the town development (e.g. the development strategy), commitment of the authorities and the local community, the partnership between the entities from the public, private and non-governmental sector, securing sufficient sources of funding.

Table 1

Projects subsidised within ZPORR in the Province of Warmia and Mazury

Town	Sub-action	Type of project	Project value (PLN)
Dobre Miasto	3.3.1.	Renovation of the building of the "Przyjaźń" cinema	1,431,000
Ełk	3.3.1.	Construction of phase II of the promenade in Ełk	3,802,733
	3.3.1.	Revitalisation of the town – repair and adaptation of an old tenement house for an artistic school	2,944,260
	3.3.1.	Renovation of the Rzemieślnicza and Bursztynowa street with a view to economic revival of the revitalised housing estates	2,755,908
Goldap	3.3.2.	Adaptation of post-military facilities in Goldap for sport and leisure facilities and a museum	2,110,810
Morąg	3.3.1.	Renovation of buildings and land development at the No. 3 Primary School	4,052,992
	3.3.1.	Renovation of streets and access roads at Kolonia Warszawska – phase I	3,975,712
	3.3.1.	Renovation of streets and access roads at Kolonia Robotnicza – phase II	3,132,295
	3.3.1.	Renovation of streets and access roads at Kolonia Warszawska – phase II	3,614,116
Mrągowo	3.3.2.	Renovation of the sports hall	2,079,439
	3.3.1.	Developing the PCK square and the land around Lake Magistrackie	4,266,000
Nidzica	3.3.1.	Renovation of the Town Hall – Phase I: Adaptation of the attic and repair of the roof of the Town Hall in Nidzica	1,013,506
Olsztyn	3.3.1.	Revitalisation of the old building at 3 General Józef Bem Square in Olsztyn	3,125,995
	3.3.1.	Adaptation of a tenement square for a Cultural Centre	9,700,143
	3.3.2.	Revitalisation of a post-military building (Polish Hunters' Association, Management Board)	3,322,687
	3.3.2.	Revitalisation of a post-military building for OWSliZ in Olsztyn	9,585,604
	3.3.1.	Maintenance and renovation of the Water Tower	1,903,831
Orneta	3.3.1.	Renovation and rebuilding of 3 ancient tenement houses	2,113,692
	3.3.1.	Renovation of tenement houses with architectural value and historic significance at Pionierów Street	858,875
Pieniężno	3.3.1.	Reconstruction of the Old Town Hall	2,517,183
Susz	3.3.1.	Revitalisation of the municipal park in The Old Town of Susz	359,967
Total			68,666,749

Source: www.zporr.warmia.mazury.pl

Many towns in the province of Warmia and Mazury have recognized the opportunity that is created by developing a comprehensive programme of revitalisation. Some examples of programmes that have been subsidised by the Integrated Operating Programme of Regional Development (ZPORR) 2004–2006 are presented below.

Most projects accepted for funding involved renovation of town centres (renovation of ancient houses, town halls) or adapting post-military areas to their new functions.

The projects grouped within action 3.3. (Degraded urban, post-industrial and post-military areas) regarded mainly sub-action 3.3.1. (Revitalisation of urban areas). The resources of sub-action 3.3.2. (Revitalisation of post-industrial and post-military areas) were used to subsidise only 4 projects. The value of the completed projects will amount to PLN 68,666,749, of which 71% are resources provided by EFRR.

The directions of future revitalisation projects in the towns of the Province of Warmia and Mazury are set by the Regional Operating Program for Warmia and Mazury for the years 2007–2013. The document lays down the following priority axes:

1. Enterprise;
2. Tourism;
3. Social infrastructure;
4. Town development, restructuring and revitalisation;
5. Regional and local transport infrastructure;
6. Natural environment;
7. Information society infrastructure;
8. Technical support.

The aim that stems from the priority axis of the development, restructuring and revitalisation of towns is to *strengthen the towns with a high potential for development as attractive centres of enterprise, service and place of residence (Regional Operating Programme..., p. 64).*

The actions centred around the axis are aimed at eliminating the causes and effects of degradation of the area and its revitalisation, understood to denote economic and social activation. Restoration of former splendour and ensuring the development of urban areas will be achieved in particular by three groups of activities: humanisation of the housing estates of blocks of flats, revitalisation of towns, restructuring and adaptation of post-military and post-industrial areas.

Humanisation of housing estates of blocks of flats will include modernisation of multi-family blocks of flats, built mainly of concrete slabs, together with their thermo-modernisation, replacement of heating systems and changes in the architectural layout of buildings. Modernisation will be combined with adaptation of rooms or entire buildings for cultural or therapeutic purposes,

for practising sport or for computer workshops, which will result in reinforcing the social functions in the housing estates and in creating new jobs.

The action termed *Revitalisation of towns* regards the centres of towns and old living quarters. Support is provided to the projects which contribute to the development of a revitalised area. These will include mainly the development projects for empty areas, improvement the functionality of traffic and aesthetic value of the public space, creating safety zones and crime prevention, assigning cultural and educational functions to degraded areas, renovation of buildings with architectural value and historic significance, rebuilding of public infrastructure with a view to development tourism, recreational and sporting functions, combined with business activity and creating infrastructural conditions for business development.

Within the third action, support will be provided to preparation of post-military and post-industrial areas for new investment projects, including the pulling down of old buildings or adapting the existing ones, reclaiming land and constructing local technical infrastructure.

Table 2

The financial plan for the Regional Operating Programme for Warmia and Mazury for the years 2007–2013 (€)

Priority axis	Community contribution	National contribution		Total
		National public contribution	Private contribution	
Enterprise	207,308,408	32,172,072	208,114,876	447,595,356
Tourism	134,750,465	23,780,847	102,893,676	261,424,988
Social infrastructure	62,192,522	10,975,151	0	73,167,673
Development, restructuring and revitalisation of towns	82,923,364	14,633,535	19,023,595	116,580,494
Regional and local transport infrastructure	352,424,294	75,220,235	5,853,414	433,497,943
Natural environment	93,288,784	22,636,249	10,975,151	126,900,184
Information society infrastructure	62,192,522	10,975,151	35,242,429	108,410,102
Technical assistance	41,461,682	0	0	41,461,682
Total	1,036,542,041	190,393,240	382,103,141	1,609,038,422

Source: Regional Operational Programme for Warmia and Mazury for the years 2007–2013 (www.zporr.warmia.mazury.pl)

The total of 1.6 billion Euro will be involved in completing the Regional Operating Programme for Warmia and Mazury. The amount will comprise 64.4% of funds from the European Regional Development Fund, 11.8% of public resources and 23.8% from private sources. Revitalisation actions performed within the Regional Operating Programme for Warmia and Mazury

will involve over 116 million Euro, which will comprise 71% of the community contribution, 12.5% – national public contribution, and the remaining 16.5% – from private sources (*Regional Operational Programme...*, p. 86–87).

Summary

Carefully planned and performed revitalisation of urban space is not only a way to improve the living conditions of local communities but also to achieve a higher level of urban development. In the province of Warmia and Mazury there are mainly small towns and most of them have populations under 5 thousand. They frequently face problems of emigration of young people, increasing unemployment and various social issues. The poor condition of infrastructure and frequently neglected centres of towns do not favour the improvement of their image, the quality of their lives and attracting tourists or investors.

Warmia and Mazury is a region with a potential for tourism which is not made full use of. Owing to the quality of the landscapes, the good quality of the environment and numerous monuments of architecture, even the smallest towns in the region can benefit from the development of tourism. There is a chance to achieve this purpose if a properly developed programme of revitalisation is performed, taking into account the diagnosis of the socio-economic situation, its main problems and development opportunities.

Owing to its multi-facet and inter-disciplinary nature, revitalisation requires a broader look and balancing the actions and in further perspective, also the effects in the social, economic and spatial perspective. Its effectiveness depends on a thorough diagnosis of the urban area, the ability to construct a financial assembly, which requires several entities to be involved, both from the public and private sector. Many towns from the Province of Warmia and Mazury have recognized the opportunity provided by developing a revitalisation programme and are making use of it as a development tool.

Translated by JOANNA JENSEN

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