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## **Revitalisation approaches in the EU – Trends and Impacts related to Poland**

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### **Abstract**

*According to the Leipzig Charter on sustainable European cities, the spatial planning system should integrate all levels and be based on the principles of sustainable development. In Poland, revitalisation or urban regeneration which has a significant impact on the image and correct functioning of the city still does not include the European Union call for an integrated approach in practice. Although Poland as a new EU country is benefiting from EU assistance, it does not have an adequate and integrated State planning policy that positively affects the urban regeneration process, compared to what is taking place in other EU countries, such as Germany. Nevertheless the role of urban regeneration in Poland is constantly evolving and growing and some examples of successful revitalisation are discussed. Concerning Poland, attention will be given to the inadequate legislation pertaining to revitalisation and the limited state involvement. In contrast, the EU revitalisation guidelines which Polish municipalities must gradually apply are also highlighted. This paper also discusses the revitalisation trends in Poland, beginning with a brief analysis of the development of urban planning after World War (II), and will also draw attention to factors which contribute to an effective revitalisation approach. These include the role of the EU and other stakeholders, as well as the perception of the revitalisation process and its activities.*

**Key words:** City revitalisation, urban regeneration, urban planning.

**JEL Classification:** R11, R12

### **1. Introduction – overview of the revitalisation issue in Poland**

The image of Polish cities depends on a spatial planning approach which each city schedules separately. However, this approach is influenced by many common factors for instance the aims of politicians, awareness of local problems or often funding and planning legislation. The European Union postulate of another factor, which can positively affect the urban image in Poland, is integrated spatial planning. The issue of integrated city planning includes revitalisation as well and is widely discussed in many planning documents at the European level, e. g. the Leipzig Charter on sustainable European cities. The research interest of this paper is related to this issue and focuses on its implementation in European countries with an emphasis on Poland.

Poland has a long tradition of revitalisation, which has been based on maintaining the cultural heritage. Nevertheless, after 45 years of developmental and political disadvantages, planning policy caused the incurrence of city areas with multi-layered problems (spatial, social, technical, economic, ecological), which municipalities (cities) in times of state system' changes and transformation of economy had to deal with it. At the same time political resolutions did not favour the incurrence of legitimate regulations or any instruments for municipalities to deal effectively with this issue, making it even more difficult to solve. Moreover, the concentration of state funding just on maintenance of listed historic monuments contributed to the neglect of other parts of the city (central areas).

However, EU assistance has opened up a new approach for revitalisation and a possibility to adapt and learn from EU revitalisation guidelines. Although it allowed covering a part of the revitalisation expenses, it also requires an adjustment to EU principles or even changes to the existing Polish framework conditions. The first funding period for revitalisation in Poland is now over (2004-2006). Nonetheless there are still misunderstandings regarding the implementation of EU rules within the revitalisation process. These misunderstandings arise from gaps in practical integration and cooperation of all revitalisation levels. How far it will be changed in the next funding period (2007-13), remains an open question.

Literature concerning revitalisation in Poland already gives some advice about how to organise and conduct the process, even comparing some parts of it to the German approach with concurrent maintenance of the EU rules [1]. The necessity for a change of Polish laws and attitudes of stakeholders with respect to revitalisation is a fact. This article will instead outline and identify a cause for current problems related to revitalisation through the description and analysis of revitalisation trends, which were developed after the Second World War. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the particular nature of revitalisation in Poland, the specific aspects of the revitalisation process will be discussed. Moreover, using selected examples of successful revitalisation, those factors which contribute to an effective revitalisation approach in Poland, will be indicated.

## **2. Revitalisation approaches in European cities – Poland as a case study**

### **2.1 Development of revitalisation trends in Poland**

In Poland after 1945 there have been noticeable changes in the approach to city planning which could be defined as “trends” of planning policy and can be linked to revitalisation. The post-World War II period in Poland was similar to most affected European countries, where state policy during the first 10 years was characterised by a prioritised focus on war-devastations. Therefore Polish post-war-revitalisation concentrated mostly on the reconstruction of city centres as well as a general rebuilding of the damaged city.

The changes of the trends described below were permanently influenced by politics [2]. As a result of this, since 1952 a new approach to organise a city was initiated and continued until the economic transformation in 1989. This period in Poland was known as the Polish People’s Republic and similar to the former DDR, the Socialistic Planning Policy was applied. On the one hand the city centers were designed based on the modern city planning’ principles introduced by politician Edward Gierek, while on the other hand new settlements made of prefabricated buildings were being established on the city periphery. From the end of the sixties till the seventies, this amounted to approximately 250.000 flats per year [3]. According to the modern approach, which has a false revitalisation premise, a portion of the city centre was demolished so that a new modern element could be established. In contradiction to socialistic approaches, “systematic and material-protecting renewal” also occurred during this period [4]. Courtesy of *Workshops for Monuments Preservation (Pracownia Konserwacji Zabytków)* new concepts of “maintaining renewal” could be developed. Nevertheless only buildings or their groups under historic preservation could be renewed from public funding.

Following the assumption that the revitalisation of city centres appears when there is a demand on the city centre, there is an explanation of why the centres had a modest role at this period of time. The former centralised economy was characterised by a significant GDP contribution from industry and agriculture (1950: 32.5 % and 60.3% respectively; 1983: 60.2% and 16.5%) and a slight contribution of services – 1950: 7.2% and 1983: 23.3% [5]. In

connection with it, there was also a slight demand on the areas where the service activities could be located, like the central areas (op.cit.). Furthermore the housing market in said areas was less attractive than those located on the city periphery. These factors contributed to the neglect of central city zones and to the compounding existing problems.

Many political decisions made between 1952 and 1989 were the basis for problems that appeared after 1989 and have remained unresolved up until today. The basic issue which has significant influence on the revitalisation process is the mixed and complicated state of ownership (property relations). Most of the hitherto nationalised lands (including buildings) were (after 1989) allocated to municipalities. However, communes, having no funding for renewal, privatized a significant part of the land and buildings. A situation subsequently developed, whereby within one area or a building multiple ownerships occurred, for instance private, commune or private-commune ownerships. In the settlements made from pre-fabricated buildings housing companionships was established who are the owners of these types of buildings. Another problem was the passing of an unfavourable planning law, which limited or even precluded revitalisation activities (discussed further in point 2.2 of this article). Moreover, the suburbanisation processes which were continuing in the nineties, contributed to the weakening role of city centres and to the problem of chaotic buildings on the city edges and the problem of the so called *renovation gap* (*luka remontowa*) in the central areas of the city.

In contradiction to progressive suburbanisation, many Polish municipalities (cities) in the nineties attempted revitalisation of the central areas by preparing needful documentation, completing necessary administration tasks and spatial plans and even acquiring revitalisation funds (Bielsko-Biala). To make revitalisation more efficient many of them cooperated with foreign institutions or took part in programs, which enabled the experts from other countries to work in Polish administration departments (Szczecin, Krakow, Bytom). Some of the revitalisation projects were at that time under the influence of URBAN so that they contained and involved a social aspect. The definition of the revitalisation process enlarged and enhanced the role of the social approach. Nevertheless such examples were rare. Additionally, the fact that just a quarter of the cities or municipalities contain the need for revitalisation in their planning documents (*Strategy of City Development* and *Study of Conditions and Directions of Spatial Planning*) indicates a limited interest or awareness of the problem in Polish cities [3].

This interest occurred concurrently with EU assistance, however, not together with awareness and understanding of the revitalisation concept. It contributed to the emergence of Local Revitalisation Programs (LPR for period 2004-06) which acted as an instrument for EU fund applications only, instead of as an instrument linking all aspects of revitalisation in one program and implementing them in practise. Certainly EU guidelines were relevant for development of revitalisation interest in Polish municipalities and the period after EU assistance can be characterised as attempts of implementation of the stated rules. The question of how it affected the city regeneration process in Poland is described in more detail in section 2.2 of this manuscript.

The table below shows an overview of the main attributes of planning processes and decisions relevant for revitalisation. Moreover it defines trends developed after 1945.

**Table 1. Trends related to revitalisation in Poland since 1945**

<b>Years</b>	<b>General features related to revitalisation</b>	<b>Trends defining</b>
	<i>POLAND</i>	
Since 2004	Revitalisation's guidelines from EU – 2 phases “Local Revitalisation's Program” (2004-06) and <i>Regional Operation Program</i> (2007-2013), <i>Profit driven revitalisation</i> – limited understanding of the EU-guidelines by the municipalities causes using the programs only for receipt of founding, constantly but slowly growth of awareness in municipalities.	<i>Revitalisation based on EU guidelines</i>
	<i>POLAND</i>	
1990-2003	Nationalised lands allocated for communes, as well as privatisation of communes lands and emergence of communal-private ownership, development of companies for social housing construction (TBS) Large requirement for new houses = new settlements on the city edge = suburbanisation and occurrence of <i>renovation gap</i> ( <i>luka remontowa</i> ), Revitalisation based on cooperation with foreign institutions, consideration of the social aspect of revitalisation, as well as <i>private revitalisation</i> – renewal of one part of a building and renting it for commercial gain.	<i>Adaptation to changes and dealing with multi-layered problems</i>  <i>First complex revitalisation projects</i>
	<i>POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC</i> ( <i>PRL = POLSKA RZECZPOSPOLITA LUDOWA</i> )	
1953-1989	Nationalisation of lands, New settlements on the city boundaries made of prefabricated buildings - Companionship as a owner of a this type of building, <i>Modern city planning</i> (seventies), <i>Systematic and substance-protecting</i> renewal [4] – public founding for buildings under historic preservation only, Small demand on areas for location of service activities, such as city centre.	<i>Socialistic Planning Policy vs. Preservation of historic buildings</i>
	<i>PEOPLE'S POLAND (POLSKA LUDOWA)</i>	
1945-52	Rebuilding of the cities (Warsaw, Kolberg, Stettin), Reconstruction of city centres (Posen, Danzig, Breslau).	<i>State Policy of Redevelopment (rebuilding &amp; reconstruction)</i>

*Source: Elaborated by author, based on literature overview*

## 2.2 Aspects and examples of Polish urban regeneration

To understand the Polish situation pertaining to revitalisation, the contribution of planning law, founding, stakeholders and organisation of the process will be detailed. These four aspects are closely related to the factors that have a significant impact on revitalisation and give an overview and introduction to the next section of this article.

While it is true that Poland has no adequate revitalisation act which will help municipalities carrying out the urban revitalisation process, attempts have been made since 1993 to establish a law. The consequences of a lack of a revitalisation act implies that all revitalisation actions have to be obligatorily assigned to existing planning law (Act from 27 March 2003 about spatial planning and development – Journal of Laws No 80, pos. 717 with

changes.) which limits the actions or even makes some of them impossible. The planning law regulates instead, principles pertaining to greenfield sites which are inadequate to revitalisation issue dealing with constructed areas. The miss-understanding of revitalisation character thus arises from inadequate or wrong laws. These rules allow investors or owners to accomplish their own interest. One such example is the possibility of co-financing of the land use plan (Miejscowy Plan Zagospodarowania Przestrzennego) by the investors while another is the broad building authorisation for property owners [6].

Other acts linked to revitalisation are:

- act from 8 March 1998 about self-government of municipality (Unitary text Journal of Laws from 2001 No 142, pos. 1592 with changes) - article 1 mentioned tasks of municipalities but do not clearly state revitalisation as a public task, however the municipality has to deal with this issue without any legitimate or financial instruments,
- act from 5 June 1998 about self-government of voivodship (Unitary text Journal of Laws from 2001 No 142, pos. 1950 with changes) - article 11 mentions aims in Strategy of Voivodship which link to aims of revitalisation - *Preservation of the value of cultural and natural environment with consideration of the needs of future generations, - The creation and maintenance of spatial order,*
- act from 7 July 1994 Building law – article 15 mentions *rehabilitation of existing buildings and technical infrastructure.*

Within the entire array of Polish laws there is none which will capture the issue in an integrated and complex way. However it should also be highlighted that in spite of this, revitalisation does take place in Polish cities. Nevertheless the question remains, what is understood by revitalisation and how can it be described?

According to a definition from February 2008 accepted by the Science Committee of the project *Revitalisation of Polish cities as a way to maintain material and spiritual heritage and a factor of sustainable development*, revitalisation is a coordinated process which is collaboratively implemented by authority of self-government, local community and other stakeholders and is an element of development policy. The aim of revitalisation is to counteract degradation of building areas and crisis situations and to thereby contribute to development and quality changes concerning growth of citizen participation, improvement of living conditions, and protection of national heritage with maintenance of the rules of sustainable development. It is important that revitalisation is perceived as a process, and as a coordination and integration of all activities contributing to the improvement of city space.

As already mentioned Poland has no act which will define how to prepare, develop and finish revitalisation processes like for instance Germany which regulate principles pertaining to city regeneration [7]. The only regulations, methods and terms concerning revitalisation issue provide guidelines from the European Union. For two funding periods 2004-06 and 2007-13 Polish municipalities could apply for subsidies for the implementation of revitalisation in the city [8]. The requirement was to accomplish in both periods a Local Revitalisation Program (LPR) which should be a universal, integrated and local development program, of which more detail, local and urban development plans for the neighborhoods should be derived [9]. As a result LPRs which have no coherence to other planning documents were created and between Polish cities competition for EU funding began. The LPR was treated by municipalities as an attachment to the application form for EU subsidies.

Moreover, in spite of social revitalisation premise from EU the projects which were chosen for subsidies do not include projects pertaining to social and economic aspects (*software*) but investment-projects (*hardware*) [10]. The decision about which projects should be subsidised is taken in Voivodship administration (Marshal-authorities) consisting of experts from various fields. Therefore the next question that arises concerns the procedure of selecting material projects and the professional competences of decision makers.

The new period for getting EU funding started in 2007 and these programs are often a continuation of previous LPRs which required more funding and were not finished within the projected time schedule. The influence of the EU can be interpreted two fold. On the one hand the EU was a motivation for some cities to continue with revitalisation that already started in the nineties and to avail themselves to the disposal of EU funding and EU guidelines (e.g. Posen). On the other hand it motivated these cities which perceived revitalisation as a political strategy (e.g. Reszl) [11].

It is important to note that revitalisation was not a consequence of EU assistance but was caused rather by an awareness of local problems and was already happening in Polish cities during the nineties. Some municipalities with legislative and financial barriers could in spite of this accomplish a revitalisation plan relevant to existing problems. Awareness, relevance and choice of real aims can contribute positively to revitalisation. Examples are Szczecin, Sopot and Lublin which in general understood revitalisation and achieved success. Using the case of Szczecin two revitalisation aspects - finances and stakeholders - will be described and emphasised.

One of the consequences of a lack of legislative rules in Poland, pertaining to revitalisation is the financial issue and more precisely, insufficiency of funds which Szczecin also had to face. Beginning with revitalisation in the nineties, the expenditure of time and money and the awareness of local problems for revitalisation quarters in Szczecin was an initial point for revitalisation.

Revitalisation of quarter No 27 between the streets B. Śmiałego, Chodkiewicza, Pocztowa and Ściegiennego started in 1993 and was based on Renovation Strategy of Central Areas of Szczecin (including 55 other central quarters). The whole process finished in 2007 and it serves as a pioneering example for other Polish cities. The revitalisation approach in this case consisted among others of:

- Broad community consultation with citizens before and during the process - social investigations, interviews and questionnaires. The motivation for revitalisation was instigated by community needs. Therefore the continuity of the process could be preserved in spite of changing legislative period and EU influence.
- Consultations with experts about implementation of elaborated Strategy.
- Collaboration with supporting programs – work with cooperator (advisor) of revitalisation from Holland and establishment of a unit for revitalisation matters; advisory help from USAID; coherent cooperation with sociologists.
- Establishment of a redevelopment agency which was the body charged with carrying out the revitalisation (TBS – Towarzystwo Budownictwa Socjalnego).
- Establishment of funding programs: Program of Small Improvements (*Program Małych Ulepszeń*) and Our Home (*Nasz Dom*) which inspired inhabitants to renovation activities. Using credits of Domestic Housing Fund (*KFM – Krajowy Fundusz Mieszkaniowy*) for co-financing renovation activities.
- Applications of ecological solutions by using build materials (financed by Dutch Ministry of Housing and Spatial Planning).

The example pertaining to Szczecin showed an integrated approach, although it started many years before the EU call for integrated planning. It therefore draws attention to possibilities of developing revitalisation projects which undoubtedly existed after 1989 despite the state system changes and economic transformation. The motivation for revitalisation based on community needs was also the reason why the continuity of the process in spite of the changing legislative period could be preserved. Moreover, the example illustrated a potential which includes cooperation with foreign advising partners and can be

used to advise or guide cities interested in starting a revitalization program but lacking adequate experience or experts in this field.

The effects of the 14 year revitalisation project, completed in 2007 are illustrated in the photographs below.

**Photograph 1. View from Poczтова Street**



**Photograph 2. View from B. Smialy Street**



**Photograph 3. Playground for children in the courtyard**



**Photograph 4. Inside of the revitalised quarter**



### 2.3 Factors having an impact on revitalisation

Every revitalisation process requires a significant amount of money and is also time-consuming. The most common factor, impacting on revitalisation, is the problem of adequate finances. Undoubtedly a lack of funding is one of the impediments or restriction in revitalisation and is the most frequently mentioned barrier to implementation of revitalisation tasks. However it is rather an indirect cause which arises from misguided planning laws in the country or in particular the lack of a revitalisation act. The competence of city planning personnel and politics can cause financial problems as well.

The contribution of Polish laws and finances have already been described and discussed in the previous section. Therefore attention will be given to factors which are often neglected, but are playing a significant role in revitalisation, for instance awareness, relevance and choice of real aims of revitalisation which concern complexity and dissimilarities between Polish cities. Additional aspects include both drivers and impediments which were divided according to *hard* factors (pertain to technical, legitimate or financial aspects – measurable) and *soft* factors (according to competences, qualifications of stakeholders and to politics - not



measurable, concerns social aspect). Table 2 gives an overview of the main factors having an impact on revitalisation in Poland and shows their segmentation.

**Table 2. Division of the factors having an impact on revitalisation**

	<b>Drivers</b>	<b>Impediments</b>
<b>Hard factors</b>	EU funds and guidelines (methods to carry out the revitalisation by preparing LPRs)	Polish law Domestic funds and narrow engagement of the State Technical-administrative barriers
<b>Soft factors</b>	EU guidelines (social aspects) Education of stakeholders Professional competence of city planning personnel and habits Growing awareness and interest in living space Awareness, relevance and choice of real (possible to accomplish) aims of revitalisation	Politics: - changing legislative period, - implementation of political aims into aims of revitalisation, - lack of continuity Education of stakeholders

*Source: Elaborated by author, based on interviews*

Soft factors are perceived as a danger and at the same time as a direct impact by those cities where city planning has experience and professional competences (e.g. Lublin, Szczecin). According to experts who have already conducted revitalisation processes in Polish cities, education plays a significant role - mostly before but also during the process [12]. Education of stakeholders can be both a driver and an impediment. It can be divided according to (op.cit.):

- *Political education* – lack of political will and time to treat the revitalisation or city issue seriously which is indicated by the fact that the next (sixth since 1993) project of revitalisation act was not approved by Polish parliament. Image of Polish cities very often equated to political aims which are profit driven. The gain instead arises from broad allowance for developers' activities.
- *Education of citizens* – people have a limited understanding and knowledge of the topic of revitalisation which needs more information based on joint discussions and consultations.
- *Education of town-planners* – city is still not perceived as one ensemble, so that the urban problems are postponed and treated mechanically.
- *Education of marshal-authorities* – it contains competences of decision makers and the system according to which the funds are granted in competitive proceedings and supports big investments.

The proper education comes with the growing citizen awareness and interest of living space and it manifests itself in an incurrence of internet discussion forums for citizens (e.g. *wspólna przestrzeń* – common space or *kultura enter* – culture enter) and associations or websites according to revitalisation issue and consisting of articles, examples and information about revitalisation (e.g. [www.fr.org.pl](http://www.fr.org.pl) or [www.rewitalizacja.org.pl](http://www.rewitalizacja.org.pl)). This factor can be crucial for further understanding and the conducting of revitalisation in Poland.



### 3. Conclusions - particular nature or misunderstanding of city revitalisation?

According to the overview of the main attributes of planning processes and decisions relevant for revitalisation since 1945, a fact can be determined that the cause of current problems related to revitalisation does not arise from the mistakes or decisions of the past, but rather from the inability of drawing the conclusions for the future.

It is irrefutable, that traces of the planning decisions after World War II till 1989 remained in the images of Polish cities, however, it was not impossible to acknowledge them after this period and find optimal strategy for each individual city and start acting. The aforementioned approach of Szczecin serves as one clear example for other Polish cities, but there are other cities like Lublin, which received an award for The Best Practices at the conference Habitat II in Istanbul, for revitalisation of the quarters, Stare Bronowice and Kosminek.

Nevertheless, the expressions *particular nature* and *misunderstanding* of revitalisation both describe the Polish handling of the issue of revitalisation. *Particular nature* refers to complexity and multiplicity of problems between Polish cities, therefore the ‘one model for all’ scenario doesn’t have to be the best solution. It is however, important to create one framework condition for all (revitalisation act, financing sources). A *misunderstanding* of revitalisation is linked to education and concerns those actions which are influenced by politicians and the motivation to start revitalisation is often based on economic rather than social reasons.

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