

POLISH MODEL OF URBAN RENEWAL: FORMAL AND LEGAL ASPECTS OF REVITALISATION IN POLISH CITIES

Jan KOWALCZYK*

Abstract: Degradation of urban spaces constitutes a common problem and obstacle in development of Polish cities. This phenomenon can be counteracted through revitalisation – a comprehensive process aimed at infrastructural and socio-economic revival of cities. This article presents formal and legal requirements of revitalisation activities in Poland. Included are subjects such as definition and goal of revitalisation, designating degraded area and revitalisation area, stakeholders of the process and the Communal Revitalisation Programme – a strategic document of Polish local governments. The article refers to strategic documents regarding revitalisation processes in five Polish cities: Warsaw, Łódź, Gdynia, Olsztyn and Białystok.

Keywords: Revitalisation, degraded area, urban renewal, city, revitalisation stakeholders.

Space degradation in Polish cities is directly connected with historical conditions of urban development and with the political system of Poland until 1989. One of idiosyncrasies of socialist, centrally-planned economy was creation of large, state-owned industrial complexes, aimed at providing employment to urban dwellers. Industrial works such as steel mills (e.g. Nowa Huta in Cracow, Huta Warszawa in Warsaw), heavy equipment factories and processing plants were placed in many cities' suburbs. When the cities expanded, the once suburban industrial areas and attached worker estates were absorbed by the cities, becoming their integral parts. When the heavy industry collapsed, empty plants and industrial infrastructure (including vast railroad areas) were left unused, occupying significant parts of the cities and driving new residential areas outwards.

As a part of the ideologically influenced treatment of economy in those times, new industrial objects were treated prestigiously – as B. Jałowiecki and M. Szczepański wrote: “production space was not eliminated completely from downtown districts and factories (...) were given monumental shapes and rich adornments, in order to create symbols of the new age”¹. It is worth noting here that in socialism industrial plants were usually established without considering their economic

* PhD. candidate, Faculty of Political Science and International Studies, Warsaw University, Poland; Email: kowalczyk.j@op.pl.

¹ B. Jałowiecki, M. Szczepański, *Miasto i przestrzeń w perspektywie socjologicznej [City and Space in the Sociological Perspective]*, Warsaw 2006, p. 116.

rationality. The political changes of early 90s, including transition to a free market economy and privatisation of most state-owned companies, rendered many enterprises unable to support themselves due to their incompatibility with the new socio-economic situation and, in effect, caused a wave of closures and bankruptcies, which left their premises empty and ruined.

However, derelict industrial areas are not the only factor driving degradation of urban space. Equally important is the social background. In the last quarter of a century people in Poland have become wealthier, the consequence of which has been migration from the crowded downtown areas to the suburbs, where the city structure is not so dense and it is possible to build individual houses with large private green areas. Due to these migrations, enclaves of economic poverty and social exclusion started to appear in the central districts, characterised by high-density residential building pattern of mostly tenement houses. This phenomenon had been mitigated for many years by lack of new apartments – one of the biggest socio-economic problems of Poland after 1989 – but in recent years the de-capitalisation of central districts in Polish cities has become clearly visible.

One of the main political changes in Poland in the early 1990s was decentralisation of public power. Many tasks were transferred to the smallest units of local governments – communes² (pol. *gmina*), presumption of competence of communes was also introduced in the law. Revitalisation of degraded areas is one of the own tasks of communes, as stated in the Act on Gmina Self-Government dated 8 March 1990. However, the process of conducting revitalisation activities was not described in any separate, universally binding legal act until 2015. The following table collects main drafts of acts regarding revitalisation from years 1992-2006, none of which was ultimately passed.

Table 1
Drafts of acts regarding revitalisation from years 1992-2006

Name of the legal act	Year	Entity responsible for the project
Draft of act on development and rehabilitation of cities	1992	Ministry of Spatial Development and Construction
Draft of act on rehabilitation of existing housing resources as a part of programmed operations of revitalisation of downtown enclaves	1993	Ministry of Spatial Development and Construction
Draft of act on renovation and modernization of urban development quarters – guidelines	1995	Ministry of Spatial Development and Construction
Draft of act on renovation and modernization of urban development quarters	1997	Office of Housing and Urban Development
Draft of act on revitalisation	2000	Office of Housing and Urban Development
Draft of act on revitalisation of urban areas – guidelines	2004	Ministry of Infrastructure
Draft of act on revitalisation – guidelines	2006	Łódź City Hall, University of Łódź, Łódź University of Technology
Draft of act on revitalisation and support of renovations and selected construction projects	2006	Ministry of Construction

Source: T. Topczewska, *Rewitalizacja miast w polityce państwa [Revitalisation of Cities in the State Policy]*, “Człowiek i Środowisko” [“Human and Environment”] no. 31(1-2)/2007, p. 9.

² Commune (pol. *gmina*) is the principal unit of the administrative division of Poland. Here are three types of gmina: urban gmina, mixed urban-rural gmina and rural gmina.

None of the abovementioned drafts were passed to the Polish Parliament. Eventually, the act on revitalisation was passed on 9 October 2015.

The goal of this article is to analyse main principles of the legal act ratified by the Polish parliament in 2015, which defines the Polish model of revitalisation of degraded areas. The thesis of the article is centred on the assumption that the Polish model of revitalisation has a comprehensive character, which means that it regards both the infrastructural (spatial-technical) and the socio-economic intervention. The aim of revitalisation according to the Polish model is therefore not only space renewal, creation of attractive places and care for cultural heritage, but also counteracting social issues appearing in degraded areas, e.g. high unemployment, poverty, lack of safety. The underlying questions of this article are: how is revitalisation defined in the Polish legislation?; which social groups should be considered stakeholders in revitalisation processes?; how is urban critical area defined in the Polish legislation?. Additional focus has been placed on analysis of the Special Revitalisation Zone as a legal solution aimed at helping local authorities in conducting revitalisation activities.

Definition of revitalisation

The term “revitalisation” has its roots in the latin word “vita” – meaning “life” – coupled with “re-” prefix, which indicates a repeated occurrence. In the urban development context this bears the meaning of reintroduction of urban life and splendour into an area.

Revitalisation is therefore a planned process, dependant on resources and spread in time. The entities responsible for revitalisation are local government institutions, but they conduct it with support from private investors, in cooperation with local communities and NGOs. Z. Zuziak understands this notion as “coordinated activities of the public and private sectors, leading to growth in value and attractiveness of urban space subject to this operation”³. As the author rightly observes, the aim of revitalisation is to prevent the effects of degradation and critical issues, which are the source of physical, social and cultural degeneration of urban fabric⁴. K. Skalski adds that revitalisation activities are aimed at renewal of old districts and their development in the areas of housing and economic functions through enhancing spatial values of cities⁵.

Modernisation, revalorisation and renovation should therefore also be considered instruments of revitalisation. In this approach revalorisation has two main dimensions –

³ Z. Zuziak, *Rewitalizacja i policentryczność [Revitalisation and Polycentrism]* [in:] Lorens P. (red.), *Rewitalizacja miast w Polsce. Pierwsze doświadczenia [Revitalisation of Cities in Poland. First experiences]*, “Biblioteka Urbanisty” [“Urbanist Library”] No. 10, Warsaw 2007, p. 163.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ K. Skalski, *Programy rewitalizacji w Polsce. Bilans, analiza porównawcza, perspektywy [Revitalisation programmes in Poland. Assessment, Benchmarking, Perspectives]* [in:] *Projekty i programy rewitalizacji w latach 2002-2006. Studium przypadków [Revitalisation projects and programmes 2002-2006. Case studies]*, Cracow 2006, p. 11.

subjective help (called by K. Skalski “help for people”) and objective help (“help for stones”)⁶. By help for people one should understand all kinds of financial assistance, which allow the members of local communities to exercise due care of their places of residence and surrounding areas. Due to development of social policy, this definition should be extended to include all proactive forms of assistance, such as employment support and social activation programmes, exclusion prevention and providing a relevant position on the job market, which influences the living standards in communities. Seemingly unconnected instruments of social policy can greatly improve the situation of people threatened by marginalisation and, as a consequence, provide them with means necessary to sufficiently care for private and public space around them. Help ‘for stones’ on the other hand includes all kinds of donations aimed at counteracting architectural neglect, e.g. subsidies for renovation of façades and elevations of historical tenement buildings, but also urban revitalisation projects, such as maintenance of street furniture and landscape architecture, creation of common areas for citizens.

There is therefore no doubt that the most important aspect to be always taken into account while developing a revitalisation strategy is the community living in the given area. This means that any other aspects – architectural, economic etc. – should be secondary to impact on society in creation of such strategy. Other groups of goals concerning revitalisation are also important, of which a great example is the classification created by M. Kopeć. In addition to social goals, the author indicates also economic goals (profit growth for companies and institutions, lower unemployment rate, raised profile of the city), ecological goals (elimination of environmentally harmful remains of industrial plants) and spatial goals (integration of urban areas, development of social order)⁷.

The legal definition of revitalisation in Polish law has been included in the Act on Revitalisation dated 9 October 2015 [hereinafter called the act on revitalisation]. According to article 1 revitalisation means a “process of bringing degraded areas out of critical state, conducted in a comprehensive manner, through integrated actions for the benefit of local community, space and economy, concentrated territorially, conducted by stakeholders of revitalisation on the basis of communal revitalisation programme”⁸. This definition means that, according to the act, the process of revitalisation has several distinctive features:

1. It encompasses a degraded area, i.e. a part of city characterized by high intensity of social problems that can only be solved through an intervention of public entities;
2. The activities are integrated, which means that they are complementary to each other and aimed at a designated goal;

⁶ For details, see M. Kopeć, *Rewitalizacja miejskich obszarów zdegradowanych [Revitalisation of degraded urban areas]*, Warsaw 2010, p. 113.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 121 and next pages.

⁸ Art. 2 pt. 1, Ustawa z dnia 9 października 2015 r. o rewitalizacji [Act on Revitalisation dated 9 October 2015] [Dz.U. (Journal of Laws), from 2015, item 1777 as amended].

3. The activities are conducted for the benefit of local community, which means that infrastructural interventions into the city fabric are aimed at improving the quality of life of residents of the degraded area and – indirectly – of other citizens of the city;

4. The activities are aimed at achieving economic revival of the area, at the same time ensuring order in the urban space;

5. The activities are concentrated territorially, which means that they concern a designated area of the city;

6. They are conducted by the stakeholders of revitalisation, the catalogue of which is stipulated in the act;

7. The basis for activities is a strategic document called Communal Revitalisation Programme (pol. *Gminny Program Rewitalizacji*), which is passed after a thorough diagnosis of the socio-economic environment and analysis of social problems present in the degraded areas.

Stakeholders of the revitalisation process

In the act on revitalisation the legislator included a catalogue of parties that should be considered stakeholders in the process of urban fabric renewal. These entities can be divided into four main groups⁹:

1. The first group are the local citizens. Included here are especially the residents of the revitalized area together with owners, perpetual lessees and managing entities (e.g. housing co-operatives, tenants' associations and housing associations), of real estate in the area. Taking into account a broad area of influence of revitalisation activities, the legislator included here also other residents of the city, i.e. people who will indirectly benefit from the modernized infrastructure.

2. The second group is comprised of local business owners – those who currently operate in the revitalized area and those who are planning to or considering doing so. Business owners are a stakeholder group responsible for economic revival, which is one of the main goals of revitalisation activities.

3. The third group are socially active non-governmental organizations, the so called 'third sector' – socially active non-profit entities, foundations, associations, public benefit organizations etc., which operate specifically in the revitalized area or generally in the commune. Presence of non-governmental organizations indicates that in the gmina exists social capital, which can be used to help achieve the goals of revitalisation, therefore it is vital to include of a broad group of third sector organizations into the process.

4. The final group of stakeholders are public entities. In this group the act includes local governments and their organisational units (e.g. schools, local Social Welfare Centres), public authorities (e.g. the ministry in charge of revitalisation – currently the Ministry of Development), as well as other entities exercising the rights of the National Treasury in the revitalisation area.

⁹ Art. 2. pt. 2. Ustawa o rewitalizacji [Act on Revitalisation].

Such a wide catalogue of entities interested in the revitalisation process means that it should encompass instruments of social participation, allowing the citizens to participate in decision-making regarding the directions of actions aimed at infrastructural and socio-economic revival of degraded areas. Social participation in revitalisation processes should include preparation, execution and evaluation of revitalisation in a way that ensures active participation of stakeholders¹⁰. It has two principal dimensions: institutional and activating.

Institutionally, a commune is obliged to create an advisory body called Revitalisation Committee (pol. *Komitet Rewitalizacji*). According to the act, the Committee serves as a platform of cooperation and dialogue between the stakeholders and the administrative bodies, as well as provides opinions and advice to the commune authorities¹¹. The rules of establishing this body and the scope of its competence are decided by the Commune Council¹² (pol. *Rada Gminy*), a collective body elected in direct elections for a 4-year term, by way of ordinance. On the basis of the resolution the commune head (pol. *wójt*) (in rural communes), mayor (in urban/rural communes) or city president (in municipal communes) appoints by way of regulation members of the Committee. It should be made possible to all previously named stakeholders to include their representatives in the Revitalisation Committee.

Activities of the Committee should be complemented by instruments targeted at activating local communities, e.g. public consultations, workshops and meetings with the authorities, during which the stakeholders can issue proposals and signal particularly important problems or obstacles in execution of revitalisation projects. The activating instruments should, according to the act, ensure primarily:

1. Identifying needs and expectations of the stakeholders, as well as alignment of actions with the real needs of the local community;
2. Conducting activities educating and informing about the revitalisation process, its essence, goals and rules of execution;
3. Supporting activities aimed at enabling dialogue between the stakeholders and their integration;
4. Providing the ability to express opinions to each of the stakeholder groups¹³.

Summarizing, a broad use of participation instruments should ensure maximal inclusion of all stakeholder groups into the socio-economic revival of degraded areas. Therefore, revitalisation is a process which is executed through public-social partnership – a cooperation of local authorities and the society.

Designation of degraded area and revitalisation area

According to the definition contained in the act, revitalisation is territorially concentrated. Because of that, before any urban space renewal projects can take place, it is necessary to designate the degraded area and the revitalisation area. Both of these

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, Art. 5.1

¹¹ *Ibidem*, Art. 7.1.

¹² Rada Gminy is a collective body of local administration, consisting of members elected in direct elections for a four-year term. It is responsible for adopting ordinances on the commune (pol. *gmina*) level.

¹³ *Ustawa o rewitalizacji [Act on Revitalisation]*, Art. 5.2

areas can only be designated by the Commune Council by way of resolution at its own initiative or upon a regulation issued by the administrator. It is a responsibility of a commune head, mayor or city president to conduct public consultations regarding the draft of the resolution¹⁴.

A fragment of a city, which forms a part of a degraded area, may be divided into smaller sub-areas, which do not need to have common borders. A revitalisation area, on the other hand, should encompass the whole degraded area or its part, but no more than 20% of the total area of the commune and no more than 30% of its population. Both a degraded area and a revitalisation area can also encompass uninhabited post-industrial (including former sea and river ports), post-military and post-railway areas, provided that their revitalisation is going to counteract negative social phenomena. It is then necessary to alter their prevalent function (for example by changing military-owned green areas into publically available recreational areas).

For a space to be included into a degraded area (and, consequently, into a revitalisation area), it must be characterized by a significant intensity of negative social phenomena, such as unemployment, poverty, crime, low level of education or social capital, insufficient level of participation in public and cultural life. In order to identify the particularly significant social problems, commune authorities are obliged to conduct in-depth socio-economic analysis, both quantitative and qualitative. Examples of research areas and proposed indicators are presented in the table below.

Table 2
Examples of research areas and proposed indicators for socio-economic analysis conducted in order to designate a degraded area

Research area	Proposed indicators
Demographic structure of local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total population growth in the area; • Demographic dependency level; • Percentage of disabled persons in the community;
Level of local entrepreneurship and state of labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of business operating in the area; • Unemployment rate; • Long-term unemployment rate; • Average income level; • Number of businesses in the area that ceased trading in the last few years;
Level of poverty and social exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of people using social assistance; • Percentage of people receiving welfare benefits; • Percentage of people below minimum subsistence level;
Lack of security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of crimes and felonies committed in the area; • Type of crimes and felonies committed in the area; • Subjective level of security among the residents; • Spatial distribution of crimes and identification of "hot spots" – particularly dangerous areas;
Local activity and participation in public life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of third sector entities operating in the area; • Percentage of people engaged in social activity; • Turnout in elections and referendums.

Source: Own work based on B. Szatur-Jaworska, *Diagnozowanie w polityce społecznej. Metody i problemy* [Diagnostics in Social Policy. Methods and Issues], Warsaw 2014, p. 146 and next pages.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, Art. 8.

In addition to social issues, a degraded area needs to be characterized by further negative phenomena in at least one of the following areas:

1. Space and function – insufficient technical and social infrastructure or poor condition thereof; lack of access to or poor quality of basic services; non-adjustment of urban solutions to changing functions of the area;
2. Economy – low level of entrepreneurship, poor condition of local businesses;
3. Environment – exceeded values of environmental quality indicators;
4. Technology – degradation of the technical state of buildings, including residential ones; ineffective use of buildings (for example in regard to energy saving solutions).

Communal Revitalisation Programme

The main communal strategic document concerning revitalisation is the Communal Revitalisation Programme (*Gminny Program Rewitalizacji – GPR*). This document is adopted by way of resolution of the Commune Council. Territorially it is directly connected with the degraded area and revitalisation area designated in the earlier stages. The act on revitalisation includes a list of issues that should be subjected to analysis in the document, but the communes have a wide margin of decision regarding which issues are significant for them in each case.

The Communal Revitalisation Programme should clearly define the goals of undertaken actions and present the vision of the area after the necessary actions are completed. The vision serves as a statement of intent of the local authorities in regard to revival of the area and indicates the expected “to be” state. In the Communal Revitalisation Programmes of selected Polish cities, those were defined as follows:

1. Warsaw (in case of the capital of Poland a mission of revitalisation activities was defined instead of a vision) – “balancing the development opportunities of critical areas of Warsaw through creation and initiation of key revitalisation projects in the priority area and coordination of selected politics of the capital city of Warsaw in the critical areas”¹⁵;

2. Łódź – “In the year 2030 in the revitalisation area a widespread feeling of rejuvenation and gradual revival is present. The centre of the city of Łódź becomes a pleasant living space, a good place for its residents and an object of pride of all citizens. The heart of the city – the Metropolitan Zone – is beating strong again. Social cohesion has been recreated and strengthened, especially through creation and consolidation of neighbourhood bonds and a multitude of grassroots micro-initiatives. Social exclusion hasn’t disappeared, but is easily identified, continuously monitored and skilfully limited. Entrepreneurship and social abilities of citizens have greatly improved. The number of individual and joint activities is

¹⁵ *Zintegrowany Program Rewitalizacji dla miasta stołecznego Warszawy do roku 2022*, [Integrated Revitalisation Programme for the Capital City of Warsaw until year 2022] [online:] <http://rewitalizacja.um.warszawa.pl/zintegrowany-program-rewitalizacji-mst-warszawy-do-2022-roku> [accessed: 26.03.2017], p. 131.

constantly growing. The people of Łódź have regained the feeling that small successes are important and appreciated. The society is slowly getting wealthier. Local patriotism has re-appeared, not only on the city-level, but also regarding individual streets, quarters and blocks. A network of institutions, both public and civil, supports creation of grassroots initiatives. The surrounding environment is becoming more beautiful, not only because of large public investments, but also – or actually mainly – thanks to newly regained resourcefulness and initiative of citizens themselves. Widespread creative atmosphere is radiating onto an increasing number of people. Łódź is really creating. Creativity is appreciated and the market is ready to pay more and more for it. Moving to Łódź becomes a fashionable choice across Europe¹⁶;

3. Gdynia – “An efficiently performed revitalisation has translated into a growth in the quality of life of the residents of the revitalised area, defined and identified socially, spatially and economically. Through execution of the strategy of sustainable and balanced growth of the city, taking into account specificity and needs of each district, social, economic and investment inequalities between the critical revitalised areas and the rest of Gdynia have been evened out. Civic participation of the residents has been boosted. Local communities are getting integrated around common goals and fulfilment of their needs. The ability to self-organize formed among the residents, who create formal and informal groups. People have a strengthened sense of self-agency and shared responsibility for their surroundings. The residents take part in designing changes to places they live in, they identify with and are proud of. Actions aimed at limiting social exclusion helped part of the residents to reduce their dependence on social security assistance. At the same time – thanks to modernised development of the support system – the residents have been guaranteed a quick, easy and thorough access to a flexible offer of social services, fully adjusted to their needs. Realised infrastructural investments serve the citizens. Local centres of integration and social animation have been created as space for establishment and development of popular initiatives centred on common needs. Improved quality of public space and housing conditions, especially concerning people in the greatest need, translates into better comfort of living for them. Development of leisure and recreation spaces encourages people to spend their free time in active ways. The residents can use easily accessible public services, adjusted to expectations¹⁷;

¹⁶ *Gminny Program Rewitalizacji dla Łodzi 2026+ stanowiący załącznik do uchwały Rady Gminy nr XXXV/916/16 z dn. 28 września 2016 r. [Communal Revitalisation Programme for the City of Łódź 2026+, appendix to Resolution No. XXXV/916/16 of the City Council of Łódź dated 28 September 2016]*, p. 90.

¹⁷ *Projekt Gminnego Programu Rewitalizacji miasta Gdyni poddany konsultacjom społecznych w dniach 11 stycznia – 10 lutego [Draft of the Communal Revitalisation Programme for the city of Gdynia presented to be consulted between January 11 and February 10 [online:] <http://gdynia.pl/bip/rewitalizacja,1506/poddawany-konsultacjom-spolescznym-projekt-gminnego-programu-rewitalizacji,460775> [accessed: 26.03.2017]*, p. 65.

4. Olsztyn – “We have changed our reality, we live in a better environment. The public space friendly to all residents, we finally feel that this territory is ours. Capital – possibilities – future – all in my hands. I act in my place, I act for everyone. This is a place where you can realise your passions and where progress never ends. We are all together from here – from Olsztyn”¹⁸;

5. Białystok – “A distinctive and distinguishing feature of the city of Białystok’s revitalisation area is its citizens – engaged into improving their living conditions, integrated, eager to help their neighbours and strongly attached to their place of residence. Social bonds are built on the foundations of the multicultural heritage of the city and developed through activities realised in specially prepared meeting places, arranged according to the needs of citizens. Each small community has its own space – a backyard, a club, which is a place for new initiatives, willingly supported by other institutions and entities in the city. The operations of non-governmental organisations are increasingly more developed and directed at various target groups. Social and support services are of high quality, which enabled social inclusion and people from formerly marginalised groups more readily take part in engagements promoting active living and are more motivated to improve their living conditions. The residents are increasingly entrepreneurial and professionally active, while more and more new local craft businesses and services emerge in the area, providing a stable rate economic development. The public space in the revitalisation area is functional, thoughtfully developed, fitted with street furniture and facilitates usage by all citizens. The area is well-communicated and communication infrastructure is no longer an obstacle for people with disabilities or restricted mobility”¹⁹.

The formulated goals should concern all identified critical areas, not only those related to high-intensity social issues, but also the economic, spatial-functional, environmental and technical ones. One chapter of the Communal Revitalisation Plan should be dedicated to the description of links of the document with other strategic documents of the commune, i.e. development strategy, social problem solving strategy and study of conditions and directions of the commune’s spatial development. Information contained in each strategy must not be contradictory to each other and the commune’s development goals should be cohesive. The table presents overall goals and main/strategic goals included in the Communal Revitalisation Programmes of selected Polish cities.

¹⁸ *Miejski program rewitalizacji Olsztyna 2020, załącznik do uchwały nr XXIV/345/16 Rady Miasta olsztyna z dnia 29 czerwca 2016 [City Revitalisation Programme of Olsztyn 2020, Appendix to Resolution no. XXIV/345/16 of the City Council of Olsztyn dated 29.06.2016]*, p. 54.

¹⁹ *Program rewitalizacji miasta Białegostoku – projekt poddany konsultacjom społecznym [Revitalisation Programme for the City of Białystok – draft subject to public consultations]* [online:] http://www.Bialystok.pl/pl/dla_mieszkanow/rewitalizacja/ [accessed: 26.03.2017], pp. 151-152.

Table 3
Overall goals of the Communal Revitalisation Programmes of selected Polish cities

City	Overall goals	Main/strategic goals
Warsaw	Renewal, revival and socio-economic inclusion of selected currently critical areas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Socio-economic revival, improved quality of public space and improved natural environment in line with low-emission economy requirements 2. Growth of tourism, culture and sports based on local identity and cultural heritage assets 3. Prevention and counteraction of social exclusion 4. Increase in resident's activity and participation in various areas of the city's functioning
Łódź	Unleash the potential of downtown Łódź and its residents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achieve social cohesion 2. Change the image of the city and its centre through revitalisation 3. Revive local entrepreneurship 4. Revive residential area
Gdynia	No overall goal presented	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social reintegration 2. Civil society 3. Quality of space 4. Economic activation
Olsztyn	No overall goal presented	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthening of social capital in the revitalised area 2. Improvement of living conditions for the revitalised area's residents 3. Growth of entrepreneurship in the revitalised area
Białystok	Integrated society able to develop socio-economically using appropriately prepared infrastructure.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High rate of social cohesion and fulfilment of needs of the revitalised area's residents 2. Occupationally activated society and economic development in the revitalised area 3. Assurance of high quality living conditions for residents

Source: Own work on the basis of Communal Revitalisation Programmes (or projects thereof) prepared by Warsaw, Łódź, Gdynia, Olsztyn and Białystok.

Additionally, the Communal Revitalisation Programme should contain plans for basic revitalisation efforts along with their descriptions, naming the entities responsible for the execution of each given task, forecasted results and criteria of assessment of the results in relation to the goals. All efforts should concern the revitalisation area; it is possible to include efforts from outside the area, if there is a specific reason for this. The programme should also contain a tasks completion schedule and a preliminary financial framework, together with a preliminary specification of public and private funding and its sources. The programme contains also a document realisation management structure, indicates the units responsible for management and for monitoring the results of revitalisation through product and result indicators laid down in the document. The indicators can, for example, pertain to the number of objects subject to support, the area of revitalised public space, the number of direct users of infrastructure built or modernized as part of the project, etc. The values of indicators should be monitored at least once every three years.

Special Revitalisation Zone

In order to provide an efficient realisation of revitalisation efforts, the commune head, the mayor or the city president can establish in the revitalised area a Special Revitalisation Zone (pol. *Specjalna Strefa Rewitalizacji*). Such a zone encompasses the whole revitalised area or its fragment and is established for up to ten years without a possibility of extending the term. The aim of the zone is the realisation of a public purpose in the area of rental housing development. A public purpose is a legal category, denoting actions which can be realised through expropriation, i.e. taking away real property ownership rights without the owner's consent by way of an administrative decision²⁰. Development of rental housing constitutes a public purpose only in the areas of Special Revitalisation Zones. Use of this instrument is in accordance with article 75 of the Constitution of Poland, which states that "Public authorities shall pursue policies conducive to satisfying the housing needs of citizens, in particular combating homelessness, promoting the development of low-income housing and supporting activities aimed at acquisition of a home by each citizen"²¹.

It is required that the activities aimed at development of social housing pertained to specific buildings and were included in the Communal Revitalisation Programme as revitalisation efforts. Public purpose is realised through building or altering buildings, in which, after the revitalisation, social housing belonging to the commune will be located. According to the Building Law Act, "building" means constructing a building object in a particular place, as well as rebuilding and outward or vertical expansion²². "Altering" on the other hand means conducting construction work, that doesn't change operational or technical parameters, such as: cubic capacity, gross covered area, height, width, length or number of floors²³. For a construction development to be considered low-income rental housing, it must jointly fulfil the following three conditions: (1) access to the housing apartments is regulated by public authorities, at the same time including market mechanisms, (2) the entity conducting the development uses public means, (3) the development is conducted by an entity, whose main course of action is not profit-related (e.g. social organisation, organisational unit of a community). It is necessary to remember that in case of public purpose, expropriation of a real property may take place only when this purpose cannot be realised in another way than taking away the ownership rights to a real property and that for the expropriated real property the owner must be given a compensation equal to the value of ownership rights.

²⁰ Ministry of Infrastructure and Construction, *Ustawa o rewitalizacji. Praktyczny komentarz [Act on Revitalisation. Practical Commentary]*, Warsaw 2016. p. 39.

²¹ Art. 75, *Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 2 kwietnia 1997 r. [Constitution of the Republic of Poland dated 2 April 1997]*.

²² Art. 3 pt. 6, *Ustawa z dnia 7 lipca 1994 r. Prawo budowlane [Construction Act dated 7 July 1994]* [Dz.U.(Journal of Laws) from 1994 no. 89 item 411 as amended].

²³ *Ibidem*, Art. 3 pt. 7.

The Special Revitalisation Zone also simplifies the process of emptying inhabited properties, planned to be revitalised. According to the act, during construction work tenants are obliged to move to a substitute accommodation provided by the commune. All costs of the move are covered by the commune. However, the object of the agreement between a lessee and a lessor is the apartment being renovated, thus after finishing the construction work the residents may return to their original apartments without a need to modify their agreement or sign a new one. It is however possible for the rent to be raised, due to improved standard of the apartment. A unique situation takes place when, as an effect of revitalisation, a residential building changes its function, for example to an office, commercial or social one. In such a case, residents are entitled to a substitute apartment of the same or higher standard and in a similar location. If a tenant doesn't leave the premises to be revitalised, the commune head files a motion to the voivode²⁴, requesting issuance of an order to vacate the premises. The proceedings are pending according to the administrative procedure, which allows the public organs to retain their rulership²⁵ over the case. An analogous situation outside of a Special Revitalisation Zone would require bringing a civil action, in which public organs are deprived of their administrative rulership, effectively delaying final vacating of the premises by the residents²⁶.

The establishment of a Special Revitalisation Zone in the revitalisation area gives the commune a right of first refusal for all real properties in the Zone. This means that when a property is put for sale, the commune has a right of acquiring it before any other potential buyers. There are exceptions from this right – for example when the property is sold or otherwise transferred to close relatives or partners. Additionally, in case of properties in the Special Revitalisation Zone, the commune can grant the owner or perpetual lessee of premises a subsidy of up to 50% of necessary cost of construction work (renovation, conversion or conservation and restoration in case of properties entered into the register of historic monuments.) However, the planned work has to serve the realisation of the communal revitalisation programme, approved by the commune council.

Conclusions

As the preceding analysis shows, the Act on Revitalisation dated 9 October 2015 has filled a pre-existing gap in the Polish legal system. Earlier attempts at creating a law concerning revival of degraded areas clearly indicated a need of introducing regulation in this area. The Polish model of revitalisation, outlined in the aforementioned act, is characterised by a set of particular features, described below.

²⁴ In modern Poland, a voivode (pol. *wojewoda*), appointed by the central government in Warsaw, is the governor of a voivodeship – the highest-level administrative subdivision of Poland.

²⁵ Rulership in Polish law means that during court proceedings an entity is treated as public authority and, as a result, the Administrative Proceedings Code is used instead of the Civil Code.

²⁶ Tenants' Rights, Municipal Housing Stock and the Civil Code Amendment Act dated 21 June 2001 [Dz.U. (Journal of Laws) from 2001 no 71 item 733 as amended].

First – revitalisation is comprehensive – it is understood as renewal of critical areas in need of intervention, but it cannot be limited to infrastructural intervention into urban fabric (renewal of facades, replacement of window woodwork, tidying up surroundings) – this is simply redecoration, which is just one of many revitalisation activities. For local authority activities to be considered revitalisation, they also need to include activities aimed at improving socio-economic situation of the area and preventing social issues present there.

Second – revitalisation is activating – the Polish model of revitalisation recognizes a broad spectrum of stakeholders, benefitting from the process directly or indirectly. In Polish legislation the revitalisation process stakeholders include: local authorities and public entities, social enterprises – non-profit organisations, associations, housing associations and members of local communities, residing in, as well as outside of, the degraded area.

Third – revitalisation is territorially concentrated – before any urban space renewal projects can take place, it is necessary to designate the degraded area and the revitalisation area. For a space to be included into a degraded area (and, consequently, into a revitalisation area), it must be characterized by a significant intensity of negative social phenomena.

What is more – revitalisation is co-ordinated – all activities undertaken as a part of revitalisation have a common goal, described in the Communal Revitalisation Programme, which outlines vision of the area after finalising necessary activities. Furthermore, the Communal Revitalisation Programme – as a strategic document – contains an enhanced diagnosis of initial state (as-is) and indicates activities necessary to achieve renewal of designated degraded area.

To sum up, the Polish model of revitalisation, established by the act dated 9 October 2015, is an example of comprehensive approach to renewal and revival of urban settlements through integrated actions of public authorities with support from private sector and social organisations. The revitalisation efforts are aimed at overcoming social issues, economic revival, improvement of the state of environment in the cities, as well as preventing degradation of urban fabric. Interventions undertaken as part of revitalisation projects have two main dimensions: spatial-technical and social.