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# Socially responsible territories – selected issues

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## **Abstrakt:**

**Aim:** The paper seeks to answer the question: Is a sustainable city realistic in the present conditions of the political, economic and social context? The answer is not so obvious in that the main barriers to attaining sustainable development of cities are of civilisational nature. The attainment of prosperity has become the dominant purpose in every society and region, regardless of the already obtained level of affluence, or the cultural and political traditions.

**Research methods:** The paper uses the following research methods: analysis of information sources and participant observation.

**Originality of the article:** In the social discourse, the notion of a sustainable city raises controversy because it often stands in contradiction to the vision of convenience and comfort of human existence. Admittedly, this is not a vision of an average resident of the contemporary city; however, it is a vision of people whose decisions create business policies and define its rules and priorities. As a result, these decisions greatly affect the image of a city and the models of its residents' lives. The subject of the paper is valid and has not been explored within a broader research analysis.

**Implications of research:** In conclusion, the author states that the territories seek social responsibility, but the effectiveness of these aspirations is diverse and multifactorial. The paper can have a considerable impact on the authorities and local communities.

**Key words:** *city, sustainable development, urbanization.*

**JEL:** R5.

## **1. Introduction**

The concept of socially responsible territories assumes that people living in these territories, the representatives of public institutions, non-governmental organizations and business jointly plan the development of their community while assuming responsibility for it. Through the activity

which utilizes the resources of the territory they enhance the tie with the space in which they live. Ineffective urban planning is accompanied by the lack of monitoring of spatial processes, incompetent administration and no engagement of citizens. The house-building industry has been most successful in its search for new technological solutions, which is an undisputable accomplishment of architects and constructors, and yet this success often fails to coincide with the needs of future residents and members of local communities. The essential feature of socially responsible territories and their development consistent with social needs is to create a dynamic local diagnosis and planning which both underpin and form a cornerstone of local development programming. Dynamism denotes the participation of the local community in creating the diagnosis and devising proposals to solve the problems. To this end, access to information and active local discussion need to be ensured. The aim of the paper is an attempt at assessing the current state of socially responsible territories across Polish local space.

### **2. Socially responsible territories**

Urbanism as an analytical category emerged in the late 1930s. In 1938 Louis Wirth described urbanism in his paper *Urbanism as A Way of Life* as “a characteristic mode of life that may be approached empirically from three interrelated perspectives: 1) as a physical structure comprising a population base, a technology and an ecological order, 2) as a system of social organization [...] and 3) a set of attitudes and ideas and a constellation of personalities [...]” (Wirth, 1996: 189-197). Focusing on the city – Wirth’s research on space can in fact be transposed onto a commune space or even that of a region. A territory whose scope is larger than that of the city is also characterized (frequently even more so) by diverse population and urban space in the form of prosperity zones and economic potentials, as well as areas marked by poverty and material neglect.

In her work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Jacobs, 1961), Jane Jacobs recognizes utility as the primary function of the cities and streets. According to the author, the streets and cities should be diverse and full of visual surprises. Tower blocks find no justification, since only wealthy users can bear the costs involved in their maintenance. Exploitation of small blocks of flats is less expensive, allowing for a greater variety in terms of forms and cubature (Majer, 2014: 176). A street that is well-designed and publicly utilized offers safe space, whereas a space with no people tends to become increasingly dangerous (Majer, 2014: 176). Achieving diversity which fosters social integration appears to be the hardest. What is required for ensuring

effectiveness of thus designed urban structure is, inter alia, devising plans for the basic functions and services (education, jobs, museums, schools, public venues), designing structures in the form of low buildings, development of old structures as well as inhabitants' occupational diversity. Jacobs stresses that every district or settlement should have at least one object – a landmark which plays the role of a hub sustaining citizens' presence and activity (see more in Wendt, 2009).

The urbanization processes come as a consequence of globalization. They cannot be stopped and from the economic point of view, it is not even worth trying to do so. However, what can be done is to prioritize the problems of local space, trying to solve them in the spirit of sustainable development. Plenty of factors determine the rate and size of spatial expansion of the cities. Two appear of key importance – growing population and consumption. At the end of 2016 Poland's population stood at 38433 thousand people, i.e. over four thousand less than the year before. 2016 was the fifth year in row in which a decline in population was recorded following the population growth observed in the years earlier (2008-2011). The rate of population decline was at 0,01%, which means that there was one person less per 10 thousand population in Poland (in 2015 it was 0,11%, i.e. 11 per 10 thousand population) (Znajewska et al., 2017: 12-13). In 2016 the population grew in four voivodships. Pomorskie and Mazowieckie voivodships saw the highest growth followed by Małopolskie and Wielkopolskie voivodships. It ought to be noted that the population increase in Mazowieckie voivodship was largely due to high net migration, while in the other three voivodships it was due to birth rate. The population growth in these voivodships has been noted since the beginning of the present century. The voivodships seeing the fastest rate of population decline include Świętokrzyskie, Łódzkie, Opolskie and Lubelskie – both net migration and birth rate are negative in those regions.

Demographic expansion, in particular that of urban agglomerations, often proceeds in a manner that is irrational and damaging to societies. The spontaneous and uncontrolled urbanization of countries across Asia and Africa has led to the emergence and growth of slums in the cities unable to house and meet the needs of the population choosing to settle there. Irrespective of whether these are slums or exclusive neighborhoods, the problems associated with populating areas are similar: providing housing, access to water, public transport, energy security and sewage removal.

The urban and demographic phenomena can be transformed into the processes which are useful for society and economy, contingent on a rational policy run by the central and local

government – the policy of sustainable development. The spatial scope of the studies concerned with sustainable development encompasses first and foremost regions named variously under the administrative structure across individual countries. The regional policy of sustainable development is the result of interregional policy, i.e. the state policy on the criteria in the region establishing the general principles of delimitation and the framework for the policy conducted in the region, and intraregional, i.e. internal regional policy specifying regional and local ways for realizing the aims of sustainable development (Karol, 2007: 9). What is still missing, however, is the policy instruments and economic concepts taking into account long-term objectives which would solve the issues brought about by globalization's contradictions and diminish the disparities in the global development. Over the recent years, the leading topic of urban debates has been the issue of how intensive urban areas should be exploited.

The so called compact city is the closest to the sustainable city, with its model aiming at stemming the process of dispersing buildings, revitalizing degraded areas, reducing vehicle transport in the shift towards public transport. The model of compact city has been included in the *European Spatial Development Perspective, 2000*. The concept of compact city refreshed in the 1960s became an instrument of sustainable development. The short-distances between buildings allow for using the area sparingly. Working towards citizens being independent of the vehicle transport provides the ground for economic communication. The compact city fosters effective fulfillment of inhabitants' needs, which is reflected, for example, in an easy access to services given the short distances. The new concept brings ecology into the city making it an attractive space for people while performing the integration function. Shorter commuting distance and greater spatial proximity of citizens are beneficial to contacts and ties across urban communities. Still, certain advantages of the compact structure of the cities remain questionable. Among others, the findings of the research conducted by David Simmonds and Denvil Coombe suggest that there is a small likelihood that deploying intensive forms for utilizing the area will affect significantly the overall scale of transport tasks. The authors believe that the limits in terms of citizens' commute possibilities should be dictated by legislation (Simmonds, Coombe, 2000: 129). The urban-development processes are often the result of local and unique factors. The ever more frequent phenomenon is the building intensification on the outskirts of large cities. On Cracow's outskirts, office buildings of major corporations have been located employing hundreds of people who commute daily mainly from Cracow.

The principles of the sustainable city – heavily built-up, protecting the environment and territory, while at the same time comfortable and people-friendly, requires that a range of solutions be applied. The concept of the minimum area to be used by residents for their needs to be met is closely related to the indicator of human pressure on the environment expressed as the level of consumption in terms of goods and services (Wilczyńska-Michalik, Świder, 2010: 104). The ecological footprint is measured according to the proportion resulting from the economic activities pursued by people for the purpose of fulfilling their needs per ecological functions expressed by a territory without which these activities would not be possible. This measure (utterly uncommon in Poland) was highlighted by William Rees and Mathis Wackernagel in 1996 in their publication *Our Ecological Footprint: reducing human impact on the Earth*. The authors raised public interest in the human pressure on the natural environment. The indicator is calculated for a specific time interval and specific population (on a global, regional or city scale). World Wildlife Fund for Nature and United Nations Environment Program are among the organizations dealing with the ecological imprint. In a report from 2002 prepared by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature, the global ecological imprint grew by 80% and already exceeds the biocapacity of the Earth by 20%. On average, every inhabitant of our planet consumed and used for his/her subsistence 2,3 hectares of land in 1999. In total the global ecological imprint was estimated at 13,7 billion hectares of land. That was the effect of consumption and industrial production. “What is also significant is the regional distribution of those processes. The ecological imprint per citizen of a rich country ranges from seven to ten hectares of land, while in the developing countries this indicator is at a level of 1,5-1,8 hectares” (Kowalewski, 2005: 134). The cause of this discrepancy lies in the differentiated standards of living across different regions (countries).

The concept of socially responsible territories represents a complementary continuation of the concept of corporate social responsibility. Its emergence is the outcome of the search for the development strategy of human capital in a situation of global policies and market economy. It is the response to the attempts aimed at constructing a model for the strategy of responsible development of communities. The socially responsible territories is an instrument used by the European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy – REVES (See Figure 1).

**Figure. 1. Reves excellence award 2013 - logotyp**



Source: <http://www.revesnetwork.eu/excellenceaward2013/> [20.09.2017].

The Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy was established in 1997 in Genoa on the initiative of a group of cities set to activate local development, including the Swedish city of Ostersund, Italian Reggio Calabria, the region of Brussels and Roubaix (France), as well as the organization incorporating worker cooperatives, social cooperatives and participative enterprises – the European Confederation of Worker Cooperatives (CECOP). REVES is a network which connects self-governments and social economy entities for the purpose of social inclusion, establishing lasting partnerships and joint political strategies for effective local development. The main principles of REVES are as follows: cooperation, participation, social cohesion and high quality employment. The overriding aim is to build pluralistic prosperity and socially responsible territories, drawing on local communities, recognizing these elements as being vital for increasing citizens' activity and meeting their needs.

A fundamental element for the SRT concept is the territory and its inhabitants, and the diverse relationships (interdependencies) unfolding between them. A close relationship between the territory and its inhabitants is considered to be the requirement for creative work, policy of change and progress, with all these elements underpinning the development of the community and the territory. If approached in this way, the development takes the form of local initiatives or grassroots activities aimed at strengthening the interdependency which brings about social integration. With respect to integration, of no minor importance are such values as a sense of identity, culture and tradition, as well as originality.

The key element of the concept of socially responsible territories is their importance for raising the living standards or at least working towards it. This practical aspect of the SRT concept is manifested by the attempts to draw up the development strategy of the territory with this strategy becoming particularly relevant under competitive conditions. It should be emphasized that under the concept of socially responsible territories it is not the territory that is the principle category, but human capital and its various aspects. The social situation tends to be presented in planning documents through the prism of numerous diverse indicators. The needs of the community's members refer to different categories, such as: job opportunities, ensuring sources of income, healthcare, education and others – which in the context of the quality of life and sense of security is recognized as the most crucial. The strategy aimed at developing the territory in a socially responsible way centers around the integration of the citizens. Moreover, solving specific problems boils down to distinctive individual groups of social capital, in other words, to, e.g. people in working age – economically active, youth and the elderly, women, the unemployed, etc. Searching for tools capable of solving problems that are characteristic for the individual categories of human capital has a positive impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the entire strategy.

Integrating human capital is beneficial to the competitiveness of the territory where this human capital lives. As less competitive, one should view those regions which attract investments which, in turn, lead to the deterioration of the standards of living of the population. This situation may be a sign that local needs are ignored, there is no cooperation between local authorities and citizens, while the expression of social integration takes the form of protests and manifestations against some unpopular investment. Among the actions that ultimately lead to declining competitiveness are also trivializing or destroying traditional social ties, disappearance of or crowding-out the indigenous culture and identity to the benefit of modern solutions, as well as making daily life more burdensome, it being the consequence of the expansion of urbanized areas. The decline in the standard of living often engenders emigration to other regions. In the region of Małopolska one can already observe the process of depopulation of the city centers from which people move to rapidly growing suburbs. All this is accompanied by unfavorable demographic processes characterized by a high death rate and low birth rate, as well as international migration.

The project Socially Responsible Wrocław incorporates the concept of socially responsible territories. The implementation of the project is funded by the EU funds under the Operational Program - Knowledge Education Development, Priority Axis: IV. Social Innovations and



Transnational Cooperation. The project activities commenced on 1 August 2016 and are set to be completed on 31 January 2019. The leader of the project is St. Brother Albert's Aid Society - Wrocław Circle (Branch), while the national partners include Social Cooperative Association of Poznań, Wrocław Social Cooperative, Wrocław Commune. The international partner is an Italian association Consorzio di Solidarietà Sociale Oscar Romero.

The main aim of the project is to increase the availability of public services provided to local governments by social enterprises in that the following tasks are performed: “devising and implementing, from 1 August 2016 to 31 January 2019, a model for cooperation between social economy entities, social enterprises and local self-government units under the name Local Program. Social Economy Development by exchanging information, knowledge and by transferring the Italian solutions under the name Consortia supporting growth of social enterprises” (<http://www.spoldzielnie.org/project,42>).

The main proposal put forward by the project of the Socially Responsible Wrocław is to build and subsequently use in practice the model of cooperation between the local self-government and social economy entities in terms of the delegation of public services (care, recycling, cleaning, renovation, maintenance of green areas). The cooperation between these entities will take the form of the Local Program of Social Economy Development (LPRES). The solution (see Table 1) combines the following elements:

- a) public-private partnership (of social economy entities, NGO, social enterprises and public entities),
- b) legal framework and the program preparing for work in the social economy entities,
- c) development of the processes for professionalizing local social cooperatives.

**Table 1. The intended outcomes of the project**

Quality specification	Quantity specification
The number of institutions which have implemented the new solutions thanks to the cooperation with a foreign partner	1 item.
The number of people who took up a job in the social economy entities as a result of taking part in the program of social and occupational reintegration.	10 people (4 women and 6 men)
The number of institutions which started cooperation with a foreign partner under the program	4 items.
The number of non-governmental organizations which started cooperation with a foreign partner under the program	2 items.
The number of social enterprises which started cooperation with a foreign partner under the program	1 item.

The number of local self-government units which started cooperation with a foreign partner under the program	1 item.
The number of people at risk of social exclusion who are going to take part in testing the solution under implementation	30 people (13 women and 17 men)
The number of solutions which were created under the cooperation with a transnational partner.	1 item.
The number of people who are going to take part in implementation training	25 people (15 women and 10 men)
The number of reports from the studies and analyses carried out for the purpose of correct implementation of new LPRES solution	3 items.
<b>Value of the project:</b>	<b>PLN 1 799 097,12</b>
<b>European Social Fund contribution:</b>	<b>PLN 1 559 637,29</b>

Source: self-reported data based on the data posted at <http://www.wci.wroclaw.pl/projekt-spoecznie-odpowiedzialny-wroclaw/> (accessed on 20.09.2017).

### 3. Conclusions

Being sustainable and socially responsible implies in the first place managing a territory rationally. The requirement necessary for achieving this structure is the willingness to seek compromise and complementary solutions. In many cases it is not possible to reconcile the contradictions between the development of the cities and consumption and economic objectives. Urbanization is an ineluctable process both for developed and developing regions, being also a stimuli for transformations. Uncontrolled urbanization processes pose serious social, economic and ecological threats. In order to face the problems that are present within the space of a territorial unit, new solutions are necessary. The strategies and models that are being devised for the development of territorial units are not effective enough to address the problems of the twenty first century. The instruments of territorial exploitation are ineffective in terms of serving the inhabited territory. The slogan of sustainable development, which is becoming ever more popular in the documents of spatial planning of Polish communes, fails to be implemented in practice. In the initiatives undertaken by the local communities two basic models of development strategy can be observed. On the one hand, what these models emphasize is the role of the self-government whose activities are underpinned by the cooperation with a variety of organizations seeking to support the initiatives so as to render them effective and efficient. On the other hand, strategies are emerging which are based on the social economy, drawing on the utilization of social capital, since they recognize this capital as a promoter of local development, as exemplified by local economic initiatives carried out in Europe which are based on the activity and integration measures of the local authorities together with the participation of non-governmental organizations, social economy entities and other actors involved in the local development (Pancer-Cybulska, 2010: 314-324).

For a regional policy to be effective one needs to define the scope and pace of the urbanization processes. What is also necessary is the redefinition of the functions to be performed by the cities because of the need to establish rational relationships between multipurpose activities when modeling the development of the contemporary cities. There is a need for changes in the principles of regional and city planning, and of regional policies in the aspect of sustainable development.

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