



Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development



**Case Study Report**  
**Communal Service**  
**A Social Cooperative as Part of a Local Revitalisation Program in**  
**Brzeziny, Poland**

**Authors:** Pamela Jeziorska-Biel, Anna Janiszewska, Marcin Wójcik, Karolina-Dmochowska-Dudek, Paulina Tobiasz-Lis, Tomasz Napierała (ULODZ)

## Report Information

<b>Title:</b>	Case Study Report: Communal Service. A Social Cooperative as Part of a Local Revitalisation Program in Brzeziny, Poland (RELOCAL Deliverable 6.2)
<b>Authors:</b>	Pamela Jeziorska-Biel, Anna Janiszewska, Marcin Wójcik, Karolina-Dmochowska-Dudek, Paulina Tobiasz-Lis, Tomasz Napierała
<b>Version:</b>	Final
<b>Date of Publication:</b>	29.03.2019
<b>Dissemination level:</b>	Public

## Project Information

<b>Project Acronym</b>	RELOCAL
<b>Project Full title:</b>	Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development
<b>Grant Agreement:</b>	727097
<b>Project Duration:</b>	48 months
<b>Project coordinator:</b>	UEF

## Bibliographic Information

Jeziorska-Biel P, Janiszewska A, Wójcik M, Dmochowska-Dudek K, Tobiasz-Lis P and Napierała T (2019) *Communal Service. A Social Cooperative as Part of a Local Revitalisation Program in Brzeziny, Poland*. RELOCAL Case Study N° 22/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

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## Table of Contents

<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of Maps.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of Tables .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Methodological Reflection.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. The Locality .....</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1 Territorial Context and Characteristics of the Locality .....	5
3.2 Spatial (in-)justice and territorial governance within .....	10
<b>4. The Action .....</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1 Basic Characteristics of the Action.....	17
4.2 Evaluation of the Implementation of the Action in Brzeziny .....	19
<b>5. Final Assessment: Capacities for Change .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>6. Conclusions .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>7. References.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>8. Annexes .....</b>	<b>32</b>
8.1 List of Interviewed Experts .....	32
8.2 Stakeholder Interaction Table .....	32
8.3 Map(s) and Photos.....	33
8.4 Additional information.....	45

## List of Figures

		Title page
Figure 1	Employees of the Social Cooperative, sources: www.communalservice.pl	4
Figure 2	Focus group in progress	6
Figure 3	Attachment to the town	11
Figure 4	“Krakówek”	14
Figure 5	Brzeziny town centre	14
Figure 6	Employees of a social cooperative at work	26

## List of Maps

Map 1	Location of the Brzeziny in Poland	9
Map 2	Location of the city of Brzeziny in the Łódź Agglomeration	10
Map 3	Perception of characteristic and important places in Brzeziny (places of contrast)	15
Map 4	Spatial impact of Community Service: “Influence of the Social Cooperative” and “Places of intervention”	24

## List of Tables

Table 1	Schedule of stages and tasks	5-6
Table 2	Basic socio-economic characteristics of the area (Source)	10-11
Table 3	The process of forming the Social Cooperative: “Communal Service”	20-21

## Abbreviations

EFRD	European Fund for Regional Development
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SGI	Services of general interest

## Executive Summary

The Social Cooperative in Brzeziny is an organisation whose mission is aimed at the social and occupational reintegration of those affected by social exclusion (the unemployed, disabled, alcoholics, those under court supervision etc.). Their return to society in such difficult life situations takes place through occupational activity. In the opinion of the Cooperative head, “work is a very important dimension for successful functioning, allowing not only for the transformation of their immediate environment, but also enabling personal self-improvement”. An important role played by the activity of the Cooperative is to provide the inhabitants of Brzeziny with general services and care for urban space (orderliness, aesthetics as well as providing new functions), and since 2013 to carry out basic municipal duties. The Cooperative is a legal entity and hence functions like any other enterprise. The majority of tasks, entrusted nowadays to the Cooperative, had been until quite recently performed by companies from outside the town. Its effective functioning is made possible owing to two unique instruments from the domain of social economy: the use of ‘social clauses’, and in-house public procurement.

In the case analysed here issues of spatial justice are encountered, first, at a regional level, meaning the causes ‘conditioning’ the locality along with its specificity. This area is affected by socio-economic problems, a “crisis” area, under the influence of the development of the urban agglomeration of Lodz, which has definite implications for local urban space. Yet, this concerns the local level as well, i.e. the spatial differentiation of areas of objective and subjective injustice. Brzeziny also features important social deficits which call for effective solutions in terms of social policy.

Among the most significant qualities associated with the existence of the Social Cooperative, the social aspect should be mentioned: assistance and support extended to the socially excluded, and the “mending of individual biographies” (and consequently of their families) by attempting to them bring back into society, taking the burden off the Urban Centre for Social Assistance, as well as decreasing joblessness in the town. In terms of the economic aspect, the Cooperative provides a number of indispensable services, while the town itself is its main commissioning entity leading to the so-called “closed flow of money”. In the spatial aspect, the activities of the Cooperative have an obvious spatial dimension (point “interventions” and zones of impact), with order and urban resources being brought back to those places which had been deprived of them. These places are endowed with new functions, they are being put in order and new resources are established. The changes, as they appear in space, give rise to new perceptions and assessments by their immediate users, the residents of the town. Until the founding of the Cooperative, cleaning was done by external companies, which often resulted in poorer quality and delays.

It is also highly significant that the Social Cooperative in Brzeziny is a pioneering example on a national scale, supplying good practices, effectively realising the precepts of social economy, and from a different perspective the concept of revitalisation of social, economic and spatial resources

## 1. Introduction

The activity of “Communal Services” constitutes an interesting and important case study (for RELOCAL), and was chosen as an example of a broadly defined process of revitalisation of local resources; combining technical activities (renovation, modernization and upgrading value), with social and economic activity; revitalization and the social economy.

Brzeziny was the first in Poland to decide to involve a Social Cooperative as a part of the process of revitalization and not just for its final effects. As a result, it became both a performer and a stakeholder in the socio-spatial changes to the area.

Brzeziny represents numerous challenges of a spatial nature: the appearance of spatial ‘disproportion’ (with social inequalities superimposed over it), the development of poverty enclaves, of marginalised places, of ugly and forgotten ones, with a pronounced need for implementing spatial justice. It is a town that requires multidimensional and multi-layered intervention and support.

The impact of the “Communal Services” Social Cooperative in Brzeziny can be analysed and interpreted at three levels: the micro level - directly addressing employees and inhabitants of social housing resources as vulnerable social groups (the socially excluded due, in particular, to long-term unemployment, disability, alcohol addiction – in other words, clients of social care entangled in a vicious circle of incapacity to change their life situations); the meso level - referring to the local community; and the macro level - referring to the entire system of implementation in a ‘trans-local’ context for Brzeziny (in this case related to broad revitalization). The issue of evening out the socio-spatial differentials finds its reflection in a number of strategic documents, and is included as one of the development objectives of the town.

It aims at the reduction of both social deprivation and exclusion, and also of the spatial “disproportion” present in Brzeziny and reflecting social inequality.



**Figure 1:** Employees of the Social Cooperative  
Source: [www.communalservice.pl](http://www.communalservice.pl)



## 2. Methodological Reflection

The Social Cooperative in Brzeziny constitutes a particular and specific case study. This entity is simultaneously an institution, a team of real individuals who form it (without whom it would have not assumed the shape it has today), as well as an idea. The respondents selected for the study were, therefore (and had to be) in a way a priori determined. We assumed that the primary stakeholders included the pioneers of the idea, the founders of the Cooperative, those currently jointly forming it, and its employees. On the other hand, the choice of methods and techniques was dictated by the need to acquire pertinent and reliable information from the subjects of study. It was decided, then, to use the following research techniques from the domain of qualitative investigations: focused interviews (Fig. 2) with representatives of the local authorities (who appear in the study in a double role – initiators of the idea and employees of Brzeziny town council) and with the President of the Cooperative; an in-depth interview with a standardised list of information sought. The homogeneous dyad (an in-depth interview, conducted simultaneously with two people, “situated on the same side of the problem” – here the respondents were employees of the entity), mental mapping (showing the perception of urban space in the context of “reach of functioning” and influence of the Social Cooperative on this space). In the framework of application of quantitative methods, a questionnaire-based opinion study was carried out on a representative sample of inhabitants of Brzeziny. Representativeness was preserved using random stratified selection, features such as gender, age and place of residence being taken into account (data were from the current registry of the town hall). The purpose of the study was to determine the attachment of the inhabitants of Brzeziny to the space of their town. It was assumed that the attitude of the respondents to their place of residence has an impact on their vision and perception of it. It is important to note that the selection of the methods applied and techniques, and, consequently, the selection of respondents, were conditioned by the specific character. This is rather small, with a limited number of meaningful stakeholders (there was a saturation of information sought and obtained).

Stage	Tasks	Timing	Location
Stage I	Preparation and research plan	February-March 2018	Desk research, University of Lodz
Stage II	Study visits	February-March 2018	Brzeziny and its Town Hall
Stage III	Focused interviews with employees of the Town Hall of Brzeziny and the President of the Social Cooperative	09.04.2018	Town Hall, Brzeziny
Stage IV	Individual free interviews with employees of Brzeziny Town Hall, and the president and employees of the Social Cooperative	April-July 2018	Brzeziny and the Social Cooperative
Stage V	Questionnaire-based opinion study	May – July	Brzeziny
Stage VI	Processing and summarising the material collected; preparation of the report	August-September 2018	Desk work, University of Lodz

**Table 1:** Schedule of stages and tasks





**Figure 2:** Focus group in progress

### 3. The Locality

#### 3.1 Territorial Context and Characteristics of the Locality

The town of Brzeziny is located in the province of Lodz, in the district of Brzeziny, 15 km to the east of the city of Lodz. Lodz is a large regional centre, affected by the consequences of a difficult multiple restructuring (map 1, 2), implementing measures aimed at redeveloping urbanized areas and giving them new social and economic functions.

Brzeziny has a long historical tradition of urban development, and is one of the oldest towns in the present-day province of Lodz. The rich historical past and numerous remnants (cultural heritage) from the pre-industrial age constitute an important factor contributing to its social and cultural identity today. One of the basic development problems is due to the consequences of the development of the urban agglomeration of Lodz in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. At this time Brzeziny was away from the mainstream of functional transformation linked with industrialisation and other associated processes. This resulted in a poor development of relations between Brzeziny and the centre (core) of the urban agglomeration of Lodz. Even though the distance between them is only 15 km, the town preserves a quite separate character, bringing both positive and negative consequences. An essential development barrier until the beginning of the 1990s was the lack of a direct railway connection between Brzeziny and the centre of the agglomeration, meaning a lack of one of the main factors forming ties in both social and economic terms. In effect, Brzeziny remained throughout the long period of the industrial age, a small town with a stable population (currently about 12 500), fulfilling predominantly local functions related to its agricultural surroundings.

A lack of significant investment in the manufacturing sector after World War II meant the social and economic, as well as the spatial, structure of the town remained stable, but with a tendency to gradual degradation. Social impoverishment and, in effect, degradation of its material substance became especially acute in the 1980s when the outflow of the better educated and more active, as well as the more mobile population, from the town to bigger cities and abroad in the search for a better life, became a permanent and significant phenomenon. The economic deficits were to an extent compensated for by social and cultural functions, especially the hospital and secondary schools, as well as important religious functions. In terms of social identification an important role had been played by its function as a district centre until 1975. In the period of the rebirth of local government institutions the residents fought a battle to bring back to Brzeziny its district seat function. Nowadays this is one of the smallest districts in the province of Lodz, but still features a complete range of general services. The maintenance of these services constitutes one of the biggest problems for contemporary social and economic development as its existence is the essence of maintaining an urban economic basis and administrative function.

The development of various social and economic relations with Lodz since the 1990s has taken place along with the increased availability of private transport and the extension of bus connections. In consequence, the problem of the capacity of the road linking Brzeziny with Lodz has arisen, the more so as its location on the trunk road linking Lodz with the national capital has brought additional transit traffic as well.

Spatial development is still characterised by a high concentration of buildings, and hence a high population density, in the centre (traditional housing blocks). The basic urban layout is shown in its radial road pattern, having as the centre the oldest part of the town with medieval origins. The consequence of this is that there is intensive road traffic across the centre, resulting from two superimposed transport routes: one related to daily patterns within the agglomeration of Lodz, and the second a transit one. The increase in road traffic

gives rise to various problems: a high intensity of noise, increased air pollution (which is additionally compounded by the location of the town in a bowl, a so-called “pit”), the destruction of buildings, and a high frequency of road accidents. All these have an influence on the negative assessment of the centre as an unfriendly area, dangerous, and worse than other parts of the town. The residents of the centre have a feeling of increasing spatial inequality, consider themselves to be wronged and feel dissatisfied. Their suggestions concerning a solution; namely the construction of a bypass, are becoming increasingly pronounced.

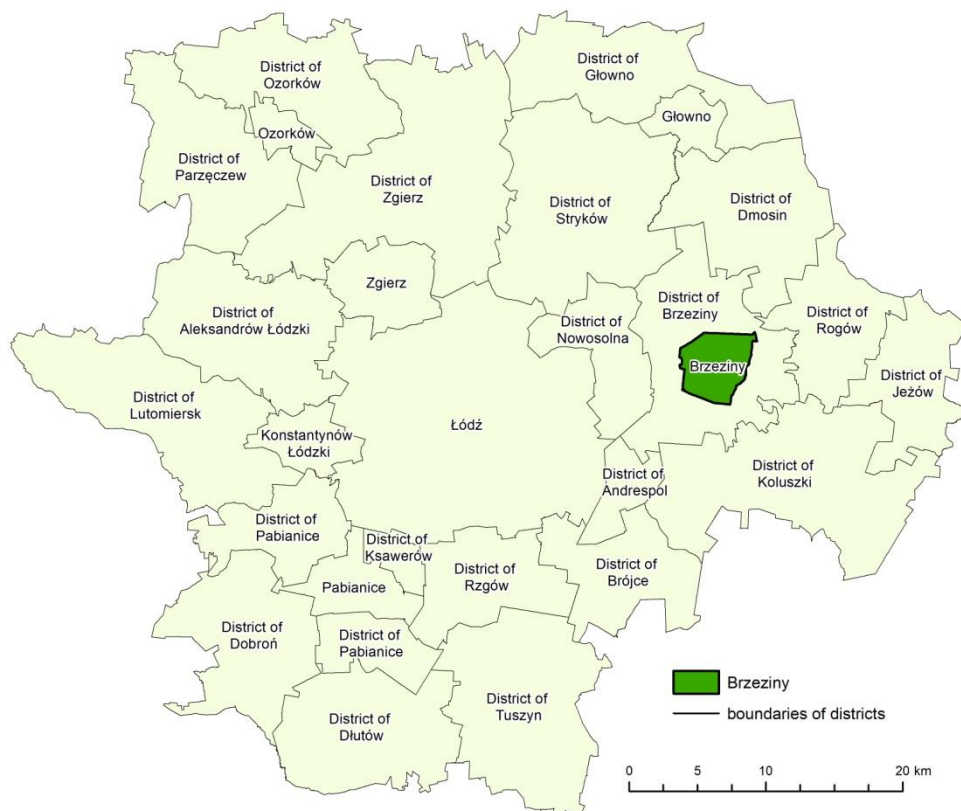
The town of Brzeziny constitutes a “crisis” area, currently subject to a plan for multidimensional revitalisation (Strategy for Development of Brzeziny in 2014-2020, Municipal Revitalisation Program for Brzeziny). It is very frequent in historical European cities for such areas to have the oldest quarters of historical significance. Yet, it is not the historical character of these quarters that stands behind the need for their revitalisation, but the particular accumulation of social, economic and spatial problems in one place. This leads to the appearance of poverty “enclaves” and a spatial concentration of social problems. In the case of Brzeziny we can speak of the following: a significant level of unemployment (including long-term), poverty, the difficult situation of the disabled and of those suffering from long-term sickness, as well as an increasing accumulation of social pathologies and exclusion (a negative inheritance of aspiration). An increasing proportion of individuals and families need to benefit from social care services (with a reproduction of negative social structures). These phenomena are compounded, additionally, with such as the relatively low educational level of the inhabitants and the out-migration of the young and educated to bigger cities, mainly to Lodz and Warsaw (lack of a sufficiently attractive offer of social infrastructure). Social phenomena are accompanied by negative environmental consequences. In the compactly overbuilt area, inhabited by the low-income population, houses are being heated during the winter season by burning the cheapest fuels (mainly low-quality coal - and quite frequently rubbish, even though this is forbidden by law).

The revitalisation of Brzeziny refers to a comprehensive process of renewal of the urban area whose space, functions and material substance have undergone structural degradation, leading to a crisis. This makes the correct economic and social development of the entire town impossible, or at least difficult, as well as in sustainable terms. The revitalization process is carried out on the basis of a strategic document: the Communal Regeneration Program for Brzeziny. This has its legal authority in the Act of 9 October 2015 on revitalization, and the sources of financing are the city budget and the EU Cohesion Fund.

One of the instruments of social revitalisation in a spatial dimension is the actively functioning Social Cooperative. This Cooperative makes efforts to help those inhabitants (mainly through employment) who do not possess adequate skills or have any capacity to compete on the labour market in the centre of the agglomeration or in other towns. At the same time, the work performed serves to solve a number of problems in the functioning of the town, concerning such “dirty” activities as waste management, cleaning, simple and basic construction and repair work. By its functioning, the Cooperative strongly influences the space of the town as well, especially in those areas which are identified by stakeholders as places of inequality, featuring socio-spatial ‘disproportions’ and uneven access to socially desirable resources.



**Map. 1.** Location of the Brzeziny in Poland



**Map. 2.** Location of the city of Brzeziny in the Łódź Agglomeration

Name of Case Study Area	Town of Brzeziny
Size	22 km <sup>2</sup>
Total population (2016)	12 514 inhabitants
Population density (2016)	568.8 inhab./km <sup>2</sup>
Level of development in relation to wider socio-economic context Disadvantaged within a developed region/city? Disadvantaged within a wider underdeveloped region?	Disadvantaged within a developed region
Type of the region (NUTS3-Eurostat)	Predominantly urban

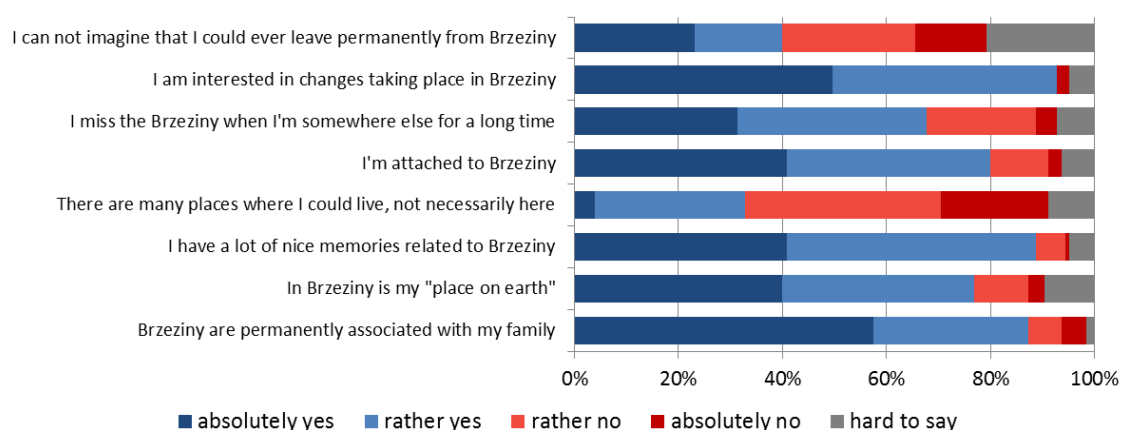
Predominantly urban? Intermediate? Predominantly rural?	- 61.3% of urban population, - employed in % of the total: agriculture, forestry and fishing – 19.5% industry and construction – 35.5% services – 45%
Name and Identification Code of the NUTS-3 area, in which the locality is situated (NUTS 3 Code(s) as of 2013)	- Statistical classification in force between 1 January 2008 and 31 December 2014 – PL114 Łódzki - Statistical classification in force between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2017 – PL 114 Łódzki - Statistical classification in force since 1 January 2018 – PL712 Łódzki
Name and Identification Code of the NUTS-2 area, in which the locality is situated (NUTS 2 Code(s) as of 2013)	- Statistical classification in force between 1 January 2008 and 31 December 2014 – PL11 Łódzkie - Statistical classification in force between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2017 – PL 11 Łódzkie - Statistical classification in force since 1 January 2018 – PL71 Łódzkie

**Table 2:** Basic socio-economic characteristics

### Attachment to town

Respondents from Brzeziny clearly identify themselves with their town (Fig. 3). A distinct majority indicate that ties to the town result from family connections. Such were the answers (“decidedly yes” and “rather yes”) of more than 87% of the respondents while roughly 80% emphasise their attachment to the town, both female and male. This attachment results in a high degree of interest in what is changing there. In this case the answers “decidedly yes” and “rather yes” added up to close to 80% of the sample.

The sentimental relation to the town (nice memories associated with it) is represented by close to 89% of responding inhabitants. The majority of them also indicated Brzeziny as their “place on the Earth” – almost 77% of such answers in the survey. This is evidence for very positive emotions linking the inhabitants with the town. More than two-thirds declare that they “long for Brzeziny” when they are away for a longer time. Despite these positive opinions, close to 40% admitted the possibility of leaving and settling somewhere else, with more than 32% stating that there are many places where they could live, and not necessarily in Brzeziny.



**Figure 3:** Attachment to the town



Source: own elaboration on the basis of results from the survey

It was assumed in the study that the attitude of the respondents to their place of residence exerts an influence on their vision and perception of it. Their strong identification is associated with an interest in its matters. As such, it gains in significance and becomes important and close to its users. People get attached to places they know and endow them with positive emotions. They also wish to see good changes in these places and, being more attentive, notice such changes when they take place. Work done for the benefit of such places is done with greater satisfaction and is of higher quality.

### 3.2 Spatial (in-)justice and territorial governance within

#### Analytical Dimension 1: Perception of spatial (in-)justice within the locality

First, the notion of spatial justice with respect to the activity of the Social Cooperative was perceived by the respondents as existing in close association with the notion of social justice (it turned out to be difficult to separate the two notions in the consciousness of the respondents). Intuitively, therefore, it showed a very good direction of reasoning since the notion of social inequality is strictly linked with the notion of spatial inequality, and one cannot separate the two. Spatial justice is defined as the opposite of spatial inequality. *"Spatial justice is then, when those excluded, those in need, get the chance to abandon poverty, their life impasse, in which they have become entangled, when they get a chance to change their own and their families' life situations, even if it is just through changing their place of residence and leaving the enclaves. Whether they use this chance is their private business, but they get it. Equally, like any one of us (...) When they get a job in the Cooperative and work normally, they can try to get a flat, for instance in some other place. We had an employee who, a long time after starting work, managed to get a social flat. He was homeless before. He renovated this apartment himself"* (PL2CivLI). The principles and the rules of the functioning of the Social Cooperative concentrate on assistance to those inhabitants of Brzeziny (primarily) in marginalised groups. To those who have not been active on the labour market for a long period of time and who are socially excluded, in order to facilitate their return to the labour market. This, in the majority of cases, would mean their effective inclusion into the local community. The assistance of the Cooperative is addressed to the spatial enclaves, stigmatised with poverty and marginalisation (i.e. those areas which accumulate pathological phenomena). Hence, we speak of spaces with less resources and with a pejorative social label. These are specific enclaves, i.e. mainly the centre and so-called "Krakówek". In the opinion of the respondents, these areas are strongly marked as downgraded, poor and full of 'disproportions' with respect to other parts of the town. *"Here the poorest live - this is known - neighbour to neighbour, such categories as those from social care, and quite different to housing estates. It is more ugly here. We know how it is here"* (PL6PubLI). All of the estates mentioned are located around the centre and constitute a natural hinterland, being the bedroom for the central part. These areas are inhabited by the major part of the population of Brzeziny.

Second, the President of the Cooperative who is someone involved actively in the particular 'biographies' of the employees, close to their problems, and taking direct care of their fate, expressed the opinion that the notion of spatial justice can also be understood quite literally. This might mean the "cleaning" of public spaces common to all inhabitants and of the socially excluded by offering them some occupation (job). The space of the town (e.g. parks, gates, passages, shops, neighbourhoods) has a chance to become more aesthetic and friendlier for all inhabitants. This space could become safer, more convenient to use, and improve the town's resources. *"This may sound strange, perhaps a bit brutal, but we, quote unquote, take those people from the yard, give them work, occupation, give them the chance to earn honestly, show them another perspective, and this is already a lot, and thus they do*



*not stick to the yards, do not spend time on park benches, they are no longer there, and it is nicer for the others, for it is known that nobody likes to see such situations” (PL2CivLI).*

Third, the notion of spatial justice in relation to a place, the specific space of Brzeziny, is also defined in the perspective of the ‘quite concrete’ effects of work and the functioning of the Cooperative for the benefit of the town. This results from the profile of its activity and concerns the work (e.g. repair of definite places), in some cases undertakings of a broader spatial reach (e.g. revitalisation of the waste selection plant), as well as care for the aesthetic aspect of public spaces (cleaning, snow removal, tree planting). In effect, the spaces that have been abandoned, untidy, treated as “worse”, “uglier”, “unwanted”, acquire a chance to get endowed with new, positive functions.

In this sense, the activity of the Cooperative may be considered as an evening out of levels of aesthetics, quality, and functionality with respect to those spaces which are deprived.

Social justice always has its reflection in space. The question of the spatial representation of “spatially unjust” places, those featuring worse access to resources, perceptible and felt kinds of ‘disproportion’, was answered with the help of an analysis of mental maps, elaborated by stakeholders. In the social experience, the places, which experience the biggest and the most visible spatial inequalities in Brzeziny, are the centre and the so-called “Krakówek”. At the same time, they are considered to be the places, in which one sees crisis, the dangerous places, the development-less places. Association of these categories in the consciousness of the respondents is quite symptomatic, especially if the assessment of these two areas is primarily negative.

“Krakówek” – the name of this area refers in diminutive to the name of the ancient capital of Poland, Cracow – but, originally, it was Brzeziny as such that was referred to as little Cracow, mainly owing to the close contacts of the owners of the town (the Lasocki family), with the royal court on Wawel Hill in Cracow (15<sup>th</sup> century). Brzeziny has also its legend, a tale of “Little Cracow”, a town competing through its glamour with the capital city itself. Yet, the inhabitants of the town, due to their pride and sins, were punished by God. Krakówek was absorbed and covered by soil on which birches grew, which in time gave its name to the place (Brzeziny – literally – birch groves).

Today, Krakówek has nothing common with glamour. It is rather a socially and spatially degraded area, *“houses were built there at some time that were meant just for a while, their destruction was assumed, but they have remained until today (...) sometimes this place is colloquially called a little Beijing” (PL5PubLI).* It is a term widely used and understood in the local slang.

The centre of the town constitutes, as well, an area, requiring revitalisation, being the historical part of town (the entire cultural-historical complex is of high regional significance), but featuring the biggest infrastructural needs, and, simultaneously, the highest intensity of pathological phenomena, crime and family problems. The majority of buildings in this zone are the housing blocks. This area has, very pronounced investment needs, make an enormous challenge for the authorities and the local community. Degradation of the centre of Brzeziny exerts a negative influence on the feeling of cultural identity and lowers the possibility of introducing prestigious economic functions. The society of the town is not capable of making full use of the offer of urban space, which this area, in view of its historical value, should potentially made available. The assessment of this place is very negatively influenced by the intensive road traffic, which, given all the kinds of hardships it brings, gives rise to social expectations and pressures towards the construction of a bypass.

The problems which result from this situation have a social and spatial character:

- lowered aesthetics of the buildings and the surrounding space causes a decrease in the attractiveness of the entire town and discourages potential investors from the creation of new projects and new jobs;
- the state of the majority of the buildings requires intervention in view of the deepening degradation. This leads to the destruction of the resources of cultural heritage and lowers the potential advantages if improvements to its technical condition were to be made;
- the degraded structures and public spaces are not conducive to economic development, and do not give a positive image of the town and its center i.e. where culture, service and trade functions are concentrated;
- the destruction of the buildings in the center of Brzeziny has a negative impact on its cultural identity and weakens the ties of the local community;
- the area is becoming depopulated; those with higher incomes move out of these buildings, choosing the fringes of the town or leave it altogether (mainly to Lodz or Warsaw);
- advancing degradation is conducive to the development of social pathologies.

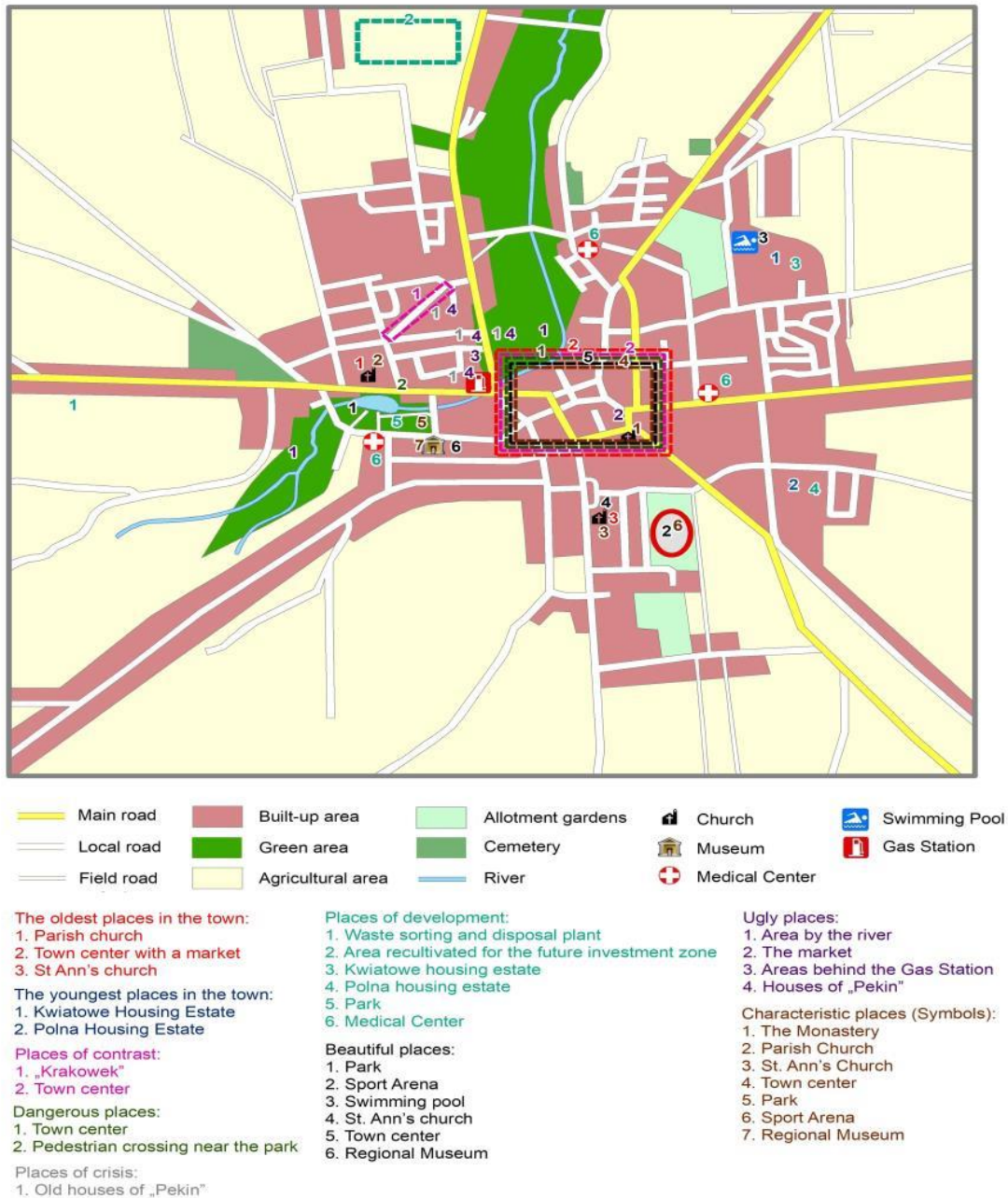
It ought to be underlined that the center is also within the sphere of influence and intervention of the Social Cooperative. The work done on local space is perceived by the respondents as important and necessary and meant to bring orderliness and aesthetics. Some of the employees of the Cooperative live in the center themselves, and were recruited from this area. It can be concluded, therefore, that the assistance of the Cooperative, directed towards the center of Brzeziny, has a twofold character.



**Figure 4:** "Krakówek"



**Figure 5:** The town center of Brzeziny



**Map 3:** Perception of characteristic and important places in Brzeziny (places of contrast)  
The colours used to describe places on the map conform to the designated rectangular areas

## Analytical Dimension 2: Tools and policies for development and cohesion

### The notions of “social justice” and “spatial justice” in the strategic documents of the City office of Brzeziny

#### The characteristic features of the space of social injustice in Brzeziny

The weaknesses of strategic policy documents from the Town Hall of Brzeziny need to be emphasized. Their main limitation lies in the lack of description of the following contexts in all of the investigated strategies: 1) detailed planning methodology, and 2) implementation, including political, financial and social impacts. Regarding these limita-

tions, the problem of transparency in strategic policy documents, as well as transparency in municipal actions and related expenditures, should be underlined (Napierała, 2017). Given this issue, an in-depth analysis of strategic policy documents from the Town Hall in Brzeziny appears to be impossible.

The “Study of the conditions and directions for the spatial organisation of Brzeziny” diagnoses the following characteristic features of socially unjust space: 1) space with buildings in a bad technical state (above all in the historical center of Brzeziny), 2) a lack of public spaces, devoid of social infrastructure, 3) space within which industrial and heavy transport functions are superimposed on to service and residential functions (the corridors of trunk and provincial roads, in which primarily the threat from transport noise has been diagnosed), 4) without access to green spaces which can play a recreational and leisure function, 5) space with a persistence of polluted air (mainly in the natural bowl formed in the middle course of Mrożyca stream in the center of Brzeziny, this area having been indicated in the document “Plan for a Low Emission Economy for Brzeziny in 2015-2017”). It is interesting to note that the unjust spaces have not been indicated in a clear manner in the cartographic part of the “Study of the conditions and directions for the spatial organisation of Brzeziny”.

The spaces of social injustice can be considered together with the degraded areas, as defined in the document “Municipal Revitalisation Program for Brzeziny”, which are planned to be included in whole or in part in the revitalisation undertakings. According to the definition, adopted in this document, the degraded area is *“the area, within which a critical state has been identified (i.e. caused by a concentration of negative social phenomena)”* (“Municipal Revitalisation Program for Brzeziny”, p. 4). It is emphasised in the document that the process of revitalisation, which has by definition to serve a levelling of spatial injustice, is a process involving all of the stakeholders of the degraded area: the inhabitants of this and neighbouring areas, managers of the housing estates, businesses currently and potentially active, and local government authorities. The revitalization program has been defined, initiated, developed and adopted by the town council, with an ongoing program of activities in social, economic, spatial, infrastructural, environmental and cultural spheres. The aim of this program is to bring degraded areas out of crisis and create conditions for their sustainable development. It is a tool for planning, coordinating and integrating various activities within the framework of revitalization (Municipal Revitalization Program for Brzeziny, p. 6). It is worth underlining that this is the sole strategic document in which a thorough analysis is presented – including a cartographic analysis – of the issues, related to spatial injustice. *“Revitalization meets its social goals related to preventing negative social tendencies, counteracting pathologies and social exclusion, as well as improving security. We have learned revitalization in this way by designing the Cooperative's activities”*

PL5PubLI.

### **Reasons for the appearance of social injustice in concrete spaces of the town of Brzeziny**

The social problems of Brzeziny ought to have been diagnosed and presented in the document “Strategy for Solving Social Problems in Brzeziny for 2015-2020”. This document indicates the following social problems: 1) ageing of the local community, 2) a slight increase of unemployment, primarily in the youngest age groups, 3) deepening poverty, caused mainly by joblessness, disabilities, or long and persistent illnesses (the very phenomenon of poverty is the subject of an ampler discussion in the document “Urban Program of Assistance to Families for 2016-2019”), 4) addiction, primarily alcoholism, which is often associated with difficult living situations (considered in detail in the “Urban Program for Prevention and Solutions to Problems of Alcoholism for 2018”), 5) aggression at home (which is considered in the document “Urban Program for Prevention of Aggression at Home and the Protection of Victims of such Aggression for 2017-2020”), and 6) physical



and mental disabilities, which often bring social exclusion. Attention ought to be paid to the fact that the main document considering issues of social justice has been radically narrowed down, while there is no identification of the spaces where the diagnosed problems appear with the highest intensity

### **Locations of spaces featuring social injustice in Brzeziny**

It should be emphasised that the diagnostic part of the fundamental strategic document determining the future development of Brzeziny does not contain any spatial analyses. The town is treated as a single whole. The individual issues, which are considered in relation to social injustice (including unemployment, homelessness, access to environmental resources – especially water, access to municipal and social infrastructure, crime) are discussed at the level of the entire town, without any reference to the specific spaces in which the negative phenomena actually appear.

The diagnostic part of the “Strategy for the Development of Brzeziny in 2014–2020” is devoted above all to consideration of the resources at its disposal (mainly infrastructural) or to activities carried out previously, while the problems which exist in the town are not defined. Social problems are identified, on the other hand, in the “Strategy for Solving Social Problems in Brzeziny for 2015–2020”. Here, however, the spaces in which the problems considered are observed are again not indicated. The diagnosis of problems, related to aggression in families contained in the document “Urban Program for the Prevention of Aggression at Home and the Protection of Victims of such Aggression for 2017–2020”, was reduced to a quantitative analysis carried out for the town as a whole, the procedure for applying for a Blue Card.

It is worth emphasising that social problems in Brzeziny resulting from addictions above all are from alcoholism, and not drug use, the latter phenomenon being completely marginal in the town. Based on an analysis of the strategic documents (“Urban Program for Prevention and Solutions to Problems of Alcoholism for 2018” and also “Urban Program for the Prevention of Drug Addiction for 2018”) the areas in Brzeziny which are particularly prone to the negative consequences of these phenomena can hardly be seen.

The urbanisation processes and their spatial reach within the present administrative boundaries of Brzeziny are described in detail in the document “Study of the conditions and directions for the spatial organisation of Brzeziny”. It should be noted that the development of the central part of the town was harmonious in terms of its historical layout, without any disturbance to the medieval pattern of the streets. Owing to this, the structure of the center is compact and coherent. Brzeziny took shape as an effect of the development of the following ‘settlement units’, which are still legible nowadays in the spatial setting of the town: 1) the original chartered town made up of buildings around the market square along with some suburbs (Szydłowiec, Nowe Miasto, Górki and Lasocin); 2) the market settlement in the area of the church of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, and 3) the manor and park of the Ogiński family, along with its agricultural land. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century all of these elements became integrated, however since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century urbanisation processes have entered into the historical areas. Compact areas of housing blocks have arisen (Modrzewskiego, Przedwiośnie, Razem and Kulczyńskiego), of family housing (Kilińskiego, Kościuszki, Krakówek, Sienkiewicza, Szydłowiec, Słoneczna, PKWN I and II, as well as Wojska Polskiego), of recreational buildings in the north of Brzeziny, and also in peripherally located farming areas with agricultural services. It seems that in the clearly developed and diversified spatial structure it is easy to identify the spatial differences associated with on-going social processes, and hence also to find areas of social injustice. This, however, does not find confirmation in an analysis of the strategic documents for Brzeziny where the question of spatial injustice is virtually absent.

## **Assessment of the policies and instruments used for purposes of development and cohesion in Brzeziny**

### **Postulates of levelling out the spatial injustice in the strategic documents of the City Office in Brzeziny**

The “Strategy for the Development for Brzeziny in 2014–2020” indicates two operational objectives related to the process of getting rid of social injustice. The document speaks of assistance to those excluded or threatened with social exclusion, and of the development of social capital. It is interesting that at the strategic level the spatial context is linked uniquely with issues of public space, environment and transport. Thus, solving the problems of social injustice has not been given, at the most general level of strategic management in Brzeziny, a spatial dimension. The document “Strategy for the Development of Brzeziny in 2014–2020” contains statements putting forward that equal access ought to be guaranteed in terms of various kinds of resources, but this equality is not explained.

The issue of a lack of consideration for social injustice in its spatial dimension while appearing at the most general strategic level, returns at more detailed levels. Analogous serious gaps are present in practically all of the analysed strategic documents, concerning Brzeziny: 1) “Strategy for Solving Social Problems for Brzeziny in 2015-2020”, 2) “Urban Program for Assistance to Families for 2016-2019”, 3) “Urban Program for the Prevention of Aggression at Home and Protection for Victims of such Aggression for 2017-2020”, 4) “Urban Program for Prevention and Solutions to Problems of Alcoholism for 2018”, 5) “Urban Program for the Prevention of Drug Addiction for 2018”, 6) “Long-term Program for Housing Resource Management in Brzeziny for 2014-2018”, and in 7) “Plan for a Low Emission Economy for Brzeziny in 2015-2017”.

The key document in which the framework for spatial policy in Brzeziny was defined, and reference made to policies for getting rid of spatial injustice, is the “Study of the conditions and directions for spatial organisation in Brzeziny”. It is emphasised in this document, in particular, that there exists a need for spatial separation of the conflicting functions, for ensuring (also in spatial terms) an equal access to the municipal and social infrastructure, and for revitalising degraded space (mainly within the historical center of Brzeziny).

It is also emphasised in the document “Long-term Program for Housing Resource Management in Brzeziny for 2014-2018” that buildings which constitute the social housing resource are in bad technical condition, their legal status is often not properly defined, and they are concentrated in the historical center of the town. Undertakings, aiming at the development of new municipal housing in the southern part of the town are expected to solve the problem of its present concentration in the center.

It should be noted that the main source for financing revitalization projects from European funds are the resources of the Regional Operational Program (European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund). The complementary sources of their co-financing are funds from the National Operational Program (European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund). The sources of financing for revitalization projects may also include state budget funds and the budgets of local authorities, as well as others, for example, private ones. At the same time, it should be noted that the legal basis for the implementation of the Municipal Revitalization Program for Brzeziny was the Act of 9 October 2015. One of the objectives of the program is a high level of social capital and a strong civil society which can significantly influence the shaping of local socio-economic policy. The Revitalization Program assumes the promotion of formal and informal associations as well as an increase in the degree of social participation in public life.

## 4. The Action

### 4.1 Basic Characteristics of the Action

The 'Action' is the activity of the Social Cooperative in Brzeziny, which contributes to the levelling of social and spatial injustice in the town (the spatial aspects will be discussed in the following sections). It is a unique solution on a national scale (within the framework of social economy) and is a multifaceted revitalization which aims at restoring the human, social, spatial and economic resources. The Social Cooperative as an initiative is characterized by a specific dynamic development process (see Table 4 for the most important constitutive events).

Timing	Tasks
2010	The Social Cooperative 'Communal Service' started its activity. At the beginning it was a social Cooperative of 'natural persons' established by five unemployed workers (two of them had, in addition, an official disability statement). The Cooperative could start owing to a subsidy from the Labour Fund and support from the Ja-Ty-My Association from Lodz. (This association conducts activities aimed at creating a network of NGOs, local authorities and entrepreneurs, it animates and supports local communities in implementing new initiatives and solutions in the field of social economy development). At that time the Cooperative provided primarily municipal services: maintaining orderliness and cleanliness in the town, repair of roads, and sold rehabilitation beds.
05. 2012	Due to a lack of orders and problems arising in the team, 'CS' was nearing the end of its activity. At that moment, before its liquidation, a strategic decision was made by Marcin Pluta, the mayor of Brzeziny, to take over the Cooperative. Thus, in 2012 the Cooperative was transformed into a Social Cooperative of 'legal persons' and the second stage started. Nowadays, the members of the Cooperative are the town of Brzeziny and the municipality of Rogów, although Brzeziny is the main customer.
11. 2012	Meetings were organised during the 'Multi-branch International Conference of Social Enterprises'. The conference had about 40 participants invited by the mayor of Brzeziny to familiarize themselves with social economy and the functioning of the Cooperative (dissemination of good practices).
2013	An unprecedented event in the functioning of the Cooperative was to take on an order related to the selective collection and management of municipal waste. Brzeziny was the first town in Poland to introduce such an activity and it had a decisive impact on determining the activity profile of the Cooperative
12.2013– 06.2015	Starting the project, entitled: "The conducting of an innovative model of Social Cooperative for implementing public services in public and social partnership". The basis was to employ five people on part time or 'civil-law' contracts. They were specialists selected through a tender procedure. In addition, it was necessary to provide the necessary organizational solutions for the implementation of tasks entrusted to the target group. The project was financed from EU funds under the Human Capital Operational



	Program (POKL).
09-10 2014	Continuation of study visits, including guests from Moldova
07. 2015	Implementation of three training cycles that were carried out as part of a project jointly run by the Social Cooperative 'Communal Service' and the Association for Development of Social Cooperatives (training included issues of building a Social Cooperative team, its operation and implementation of the revitalization process and its impact on society).
08.2017	Study visit of government representatives

**Table 3:** The process of formation of the Social Cooperative: 'Communal Service'

Source: authors based on: [www.communalservice.pl](http://www.communalservice.pl)

The social Cooperative 'Communal Service' has been functioning since 2010. At the beginning it was a social Cooperative of 'natural persons' established by five unemployed workers (two of them had, in addition, an official disability statement). The functioning of the Cooperative could be started owing to the subsidy from the Labour Fund and the support from the Ja-Ty-My Association from Lodz. At that time the Cooperative provided primarily municipal services: maintenance of orderliness and cleanliness in the town, repair of roads, and also sold rehabilitation beds. In this form the Cooperative functioned until 2012, when, due to lack of orders and problems arising in the team, it was nearing the end of its activity. At that moment, before liquidation, a strategic decision was made by the mayor of the town of Brzeziny, Marcin Pluta, to take over the Cooperative. Thus, in 2012 it was transformed into a Social Cooperative of 'legal persons' and the second stage started. Nowadays, the members of the Cooperative are the town of Brzeziny and the municipality of Rogów, although Brzeziny is the main customer.

An unprecedented event in the functioning of the Cooperative was to take on an order related to the selective collection and management of municipal waste. Brzeziny was the first town in Poland to introduce such an activity and it had a decisive impact on determining the activity profile of the Cooperative.

It should be mentioned that the functioning of the Cooperative is founded on two important notions: social economy and social revitalisation. And so, the broadly conceived revitalisation links technical activities (repairs, modernisations, refurbishings) with social and economic activities (associated with the preventing of negative social tendencies, countering pathologies and struggling with social exclusion, as well as improving security). Thereby revitalisation, within the second dimension, joins the social economy. The common ground is found in programs of economic activation and those aimed at solving social problems such as unemployment, crime, and lack of demographic balance. The social economy is understood by the founders of the Cooperative as sensitivity and mindfulness with respect to people: employees, partners, or simply inhabitants of Brzeziny. It is the source for creating the instruments to implement the Cooperative: self-help, self-organisation and cooperation.

It is important to note that in the realisation of these principles two formal issues appeared indispensable. The most important is the need to avoid tenders when ordering services by using the so-called in-house mode established by local authorities. This means, in this case, that when the members of the Social Cooperative are two local authority units, and assuming that the Cooperative provides services primarily for these units, the units in question can place their orders with the Cooperative without being obliged to organise tenders. This results from the official interpretation of Article 2 of the Law on municipal economy, issued by the Office for Public Procurement of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The second issue relates to the social clauses resulting from the Law on public procurement. They enable an order to be prepared where preference is expressed for services

to be provided by enterprises which give jobs to those threatened with social exclusion, in particular through the Social Cooperatives.

#### **4.2 Evaluation of the Implementation of the Action in Brzeziny**

##### **Analytical Dimension 3: Coordination and implementation of the action in the locality under consideration**

A Social Cooperative provides services of a general public character in Brzeziny. "Before establishing a social Cooperative, its current range of duties was performed by external companies. This was so unfavorable that these companies did not correct any mistakes they made. From an economic point of view, it was also a disadvantage because there was a transfer of money out of the town " PL5PubLI.

The employees of the Cooperative undertake work related to such services as:

- management of municipal waste,
- maintenance of cleanliness and orderliness within Brzeziny using both machines and hand-held tools,
- dismantling, loading and cleaning after work completed by other organisations,
- general construction work, including repairs to buildings, laying of sidewalks and squares, setting paving, painting, surface finishing,
- caring for municipal sites and facilities in public use,
- small scale repairs to roads and sidewalks,
- cleaning and keeping orderliness in buildings and industrial facilities,
- winter season maintenance work on roads, sidewalks and squares (removal of mud, snow, and other dirt),
- maintenance of orderliness at public transport stops,
- conservation of open spaces, including care for the municipal park and the pond,
- conduct of activities associated with the protection and care for straying animals.

An important activity of the Social Cooperative is the management and running of the entire complex at the selective waste facility in the town. The sorting plant with its professional equipment was established on the initiative of the Cooperative (within a former brickyard), and its buildings were constructed by its employees. In the terms of waste recycling the Cooperative deals with:

- separation and dismantling of larger-dimension waste and home appliances,
- compressing and packing of plastics, paper and products of various materials, which are then sold,
- activities associated with producing compost.

The Cooperative has at its disposal technical equipment and quite diversified kinds of machinery, both larger and smaller, mainly serving the purposes of cleaning in urban areas.

The Social Cooperative in Brzeziny has increased its recruitment; currently around 60 are employed. The entire waste management complex employs 18. In 2014 the number of employees was 50 structured as follows:

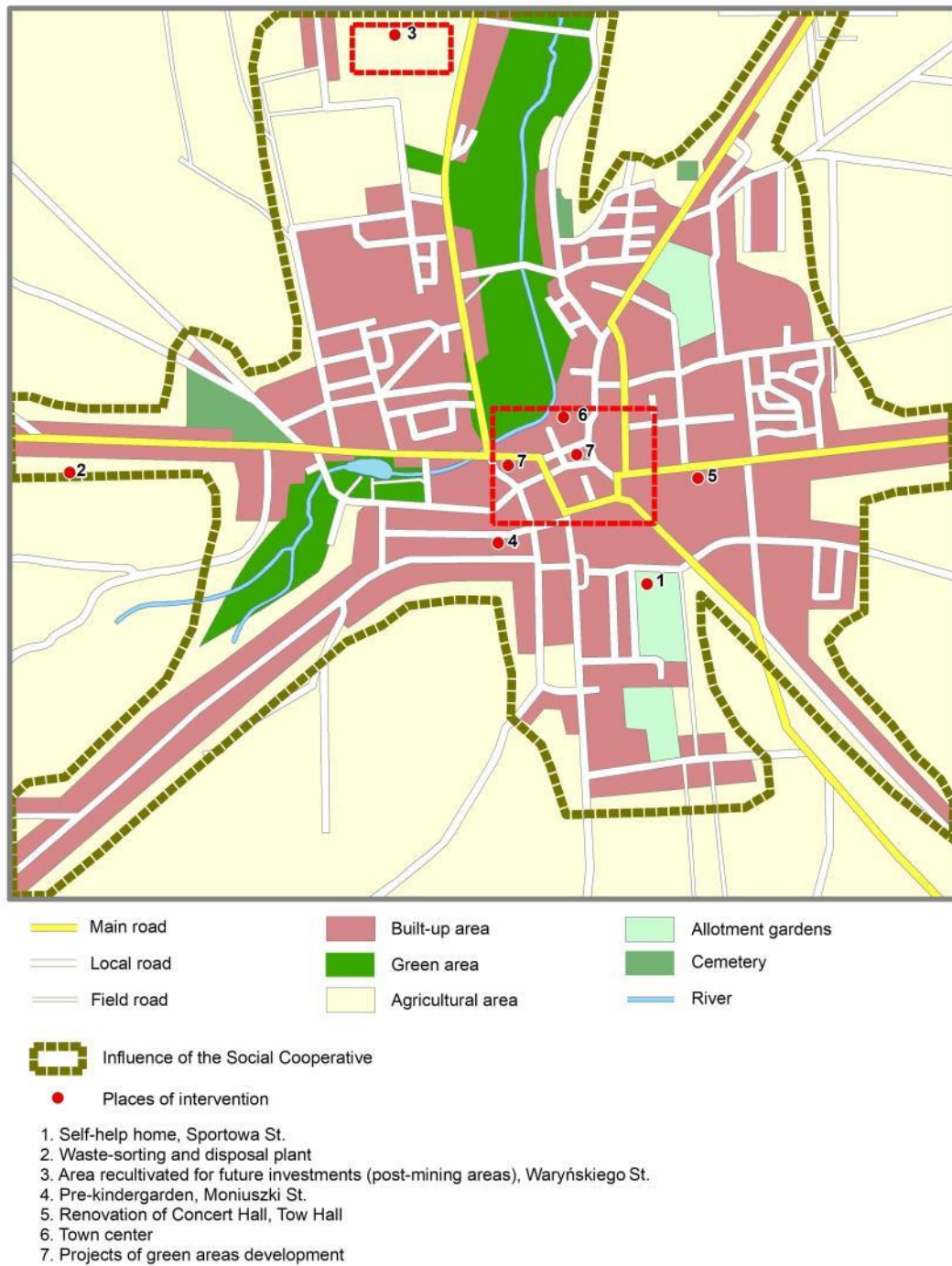
- disabled: 6,
- long term unemployed: 34,
- those from the 'socially-useful' program: 5,

- professional practice: 1,
- those directed by the courts to undertake community work: 10.

In urban and construction work, mainly men are involved, however, when it comes to the sorting plant, both men and women work there. The biggest group are the those who have been unemployed for a long period of time. According to data from the Central statistical Office such people account for more than half of all the unemployed and they encounter problems in returning to the labour market; being out of work for a long time they find it difficult to be sufficiently effective, and may have lost some of their skills. Another issue (which is more subjective) is that they are disinclined to look for a job or lost hope of finding one. The consequences of long-term unemployment are economic, social and psychological.

It should be emphasised that the employees of the Cooperative are mainly recruited through MOPS, the district Labour Office. Employment is offered to the unemployed, the disabled, those affected by alcoholism, those directed by a probation officer; all of whom have care extended through work, hence all those who, for various reasons, find themselves in a difficult life situation. It is also important that the remuneration of such employees is comparable others performing similar activities: "our remuneration does not differ from the wages of employees in private companies" PL3CivLI.

The analysis of mental maps shows that the activities of the Cooperative in spatial terms are perceived in two ways first, as specific "places (points) of intervention" in the form of specific projects, most often involving construction. These interventions include sorting and storage, reclamation of land for the urban investment zone, the "Environmental House for Self-help", a nursery, renovation of the conference room in the Town Hall, open spaces in the town center, and tree planting. Secondly, the "influence of the Social Cooperative" can be spoken of and, in this respect, the respondents tried to identify the specific area of influence of an activity. Interestingly, all surveyed employees of the Cooperative unanimously pointed to the entire town as an area of influence. Other respondents included in this context: the park, the urban investment zone, the sorting center, and the town center. Such an extensive perception of the zone of influence can be a sign of the strong presence of this organization in the everyday life of residents, and indicates a perception of positive effects through changes taking place in space.



**Map 4:** Spatial impact of the Communal Service: “Influence of the Social Cooperative” and “Places of intervention”

#### Analytical Dimension 4: Autonomy, participation and engagement

The social Cooperative in Brzeziny operates on the principle of a commercial company, it is self-financed, the principles for its operation are transparent through instruments such as social clauses and the in-house ordering procedure. This last aspect is especially important because the Cooperative can execute orders from the town council without the necessity of participating in the tender process (and these orders constitute about 80% of



all work). In general, this allows the municipality to save 20-30% of costs. Of course, the Cooperative also goes elsewhere with its services, providing them directly for residents and companies. It should be noted in this context that this is largely due to the fact that it is a socially responsible company. Thus, Brzeziny as a town occupies a leading position in the development of the social economy. The effects of the Cooperative's activity, as well as the idea itself, are disseminated throughout the country in various types of conferences, study visits, and training sessions demonstrating the positive impact of this initiative on other local authorities.

The current President of the Cooperative plays the most important role in its structure. He is very competent, the sole decision-maker, devoted to the idea of the Cooperative, above all with an empathic and attentive approach to employees. The President enjoys high authority in the locality and at work. In principle, it is the key and most valuable human resource of this organization: the right person in the right place at the right time. In perspective, this may also give rise to some concerns because in the event of resignation, the Cooperative may lose its position and social trust outside the organization, as well as among its employees. He seems to be a chief executive of the Cooperative, deciding about hiring employees, controlling the formal organization, but the informal aspect seems to be more important: *"He's a 'golden man', it is thanks to him the Cooperative functions at all. He has given his heart and health, it seems that only he has an approach to such specific employees who are not ordinary workers. He knows how to talk to them, when to give a chance, but when to say - enough. Without him, it's not known if it would work at all"* (PL5PubLI). What is most important is the reception of the employees themselves: *"The president is our father, he is a good man who changes people's lives. He has an approach, it's his calling. He looks after us, hence his uniqueness"* (PL3CivLI).

The situation is similar with the Mayor, the so-called founding-father of the idea of the Cooperative, having at the moment support from the Town Hall. As regards the reintegration of local structures and systems, the situation may yet change. *"The whole idea of the social economy is what the Mayor took, and set up the Cooperative for. The Mayor was then a normal councilor, he was then active in the association "Common Future - Poland, Europe, World", and these were the foundations, then this idea of a Cooperative movement began to sprout. He persuaded a total of 15 (at the beginning 5) individuals (some of them unemployed), and received funds from the ESF to set up this activity and its running (2010). Unfortunately, when the money ran out, the Cooperative ceased to cope, mainly because the town could not delegate tasks to them. They were not able to break through the other companies operating at the time in the market. The Mayor then helped them in such a way that they gave away the town's 'shares' for free, and in return they got a job in this new Cooperative. It was in 2012. And since then the Cooperative has been operating on the current basis"* (PLCivLI2 and PLPubLI5). It seems, therefore, that the initiative of founding the Cooperative was a personal idea of the Mayor, who used the legal opportunities very successfully, finding a way to bring the Cooperative to life. Because of this, he is particularly attached and devoted to the idea, so there is a fear for the further fate of this institution if a change of government takes place.

The weaknesses of the Cooperative in the opinions of the respondents are hardly noticeable. In their statements, they focus mainly on the advantages of the company. However, apart from what has been said so far, attention has been paid to the social stigmatization of excluded people. There are cases of individuals or companies who are prejudiced against this type of employee, attributing stereotypical faults to them, and not accepting the fact that such people could be working for them. Further, the respondents also noted difficulties when with working with such people: a high turnover of employees, the need to develop effective control mechanisms, continuous destruction and rebuilding of trust: President - employee, and employee - employee.

As shown by the answers to additional questions on the part of the research related to mental maps. In the overall assessment, the activities of the Cooperative and its socio-spatial impact on the town and its residents, turns out to be very good, especially among those who work there. The co-operative is most often described with such adjectives as important, necessary, needed and good (for both people and the town). Respondents also highly appreciate its impact on space. They 'definitely agree' and 'agree' with the statement that the Cooperative has the greatest impact on the physical space of the town (ahead of such significant actors as local entrepreneurs, or associations, or the residents themselves). In the assessment of the Cooperative's activity, categories such as 'important for the development of the town, important for residents, effective in action, needed, positively influencing the space, with lasting effects', and, most importantly, 'equalizing access to resources', are put forward and highly rated.

It should be clearly stated that it is a model of a Social Cooperative that revitalizes resources with an innovative profile of activity, that is being discussed, i.e. integration and service together. It is a specific form of social enterprise operating on the principles of social economy. Social economy is just one of the ways to define an economic activity that combines social and economic goals. It is also referred to as social economy or social entrepreneurship. The Social Cooperative also fits into the idea of revitalization, mainly in the social and spatial dimensions. Based on the national resolution of 2015, the Social Cooperative as a legal entity can achieve its goals thanks to its preferential legal position: social clauses and in-house procedures. However, the current aim of the Cooperative is to become a commercial company: *"We want, and slowly it is already happening, in the future to act as a commercial company, bid for tenders with other companies on the market, offer competitive offers and win. It means self-financing for us and it is safe to stay on the market"* (PL2CivLI).

### **Analytical Dimension 5: Expression and mobilisation of place-based knowledge and adaptability**

The town of Brzeziny was not chosen for the RELOCAL project by accident. It is a town marked by many social, economic and spatial problems that have evolved over time. This is an area in need of support where initiatives aimed at solving the town's main problems are welcomed with enthusiasm and hope, especially if, just like the Social Cooperative, they are dedicated to people in need.

Brzeziny is a town which struggles with a number of socio-economic problems, requiring an individualised and innovative approach to their solution. So, the planning documents indicate that the town bears increasing costs, related to the financing of social care and assistance. This segment of the municipal budget is annually more than 7 million Polish zloty. Besides, the relatively low level of business investment results, in particular, in unemployment, the deepening differentiation of the material status of the inhabitants, and poverty. According to data from 2013, the unemployment rate in the town was slightly more than 11%. An important part of the unemployed are those representing various occupations from the garment industry. The problem also affects those from other sectors: managers of production and services, forestry and fishery specialists, personal care, cleaning etc. The situation is especially difficult for those who cannot claim any specific occupation. Overall, the low level of education of the inhabitants is a factor in persistent joblessness.

The political transformation has caused a deepening of social stratification, and the emergence of the unemployed on a much larger scale. To increase interest in the socio-economic value of Cooperatives in solving unemployment and social conflicts along with

the activation of less developed regions, EU policy supports the promotion of the development of various forms of Cooperative activity in urban and rural areas (Chyra - Rolicz, 2017, p. 79). Brzeziny benefited from this thanks to the Mayor's professional knowledge, and his perfect understanding and assimilation of the principles of social economy. The Mayor consistently shared his knowledge with his employees, the Cooperative could always count on his substantive support, along with the President of the Cooperative its main manager. *"In the social economy I started to learn how I became President, thanks to the Mayor. He introduced me to this idea, and showed how it is translated into reality"* (PL2CivLI).

'Communal Services' shows that it has been and is collecting place-based knowledge, and about the people living there, so as to subsequently adapt its activities to the specific context of the neighbourhood. The research has shown that it is perceived as an outstanding organization in Brzeziny due to its professional organisation and strength of approach. Especially after 2012, when its activity was professionalized, supported by the Town Hall, and with very valuable human resources, thanks to which it has become an important link in building the town's social capital. Those who cooperate are in the process of continuous education in the field of social economy and its practical dimension, gaining new resources, and the development of opportunities for the Cooperative. The town of Brzeziny regularly hosts local government officials and social economy workers from the whole of Poland who are interested in developing one. The President of the Cooperative and officials from the Town Hall who are close to the activity of the Cooperative (including its difficult period at the beginning), conduct training sessions for other local authorities concerning its principles, showing it as an example of good practice as an opportunity for 'levelling up' the inhabitants of 'problem' areas. *"The Mayor asked me to take part in one of the local television programs and talk about the Cooperative because I was with it from the beginning. He was very stressed, but I agreed because of the goal of disseminating knowledge about the Cooperative"* (PL5PubLI).

The learning aspect of the employees themselves is also very important. Paraphrasing the respondents, the employees have learned how to re-enter society, function normally, learnt that work is important and that it leads to development. They appreciate change and are not ashamed of their lives. Someone believes in them, gives them a chance while not stigmatizing them, and this is very important in the perspective of individual biographies. Work in a Cooperative is a kind of resocialization, leading to social and occupational reintegration. As a consequence, the changes (psychological and social) to which the Cooperative employees are subject, enable society (including the immediate neighborhood) not to assess them so negatively and unambiguously.



**Figure 6:** Employees of a Social Cooperative at work



## 5. Final Assessment: Capacities for Change

### Synthesising Dimension A: Assessment of promoters and inhibitors

In order for an initiative such as a Social Cooperative to work (at different places and times) and to achieve its goals (producing socially, spatially and economically advantageous benefits), several elements must be in place. These elements, under appropriate conditions, may take the role of filters or promoting factors:

- active, socially approved local leaders, with competence and knowledge: (in the case of Brzeziny, these are the President of the Cooperative and the Mayor). Appropriate human resources are the most important element in the success of such local initiatives, a component of social capital. An extremely important message, resulting from the study, is that it is the lack of professional staff, led by a local leader, that most often contributes to the failure of an endeavour;
- appropriate institutional solutions related to urban policy - advantageous procedures, facilitating the organization and functioning of such initiatives as the Cooperative are also an important supporting factor (in this case: social clauses and the in-house ordering procedure). Agreement and cooperation with the Town Hall seems to be a key aspect, the lack of which would be a significant obstacle to the functioning and organization of the Cooperative;
- the existence and perception of extensive social and spatial inequalities. Despite social inequality being permanently present in the structure and functioning of the town with its high social and spatial diversity, its intensity can provide a favourable situation for a Social Cooperative to work. The undertaking then constitutes a response to important needs, and its effects are appreciated, considered important and awaited by the potential beneficiaries. In less crisis-affected, non-marginalized areas, with a lesser intensity of socio-economic-spatial problems, such an initiative as the Cooperative may not have such a substantial justification, both before and after, as in the case considered here.

Significant positive effects from establishing Social Cooperatives exist. These effects include:

- 1) Cooperatives which employ at least 50% of those threatened with social exclusion, create jobs within a local authority, and money from taxpayers remains within the municipality. Every additional employed person signifies a real decrease in expense on social care and assistance.
- 2) A Social Cooperative may provide services for the local authority, both in the form of services purchased through public tender (also under limited offer), and as a public task, entrusted within the framework of the regulations, concerning public utility and voluntary activities. Besides, the local authority may place orders having social utility with the Social Cooperatives without the necessity of applying the usual public procurement procedures (in-house procedures).
- 3) Social Cooperatives do not generate costs like traditional enterprises due to the fact that their essential objective is to maintain and develop jobs, and not to generate profit for shareholders. The financial surplus of a Cooperative is directed in its entirety to social re-integration and the development of the organisation.
- 4) Social Cooperatives constitute a preferred solution in Polish conditions. This means that state support can be expected for the establishment of jobs in them. In addition, they may take advantage of institutional support from 'Centers of Support for Social Economy' (OWES), which may significantly enhance employees' occupational levels.

- 5) Social Cooperatives may provide jobs for people without work who are frequently receiving unemployment benefits.
- 6) Cooperation with Social Cooperatives by no means signifies a necessity to apply the preferential mode, irrespective of the quality of service or products offered. On the contrary, preferences for Social Cooperatives are tied to the requirements of quality and meeting deadlines.
- 7) Social Cooperatives are involved in the specific domains of general services which have previously been rarely taken up by commercial bodies. These are services which either require specific skills, or are of little interest from the point of view of an expected profit. That is why a Social Cooperative means an opening up of new opportunities rather than a tightening of competition with respect to existing businesses.

### Synthesising Dimension B: Competences and capacities of stakeholders

It should be emphasized once again that the success of the 'Communal Services' project is primarily down to finding the right people: local leaders, favorable initiatives, local authorities, and Cooperative employees - therefore human capital. A permanent feature of this capital is its ability to converge, and hence change to another type of capital. In the case of 'Communal Services', human capital efficiently converts into social capital, and is based on three pillars: social trust, shared norms and values, and network relationships. All these elements are now found in the Cooperative's functioning structures, and the future is in the social development of the sociocultural fabric and civic engagement.

For the effectiveness of the Cooperative's activity, appropriate leaders are necessary, in this case it is the President of the Cooperative and the Mayor. Their effectiveness is demonstrated by their qualities, predispositions and personal competences as well as the influence of their activities. Nowadays, the core competences of leaders must include reliable, interdisciplinary knowledge: about the place and the community, economics, mechanisms of political action, past experience, and the problems and aspirations of the community. Moreover, leaders must be active, empathetic and socially trusting. *"Without the Mayor and the President, it would never look the way it looks. The President is an exceptionally humble person, but he loves people, he is open, he gives people a chance, he can talk when he needs from a 'vertical position'. He knows most about the Cooperative"* (PL6PubLI). The Mayor surrounds the Cooperative with substantive and organizational care, and indicates its directions of development. *"The Cooperative is a child of our Mayor. He is proud of its creation, it is a pioneering solution at a national level using the human and social potential of Brzeziny"* (PL6PubLI). Thanks to this, the respondents indicated local authorities as an important and active factor contributing to local development. It is concluded that it is good when the local leader is recruited from the local authority environment, it certainly gives greater efficiency to activities and legitimisation.

### Synthesising Dimension C: Connecting the action to procedural and distributive justice

Justice, here, is expressed through the implementation of procedures aiming at preferential assistance for marginalised groups and the socially excluded (social clauses). Here the strong connection with social justice and the 'levelling up' of opportunities can be spoken of. Spatial justice is enabled due to the in-house procedure, where the realisation of tasks without tenders gives higher chances for care about the spaces and places that require improvement in the town. This would be truly difficult without such provision.

Distributive justice is seen in the equalisation of chances to access resources for those, who in a different situation (with a different employer, say), would not get a similar op-

portunity. Not without significance in this case are the personal competences of the President of the Cooperative, who cares for all employees and knows their life situations.

The Social Cooperative will be effective in its activities, and achieve its objectives in terms of equalizing spatial and social 'disproportions', if there are key, convergent conditions. Above all, a place must be characterized by significant 'deficits' and need revitalization (social, spatial). Another condition is to have appropriate and competent human resources that will be responsible for the operation of the undertaking. In addition, 'friendly' legal procedures ensuring safety and efficiency are important.

The process of striving to ensure procedural and distributive justice is an important challenge for local stakeholders. It is important because the direct effects of these two processes affect the inhabitants themselves and the space in which they live. The observation of the process, and then the operation of the Social Cooperative initiative, is proof that knowledge should be sought in both the place and the people who inhabit it. It seems, therefore, that future co-operative development will depend on the development of various forms of public education and social policy.

As we have seen, strategic capacity, flexibility and adaptability are specific strengths of 'Communal Services', and there is reason to believe that the organization will continue to be successful, although shaped by the local community and conditions after the coming election.

## 6. Conclusions

The problem of stratification in social life and the rejection of some of its members on the margins of society, was one of the central problems that appeared in Poland after the systemic transformation. However, it affects small towns to a greater extent and they not infrequently struggle with multifaceted and deepening social and spatial inequalities. Those marginalized, with inherited poverty, often occupy places in the urban space (*ghettoisation - gettyzacja*) where certain behaviors and pathological attitudes are reproduced. It is very difficult to break this impasse and escape the circle of disadvantage. For some people it is virtually impossible without institutional support. A Social Cooperative offers such support (it gives not a fish, but a fishing rod). On the one hand, through the job offer it helps individuals return to society, on the other it supplements resources where they are most needed. The changes caused by it are key and not substitutable by any other institution.

### **What is being achieved in terms of delivering greater spatial justice?**

Considering inequality as the category which brings together the effects of development-related undertakings and reflects the relative differences in levels of development, the tendency to a co-appearance of various kinds of inequality should be emphasised. Consequently, social inequalities have their spatial dimensions, very clearly visible in actual space, even if to differing degrees. It is exactly social inequalities that are most frequently identified in planning documents as far as Brzeziny is concerned, and are largely identified with socially unjust space. The respective spaces, according to the authors of the strategic documents, which determine the direction of development, include those in poor technical condition with poor infrastructure, those where there is a collision of function, and where there is little access to public space. Spaces of social injustice are identified with degraded areas which are subject to revitalisation. This implies that the notion of spatial justice is close to social justice.

Such a conception and understanding of spatial justice leads to a determination of concrete practical solutions. These are the frames in which the Social Cooperative in Brzeziny functions and that is why the implementations of the Cooperative, resulting from its principles, are focused on assistance to the inhabitants, both in general and to particular groups. A special kind of addressee is made up of those socially excluded who have been for a long time outside the labour market. These see a return to occupational activity facilitated, and thereby the essential factor of their marginalisation is overcome. In addition, the activity of the Social Cooperative, resulting from its profile of providing general services (modernisation and orderliness), is oriented to the entire community of Brzeziny. In consequence of this activity, public spaces have become prioritised. This kind of activity is in agreement with a normative pattern, conforming to the principles of spatial justice.

An interesting observation applies to respondents identifying spaces at the center of the Cooperative's activity. These are, as already mentioned, spaces of social inequality which were simultaneously classified as crisis places: ugly, old, dangerous and specific. This certainly demonstrates the importance of the Social Cooperative's activities.

### **What are the policy changes ahead for bigger impact?**

Several factors have been identified that affect the introduction of such an initiative as a Social Cooperative under differing conditions. Above all, there is a convenient legal framework; at a national (external) level the Act of 2015 institutionalizes the process of the revitalization of problem areas. The expansion of the Cooperative's activity was also enabled by the Act of 11 July 2014 on the principles of implementing programs in the field

of cohesion policy, financed for the period 2014-2020. Social Cooperatives then gained additional support from the state when the Council of Ministers on August 12, 2014 adopted the National Program for the Development of Social Economy. At a local (internal) level procedures facilitating the activities of the Cooperative are in-house procedures and social clauses. Knowledge of these procedures and skillful use of them is already focusing on the human resources which are a necessary condition for the success of an initiative. Local leaders and local authorities should also have knowledge about the sources and possibilities for obtaining external funds, or applying for a project. It is best to have a special organizational unit set up for this purpose which will specialize in this, not always an obvious matter. Knowledge about opportunities for using EU support turns out to be crucial in many situations.

The grassroots initiatives of the inhabitants, strengthened in many instances with an opportunity to acquire funds for local development, play a particular role in strengthening local resources.

Nationally, running a Cooperative is not an easy task. Many Cooperative organizers complain about difficulties in winning tenders, and not everybody manages to overcome the difficulties of registering and developing profitable activities (Chyra-Rolicz 2017: 83). Problems of survival arise when subsidies end and functioning on the free market is necessary. The personality of the leader and his/ her managerial abilities play a big role then. A co-operative as an initiative therefore requires systemic, integrated and continuous support, from various sources and provided by competent human capital.

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[https://doi.org/10.1553/ISR\\_FB042s369](https://doi.org/10.1553/ISR_FB042s369)

### Documents on Development Strategies\*

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- Uchwała nr LVI/295/2014 Rady Miasta Brzeziny z dnia 28 sierpnia 2014 r. w sprawie uchwalenia „Strategii Rozwoju Miasta Brzeziny na lata 2014–2020”. [Strategy for Development of Brzeziny for 2014–2020]
- Uchwała nr VIII/48/2015 Rady Miasta Brzeziny z dnia 23 kwietnia 2015 r. w sprawie przyjęcia „Strategii Rozwiązywania Problemów Społecznych dla Miasta Brzeziny na lata 2015-2020”. [Strategy for Solving Social Problems in Brzeziny for 2015-2020]
- Uchwała nr XL/268/2017 Rady Miasta Brzeziny z dnia 19 czerwca 2017 roku w sprawie przyjęcia i wdrożenia do realizacji „Planu Gospodarki Niskoemisyjnej dla Miasta Brzeziny na lata 2015-2020”. [Plan for a Low Emission Economy in Brzeziny for 2015-2017]
- Uchwała nr XLII/190/2013 Rady Miasta Brzeziny z dnia 26 września 2013 r. w sprawie uchwalenia zmiany studium uwarunkowań i kierunków zagospodarowania przestrzennego Miasta Brzeziny. [Study of the conditions and directions of spatial organisation for Brzeziny]
- Uchwała nr XLV/319/2017 Rady Miasta Brzeziny z dnia 26 października 2017 r. w sprawie przyjęcia „Gminnego Programu Rewitalizacji dla miasta Brzeziny”. [Municipal Revitalisation Program for Brzeziny]
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- Uchwała nr XLVII/336/2017 Rady Miasta Brzeziny z dnia 20 grudnia 2017 r. w sprawie uchwalenia „Miejskiego Programu Profilaktyki i Rozwiązywania Problemów Alkoholowych na rok 2018”. [Urban Program for Prevention and the Solution of Problems of Alcoholism for 2018]
- Uchwała nr XLVII/337/2017 Rady Miasta Brzeziny z dnia 20 grudnia 2017 r. w sprawie uchwalenia „Miejskiego Programu Przeciwdziałania Narkomanii na rok 2018”. [Urban Program for Prevention of Drug Addiction for 2018]

Uchwała nr XXII/144/2016 Rady Miasta Brzeziny z dnia 31 marca 2016 r. w sprawie przyjęcia „Miejskiego Programu Wspierania Rodziny na lata 2016-2019”. [Urban Program for Assistance to Families for 2016-2019]

Uchwała nr XXXVII/241/2017 Rady Miasta w Brzezinach z dnia 30 marca 2017 r. w sprawie przyjęcia „Miejskiego Programu Przeciwdziałania Przemocy w Rodzinie oraz Ochrony Ofiar Przemocy w Rodzinie na lata 2017-2020”. [Urban Program of Prevention Against Aggression at Home and Protection of Victims of such Aggression for 2017-2020]

\*This is the list of original documents from Brzeziny Town Hall mentioned in the text.



## 8. Annexes

### 8.1 List of Interviewed Experts

List of interviewed experts	Date of interview	Type of expert
PL1PubLI	2018-04-09	Local leader
PL2CivLI	2018-06-04	Project leader
PL3CivLI	2018-06-04	Cooperative employee
PL4CivLI	2018-06-04	Cooperative employee
PL5PubLI	2018-06-04	Local administration
PL6PubLI	2018-06-06	Local administration
PL7PrivLE	2018-06-25	University researcher

### 8.2 Stakeholder Interaction Table

Type of Stakeholder	Most relevant 'territorial' level they operate at	Stakeholders' ways of involvement in the project ( <i>What do we gain, what do they gain</i> )
Local politicians	Local (town)	The perspective of the Action initiator regarding: theoretical foundations, origins, principles of financing and functioning, selection of personnel, development prospects within the local, regional and national policy.
Local administration	Local (town) Beyond local (supra-local/powiat)	Insights into principles and structures of the town's management; knowledge about the formation of ideas, foundations and principles of the Social Cooperative and its importance as a pioneer in social revitalization at the local and national level.
The Cooperative (civil society organization representing vulnerable groups)	Local (town)	The Chair: Insights into current functioning of the Cooperative, employees' problems and biographies; narration about attachment to locality and action Employees: The perspective of people directly involved in the Cooperative, a narrative about their lives and the role of the Cooperative for them; The pros and cons of the Cooperative.
Local state offices	Local (town)	Insights into principles and structures of the town's management, knowledge about the formation of ideas, foundations and principles of the Cooperative

		and its role as an example of social revitalization activity at the local and national level.
Colleges and universities	Local (town) and Beyond local (regional and national)	External perspective on the development paths of the town of Brzeziny. Perception of the functioning of the Cooperative within the social, economic and spatial context.

### 8.3 Map(s) and Photos



**Figure 1:** Land reclamation for the investment zone





**Figure 2:** Renovation of the Fara Church

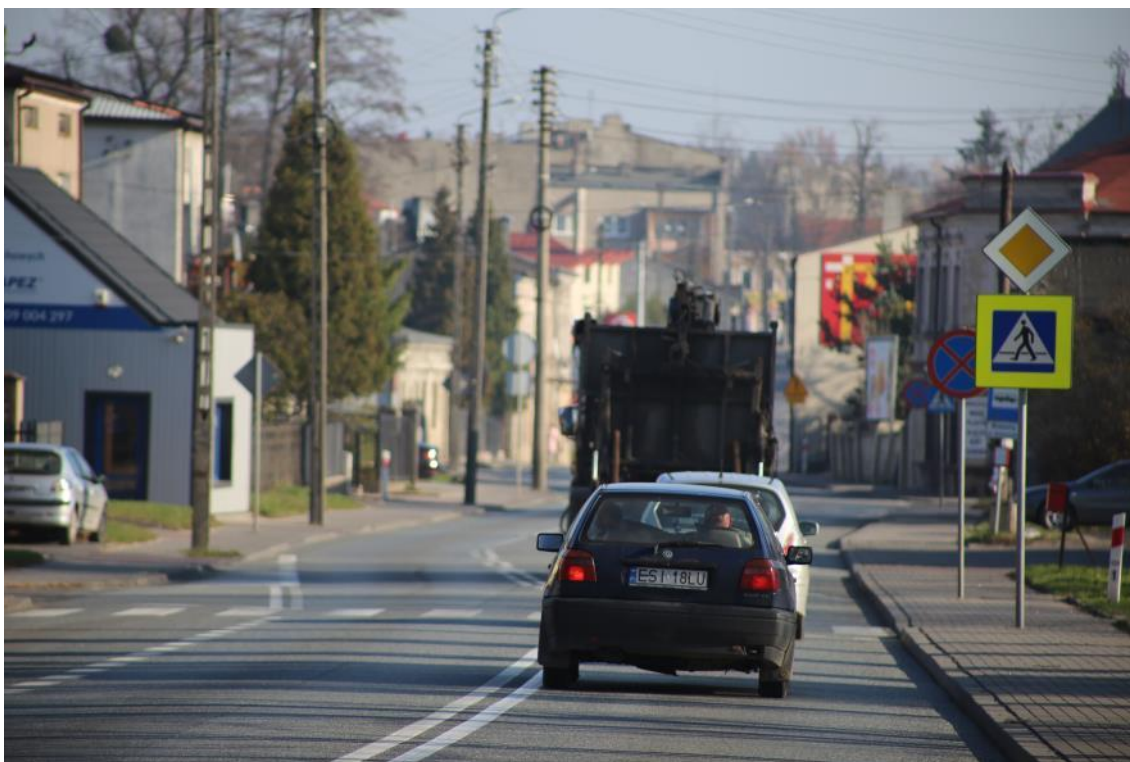


**Figure 3:** Space in the park





**Figure 4:** The park with a view of the renovated church



**Figure 5:** Dangerous crossing for pedestrians





**Figure 6:** Degraded buildings in Brzeziny



**Figure 7:** Park in Brzeziny





**Figure 8:** Social Care Offices in Brzeziny



**Figure 9:** A dilapidated building



**Figure 10:** Square in the town center



**Figure 11:** View in the town centre





**Figure 12:** The monastery



**Figure 13:** Employee of the Social Cooperative



**Figure 14:** Care home built by 'Communal Services'



**Figure 15:** New housing estate





**Figure 16:** New housing





**Figure 17:** Nursery – renovated by ‘Communal Services’



**Figure 18:** View of a housing estate



**Figure 19:** Saint Anne's Church



**Figure 20:** An rear entry near the town center

## 8.4 Additional information

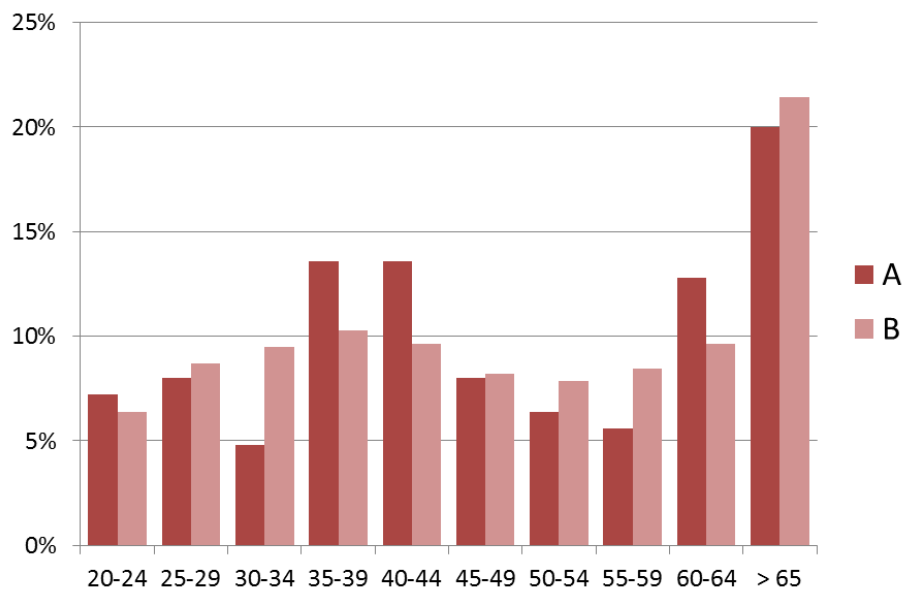
### The results of the questionnaire survey performed in Brzeziny

#### The characteristics of the respondents

The investigation, whose purpose was to discover the level of attachment of the inhabitants to their town, was carried out through a representative sample of adults. The representativeness of the sample means that the results can be generalised for the entire population for which they were obtained. Hence, a random selection was applied (procedural representativeness), while fulfilling, at the same time, representativeness by age, sex and location of residence. The random-quota sample obtained corresponded to the demographic and geographical distribution of the population.

The sample consisted of 125 respondents. Women accounted for 51.2% (the proportion of women in Brzeziny is 52.7%). The age structure was also similar to that of the population (see Fig. 3). The biggest share (20%) were the elderly - 65 and above (in Brzeziny - 21.4%). Proportions in the 35-39 and 40-44 age brackets were both close to 14% (while these are 10.3% and 9.6% respectively). Respondents had primarily completed secondary or post-secondary education (close to 41%). Further, there were similar proportions with a basic vocational education and those with tertiary (bachelor or master) - slightly above 24% each. More than two-thirds of respondents were occupationally active, either employed in Brzeziny, or outside.

A vast majority of respondents lived in their own houses (close to 70%), not quite 17% declared having their own flat, while 8% lived in a municipal flat. The respondents assessed their way of coping with money, with the most frequent response being that they have an 'average' life. They have enough for day-to-day living but have to economise in order to make more serious purchases (more than 55%). Close to 18% declared that they live 'modestly' in their opinion and have to economise very carefully each day.



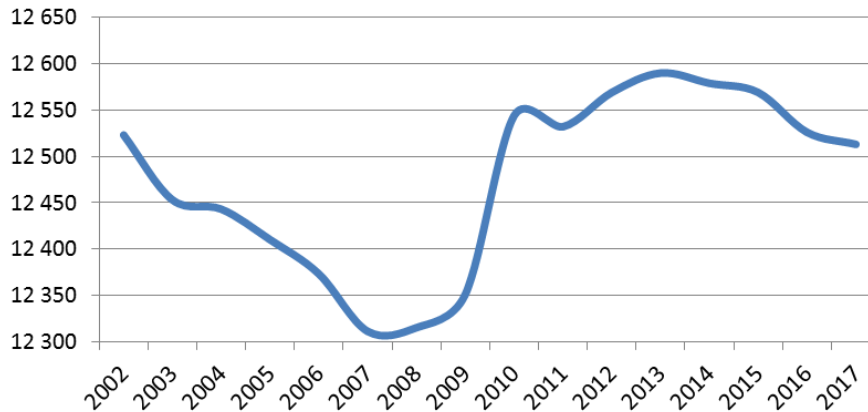
**Figure 3.** Age structure of the respondents (A) and the inhabitants of Brzeziny (B)  
Source: author on the basis of results from the survey and BDL GUS data

### The demographics of Brzeziny

The town of Brzeziny is one of 44 in the province of Lodz. It is classified as a small town (according to the classification, adopted by the Polish Central Statistical Office - small towns have up to 20 000 inhabitants), and there were 29 such towns in the province in 2017 (Fig. 1). Brzeziny is 23<sup>rd</sup> in terms of population. The demographic potential is variable. In 2002-2007 there was a decrease in population, followed by an increase and then, since 2013, the population started to decrease again. The changes mentioned, both increases and decreases, were quite limited over this period.

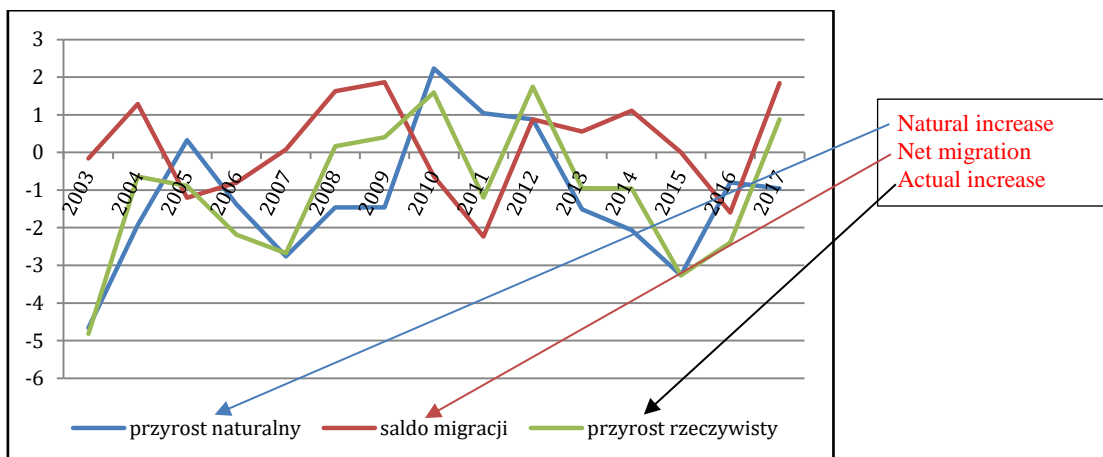


These changes result from both natural increase and net migration (Fig. 2). During the period considered no significant changes have been found overall, depopulation has not occurred. This is advantageous, not only from a strictly demographic point of view, but also as an element of positive influence on socio-economic development.



**Fig. 1.** Changes in the population of Brzeziny: 2002-2017

Source: author on the basis of data from the Bank of Local Data of the Central Statistical Office (BDL GUS)



**Fig. 2.** Actual increase with natural and net migration components in Brzeziny: 2003-2017

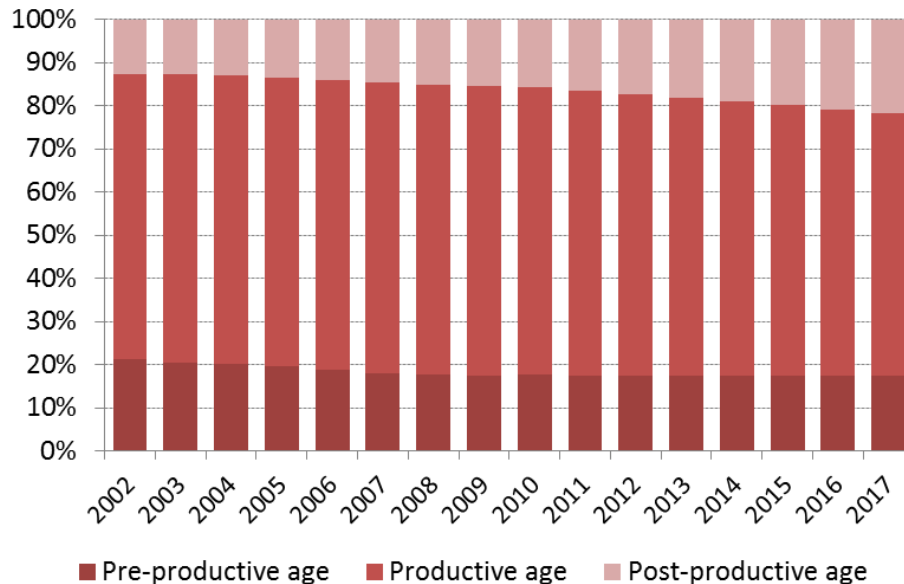
Source: author on the basis of data from BDL GUS

In analyses of population structure, according to demographic characteristics, sex and age are most often considered as the variables having an influence not only on the development of demographic processes, but also as true factors in socio-economic processes. The population of Brzeziny (in 2002-2017) showed a female domination, with the feminisation coefficient oscillating around the values 110-112.

For current and potential future socio-economic development (and demographic as well) changes in population and change in sex structure are not only important but also changes in age structure. Particular attention is paid in this context to the mutual relations of children and the young, adults, and the elderly. These relations determine the very important (current and future) tasks for numerous areas in society. Here, we must refer to the distinction, based on socio-economic premises, leading to the definition of three large age groups: pre-productive (0-17 years), productive (18-59 for women and 18-64 for men), and post-productive (60 + for women and 65 + for men).

Quite significant changes in the population structure according to these economic groups in Brzeziny should be noted (Fig. 3) concerning primarily two age groups: the productive

and the post-productive. Due to the decrease in the youngest group, there has been also a decrease in the adults (productive) – by 5%, and an increase in the proportion of the elderly (post-productive) by 9%.



**Fig. 3.** Population structure according to economic age groups in Brzeziny: 2002-2017  
Source: author on the basis of BDL GUS

In the analysis of age structure, relations are presented among economically defined groups but, in addition, proportions were considered between the oldest and the youngest divided into the biological age groups. This gave a chance to determine quantitatively levels and changes in terms of an ageing population. This is one of the essential demographic problems which characterises Polish society, and growing both in urban and in rural areas.

When making a broad biologically-based division according to age, three age groups are distinguished most often: 0-14, 15-64, and 65 and older. This division makes it possible to determine the proportions of children (referred to as 'grand-children'), adults ('parents'), and the elderly ('grand-parents'). This gives an indication of the ageing of the population for a given country or region.

From 1995 to 2017 deep changes took place in the age structure of Brzeziny. These changes included an increasing proportion of the elderly (i.e. 65 +) from 8.6% to 17.3%. During the same period the share of the youngest decreased by more than 7% (from 22.1% to 15.9%). The degree of ageing is also expressed through the value of the demographic ageing index which shows the ratio between the elderly and the youngest. This index in 1995 was at 38.8, while in 2017 it exceeded considerably the value of 100 (115.9), emphasising the domination of the elderly over children. The dynamics of ageing were quite significant in this period - the coefficient of ageing amounted to 15.9 (while the average for all small towns in Poland was 16.4).

Document	Does the document present the maps of locations in need of intervention?	Does the document present the maps showing the spatial directions of intervention?	Do the notions of “social justice” or “spatial justice” appear in the document?
Strategy of Development of the Town of Brzeziny for the years 2014–2020	–	–	–
Strategy of Solving Social Problems for the Town of Brzeziny for the years 2015-2020	–	–	–
Urban Program of Assistance to Families for the years 2016-2019	–	–	–
Urban Program of Prevention Against Aggression at Home and Protection of Victims of Aggression at Home for the years 2017-2020	–	–	–
Urban Program of Prevention and Solving Problems of Alcoholism for the year 2018	–	–	–
Urban Program for Prevention of Drug Addiction for the year 2018	–	–	–
Urban Program of Protection of Psychological Health for the years 2017-2022*	?	?	?
Study of the conditions and directions of spatial organisation of the Town of Brzeziny	–	+	–
Municipal Revitalisation Program for the Town of Brzeziny	+	+	–
Long-term Program of Housing Resource Management of the Town of Brzeziny for the years 2014-2018	–	–	–
Plan for the Low Emission Economy for the Town of Brzeziny for the years 2015-2017	–	–	–

\* “Urban Program for Protection of Psychological Health for 2017-2022” has not been made available on the ‘Bulletin of Public Information’ of the website of the Town Hall of Brzeziny

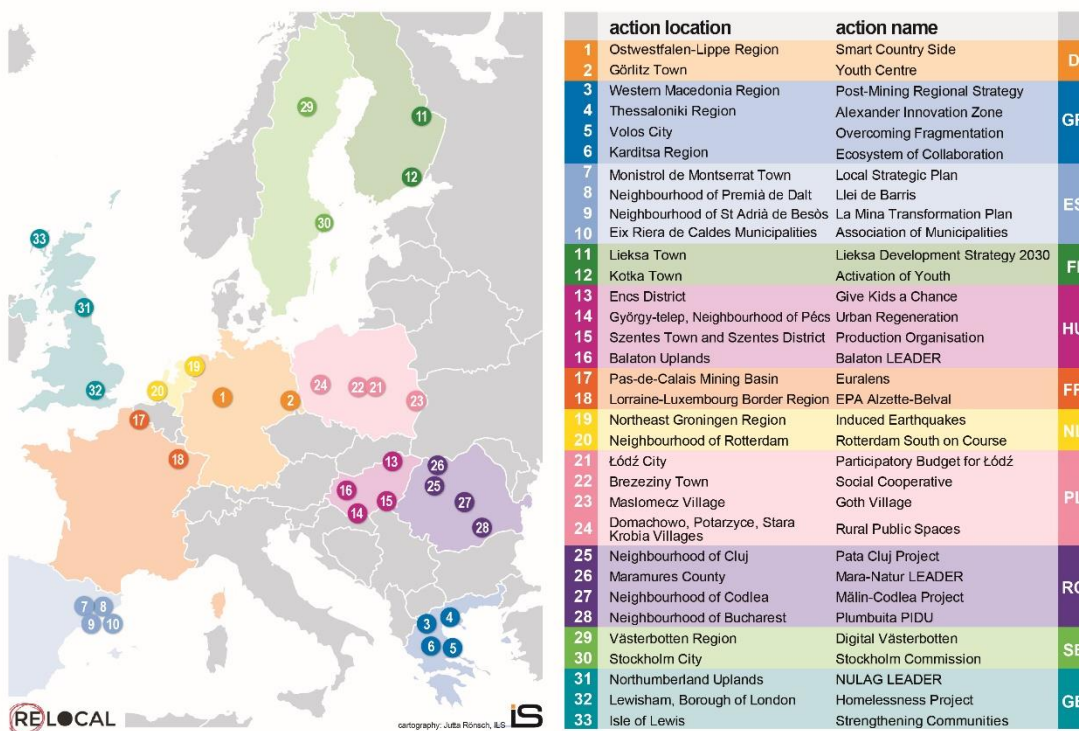
**Table 3:** Assessments of spatial injustice in strategic documents at Brzeziny Town Hall

## The RELOCAL Project

EU Horizon 2020 research project '**Resituating the local in cohesion and territorial development**' –**RELOCAL** aims to identify factors that condition local accessibility of European policies, local abilities to articulate needs and equality claims and local capacities for exploiting European opportunity structures.

In the past, especially since the economic and financial crisis, the European Social Model has proven to be challenged by the emergence of spatially unjust results. The RELOCAL hypothesis is that **processes of localisation and place-based public policy** can make a positive contribution to spatial justice and democratic empowerment.

The research is based on **33 case studies** in **13 different European** countries that exemplify development challenges in terms of spatial justice. The cases were chosen to allow for a balanced representation of different institutional contexts. Based on case study findings, project partners will draw out the factors that influence the impact of place-based approaches or actions from a comparative perspective. The results are intended to facilitate a greater local orientation of cohesion, territorial development and other EU policies.



The RELOCAL project runs from October 2016 until September 2020.

Read more at <https://relocal.eu>

Project Coordinator:



UNIVERSITY OF  
EASTERN FINLAND

University of Eastern Finland

Contact: Dr. Petri Kahila ([petri.kahila@uef.fi](mailto:petri.kahila@uef.fi))



RELOCAL has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement N° 727097