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SOCIAL INNOVATIONS IN PLOCK, POLAND

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INTRODUCTION - LOCAL BACKGROUND FOR SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

Innovation is defined in many ways by social scientists, people connected with business or technology. Shortly speaking, it is a way to improve the systems that already exist, making them better, faster and cheaper (Iuri, Kuhn, 1998). What means “better, faster, cheaper” depends on the area of interest. In our case it is social policy in local communities, including discussed and implemented innovations, which are expected to meet needs of different segments of local communities. The innovations have different meaning depending on specific social, economic, cultural and political context.

Putnam stresses there are two fundamental points, which have to be taken into consideration studying how institutions and members of communities can collaborate to meet their goals:

- 1. Institutions shape politics. The rules and standard operating procedures that make up institutions leave their imprint on political outcomes by structuring political behavior.... Institutions influence outcomes because they shape actor's identities, power and strategies.*
- 2. Institutions are shaped by history. Whatever other factors may affect their form, institutions have inertia and 'robustness' (Putnam, 1993: 8-9).*

He also points out the role of features of social capital in the process of collaborations of governments, other actors (e.g. TSOs) and individual members of local communities. Social capital is defined as trust, norms and networks shaped over time (Putnam, 1993: 170; Sherraden, M.S., B. Slosar, and M. Sherraden, 2002). The social capitals can influence types of innovations proposed by different actors and their chances to be accepted and implemented.

Plock is the historic capital of Mazowsze, located in the northwestern part of Mazowieckie province (Ciechanowsko-Płocki sub-region according to NUTS-3 classification) at the distance of about 110 km from Warsaw. According to the Central Statistical Office, at the end of March 2012, the population of Plock inhabitants consisted of 124 553 permanent residents (Central Statistical Office, National Census of Population and Housing 2011).

The most substantial economic growth and increase in the number of inhabitants were observed in the 1960s and 1970s. As a result of political decisions of central authorities of the People's Republic of Poland, a petrochemical conglomerate was established in Plock, as well as other industrial plants (such as the Harvesting Machines Factory, Cotex Knitted Goods Factory and the River Dockyard). This resulted in massive migration to Plock, mainly of young people from the nearby rural areas. In the early 1960s, prior to commencement of the industrial investment projects, referred to above, the population of Plock amounted only to 34 thousand inhabitants, while in the late 1980s it reached 122 660 (Central Statistical Office, National Census of Population and Housing 1988). Plock became a significant industrial centre of the region of Mazowsze - mainly large, state-owned industrial plants shaped the local labour market. The economic crisis of the 1980s and the system transformation slowed down the development of Plock. Restructuring and change of ownership of industrial plants took place. The petrochemical conglomerate was transformed into PKN Orlen SA (Polish Oil Company Orlen) and it has remained the dominant employer in the city. Other plants have been privatized and the employment rates have been significantly reduced. Some, like Cotex, employing mainly women, declared bankruptcy and discontinued operation. Nevertheless, the industrial sector is still of significance - in year 2010, those employed in industry and construction constituted 40% of all employees in the city (Plock City Hall).

New solutions are often initiated by the inhabitants, who express their needs and point to the ways in which they could be satisfied. Later on, these serve as a basis for establishment of a partnership between the citizens, TSOs and the municipal or district authorities. Sometimes, the scenario of innovation is different. The city shows initiative and searches for partners among the entities and organizations, mentioned above.

2. SOCIAL INNOVATIONS IN PLOCK

2.1. Care of Children and Seniors: the Plock Council of Seniors

One of the most significant issues associated with childcare in Plock is the insufficient number of kindergartens and crèches. In the case of kindergartens, like in Warsaw, this is not the problem of kindergarten places as such, but their distribution in the city. Insufficiencies are observed mostly in the dynamically developing districts further away from the downtown, which are the preferred place of residence for young families with children, e.g. Podolszyce. In Podolszyce, the number of children aged 3-6 registered as residents is 516, while the childcare institutions offer places for 190 children (data as of March 2011). Secondly, mainly parents of 3-year-olds encounter the problem; most older children in Plock are benefitting from kindergarten education.

In Plock, kindergarten education at private and public kindergartens and kindergarten departments at elementary school is provided for 88%, which is a very high rate in Poland (the national average is 37%, which is the lowest indicator of popularization of kindergarten education in the EU member states). It seems that insufficient supply of crèche care is a more serious problem - there are only 3 public crèches in the city and two non-public crèches. According to the city officials, the small number of non-public crèches is due to the fact that in the light of the legal provisions that had been in force until recently (e.g. concerning the standard of rooms, in which childcare services are provided), it used to be much easier to open a kindergarten and obtain EU funds for this purpose than to open a crèche for the youngest children:

First of all, EU funds were used for the kindergartens. It is true that this boom of non-public kindergartens was due to the fact that there were funds first for the kindergarten facilities, which over time are transformed into full kindergartens. There were no such provisions for the crèches. Only the budget funds, and everyone knows that these are not sufficient to do anything. As a result, non-public kindergartens and kindergarten facilities emerged faster than some babysitting services or mini-crèches [focus_Plock].

At the same time, in the interviews conducted with the councilors, representatives of NGOs and journalists, the problem of care of the elderly was also visible. This pertains mainly to healthcare, including recognition of specific needs of the elderly in terms of healthcare, and the broadly understood support in social life, going beyond the education and cultural offer of universities of the third age:

There are few organizations that would deal with healthcare of the elderly. There is the University of the Third Age, there are combatant organizations and so on, which, for instance, organize the pass time of the elderly, using their skills, engaging them in education. There are little organizations that would deal with healthcare of the elderly, their problems, and their lives. Moreover, there is no overview of the situation, we don't know how many of them are lonely, whether they need some additional care or someone, who would at least visit them and talk to them. There are no organizations like that. As for care of the lonely, there are three organizations here, in Plock. Us

(the Polish Committee for Social Assistance), the Polish Red Cross and the Foundation for the Elderly, and we are the only ones to provide care [interview P.8].

There are two Care Homes in Plock¹, which is insufficient as a result of ageing of the society. Moreover, there are no Social Assistance Homes in the city, which would provide constant institutional care of the elderly. The 6 Public Social Assistance Homes in the district are dispersed over smaller towns, the number of places is limited and, according to our respondents, the waiting lists are very long. The interviewees did not mention private care homes in Plock or in the surrounding area. According to one of the respondents, diversified institutional forms of care should be complementary with care provided to the elderly by their family members. Making the family exclusively responsible for care may result in pathologies and limitation of public control of the real situation of the elderly, who can be treated poorly by their relatives in some situations:

(...) We do not know how the elderly function in the family environment. We do not know whether they feel comfortable with the family, whether they are important to their relatives, whether there is good care, whether there are any problems, or the elderly is there only because they get the old age pension or disability pension and they are being abused. Sometimes, some things are disclosed, but these are unusual situations, when, for instance, somebody living in the same apartment building says, this and this is happening at home of this elderly lady, and the social worker goes there for an interview, but, in general, we don't know about the situation of these people [interview P.8].

The above statement indicates that no complex diagnosis has been provided for Plock with regard to the situation and needs of the elderly inhabitants of the city. While time management initiatives for the seniors are being implemented (such as the University of the Third Age), from which only certain groups benefit, insufficient healthcare and social support are a more serious problem.

2.1.1. Short description

The Plock Council of Seniors has been operating since October 3rd, 2012. Its members have been appointed on the basis of the order of the President of the city of Plock. The Council has 10 members (8 women and 2 men). Nine of them are active in the community of the elderly and represent the key institutions established to provide them with support; the tenth is a councilor representing the President of the City of Plock.

The Council is a consultative and initiative-forming body of the President of the City of Plock on affairs pertaining to persons above 50 years of age. The objective of operation of the Council is integration, supporting and representation of the community of the elderly and exerting impact on affairs that concern all inhabitants of Plock.

2.1.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users

The detailed tasks of the Plock Council of Seniors are as follows:

¹ A Care Home is a form of long-term stationary care. The Homes provide 24-hour healthcare, consisting of treatment, care and rehabilitation of persons, who no longer require hospitalization and who have been through the entire process of diagnosis, surgery, who, nevertheless, due to their health condition and disability and lack of ability to function at home require constant supervision of professional personnel.

- presenting of proposals to define the priorities of tasks and activities on behalf of the elderly in Plock;
- initiation of undertakings aimed at social integration of the elderly and satisfying of the needs of this social group;
- engaging in activities aimed at taking advantage of the potential and time of the elderly on behalf of community initiatives, particularly in the field of culture, sports and education;
- issuing of opinions on the local legal acts pertaining to the situation of the elderly and affairs presented to the Council for issue of opinions by the President of the City of Plock;
- consulting on affairs concerning the elderly, in particular, with regard to social assurance, healthcare, social assistance and care;
- aiming at restoring and strengthening of social bonds between generations².

Until today, in total, eight meetings of the Plock Council of Seniors have been held. During these meetings, the following topics have been discussed: social assistance with particular emphasis on support and assistance for the seniors in Plock; ability to introduce changes in the functioning of the Public Transport System in Plock (on the basis of analysis of results of the questionnaire conducted among the seniors in the autumn of 2012); health prevention among the seniors, planned for Plock for year 2013; possibilities of creation of a Geriatric Clinic in the city in the future; concepts for activation of the senior community of Plock³.

Meetings of the Plock Council of Seniors are attended by external guests, representing institutions that are of significance for the issues discussed by the Council, including the Ombudsman for the Disabled at the Municipal Office of Plock, representatives of the Polish Red Cross and the Polish Committee for Social Assistance, president of the Management Board of the Public Transport System in Plock, director of the Municipal Center for Social Assistance, manager of the Department of Support and Social Rehabilitation at the Municipal Center for Social Assistance, Director of the Local Office of the National Health Fund in Plock, Vice President of the Management Board of the State Healthcare Institutions and the Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection.

The activities of the Plock Council of Seniors include the action „Place friendly for seniors”. It is organized by the Council and the President of the City of Plock. The main objective of this action is to promote places and institutions that are friendly to seniors, operating in Plock. Mostly, these are cultural, education, recreation institutions, cafes, shops, drugstores, public institutions and other facilities that satisfy the needs of the elderly by adapting their architecture and offering products, services and discounts for this group and places, in which the elderly feel comfortable and well. The action is addressed to all institutions interested in obtaining the certificate „Place friendly to seniors”. Such facilities are granted the certificate and marked with a special graphic sign informing of the reward. The institution applying for the certificate should meet the following criteria: have an offer addressed specifically to the elderly, maintain and develop this offer, reach as many seniors as possible, provide discounts for seniors, make sure that the architecture and interior design and equipment match the needs of the elderly, be open towards the needs of the elderly and meet their expectations, become a place, which is often visited by the elderly, while providing access for all age groups. The decision on granting of the certificate is made by the jury consisting of: the President of the City of Plock and the Plock Council of Seniors. Visits to the places and verification of applications are dealt with

² http://www.plock.eu/pl/dzialania_rady.html.

³ http://www.plock.eu/pl/informacje_biezace.html.

by the contest commission, consisting of representatives of the Plock Council of Seniors⁴. So far, fifteen institutions have been granted the „Place friendly to seniors” certificate⁵.

According to one of the respondents, the plans of the Plock Council of Seniors include development of a programme for social activation of the elderly on the basis of the concept of inter-generational exchange of experience, which, at the same time, will allow for diversification of childcare services available in the city:

(...) The elderly, who are lonely and have a lot of time, who are healthy and able, will take care of children at home, in those families, which, for instance, are unable to send the children to the kindergarten, because, for instance, there are no vacant places. So, these persons will not only take care of the children, but they can also share their knowledge, educate, teach the children some skills that they have, which, for instance, are being forgotten, such as knitting and decorative paper cut-outs. The elderly can do many things, which we sometimes know nothing about [interview P.8].

2.1.3. Internal organization and modes of working

The Plock Council of Seniors does not have the status of a self-governing legislative body, as it performs consulting functions. The councilors of the Plock Council of Seniors are representatives of the following entities: Association of Catholic Families of the Diocese of Plock, the Polish Diabetics Association, the Polish Association of Old Age and Disability Pensioners, the Sclerosis Multiplex Association, the Association of the Children of War in Poland, Plock Association for Assistance on Behalf of Persons with Alzheimer’s Disease, the Association of Combatants and Former Political Prisoners of the Republic of Poland, the Association of the University of the Third Age in Plock, the League of Polish Women. The tenth member of the Council is a Representative of the President of the City of Plock - Proxy for the Affairs of NGOs.

Members of the Plock Council of Seniors are also invited to meetings with representatives of public institutions at various levels. In April of this year, upon invitation by member of European Parliament Danuta Hübner, the Council visited the Parliament. The visit was dedicated mainly to the activity of the Commission for Protection of Natural Environment and the Commission for Public Health and Food Safety ENVI⁶.

A significant aspect of operation of the Plock Council of Seniors is referring directly to the opinions of the elderly inhabitants of the city. For instance, proposals of the Council concerning changes in functioning of the public transport system have been developed on the basis of a questionnaire addressed to seniors.

2.1.4. Interaction with the local welfare system

The Plock Council of Seniors was appointed by the City Hall as the space for communication between the city authorities and representatives of the senior community - persons acting on behalf of the seniors, well familiar with their various needs. In the light of the statement of the President of the City, the Plock Council of Seniors is also supposed to initiate solutions and activities aimed at improvement of the situation of the elderly

⁴ <http://www.plock.eu/pl/aktualnosci/details/article,2494,1,1.html>.

⁵ <http://www.krpradio.pl/news/wiadomosci-lokalne/1350-w-plocku-jest-pietnascie-miejsc-przyjaznych-seniorom>.

⁶ http://plock.gazeta.pl/plock/1,35710,13770856,Plocka_Rada_Seniorow_odwiedzila_Parlament_Europejski.html.

inhabitants of Plock: “2012 is the European Year of Activity of the Elderly and Inter-Generational Solidarity. It is a great moment to appoint a Council, which will not only speak of the problems, but also propose specific solutions”.⁷

The Plock Council of Seniors does not deal directly with the problems, listed above, associated with insufficient supply of healthcare for the seniors living in Plock; at the same time, it differs from the former dispersed initiatives, aimed mainly at social activation of the elderly. The activities of the Council so far remind us to some extent of the projects of MaMa Foundation in Warsaw, aimed at urban space friendly for parents with small children. The Plock Council of Seniors, during the first term of office, also focused on „friendliness” and availability of various places to the seniors, on facilitating movement around the city. Involvement of representatives of the local communities at the local authority level may contribute to recognition of the real situation of the elderly inhabitants of Plock and development of a systemic strategy of improvement.

2.2. Migrants: The Russian Community Association

The scale of foreign migrations in the case of Plock is significantly smaller than in Warsaw. The available statistics from the National Census from 2002 allows only for presentation of diversity of Plock inhabitants according to the declared nationality being Polish or other, which probably includes both immigrants and minority representatives⁸: 309 individuals out of 128 361 in total pointed out, that their nationality is other than Polish. According to the Municipal Office in Plock, in year 2010, 131 foreigners were permanent residents of Plock, representing about 0.1% of all permanent residents. In this group, 110 persons were citizens of countries outside the European Union. These are mainly citizens of Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Armenia and Mongolia. On the basis of interviews, the actual number of immigrants in Plock may be at least three times higher. Due to lack of formally registered immigrant organizations in Plock, it seems that the local immigrants are doing their best to "remain unnoticed" (see WP3 Report for Plock).

A specific phenomenon in Plock is the wave of female immigrants - citizens of USSR, who came to Plock in the 1970s together with their Polish husbands - many of them were engineers, sent to the USSR to work as representatives of the Petrochemical Conglomerate. These women have lived in the city for several dozen years; some of them attend the prayers and meetings organized by the Orthodox Church in Plock. However, they do not constitute a compact immigrant community - most of them have been granted citizenship of Poland. Another specific group are the Poles of Russian origin, living in Plock - children of Russians, who settled in Plock during the partition period (19th century).

In the light of interviews with two female migrants - a Russian and a Ukrainian, the most significant problems encountered by immigrants in Plock include the language barrier, difficulties in finding jobs and reluctance of the Poles to accept them

2.2.1. Short description

The Association was officially registered in 2007 as a branch of the “Russian Community” association established in Warsaw. The members include mainly Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians, as well as some Poles, although only a few. Most of them have registered due to having spouse being an immigrant.

⁷ <http://portal.plocman.pl/aktualnosci/powstanie-rada-seniorow,25879.html>.

⁸ In Plock, we are dealing with a relatively significant population of Romani people, as well as some representatives of the Jewish minority.

The Association was established by one of the Poles of Russian origin, descendant of Russians, who came to the city during the period of the partitions, that is, in the 19th century. The initiative, as it turned out, has met the expectations of the modern immigrants from the East, in particular, female citizens of the USSR, who came to Plock in the 1970s:

I had been thinking about an association like this for a very long time. My grandma often told me how difficult the situation of Russians was at the time, how lost they felt. They only met at the Orthodox Church. I remember this from my childhood. This is why I wanted to create a group of people, who could meet, talk in their mother tongue, exchange experiences and remarks, and celebrate together.⁹

The future of this initiative remains unclear. The leader - a female immigrant from Russia - has moved to another city and there is no candidate, who could replace her on the position.

2.2.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users

The organization performs many functions, which are of significance for the immigrants: it organizes cultural events, preserves the cultural traditions, builds the image of the immigrants from the East and communication of the Poles and other immigrants in Plock, as well as helps the newcomers in finding jobs or apartments. Members of the association have also participated in trips to Russia and Belarus, organized by the central office in Warsaw. The cultural events organized include the "Russian Days" and evenings with literature, dedicated to Russian writers: "(...) we have organized so many meetings, and the „Russian Days" two years ago, and an evening dedicated to Tolstoy. Everyone prepared something, some articles to be read. And we presented a film about the writer, and it all worked beautifully" [interview P.9]. Information on the Association was distributed mainly by the local press - the organization members have published articles in *Tygodnik Plocki* and in the local edition of *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

2.2.3. Internal organization and modes of working

The „Community" consists mainly of the elderly, old age pensioners; the number of young people is very small. In year 2012, there were 25 members, including about 10 active ones. The branch in Plock of the Russian Community Association covers its current expenses mainly from member premiums. These funds are designated for organization of meetings for the members, purchase of coffee, tea, cookies, covering of costs of travel of guests invited to meetings, as well as trips associated with participation in meetings organized in Warsaw. The Association may not collect funds for its operation (e.g. from the Municipal Office), since, as a Plock branch of an organization with central office in Warsaw; it does not have legal personality. Therefore, the funds for organizing large undertakings came from Warsaw, they were booked and settled there: "(...) the association in Warsaw, they engaged in some projects, financed by Moscow or the Russian consulate. And we got some little bits out of these. But the money, they got it, they made the settlements" [Interview P.9].

Members of the Association used to meet in the private apartment of the president or at local cafes, while the large cultural events, such as the Russian Days, were organized at the Municipal Office of Plock. The members use their own resources to deal with organizational affairs - their own cars, computers and phones.

⁹ http://plock.gazeta.pl/plock/1,35681,6969289,Kawalek_Rosji_w_Plocku.html.

2.2.4. Interaction with the local welfare system

The Association under concern has been considered to be innovative as it is the only initiative so far aimed at immigrants living in Plock and implemented by them. Activities of the organization are aimed at a specific group of immigrants - those from the east (Russians and Ukrainians). At the same time, the Association works on behalf of the Russian minority of Plock, that is, the descendants of Russians, who came to the city in the 19th century.

According to the president, cultural and assistance events are particularly needed by immigrants, who, to a certain extent, feel torn between Poland and their country of origin, who have not been able to find a place for themselves in the Polish society and who still do not want to return to their homeland as, in their opinion, they have not succeeded as immigrants. Such persons particularly need the support and the space, in which they could feel more comfortable.

Activity of the Association, however, has not attracted substantial interest of immigrants living in Plock. Their reluctance is not overcome even by the fact that it is managed by immigrants from the East themselves and persons of Russian origin, who could provide assistance in their life problems:

The ones, who have problems, the ones, whom I almost tried to force, they are the ones who refuse to come to us. Even though they have problems, they have no jobs; they prefer to stay at home. I know they've been unemployed for years, they have the time, I wanted to get them involved in some tasks, where, I have no time to do this, and they could. No, they will not come. And later on, they blame me for calling them and disturbing them [Interview P.9].

Immigrants from Russia and Ukraine, living in Plock and the surrounding area, who have attained a higher material status, are not interested in getting involved in the works of the Association either. They do not want to provide financial support for the organization. Other persons, particularly those, who are in mixed marriages, try to assimilate in the Polish majority as much as possible and they prefer not to transfer their cultural and national traits to their children:

I had this encounter a year ago, this lady, Wiera, said: „What do you want from me?” I said, perhaps your daughter would like to come to us; we organize trips to Moscow for Russian language courses, for kids from mixed families. And she said, „Get away from me”, loudly, so that everyone in the store could hear her, „my daughter is not Russian, you better remember this” [Interview P.9].

At the same time, the Poles living in Plock are not interested in the Association either: “(...) we received some phone calls, inquiries, several persons came over, they came here looking for wives, the Poles, and there were some other strange phone calls and that was it” [Interview P.9].

Activity on behalf of immigrants in Plock is not easy due to the specific local traits associated with small scale of migration in general, the phenomenon of illegal migration and diversity of the groups of foreigners, which came to the city in various time periods. Due to their unregulated status, illegal immigrants are afraid to get involved in any social initiatives. On the other hand, immigrants - particularly females - coming to Plock from

the east in the 1970s and at present believe it to be a good strategy to become a part of the Polish majority. This does not mean, however, that initiatives on behalf of immigrants are not needed in Plock. Quite the opposite, a greater number of various initiatives, with more active support of the city authorities, could make the immigrants noticeable as one of the groups of inhabitants having specific needs in terms of social support.

2.3. Housing: City Social Housing Society

Housing is one of the important social policy issues in Plock and a topic of numerous newspaper articles as well as city council debates. The scope of the problem is much too big for the city budget to be solved easily, and many critics say that the housing policy of the city is chaotic and neglected, without clear vision or direction. As former vice president said at one of the council meetings: "... 2 thousand families face this problem, often having no permanent residence address. So, today, an attempt to provide 100 thousand, 500 thousand, 1 million zlotys will not bring any effect at all." A representative of the local press stated that this problem is encountered by even more people than shown by official statistics: "Officially, there are 7 thousand families waiting for apartments in Plock. In fact, nobody really knows how many people really are waiting" [P.2. Prasa_mieszk i praca].

These statements illustrate the scale of problems associated with housing in Plock and lack of perspectives for solving them. Particularly problematic are the tenement houses in the Old Town, which are in a very bad condition, inhabited by poor and marginalized persons. These are areas, in which various problems and pathologies concentrate, resulting in creation of a kind of ghetto. In this context, it is particularly significant to introduce innovative solutions, giving a chance for improvement in the regard of housing conditions of Plock inhabitants.

2.3.1. Short description

The City Social Housing Societies are social developers appointed by the commune, which work is focused mainly on construction and renting of houses for the purpose of implementation of the housing policy of the commune. The CSHS of Plock is the largest company of this kind in Mazowsze and one of the largest in the country.

CSHS, apart from construction of rental flats for persons with lower income, try to build apartments for sale on the basis of commercial credits. In 2013, CSHS offered 10 apartments at 3.9 thousand to 4.2 thousand PLN per square meter. After calculation of total costs (installment, service charges), these prices were comparable with those on the market.

2.3.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users

The CSHS offer is addressed to the less affluent inhabitants, who cannot afford to purchase or rent an apartment on the free market. Before the construction starts, the Society establishes a list of potential inhabitants. Prior to commencement of the investment project, the so-called "participation" fee is collected as participation in costs of construction. When the flats are ready, they are rented to those who participated in the costs of construction. As they remain the property of the city, they cannot be purchased, but the tenancy rights can be inherited. The future tenants of CSHS buildings must return their current council flats or pay the participation fee in the amount of 20-25% of the value of the flat.

The rental fee contains also the service charge and the loan incurred by the Society for construction of the apartments. Buyout of the apartment occupied is not possible - the tenant leaving the Society may only regain their contribution, which, in fact, constitutes about 30% of the market value of the apartment. Considering the fact that the rent at CSHS is not much lower than in a housing cooperative, these apartments are not as attractive as they could be (Gazeta Wyborcza, 30.04.2013).

2.3.3. Internal organization and modes of working

The activities of CSHS are a response to lack of apartments at prices that would be affordable for an average citizen, or a citizen, who is unable to make a living. According to the act on local self-government, the commune must warrant a place to stay for its inhabitants - one of the methods of implementation of this task is construction of apartments for rent. CSHS has built almost two thousand apartments of this type. These are designated for rental, and the tenant provides a participation fee. On this basis, they become entitled to move in; also this right can be transferred to someone else.

The two thousand apartments were constructed with the assistance of the National Housing Fund of Bank *Gospodarstwa Krajowego*. This is a target fund of the state, designated for loans to Social Housing Societies for construction purposes; inhabitants repay these for many years in their rental fees. Apart from two thousand apartments provided on the basis of the participation formula, CSHS has constructed several facilities to be sold on the free market. These are additional activities and up to now they have not been successful - the apartments constructed in this way are characterized by high prices per meter and the number of potential purchasers is low.

At present, the National Housing Fund is no longer in operation because of the EU provisions, which prohibit the activity of this type. Therefore, CSHS is waiting for other programmes to be launched. Several dozen council flats are currently being constructed on the land plots belonging to the CSHS. It is planned that in the late 2013/early 2014, the president will dispose of more than 60 new council flats ready for the inhabitants to move in.

A problem, associated with operation of the CSHS is the fact that, since the inhabitants have to repay the loan incurred for construction in their rents, the monthly rent is relatively high (even twice as high as in housing cooperatives). When one of the tenants fails to pay, CSHS must pay interest to Bank *Gospodarstwa Krajowego* for them, which amounts in several hundred thousand zlotys per year. That's why CSHS is looking for additional sources of income.

2.3.4. Interaction with the local welfare system

CSHS as a company owned in 100% by the commune treasure, established by the City, is well embedded in the local welfare system. The City Council plays the role of the general assembly of shareholders of CSHS, making decisions with regard to activities to be undertaken by the company. The housing policy, including the operation of the CSHS, is under the direct supervision of the President of the City and constitutes one of the priorities of city's investments. As it has been described by the President of the CSHS:

CSHS is a company, but it is not like we are a separate structure, we are an extension, an executive arm of the president of the city of Plock and we implement the policy developed by the president of Plock and the council of Plock. So what if it's a company? It makes it easier to manage [p.5 mieszkanie i praca].

This, however, does not mitigate the problem associated with lack of the sufficient funds for construction of subsequent apartments. Attempts made by the CSHS to obtain means from sale of development apartments on the free market have not brought the expected results due to the too high prices of apartments.

In general, opinions concerning the activity of CSHS in Plock are diversified. It has been pointed out that the current prices of apartments offered by the company do not differ much from those available on the market, and the quality of construction is rather low. In response to lack of interest in new apartments, in 2013, the opportunity of buyout of apartments in installments is to be introduced: the purchaser will pay 30% of the value of the apartment, while the rest of the amount payable is to be distributed over the period of 5 to 20 years, depending on the ability of the purchaser to make payments. It is significant that the first installment, as well as the interest rates, can be negotiated, and in the case of any further problems with repayment - it is possible to reach agreement with regard to temporary suspension of payments. Unlike banks, the CSHS does not require any property documentation and qualify for purchase those, who have their own funds (not from a bank loan) for the first payment.

CSHS has operated in Plock for a long time, the first apartments were offered in 1998, and the last - three years ago, as an apartment for rent; afterwards, the operation of the National Housing Fund was discontinued. Thanks to the act of 2010, which allows for sale of these apartments to inhabitants at market prices, CSHS plans to regain some of the invested money. The funds remaining after repayment of the loan can be spent only on housing construction; thus, if any interesting central or municipal programmes emerge, CSHS will contribute to these, building new apartments and the associated infrastructure.

2.4. Housing: Project “Together for Revitalization”

2.4.1. Short description

The project „Together for revitalization” lasted for almost 15 months, encompassing more than one hundred inhabitants of the Old Town of Plock. The project, funded mostly from the European Union funds, has been managed by the City Social Assistance Center. As it has been underlined, it was a pilot project - one of 20 of this kind, implemented in the country.

The aim of the pilot project was to develop a general model to be implemented by other cities and communes. Plock could participate in the contest for the funds, because it met the key prerequisite - since 2005, it has implemented its own revitalization programme with some social partners.

2.4.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users

The project was focused on inhabitants of the old town: the poor and marginalized due to low education levels, addictions, unemployment, crimes etc. Revitalization was to include renovation of old buildings, squares and streets, but also „bringing back to life” the local community, often marginalized. The project encompassed 100 people, half of these aged 15 to 25.

The entire programme had the budget of more than 1.6 million zlotys, divided, more or less equally, among the two partners selected by the City Social Assistance Center on the basis of a contest: the Professional Development Institution and the Association “Innovation Center for Information Society”. Within the framework of these funds, the Social Assistance Center provided trainings on social competences and skills, including

psychological education workshops and sexual education/family planning courses, as well as a community center, where integration classes for the youth could be organized. The second partner - the Professional Development Institution - organized professional courses, while the ICIS was responsible for activities for the youth (sports, arts, photo, filmmaking and dancing), making of a film on the participants and painting of murals on old tenement buildings - some of these were designed by young people participating in the programme.

2.4.3. Internal organization and modes of working

The City Social Assistance Center in partnership with the Professional Development Institution and the Association “Innovation Center for Information Society” has been implementing the programme „TOGETHER FOR REVITALIZATION - pilot programme for social revitalization of the Old Town of Plock”, co-financed by the European Social Fund. The main purpose of the project is social revitalization of the Old Town in Plock by providing support to at least 100 persons threatened by social exclusion and engaging in activities to animate the local community.

Target group of the Project was defined as 100 persons threatened by social exclusion, living in the Old Town of Plock, beneficiaries of social assistance provided by the CSAC in Plock, at least 50% of all participants were young people aged 15-25.

Within the framework of participation in the programme, various forms of activity have been planned, such as:

- Social reintegration (workshop)
- Social reintegration - animation (sports, film and dancing classes)
- Social and professional reintegration (courses and trainings)
- Organization and maintenance of the community center
-

The classes offered to the youth included sports, such as kickboxing, filmmaking, dancing, art, e.g. graffiti, and photography. Professional courses were also offered in areas like: artistic make-up, animation of recreation, arrangement of flowers, cosmetology, haircutting, construction, engine-driven forklift truck driving, catering, cash register management and computer skills.

2.4.4. Interaction with the local welfare system

As a result of this project, several backyards have been renovated; small gardens have been established, with sandpits for the children etc. The inhabitants themselves care about their new backyards and add some new features like swings, flowerbeds, fence, etc. Moreover, several participants found jobs after the professional courses that were organized in the project. Now the CSAC is searching for money to continue these activities. Thanks to the fact that the project was based on partnership of three local institutions, it offered a wide choice of services matching the needs of the inhabitants of areas that are most threatened by exclusion. The project leader was the CSAC, which is the major institution responsible for social assistance, implementing several projects financed from the EU funds. Joining of efforts of CSAC and the Professional Development Institution allowed the project to provide participants with assistance and education as two complementary fields.

However, the most significant were the effects of the ICIS association work, which introduced real changes in the community of the Old Town on the basis of participation. Working together on establishment of the local green areas, the inhabitants started to feel responsible for the appearance of their community, they started to protect it actively and

add new components to it (such as swings for the children, made by one of the inhabitants). The backyards, formerly uncared-for, became the space, in which children and adults could spend time and rest in much better conditions than before.

2.5. Employment: Foundation "Grant Fund for Plock"

The situation on the labor market has been one of the main problems encountered by the city authorities. Most activities, implemented by the labor market institution, are based on spending of EU funds for professional trainings and consulting for the unemployed. Unfortunately, many of the solutions introduced bring only temporary or none results. Trainings are organized in fields, which often fail to match the skills or interests of the participants, as well as the market demands. Some attempts have been made to cooperate with employers to identify the skills they are searching for; however, this is not systemic cooperation.

A problem, which has been mentioned in many interviews, is weak connection of the largest local employer - PKN Orlen Corporation - with the local labor market. The establishment of the corporation resulted in substantial inflow of external inhabitants, who are not interested in the future of Plock. According to one of the interviewees:

Thanks to construction of Petrochemia, it became a large city, and what happened? The entire Steelworks came to the city, mostly people, who could achieve nothing at home, who had no education or no skills or abilities. The local people feel no bond with each other, they are unable to unite or defend the local community, they do not treat Plock as being their own.

In the context of significance of PKN Orlen for local development, the „Grant Fund for Plock“ Foundation established by the corporation in cooperation with the City to support the local initiatives through grant contests is a positive development.

2.5.1. Short description

The „Grant Fund for Plock“ is an initiative of the Municipal Office of Plock and two corporations operating locally - PKN ORLEN S.A. and *Basell Orlen Polyolefins*, established in 2003. Cooperation with two large founders is based on social business responsibility. The main objective of the Foundation is work on behalf of improvement of the quality of life of inhabitants of Plock.

According to the Vice President of the City of Plock:

The „Grant Fund for Plock“ Foundation combines the potential of the public and private sector, supporting those, who have the enthusiasm and ideas to act on behalf of the local community. The scope of projects implemented thanks to the grants has been very wide. The activity of the Foundation is all the more valuable as it allows for rewarding of initiatives that are focused on such areas as culture, sports or education, as well as the difficult issues of social assistance or unemployment. Success of the Grant Fund depends on people, who are willing to work, who act on behalf of the inhabitants of our city. We have learned many times we have many people like this in Plock. It should be kept in mind, too, that the initiative has been successful thanks to companies engaged in social issues - PKN Orlen and Basell Orlen Polyolefins. The Foundation is for people with ideas.

So far, five contests have been held; on 20.02.2013 another was announced, in which organizations could compete for grants of up to 25 thousand zlotys; the total amount of funds is 300 thousand zlotys. All organizations that have their headquarters or branch in Plock may apply. What is important, all the projects must be focused on the city and its inhabitants. The projects may be related to various fields, including social and educational work, sports, and environmental protection. Every potential beneficiary may file an unlimited number of projects.

2.5.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users

The Foundation announces cyclical contests for NGOs of Plock. According to the statute, it provides financial support for projects on behalf of: a) raising of the level of education of the inhabitants of Plock, b) counteracting social and economic exclusion of persons threatened by such exclusion, c) raising of public security, d) preservation of the historic heritage and development of culture and art, e) raising of the quality of social assistance, f) improvement of the condition of the natural environment and raising of awareness of the inhabitants of Plock in this regard, g) raising of attractiveness of Plock in terms of tourism, social relations and economy, h) popularization of recreation and sports, i) supporting of the economic community and undertakings aimed at economic growth of Plock, j) strengthening of European integration and international cooperation and j) acting on behalf of healthcare and promotion of healthcare.

The Foundation supports organization of workshops, trainings, lectures, seminars, exhibitions, reviews, trade fairs, concerts, meetings, contests, creation and operation of community centers, clubs, locations for meeting of local groups, publication of information materials, including audiovisual materials, archiving of knowledge, creation of databases and other innovative activities aimed at integration and development of the local community.

2.5.3. Internal organization and modes of working

The „Grant Fund for Plock” Foundation is an initiative of the Municipal Office of Plock, PKN ORLEN S.A. and *Basell Orlen Polyolefins Sp. z o.o.* and is a national-scale innovation. The initiative was undertaken within the framework of social business responsibility and care of the local government for development of the local NGOs.

The legal deed establishing the foundation was signed by representatives of the Founders - the Municipal Office, PKN ORLEN S.A. and *Basell Orlen Polyolefins Sp. z o.o.* on December 15th, 2005. The initial capital of the „Grant Fund for Plock” Foundation amounted to PLN 1 000 000. The city provided PLN 600,000, PKN ORLEN S.A. - 300,000, *Basell Orlen Polyolefins Sp. z o.o.* - 100,000. The Foundation took over the name and tasks of the Grant Fund for Plock. On March 24th, 2006, the Foundation was granted legal personality and was entered in the National Court Register - Register of Associations, other Social and Professional Organizations and Public Healthcare Institutions.

Thanks to systematic support of their Founders, the Foundation has conducted five editions of grant contests, supporting the NGOs of Plock in implementation of 130 projects with the total amount of more than PLN 1.7 million.

2.5.4. Interaction with the local welfare system

History of the Foundation goes back to October 14th, 2002, when representatives of the city authorities, PKN ORLEN S.A. and the United Nations signed the letter of intent concerning establishment of the „Forum for Plock”. The project was aimed at inclusion of

the local business and social organizations in cooperation with the local government on assessment and updating of the „Strategy for Development of the City of Plock until year 2012”. For six months, almost 50 local organizations, representing the business of Plock, NGOs, the inhabitants and the local government cooperated to create and define the development priorities for the city. The works were concluded in June 2003 by approval of the „Strategy for Sustainable Development of the City of Plock” and signing of the declaration for cooperation on behalf of achievement of objectives of the strategy.

Another innovative initiative, which emerged during the works of the Forum for Plock, was establishment of the Grant Fund for Plock in May 2003, on the initiative of the Municipal Office of Plock and PKN ORLEN S.A. The Fund was supposed to provide the financial basis for NGOs of Plock working to support the Strategy for Sustainable Development. The initial capital amounted to PLN 1.1 million -500,000 provided by PKN ORLEN S.A. and 600,000 by the city. The project was supervised by UNDP. The role of UNDP was to facilitate communication between the private and the public sector. They also supervised the activity of the Fund and provided consulting. As the works were in progress, another business partner joined the project - Levi Strauss Poland. Thanks to financial support provided by all three entities, the Fund developed three editions of grant contests, in which 121 grants were awarded for the total amount of almost PLN 2,100 000.

After three editions of the contest, the UN decided that its role as the project administrator was over and the Fund was ready to be handed over to the local community. Therefore, the Founders (the city of Plock, PKN Orlen S.A) and the new partner -*Basell Orlen Polyolefins Sp. z o.o.* and UNDP representatives worked to create a foundation, which could take over the activities of the Grant Fund for Plock and support the development of the local community. Levi Strauss Poland withdrew as a Founder due to formal reasons.

Both companies engaged in activity of the Grant Fund for Plock have underlined that their support for this initiative is due to willingness to support the local community, as well as the prestige associated with participation in such a unique project:

The Grant Fund for Plock Foundation is a unique example of a public-private partnership in Central and Eastern Europe. Participation in such exceptional initiative allows the partners to support, plan and monitor the development of very significant projects on behalf of the inhabitants of Plock. Being a founder is not only prestige, but also responsibility, and active participation in projects aimed at improvement of the standards of living of the local community. I believe that the more people are willing to cooperate, the more benefits there are in it for all beneficiaries [representative of PKN ORLEN].

Basell Orlen Polyolefins Sp. z o.o. is a company of Plock, and apart from its business operation, it strives to support the development of the region, in which it operates, through participation in many social projects. One of these is the Grant Fund for Plock, which offers many opportunities in such fields as sports, culture, education and many others. The Fund is also a platform for exchange of information on opportunities in the region for many interesting initiatives. The Company assumes social and business responsibility for the affairs of Plock, as it has been proven by our participation in the Fund, of which we are proud [representative of Basell Orlen Polyolefins Sp. z o.o.].

CONCLUSIONS

There are a number of factors which influence local welfare policy and social

innovations in Płock:

- (1) characteristic of the city and scope of its legal decisions and responsibilities;
- (2) recent economic and social developments in Płock;
- (3) types of local and external “actors” initiating innovations.

Characteristic of the city and scope of its legal decisions and responsibilities.

Płock is the historic capital of Mazowsze, located in the north-western part of Mazowieckie province (Ciechanowsko-Płocki sub-region according to NUTS-3 classification) at the distance of about 110 km from Warsaw. According to the Central Statistical Office, at the end of December 2010, the population of Płock inhabitants consisted of 124,727 permanent residents; among these, women constituted 52.4% (Central Statistical Office, Local Data Bank). In terms of population size, Płock is counted among medium-sized cities. Płock is a city with county rights (NUTS-4), which means that the scope of its tasks differs from that of the communes. Due to its status as a township, the tasks of the city of Płock include maintenance of public education institutions, implementation of a family support policy, as well as assisting the disabled (District Family Assistance Centre). On the other hand, the tasks of the city include maintenance of the road infrastructure, the water supply, sewage and sanitary systems, social assistance (maintaining of care centres and institutions), public housing, maintenance of elementary schools, kindergartens (nursery schools) and other education and care institutions, social, medical and legal assistance for pregnant women.

As a township, Płock is responsible for independent financial management within the scope of its budget. The main sources of income for the city are taxes, charges and other receipts, income from the city property, a general subsidy from the state budget, as well as special purpose donations for implementation of ordered tasks and for additional financing of own tasks (Statutes of the City of Płock 2008). In the case of the city of Płock, in year 2010, 65% of its income consisted of internal income. At the same time, the share of own income of Płock in overall income is similar to the average for all cities in Poland (Central Statistical Office, Local Data Bank).¹⁰ In Płock, there are several universities and colleges, including the branches of The University of Warsaw and Warsaw University of Technology.¹¹ The companies play important role in the city being providers of workplaces and helping solve different city problems. The companies cooperate with local authorities and other local actors to solve some of the most important problems of the city.

Recent developments in Płock : Transformations of the local labor market

The local labor market and economy in Płock, like the national level and economy of the Ciechanowsko-Płocki (Ciechanów- Płock) sub-region, reflects the growth and slowdown trends, associated mainly with accession of Poland to the European Union in year 2004 and the global economic crisis of 2008-2009. Positive impact of membership of Poland in the EU is indicated, among other things, by the GDP values per inhabitant. Płock can be referred to as a city of industry and services, while the role of the agricultural sector is small. The highest investment expenditures of Płock companies in year 2009 were observed in the industrial sector. In year 2009, in Płock 69% of all employed worked in the private sector, and 31% - in the public sector (Central Statistical Office 2010).

¹⁰ Among other companies, Polski Koncern Naftowy Orlen SA has its headquarters in Płock; the city is also home to production plants of the American company Levi Strauss, as well as many other companies with a share of foreign capital: Hoppenstedt Bonnier Information, Bildau&Busmann, Adler Poland, A. Schulman, Dr Oetker Dekor.

¹¹ (www.ump.pl)

In years 2000-2009, the percentage share of the unemployed among the professionally active population decreased substantially in Płock. Reduction of unemployment after the accession of Poland to the European Union was caused by migration abroad in order to search for jobs. At the time, the local press of Płock informed of "insufficient number of employees", particularly in professions requiring low qualifications and/or manual labor. In year 2010, the registered unemployment rate in Płock amounted to 10.9%, and in the case of the Ciechanowsko-Płocki sub-region and on the national level, it was equal to 15.6% and 12.3%, respectively. The available statistical data show that social groups, which are more threatened by unemployment in Płock are women, young people, as well as the elderly - persons aged 55 and more, and persons with lower education. The same tendencies can be observed at the national level, as well as in the Ciechanowsko-Płocki sub-region.

In the last 10 years, Płock has been characterized by a substantially higher share of women among the registered unemployed in comparison with the sub-region or the entire country. The problem of unemployment pertains mainly to women, who had been employed before (Mackiewicz 2009). The closing of some factories in the last years where women have been employed caused the increase of their unemployment. Regardless the fluctuations in the economic conditions, the number of women professionally passive grew systematically in years 2000-2009.

Outflow and inflow of population from and to Płock (migration)

Despite of relative attractiveness of Płock in the context of the Ciechanowsko-Płocki sub-region, the city is unable to stop the outflow of the population, which mainly migrates to Warsaw or abroad. In Płock, in years 2005-2009, the balance of migration abroad for permanent residence was usually negative, and the balance of temporary migration abroad was positive. The immigration from abroad, earlier mainly from the Soviet Union, after 1990 from Ukraine, Belorussia and the Far East (Vietnam, China), is small. The immigrants do not have very active organizations and their own centers.

Typology of initiators of social innovations in Płock (and their examples): City authorities using EU funds

The situation on the labor market has been one of the main problems encountered by the city authorities. Most activities, implemented by the labor market institution, are based on spending of EU funds for professional trainings and consulting for the unemployed.

The „Grant Fund for Płock” is an initiative of the Municipal Office of Płock and two corporations operating locally - PKN ORLEN S.A. and Basell Orlen Polyolefins, established in 2003. Cooperation with two large founders is based on social business responsibility. The main objective of the Foundation is work on behalf of improvement of the quality of life of inhabitants of Płock. Another innovative initiative, which emerged during the works of the Forum for Płock, was establishment of the Grant Fund for Płock in May 2003, on the initiative of the Municipal Office of Płock and PKN ORLEN S.A. The Fund was supposed to provide the financial basis for NGOs of Płock working to support the Strategy for Sustainable Development.

The project of social revitalization of the part of Płock inhabited by population endangered by social exclusion is an example of cooperation among city institutions, NGOs and inhabitants. The City Social Assistance Center in partnership with the Professional Development Institution and the Association “Innovation Center for Information Society” has been implementing the programme „TOGETHER FOR REVITALIZATION - a pilot programme for social revitalization of the Old Town of Płock”, co-financed by the European Social Fund. However, the most significant were the effects of the ICIS

association work, which introduced real changes in the community of the Old Town on the basis of participation. Working together on establishment of the local green areas, the inhabitants started to feel responsible for the appearance of their community.

The association whose activities are aimed at a specific group of immigrants - those from the east (Russians and Ukrainians) demonstrates that grassroots initiatives form the basis of activities of nongovernmental organizations. At the same time, the Association works on behalf of the Russian minority of Plock, that is, the descendants of Russians, who came to the city in the 19th century. According to the president, cultural and assistance events are particularly needed by immigrants, who, to a certain extent, feel torn between Poland and their country of origin. Activity of the Association is managed by immigrants from the East themselves and persons of Russian origin. Activity in Plock is not easy due to the small scale of migration to the city, the illegal migration (immigrants are suspicious) and diversity of the groups of foreigners, which came to the city in various time periods. However, a greater number of various initiatives, with more active support of the city authorities, could make the immigrants noticeable as one of the groups of inhabitants having specific needs in terms of social support.

The Ministry of Economy, Labor and Social Policy aims at securing the position of NGOs as an integral element of the new child and family care system. Consequently, government policies are geared toward developing local community-based infrastructure to support families in the proper discharge of their responsibilities for children. The center provides the child with round-the-clock permanent or temporary care and also secures the necessary livelihood, developmental needs of the child.

The City Social Housing Societies are social developers appointed by the local authorities. Their work is focused mainly on construction and renting houses for the purpose of implementation of the housing policy of the commune. The CSHS of Plock is the largest company of this kind in Mazowsze and one of the largest in the country. The CSHS offer is addressed to the less affluent inhabitants, who cannot afford to purchase or rent an apartment on the free market. The flats are rented to those who participated in the costs of construction. As they remain the property of the city, they cannot be purchased, but the tenancy rights can be inherited.

External financial support given by the European Union

European Funds are one of the major drivers of both infrastructural and social development in Poland nowadays. Active labor market policies as well as life long learning activities are one of the important areas supported by European Social Fund. Therefore, it's not surprising that the financial support given by the European Union, especially in the frame of the ESF and The European Fund for the Integration of Third-country Nationals is the important factor in the context of sustainability of discussed local initiatives. For example, in case of mentioned TSOs helping immigrants, applying for EU funds is crucial for their projects, as they receive irregular and partial support from the city. Resources of the European Fund for Integration of Citizens of Third Countries allowed for intensification of activities aimed at integration.

Due to lack of a clear integration policy in Poland and existing restrictions on social assistance available for immigrants, the Fund actually replaced the state activity in this regard. Similarly, the support for social cooperatives is possible thanks to the projects realized by Labor Office and based on ESF money. However, there is a risk, that the initiatives based mostly on these funds may lose sustainability in future programming periods when the European Commission introduces some changes in the structure of the EU funds. On the other hand, in Plock, the EU money support the great majority of the

activities against unemployment implemented by local welfare institutions (such as The Labor Office), TSOs and private entities, which usually offer trainings and courses for various categories of unemployed.

Concluding, building participatory democracy in Plock takes place even it faces some problems. Creation of third sector organizations often based on individual initiative as well as building cooperation among different local actors facilitates social cohesion of the local community. These types of activities are significant because of low trust to government and its agencies in Poland (WVS 2012 unpublished) and historically proven belief, that citizens are the most successful if take their problems in their own hands. The last decade shows that the governmental agencies responsible for social policy are increasingly understanding (with a support of European Commission) that it is a way to identify important problems in the city and way to meet needs of different social groups. Like in many other countries, commercialization of services take place, which may polarize the local communities, dividing it according to income and type of social networks which different groups have at their disposal.

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