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TRADE AS A SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTOR OF TOWN DEVELOPMENT. A DYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE EXAMPLE OF LESZNO

The aim of this study is to determine the current role of trade as a town developing factor. The analysis was made on the example of a middle-size town - Leszno. During only the last few years a lot of have taken place in Leszno concerning the quality and quantity of trade as well as location of it in the town space. This study contains the analysis and assessment of changes in Leszno retail trade in the years 2010-2012. The survey was the basis for the assessment of the town prestige as a sub-regional trade centre, appraisal of the trade system, the arrangement of trade points in the town, the appeal of the town and its centre as a result of building new shopping malls.

Keywords: retail trade, town, socio-economic development.

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INTRODUCTION

Leszno is a middle-sized town in southern *Wielkopolska* with a population of more than 64,000 people (recorded-in 2012). Located very favourably, almost halfway between two metropolises – Wrocław (95 km away) and Poznań (80 km away), it plays very important roles as a sub-regional centre (administrative, commercial, service – oriented, economic, communications hub). Leszno is the most important element in the settlement system in this part of the region. Services prevail in the functional structure of the town (about 65% of all employed), with intangible services dominating (36%). A prevailing economic sector in Leszno contains services, trade and repairs which comprise of about 80% of all economic entities. Retail trade operators alone form 22.5% of all entities in Leszno.

The aim of this study is to determine the current role of trade as a town developing factor. In Leszno, the object of the research, a lot of qualitative and quantitative changes in trade and its relocations in the town space took place in the last few years. The analysis and assessment of changes in retail trade in Leszno in the years 2010-2012 have been carried out. On the basis of the survey the following has been determined: the rank of the town as a subregional trade centre; the assessment of trade base and location of trade objects in the town; the attractiveness of the town and its centre as a result of the establishment of new shopping galleries. For the purpose of the analysis two anonymous surveys have been created and carried out among active adult consumers. The first was completed at the beginning of July 2010 and the other within April and May 2012. Both surveys took place in Leszno, and 501 and 1,002 adults were questioned respectively.

FUNCTIONS OF TRADE AS A TOWN DEVELOPING FACTOR

Trade has always been playing an important role in towns' development. For economy trade is one of the most important elements determining the efficiency of the production sphere, as well as fulfilling people's needs. Trade plays a significant town-creating role. That means that trade can directly or indirectly effect the formation of the majority of living functions in towns, which in turn influence its general development and competitiveness as a centre in the settlement system or even in the whole country. The thesis on town-creating function of trade has been alleged by various researchers saying that trade is one of the more important factors determining town development¹. Although trade can exist without a town (e.g. e-business), a town (and especially its population and economy) cannot exist without trade. Town development is the result of the provision of goods and services to the surrounding areas. Currently, despite dramatically changing conditions, trade remains one of the most important factors conditioning regular development of a town.

¹ See J. Mikołajczyk, *Ocena poziomu rozwoju handlu detalicznego w Lesznie*, Zeszyty Naukowe, Wyższa Szkoła Handlu i Usług w Poznaniu, Nr 15 / 2008; A. Grzesiuk, *Handel detaliczny jako pracodawca we współczesnej gospodarce*, Poznań 2010.

Trade in its broad sense plays numerous and various significant roles in the accomplishment of town development aims and in its spatial organization. We can divide them into four groups which are:

- I. A group of **generally developing functions of the town**
- II. A group of **economic functions of the town**
- III. A group of **town space organizing functions**
- IV. A group of **social functions**.

Groups of functions and particular functions should not be treated separately. All of them intervene directly or indirectly creating a context of interdependences.

In the group of **generally developing functions of the town (I)** the basic roles are played by:

- **central functions**, according to the Christaller's central place theory, decide on the rank of a town in the hierarchy of settlement system. Functions of this kind relate to the activities of more than local importance, i.e. their range exceeds the area of the town itself. Retail trade is one example of central functions. If its range is wide, then such a town is an attractive and competitive centre as far as its offer and its uniqueness is concerned. Central functions are connected with concentration of trade with goods available in towns of higher rank. As a result of performing central functions a town creates economic and socio-cultural ties within the area of its influence.

- **function of creation of living standards** - level at which trade is functioning significantly influences living standards in a town. These, in turn, depend on trade infrastructure, its condition, spatial arrangement, diversity in shop sizes and kinds, operating forms and rules. Trade infrastructure provides conditions for the rise of living standards in towns. That is why the right location of trade points in town space is crucial. It determines the availability of trade services, enables fulfilment of consumers' needs - dependent on their income, preferences, time allowed for shopping, and so forth.

In the group of **economic functions (II)** the following should be mentioned:

- **function of creating business environment** - economic ties in retail trade make simultaneously an area of trade cooperation with other economic entities. Every stage, from planning through construction to trade point operation, creates a demand for goods and services supplied by other economic entities. Among local enterprises, the benefactors of a planned trade point are real estate agents, solicitors, land surveyors, or

architects. The construction stage or modernization of trade point bring benefits to construction companies, building materials suppliers, media providers (e.g. power, gas, water), and shop facilities providers. In the course of their operation, trading points cooperate with goods producers and suppliers, service providers (e.g. cleaning, advertising, security, repairs, telecommunications, and media), municipal services (garbage disposal, sewage, power plants) as well as the local transport system.

- **consumer function** - that is, the middleman in goods exchange, which stems from the core of retail trade which is a professional exchange service. Retail trade is the last element joining a producer with a consumer in the distribution chain. Market rules of trade development divide the consumer market into segments. This division is extensive especially in big towns where there is a wide range of offers. That in turn, enables a natural division of the market into supporters of various trade forms.

- **employer function** - having a significant and growing share in jobs provision. At the same time the number of employees in trade and services reflects the state of the economy. Growing demand for goods and services generates growth in employment and enhances the role of trade in employment. The influence of trade on the labour market is reflected by new jobs but also in creating demand for new professional skills connected with the development of this sector and innovations of products, sales and marketing.

- **income function** - has an important share in creating town revenues. These revenues can be divided into a) direct incomes to the town budget from property tax, perpetual usufruct (public ground lease) payments and market fees; b) indirect incomes from taxes charged on trade as business activity in the form of a share in corporate income tax (CIT) or personal income tax (PIT); c) incomes from sale or lease of the grounds and lease of the municipal real estate for trade activities.

The third group of **town space organizing functions (III)** consists of **architectural and urban functions**. They both determine the appearance and aesthetics of a town, its spatial structure and spatial order. Trade through its architectural forms may determine the spatial order or chaos in the town and beauty or ugliness of its landscape. Thus it can 'improve' or 'spoil' the town's appearance. Additionally, the introduction of a new trade object to a town is not only a construction of the object itself but often also of a whole infrastructure in the surroundings. Furthermore, the arrangement of trade points constitutes the urban and functional structure of a town.

Retail trade is inevitably connected with social life. In this context the group of **social functions (IV)** contains:

- **cultural function**- shaping ways of spending free time and leisure, and fulfilling the needs connected with them. Development of new retail forms, mainly LFOs² and shopping galleries involves redefining of the function of a shopping centre. Its main trading function is enriched with cultural and entertainment offers, such as multi-screens, theatres, clubs, concert stages, fitness clubs, bowling alleys and sometimes even places of worship (e.g. chapels). The growing popularity of trade and service centres comes not only from a wide range of goods. This success would be due to a shortage of public space in towns. This shortage or even lack of such places is successfully compensated for by shopping centres. In peak periods of customers visits, shopping centres organise numerous mainly commercial events like promotions, fashion shows, concerts, and competitions. Thus, trade centres are filling in for public space and becoming attractive free time and leisure destinations.

- **integrating function** - reflected in bringing life of the local population together. Originally this function was played by local markets, market squares, or local shops. In a way, current shopping centres took over the role of these places which were used not only for trading but also for meeting, passing on information or spending free time. In bigger towns, the integrating function is performed by shopping centres - by offering services of high quality.

RETAIL TRADE IN LESZNO - QUANTITATIVE, STRUCTURAL AND SPATIAL ASSESSMENT

In Leszno in 2010 there were 265 large and medium-sized shops (with over 9 employees) with 49,923 m² of total sales floor, which employed 1,473 workers. This means that the number of shopping points and sales floor have increased slightly in the last few years. Employment, on the other hand, decreased although until 2008 it was steadily growing (tab. 1).

These figures must be completed by the most numerous group of 770 small shops, which totals to overall number of 1,000 shops in the

² In this article LFO means shopping centres of more than 400m² of sales floor (Large Sales Floor Object /Retail Unit).

Table. 1. Retail shops in Leszno

Years:	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number of shops:	248	242	258	253	265
Employment:	1 396	1 440	1 590	1 507	1 473
Sales floor [in m ²]:	44 177	42 160	49 332	48 997	49 923

Source: Town Office in Leszno data

town³. Between 1999 – 2008 the total number of shops in Leszno fluctuated between 1000 to 1100 with a peak in 2004 followed by slow but steady decline. In years 2004–2008 the number of trade points dropped by 85 or 7.6% since 2004.

The range of Leszno shops is quite stable. Lack of dramatic changes in trade structure may prove that the range of shops accommodates the customers' needs. The majority of shops are the so-called "other", and their number has grown to 67 in recent years. These are rather small, common shops offering food and everyday goods. The least numerous are furniture shops, shops which sell lights, TV and sound systems, domestic appliances, and bookshops with stationery (tab. 2).

A shop floor is not related to the number of shops and depends on the traded goods (see tab. 2 and 3). Therefore, the biggest furniture shops or vision, sound and domestic appliances shops in Leszno have an average sales floor of 150 m² and 136 m² respectively. The smallest sales floors are required by cake shops, bakeries, meat and fish shops (on average 15 – 18 m² of shop floor)

In order to appraise the development of retail trade in Leszno, typical measures should be taken into consideration: density of shop network (number of shops per 1,000 citizens) and number of citizens per one shop. The number of shops per 1,000 citizens is remarkably high in Leszno and comes to 16. That means the density of shop network there is by about 20% higher than in many medium size towns in Poland. The indicator for Poland is 10.3 shops per 1,000 citizens (but it also encompasses vil-

³ Since there is not enough information about all the shops after year 2008, the record of all quantitative and structural changes in Leszno trade is impossible. This analysis is restricted only to the group of shops with over 9 employees. There are approximately 770 small shops left off the analysis as they do not figure in the official statistics. This fact undoubtedly limits the analysis and hinders full conclusions.

Table 2. Shops in Leszno by groups of goods
(economic entities employing over 9 people)

Specification	Number of shops		
	2006	2008	2010
Grocery, fruit and vegetables	46	39	35
Meat and fish	40	39	34
Cake and bakery	35	24	34
Alcohol, cosmetics, textiles	8	13	13
Clothing	14	23	28
Shoes and leather goods	7	11	12
Furniture and lighting	6	6	5
Vision, sound and household appliances	8	11	7
Books and stationery	4	3	6
Motor vehicles	14	12	11
Petrol stations	13	13	13
Other shops	53	64	67
Total	248	258	265

Source: Town Office in Leszno data

lages). The higher indicator means not only higher a density of shop network but also more fragmentation. Large fragmentation of shop networks is not a positive phenomenon, and according to the market logic it signals the need for consolidation. From the customer's point of view, consolidation means shopping in better conditions and in a larger space. For a town it may mean trade entities leaving small shops or adapting premises and joining them into bigger shops. This is a manifestation of the expansion of new forms of sales over the traditional trade. As far as town space is concerned, this may lead to changes in the town space organization and to building modern looking shopping centres located in central parts of towns.

To get the complete picture, it is worth adding that the number and percentage of LFOs among all trading points is a good measurement of the qualitative and quantitative development of a shop network. Until 2009 there were 44 LFOs in Leszno. They were mainly discount shops and su-

Table. 3. Sales floor in shops in Leszno by groups of goods
(economic entities employing over 9 people)

Specification	Sales floor in m ²		
	2006	2008	2010
Grocery, fruit and vegetables	16 099	15 588	16 506
Meat and fish	1 982	1 921	1 841
Cake and bakery	1 035	798	1 222
Alcohol, cosmetics, textiles	666	1 200	1 670
Clothing	1 832	4 714	3 704
Shoes and leather goods	822	954	1 204
Furniture and lighting	2 206	1 779	2 857
Vision, sound and household appliances	3 172	3 800	2 306
Books and stationery	279	205	223
Motor vehicles	3 462	2 397	2 545
Other shops	12 622	15 976	15 845
Total	44 177	49 332	49 923

Source: Town Office in Leszno data

permarkets. The average sales floor in those objects was almost 1,400 m² per shop. The cumulative area of all such shops in the town was about 60,000 m², they provided over half the sales floor space in Leszno.

Only 4 large shops had sales floor bigger than 2,000 m² (i.e. from 4,300 m² to 11,000 m²). Apart from these, in 14 objects the shopping floor space ranged from 1,000 to 2,000 m². Their distribution is not regular, most of them being in the centre (Starówka) and in the eastern part of the town (Przylesie). In general, spatial arrangement of LFOs is parallel to the north-south town axis and shows that trade corresponds with the customers' living space. One of the conditions for establishing trade is the areas where there is demand for new lines of commerce. An exception to this rule are Zatorze and Zatorze Pd. - the town districts lacking bigger shops (apart from one quite small shopping centre CH "Zatorze"). The location of LFOs in Leszno is depicted in fig. 1.

Until 2009 there were 3 shopping centres in Leszno: Manhattan, Nasze Leszno and Zatorze with a sales floor of about 17,500 m². This meant there

were 270 m² of sales floor space per 1,000 citizens, which left large development potential for further retail units of this kind. The situation changed markedly in 2011 when two modern shopping centres opened: Tesco *extra* + OBI and Galeria Leszno, the latter being a real modern shopping gallery of the 3rd generation⁴. From then onwards the sales floor in LFOs expanded by about 40,000 m² to 57,000 m². Thus, the index has grown to almost 900 m² per 1,000 citizens, which may suggest a high level of saturation with trading space in big objects.

Considering only the modern sales floor in Leszno, we can assume that shopping space amounts to around 56,000m². The saturation indicator for sales floors in Leszno in general is 860 m²/1,000 citizens. It is a high figure and in comparison to big nearby cities: Poznań (984 m²/1,000 citizens) and Wrocław (863 m²/1,000 citizens), Leszno is in the forefront in Poland. That means the market saturation with LFOs is already high in Leszno.

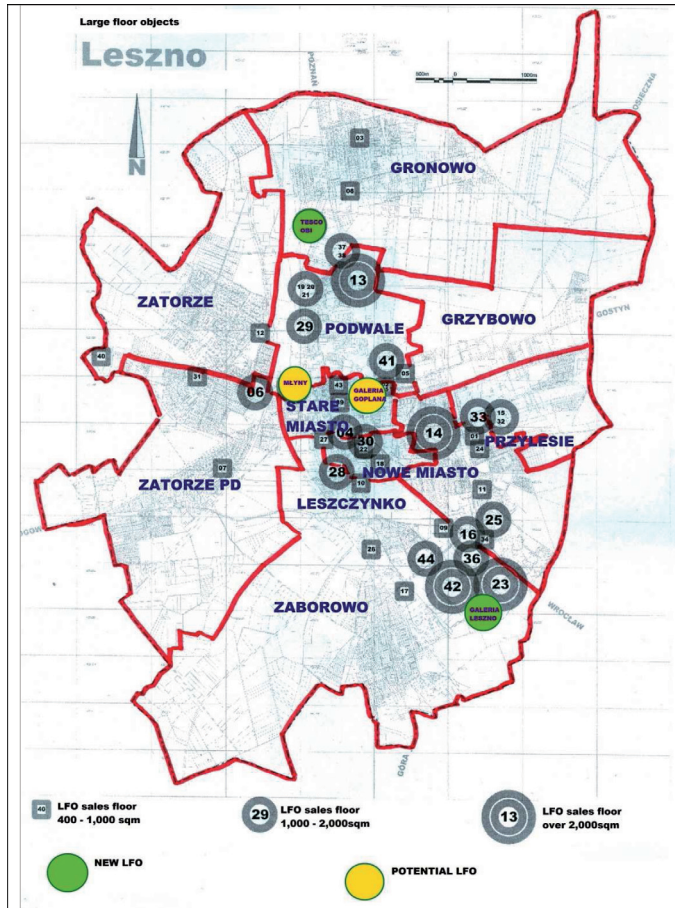
The comparison of Leszno with towns of similar size is also interesting (see fig. 2). There the index of figures is very wide. In Opole it is 1,050 but only 350 in Włocławek and Olsztyn. So the amount of sales floor in some middle size towns is still quite low. Leszno can again be considered a leader compared to towns in this group.

It can be said therefore that the sales floor saturation in Leszno is already high. The level is high also in relation to abilities and purchasing power of the participants of the local market being the administrative area of the town. However, if we take into account the scope of influence of modern large floor trade forms, which ranges from 20 to 50 km, the above figures should be reconsidered. The potential number of customers in the catchman area of LFO rises to 400,000 people (64,000 citizens of Leszno, 50,000 powiat⁵ *leszczyński*, and 270,000 in the following powiats: *rawicki*, *gostyński*, *kościański*, and *wolsztyński* together with *gmina Góra*). In this context the estimated indicator under the investigation falls to 150 m²/1,000 citizens.

⁴ Nowadays the most popular form of trade organization in cities and middle-sized towns are shopping centres. The basis for such objects are large stores like supermarkets or hypermarkets selling FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods). According to DTZ Research, *Rynek centrów handlowych w miastach średniej wielkości*, 2009, shopping centres of the 3rd generation have a bigger shopping gallery (over 70% of the centre) and cultural and entertainment venues (e.g. multi-screens, disco, fitness club, bowling alley) and a much smaller share of groceries.

⁵ Powiat is an administrative unit smaller than voivodship.

Figure 1. Location of LFO in Leszno [recorded in 2012]



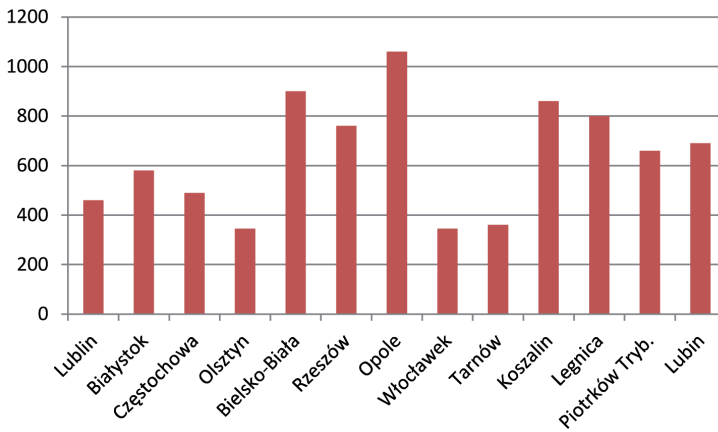
Source: own study based on Town Office in Leszno data

Similar estimations for the largest Polish agglomerations clearly verify the degree of sales floor saturation in these cities to half their level (see fig. 3).

On the basis of the above analysis and considerations, Leszno authorities raise a question: how many more modern large sales floor retail units should there be built? The question is particularly relevant at the moment when a new shopping centre: Galeria Goplana, is going to be built in the city centre in the near future.

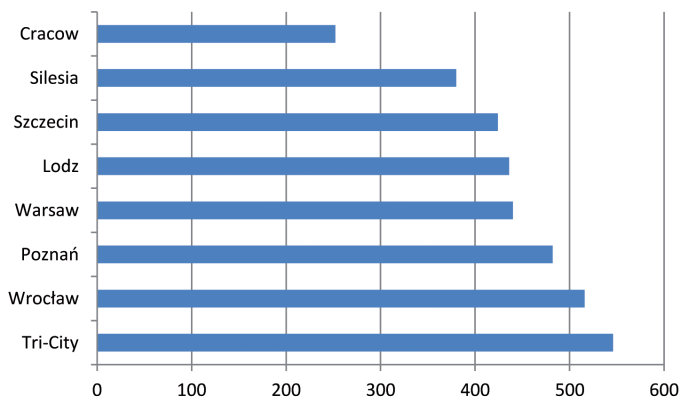
The development of the shop network in a town cannot be determined by mathematical calculations and indicators of shop numbers or sales

Figure 2. Saturation of market in selected middle size towns in Poland
(in m²/1000 inhabitants) [2009]



Source: Colliers International, *Przegląd rynku nieruchomości*, 2010.

Figure 3. Saturation with sales floor in selected Polish agglomerations
[recorded in 1st quarter 2012]



Source: Commercial Real Estate Services, *Polska Raport 2012*

floor per citizen. The same should be said with regard to estimation of purchasing power of the customers or shop turnovers. There are no normative indicators influencing decisions for new locations. Trade is one of the branches where the choice of shopping destinations has no limitations. So it is basically unconstrained. The citizens of Leszno and its surroundings may unrestrictedly choose their shopping destinations; their decisions are difficult to predict explicitly in a free market environment.

LESZNO AS A SUBREGIONAL TRADE CENTRE

According to the above-mentioned considerations, it can be said that trade in Leszno is well-developed. There is a high percentage of employed, a big number of trade entities in the branch, as well as numerous shopping objects, including two of the latest generation opened in 2011. At the same time trade plays vital developing functions for towns: economic, social, cultural, as well as architectural and town-space organising. With regard to the area of influence of Leszno trade and the inertia of this system in time, it is true that Leszno is the trade hub in the subregion. One could ask if Leszno inhabitants are aware of that and how their awareness changed in 2012 compared with the data from 2010. On the question asked in 2010: 'Is Leszno the trading centre of subregion?' only 43.7% of citizens answered affirmatively. On the other hand, 32.5% gave a negative answer. After only two years citizens' opinion radically changed, and as many as 77.4% of the surveyed see Leszno as a trade hub for the subregion, while only 5.2% answers were negative. The number of people who could not give a definite answer fell by 6.4% in these two years (see tab. 4).

Table 4. Leszno as a subregional trade centre

Leszno as a subregional trade centre / year	2010	2012
definitely YES	10.4%	26.8%
rather YES	33.3%	50.6%
difficult to say	23.8%	17.4%
rather NO	25.3%	4.7%
definitely NO	7.2%	0.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Source: own study

This indicates that the changes which had taken place in Leszno retail trade was apparent to a large proportion of local citizens and played a positive part in their perception of the town's role and development of the town's trading function. The results of the survey confirm tendencies perceived by R. Cichocki, P. Cichocki and P. Jakubowski⁶, regarding the ways

⁶ Cichocki, Ryszard, Cichocki, Piotr, Jakubowski Piotr, *Życie w Lesznie*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań, 2010.

and directions of changes in Leszno's development over the last 10 years. The authors realized the continuously growing significance of the town as a trade centre (measured by the rank and respondents' indications). They also emphasized the inhabitants' support for three prior directions of the town development: industry, economy and trade. Such a visible change of the town's image and of the citizens' perception of the change resulted not only from changes within the town economy, but also from changes in its environment. After the administrative reform (in 1999) the town was downgraded from the capital of the voivodship to the seat of powiat. Nevertheless, the town retained its position as an important economic centre – a town with large cumulated assets. These include a developed and modernised road infrastructure, modern municipal infrastructure, environment protection infrastructure, and a smooth operating public transportation system. Over the last few years, the lagging trade structure went through changes. The old trade system based on small private shops was well developed or rather overdeveloped in the town; if sustained it could have become a developmental barrier for the town. The survey results reflect the customers' positive attitude towards the change of directions in the trade structure including the introduction of modern trade. Further stimulation of trade development in the town lies is dependent on the transport infrastructure (i.e. public roads and railways) which has been thoroughly modernized in the recent years.

The grade of changes in people's perception of Leszno as a trade centre at the subregional level is depicted by a weighted arithmetic mean of the answers (strong positive answer = 5 points, strong negative = 1 point). The weighted arithmetic mean for the year 2012 was as high as 3.99 and exceeded the result from 2010 by 0.85 points. This shows a significant growth in positive attitude of the community regarding Leszno's rank as a subregional centre. This outcome displays a positive feedback by the inhabitants towards the new LFOs in town, which started operating in 2011. In 2012 only 1 in 20 inhabitants was sceptical about the subregional role of Leszno as a trade centre.

All the above results show how dramatically social phenomena are changing. They stem from the significant change in the trade system in Leszno which took place in the last few years. The introduction of modern commercial venues such as shopping and service centres, shopping galleries, triggered changes in perception of the town's character. Comparing the survey results from 2012 with those received two years earlier one can definitely notice the enhancement of Leszno as a trade centre also in the

context of the subregion. This means that for the majority of respondents Leszno has become such an attractive trade centre and has strengthened the hold on its ranking that it can become a major attraction for the inhabitants of the former *leszczyńskie* voivodship.

CHANGE IN THE APPRAISAL OF COMMERCIAL VENUES IN LESZNO (2010-2012)

Assessing commercial venues, the majority of Leszno citizens claimed that they were sufficient or useful (82.3% of answers in 2010 and in 2012, 94.4%). The most striking aspect is the rise of the highest marks (sufficient) - in two years the percentage grew by 15.3 points. At the same time the number of answers "not very useful" fell significantly - by 11.6% points. This means that Leszno's population uses the existing shopping offers although it does not always fulfil all their needs. Those who viewed the Leszno trade base as "useless" were marginal.

Table 5. Appraisal of usefulness of the existing trade base in Leszno

Appraisal of the existing trade base in Leszno / year	2010	2012
Sufficient	22.4%	37.7%
useful but not sufficient	59.9%	56.7%
not very useful	16.6%	5.0%
useless	1.2%	0.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Source: own study

The evaluation of Leszno in a thorough analysis of its trade system⁷ indicates that the town is approaching a balanced state with the prevailing feeling that the consumers' quantitative needs are met. 53.5% of respondents in 2012 expressed the opinion that there were enough or just enough commercial locations in the town (tab. 6). That in turn is accompanied by

⁷ For this part of the analysis the question was the following: "do you think that the existing trade base in Leszno is sufficient?"

the feeling that the qualitative needs are somehow met (44.9% of respondents see the diversity of the Leszno system of trade). However the situation is not an ideal one – some sophisticated needs for high-end shopping are not fulfilled (only 22.4% confirmed such exclusivity of the commercial trade in Leszno). This suggests the need for the introduction of some niche exclusive trade in Leszno.

Table 6. Multifactor characteristics of trade base in Leszno in years 2010-2012

1) not enough vs. enough - in numbers	definitely insufficient	rather insufficient	difficult to say	quite sufficient	definitely sufficient
2010	9.6%	28.3%	28.3%	21.8%	12.0%
2012	2.4%	21.0%	23.2%	29.7%	23.8%
2) poor vs. diversified - in quality	definitely poor	rather poor	difficult to say	quite diversified	definitely diversified
2010	13.0%	30.7%	32.5%	17.8%	6.0%
2012	3.0%	19.2%	32.9%	33.0%	11.9%
3) common vs. exclusive	definitely common	rather common	difficult to say	quite exclusive	definitely exclusive
2010	18.2%	34.7%	37.5%	7.6%	2.0%
2012	11.9%	23.8%	42.0%	17.7%	4.7%

Source: own study

For a more lucid picture of citizens' responses, the results were standardized in order to get a calibrated mark on a scale from -2 to +2. The calculated parameter was called "the indicator of community feelings"⁸. The following results were obtained:

- in terms of quantitative saturation of the trade base, in 2010, -0.02; in 2012, +0.52 – significant growth (of 0.54 points).
- in terms of qualitative diversification of the trade base, in 2010, -0.27; in 2012, an increase to +0.32. This was the most dynamic growth in assessment among the three investigated categories (a difference of 0.59 points).

⁸ The indicator of community feelings was introduced to show vividly the attitude of Leszno citizens; people evaluated phenomena in a polarized way: "cold-hot" within the scope [-2 - +2]; where -2 means a very negative attitude (feelings), 0-neutral attitude or no opinion and +2-very positive.

- in terms of exclusiveness of trade offer, in 2010, -0.63; in 2012, -0.21. In spite of a distinct growth, there is still an insufficient level of trade exclusiveness in Leszno (in other words, the shopping offer is still perceived as generally common or standard).

A general assessment of changes in trade in Leszno was positive or definitely positive. Such opinion was expressed by 80.4% of respondents. Less than 4% of people had a negative attitude towards the changes in Leszno trade (see tab. 7.). The ratio of positive answers against negative ones (about 22:1) shows explicitly the positive feedback towards the changes which has taken place in Leszno in the years 2010-2012. It reflects the degree of community approval of the observed phenomenon. The implied indicator of community feelings reached +0.91, also confirming this positive trend.

Table 7. General assessment of changes in Leszno trade and qualitative changes in the trade base

Comparison 2012 vs. 2010	definitely improved	rather improved	difficult to say	rather worse	definitely worse
assessment of changes in Leszno trade	14.8%	65.6%	16.0%	3.2%	0.5%
qualitative changes in Leszno trade base	18.1%	65.7%	15.0%	1.1%	0.2%

Source: own study

An even higher note was given to qualitative changes taking place in Leszno trade. 83.8% of respondents assessed them rather positively (i.e. as improvement of the trade system), while negative opinion was expressed by only 1.3% of respondents. And the ratio of supporters of change against the sceptics was 64:1. In this case, the indicator of community feelings went up to +1.00, which clearly shows positive feelings of the population.

CHANGES IN SHOPPING MIGRATION IN LESZNO

An important issue in this research was to find out if Leszno inhabitants go to shops solely in their town or if they visit other cities in order to do shopping. Equally important was to examine changes in this behaviour in the questioned period.

Over 62% of Leszno's population utilizes the commercial opportunities of places outside the town. During the two year range of the survey however, the percentage of Leszno inhabitants shopping outside the town dropped as much as 8.98 points, or 6,000 people. Thus, the number of people shopping solely in their town is growing, simultaneously strengthening the town's position on the trading map of the subregion. The increase of people shopping in the town helps to prevent the outflow of resources to other, bigger cities.

Tab. 8. Leszno citizens' preferred shopping destination – general profile

Shopping only in Leszno or also outside the town?		
Year of the survey:	only Leszno	also outside Leszno
2010	28.54%	71.46%
2012	37.52%	62.48%

Source: own study

Leszno citizens who decide to shop outside their town usually and most often go to Poznań (65.1% and 69.9% in 2010 and 2012 respectively), much less often to Wrocław (around 25% of responses). Some respondents (down from 10% to 5.5% in the questioned years) pointed to shopping in other, usually neighbouring powiat towns.

The most important observation is the fact that frequency of trips to other towns or cities in order to do shopping is falling. This conclusion has been drawn from two factors:

- a. the share of people leaving town for shopping at least once a month is going down (a drop from 65.5% in 2010 to 56.1% in 2012);
- b. the share of inhabitants shopping outside their town less often than monthly is rising – a growth by 8.4% in the years 2010 – 2012 (equal to about 3,500 people).

It has become clear that regardless of the significant drop, about 35% of the Leszno population still supplement the shopping offers in town with those in bigger cities (mainly Poznań and Wrocław) at least once a month. Further 27.5% of the total population leaves the town for shopping less often than once a month.

The observed phenomena and tendencies should be treated as positive from the town's point of view. They show that customers are more and

more satisfied with and accept the trade system in the town and its offer. Concluding, the results prove that the population appreciates the changes taking place in the local trade.

SUMMARY

1. On the basis of the conducted research the following conclusions can be drawn:

2. The town of Leszno is evidently perceived as a subregional trade centre with the area of influence more or less that of the former *leszczyńskie* voivodship. This coverage area is populated by about 350,000 – 400,000 inhabitants of Leszno itself and its surroundings. The image of the town as a subregional trade centre was further enhanced in the last two years, which was due to the launch of two big and modern shopping centres.

3. After the two new shopping centres started up in 2011 approximately 6,000-7,000 citizens refrained from going shopping in other cities. It results from the upgrading of attractiveness of the trade sector in Leszno and growing satisfaction of customers. Nowadays 62.5% of Leszno inhabitants go shopping outside of their town, though they do this less often.

4. Changes taking place in Leszno trade in the last two years have been evaluated by the respondents as positive. What especially is worth noticing is that:

- 80% of respondents appraised the changes in trade base in Leszno as positive or definitely positive;
- 83.8% of the polled spotted qualitative improvement of trade system;
- 60.4% of the answers confirmed that the size and kind of the objects realised at that time were appropriate.
- 70.9% of respondents evaluate LFOs as adequately suited to the town size.

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