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**WHO IS ABOUT TO ACCEPT THE SURFACE MINE?
SOCIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PROJECT
OF ENERGETIC COMPLEX GUBIN-BRODY**

Introduction

This paper refers to the plans of an opening of a new surface mine and power plant based on the resources of the Gubin lignite deposit in Lubuskie province. This is an investment which social reception is very controversial and is an interesting laboratory of social relationships. It is an example of a situation rarely encountered in the Polish reality. The thematic of conflicts connected with infrastructural investments is not popular in social studies, and even less considering energy issues, particularly relating to conventional energy. The planned open-pit mine will affect an area of two communities – municipal Gubin and municipal Brody. The project is treated as a very important one for the Polish power system and has been taken into account in strategic documents of the Polish government and regional strategies (Naworyta 2011, Naworyta, Badera 2012). As almost every planned investment related to energy Gubin-Brody project generates social anxiety and unrest. Residents of the community are afraid of mine's negative impact on a daily life and health, and do not trust the solutions that are applied in the process of investment. The most important part of any investment process is to obtain social acceptance of residents of the investment area. This consent sometimes turns out to be the greatest value of the investment location (see also Kasztelewicz, Klich 2008). This acceptance can also be treated as a barometer of trust of both involved in the investment: residents, and the entire energy sector. Various subjects involved in investing procedure influence the local community wanting their members to get a support – either they want to force people to accept the investment or they try to create the conditions conducive to the resignation from the investor plans

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to build a mine. These actions are also relevant to other decisions of local authorities

The aim of this paper is to obtain empirical knowledge about the nature of the conflict situation related to the plans of building an energy complex Gubin-Brody with special emphasis on the perspective of its inhabitants. An important element of the analysis is therefore to learn what the inhabitants of Gubin and Brody think about many aspects of the planned investment, underlying diagnosis of the conflict situation in this regard is necessary. The author attempts to identify socio-demographic features of local community favoring social acceptance for the investment. In the analysis of the attitudes towards the investments an important aspect is also to determine whether the vision of building the mine becomes the factor dividing local communities mainly into opponents and supporters. The characteristic of supporters and opponents of energetic complex Gubin-Brody is presented in dynamic perspective. The intention of diagnosis may also become an indicator of public sentiment on issues of conventional energy in terms of local and regional character.

The author assumes that social attitudes towards the investment will crystallize over time. It is connected with the gradually increasing proportion of people declaring themselves as strongly for or strongly against the investment. At the same time it can be assumed that the actions of people with extreme views will be more visible in the community and they can decide on the formation of the conflict situation around the planned investment.

Conceptualizing social acceptance for open-lit lignite mine

The subject of this paper is located somewhere between sociology of conflict and sociology of energy. Maintaining a certain level of economic growth requires a continuous supply of energy. Polish security in this area is treated as a necessary condition for every sphere of economic and social life. Achieving a certain level of security in terms of energy supply is a challenge determined by many external circumstances and variables (mainly regulations at the European and global level). Existing coal mining, which is the main element of the Polish energy sector, will be soon limited due to resource exhaustion. Lignite and coal not only remain the cheapest source of energy, but they are also the only ones by which we, as a country, are self-sufficient in terms of energy (Kasztelewicz, Klich 2008, p. 99). Energy companies are looking more and more for new solutions and one of them is the idea of commissioning of the mine and coal-fired power plants in Lubuskie. Successful investment requires social acceptance.

Social acceptance is a term used frequently in the literature concerning energetic issues (Shackley et al. 2006, Beuermann, Santarius 2006). Definitions of social acceptance therefore distinguish three dimensions: socio-political acceptance, community acceptance and market acceptance (Wuestenhagen et al. 2007). In this paper the author concentrates on only one of those three dimensions – community acceptance. Community acceptance refers to the specific acceptance of siting decisions and energetic projects by local stakeholders, residents and local authorities. Defining the social conditions determines the success of an energetic project. Open-pit lignite mining covers large areas and usually generates social conflicts which can be treated as threats for energetic security (Frączek 2010). Problems with the social non-acceptance of the mining projects are a result of globalization, democratization and easier access to information. It enables the activity of many subjects, especially local communities, ecological organizations and independent media. Thus, local communities have been equipped with the instruments needed to fight unwelcome investments (Badera 2010). The legal regulations enable the community to express its opinions and remarks concerning the planned investments. Objections of the community may influence the local government's decision and even hold the procedure of investment. The development of energetic investment is possible only by obtaining a social acceptance to operate and mutually treating companies and local communities as partners (Esteves, Barclay 2011).

A particular feature of community acceptance is that it has a time dimension. As Maarten Wolsink (Wuestenhagen et al. 2007) demonstrates, the typical pattern of local acceptance for the energy project follows a U-curve in dynamic perspective. Initially it is going from high acceptance to (relatively) low acceptance, during the siting phase (usually still positive on average), and back up to a higher level of acceptance once a project is up and running.

Community acceptance issues create also the space where the debate around NIMBY syndrome¹ unfolds. There can arise some argumentation of the difference between general acceptance and then resistance to specific

¹The acronym NIMBY stands for “not in my backyard.” This term has been used to characterize local, grassroots movements that are endeavoring to resist the siting of some unwanted land use in a particular neighborhood or community. NIMBY movements have formed to oppose a wide array of undesirable entities that include environmental hazards (landfills, waste incinerators, polluting industries), perceived social hazards (homeless shelters, prisons, mental health facilities), and aesthetic offences (wind turbines, airports, cell phone towers). In this paper NIMBY syndrome is used to characterize social attitudes towards surface lignite mining project in Lubuskie province declared by opponents of the investment.

project. Investments concerning mine building are connected with significant environmental conversion, and that's why they usually do not receive social acceptance.

Developing of large-scale lignite excavation can often generate socio-environmental conflicts between mining-energetic companies and various stakeholders, such as local communities or ecological organizations. Lignite open-pit excavation involves the big area of land and the necessity to relocate the whole groups or communities. The other factor generating possible social conflict around investment is the perception of unfair outcomes (perceiving benefits for some sections of the community at the expense of others) which can result in protests, damaged relationships and divided communities. Social acceptance for investment can be achieved only through dialogue. Communication between stakeholders, planned and implemented in accordance with specific standards can prevent crisis situations (Badera, Kocoń 2014). The possible conflict around investment, which could be a positive force and development of a community, should be effectively moderated. Hence the study on the impact of conflicts on local development is so important.

The issue of social acceptance of energy investment is multi-factored, among the main reasons for the lack of social acceptance are imposing investment from a position of strength investor (economic, legal), ignorance of the technology by the public, skipping social fears and not taking them into account in decision-making, lack of benefits for local communities (Łucki, Misiak 2010).

Methodological background

The empirical base of analysis in this paper presents results of survey conducted from 2011 to 2015 with inhabitants of two Lubuskie municipals Gubin and Brody. For methodological reasons (the possibility of making equivalent comparisons) in the study there are implemented the same rules for the selection of units for testing. The selection of village was based on simple random sample. Sampling frame was a list of all the locations, arranged alphabetically (separately for the municipality of Gubin and Brody). The list prepared in such a way excluded settlements, hamlets and lodge. The decisive factor in the amount of random village was the size of municipalities. The respondents chose to the survey are 18 or more. With such a defined population, we had some people in a quota sample of 250 people which became the representation of the population. We have established that the essential things that to achieve the objectives of the study following characteristics: gender, age, and place of residence are controlled.

We used four age categories (18-24; 25-39; 40-59; 60+) and two residential categories (Gubin municipalities' inhabitants; Brody municipalities' inhabitants).

Attitudes towards investment

In fact, it is rare that the subject of social research were attitudes on the basis of which to diagnose potential conflict, at different moments of its occurrence. Typically, in the analysis of social conflicts they are analyzed retrospectively and during the analysis a certain strive to understand the already existing conflict appears. When we want to find motives of the conflict, we should remember that the motives are based on an important elements of the diagnosis, which are the attitudes and moods of local community.

Mahlon Brewster Smith in 1947 for the first time identified three essential components of social attitude: affective, cognitive and behavioral. In this paper the author uses this definition developed by Stefan Nowak (1973). Attitude to a subject is generally relatively stable disposition to assess the subject and to respond to it emotionally, we can also say that what possibly accompanies this attitude are the emotional evaluation dispositions of assets or beliefs about the nature and properties of the object, and the relatively stable dispositions to behave in a certain way towards this subject. At the same time the most important element of the attitude is an affective component (see also Marody 1976). There are several important elements that influence the affective component of attitudes (Wojciszke 2005). It can be considered the strength of the influence of classical conditioning. Multiple appearance (almost universal presence) of an idea of the investment (as a result of the activities carried out by all entities involved), which is not neutral because of the wide range of changes, evokes emotions in a certain direction. It can be also an operant conditioning connected with the appearance of strong positive or negative emotions when events related to the matter of attitude take place and emotions are the effect of persuasive campaigns. Shaping attitudes towards investment within their affective component is also the phenomenon of habituation. Habituation can be defined as "learning" the importance of investment. It has to do with the attitude that originally aroused strong concern and was automatically conducive to the emergence of negative emotions. Hence the analysis of component behavior is dynamic.

The main indicator which allows the author to interfere with social attitudes towards the planned investment is a question of social acceptance to it. In the analyzed study respondents answered the question of their acceptance for the Gubin-Brody investment, placing their opinions on the

scale running from point 1, meaning resolute opponents of the investment, to the point 10 – strong supporters of mine and power plant.

Tracking opinion changes in the long term perspective gives much more information and the ability to draw conclusions on the basis of long-term trends rather than individual swings in sentiment. For the purpose of analyzing ten-point scale has been recoded to five values.

Social situation in Gubin and Brody in connection with the planned construction of a lignite mining and power plant in this area is constantly changing. Social research carried out systematically has illustrated the increase in the level of social acceptance for investment plans.

Dynamic perspective shows increasing percentage of people who describe themselves as “resolute supporters” of the project of energetic complex. Such a conclusion is based on a comparison of completed survey data. Surveys conducted from 2011 illustrate upward trend (2011 – 26.2%, in October 2015 – 38.4%). This does not mean that any further survey brings higher proportion of responders in this way. It is rather some kind of a waving – once a small increase, sometimes a slight decrease in the percentage of resolute supporters. Presented attitudes are not well established and some circumstances or events can cause significant changes in the attitude towards investment.

Fairly stable (around 10%) is the level of respondents describing themselves as “moderate supporters” of the energetic complex, as well as those who declare that they are hesitates (about 20%). On the side of the opponents, stable level characterizes “moderate opponents”. Taking into account small changes in subsequent measurements (heave reviews) we can estimate their size at about 5%.

In the social environment related to the planned investment we can find many different social actors. These individuals may take different positions via energetic complex: they can support or oppose the project. They can also be varied in their level of involvement in the conflict, and its accession to it. More and more social actors notice the benefits mining investment can bring to them. This also applies to the organization of development-oriented areas of both municipalities, representatives of business and scientific institutions. Exceptions are ecological organizations, which type of attitude towards the investment is defined in sociological literature as BANANA syndrome (Built Absolutely Nothing, Anywhere Near Anything – “not build absolutely anything anywhere and close to nothing” – different type of NIMBY syndrome). It means dealing with a total disagreement and rejection of the plan for the development of conventional energy, and thus the planned investment.

Attitudes towards energetic investment are differentiated along with

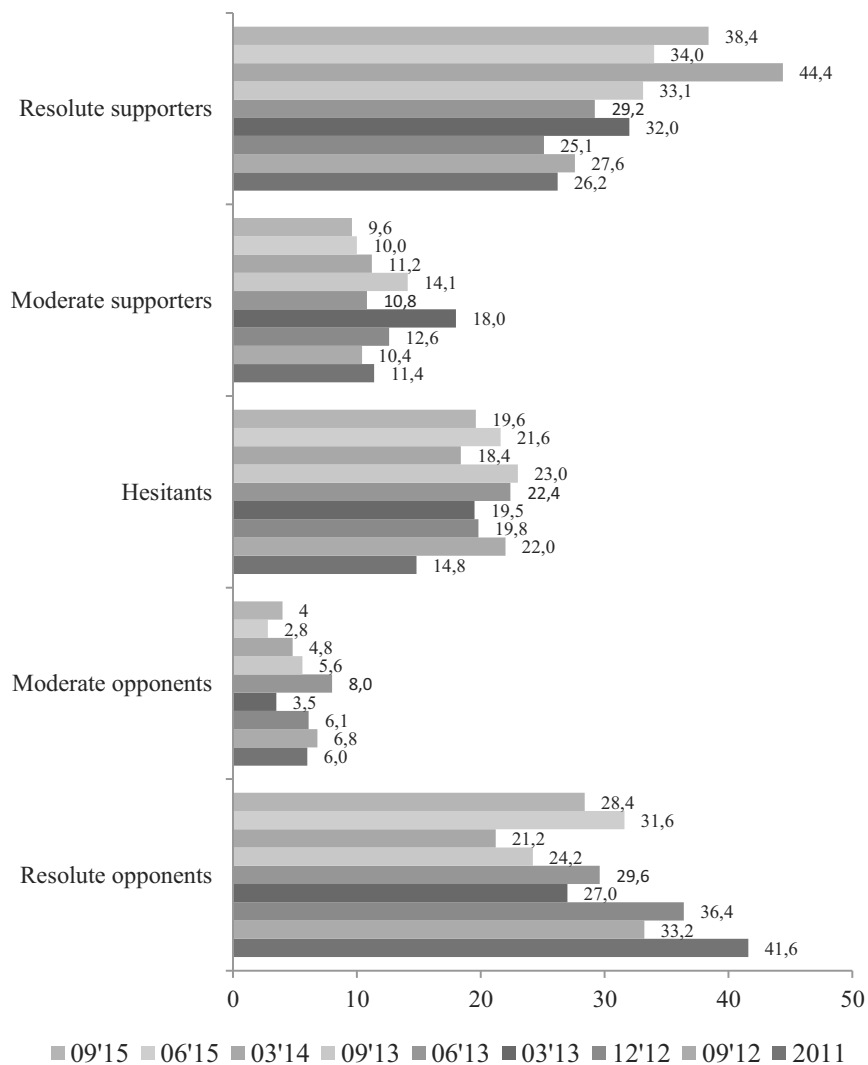


Figure 1. Social acceptance towards investment (%).

Source: author's own work.

socio-demographical characteristic of inhabitants of Gubin and Brody municipalities. The analysis shows who support the investment and who seems to be possibly convinced to it. Both municipalities have been dominated by supporters of the project of energetic complex. Data from the last survey (10'15) show that in the municipality of Gubin there are 17.2% more supporters, while in the municipality of Brody – 14.9% more. In Gubin the

gap between supporters and opponents in the last year was as a result of increasing the percentage of supporters (of 7.3%) and a parallel decrease in the percentage of opponents by 2.8%. In Brody the situation was slightly different – data show a decrease of the percentage of opponents by 2.1%, and parallel decrease of the percentage of supporters by 2.6%. Dependence between attitudes towards investment and municipal of residents are not statistically significant (exception – survey from September 2012).

The dynamic analysis shows that the attitude of the respondents living in areas of planned investment underwent major changes and were characterized by a transition from the prevailing attitudes against the investment to the higher percentage of supporters (opponents: 2012 – 61.2%, 10/2015 – 33.8%; supporters: 2012 – 27.8%, 10/2015 – 48.7%). The attitudes of the respondents living outside the planned investment did not show nearly as large changes (opponents: 2012 – 34.1%, 10/2015 – 31.0%; supporters: 2012 – 40.8%, 10/2015 – 47.6%). As a result of the observed flows and changes in attitudes towards the planned investment data are very similar in both areas. This dependence was statistically significant in December 2012, June 2013 and October 2013.

The other variable differentiating respondents' attitudes towards the planned investment is gender. In both categories of respondents, distinguished by gender, supporters of mine and power plant dominate (result represents the difference between supporters and opponents of women – 3.2%; men – 29.3%). It can therefore be concluded that women look more skeptically at the project of building energetic complex, while men are more likely to accommodate to it. This dependence is not statistically significant.

The age of respondents is not a factor that clearly indicates some regularity in the long term perspective, however there are some important conclusions. In each categories in the last survey (September 2015) supporters of investments dominate over the opponents: (18-24) – 12.2%; (25-39) – 6.7%; (40-59) – 25.6%; (60+) – 18.4%. There is also some specificity of the youngest residents (18-24). In dynamic analysis the percentage of opponents clearly increased (2013 – 26.8%; 09/2015 – 39.0%) and the percentage of supporters decreased (2013 – 56.1%; 09/2015 – 51.2%). It is also a category of those who have the most polarized opinions – only 9.8% of them qualify as neither supporters nor opponents. Domination of investment's supporters is more noticeable among the elderly residents over 40 years old. This relationship was statistically significant from June 2013 to June 2015.

Table 1

Attitudes towards investment and municipal of residents (%)

	Gubin						Brody									
	9'12	12'12	3'13	6'13	10'13	3'14	6'15	10'15	9'12	12'12	3'13	6'13	10'13	3'14	6'15	10'15
Opponents	40.1	47.4	32.6	29.8	26.1	29.1	35.3	32.5	39.3	29.9	24.7	53.5	37.3	20.5	32	29.9
Hesitants	26.0	20.9	21.3	24.8	24.2	18.2	22.3	17.8	15.5	16.4	13.7	17.4	19.3	18.5	20.6	25.3
Supporters	33.9	31.6	46.1	45.3	49.7	52.7	42.4	49.7	45.2	53.8	61.6	29.1	43.4	55.2	47.4	44.8

Source: author's own analysis.

Table 2

Chi-square indicator statistics

	Value	df	Significance	Value	df	Significance
9'12	13.280	2	0.001	10'13	0.027	2
12'12	2.274	2	0.321	3'14	1.726	2
3'13	1.300	2	0.522	6'15	0.497	2
6'13	4.058	2	0.131	10'15	0.528	2

Source: author's own analysis.

Table 3

Attitudes towards investment and area of living (%)

	Investment's area						Non-investment's area								
	9'12	12'12	3'13	10'13	3'14	6'15	10'15	9'12	12'12	3'13	6'13	10'13	3'14	6'15	10'15
Opponents	61.2	42.1	33.4	40.8	32.7	39.6	33.8	33.1	42.3	29.3	30	27.1	23.8	33.2	31.0
Hesitants	11.1	25.8	15.3	14.3	16.4	18.7	17.6	25	18	21.0	24.2	25.1	19.0	22.2	21.4
Supporters	27.8	40	41.4	44.9	50.8	41.7	43.7	40.8	39.6	49.7	45.8	47.8	47.1	44.6	47.6

Source: author's own analysis.

Table 4

Chi-square indicator statistics

	Value	df	Significance	Value	df	Significance	
9'12	5.760	4	0.218	10'13	10.069	4	0.039
12'12	10.692	4	0.030	3'14	2.162	2	0.339
3'13	7.429	4	0.115	6'15	0.561	2	0.755
6'13	13.376	2	0.001	10'15	1.759	2	0.415

Source: author's own analysis.

Table 5

Attitudes towards investment and gender of respondents (%)

	Women						Men								
	9'12	12'12	3'13	6'13	10'13	3'14	6'15	10'15	3'14	6'15	10'15	3'14	6'15	10'15	
Opponents	43.5	44.3	32.3	36.2	29.7	28.1	38.9	38.4	35.5	40.5	28.8	39.2	30.0	23.8	25.2
Hesitants	16.8	19.8	21.5	23.8	25.8	14.8	22.2	20	28	19.8	17.6	20.8	20.0	22.1	20.3
Supporters	39.6	35.8	46.2	40.0	44.5	57	38.9	41.6	36.4	39.6	53.6	40.0	50.0	54.1	54.5

Source: author's own analysis.

Table 6

Chi-square indicator statistics

	Value	df	Significance	Value	df	Significance
9'12	4.659	2	0.097	10'13	1.295	2
12'12	0.437	2	0.804	3'14	2.355	2
3'13	1.470	2	0.480	6'15	3.042	2
6'13	0.404	2	0.817	10'15	5.443	2

Source: author's own analysis.

Table 7

Attitudes towards investment and age of respondents (%)

			Opponents	Hesitants	Supporters
Age	18 – 24	9'12	26.8	17.1	56.1
		12'12	31.0	35.7	33.3
		3'13	37.2	25.6	37.2
		6'13	36.6	4.9	58.5
		10'13	42.9	19.0	38.1
		3'14	39.0	9.8	51.2
	25 – 39	6'15	30.7	22.7	46.7
		10'15	37.8	24.3	37.8
		9'12	25.4	32.4	42.3
		12'12	30.1	20.5	49.3
		3'13	25.0	29.2	45.8
		6'13	33.8	25.7	40.5
	40 – 59	10'13	28.6	17.6	53.8
		3'14	45.8	18.1	36.1
		6'15	37.6	16.5	45.9
		10'15	23.0	16.1	60.9
		9'12	44.2	14	41.9
		12'12	26.7	20.9	52.3
	60+	3'13	39.1	19.6	41.3
		6'13	31.2	12.5	56.2
		10'13	16.3	18.4	65.3
		3'14	17.4	30.4	52.2
		6'15	24.4	26.5	49.0
		10'15	30.6	20.4	49.0

Source: author's own analysis.

Table 8

Chi-square indicator statistics

	Value	df	Significance		Value	df	Significance
9'12	2.446	6	0.874	10'13	15.596	6	0.016
12'12	3.548	6	0.738	3'14	13.137	6	0.041
3'13	3.516	6	0.742	6'15	12.137	6	0.059
6'13	12.827	6	0.046	10'15	7.526	6	0.275

Source: author's own analysis.

The belief in inevitability of investment

The attitudes towards the planned investment are indirectly created with a belief that energy complex will be certainly constructed. The sense of inevitability of investment can stimulate specific strategies of behavior of residents. Their catalog can be very different and depends on the extent to which respondents are involved in the development of energetic complex. If anyone is assured that the investment will be realized, sooner or later he will look for certain benefits for himself in the existing situation. For entrepreneurs this means the need to prepare plans for the operation in a new situation, for residents who are considering a new location plans can be suspended, etc. Data from the study illustrate very stable belief in inevitability of Gubin-Brody energetic complex.

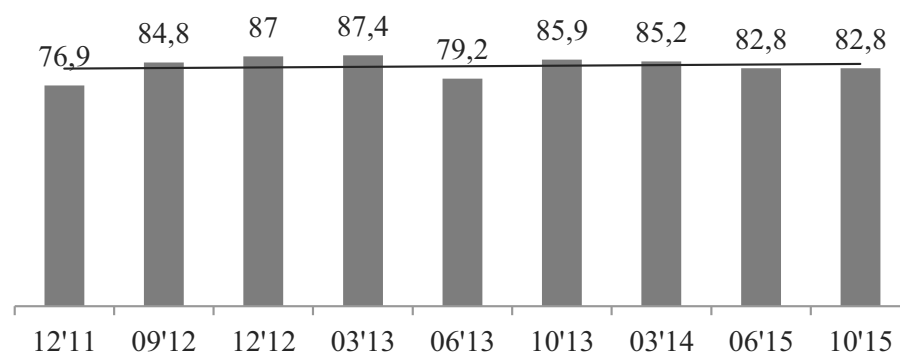


Figure 2. Belief in inevitability of investment (%).

Source: own analysis.

Belief in agreement with the investor

The social acceptance to the investment is an indirect result of investor's actions. The activities of the investor during the past five years reflect the idea of "ongoing consultations", which enable the participation of interested communities in initiatives around the planned investment. Among many different forms of participation dominate information meetings, consultations with experts, meetings with people from the areas where similar investments function, or excursions to quarries and power plants.

More than 50% of the inhabitants of Gubin and Brody in June 2015 see the possibility of an agreement with the investor. In the last survey – October 2015 such a belief was declared by 76.1% of respondents. The observed

change is very clear. This information should be treated as a kind of incentive to dialogue and development of common understanding. Residents are mostly ready for dialogue and expect investor to organize direct meetings (discussions with residents, personal conversations, open meetings).

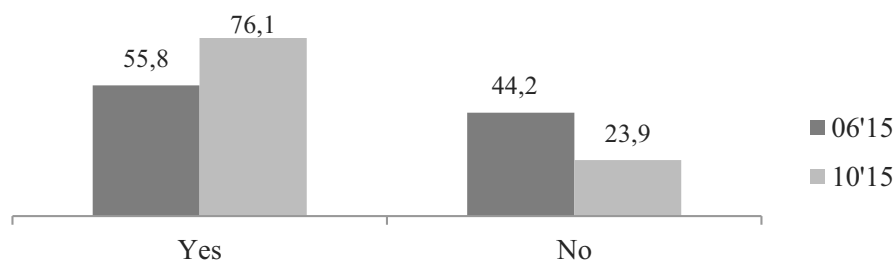


Figure 3. Answer to the question “Is the agreement with the investor possible?” (%).
Source: own analysis.

An essential component of perceived investing process is trust. Trust is a key issue in all facility siting issues (Wuestenhagen et al. 2007). It happens because siting decisions are always heavily loaded with risk components: environmental, economic, and social risks. The perception of this process depends on how potential risks are defined, how information about those risks is produced, and how and by whom they are managed (Owens, 2004). Important issue is trust in investor’s aims, attitude and competence. It runs the openness of the process for local involvement and the flexibility. Risk studies have revealed the ‘asymmetry principle’, which tells us that trust is fragile, as it is typically created slowly but can be destroyed rapidly (Slovic, 1993).

Invariably inhabitants claim that the biggest barrier which might prevent the agreement is the lack of trust to the investor (70.7%). Another mentioned barrier is the lack of reliable information (59.5%). An important factor is the reluctance of residents to invest (53.3%) and the lack of a clear position of inhabitants (35.1%). It should be noted that as a barrier in consultation residents declared inappropriate actions taken by the investor (31.4%) and the lack of proposals to establish an agreement (25.2%). This may indicate a lack of initiative taken by the investor and reduced its activity in the last period.

Conclusions

Building surface lignite mine is one of the factors determining the shape of the social structure in the future and also one of the factors influencing

attitudes towards the investment itself. The diagnosis of social features determining this process can be considered as a factor affecting the level of approval for the planned project and an instrument to analyze the risks and costs associated with investment activities. Construction of a new lignite mine and power plant in Lubuskie in the public perception raises a lot of controversy. The concerns of the local community are connected with the necessity of relocation from the area of the deposit, rebuilding infrastructure and changes in land use. It can generate social conflict.

Social acceptance for investments must meet two basic conditions: (1) the public has a legitimate and positive attitude to the proposed solutions, (2) no significant obstacles will appear on the part of residents of areas where the investment is planned (including the local authorities). Survey results clearly illustrate that the level of social acceptance for investment (defined this way) is growing steadily. But this is not the constant situation. The occurrence of the NIMBY syndrome among the opponents of the planned investment also cannot be excluded. To avoid the escalation of social tensions in the area where the investment is planned, investor should take care of social trust and appropriate information and involvement of residents in the investment process. Without the public acceptance of investment its success will be compromised and energy complex may not be constructed.

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GUBIN-BRODY**

Keywords: social acceptance, NIMBY syndrome, lignite mining project, social conflict, social attitudes towards energy.

Every planned investment connected with energetic issue generates social anxiety. Local community is afraid of negative impact of this investment on their life and health condition. The crucial issue for every investor is to gain social acceptance for the investment, and such an acceptance is considered also as the highest value of this investment. It could be treated as social barometer of trust for the investment or the generally defined energetic sector. There are many social actors who want to have acceptance and support of local community – either investor and his supporters, or his opponents. The intention of the author in this paper was a characteristic of social conditions of the plans for a new surface mine and power plant based on the resources of the Gubin lignite deposit in Lubuskie province. Empirical base is data from surveys conducted in 2011-2015. Analysis showed that social acceptance for this investment had systematically increased, but it is not a constant (stable) situation. Social attitudes towards this investment are differentiated by socio-demographic features of the inhabitants of two communes. It is also showed that in local community there is still a risk of NIMBY syndrome appearance and a question may arise on how important it is to have social acceptance and trust for the investor. Without social acceptance the lignite mine project in Lubuskie could not be realized.