

ABOUT THE BOOK

Rural development is a complex term – it can be interpreted in various, though equally valid ways. Within the scope of this book it refers to the transformations in distributed economic and social potential of local rural systems. Its goal is the creation of adequate living and working conditions for local residents, as well as improvement of their access to public goods and services. Adequate conditions are defined as being in line with current standards of civilization, adapted to the region's unique potential and spatial aspects, and most importantly, appropriate to the needs and abilities of rural residents. Specifics of development involve maintaining a rural intensity of spatial management – wider distribution of population and economic activity, as well as lower human pressure, compared to urban regions – while always striving to improve rural living conditions. Naturally, there is no single universal scenario for attaining this goal, since local systems develop along widely divergent paths. The complexity of this term lies in the variety and diversity of these paths.

Socio-economic development of rural areas is spatially diversified by its very nature. The main aim of this study, the key problem to be solved, lies in specifying the directions of this diversity and seeking mechanisms to explain existing imbalances. An evaluation of rural development in Poland was performed in three interdependent studies; **the first was aimed at defining the level of socio-economic development, the second at recognizing the profiles of its socio-economic structures, and the third at establishing characteristics of local conditions for development.** This approach was selected under the consideration that earlier socio-economic development of local systems would be mirrored in the level and structure of their development. These two characteristics basically describe the effects of development. However, endogenous conditions for development are no less important – they permit said characteristics to display the type and strength of their influences. It is commonly thought that conditions and effects of development determine its level; therefore I have sought out factors that would explain the existing spatial diversification of socio-economic development of rural areas, as well as its structures and local conditions.

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In light of these considerations, I was faced with the important task of classifying local systems by determining the number of the actual different groups - varying in structures of socio-economic development in rural areas and in local conditions for this development. Descriptions of homogenous groups explain similarities and differences between the groups that have emerged. It was thus empirically verified which qualities are significant and which exert little influence. Therefore, this study also aims to highlight actual criteria of sorting local systems into similar groups, grasp the factors determining distribution, indicate their regions of convergence, and determine ones of more and less significance.

The object of the study - rural area development - is complex and multicriterial, therefore solving the problems located basically in the study field of economic sciences involved the cognitive apparatus, theoretical achievements, and instruments of other fields of study. This interdisciplinary approach benefits from considering economic aspects along with extraeconomic, which permits us to grasp the complexity of the phenomena and interdependencies between various aspects of this fragment of reality.

It should be noted that this book consists of two parts, the first of which is a critical evaluation of the current state of the studies based on available literature - not only concerning economics, but also related fields. It serves as an introduction to the second, empirical part - the Author's original contribution to the field of spatial diversification of rural area development, illustrated by a broad collection of choropleths included in the book.

This approach has not been used in this field of study in Poland prior to the publication of this book. Research procedures were implemented in stages; conclusions that have been formulated allow the Author to state that the goal of the study was achieved. The "About the Book" section consists of two parts - the first touches upon the hypotheses formulated in the study, while the second recalls the results of empirical research in an order imposed by the structure of this book.

Research indicates that rural area development depends on numerous diverse factors. Said factors tend to become visible in the course of a long process, which involves - on one hand - mutual cumulation of positive influences, which causes a given region to boast a relatively high level of development, multifunctional economic structure, balanced labor market and favorable social characteristics of residents, and on the other - factors which "wash out" and drain development potential, leading to stagnation, which results in lower development level indicators and unfavorable socio-economic structures. This simultaneous existence of

contrapositive tendencies eventually leads to the scissor effect in socio-economic development level, as well as its polarization.

An analysis of the results indicates polarization along two axes in spatial distribution of **rural socio-economic development level** in Poland. This means that development polarization within regions on the center-periphery axis coexists with polarization of regions along the East-West axis.

The first case showing polarization of regions (in an administrative sense) involves dividing rural regions into central zones linked to large cities and peripheral zones located farther from them, usually along regional boundaries. Naturally, this division is not strictly dichotomous - various units classified according to their development level may be placed along the center-periphery axis forming a rather broad continuum. The size of a rural zone linked to a city depends not only on the size of the city, but also on the position of a given urban center within the regional and national socio-economic system. Cities with a long and involved history of serving as administrative and political centers have cultivated the relatively broadest rural suburban zones strongly linked to the urban core. Other large cities, which have either advanced up the administrative ladder (especially former voivodship capitals) or former industrial centers (e.g. selective development investment programs), exhibit weaker social and economic ties with their rural surroundings. Transition to market economy has strengthened the significance of spatial accessibility of development centers, but in the case of these cities, economic integration with rural zones is restricted to their closest surroundings.

In the second case, regional polarization involves a generally higher level of socio-economic development of communes located in the western part of the country. This system of spatial diversification is based on historical factors; partitions of Poland played a particularly significant role in this phenomenon. Three separate national systems brought significantly different levels of culture and civilization to each of the three partitions for the 100 years of development. The consequences of socio-economic structures established over that period have been deepened by cumulated effects of subsequent periods. Those conditions are so deeply rooted that neither the post-1989 economic transformation nor a decade of implementing a territorial cohesion policy could significantly modify the phenomena under discussion.

An analysis of internal profiles of **structures of socio-economic development of rural areas** in Poland has proven that spatial polarization is a function of geographical conditions (center-periphery axis) and historical conditions (East-West axis). However, the stated hypothesis that the center-periphery criterion is currently

a stronger tendency, slowly but surely erasing the order imposed by historical criteria on the East-West axis, has been confirmed. Agglomerative benefits are the key determinant of the concentration of relatively most favorable structures.

The multifunctional type of suburban communes emerged at the first stage of exploring structures of socio-economic development, leaving the remaining rural areas within the type featuring opposite characteristics. In the entire sequence of typologies, structural differences of communes significantly integrated with large cities (in comparison to the remaining types) differed strongly by their relatively more favorable evaluations, while the group of these communes remained relatively small. The three middle typologies have verified the hypothesis that historically formed structures of socio-economic development exhibit significant inertia, leading to a relatively lower level of development in eastern parts of the country as opposed to western regions. Clusters of similar structures of local systems were gradually defined first in the regions formerly partitioned to Russia, then in former Prussian and Austrian partitions. The final entry in this typology series is the post-PGR (state farm) region type (relatively younger in a historical sense).

The strength of the center-periphery criterion is confirmed by a typology considered optimum. This also indicates the multitude of significantly different groups which systematize rural areas according to structures of socio-economic development. These are:

- three types of multifunctional communes, characterized by:
 - multifunctionality with predominance of modern agriculture, mainly family farming (key locations: Greater Poland – Wielkopolska, Gdańsk Pomerania – Pomorze Gdańskie, Lower Silesia – Dolny Śląsk regions),
 - multifunctionality stemming from agglomerative benefits (surroundings of agglomerations: Warsaw, Poznań, Toruń/Bydgoszcz, Wrocław, and the Tri-City (Trójmiasto) area),
 - extra-agricultural multifunctionality of suburban communes with less-prominent qualities than in the previous type (urbanized zone of Silesia and voivodship capitals in Central and Eastern Poland),
- three types of communes with predominance of agricultural function, considered relatively monofunctional, including:
 - monofunctionality based on family farming (basic locations: Central and Eastern Poland),
 - post-PGR monofunctionality based on hired-labor large-scale farms (Northern Poland),
 - monofunctionality of communes exhibiting fractured agriculture and lack of extra-agricultural diversification, mixed sources of labor income

(Southern Poland and the Central Industrial Region in the interbellum period).

The results have confirmed another hypothesis stating that multifunctional development – deagrarization of economic structures – mainly occurs in the areas surrounding urban cores; the larger the urban core with a highly developed structure of economic functions, the larger its radius of influence on rural areas. Moreover, a multifunctional character of rural economy occurs in zones of influence of cities – both ones of regional significance and economically restructured. The assumption of existence of multifunctional local systems, not necessarily economically and socially urbanized, was correct – I have identified a group of communes not integrated economically with cities, exhibiting a relatively high level of both agricultural and extra-agricultural functions. At the same time I have indicated the differences between communes exhibiting a relatively high level of deagrarization of local economy and ones with varied degrees of development of agricultural function and degrees of structural transformation. The latter is relatively:

- a) high in regions where agriculture is modern, commercial, and boasting a history of high culture of farming and exemplary management (Greater Poland, parts of Pomerania and Lower Silesia),
- b) medium in zones directly adjacent to agglomerations, thanks to their orientation towards a nearby market, where the significance of farming was decreased due to multifunctional structure of communes, yet agriculture is specialized, intensive and commercial,
- c) low in urbanized zones of post-industrial cities of Southern Poland, as well as of voivodship capitals in Eastern and Central regions.

Socio-economic development of rural areas viewed in local (commune-level) aggregation exhibits spatial discontinuity. Its favorable social, economic and geographic/locational conditions accumulate particularly in central zones, namely around large urban centers, resulting in polycentric development. Economic dominance of central zones increases continuously due to a self-enforcing polarization mechanism. Peripheries form the other pole of spatial polarization. Literature on the subject highlights the fact that development possibilities of these areas depend to a large degree on setting their internal growth potential in motion – on starting their own, often unique development dynamic.

Every spatial unit has specific conditions for development. We take endogenous factors into consideration, seeing local resources as fundamental. In the course of multistage exploration it was determined that in light of the

assumptions of this study, **local conditions for rural development** in Poland are basically determined by the ordering of the center-periphery continuum. Their spread is the resultant of two contrapositive tendencies: a tendency to converge and a tendency to disperse. Their effects are conditioned by the accumulating influence of benefits stemming from location rent. An analysis of the sequence of typologies confirmed the hypothesis that relatively weak socio-economic development drains development potential from peripheral areas – regions located farther away from regional urban centers and/or ones where agricultural function dominates the economic structure.

Spatial polarization, noted in the spread of types of communes homogenous with respect to the similarity of their combinations of local resource evaluations, exhibits qualities of a hierarchical relationship. The typology assumed to be optimal specifies:

- two types of peripheral communes, relatively not wealthy and infrastructurally under-invested, divided into -
 - peripherality with a reserve of labor resources, and
 - peripherality with severe depopulation,
- three types of central communes taking advantage of location rent, relatively wealthy (high capability of income generation), when -
 - affluence is a function of urban rent featuring the densest concentration of capital,
 - affluence is a function of surroundings, exhibiting high concentration of labor resources and favorable living conditions,
 - affluence is a function of surroundings featuring an accumulation of knowledge assets.

The influence of historical factors proved complex in this case. Types of peripherality – though naturally path-dependent – are less clearly shaped by historical context than types of central communes, whose affluence is a function of favorable surroundings. The latter separated into two dissimilar groups, differing not only in the structure of local resources, but also in territorial reach. In a general sense, communes in western parts of the country exhibit relatively more favorable characteristics of labor resources and living conditions than communes in Eastern Poland. In both cases they form a transitional zone where two processes intersect to a varying degree: the process of diffusion of development factors from the core and the process of absorption of development factors from peripheral zones. Their proportions vary between communes.

The nature of socio-economic development engages many factors at once, forming complexes that may be divided in various ways. It is impossible to

formulate a single, universal, model classification of these factors. Regardless of the specific type of classification, only one thing is certain: a set of factors determines actual, effective and significant development. In the case of this specific group and study assumptions it was proven that said factors interact in a dynamic fashion, cumulatively and often non-linearly.

The final hypothesis verified in this study was set to determine which variables have the greatest influence on the level of socio-economic development of rural areas in Poland. Their formal identification allowed me to confirm the assumption that the level of development of rural areas in Poland is, in current conditions, shaped to a larger degree by economic criteria than by social ones. In the structure of socio-economic growth, the variable which explains attained development levels to the largest extent is the degree of deagrarization of local economies. Four component structures also satisfyingly explain attained development levels: the erstwhile degree of deagrarization of local economies; agricultural sector characteristics; labor market characteristics; extra-agricultural sector characteristics. Components related to local populations and demographic aspects were found to have negligible effect on the variable, though their importance should be expected to increase.

Linear interdependency has not been found in the relationship between variables of local resource structure and the level of socio-economic development of rural areas in Poland. I have, however, determined that a commune's financial affluence is the category that explains development levels to the largest extent. Different proportions (or different activities) of various categories of local resources may therefore contribute to attaining the same level of socio-economic development. According to the equipotentiality rule, areas with comparable local conditions for development may develop at a completely different pace (accumulate development effects differently) and, as a result, attain different development levels.

Geographical location rent, as an "immobile" factor in development, has unquestionably significant influence on the level of socio-economic development of rural areas. Its strength determines spatial diversification of rural development, leading to hierarchical polarization in a center-periphery system.

Rural development does not happen without contact with urban areas (markets); this fact was emphasized numerous times in this study. These two subsystems are interdependent, though their relationship of interdependence is not isomorphic. Rural areas in every spatial unit have specific possibilities for development as a result of the abovementioned location rent and qualities of formed socio-economic structures and accumulated resources. The individual character of socio-economic and environmental qualities of rural areas also remains under the

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influence of exogenous development factors and random processes. Due to these aspects, the relationship between factors and effects of development is not always linear, which certainly complicates the course of formulating development concepts.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the relationships described in this book cannot be seen as universal, particularly with regard to the significance of their influence; they should be perceived as true in the context of the conditions of a specific period, assumed group of units and stated assumptions.

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The so-called territorial approach became key in regional policies currently undergoing implementation. Two basic aspects of this approach are: effectiveness, understood as counteracting incomplete utilization of development potentials, and equality, understood as counteracting social exclusion. Analyses of diversification of rural development, discussed in this study, are very significant in this context – it is difficult (if at all possible) to find a common direction of development and common instruments of support for vastly different local systems. Study results indicate that activating the development of specific homogenous types of local systems according to a dedicated scenario, tailored to their potential (conditions) and needs, is more significant than eradicating differences by any means necessary and striving for regional convergence formulated as unification. The possibility of giving even partial support for rural development by providing different types of interventions to homogenous groups of communes should therefore be considered. Unlike communes developing without significant problems, local systems exhibiting a relatively monofunctional economic structure or peripheral systems drained of development potential should receive particular attention from cohesion policies, regional policies and rural development policies. However, this would require a different system of addressing instruments of support than the one currently utilized.