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## CHANGES IN FARMERS' PARTICIPATION IN RURAL ORGANIZATIONS OF OPOLSZCZYZNA REGION

Stanisława Sokołowska✉, Paweł Szwiec

Uniwersytet Opolski

**Abstract.** The article's findings referred to and described one of the most important dimensions of social capital of farmers in the Opolszczyzna – self-organization of farmers in the period from 2008 to 2014. Particularly, the popularity of different self-governed organizations among farmers and their efficiency have been presented. The described findings point to stagnation in the development of self-organization of farmers in the discussed period.

**Key words:** social capital, self-organization of farmers, farmers' social activity

### INTRODUCTION

Self-organisation, self-government, self-determination are terms used in many different contexts. They appear, among others, during discussions on economic development, the reinforcement of civic society or the maturing of democracy. They are often mentioned together with the construct of social capital. This term is defined in literature in many different ways. The majority of them may be identified with one of two approaches. According to the first approach – social capital is identified with trust that members of community put in each other (Fukuyama, 1999, p. 16). According to the second approach – it is linked to interpersonal relationships facilitating the achievement of individual and collective goals (Szreter, 2000, p. 57). The measurement of social capital usually involves measuring the level of: acceptance of

moral standards, trust, or functioning within formal and informal systems (van Staveren, 2003, p. 416). The former kind includes non-government organisations. They provide citizens with a number of possibilities, including the chance to express their beliefs, needs and expectations, to cross class barriers, to reduce the level of fear related to taking economic decisions or to build relationships based on trust with other people (Lewenstein and Palska, 2004, p. 81). Therefore, they encourage economic development (Górecki, 2004, p. 196). Moreover, they contribute to the reinforcement of democracy. It is even emphasised that the scale of citizen participation in non-government organisations constitutes one of the essential criteria for the assessment of the maturity level of a democracy. The limited participation of Polish residents in the functioning of non-government organisations is one of the reasons why in the literature on the subject, there appear theses of the crisis of democracy in our country (Gliński, 2003, p. 16). Do the farmers from Opolszczyzna also engage in little social activity and did it undergo any changes in the years 2000–2015? The answer to these and other questions will be presented in this article. The scope of farmers' participation in rural self-government organisations was shown based on empirical studies constituting a part of larger elaborations concerning the changes in the agricultural productivity in the Opolskie region. They were based on information received from farm managers residing in municipalities characterised by intensive and medium intensive agricultural activity. These municipalities include: Kietrz,

✉ prof. dr hab. Stanisława Sokołowska, Katedra Organizacji i Zarządzania, Uniwersytet Opolski, ul. Ozimska 46a, 45-058 Opole, Poland, e-mail: stanislawa.sokolowska@uni.opole.pl

Głogówek, Skarbimierz, Olszanka and Lubrza. The interviews were conducted in 2000, 2008 and 2014 with 150, 150 and 100 farmers managing farms larger than 10 ha, respectively.

## **FARMERS' PARTICIPATION IN RURAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE OPOLSZCZYŻNA REGION**

In the literature on the subject, the term self-government is understood in various ways. The present paper follows a broad definition of this term, identifying four basic forms of self-government operating in rural areas, i.e. cooperative self-government, territorial self-government, professional self-government and agricultural self-government. Agricultural self-government is represented by: agricultural chambers, rural women circles, agricultural circles and other social and professional agricultural organisations. Cooperative self-government is made of: cooperative banks, "Samopomoc Chłopska" municipal cooperatives, agricultural production cooperatives, dairy farmers' cooperatives and gardening and bee-keeping cooperatives. Territorial self-government includes municipal councils and rural meetings. Individual self-government institutions play a number of important roles, including: promoting agriculture and agricultural education, voicing and protecting the interests of village inhabitants (Sokołowska, 1994, p. 77). Rural and territorial self-government institutions play a particularly important role in the life of villagers. Agricultural self-government organisations' tasks include among others: expressing opinions on projects of law regulations, taking action to improve the quality of agricultural produce, actions aimed at improving the living conditions of village inhabitants, participating in the elaboration and implementation of the agricultural policy of the state, stimulating the development of educational and cultural activity (Kozuch, 1999, p. 57–58).

The tasks of organs of territorial self-government, on the other hand, include among others: elaborating area development plans, providing municipal services to village inhabitants or creating municipality's budget and economic plans (Kozuch, 1999, p. 54–55).

One of the key criteria for the assessment of self-government in rural areas is the number of members of individual self-government organisations and the dynamics of its change. Of course, it does not determine the level of people's involvement in the operation of

such institutions, but it nevertheless constitutes an important indicator of the belief in the possibility of initiating changes through common activity.

Prior to political transformation, the majority of village inhabitants were members of rural self-government organisations. In 1985, 70% of farmers in Opolszczyzna who took part in the study declared membership in this type of organisations, while in 1991, this number shrunk to 27%. However, as soon as in 1992, the number of members of rural self-government organisations increased. Furthermore, new organisations of this type appeared. What is more, the number of farmers who felt they had a significant influence on the decisions taken in self-government organisations grew by 22% compared to 1991 (Sokołowska, 1994, p. 78).

The membership in various rural self-government organisations stabilised after 1992. However, the level of farmers' involvement in the operation of individual institutions changed in the period 2000–2014. Nevertheless, one must be cautious when interpreting the data below. One must not forget that the farmers' sample was not random and the study itself was conducted in the given years in various municipalities. Between 2000 and 2008, the percentage of respondents declaring membership in the Rural Women Circle, the Union of Silesian Rural Women and the Union of Growers more or less doubled. However, during the years 2008–2014, the percentage of members of the Rural Women Circle dropped from 31% to 23% and the percentage of members of the Union of Silesian Rural Women dropped from 10% to 6%. Meanwhile, the popularity of the Union of Growers among respondents grew from 13% to 22%. In the years 2000–2008, the percentage of respondents declaring membership in the Village Council and the Dairy Farmers' Cooperative tripled (growing from 13% to 37% and from 4% to 13%, respectively), only to drop in the period 2008–2014. In 2014, 34% of respondents were involved in the work of the Village Council, while 7% were members of dairy farmers' cooperatives. The organisation that particularly gained ground during the fourteen-year period under examination was cooperative banking. As late as in 2000, only 5% of respondents used the services of cooperative banks. However, in 2014, this number reached 74%. At the same time, as many as 88% of respondents favourably assess the operation of these institutions. In any case, of all the considered organisations, cooperative banks were assessed most favourably by respondents (Table 2). They were

**Table 1.** Farmers' attachment to self – governed organizations in Opolszczyzna in 2000, 2008 and 2014

**Tabela 1.** Przynależność rolników do organizacji samorządowych na Opolszczyźnie w latach 2000, 2008 i 2014

Organization name – Nazwa organizacji	Membership of an organization Przynależność do organizacji (%)		
	2000	2008	2014
Village Council – Rada Sołecka	13.0	37.0	34.0
Agricultural Circle – Kółko Rolnicze	20.0	6.0	6.0
Voluntary Fire Brigade – Ochotnicza Straż Pożarna	21.0	29.0	41.0
Cultural Society of Germany Minority Towarzystwo Kulturalne Mniejszości Niemieckiej	31.0	25.0	15.0
Rural Women Circle – Koło Gospodyń Wiejskich	16.0	31.0	23.0
Union of Silesian Rural Women – Związek Śląskich Kobiet Wiejskich	4.0	10.0	6.0
Union of Silesian Farmers – Związek Śląskich Rolników	5.0	19.0	18.0
“Samopomoc Chłopska” municipal cooperative Gminne spółdzielnie „Samopomoc Chłopska”	–	11.0	3.0
Animal breeding associations – Związki hodowców	18.0	14.0	12.0
Union of Growers – Związek Plantatorów Roślin	6.0	13.0	22.0
Dairy farmers' cooperatives – Spółdzielczość mleczarska	4.0	13.0	7.0
Cooperative Bank – Bank Spółdzielczy	5.0	77.0	74.0
Local active groups “Village Renewal” Lokalne grupy działania „Odnowa Wsi”	–	30.0	32.0
Local active groups “Leader+” – Lokalne grupy działania „Leader+”	–	7.0	19.0
Producers' groups – Grupy producenckie	–	5.0	17.0
Chamber of Agriculture – Izba Rolnicza	3.0	–	30.0
Farm Advisory Circle – Koło Doradztwa Rolniczego	4.0	–	–

Source: own elaboration based on research carried out in the years 2000, 2008 and 2014.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie badań zrealizowanych w 2000, 2008 i 2014 roku.

positively rated by as many as 88% of farmers. There is no doubt that this situation fosters the development of agriculture, considering the significance of cooperative banks in the system of institutions providing financial services for agriculture. It is very good that it is not only the vicinity of branches or tradition (Czudec et al., 2008, p. 61), but also satisfaction from the received service that encourage farm managers to cooperate with cooperative banks.

In the analysed period, the popularity of producers' groups also grew quite significantly. In 2008, 5% of respondents were members of such groups, while in 2014,

this number grew to 17% of farmers. It is without doubt a very positive development. Finally, farm managers gathered in producers' groups may obtain a number of benefits, including: financial support, reinforcement of competitiveness of farms (Lemanowicz, 2005, p. 565), or streamlining of time management (Dyngus, 2005, p. 40–50).

Meanwhile, in the years 2000–2014, there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents declaring membership in Agricultural Circles (from 20 to 6%), the Cultural Society of German Minority (from 31% to 15%), “Samopomoc Chłopska” municipal cooperatives

**Table 2.** Farmers' opinions about functioning of self – governed organizations in Opolszczyzna in 2008 and 2014

**Tabela 2.** Sposób oceny funkcjonowania organizacji samorządu wiejskiego przez rolników Opolszczyzny w 2008 i 2014 roku

Organization name – Nazwa organizacji	Respondents who have positive opinions about results achieved by organizations Respondenci pozytywnie oceniający wyniki działania organizacji (%)	
	2008	2014
Village Council – Rada Sołecka	83.0	77.0
Agricultural Circle – Kółko Rolnicze	18.0	18.0
Voluntary Fire Brigade – Ochotnicza Straż Pożarna	75.0	80.0
Cultural Society of Germany Minority Towarzystwo Kulturalne Mniejszości Niemieckiej	26.0	17.0
Rural Women Circle – Koło Gospodyń Wiejskich	63.0	40.0
Union of Silesian Rural Women – Związek Śląskich Kobiet Wiejskich	23.0	8.0
Union of Silesian Farmers – Związek Śląskich Rolników	20.0	20.0
“Samopomoc Chłopska” municipal cooperative Gminne spółdzielnie „Samopomoc Chłopska”	23.0	16.0
Animal breeding associations – Związki hodowców	6.0	12.0
Union of Growers – Związek Plantatorów Roślin	9.0	23.0
Dairy farmers' cooperatives – Spółdzielczość mleczarska	35.0	18.0
Cooperative Bank – Bank Spółdzielczy	83.0	88.0
Local active groups “Village Renewal” Lokalne grupy działania „Odnowa Wsi”	58.0	58.0
Local active groups “Leader+” – Lokalne grupy działania „Leader+”	27.0	31.0
Producers' groups – Grupy producenckie	17.0	33.0
Chamber of Agriculture – Izba Rolnicza	–	9.0

Source: own elaboration based on research carried out in the years 2008 and 2014.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie badań zrealizowanych w 2008 i 2014 roku.

(from 11% to 3%) and the animal breeding association (from 18 to 12%). In the case of the second and third institution, the percentage of respondents who positively evaluated their activity also decreased, by 9% and 7%, respectively.

In 2014, the following organisations were the most popular among farm managers: cooperative banks, Voluntary Fire Brigade, Village Council and local active groups “Village Renewal”. Membership in these organisations was declared by: 74%, 41%, 34% and 32% of respondents, respectively. Meanwhile, participation in the operation of institutions such as: Rural

Women Circle, Union of Growers, local active groups “Leader+” or producers' groups, was quite unpopular among farmers and their wives. 23% of respondents (or their wives) were members of Rural Women Circles. A slightly smaller number of 22% of farmers took part in the activities of the unions of growers. Local active groups “Leader+” (19%) and producers' groups (17%) proved to be similarly popular.

Rural self-government organisations that attracted little attention of respondents in 2014 include: animal breeding associations, dairy farmers' cooperatives, agricultural circles, the Union of Silesian Rural Women,

“Samopomoc Chłopska” municipal cooperatives. Membership in these organisations was declared by 12%, 7%, 6%, 6%, 3% of respondents, respectively. In any case, in 2014, three of these institutions received more negative ratings from respondents than in 2008. The percentage of respondents who positively evaluated the activities of the Union of Rural Silesian Women, “Samopomoc Chłopska” municipal cooperatives and dairy farmers’ cooperatives decreased by 15%, 7% and 17%, respectively (Table 2). However, one must admit that ratings were not particularly good in 2008 either. Dairy farmers’ cooperatives received the best ratings. 35% of respondents positively assessed their operation. At this point, it is worth emphasising that apart from the three above-mentioned institutions, several other organisations considered in the studies, i.e. Village Councils, Cultural Association of the German Minority and Rural Women Circle, also received more criticism. On the other hand, the following institutions got better ratings in 2014 compared to 2008: Voluntary Fire Brigade, animal breeding associations, the Union of Growers, cooperative banks, local activity groups “Leader+” and producers’ groups.

However, in 2014, most of the organisations included in the analysis were positively assessed only by a small percentage of farmers. These organisations include: the Union of Growers (23%), the Union of Silesian Farmers

(20%), agricultural circles (18%), dairy farmers’ cooperatives (18%), the Cultural Association of the German Minority (17%), “Samopomoc Chłopska” municipal cooperatives (16%), the Agricultural Chamber (9%) and the Union of Silesian Rural Women (8%). The following organisations were slightly better assessed by farmers: Rural Women Circles, producers’ groups and local activity groups “Leader+”. They got a positive rating from 40%, 33% and 31% of respondents, respectively. Nevertheless, over a half of farmers declared they were satisfied with the results achieved by only four of the institutions considered in the studies, i.e. local activity groups “Village Renewal” (58%), Village Council (77%), Voluntary Fire Brigade (80%) and cooperative banks (88%).

The collected data revealed a link between the way organisations are perceived by respondents and the number of their members. Thus, institutions that get most valuable results according to the majority of farmers, are also the most popular ones.

Most respondents from 2008 (59%) claimed they participated in all or nearly all village meetings (Table 3). Only 5% of interviewees admitted they never or almost never took part in the meetings. The most common reason was lack of time or the fact that too few meetings were organised. In 2014, the frequency

**Table 3.** The level of participation of farmers from Opolszczyzna in rural meetings in 2008 and 2014  
**Tabela 3.** Poziom uczestnictwa w zebraniach wiejskich rolników Opolszczyzny w 2008 i 2014 roku

Frequency of participation in rural meetings Częstotliwość uczestnictwa w zebraniach wiejskich	Respondents pointed out participation in rural meetings Respondenci deklarujący określony poziom uczestnictwa w zebraniach wiejskich (%)	
	2008	2014
Participation in all or almost all rural meetings Uczestnictwo we wszystkich lub prawie wszystkich zebraniach wiejskich	59.0	47.0
Participation in about one half of rural meetings Uczestnictwo w mniej więcej w połowie zebrań wiejskich	18.0	19.0
Participation in minority of rural meetings Uczestnictwo tylko w mniejszej części zebrań wiejskich	18.0	24.0
No or almost no participation in rural meetings Zupełny lub też prawie całkowity brak uczestnictwa w zebraniach wiejskich	5.0	10.0

Source: own elaboration based on research carried out in the years 2008 and 2014.  
Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie badań zrealizowanych w 2008 i 2014 roku.



of respondents' participation in village meetings decreased. Only 47% of farmers declared that they participated in almost all meetings. This means a decrease by 12% compared to 2008. At the same time, during this 6-year period, the percentage of people who showed no interest in village meetings grew from 5% to 10%, while the number of those who did not even know how many meetings were organised per year increased from 5% to 11%. One shall hope that this development is not linked to the farm managers' loss of faith in the effectiveness of collective actions or a decline in their need to shape the situation of the local community in which they live. Another thing is that respondents were unlikely to get bored with participating in many village meetings. In fact, according to approximately half of the interviewees, both in 2008 and in 2014, such meetings were organised no more than twice a year. Meanwhile, in each of the analysed periods, at least 40% of farmers claimed that village meetings took place more often than twice a year (Table 4).

Village meetings are a good opportunity to discuss how to deal with the most burning issues affecting the local community. In 2014, respondents identified the following most pressing tasks for self-government organisations: fighting unemployment (56%), development of industry in the municipality (46%), maintenance of schools and kindergartens (39%), environment protection (33%), ensuring security and public order (32%).

The most frequently mentioned tasks are the expression of farmers' concerns and problems they, their families and friends face. As it turns out, the key issue among the members of this group is still finding and keeping a satisfactory job. Therefore, respondents expect the self-government organisations to take steps that may, in their view, reduce the unemployment rate. They can see two ways to achieve this goal. The first one is by stimulating the multifunctional rural development and creating new jobs outside agriculture in the rural areas. The second way is related to providing services which ensure that parents of young children have a better work-life balance. It should also lead to reducing inequalities in human resources in rural and urban areas and, as a result, contribute to establishing a more just society. This is not the only evidence that farm managers adopt a long-term perspective. Many of them pointed out that there is a need to take steps in order to protect the environment. All this despite the fact that the level of degradation of rural areas in Poland is still lower than in many "old" European Union countries. Many agricultural areas are still rich in flora and fauna thanks to the limited use of intensive methods of production (Paszkowski, 2001, p. 47). Farmers even indicated several ways to improve the state of the environment, i.e. by constructing a sewage and water system (21%), keeping rural areas clean (13%), and providing energy from sustainable sources (2%). Another factor that may improve the quality of

**Table 4.** Opolszczyzna farmers' opinions about frequency of rural meetings formulated in 2008 and 2014

**Tabela 4.** Częstotliwość odbywania się zebrań wiejskich w wybranych wsiach Opolszczyzny w opinii kierowników gospodarstw rolnych w 2008 i 2014 roku

Frequency of rural meetings Częstotliwość odbywania się zebrań wiejskich	Respondents pointed out some frequency of rural meetings Respondenci wskazujący na określoną częstotliwość odbywania się zebrań wiejskich w ich wsi (%)	
	2008	2014
Less than once a year – Rzadziej niż raz w roku	2	1
Once a year – Raz w roku	24	22
Twice a year – Dwa razy w roku	29	23
More often than twice a year – Częściej niż dwa razy w roku	40	43
I don't know – Nie wiem	5	11

Source: own elaboration based on research carried out in the years 2008 and 2014.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie badań zrealizowanych w 2008 i 2014 roku.

life and work performance is healthcare. A significant number of respondents (27%) see the need to take action in order to provide better healthcare in rural areas.

Among less pressing problems to be solved by the self-government, respondents mentioned: provision of social welfare (20%), development of trade and services (12%) and supporting libraries and community centres (12%).

According to the majority of respondents taking part in the 2014 survey, the problems indicated above should be solved primarily by the mayor, the councillors, the municipal executive board and its clerks (Table 5). These entities are thought to have the most influence on shaping the reality in which farmers live. According to farm managers, individual inhabitants as well as the organisations they build lack resources necessary to effectively solve the most important problems. The same conviction holds true to political parties, the Church and rural entrepreneurs. It is thought that the group that has the least, in fact only marginal, influence on the situation in the municipality are senior citizens.

As a matter of fact, the opinions on particular groups' significance for municipalities proved to be very stable. The respondents of the 2008 survey also thought municipal administration, the mayor, councillors and the municipal council were the most influential. Then, when asked to name entities that have a very limited impact on the situation in the municipality, farmers indicated senior citizens, individual inhabitants and political parties. (Table 6). This is a particularly disturbing issue. This feeling of marginal influence on the situation of their "little homeland" expressed by farmers may constitute a significant barrier for individual actions for the common good. What is more, it may also to a certain extent justify the lack of activity in this respect. Arguably, it is furthermore linked to an antagonistic view of social reality, in which there are those who can do a lot, i.e. people who have power, and those who must accept the existing state of affairs and the uselessness of any individual attempts to change it. As a matter of fact, this does not apply only to individual efforts – but also to those made by a community – because such actions,

**Table 5.** The impact level of different subjects on situation in commune in the opinions of Opolszczyzna farmers' in 2014  
**Tabela 5.** Skala wpływu różnych podmiotów na sytuację w gminie według rolników Opolszczyzny uwzględnionych w badaniach w 2014 roku

Subject – Podmiot	Respondents pointed out divergent degree of subjects' impact on the situation in a municipality Respondenci wskazujący na różny stopień wpływu podmiotów na sytuację w gminie (%)		
	small – mały	average – średni	big – duży
Clerks and municipal administration – Urzędnicy i administracja gminy	21	42	30
Mayor – Wójt	4	24	68
Councillors – Radni	9	25	66
Municipal executive board – Zarząd gminy	12	23	42
Groups of inhabitants – Grupy lub komitety mieszkańców	40	36	12
Individual inhabitants – Indywidualni mieszkańcy	61	28	6
Political parties – Partie polityczne	45	38	8
Rural entrepreneurs – Przedsiębiorcy wiejscy	34	44	11
Pensioners – Emeryci	89	4	0
The Church – Kościół	40	37	18

Source: own elaboration based on research carried out in the year 2014.  
Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie badań zrealizowanych w 2014 roku.



**Table 6.** Subjects' ranking in respect of their impact on the situation in commune in the opinions of Opolszczyzna farmers' in 2014

**Tabela 6.** Ranking podmiotów ze względu na ich wpływ na sytuację w gminie według opinii rolników Opolszczyzny wyrażonych w 2014 roku

Subject – Podmiot	Subject's position in the ranking Miejsce przypisane podmiotowi w rankingu	
	2008	2014
Mayor – Wójt	1	2
Councillors – Radni	2	1
Municipal administration – Urzędnicy i administracja gminy	3	3
Rural entrepreneurs – Przedsiębiorcy wiejscy	4	6
Municipal executive board – Zarząd gminy	5	4
The Church – Kościół	6	5
Groups of inhabitants – Grupy lub komitety mieszkańców	7	7
Political parties – Partie polityczne	8	8
Individual inhabitants – Indywidualni mieszkańcy	9	9
Pensioners – Emeryci	10	10

Source: own elaboration based on research carried out in the years 2008 and 2014.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie badań zrealizowanych w 2008 i 2014 roku.

according to the majority of respondents, are unlikely to have any significant impact.

One of the previous sections of this paper presented the respondents' opinion on the most important tasks to be carried out in their municipality. They included: fighting unemployment, development of industry, maintenance of schools and kindergartens, environmental protection and provision of security and public order. Do the farmers see any undertakings carried out in the municipality that might help achieve these goals? Interestingly, as many as 10% of farm managers asked in 2014 claimed that there were no significant local undertakings carried out in their municipality. Another 10% of respondents declared they did not have sufficient information to identify such initiatives. Nonetheless, 80% of farmers had no problem indicating activities contributing to the development of the municipality. They were most likely to notice undertakings concerning the creation and improvement of village infrastructure, including the construction and repairs of local roads, the construction of a sewage system, the construction and repairs of playing fields, the construction of playgrounds, integration spots and green areas. Farmers paid slightly

less attention to activities carried out with respect to the construction and repairs of rural community centres, the construction and renovation of the water system, or the construction of pavements. Only few respondents listed the following initiatives: creation of a rural museum, installation of bicycle lanes, construction of a sports hall or wind farms. Only two respondents mentioned a new work establishment under construction and the development of industry in their municipality. Of course all the activities listed by respondents should contribute to local development and help achieve goals that they specified. They will result not only in the improvement of infrastructure, but also in the reinforcement of human and social capital. The respondents' answers show that infrastructure development is a priority, though. These are obviously the "most visible" developments and perhaps also the most pressing. There is no doubt that many of them should also improve the quality of the environment, while their implementation may create demand for local workers. However, in general, respondents did not mention any particularly resounding undertakings concerning: fighting unemployment, development of industry in the municipality or maintenance of schools

and kindergartens. This basically means they did not mention any actions regarding the issues they considered the most important for the well-being of the inhabitants of the municipality.

## SUMMARY

It has already been mentioned in this paper that after the sudden decline in the participation of farmers from Opolszczyzna in the activities of rural self-government organisations at the beginning of the political transformation, there began a gradual reconstruction of social capital in rural areas. Nonetheless, the information presented in this paper, collected during surveys conducted in 2008 and 2014, does not indicate any continuation of this process. It rather seems to prove a certain stagnation in the development of rural self-government. This statement was based on several premises. Firstly, no significant increase in the level of participation in rural self-government organisations was noted. While some of the organisations gained new members, others lost them and besides, the gain, apart from few exceptions, was at best moderate. Secondly, there was no significant improvement in the way farmers from Opolszczyzna assessed the results of operation of rural self-government organisations. Some of the organisations got better notes in 2014 than in 2008, others quite the opposite. However, less than half of respondents showed approval of the results achieved by organisations included in the studies, apart from three institutions. Thus, there has always been a lot of room for improvement for both members and governing bodies of these entities. Thirdly, there was a decrease in the number of respondents who always or almost always took part in village meetings. On the other hand, there was an increase in the percentage of farmers who do not feel the need to participate in such meetings. In 2014, more farm managers showed a complete lack of interest in village meetings to the point where they were not even able to specify the number of meetings. As a matter of fact, this indifference as to what happens in the municipality also showed in the answers concerning local undertakings. In this case, around 10% of the people interviewed in 2014 were unable to name any of these initiatives. Fourthly, in 2014, all in all not unlike in 2008, only a small percentage of respondents thought individual village inhabitants and their associations had a major impact on the situation in the municipality. This lack of faith in the ability to shape

one's living conditions is surely linked to less inclination towards taking collective steps for common good. Thus, it should constitute a barrier for further development of self-government and rural social capital. It also needs to be noted that information received in the course of the studies may reveal an overly positive image of rural self-government. After all, it comes from the owners of relatively big commercial farms operating in an area of highly developed agriculture.

As a matter of fact, the conducted analyses give a very fragmented view of the condition and changes of self-government in the rural areas of Opolszczyzna. Further analyses taking into account other categories of village inhabitants and more differentiated indicators of rural self-government are necessary.

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## ZMIANY UCZESTNICTWA ROLNIKÓW W WIEJSKICH ORGANIZACJACH SAMORZĄDOWYCH OPOLSZCZYZNY

**Streszczenie.** W artykule podjęto próbę określenia zmian w zakresie samoorganizacji społeczności wiejskiej Opolszczyzny z uwzględnieniem konstruktów kapitału społecznego. W tym celu wykorzystano dane uzyskane od osób kierujących gospodarstwami rolnymi zamieszkających w wybranych gminach Opolszczyzny. Zostały one zebrane za pomocą kwestionariusza wywiadu. Zawarte w nim pozycje umożliwiły określenie zmian, jakie zaszły w latach 2008–2014, m.in. pod względem: przynależności respondentów do różnych organizacji samorządu wiejskiego, sposobu postrzegania przez rolników efektów działań tych instytucji czy postrzegania przez kierowników gospodarstw rolnych możliwości wywierania wpływu przez różne podmioty na sytuację w gminie. Ujawniły przy tym występowanie kilku negatywnych zjawisk w dziedzinie samorządności wiejskiej, które świadczą o stagnacji w jej rozwoju w latach 2000–2014.

**Słowa kluczowe:** kapitał społeczny wsi, samoorganizacja społeczności wiejskiej, aktywność społeczna rolników

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