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## **THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS**

Key words: rural areas, rural development policy, sustainable development theory,  
smart villages, endo- and neo-endogenous development

**ABSTRACT.** The objective of the study, on the basis of problem literature, is the presentation of theoretical concepts referring to rural development and practical support programmes of these areas available in Poland and the European Union (EU). In this context, rural areas are presented as the reference area for development policies, with particular consideration for the Cohesion Policy (CP), the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), including the EU Rural Area Development Programme (RADP). Among the theoretical rural development concepts, particular attention was devoted to sustainable and balanced development forming the basis for shaping practical development programmes and identifying new theoretical approaches. The latter encompassed the smart rural areas concept, the resilience concept, local development programming, bottom-up endogenous development and the neo-endogenous concept of open development. It was concluded that the LEADER and LEADER+ neo-endogenous concept is an effective form of supporting rural area development, especially after the fifth extension of the EU with Central and Eastern European countries.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Rural areas in Poland, defined on the basis of administrative criterion as all areas outside city or town borders, occupy, on average, 93% of Poland's area [GUS 2020]. This formal, dichotomous way of dividing the country's territory into urban and rural areas is highly imprecise and subject to change, as new rural settlements are being transformed into urban areas, thus reducing rural area size, and many suburban areas are urban-rural spaces difficult to delimit. This imprecise definition of rural area borders poses difficulties both for theoretical and practical development. Rural areas are highly diversified, as they include many varying forms of space use: agricultural, forest and transport areas, waters, areas unused for commercial purposes, ecologically valuable areas, rural settlements inhabited by farmers and residents unassociated with agriculture and, increasingly more often, buildings and facilities of public institutions and industrial and service companies. These areas, at least in functional terms, often include small towns, especially those in which urban-rural communes are based. Rural areas with diverse regional systems are

constantly being transformed, with changes to their nature and functions. The weakening of the agricultural function is leading to deagrarianisation, and new non-agricultural production, service and consumption functions are being developed. The development of a non-agricultural economy and an increase in agricultural productivity are changing the socio-occupational structure and use of space. Rural space is more commonly becoming an asset used by city residents, entrepreneurs and tourists, thus becoming a public good [Adamowicz 2003, Zwolińska-Ligaj 2018, Guzal-Dec 2018].

Interest in rural area development in EU countries originated in the 1970s and increased with subsequent CAP reforms. The new CAP, implemented in 2005, not only focused on promoting sustainable agriculture and the production of high-quality food but also on animal welfare, preserving the cultural identity of rural areas, preserving traditional plant varieties and animal breeds and other elements of the material culture of rural areas. The policy in 2007-2013 maintained the continuity of previously implemented programmes and divided them into four thematic axes: competition and the environment, land management, the promotion of economic diversification of rural areas, and the Leader programme serving as an impulse for activity, which, together with the third axis, became the main development tool of rural areas for subsequent programming periods. Currently, the rural area development policy is carried out in the form of multifaceted development programmes and the funding development strategy from the designated European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. Rural areas are also using support from other funds, including the social and regional fund. In the budget for 2014-2020, expenditure for the objectives of Pillar II of the CAP were raised from EUR 13.7 bn to EUR 14.3 bn, signifying a stronger tendency towards the development of non-production functions of agriculture and the significance of non-agricultural management domains in rural areas as well as a rise in the significance of public functions of rural areas. The RADP for these years was incorporated in the overall system of the development policy as expressed in "Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth". The main objective of RADP is to increase the competitiveness of agriculture, the sustainable management of natural resources and actions for the climate as well as achieving sustainable local and regional development of agricultural holdings and rural communities.

The considerable complexity and diversity of rural areas are becoming an issue in attempts to build a coherent theoretical concept of rural area development and prepare efficient and effective development plans and strategies of these areas both in national, regional and local terms. Practical difficulties are increasing even more so considering the fact that potential sources of support funds for rural area development programmes and strategies are dispersed in various EU funds and budget items, and are subject to the impact of various EU and national policies, the major being the Common Agricultural Policy, the Cohesion Policy and the Environmental Policy. The objective of the article is to prevent the major current theoretical concepts referring to rural area development and practical programmes supporting these areas. The study was prepared on the basis of problem literature and a review of official national and EU development programmes.

## DIVERSIFICATION OF THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF RURAL AREAS

One of the possibilities for the development of rural areas is the diversification of business activities and strengthening the resilience of these areas. This approach is clearly visible in multifunctional development strategies, the concepts of building local development programmes and strengthening the resilience of local systems.

The need for diversification, as part of balanced and sustainable development, was clearly stated in the 1st Cork Declaration in 1996 “Rural Europe – Perspectives for the Future”. It was then acknowledged that agriculture and farmers as well as horticulture, crucial for the rural economy, were losing their importance to non-agricultural sectors of the rural economy. The further development of these areas should thus consist of economic diversification implemented by small and medium-sized enterprises, mainly in the service sector. By diversifying the economy and the rural and cultural landscape of villages as well as developing new functions as part of agricultural holdings and outside of them should ensure a higher living standard for the rural population and the protection of natural resources and biodiversity. The new development model was to complement the CAP reform introduced in the 1990s and make rural areas more attractive to work and live in for various social groups of varying ages and professions. The proposed development model differed from the then implemented CAP policy, and the differentiation of business and social activity was to become possible with assistance designated for investment projects and services associated with business activities, the development of education and the training system, and streamlining the information and communication system, etc. Attention was drawn to simplified support procedures, the application of the subsidiarity principle, aiming for the decentralisation of activities, and increasing the role of local communities in programming and development management. Emphasising the crucial role of agriculture in meeting overall economic, social and environmental goals through the need to develop its multifunctionality, the 1st Cork Declaration became the basis for developing rural policy as part of Agenda 2000. Under the influence of the 1st Cork Declaration and Agenda 2000, the concept of the multifunctionality of rural areas and agriculture, which began to be developed in the 1970s, gained practical significance. It focused on utilising endogenous potential with the use of external support instruments.

The idea of diversification was reflected in local and regional development concepts, including the one referring to the development of local systems. Local and regional development is associated with specific areas, regional or local systems, as part of which natural and anthropogenic resources are considered jointly with the characteristics of local communities and the economy and used for the development of a given local and regional system. The local and regional development concept was most fully reflected in the notion of local development. Ryszard Brol defines local development as harmonised and systematic activities of society, public authorities and other entities operating within a given local or regional entity aiming at the creation of new and the improvement of existing use values in a given local or regional entity, creating favourable conditions for the economy and ensuring spatial and ecological order [Brol 1998]. Local development may also be defined as a set of qualitative transformations referring to a given area with regard to the living standards of people living there and the conditions of the functioning of

business entities located there. According to Irena Pietrzyk, local development is a process of diversifying and enriching business and the social activity of a given area, based on the mobilisation and coordination of its resources and energy undertaken by local actors on the basis of the valuation of local resources, taking its local/regional characteristics into consideration [Pietrzyk 1997]. Local development thus consists of the rational use of internal potentials and external factors of development of a given system. It is of a multifaceted nature, and its effects are expressed in economic growth indicators, and quality of life and social welfare measures, and can also be measured with criteria assessing the quality of the natural environment. Andrzej Łuczyszyn, referring to various definitions, states that the essence of local development is the economic and social transformation process in a local community, which should be considered in three dimensions: economic, social, environmental and spatial [Łuczyszyn 2013].

Aspects of diversification also occur in the concept of rural resilience [Heijman et al. 2007]. The concept is associated with situations involving development disruptions, which may result from unexpected phenomena or accumulating development-related disparities in a given local or regional system. These disparities and disruptions may result, e.g., from the deepening specialisation or concentration of agricultural production, resulting in unfavourable environmental phenomena, and even a loss of balance of natural rural ecosystems. Contemporary agriculture often creates interconnected chains or clusters with industrial agribusiness sectors, thus strengthening local competition, becoming a natural limitation for the development of services needed in rural areas, such as, e.g. tourist and recreation services. Conflicts arising in these situations lead to a search for programmes that will restore natural resilience in specific systems or reduce susceptibility to the negative consequences of developing economic and social structures.

## THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF RURAL AREA DEVELOPMENT

Strategies and policies shaping the development of rural areas and their practical applications are based on scientific achievements and the political process, transforming ideas and theoretical approaches into action programmes and legal regulations governing the interventions of authorities in economic processes. In the last three decades of the 20th century, a number of scientific concepts appeared referring to the support of rural area development processes. Janusz Siemiński identified two groups of theories, the first focusing on traditional concepts, such as the multifunctional development concept, social, economic and spatial order, the rural renewal concept, the concept of bottom-up development, activation and local community development. The second group contained more recent concepts for planning development, local development, sustainable development and revitalisation, etc. [Siemiński 1996]. These are not all science-derived ideas shaping the vision and methods of solving rural development issues in European countries. There are new concepts constantly emerging arising from globalisation, new technology development, innovation transfer and strengthening innovation processes, etc. Concepts of inclusive development and regional smart specialisations or smart rural areas can serve as examples. These concepts have been created by economists, sociologists,

geographers and specialists dealing with regional and spatial economy. Concepts developed as a result of unique attempts to combine scientific research results and expert studies with political initiatives have a different origin. The outcomes of this approach can be found in formulated EU development strategies as well as the 1st (1996) and 2nd (2016) Cork Declaration [Adamowicz, Zwolińska-Ligaj 2018]. The 1st Cork Declaration reinforced the claim that rural area development in Europe should be balanced and sustainable, with a local or regional focus. All other emerging rural development concepts make use of the theory of balanced and sustainable development as the primary basis for developing new approaches adjusted to changing conditions and taking advantage of new development opportunities and factors.

### THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS

The sustainable development concept can be defined as a set of activities aimed at meeting the basic needs of the population while preserving natural resources for future generations [Marsden 2003, Czudec et al. 2018]. The concept was based on the need to prevent the degradation of the natural environment, and soon enough covered economic and social aspects of development. The essence of sustainability is analysed and assessed according to various scales and perspectives. Over the past 50 years, it has been enriched with contributions from various scientific disciplines, becoming the basic paradigm of development programmes, policies and strategies formulated by international organisations, national governments and local and regional government bodies. Its essence is still to ensure the permanent improvement of the quality of life of contemporary and future generations by establishing rational proportions between various types of capital – economic, human and social capital as well as natural capital [Borys 2016]. The concept of the sustainable and balanced development of rural areas assumes simultaneous attempts to improve the living conditions of the rural population and conditions for business activities while preserving the typical resources of rural areas, such as the natural environment, landscape and cultural heritage. The approach is aimed at reconciling environmental, economic and social rights and is in constant search for appropriate development strategies ensuring the overall improvement of the living conditions of the population, maintaining healthy and resilient rural communities capable of acting economically while simultaneously preserving their values.

Rural areas have a number of specific characteristics and vary in terms of access to development factors. Jerzy Bański identifies the following characteristics of rural areas: an open landscape, low population density, the dominance of a population dealing with agriculture and silviculture, a traditional lifestyle and customs close to nature, extensive, mainly agricultural and horticultural land use, scarcity of built-up areas and dispersed settlement as well as residents' considering themselves rural inhabitants [Bański 2011]. Along with various advantages, there are some generally occurring development barriers and threats. The diversity and complexity of the subject matter points to the need to take connections between the current development state and level, problems to be solved, specific assets of the given system and goals to be achieved into consideration.

The subject matter of the sustainable development of rural areas has been undertaken in various strategies and programmes launched by international organisations (the UN, the OECD, the EU). The major EU strategy, the aforementioned Europe 2020 Strategy, is implemented in practice in accordance with programmes adapted to a given country's circumstances. In reference to previous activities, the UN has recently announced the "Agenda 2030" document, which identifies recommended mechanisms to be developed in order to ensure the sustainable development of rural areas on an international, national, regional and local scale. Taking the considerable diversity of rural areas in the world into consideration, Agenda 2030 identified 17 general sustainable development objectives for these areas and 169 detailed tasks to tackle such challenges as poverty, climate change, environmental pollution, geographical differences, ensuring safety and social justice, etc. [Mihai, Iatu 2020]. It is stated in the document that, in addition to food, rural areas are a source of labour resources also used in urban areas, a refuge for endangered plant and animal species and natural landscapes and areas in need of protection. Rural settlements are an important element of national and regional cultural heritage. Thus, sustainable rural development is a complex set of significant issues for a country's whole society. The key issue for rural area development is the management of land resources and the determination of optimum proportions and a balance between agricultural land, built-up and transport areas and areas constituting protected natural resources. Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on climate change can be regarded as ones with the most ambitious international initiatives referring to the perspectives of future economic development associated with environmental aspects.

Although the sustainable development concept has generally been accepted as the basis for rural development processes, there are many barriers to its practical implementation [Guzal-Dec 2018]. Although it is theoretically strong and seems necessary, it is often regarded to be of a postulative and aspirational nature rather than having practical application [A. Dacko, M. Dacko 2018]. Thus, continuous attempts are being made to operationalise, elaborate and implement it in whole or in part. This is also a source of new enriched or supplemented theoretical concepts [Heijman et al. 2007, Kożuch 2010, Guzal-Dec 2018, Zwolińska-Ligaj 2018, Bryant, Granjon 2009, Sobczyk 2014]. The study presents an outline of selected general concepts and those highlighting the main economic or social aspects.

## SMART RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The origin of the notion of smart development related to local and regional systems should be sought in various socio-economic and local and regional development theories and concepts – (Porter's) cluster theory, the local and regional competitiveness theory, the innovation theory, the human capital theory, the social capital theory, the local and regional rooting theory, the local production systems theory, the innovative environment theory, the learning regions theory as well as the regional innovation systems theory, etc. [Szczech-Pietkiewicz 2015, Dudek 2018]. These concepts were used to develop regional development policies. These policies were directed at stimulating the endogenous potential



of regions, and strengthening intraregional cooperation and innovativeness. One of the three priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy was smart growth, as part of which the goal was formulated to support a knowledge- and innovation-based economy through the improvement of European potential for innovation, the results of educational processes and the use of economic and social capabilities of the digital society. Smart rural development should be understood as a type of economic progress achievable as a result of innovation, education and research activities in rural areas [EC 2010, Naldi et al. 2015, Wolski 2018]. The smart growth model proposed for rural areas sees rural areas as separate and sustainable in terms of resources and market relations, requiring preservation measures, not only reducing the backlog in the developmental distance in relation to urban areas. In this approach to the smart rural development concept, major tasks should consist of building local and regional economic, social, environmental and cultural capital [Bryden, Dawe 1998]. Smart rural development is defined by interrelated factors, such as the socio-economic structural characteristics of an area (human resources, human capital, mobility, capital resources, location and markets); natural and environmental resources (natural environment assets, landscape and cultural heritage); connections and cooperation networks (local markets, ICT infrastructure, social capital and cooperation with the external environment). The smart rural area concept assumes that social activation and technological progress, when effectively integrated with other development initiatives, can create new revenue-generating opportunities, improve the products and services offering and lead to an overall strengthening of the local community, resulting in the improvement of the quality of life in rural areas. In the production aspect, the smart village may mean investing in infrastructure, efficient management, implementing new technologies and smart specialisations adjusted to local production conditions and sales markets. Marcin Wójcik [Wójcik 2018] considers the following factors as elements of smart rural development: public services (education, healthcare, safety and housing, etc.); the management and co-management of commune space; the creativity of local communities, technological innovations directed at cooperation and entrepreneurship; developing modern forms of social communication as well as environmental protection and new forms of utilising the natural environment's potential.

The smart rural development concept emphasises the role of bottom-up pro-development measures taken by local leaders in cooperation with local and regional government bodies and the need for the transfer of innovation into rural areas from outside with a considerable contribution of social innovations, which may enable the more effective implementation of technological innovations. Implementing the concept should contribute to creating local innovation systems developed on the basis of cooperation networks joining businesses from various sectors and other entities operating within the local system and in neighbouring urban areas. The sectors which may form a space for smart rural development include tourist, health and recreation services, ecological production, traditional food production, handicraft and cultural services. They often constitute market niches which need to be discovered and developed with local systems [Guzal-Dec 2018].

It seems that the smart rural development concept corresponds to contemporary challenges arising from the strengthening of a knowledge-based economy using



technological and social innovations and networking connections, conducive to increasing the competitiveness of rural areas in various local and regional systems. By emphasizing a rural area's regional and local traits, it helps focus on taking care of the quality of life and working conditions of rural area residents as well as the natural and cultural environment. Thus, this is a concept which may be used in order to develop a rural area's development strategy and policy.

## ENDOGENOUS AND OPEN (NEO-ENDOGENOUS) RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

The concept of endogenous development, which is a bottom-up comprehensive approach to local development, is based on the use of local resources and endogenous potential in building the local and regional capital of a given spatial system. Endogenous development factors therefore include all local needs and development possibilities, i.e. material, natural, economic, financial, human and cultural resources [Wojtasiewicz 1996]. An important development factor is the state of activity of the local community, comprising the activity of leaders, elites and institutions, i.e. the level of social capital. The concept focuses on the symbiosis between rural areas and small towns and economic centres. In the last 3 decades of the 20th century, the role of the endogenous factor in local development increased. The barrier for the success of the concept of building endogenous potential was often a lack of funds preventing access to innovation. No local system was able to fully utilise local resources without an inflow of external, exogenous development factors. Pointing the attention to the significance of exogenous factors in activating the potential of endogenous resources take the form of a new, modified concept of local development under the name of endogenous development. Thus, the concept was open to an inflow of external innovation and was based on cooperation, also with external actors, made possible due to the contribution of external funds and various forms of their use. Such funds could be provided as part of the RADP introduced under the EU rural development policy. The most popular forms of implementing the concept became Local Action Groups under the LEADER and LEADER+ programmes. The programme was developed with particular dynamism after the 2004 EU expansion with Central and Eastern European countries [Konečný 2019]. This expansion led to the LEADER programme being reshaped into the leading form of transformation, stabilisation and development of rural areas in Europe. However, it must be stated that the model was not the same everywhere, as it took various forms and used various instruments adjusted to local needs and circumstances. However, the LEADER programme was oriented towards the evolution of the development potential, increasing the efficiency of the local economy and building capabilities of local entities to cooperate on perspective goals through local communities and their actors. Quite often the LEADER concept is perceived as an effective way of strengthening the still limited development potential of rural areas.

## CONCLUSIONS

The idea of rural growth is primarily based on the concept of sustainable and balanced development, taking the need for equal consideration in the rural development programmes of economic, social and environmental aspects into consideration, without violating the interests of future generations. The practical specification of sustainable and balanced development should be adjusted to the circumstances and factors of a specific territory.

The sustainable development concept, along with scientific progress and changing conditions, encompasses new theoretical and practical concepts of rural development, emphasis on the significance of new innovation factors, taking new needs and development opportunities as well as expectations as to the way of life into consideration. Such concepts may include the development of smart rural areas and regional specialisations, rural economic diversification, development based on endogenous resources and the open development concept also using exogenous resources.

Since EU's extension with Central and Eastern European countries, the LEADER programme, based on open (non-endogenous) development, turned out to be an efficient and effective rural development method. An important success factor of the programme is external support from EU funds provided through the European Rural Development Policy associated with the Common Agricultural Policy and the Cohesion Policy.

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## TEORETYCZNE I PRAKTYCZNE KONCEPCJE ROZWOJU OBSZARÓW WIEJSKICH

Słowa kluczowe: obszary wiejskie, polityka rozwoju wsi, teoria rozwoju zrównoważonego, inteligentna wieś, rozwój endo- i neoendogeniczny

### ABSTRAKT

Celem pracy jest przedstawienie aktualnych koncepcji teoretycznych odnoszących się do rozwoju obszarów wiejskich, a także praktycznych programów wsparcia rozwoju tych obszarów, prowadzonych w Polsce i Unii Europejskiej (UE). Analizę przeprowadzono na podstawie literatury przedmiotu. Przedstawiono obszary wiejskie jako przedmiot odniesienia polityk rozwojowych, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem polityki spójności (PS) i wspólnej polityki rolnej (WPR), w tym programów rozwoju obszarów wiejskich (PROW) UE. Wśród teoretycznych koncepcji rozwoju wsi szczególną uwagę poświęcono teorii zrównoważonego i trwałego rozwoju, jako podstawy do kształtowania praktycznych programów rozwoju i wyłaniania się nowych innowacyjnych ujęć teoretycznych. Spośród tych ostatnich przedstawiono koncepcję inteligentnych wsi, koncepcję prężności, programowania rozwoju lokalnego, oddolnego rozwoju edogenicznego oraz neoendogeniczną koncepcję rozwoju otwartego. Uznano, że neoendogeniczna koncepcja LEADER i LEADER+ stanowi skuteczną formę wspierania rozwoju obszarów wiejskich, zwłaszcza po piątym rozszerzeniu UE na Europę Środkowo-Wschodnią.

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