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## CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS OF MULTIFUNCTIONALITY IN POLISH AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND RESEARCH

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**ABSTRACT.** This study seeks to analyse the process of rural areas policy development in Poland. In this sense, various approaches towards multifunctional rural development within the scientific arena are presented. In Poland, the concept of multifunctionality of rural areas occurred at the beginning of the 1990's as a result of political system transformation. The research conducted so far points to the definitions of multifunctionality of rural areas as referring to non-agricultural activities of the rural community.

**Key words:** agricultural policy, multifunctionality, sustainability, Poland

### Introduction

In Poland, there are 870 cities of which 564 are small cities perceived as part of rural areas and 56 803 villages. Among villages around 15% account for fewer than 100 persons, 66% – from 100 to 500, 13% – from 500 to 1000, 6% – above 1000 habitats. Rural areas are rich in human resources, but the level of education is lower in comparison with inhabitants of big cities. In the country, the level of higher and secondary education is 17%, while in the city it is 43%. Rural areas in Poland are diversified with reference to the settlement network. Although rural areas occupy 93.4% territory, and 38.1% (14,39 M.) of Polish population live there, agricultural activity is main source of income only for 8% of the farming community (**Gospodarka...** 2001). The rates of income of rural community mainly consist of retirement payments, pensions and social aid. In this regard, the issue of seeking alternative sources of incomes is pointed. The direction towards multifunctional development of rural areas is taken (**Woś** 1998). Referring to the surveys carried out so far, Polish people take the first place in Europe, in accordance with the willingness for running own businesses, but at the same time they are the least competitive (**Gospodarka...** 2001).

## Historical and cultural context

After World War II till the late 80's the development of the socio-economic system in the Central and East European countries remained under the Soviet Union influence. As the change from the system of planning economy to the market economy took place in 1989, Poland implemented the objectives of the free market economy. Thus, development of the concept of multifunctionality has been affected by changes within political system and industrialization processes. They brought both positive (new work-places) and negative effects (one-sided development of industry and cities, degradation of socio-economic rural structure). Simultaneously, contrary to the West European countries the actions to develop multifunctionality of agriculture and rural areas were not undertaken. In this regard, we can distinguish three phases (Fig. 1) within the research conducted on the multifunctionality: I – 1945-1989, II – 1990-2000, III – 2001-2004.

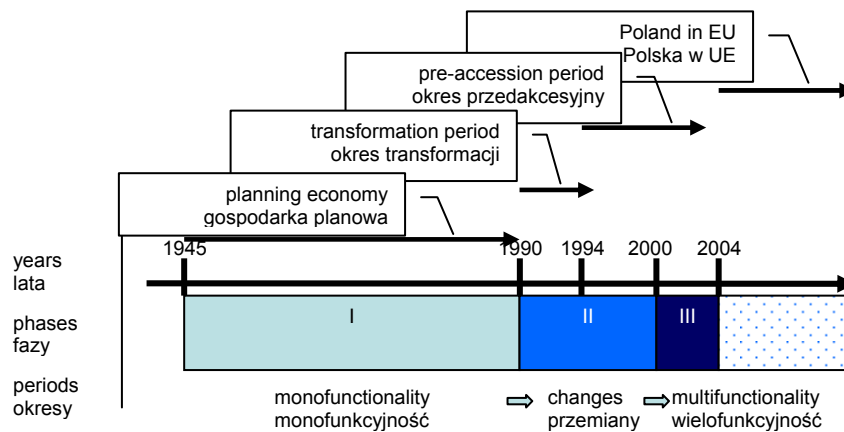


Fig. 1. Phases within research conducted on the multifunctionality  
Ryc. 1. Wielofunkcyjność w badaniach naukowych

The first phase can be characterized as a lack of postulates and research on multifunctionality of rural development. The rural areas development was exclusively linked to the development of agricultural productivity at that time. Thus, the concept of multifunctional rural development occurred in late 80. as response to difficulties of the then existing model of development. It was perceived as abandonment of agriculture as pre-dominant function of rural development.

In the second phase attempts to undertake work on multifunctional rural development were made, but the research was conducted accidentally. However, some of the concerns of multifunctionality of rural areas development were integrated in government's document.

The third phase takes into account research driven by the process of Poland's unification to the European Union's structures, the use of pre-accession funds and currently the CAP instruments and structural policy concerning the issue of rural areas development.

Although the multifunctional approach of rural areas in Poland is said to be insufficient, rapid changes have been made since 1989. It should be noted that significant problems in adapting rural areas to the market economy structures still exist. They occurred mainly as a result of long-term neglects and the lack of capital from the government budget. However, from the early 90s the idea of multifunctional development of rural areas has been implemented in Poland. Rural areas in Poland are diversified with reference to the spatial diversification of economic structures (Lewczuk 2003). The central and central-western part of Poland is characterized by the highest rates of development (GDP per inhabitant). The majority of rural areas in Poland, struggle with typical restraints of being situated in peripheral areas, remote of the economic centers (Duczkowska-Malysz 1994, 1998, Uwarunkowania... 1995): capital deficits and the lack of ability to gather assets, which can be used for investments; monofunctional approach, which manifests itself in rich human resources defined as registered and latent unemployment rates combined with the agricultural structures requiring a large workforce input; obsolete socio-profession structure, which comprises farmers and the population doing simple non-agricultural work; registered and latent unemployment; undeveloped business and institutional infrastructure, lack of tradition and skills of creating and running own enterprises; unfavourable demographic situation, combined with a low level of education among rural communities, which is an important constraint of the development process.

### **Interpretation of MF at the policy level**

During the system of planning economy, no support, towards rural areas development, was given in Poland. The first practical approach was undertaken in accordance with Phare Fund (Heller 2000). Progress was made as other pre-accession funds were made available, mainly through SAPARD. Within the agricultural ministry, the efforts to elaborate the documents, defining aims and presumptions of rural areas policy, have been made. These documents specify objectives, priorities and rules of the integration process within the European Union structures. The directions of redistribution of pre-accession and structural funds are set. Primary documents comprise: **The coherent structural policy of agricultural and rural areas development, The National Pre-accession Programme, The Operational SAPARD Programme for Poland.** Currently, Poland as a member of the European Union, is implementing the objectives of **Sectoral Operational Programme (SPO) “The restructuring and modernisation of the food sector and the development of rural areas”**, of which, the core issue is sustainable rural development approach. This programme is accompanied by the Rural Development Plan, Integrated Operational Programme of Regional Development, Sectoral Operational Programme “Enhancement of Competitiveness”, Sectoral Operational Programme “Development of Human Resources” and Sectoral Operational Programme “Environmental Protection and Water Economy”.

## Conceptions of MF in academic/research work

The concepts of multifunctional rural development include process of revitalizing the rural areas through the provision of new workplaces within non-agricultural sectors (**Kobialka** 2003). **Kostrowicki** (1976) was one of the first authors that have stressed the idea of multifunctional rural development. He pointed the research and planistic concerns of rural areas. In the 80s, the broad approach with reference to the functions of rural areas was elaborated by **Stoła** (1987). She concluded that the process, of setting the complex spatial – functional structures within rural areas, is being made. She underlined the matter of basic and supplementary functions within the structures of country settlement. In the 90s, **Stasiak** and **Kulikowski** (1996) undertook the comprehensive approach. Currently, the main objective of multifunctionality contains improvement of economic and living conditions of rural areas communities. This goal can be attained by an increase in diversity of workplaces accompanied by an increase in income and the attractiveness of countryside as a place for living (**Zarębski** 2001, **Wilkin** 2000, **Duczkowska-Malysz** 1997, **Rosner** 1999, **Heffner** 1999). Therefore, issues concerning rural development can be found in Polish literature. Regional surveys have been carried out, which mostly consider the economic potential of rural areas and the multifunctional approach of rural development. Regional analyses of the units of NUTS II level were also conducted (**Sobkow** 2003, **Łuczak** and **Wysoki** 2001, **Wilkin** 2000, **Szczepaniak** and **Wigier** 2000, **Kłodziński** 1994).

It should be noted that rural areas in Poland are diversified with reference to the spatial diversification of economic structures. As a result research conducted in various scientific units differs significantly as they have different characters and approaches of development of agriculture and multifunctionality.

## “Sustainability” and “Multifunctionality”

In Poland, there are various definitions of “sustainable development”. The definitions differ in accordance with the various factors taken into consideration. In this regard, the most common factors are ecological or economic. “Sustainable development” can therefore be defined in various ways and the term can encompass: eco-development, permanent development and an integrated framework (**Fiedor** 2001). The broadest term used is “permanent development”, which requires the balance between economic, social and environmental quality issues and maintenance of natural resources for future generations. In this regard, “permanent development” must be sustainable and must fulfil the requirements of an integrated framework taking into consideration basic aspects of development: social, ecological, cultural, spatial and institutional interference among them. Success of the sustainable development approach depends upon equal treatment of all frameworks, giving prominence to one framework e.g. economic would lead to social and ecological problems in the long term (**Wiatrak** 2003). Within the Polish scientific literature “sustainable development” is defined as development, which reconciles nature and economy objectives with economic activity (**Kozłowski** 1989): aims, regional objectives, rate and quality objectives. Sustainable development leads to rural areas development, which means “adding” to regular agricultural activity, other produc-

tivity areas (diversification in agricultural activities), in order to achieve agribusiness approach. The main activities combined with this approach are: processing of agricultural products, investments designed to improve agricultural and processing activities, trade of agricultural products, specialization of agricultural productivity, agri-tourism, landscape preservation and natural heritage conservation (**Szczepaniak** and **Wigier** 2000). Rural areas, by taking over agricultural and non-agricultural activities, contribute to a decrease of rate of unemployment and enhance the enterprise among rural communities.

However, multifunctional rural development includes both agricultural and ecological aspects related to recreational and settlement activities (**Zarebski** 2001). Multifunctional development of rural areas can also be perceived as socio-economic development of countryside and comprehensive approach should be undertaken. Thus, the modernization of agriculture and multifunctional development issues are combined (**Duczkowska-Malysz** 1997, **Kłodziński** 1994).

Multifunctionality of countryside should be based on gradual avoidance of agriculture as the prior source of farmers' income. Currently, the advanced process of urbanization is connected with the improvement of the socio-technical state of rural infrastructure, resulting from structural changes (**Heffner** 1999).

The main directions of multifunctional rural development in Poland contain:

- agri-tourism (including farm tourism, eco-tourism, hotel industry, gastronomy),
- nature protection (the conservation of landscapes, municipal services),
- processing of wastes (getting recyclable materials back, composting, etc.),
- trade (mainly food trade),
- sustainable agricultural economy,
- forestry and fisheries,
- use of natural energy resources (the delimitation and restriction of use and seeking alternative and renewable sources of energy).

## Conclusions

In Poland the development of concepts of multifunctionality occurred simultaneously with changes in the economy system in the late 90's. The literature on the subject indicates that the definitions of multifunctional rural development apply to development of non-agricultural economic activities of rural population. Although initially the activity related to productivity was the only one taken into consideration, subsequent development of multifunctional activities included service aspects as well (mainly ecological and environmental services). In the recent past the concepts were developed and related to the integration process and the ability of pre-accession fund use. Currently the instruments of the CAP and structural policy have been added, within which the activities for rural areas development are unified. The concepts that relate in direct or indirect way to the rural development have also been recognized. Depending on scientific discipline we can point to such concepts as: "spatial order", "local development", "development of community", "eco-development" and "the concept of revitalization".

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KONCEPCJE I DEFINICJE WIELOFUNKCYJNOŚCI W POLSKIEJ POLITYCE  
ROLNEJ I BADANIACH

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Celem artykułu było zanalizowanie koncepcji wielofunkcyjnego rozwoju rolnictwa i obszarów wiejskich. Przeprowadzone badania określiły kierunki rozwoju polityki obszarów wiejskich w Polsce. Jednocześnie przedstawiono różne podejścia badawcze dotyczące wielofunkcyjnego rozwoju obszarów wiejskich. W Polsce zwarte koncepcje wielofunkcyjności rolnictwa i obszarów wiejskich pojawiły się na początku lat dziewięćdziesiątych w rezultacie transformacji systemu politycznego i dążenia do integracji z Unią Europejską. Przeprowadzone dotychczas w Polsce badania wskazują, że wielofunkcyjność jest definiowana przede wszystkim w odniesieniu do rozwoju pozarolniczej aktywności społeczności wiejskiej.