

## THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF RURAL AREAS

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the work is to make a synthetic review of definitions of regional and local development in economic terms in relation to rural development. Rural development is a topic often taken up in scientific research by sociologists, geographers and economists, but it is not defined in a specific way, and is usually understood as development in relation to rural areas. Therefore, the paper presents an overview of various approaches to local development and regional development, using the method of literature studies. The work has reviewed many approaches, features and definitions of socio-economic development as well as regional and local development, which also refer to rural areas and finally proposed a place for rural development in regional and local development.

**Key words:** rural development, local development, regional development, definitions

### INTRODUCTION

Rural development is a topic frequently undertaken in interdisciplinary research, in which, in addition to economists, work carried out by sociologists, geographers and representatives of other scientific fields is of great importance. However, the issue of rural development does not constitute a separate research area, and is usually understood as regional or local development in relation to rural areas. There is a lack of a universally recognized definition of rural areas, although they cover approximately 93% of the total area of Poland. On the other hand, to the rural areas refer strategic documents as Strategy for the sustainable development of the countryside, agriculture and fisheries or Rural Development Program. In the literature on the subject socio-economic issues are exposed, which was also reflected in this work in which the review of theoretical and definitional approaches on socio-economic development, including regional and


local development, was presented, emphasizing the economic approach.

### MATERIAL, AIMS AND METHODS

The aim of the work is to make a synthetic review of the definition of regional and local development in economic terms in relation to rural development. Selected definitions and theoretical aspects are shown, while the work deliberately omits issues of development factors, indicators and methods of measuring development, which can be a material for a separate, comprehensive scientific article. A wide overview of regional and local development theories can be found among others in papers by Capello and Nijkamp [2009], Capello [2011] or Rakowska [2016].

The method of literature studies was used, based on which an overview of various approaches to local development and regional development was presented. Fragments of the literature review made by the author

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in his doctoral dissertation were also used [Stawicki 2011].

## **DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH AS ECONOMIC CATEGORIES**

In economic sciences, both concepts of growth and development are used, but they can not be used interchangeably. Regional economics deals with the regularities of socio-economic and spatial development and its shaping in regional and supra-regional terms [Secomski 1982]. Economic growth is one of the objects of interest in macroeconomics. The economy of development deals with the study of development processes in low-income countries [Bartkowiak 2010], in particular the causes of poverty and the possibilities of stimulating economic development. The following are the basic differences between the two concepts, hereinafter the definitions of socio-economic development are presented.

Growth is a process of intensification, increase and intensification of existing features of observed phenomena and limitations, as a result of which phenomena increase their possessed parameters [Kupiec 2008]. Economic growth should be understood as increasing the potential gross domestic product of a country or a gross national product [Samuelson and Nordhaus 2004]. The most important growth factors are: human resources, natural resources, capital accumulation, technology.

On the other hand, development is, according to the Polish language dictionary, “a process of change leading to improvement of something, to increase something, to achieve a higher level in some respect” [Dunaj 2001]. It is also defined as “a process of changes taking place in every field, and at the same time creating a process of transformations consisting of increasing and intensifying and improving existing features, as well as the emergence and further development of new phenomena”, which results in positive qualitative changes and structural, spatial and functional transformations [Kupiec 2008]. A variety of definitions of economic development were presented by Siudek et al. [2014].

Thus, development is the result of positive changes in quantitative growth and qualitative progress in eco-

nomie, social and natural systems [Markowski 2008]. These changes take place both in terms of time and space. Gorzelak [1989], having reviewed the definitions of the term development in the literature, notes that:

- development is a concept of many dimensions which combines many mutually dependent phenomena;
- development, apart from the growth (the quantitative category), means also structural changes;
- development is dynamic and spatially diversified.

In summary, development can be defined as a transition from worse to better, a process of positive change involving qualitative and quantitative growth.

### **Socio-economic development**

According to the definition proposed by Chojnicki and Czyż [2006], “socio-economic development can be defined as a set of targeted changes that take place in various spheres of social reality: economic, political, institutional, cultural, biological, ecological and environmental protection”. It consists of two main elements, which are economic development and social development.

Economic development is a long-term process of change taking place in the economy, which includes both quantitative changes related to production growth, employment, investment, capital, income, consumption and other economic variables characterizing the economy from the quantitative aspect (economic growth), as well as accompanying changes with qualitative character. Among them one can include technical and technological progress, improvement of the system of economic connections within the country and links with the global economy, increase in the level of qualifications of the workforce, changes in the structure of the economy aimed at its modernization, increase in efficiency on the micro and macroeconomic scale, the emergence of new products and improvement of quality of the already produced. While it is possible to grow without development, it is not possible to develop without growth [Encyklopedia PWN 2016].

Social development is defined as the development of social units and social systems and the process of change leading, among others, to enrich and diversify

the organizational and cultural structures of a given community [Encyklopedia PWN 2016]. On a local scale, it relies on better and better meeting the social needs of the population and business entities in a given area.

### **Rural development as an element of regional and local development**

Rural development is not a separate category within the framework of development economics, which addresses these issues within the scope of development of agriculture or selected development problems (such as poverty, marginalization, exclusion, migration) [Zawalińska 2009]. Specific aspects of development of rural areas were presented i.a. by Bański [2017]. Rural development should be understood primarily as local development in relation to rural areas, regional development concerns entire regions (e.g. voivodships), thus units covering both rural and metropolitan areas. This approach is confirmed by the fact that rural development is defined as a process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in peripheral and sparsely populated areas [Moseley 2003]. Ellis and Biggs [2001] presented the evolving ideas in rural development in the 20th century. In the following, the basic definitions are presented: in a narrower scope of regional development, and more broadly of local development, which also apply to non-urbanized areas.

Local development can be understood as a complex of positive qualitative transformations in the area of living standards of people living in a given area [Wojtasiewicz 1997]. Another concept is local economic development defined as a process in which the following sectors cooperate with each other to create better conditions for economic growth and new jobs: the public sector, the business sector and the non-governmental sector. The goal of local development is to improve the quality of life for everyone [Bank Światowy 2003, Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska 2010].

Blakely and Leigh [2002] believe that local development is a process of supporting or at least maintaining employment in industries that bring specific benefits for a given local community. In Polish literature there are many different definitions of local development. According to Pietrzyk [1997], this con-

cept “belongs to very imprecise, ambiguous and has an ideological tone”. Another definition is given by Brol [1999], for whom it is “a process of changes taking place in a city, rural or urban-rural commune or otherwise delimited subregion, ie a local socio-territorial system identified by special features of space, economy and culture, as well as local preferences needs and hierarchy of values”.

Canzanelli [2001] defines local development as a participatory process that facilitates partnership between local stakeholders, enabling joint design and implementation of strategies, mainly based on the competitive use of local resources to create decent jobs and sustainable business. Markowski [2008] defines local development as a result of positive changes in quantitative growth and qualitative progress in economic, social and natural systems. At the same time, he points out that the natural system is perceived as an integral component in the contemporary paradigm of local development.

In general, local development is related to the local scale of socio-economic activity and takes place in the local environment of a given community using local development resources and through the involvement of local communities, local self-government structures and other organizations and institutions, especially non-commercial ones. Therefore according to Parysek [2001], local development is based on endogenous development factors (local people, local organizations and economic entities, local resources, local needs, etc.) and complements regional development taking place on the basis of exogenous factors. This concept seems to omit the importance of endogenous potential, which stimulates regional development as well.

According to Adamowicz [2003], local development may be defined as a process of economic, social, political and cultural changes leading to raising the general level of well-being of the inhabitants. The development components can be:

- economic growth;
- reducing unemployment;
- increase in the well-being and quality of life of the population (e.g. housing equipment);
- increased investment attractiveness (land preparation, entrepreneurship support);

- technological development and implementation of innovations;
- restructuring and diversification of economic activity;
- development of services and technical infrastructure;
- increase in occupational and social mobility of people (training, counseling, development of new qualifications);
- development of institutional infrastructure and non-governmental organizations;
- improvement of the quality of the natural environment;
- strengthening local or regional identity, social integration.

In turn, Pietrzyk [2000] believes that local development is not only “development on a local scale” but also stresses the bottom-up nature of this process. According to Kowalska [2003], despite various approaches to the definition of local development, the authors mostly note the following common features of this phenomenon:

- the subject of development on a local scale are residents of a given area;
- the key drivers of development are primarily endogenous factors;
- local development is a broader concept than economic development;
- the criterion of development is the satisfaction of residents and the improvement of living conditions;
- local development is not a state but a process.

In a broad sense, local development is based on three levels [Pająk 2003]:

- the social sphere – it causes an increase in the level of education, awareness and culture of the inhabitants;
- the ecological and spatial sphere, meaning shaping the spatial order, respecting the values of the natural environment;
- the economic sphere in which it manifests itself in the development of entrepreneurship.

Local development is therefore also a social process, which consists in activating local communities, externalizing local pro-development attitudes and participation of social institutions [Parysek 2001]. It should be remembered that local development is influ-

enced by processes taking place in the environment, both closer (in the region) and further (in the country and abroad) and the territorial local system should be considered as an element of a larger whole. On the one hand, the local unit imports goods and services, is supplied from outside (e.g. with energy, raw materials), and on the other hand, it exports the effects of its own economic activity [Kot 2001].

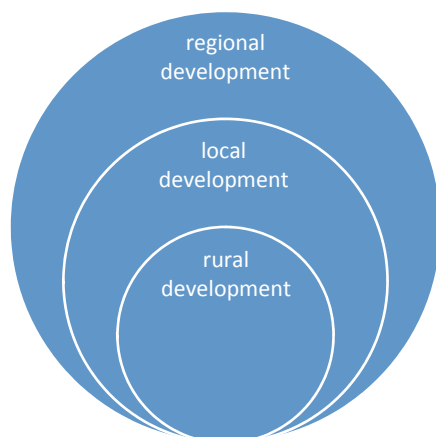
Local development is understood as a continuous transformation of territories, both in time and space and is conditioned by the relations between various local actors [Conti and Giaccaria 2001]. Local development is closely related to the concept of regional development. According to some researchers, local development is identical to the regional one, and the only difference is the size of the territorial unit, the development of which concerns (local – small units, e.g. municipalities, regional – large enough voivodships) [Kosiedowski 2005].

Locality is on the one hand a factor, a component of the development of the region, on the other hand, the development of regions is based on local potential [Siemiński 1994]. As the quoted author points out, there is confusion and incompatibility in terms of terminology and the relationship between local and regional development. Therefore, the basic definitions of regional development are presented below.

According to Szlachta [1996], regional development is “systematic improvement of competitiveness of economic entities and the standard of living of inhabitants, as well as the increase of economic potential of regions contributing to the socio-economic development of the country”. Regional development is also understood as a process of improving conditions in underdeveloped regions or undergoing structural changes [Bingham and Mier 1993]. Regional development can also be treated as the country’s development in the decomposition into regions [Gorzela 1989].

All the above mentioned concepts are similar and complement each other. According to the author’s idea, regional development is therefore somewhat broader than local development, not only due to the larger territory, but also a wider scope including impact on development and economic competitiveness at the national level. Regional development refers also to larger territorial units, in Poland – voivodships (or

regions at NUTS-2 level) and statistical macroregions (NUTS-1 level), while local development means the development of municipalities (communes) and counties (poviats). In this way, local development can be taken into consideration as an element of regional development processes. The development of rural areas refers to local development in rural areas, so it can be treated as a part of local development containing improvement of living conditions. Consequently therefore it is an element of regional development as regions cover both rural and metropolitan areas. The idea showing the relations between the discussed development processes are presented in the figure.



**Fig.** Relations between rural, local and regional development

Source: Own elaboration.

## CONCLUSIONS

As can be seen from the above considerations and analyzes of other authors, the concept of development, including local development, is considered to be ambiguous. In the literature one can find various research approaches, different interpretations and, consequently, various definitions of development [Wojewódzka 2009].

Development processes in rural areas are one of the elements that make up the development of regions. Regional development refers to the social and economic development of countries and regions. The development of rural areas, as an element of regional

development, should be defined as the local socio-economic development and improvement of living conditions in relation to rural areas.

Summing up, it can be stated that the development of rural areas as local development is a process of changes in the economic, social, political and cultural sphere, which results in an increase in the well-being of the population. This is a particularly important process in poorer regions, which are characterized by a lower initial level of development. These regions include areas distant from larger urban centers with a large share of agriculture and forestry sector in economy and employment, and above all, rural areas. This is one of the reasons of the growing interest in scientific research on the issue of rural development in economic sciences. Further studies can be aiming at identification of successful rural development mechanisms and creating new concepts of development in the 21st century globalized economy.

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## **TEORETYCZNE UJĘCIA ROZWOJU LOKALNEGO W KONTEKŚCIE OBSZARÓW WIEJSKICH**

### **STRESZCZENIE**

Celem pracy jest dokonanie syntetycznego przeglądu definicji rozwoju regionalnego i lokalnego pod względem ekonomicznym w odniesieniu do ewolucji obszarów wiejskich. Rozwój obszarów wiejskich jest tematyką często podejmowaną w badaniach naukowych zarówno przez ekonomistów, jak i socjologów czy geografów, przy czym nie jest definiowany w sposób szczególny – zwykle jest rozumiany jako rozwój w odniesieniu do obszarów wiejskich. W pracy zastosowano metodę studiów literaturowych i dokonano przeglądu wielu ujęć, cech i definicji rozwoju społeczno-gospodarczego oraz rozwoju regionalnego i lokalnego, które odnoszą się także do obszarów wiejskich. Dodatkowo określono miejsce przemian obszarów wiejskich w rozwoju regionalnym i lokalnym.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rozwój obszarów wiejskich, rozwój lokalny, rozwój regionalny, definicje