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Development of Non-Governmental Organizations in Poland

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents the results based on the survey about the development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Poland. The authors present the owner's opinions of NGOs managers. Moreover, the authors presented characteristics of the non-governmental organizations and the area of their activities, areas of intersectoral cooperation, difficulties in the operation, and other factors. We used: descriptive, tabular and graphic methods to describe the changes and opinions about factors of non-governmental organization development. The study was conducted via telephone interviews with representatives of computer-aided, non-governmental organizations active in rural areas. The survey found that organizations located in rural areas have their own traditional identity and specificity. Most of them work in the city (93.7%) and only (6.3%) in the village. These are small organizations that generally employ up to 9 people.

KEY WORDS: NGOs, institutions, development, rural areas

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Introduction

The NGO sector includes groups not included in public activity and social institutions. These organizations are characterized by self-governance and independence from state institutions. These institutions are not focused on income generation (Pawłowska, 2015). Nowadays we can observe a tremendous increase of the number of NGOs. According to Adamski et al. (2014) there are about 83,5 thousand organizations,

69,6 thousand associations and similar social organizations, 8,5 thousand foundations, 3,6 thousand economic organizations, professionals and employers, and 1,8 thousand religious organizations running social activity in Poland.

NGOs play an important role in the development of entrepreneurship. The problem of entrepreneurship development interests not only people seeking their own professional development, but also is an alternative to salary-based employment (Staniewski, 2016). Entrepreneurship is also a possible remedy for unemployment. The entrepreneurship improves conditions of living in a country (Staniewski & Szopiński, 2013). The development of entrepreneurship depends on the economic system and the capitalism system increases the number of entrepreneurs and managers (Schumpeter, 2003).

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The NGOs have an impact on the development of innovations, which occurs through scientific and educational development. Their meaning is numerous. The innovations satisfy public needs and create goods and services for customers (Gashenko, Vokina, Romanov, Bezrukova, & Kozenko, 2016).

There are many classifications of nonprofit organizations. They can be classified in different groups: culture and recreation, education and research, health, social services, environment, development and housing, law, advocacy and politics, international, religion, business and professional associations, unions, and other (Salomon & Anheier, 1996).

The NGOs play an important role in the economic growth and development of rural areas and regions. The economic growth reflects the volume of national production (Vokina, Zima, Sinyavsky, Meshkov, & Sultanova, 2016). The factors hampering the development of rural NGOs and the main areas of NGO activities in rural areas need special attention in the literature.

The purpose of this article was to characterize NGOs in Poland and their role in the development of rural areas in Poland.

To develop the main objective the authors wanted to answer following questions:

1. Where are the NGOs located?
2. How many people work in the NGOs?
3. Where do NGOs function?
4. What is the scope of NGO activities?
5. What is the most important success of the surveyed NGOs?

The paper is organized as follows. First we describe the institutions and the NGOs in literature and non-profit organizations. Second we present methodology. Third we describe our main results. The final part is our conclusions.

Literature review

This part of our paper deals with the problem of definitions of institutions, social capital and NGOs.

North (1991, p. 99) describes institutions as „*the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction*”. Moreover, North (1991) says that an institution is defined as a regulated system and the means of needs fulfillment of a particular social group. Also, North (1990) claims that institutions aim to reduce uncertainty in human

life. According to North (1994, p. 363) “institutions create an incentive structure of society and political and economic institutions that are determinants of economic performance”.

We can find different categories of institutions in the literature. Alex, Byerlee, Helene-Collion, and Rivera (2004) divided institutions into two groups: those with informal constraints (customs and traditions) and those with formal rules (constitutions, laws). Extension is included in public, private and semi-public institutions and provides agricultural services. Mintzberg (2014) divided non-state institutions as: private businesses for profit and community associations not for profit. Prosperity is the result of a complicated interplay between culture, institutions and geography. Culture is very important because it helped the western civilizations to dominate the world for 200 years (Landes, 1998).

The institutions have impacts on society in many ways. Gutner and Thompson (2010, p. 235) claim that institutions:

- „• are expected to rebuild war-torn societies,
- reduce extreme poverty,
- stop the spread of diseases,
- prevent and mitigate financial crises,
- address global environmental problems,
- make trade more free and fair,
- promote gender equality,
- reform domestic legal systems,
- and reduce corruption.”

The development of institutions is linked with social capital development. It includes the cultural component of modern societies and has important economic and political functions (Fukuyama, 2001). However, today societies live in an information age. The model attempting to combine technological and economic success with social justice and equity was developed by Castells and Himanen (2002). Their conclusion is that there is room for different policies and values. The model should be elaborated ranging from sustainable economy to sustainable well being and a sustainable environment.

The authors of the report “Poland 2030” (Boni, 2009, p. 95) consider social capital as very important, as we read that: “... *we need new forms of social capital: development capital, which is necessary to meet current and future challenges. Development capital is the ability*

of people to trust themselves in all dimensions of life". Czapiński (2013), who is relying on international studies, shows that human capital is very important. This explains why Poland has so far developed economically at a pretty good pace, despite the relatively low level of social capital. It is expected that in the next few years citizens will continue to invest in human capital, but this will no longer be enough to sustain development and social capital and therefore should be vigorously built to further support development.

The non-governmental organizations (NGO) play an important role in Poland. They are responsible for entrepreneurship development and creating new initiatives. The meaning of NGO is very important. According to Pallas and Urpelainen (2012, p.3):

- „ • *An NGO can provide domestic publics with credible evidence regarding successful cooperation,*
- *NGO scrutiny helps credibly commit to high cooperation levels,*
- *NGO monitoring is the most useful when the cooperation cost is relatively low,*
- *The growth of NGOs is explained by a growing public awareness of transnational issues,*
- *NGOs monitor policy implementation in international cooperation,*
- *An NGO can participate in international cooperation in many ways,*
- *An NGO can try to influence negotiations, provide resources, and information,*
- *NGOs prefer international cooperation,*
- *NGOs have the resources to obtain and reveal information regarding compliance or non-compliance to a domestic audience,*
- *The NGO community often actively seeks access to international institutions.”*

The reason for the tremendous growth of NGOs was the effect of an absence of government services. Their meaning in the development of rural areas is important because they increased their efforts in the process and are a source of financial and organizational resources (Bradshaw & Schafer, 2000). The authors claim that NGOs deliver several billion dollars for developing countries. Their role is not evaluated. They have helped to provide clean means to poor societies and slums, helped to build affordable houses, improve sanitation facilities, build health clinics, and organize programs for street children.

The relations between government and non-governmental organizations can be numerous. They can include: resource flow, which is mainly governmental funding, inter-organizational relationships, emphasizing interaction styles and features determining the comparative advantage of both sides (Coston, 1998).

You can venture to say that the positive experience of the organization may, on a local scale, be the subject of personal pride and encourage its members to get involved in another project. Here, however, it plays a huge role in building skills by leaders of a positive climate of openness to new ideas and new members of the community. Rural associations must in this regard be especially sensitive, because in many cases their leaders are people who moved to the area recently, are better educated, and are distinguished from the rest of the inhabitants. This can lead to a kind of alienation of such organizations and to rejection by a substantial part of the community, thus creating difficulties in achieving the objectives (Kamiński, 2008). If you apply for support from the public and declare support for the entire rural community, they should provide specific settlement with the realization of their goals.

Thus, Sawhill and Williamson (1997, p.15), write “... *experience and analysis show that organizations can - and even must - measure results and progress in the implementation of the adopted mission*”. The conclusion of problems, obstacles and limitations of the organization, and more broadly, civil society may be that more and more talk about the frailty of civil engagement in common, in particular those of a local nature. Bober et al. (2013, p. 15) present “... *three well established beliefs. The first is the conviction that local authorities are not eager to involve citizens to the management of public affairs (this view is often exhibited by non-governmental organizations). The second is the belief that NGOs are not very professional, and are often a selfish, inefficient partner in the area of co-management affairs of local communities (such opinions appear in the local communities). The third conviction - shared by local authorities and non-governmental organizations - comes from the realization that citizens are not interested in public affairs, and do not want to get involved in the initiative of local authorities or non-governmental organizations in the project*”.

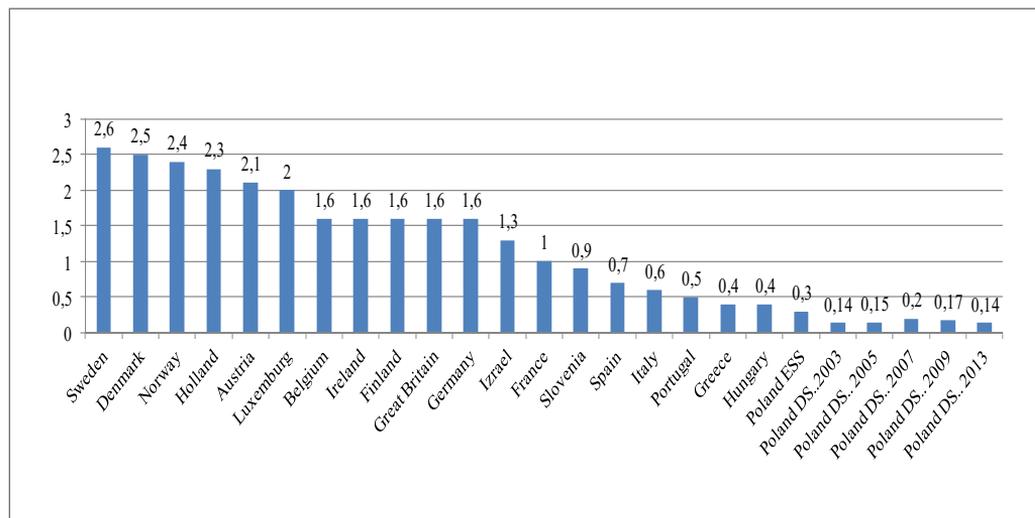


Figure 1. Average number of organizations, which include respondents aged 18 and older

Source: Adopted from "European Social Survey 2002", by Czapiński, Panek (2013) in *Contemporary Economics*, 7, 296-308.

Aim and methodology

The objective of the research was to evaluate the development of NGOs in Poland and their role in economic development.

The authors conducted the research on 505 NGOs in Poland. We wanted to identify the traits describing the NGOs and the main scope of their activities. The survey was carried out in 2016.

The study used a random sample of 505 formal social organizations operating in rural areas to learn about the conditions and opportunities for stimulating these organizations' impact on socio-economic development.

The study was conducted with telephone interviews of representatives of computer-aided, non-governmental organizations active in rural areas. The goals of the interview were, among others, to determine:

- The characteristics of the non-governmental organizations and the area of their activities,
- The areas of inter-sectoral cooperation;
- Difficulties in the operation,
- Assess the environment in which the NGOs operate.

The obtained data were studied using quantitative analysis. The study used a questionnaire that included open and closed-ended questions. They related to is-

suues of place of residence, number of employees, area of functioning, the rhythm of work of NGOs, the main areas of NGO activities in rural areas, and the main factors hampering the development of rural non-governmental organizations.

The study was conducted in NGOs in all voivode- ships of Poland. The strata of the survey are proportional to the structure of NGOs in Poland. The survey is representative of the structure of NGOs in Poland. That is why the vast majority of surveyed NGOs were small entities employing up to 9 people (90%).

Development of NGOs in EU and Poland

The number of organizations, which include respon- dents, aged 18 and older has been different in the EU countries (fig. 1). The biggest number was observed in Sweden (2,6) and the lowest was in Poland (0,4).

Bober et al. (2013, p. 19) write, "*The growing dys- function ...in the Polish institutional order is not con- ducive to civic activity and the presence of citizens in the public space. They are essentially ousted from it and retreat to the private sphere*".

The latest research of Adamiak, Charycka, & Gum- kowska (2016) describes special differentiation of the

Table 1. Characteristics of Non-governmental organizations in Poland

Voivodeship	Number of associations and foundations (as of December 2014)	Number of associations and foundations for 10 thousand residents (as of December 2014)	Percentage of organizations employing regular employees (%)	Percentage of organizations based solely on social work (%)
Dolnośląskie	9927	34	30	51
Kujawsko-pomorskie	5617	27	41	38
Lubelskie	6772	32	32	43
Lubuskie	3284	32	28	50
Łódzkie	7133	28	27	50
Małopolskie	10433	31	34	42
Mazowieckie	19803	37	48	36
Opolskie	2960	30	38	47
Podkarpacie	6579	31	24	56
Podlaskie	3301	28	31	44
Pomorskie	7046	31	32	42
Śląskie	10342	23	22	55
Świętokrzyskie	3578	28	35	45
Warmińsko-mazurskie	4716	33	18	43
Wielkopolskie	10893	31	34	41
Zachodniopomorskie	5469	32	33	47

Source: Adapted from „Kondycja sektora organizacji pozarządowych w Polsce w 2015. Raport z badań” [“The condition of the non-governmental organizations sector in Poland in 2015. Research report”], P. Adamiak, B. Charycka, M. Gumkowska (2016), Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Klon/ Jawor. Retrieved from http://www.nck.pl/media/attachments/318004/Raport_Klon_Kondycja_2015.pdf

Non-Governmental sector in Poland. The voivodeships having the dominant role in the development of Non-governmental organizations in Poland is Mazowieckie (tab. 1). In December 2014 the number of associations and foundations was the highest and accounted 19 803 and the percentage of organizations employing regular employees was 48%. The lowest numbers of associations and foundations in December 2014 were found in Opolskie (2 960) and Lubuskie (3 284) voivodeships in Poland.

Number of associations and foundations per 10 thousand residents was the highest in Mazowieckie (37) and Dolnośląskie (34) in 2014. The lowest number of associations and foundations per 10 thousand residents was found in Śląskie (23) and Kujawsko-pomorskie (27) voivodeships.

The percentage of organizations based solely on social work was different in Poland in 2014. The survey of Adamiak et al. (2016) found that Podkarpacie (56%) and Śląskie (55%) voivodeships had the high-

est percentage of organizations based solely on social work (Adamiak et al., 2016).

Using data from the MSO (Main Statistical Office), it can be stated that overall these active organizations bring together more than 10 million members, this being the total number of people reported as in organizations, rather than the total Polish population declaring membership in associations and similar social organizations (Goś-Wójcicka, Knapp, & Nałęcz, 2010). One person may simultaneously be a member of several organizations, and sometimes people cannot remember that they have signed up once to the organization. According to the authors of the Social Diagnosis 2013 (Czapiński, 2013), the loyalty to the association when membership to the organization has become entirely voluntary, fell sharply from 30.5% in 1989 to 14.8% and remains near that level today (approx. 13.0%).

Another example of the representatives of the third sector is rural volunteer fire brigades. These common associations have existed in many places for over a hundred years, with active involvement in virtually all Polish communities. It should be noted that the organizations work in the community by engaging in almost any of its activities (Jastrzębska & Knieć, 2012).

The scope of surveyed NGOs

First, the authors of the paper wanted to identify the level of residence of the surveyed NGOs. The survey found that 93.7% of surveyed NGOs function in cities, while only 6.3% operate in villages. The survey recognizes the employment in NGOs. Most of the NGOs (90.9%) employ fewer than 10 people. The next group (8.5%) employs 10-49 people. Only 0.6% of surveyed NGOs employ 50 employees or more (tab. 2). The research also examined the scope of activity for the surveyed NGOs. The survey found that most function in the country (25.5%), close neighborhoods (24.6%) and voivodeships (19.2%).

We asked the NGOs owners how their organizations are working. The vast majority work systematically. The next group is working systematically, but within main tasks (26.7%), while 26,3% are working according to occasions.

Analysis of the development directions of the activities of associations should start by identifying their current activities. Given the diversity of organizations and their activity already quoted, the Centre

for Civil Society Studies at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, has developed an international classification of fields of activities of nonprofits (ICNPO). The main results of the research areas – areas, or as they're sometimes defined "fields of activity," for Polish non-governmental organizations have remained unchanged in recent years, even comparing data from 2006 (Kamiński, 2008), with data from 2015. We can see some new trends. In 2015, 34% of organizations indicated as a primary area of activity of sport, tourism, recreation, or leisure. In studies conducted in 2011, by the Rural Forum (PAOW) on the representation of organizations drawn from a population of 13 thousand rural organizations from all provinces (Goszczyński, Kamiński, & Knieć, 2013), the category sport, tourism, recreation and leisure was identified only by 10% of organizations. Our research indicates that these areas are important, because in 2016 we found 26.3% of rural organizations had a sport, tourism, recreation and leisure focus.

On a national scale, a growing number of organizations define their primary field of action as art and culture. While in 2006 such organizations accounted for only 12.8%, by 2012 this included 17% of the population and in 2015, 13.5%. Similarly growing areas of activity dealt with education and upbringing. In 2006 declarations concerning this area of activity indicated 10.3%. In 2012 it was already 14% and in 2015 it was 15%. For organizations covered by the research and operating in rural areas, this activity took up 28.5% of the organizations. This state of affairs certainly exerts a great influence on the independent educational initiatives related to the creation of private and non-public kindergartens, clearly decreasing until 2012, the number of organizations engaged in social services and social assistance of such organizations was only 6% in 2015. In our 2016 study the share was 25.5% of such organizations (fig. 2). Similarly, for the area of health, in 2006, 8% of the organizations described their emphasis when surveyed by Klon / Jawor, in 2012. Only 6% did so in 2015. It is a relatively large group of organizations (5%), which is the most important field of its activity pointed to local development in social and economic terms. In our study of organizations, this focus was a much higher percentage of organizations (10.1%).

The activity of rural organizations is influenced by changes in the structure of communities. They are not

Table 2. The characteristics of surveyed NGOs

Place of residence		
Specification	n	%
City	473	93,7
village	32	6,3
Number of employees		
Up to 9	459	90,0
10-49	43	8,5
50-249	2	0,4
250 and more	1	0,2
Area of functioning		
Other countries	51	10,1
Whole country	101	20
Voivodeships	97	19,2
County, powiat	129	25,5
Nearest neighborhood	124	24,6
In net	1	0,2
globally	2	0,4
The rhythm of work of NGOs		
Systematical, work every day	232	45,9
Systematical within tasks	135	26,7
Works according to occasions	133	26,3
Difficult to say	5	1

as homogeneous as before, and one consequence is the emergence of initiatives to create new, non-traditional organizations. Local communities try to adapt to the surrounding reality. A number of changes have occurred in recent years, including the emergence of new functions in rural and urban areas, new residents, and new social relations, all of which led to the creation of many new organizations. A large group of new organizations are those that have taken educational initiatives, primarily created as a reaction to the liquidation of small rural schools (Kamiński, 2013).

The need to ensure availability of external support for local initiatives triggered series of changes and aroused great hopes in the countryside (Brodziński & Brodzińska, 2015; Kamiński, 2008). As we read in the latest report *Klon / Jawor* from 2016, the list of problems noticeable in most organizations is similar in many years (Adamiak et al., 2016).

Regarding the needs of the third sector, many also answer the question about the purpose for which the respondents spend hypothetical extra money. It turns out that they would like first of all to expand their

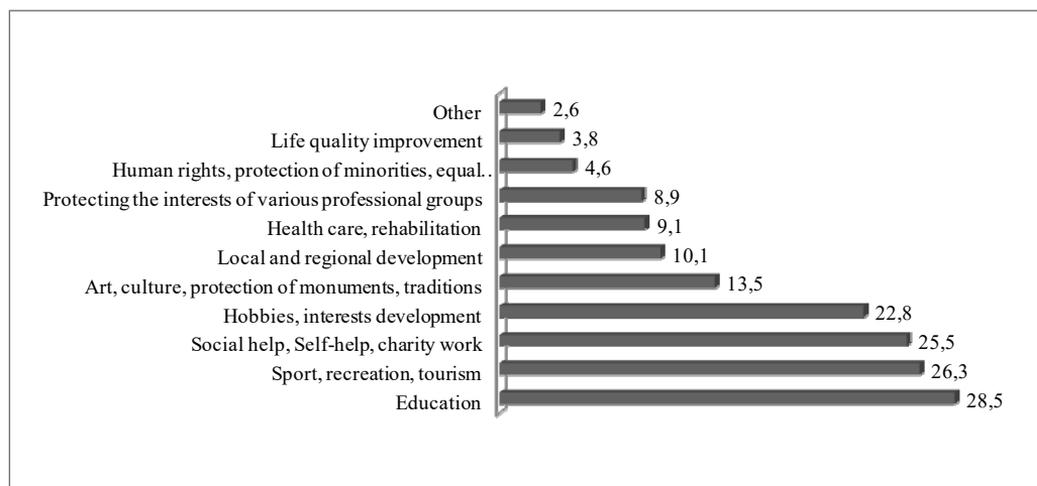


Figure 2. The main areas of NGO activities (percentage of organizations indicating the area)

Table 3. The main factors hampering the development of rural non-governmental organizations

Category	PAOW survey 2011 *		Own survey 2016 **	
	n	%	n	%
Lack of interest in the activities of the inhabitants of the organization	79	12,5	77	15,2
Administrative abstacles	125	19,7	116	23,0
The indifference of local government to our organization	24	3,8	35	6,9
Lack of equipment of organization	30	4,7	22	4,4
Unequal treatment of various organizations by the local government	13	2,0	36	7,1
We cannot yet operate smoothly in NGO	11	1,7	8	1,6
Bad contacts between non-governmental organizations in our area	7	1,0	18	3,6
Difficulties in obtaining funds	220	34,7	135	26,7
Little support local businesses	34	5,4	19	3,8
Other	32	5,0	22	4,4
Difficult to say	59	9,5	17	3,3
Total	634	100,0	505	100,0

Source: Adopted from "Dylemat linoskoczka, czyli o profesjonalizacji autentyczności i perspektywach rozwoju organizacji pozarządowych na wsi i w małych miastach [Equilibrism dilemma, or about professionalization of authenticity and development perspectives of non-governmental organizations in rural areas and small towns]", by W. Goszczyński, R. Kamiński, W. Knieć (2013).

** Author's own elaboration.

business, and as a means to this end, consider mainly investments in specialized equipment, promotion and advertising of their own actions and seeking their own contribution to the projects. Training needs to be mentioned by the organizations, while fundraising is consistently listed among the most important. The results of the PAOW survey and our survey are shown in Table 3.

PAOW studies, conducted in 2011, as in our study, found respondents clearly distinguished three categories of factors that hinder the development of rural non-governmental organizations, and they are, in order:

- Difficulties in obtaining funds for the activity,
- Administrative difficulties, and the,
- Lack of interest in the activities of the organization by the inhabitants.

From the cited studies it can be concluded also that for many organizations the mission and the essence of the operation is to raise funds from the outside. Unfortunately you cannot accept such behavior as an absolutely positive attitude of leaders of the third sector. Praszkiar (2007), writes that organizations that focus their activities exclusively on meetings, conferences, and subsidized shares often do not include in their activities the assessment of long-term effects - or if you end up with a grant and organized a series of festive events (trainings, conferences, etc.), then people will be more willing to cooperate in other matters, the community will be more connected to each other, and above all, this will increase trust among people.

The place and role of NGOs in stimulation of development in rural areas

Today rural areas face many changes that have an impact on their development. The most important changes include implementation of EU programs and multifunctional and sustainable development. The implementation of EU programs leads to development, elimination of the barriers to development, and enhancing entrepreneurship of the rural population. It also resulted in faster development of rural areas and non-rural functions of rural areas, including: economic, social and environmental functions.

Other developed functions of rural areas include: blue functions (preservation of water and its

resources), green (preservation of grass, meadows and forests), and yellow functions linked with food preservation.

These and other changes in the rural areas of Poland and other nearby EU countries will not take place without institutions that are responsible, not only for utilizing EU funds, but also for social relations. It created the basis for area-based and cross-sectoral partnership (Furmankiewicz, Thompson, & Zielińska, 2010). As far as Western Europe is concerned, the partnership was associated with the LEADER community initiatives. It was an important programme that enhanced strategy building, infrastructure, and business start-up.

In the process of multi-functional development of rural areas, the important thing is the rural-area inhabitants' entrepreneurship. This term embodies the specific characteristics of rural inhabitants that help improve their income situation on the one hand, while entrepreneurship also is a process associated with business activity and running an enterprise (Sikorska-Wolak, 2007). Among the most frequently mentioned non-agricultural forms of activity in rural areas, Józwiak (2004) distinguishes the following: slaughterhouse activity, meat processing, fishery trade, running travel agencies, and providing transport services. In 2002, the proportion of farms whose owners operated a non-agricultural business was approximately 13% (Bórawski & Dunn, 2012).

An important issue in the case of non-governmental organizations active in rural areas in Poland is to determine their numbers. This encompasses many differences and controversy, since the majority of operating groups are informal, and do not exist in the official records. In fact, the specificity of rural social capital promotes the development of more or less formal relationships. Many emerging forms of rural self-organization are not institutional, but there is a force of custom, habit, or emergency needs. In the absence of precise data in official statistics, some often-cited sources of information on non-governmental organizations are the periodically published reports of Klon /Jawor. According to the 2015 report of the organization, Poland had 17 thousand foundations and 86 thousand associations. It is assumed that approx. 25% of these organizations are registered in rural communities (Przewłocka, 2012).

To the group of approx 26 thousand organizations working in rural areas in Poland an additional 15 thousand volunteer fire brigades should be included. Another 700 organizations are registered on the village's foundations as are 900 other entities, such as hunting circles, cash assistance, loan funds, and registered social committees. Another formally and legally operating group of organizations includes approx. 3 thousand organizations of professional self-government and economic development for farmers, including agricultural farmers, producer organizations, agricultural trade associations, and approx. 4 thousand agricultural cooperatives. Herbst (2008) added a third rural sector of 1.3 thousand non-agricultural trade unions, 8 thousand organizational units of the Catholic Church, and approximately 300 units of other Churches. In the non-governmental organizations active in rural areas in Poland, a large group of organizations registered in the system code, such as various local government associations, including ordinary water companies, communities, forest land, and many others, should be included. A typical example of a dynamically operating organization, without official registration, is farmer's wives. The vast majority of these organizations have a decades-long tradition.

A typical feature of the operation of rural organizations is their spontaneity and flexibility. They are based on the solid work of volunteers, and relatively rarely have their own offices, and other technical facilities. A worry of rural organizations is their dependence on local governments for funding. It is estimated that in the case of rural organizations approx. 3/4 of them operate through local-government grants. On the other hand, as research shows, rural non-governmental organizations work with the local community much more often than in urban areas (75% vs. 40%) (Knieć & Lewandowski, 2013).

Summary

Organizations located in rural and urban areas have their own traditional identity and specificity, but you almost cannot say today that the country significantly lags behind in terms of social involvement and citizenship.

The most vibrant work in the countryside is by two different types of organizations. The first one is traditional, which include the farmers' wives and

volunteer firefighters and new initiatives arising as a response to new challenges and needs. The second group includes leading associations of private schools and kindergartens, and various rural development initiatives, organizations formed on the basis of thematic villages, development associations, or town or village renewal.

Today, more and more attention is paid to linking the projects implemented with the main areas of activity of the NGOs. Rural non-governmental organizations seem to be entering into this new approach to development activities. The role of associations in the development of human capital and citizenship is multifaceted and invaluable. Implementing statutory objectives, NGOs contribute to increasing the social capital of rural communities and regions. They participate in public consultations and in the life of the local community through the organization of cultural, social and sporting events. They also represent an important means for democratic control of social activities carried out by local authorities. NGOs are also a place for raising human capital. Members of the association have a desire to get involved in public life, as evidenced by the fact that 72.6% of them engage in systematic activities.

Conclusion and implications

It can be considered that the efficiency of the activities of associations and not their number should be an indicator of the level of differentiation of the social capital of rural communities or even entire regions. The efficiency of the organization, however, has affected not only the activity of the members, but also the social context (level of confidence, solidarity, the ability to cooperate).

Most NGOs are a small group employing up to 9 people. This result demonstrates the scope of activity, which is rather local, such as the nearest neighborhood, and voivodeship. This is very important for practitioners that they should try to solve their problems with local NGOs, which know the problem best.

The quality of non-governmental organizations and their influence on the construction of civil society are primarily those organizations that arise endogenously. As Putnam (1995) writes the local associations contribute to building a more effective development strategy for rural areas. The most effective

tive organizations at the local level are those that are formed by the initiative of local actors.

The vast majority of local NGOs in Poland are engaged in education, sport, recreation, tourism, social help, and charity work. These activities are important for local populations and local activists. Such scope of activity is a clue for practitioners managing rural areas in Poland. The NGOs can help them achieve EU subsidies for such activities because they understand local conditions.

Although the Polish third sector does not represent a high level of social capital, it serves a very important role in the life of rural communities. Simple operating procedures, even if based on ad-hoc actions, are an important aid to self-realization and integration.

Most local NGOs in Poland face many problems with administrative obstacles and obtaining funds. This is a clue for local governments that the activity of NGOs that is needed in rural areas requires outside help. Therefore active support from the EU budget is needed to develop the NGOs activity and the support of local governments.

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