

THE PHENOMENON OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: NEW STIMULI FOR CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS OF POLAND

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Abstract

The paper aims at analyzing the development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage, and their importance in shaping the cultural functions of rural areas of Poland in the context of their multifunctional development. The research has been conducted in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship. The data have been obtained from the foundations and associations database published by the Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor (the Klon/Jawor Association), from the statistical data published by the Central Statistical Office in Poland, and from the webpages of the analyzed organizations. The information on the NGOs as well as on the cultural institutions located in the rural areas of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship has been compared. It turns out that the development of the NGOs in rural areas of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship tends to have constant growth dynamics and that the presence of these organizations significantly increases the accessibility of cultural sector to residents and contributes to economic diversification. NGOs supporting the cultural sector have been developing only since 2000. Therefore, it can be assumed that the existing NGOs network is in its initial stage, but we may expect it will continue to develop. The NGOs are located mainly in urbanized and environmentally valuable areas. Considering the decreasing number of libraries and the types of initiatives undertaken by NGOs in the rural areas of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship we should state that the emerging NGOs can remedy current deficiencies and provide rural residents with access to culture.

Key words: non-governmental organization; culture; multifunctional development; rural areas; Poland.

Introduction

In the development strategies of both individual cities and entire regions, the cultural sector is identified as a crucial element determining their sustainable socio-economic development. In the 1980s in most countries of Western Europe and North America the cultural sector was perceived as a remedy for the problems of post-industrial cities (Bianchini, 1993; Kong, 2000a, 2000b; Stryjakiewicz, 2010). The research focused on the importance of the cultural sector for economic development resulted in the publication of many papers discussing both theoretical and practical aspects of cultural industries at the international, national, regional, and local level (e.g. Bianchini, 1993; Scott, 1997, 2000, 2004; Kong, 2000a, 2000b; Power, 2002; Power and Scott, 2004; Throsby, 2010; Środa-Murawska, 2013). While the researchers' attention has been focused mainly on large cities which have always been the centers of cultural life not only for their regions, we have to remember the crucial, although different role of the cultural sector in the development of towns and rural areas. The role may be considered in terms of, among others, protection of cultural heritage, development of tourism, and social capital.

Supporting the development of the cultural sector in rural areas becomes particularly important in the case of Poland, a country which has been in transition since 1989. The dismantling of State Agricultural Farms, the growth of unemployment, and the lack of new jobs have created the need to seek opportunities

for the development of the Polish countryside in new conditions. The search for ways to change the perception of rural areas as monofunctional (with agriculture as the basis of economic activity) to multifunctional (with diversified rural economy) has been the subject of studies by many researchers in Poland (e.g. Falkowski, 1996; Szymańska and Matczak, 2000; Heffner, 2001; Fijałkowska and Jasiulewicz, 2003; Kłodziński, 2004, 2008; Czarnecki, 2005, 2009; Feltynowski, 2009) and in the world (e.g. Knickel and Renting, 2000; Huylenbroeck and Durand, 2003; Holmes, 2006; Râmniceanu and Ackrill, 2007; Wilson, 2007). In the papers concerning the multifunctional development of rural areas, the maintenance and protection of cultural heritage and the development of tourism are often pointed out as having the potential to diversify economic activity (Kłodziński, 2004).

Considering the importance of the cultural sector in the context of multifunctional rural development we should emphasize that in recent years in Poland, next to the main actors of cultural dissemination in rural areas, i.e. state and local cultural institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been getting more and more active in the sphere of culture. Poland is a state with a very long tradition of charitable institutions, but after World War II the dominant player in the creation of social policy was the state. The situation changed after the new Act of 7 April 1989 (published in Dz.U. 1989 No. 20) had been introduced. The Act sanctioned the right

of people to form associations and made it possible to reconstruct the NGOs structures. That is why the development of NGOs has been observed in Poland only since 1990.

The problem is particularly important because rural areas in Poland comprise slightly more than 93% of the country's total area and are inhabited by almost 40% of the total Polish population. Moreover, in the analyzed voivodship (an administrative region of the 1st order in Poland) rural areas constitute as much as 95.4% of its total area (17,143 sq. km) and are inhabited by almost 40% (834,414) of its total population number. The rural areas of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship include 92 rural and 35 rural-urban (excluding urban parts) gminas (administrative regions of the 3rd order) (state as of 2013).

The following paper aims at analyzing the development of NGOs which are active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage and their importance in shaping the cultural functions of rural areas in the context of their multifunctional development on the example of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship. As such, the paper reflects a research trend describing changes in cultural services in Poland.

Materials and Methods

The necessary input data have been obtained from the foundations and associations database published by the Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor (the Klon/Jawor Association), from the statistical data published by the Central Statistical Office (CSO) in Poland, and from the data derived from the webpages of the analyzed organizations. The data on NGOs has been obtained from the foundations and associations database published by the Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor. It is the largest public database which contains information about all Polish foundations and associations, local government units and public institutions run by foundations, associations and local governments (<http://bazy.ngo.pl>). Information about all NGOs active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage and registered in rural settlements (we have considered only rural gminas and rural parts of urban-rural gminas) of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship has been separated from the database. Detailed information on the types of initiatives undertaken by individual NGOs has been obtained on the basis of their webpages content. In total, data for 117 NGOs which are active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage and are located within 64 gminas of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship has been collected. It is worth noting that some of the NGOs (e.g. foundations supporting local development, associations for the disabled and for the poor) do not

conduct activities directly related to culture and arts; however, since their actions partially include broadly understood cultural education, they also contribute to some extent to the development of culture. In the study it is assumed that any NGO, which is active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage in rural areas enhances the development of the cultural sector and affects the availability of cultural services, and through its activity contributes to increasing the life quality of rural residents and the socio-economic development of a locality.

The data on population number, and the number of cultural institutions (libraries, cultural establishments, museums) for Poland and for all 144 gminas of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship have been derived from the database published by the Central Statistical Office at www.stat.gov.pl.

It should be emphasized that while the activities of government and local government cultural institutions in Poland have been constantly analyzed and monitored (e.g. reports of the Central Statistical Office: CSO, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013), there have been only few studies of the NGOs active in the cultural sector. The most valuable reports and publications considering the role of NGOs in shaping culture in Poland have been created by the Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor and by the initiative called Obserwatorium Żywej Kultury (Living Culture Observatory), established relatively recently by the Narodowe Centrum Kultury (National Center for Culture) and the University of Warsaw in 2010.

The development of NGOs active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage in rural areas has been described on the basis of the year in which individual organizations were established. The importance of NGOs for the cultural development of rural areas has been, in turn, determined by using the criterion of quantitative equipment in cultural institutions per 1,000 inhabitants. The indicator defined in this way denominates the accessibility of services for residents. In the geographical and economic approach the notion 'accessibility' 'refers usually to the concept of proximity, ease of spatial interactions or potential contacts with functions' (Taylor, 1999). Accessibility may be considered in spatial, economic, and social aspects. Because of the purpose of the study we used social accessibility and expressed it with the index of services accessibility (Jakubowicz, 1993).

The paper aims at analyzing the development of NGOs active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage and their role in shaping the cultural functions of rural areas of Poland on the example of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship.

According to the aim of the study, the basic research problems have been set as:

- the structure of the cultural services sector in rural areas and the NGOs which are active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage;
- spatial layout of NGOs supporting the development of cultural services in rural areas of the voivodship;
- factors determining the spatial distribution of the NGOs active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage;
- an attempt to assess the impact of such NGOs on the general development of the cultural sector in rural areas.

The cognitive aim of the study comprises researching and describing the spatial differentiation in the formation of NGOs (which are active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage) structures and activities.

The research is mainly quantitative and partly qualitative. Determining a measurable participation of NGOs in the cultural development of rural areas is an extremely difficult task; however, the following research indirectly indicates the importance of the NGOs sector in the cultural development of rural areas and enables us to better understand the accessibility of cultural services in rural areas.

Results and Discussion

The restructurization of Polish economy which began in 1990 included also the sphere of culture. The

results of the changes have been as follows: decrease in the number of libraries and their branches, closure of cultural establishments and of small cinemas replaced by multiplexes. The changes have caused a reduction in the accessibility of some cultural objects in relation to the number of residents, e.g. in small towns of Poland (Środa-Murawska, 2013).

Similar trends were observed in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship in the years 1995 – 2012 when a drop in the number of libraries per 10,000 population was noticed (compare Fig. 1).

In the analyzed voivodship the number of libraries declined more than 15% (from 515 in 1995 to 438 in 2012) but in rural areas more than 20% (from 341 in 1995 to 274 in 2012).

Interestingly, an increase in the accessibility of cultural establishments (basic cultural centers for local communities in Poland) was observed in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship in the years 2003 – 2012, but only in rural areas (see Fig. 2).

The number of cultural establishments in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship increased by 12% (from 183 in 2003 to 206 in 2012) and by 50% in the rural areas of the voivodship (from 91 in 2003 to 137 in 2012).

Thus, we can observe a decrease in the number of libraries and an increase in the number of cultural establishments in the rural areas of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship. Both types of institutions are responsible for the cultural development of local communities, especially in rural areas. Their activities have been strongly supported by various NGOs for

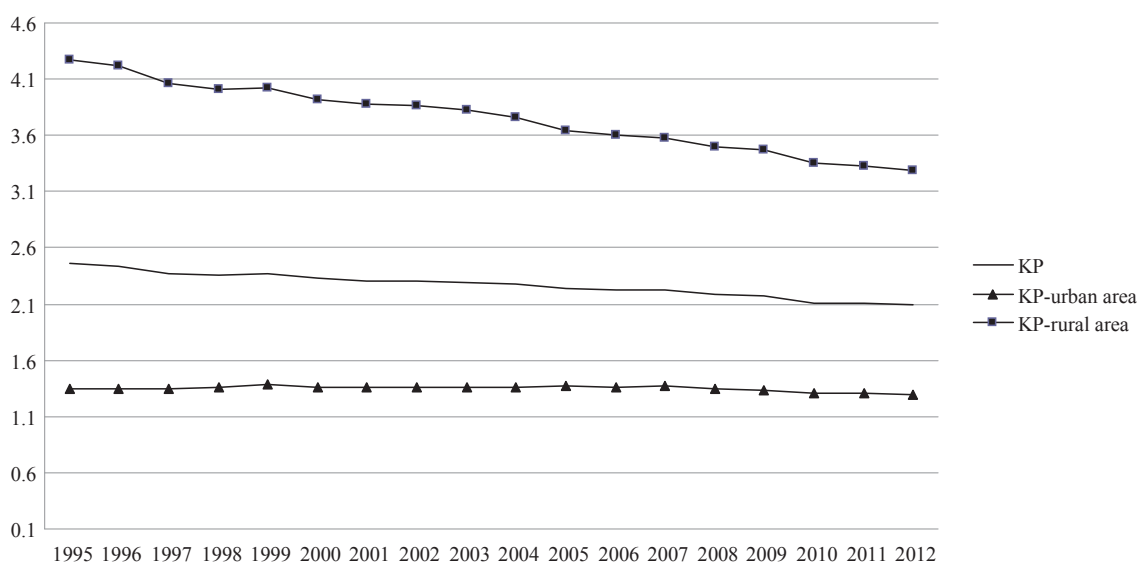


Figure 1. Accessibility of libraries (number of libraries per 10,000 population) in Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship in the years 1995 – 2012.

Explanation: KP – Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship.

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of www.stat.gov.pl.

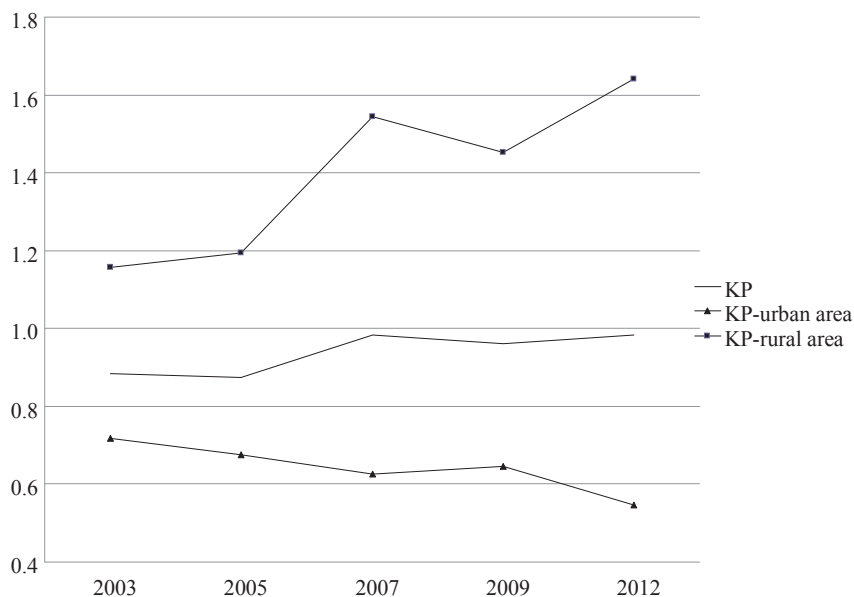


Figure 2. Accessibility of cultural establishments (number of cultural establishments per 10,000 population) in Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship in the years 1995 – 2012.

Explanation: KP – Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship.

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of www.stat.gov.pl.

several years. At the same time, in the rural areas of the voivodship the intensive development of NGOs which declare activities in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage began only after 2000 (compare Fig. 3).

Although until 2000, the presence of NGOs active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage was noticed only in six rural gminas (i.e. 4.7% of all rural gminas and rural parts of urban-rural gminas), in the years 200-2004 and 2013 NGOs emerged in 29 and 64 (i.e. 50.4%) rural gminas and urban parts of urban-rural gminas respectively. The gminas in which NGOs are registered form several distinct clusters, e.g. there is a group of gminas neighboring the city of Toruń from the north and north-east; another group of gminas in the southern part of the voivodship surrounds the city of Inowrocław; there is also a group of gminas located in the northern part of the voivodship. A detailed analysis of individual gminas, localities and village administrator's offices in which the considered NGOs are situated reveals that many of them are environmentally valuable areas, e.g. the Wda Landscape Park, the Tuchola Forest, the Brodnica Landlake, the Chełmiński and Nadwiślański Landscape Park Complex, etc.

The high dynamics of the development of new NGOs (which are active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage) may indicate, inter alia, the increasing demand for this type of organizations, growth in the local communities' activity, and the development of alternatives to

government institutions' forms of support for the cultural sector in rural areas.

The next step of the research has been to examine the accessibility of NGOs which are active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage in relation to 10,000 population in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship in 2013 (Fig. 4).

The average number of considered NGOs per 10,000 population in the rural areas of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship amounted to 2.8 in 2013; the lowest value of indicator totaled 0.75 and was observed in the rural part of the urban-rural gmina of Nakło nad Notecią, while the highest values were noticed in rural gminas: Raciążek (9.6), Zbiczno (8.4) and Sadki (8.1).

Besides the NGOs whose basic activity is the support of culture and development of the arts in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship, we have also considered groups of organizations for which cultural development is an additional activity. The groups include:

- organizations centered around the protection of national heritage and regional identity (e.g. Bractwo Czarnej Wody/the Brotherhood of Black Water) whose actions have contributed to cultural development (e.g. organization of regional songs concerts, exhibitions dedicated to the history of the region, publication of materials promoting the cultural heritage of the region and tourist guides, etc.);
- organizations supporting broadly understood socio-economic development of some locality,

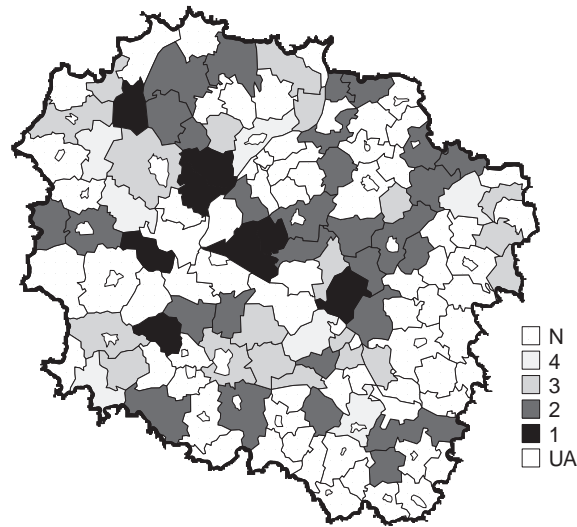


Figure 3. Year of establishment of the first NGOs active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage in the rural areas of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship.

Explanation: 1 – before 2000, 2- in the years 2000-2004, 3- in the years 2005-2009, 4 – after 2009, 5 – lack of NGOs active in the field of culture, arts, and protection of cultural and national heritage, UA – urban areas.

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of www.bazy.ngo.pl.

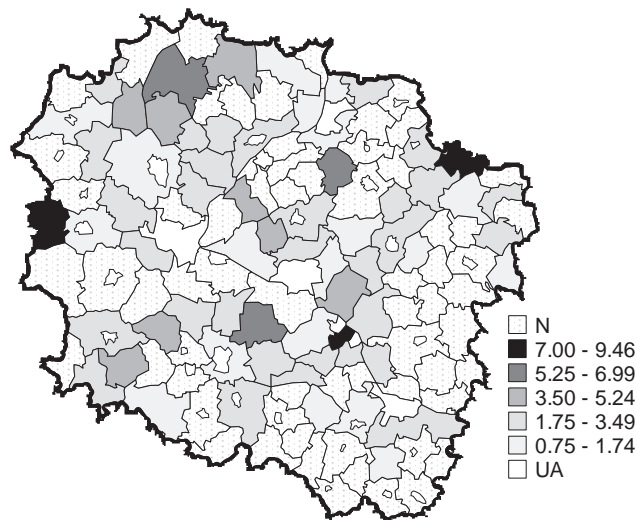


Figure 4. Accessibility of NGOs active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage per 10,000 population in rural areas of Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship in 2013.

Explanation: N – lack of NGOs which are active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage; UA –urban areas.

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of www.bazy.ngo.pl.

groups of localities or region (e.g. Stowarzyszenie na rzecz Rozwoju Gminy Bobrowo ‘Aktywna Gmina’/ the Association for the Development of Bobrowo Gmina called ‘Active Gmina’, Stowarzyszenie na rzecz Rozwoju Wsi Mrozowa/the Association for the Development of Mrozowa Village, and Samostrzela ‘Kłos’) whose activities also include numerous initiatives promoting culture (e.g. creation of cultural

heritage chambers; preparation of plays presenting the history of the region; preservation of traditions and cultural heritage protection);

- organizations attracting people with common interests and hobbies (e.g. Bractwo Rycerskie Ziem Toruńskich/the Brotherhood of Toruń Lands Knights; Fundacja na rzecz Tradycji Lotnictwa Polskiego/ the Foundation for the Polish Tradition Aviation) for

whom the cultivation of cultural traditions is uniquely important.

Among the 117 analyzed organizations 32% had their activities focused primarily on the development of the cultural sector. Next, there are 34 organizations supporting local development (29%), followed by brotherhoods and associations focused on the protection on national heritage.

Conclusions

In order to sum up the research results it should be emphasized that NGOs supporting the cultural sector have been developing only since 2000. Therefore, it can be assumed that the existing NGOs network is in its initial stage, but we may expect it will continue to develop (cf. Biegańska et al., 2014). NGOs active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage are located mainly in urbanized and environmentally valuable areas. Considering the decreasing number of libraries and the types of initiatives undertaken by NGOs in the rural areas of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship we should

state that the emerging NGOs can remedy current deficiencies and provide rural residents with access to culture. The collected data indicate that NGOs active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage may and indeed do contribute to the economic diversification of rural areas. The huge diversity and multiplicity of NGOs activities makes it possible to verify the perception of rural areas only through the prism of agriculture and to change the perception of the cultural sector only through the prism of government and local government cultural institutions.

In the context of factors determining the spatial distribution of the NGOs active in the field of culture, arts and the protection of cultural and national heritage, we have shown that in rural areas the NGOs have been mainly located in environmentally valuable areas or near historic and cultural objects or the group of historic and cultural objects. Therefore the presence of objects of this type can be a stimulus for the development of NGOs active in the field of culture.

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