

Revitalization Programs in Rural Areas in Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to evaluate revitalization programs of rural communes in Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship and to formulate critical remarks with respect to the revitalization programming rules currently in force. The method of analyzing source documents (i.e., revitalization programs, was used to achieve this objective). The subject of the analyzes were: revitalization models, ways of designating degraded areas and areas of revitalization as well as financial instruments and forms and methods of social participation provided for in the revitalization process. The results of the study indicate that the principles of revitalization programming, which may be effective in cities, do not always correspond to the conditions prevailing in rural areas, which is mainly due to the fact that these areas are usually mostly affected by a crisis caused by widespread occurrence of structural problems.

Keywords: revitalization, revitalization program, Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship, communes, rural areas

JEL: H76, R58, R59

Introduction

Revitalization, although variously defined and implemented with the use of various instruments, has always been the answer of public authorities to crisis phenomena, most often in cities (Couch, Fraser, and Percy 2003, chap. 15; Guzik and Domański 2010, 22; Roberts, Sykes, and Granger 2017, 12–13). Contemporary concepts of revitalization put emphasis on the participation of a wide range of stakeholders representing both the public and private sectors in the development of its assumptions and in their implementation. In addition to the spatial aspects that dominated the revitalization processes of cities in the early 2000s (Kaczmarek 2001, 16), they take into account environmental, cultural, institutional, economic, social and even health problems, stressing the overriding goal of revitalization processes, which is social renewal (Bryx 2012; Colantonio and Dixon 2011; Corburn 2009; Jarczewski 2009; Karadimitriou, de Magalhães, and Verhage 2013; Marszał 2011; Palermo and Ponzini 2014; Skalski 2013).¹

In Poland, from the end of October 2015, the legal basis for the implementation of revitalization projects is the Act of 9 October 2015 on revitalization (AR).² The AR defines revitalization as a complex process of recovering of degraded areas, consisting of territorially focused, integrated activities for the benefit of the local community, space and economy, carried out by stakeholders of revitalization based on the communal revitalization program (CRP). The AR allows the possibility of conducting revitalization activities not only in cities, but also in rural areas.

1. See also: Planning healthier places—report from the reuniting health with planning project. By A. Ross, with M. Chang, Town and Country Planning Association, November 2013, page 5, [@:] http://www.boltonshhealthmatters.org/sites/default/files/Planning_Healthier_Places.pdf.

2. See: Ustawa z dnia 9 października 2015 r. o rewitalizacji. DzU z 2015 r. poz. 1777.

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1 Assumptions regarding revitalization in Poland for the years 2014–2020

As it has already been mentioned, in Poland since the end of October 2015, the legal basis for conducting revitalization projects is the AR. It defines the necessary condition for them to be taken, i.e. development of the CRP. In Art. 52 the Act provides, however, that until the end of 2023, revitalization may be carried out on the basis of a commune program other than the CRP adopted by the resolution of the municipal council. This means that since the entry into force of the AR by the end of 2023, the legal basis for revitalization projects in communes could still be the Act of 8 March 1990 on commune self-government.³ This Act in Art. 18 Paragraph 2 Subparagraph 6 specifies the title to adopt revitalization programs. In the current financial perspective—i.e., in the years 2014–2020, only budgetary and private funds may be used to finance projects envisaged in such programs. On the other hand, communes that are going to support revitalization with EU funds are obliged to implement revitalization processes based on the “Guidelines for revitalization in operational programs for the years 2014–2020”⁴ or the AR. The latter introduced new tools for programming and implementing revitalization (CRP, Special Revitalization Zone, local revitalization plan) and established additional procedures, but its substantive requirements are consistent with the “Guidelines...”. In both documents, revitalization is defined in a similar way—as a complex, long-term process led by various groups of stakeholders in close cooperation with the local community, assuming optimal use of specific conditions of a given area and strengthening its local potentials (economic, social, infrastructural, cultural and other).

The “Guidelines...” as well as the AR do not indicate a specific scope or model of implementation of revitalization projects but assume that fundamental importance for the effectiveness of the revitalization processes in communes has social participation. It means active participation of revitalization stakeholders both at the stage of preparation of the processes, conducting them and evaluation. Both documents emphasize that the basic revitalization tool—i.e., the revitalization program (RP), should be developed by the local government and based on the diagnosis of local problems. It should be subjected to discussion with the community of revitalization areas, entrepreneurs and non-governmental organizations. The RP should also meet the principles of comprehensiveness, concentration and complementarity.

The first of these principles means that RP should include activities in a comprehensive manner, so as not to overlook the social, economic, spatial-functional, technical or environmental aspects associated with both a given area and its surroundings. The principle of concentration of interventions and the related need for the hierarchization of needs mean that RP should concern areas of significant importance for the development of the commune, covering all or part of the degraded areas, affected by a particular intensification of problems and crisis phenomena. In the case of the principle of complementarity, several aspects are mentioned in the “Guidelines...” and in the AR: spatial, problematic, procedural and institutional, and also about the complementarity of sources of financing.

Spatial complementarity means the necessity to take into account during the development and implementation of RP mutual links between revitalization projects implemented both in the area of revitalization and outside it but affecting this area. Problem complementarity means the necessity to implement revitalization projects that will complement each other thematically, making RP affect the area of revitalization in all necessary aspects (social, economic, spatial-functional, technical, environmental). Procedural and institutional complementarity means the necessity of designing

3. See: Ustawa z dnia 8 marca 1990 r. o samorządzie terytorialnym. DzU z 1990 r. nr 16 poz. 95 z późn. zm.

4. See: Wytyczne w zakresie rewitalizacji w programach operacyjnych na lata 2014–2020. Mateusz Morawiecki, Minister Rozwoju, MR/H 2014–2020/20(2)08/2016, Warszawa, 2 sierpnia 2016 r., [@:] https://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/media/23916/Wytyczne_dot_rewitalizacji_po_aktualizacji-zatwierdzone02082016clear.pdf.

an RP management system that will enable effective cooperation of various institutions involved in revitalization processes and mutual complementarity and coherence of procedures. Ensuring complementarity of financing sources means the ability to combine different sources of financing for revitalization projects—public (national and European) and private.

2 Research methodology

The subject of this study were revitalization programs of rural communes in Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship approved by the Voivodship Board until March 14, 2018.⁵ The list of all approved programs included 44 documents previously adopted by resolutions of municipal or city councils. Among them, 33 were rural communal programs, 7 were developed by urban-rural communes, and 4 by municipalities. 25 out of 33 programs developed by rural communes were available on municipal websites (most often in the Public Information Bulletin), hence only those were analyzed.

Due to the fact that RPs include projects for which communes plan to obtain funding under the Regional Operational Program of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship for 2014–2020, in accordance with the requirements of the Managing Authority of the Program, RPs had to be prepared in accordance with the requirements set out in Annex 10 to the Detailed Description of the Priority Axes of the Program entitled “Principles of programming revitalization projects in order to apply for funds under the Regional Operational Program of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship for 2014–2020.”⁶

The aim of the research was to evaluate revitalization programs and formulate critical conclusions with respect to the revitalization programming principles contained in the AR, the “Guidelines...” and the “Principles...” The subject of the analyzes were: revitalization models, ways of designating degraded areas and areas of revitalization, financial instruments of revitalization and forms and methods of social participation provided in the revitalization process.

3 Revitalization models

In the case of 20 RPs, the legal basis on which they were prepared was the Act of 8 March 1990 on commune self-government. Only 5 communes decided to develop a RP based on the AR, so they chose a slightly more demanding way of preparing the document. For example, the AR imposes the necessity to establish a Revitalization Committee, which is a special way of including revitalization stakeholders in the process of program development. As part of social consultations, which are obligatory in the case of carrying out the diagnosis of the commune and designating the degraded area and revitalization area, the AR requires collecting comments on paper or in electronic form and organization of at least two of the following forms of consultation: meetings, debates, workshops, studio walks, surveys, interviews, use of representative groups or collection of oral comments. The AR also provides for a strictly defined duration of consultations regarding each important part of the RP. On the other hand, only in programming of revitalization on the basis of the AR it is possible to use specific revitalization tools, such as a Special Revitalization Zone or a local revitalization plan. However, none of the 5 RPs, which were developed on the basis of the AR, provided for the use of these tools.

18 RPs were developed in close cooperation with external companies (advisory, consulting, etc.); in 12 cases it was the same entity. Programs prepared by the company are similar not only in terms of editing, but also substantively. The company used various indicators for delimitation of degraded areas and revitalization areas, but the way of delimitation of these areas, and then formulated visions and goals for the areas of revitalization in individual communes are very similar.

5. See: Załącznik do uchwały nr 10/381/18 Zarządu Województwa Kujawsko-Pomorskiego z dnia 14 marca 2018 r. [@:] https://kujawsko-pomorskie.pl/pliki/2018/planowanie/rewitalizacja/20180314_wykaz.pdf.

6. See: Zasady programowania przedsięwzięć rewitalizacyjnych w celu ubiegania się o środki finansowe w ramach Regionalnego Programu Operacyjnego Województwa Kujawsko-Pomorskiego na lata 2014–2020. Załącznik nr 10 do SZOOP RPO WK-P, Toruń, 18 stycznia 2017 r., [@:] http://www.mojregion.eu/files/dokumenty%20rpo/dokumenty_prawne/Szczegolowy%20Opis%20Osi%20Priorytetowych/SZOOP%20z%2029.03.2017%20r/Zalacznik%20nr%2010%20-%20Zasady%20programowania%20rewitalizacji-%20ze%20zm.%20z%2018%20stycznia%202017%20r..pdf.

In the process of preparing RPs, the company used the same scheme and almost the same forms of social consultations, and the conclusions drawn from them are similar. The remaining 7 RPs were probably developed by the communes themselves, as evidenced by the lack of information on the involvement of external experts. Communes, however, could use their help without showing it in the program.

4 Ways of identifying degraded areas and revitalization areas

A degraded area (DA) in the commune is the area where the crisis was identified due to the concentration of negative social phenomena, in particular: unemployment, poverty, crime, low level of education or social capital, as well as insufficient participation in public and cultural life. The crisis state of a given area is determined by the co-occurrence, together with social problems, of negative phenomena in at least one of the following aspects: economic (low level of entrepreneurship, poor condition of local enterprises), environmental (exceeding environmental quality standards, presence of waste hazardous to people health and life and to the environment), spatial and functional (insufficient equipment in technical and social infrastructure, lack of access to basic services or their poor quality, non-adaptation of urban solutions to the changing functions of the area, low level of communication service, deficit or poor quality of public areas) and technical (degradation of technical condition of buildings, including housing, lack of technical solutions enabling effective use of construction facilities, in particular in the field of energy efficiency and environmental protection).

The scale of negative phenomena is reflected in the development measures describing the above aspects, which indicate a low level of development or document strong dynamics of the drop in the level of development of a given area compared to the whole commune. DA can be divided into sub-areas, including sub-areas that do not have common boundaries.

In accordance with the “Principles...,” in rural communes DA are towns or villages that simultaneously meet the following criteria:

- in the town/village there are at least 2 social problems identified by the indicators defined in the “Principles...” —these indicators have to take values less favorable than the average in the commune
- in the town/village there are degraded areas, or the commune may propose a different criterion (negative phenomenon) representing the non-social sphere (i.e., economic, environmental, spatial-functional or technical)

In delimitating DA in a given commune one can use the same or different indicators. An alternative way of designating DA in rural communes is to indicate such towns/villages where the most important problem is the aging of society, and revitalization is planned to be based on activities aimed at ensuring care and social inclusion of the elderly population. In order to determine DA, it is possible to use one or both above methods. The area of revitalization (RA) as a part of DA, however, has to meet two conditions: its surface cannot exceed 20% of the surface of the commune, and the number of population living in it cannot be greater than 30% of the commune’s population. If DA exceeds these limits, to determine RA it is necessary to apply the narrowing procedure proposed in the “Principles...”

The majority of surveyed communes (23) delimiting DA used the first mentioned method, choosing the indicators proposed in the “Principles...” The alternative delimitation method was used in the RPs of the other two communes. In one of these programs it was the only method for selecting DA, and in the other it was used in conjunction with the indicator method.

The social indicators most often used in the selection of DA were indicators characterizing: labor market problems (share of unemployed in the working age population, share of unemployed out of work for 12 months and longer in the working age population, share of unemployed out of work over 24 months in all unemployed people), economic self-sufficiency of households (share of households —permanent beneficiaries of social assistance at domicile in the total number of households, share of persons in households using social assistance at domicile in total population), effectiveness of education at the basic level (average result of the test of the sixth grade students, the average result of the gymnasium examination, the town/village is located in the area where

primary school or junior high school has a low level of education) and the degree of advancement of the aging process of the population (share of population in post-productive age in total population). Indicators illustrating the situation on the labor market were applied 47 times (accounted for 31,5% of all social indicators used), characterizing economic self-sufficiency of the population — 29 times (19,5%), describing the effectiveness of education — 20 times (13,4%), and measuring the level of advancement of the aging process — 17 times (11,4%).⁷ Only one commune has used its own social indicators (not listed in “Principles...”). These were: share of the village in the total number of people in households covered by social assistance in the commune, participation of the village in the total number of unemployed people in the commune and participation of the village in the total number of offenses committed in the commune.

Delimitating DA, apart from social indicators, 9 communes used existing degraded spaces in their area. The economic indicator characterizing the level of entrepreneurship (the number of natural persons conducting economic activity per 100 residents of working age) has been used 7 times. In a descriptive manner the situation in the economic, environmental, spatial and functional or technical sphere in a given area was presented in 8 programs. Own indicators have been applied 7 times. These were: “peripherality” of the village, the availability of social infrastructure, the number of asbestos products per 1 inhabitant, share of area occupied by degraded spaces in the total area of built-up areas, lack of public infrastructure for social activation, climate of economic activity and share of people using waterworks in the general population.

As it was already mentioned, RA designated in a given commune using the above methods could occupy no more than 20% of its area, and the share of the population living in it in the total population of the commune could not exceed 30%. In 12 analyzed RPs RA constituted up to 10% of the commune area (in 7 programs it did not exceed 5%), in 3 RPs it was bigger than 10%, but smaller than 15% of the commune’s area, and in 10 RPs it was bigger than 15% of the area of the commune. RA was inhabited by a relatively large number of people. Only in 7 programs, the number of people living in RA accounted for less than 15% of the population of the commune. In 3 programs it was higher than 15%, but did not exceed 20%, and in 15 it exceeded 20%.

5 Financial instruments of revitalization

One of the assumptions of RPs prepared on the basis of the AR, “Guidelines...” and “Principles...” is financing the revitalization projects from EU funds. At the same time, one of the important features that revitalization programs should have according to these documents is financial complementarity. It is assumed that removing RA from the crisis state and ensuring the appropriate dynamics of the desired changes is possible only through the simultaneous financial involvement in the revitalization of public and private entities, preferably originating from the local community. Fulfillment of the principle of financial complementarity in a comprehensive manner can be ensured by hybrid projects — i.e., projects implemented in the public-private partnership formula, in which public and private financing is supplemented by EU funds (Kola-Bezka 2017).

In the analyzed RPs, 208 basic revitalization projects have been planned, i.e. those that directly enable implementation of the objectives set in these programs. Thus, on average there were 8 projects per one RP, but there were some of them in which there were a dozen or so projects (even 19) or only 3. Most often, however, 6 basic projects were envisaged. The total value of these projects was equal to PLN 56,7 million, which gives the average value of projects in one RP equal to PLN 2,3 million, and the average value of one project equal to PLN 272,6 thousand. The source of financing the vast majority of basic projects was the European Social Fund (ESF). There were 129 such projects, and the amount of funding from the ESF amounted to almost PLN 10 million. In RPs there were also 49 projects financed from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

7. The number of applications of indicators exceeds the number of analyzed RPs, because in delimitation of DA, communes could use more than compulsory 2 social indicators, and they could make an indicator analysis for each town/village or selected groups of towns/villages with a different set of indicators.

[In the journal European practice of number notation is followed — for example, 36 333,33 (European style) = 36 333.33 (Canadian style) = 36,333.33 (US and British style). — Ed.]

for the total amount of co-financing of PLN 23,9 million and 29 projects financed from other sources (in 12 projects the Rural Development Program was identified as the source of financing, in 11 own resources of the commune, and in the remaining 6—other sources, including funds of non-governmental organizations, funds from the state budget or Regional Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management). On average, in 1 RP there were 5 projects co-financed by the ESF, 2 projects co-financed by the ERDF and 1 project financed from other sources. Most often, however, in RPs there were 3 projects co-financed from the ESF and 1 project co-financed by the ERDF. The typology of basic revitalization projects planned in the surveyed RPs and a summary of their expected effects are presented in table 1.

In addition to the basic revitalization projects, communes could include in the RP the so-called complementary projects that directly do not contribute to the elimination or reduction of negative phenomena diagnosed in the RA but may result in strengthening the effects of basic projects. They can be financed from the commune's own resources or from various sources of external financ-

Tab. 1. Typology and expected effects of basic projects in surveyed RPs

| Project type | Expected effects of the projects |
|---|--|
| Social projects | |
| Professional activation of the unemployed, people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (56) | Number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • covered by support—1201 • who have obtained qualifications—139 • jobseekers—309 • with increased social activity—598 • working after the end of the project (including self-employed)—168 |
| Counteracting social exclusion of the elderly and the disabled (21) | Number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • covered by support—714 • with increased social activity—356 |
| Counteracting social exclusion of children and youth (26) | Number of pupils who acquired key competences—515 Number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion with increased social activity—221 |
| Social activation of the population (without indicating a specific population group) (23) | Number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion with increased social activity—1 375. |
| Support for families in a difficult life situation (5) | Number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • covered by support—84 • with increased social activity—79 |
| Intergenerational integration (7) | Number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • covered by support—373 • with increased social activity—130 |
| Infrastructure projects | |
| Building / renovation / modernization / equipment of a community center (29) | Number of people using revitalized facilities—5 706 Number of supported infrastructure facilities—30 |
| Construction / modernization / development of open zones of inhabitants' activity (15) | Number of people using revitalized areas—8 256 |
| Renovation / extension / reconstruction of buildings for the purpose of providing social services (cultural, educational, sports etc.) (11) | Number of supported infrastructure facilities—11 |
| Reconstruction of the municipal road (5) | Number of people using revitalized areas—2 587 |
| Other (10) | n.d. |

Note: The number of projects of a given type is given in brackets. The expected results of the projects have been estimated on the basis of project indicators given in the surveyed RPs.

Source: Own elaboration based on the surveyed RPs.

ing. However, they do not have to be projects implemented by communes. The project indicated as complementary can be implemented by any entity in RA or outside RA. The only important thing is that its effects should intensify the effects of basic projects. The typology and examples of complementary projects included in the surveyed RPs are presented in table 2.

In the surveyed RPs, 102 complementary projects were considered for PLN 77,3 million. On average, for one RP, there were 4 complementary projects for a total amount of about PLN 3 million, however, in the case of 7 RPs such projects were not planned at all. The sources of financing of complementary projects were: ERDF (19 projects), ESF (18), own resources of the commune (18) and the Rural Development Program (15). Private financing was provided for only 5 projects. In other RPs there were indicated other undefined sources. Due to the fact that communes will not be accounted for in any way from the implementation of complementary projects, including them into the RP did not result in any consequences. Perhaps that is why the number of these projects and their value are relatively large compared to the number and value of basic projects. In addition, infrastructural projects, whose value is inherently greater than soft projects, were most often included as complementary. Among the basic projects, soft ones dominated. No hybrid project was identified in any of the RP.

Tab. 2. Typology and examples of complementary projects in surveyed RPs

| Project type | Examples of projects |
|--|---|
| Social projects | |
| Socio-professional activation of the population (11) | Vocational training, improvement of competences, entrepreneurship trainings, animator of the local community |
| Social integration and social animation (9) | Organization of sports events, supporting the psycho-motor development of children and youth |
| Services for residents (6) | Rental of rehabilitation equipment, care for dependent persons, daily care, daily help for the elderly |
| Development of cultural offer (5) | Organization of concerts, promotion of tradition and cultural heritage |
| Other (4) | Educational activities for children and school youth, development of pre-school education offer |
| Infrastructure projects | |
| Construction / renovation / modernization of facilities for social activation (20) | Creation of a playground, construction of a swimming pool, construction of bicycle paths, outdoor gyms, development of a park, creation of a public beach, creation of a historical information point |
| Modernization / reconstruction of road infrastructure (16) | Modernization of streets, sidewalks, roads, parking lots, pedestrian and bicycle routes |
| Improving the quality of public services infrastructure (7) | Thermomodernization of schools, health centers, renovation of the gymnasium, renovation of the municipal cultural center |
| Private investments (4) | Renewal of the facade of the building, construction of the fence, roof repair |
| Other (20) | Construction of a child care home, extension of the water supply network, adaptation of facilities to the needs of elderly and disabled people, adaptation of the building to a public facility |

Note: The number of projects of a given type is given in brackets.

Source: Own elaboration based on the surveyed RPs.

6 Forms and methods of social participation

One of the main principles in programming of revitalization is social participation. Work on the development of RP as well as its implementation should be based on cooperation with all stakeholders, in particular with residents of RA, entrepreneurs and non-governmental organizations (Blakeley

and Evans 2009; Ignasiak-Szulc, Kola-Bezka, and Milejczak 2017). According to the “Principles...”, social participation should be included in the revitalization process at each of its stages: diagnosis, programming, implementation and evaluation.

In the process of developing and implementing RP, mature forms of participation are desirable, not limited to informing (in the form of meetings, discussions, workshops) or consulting local authorities, but covering such elements as co-decision, active participation in projects, including project financing from private funds, and civic control (Boryczka 2016, 121–123). Ensuring a wide range of participants in the revitalization process who take part in the discussion and then shape the surrounding space is to enable a substantive debate and practical implementation of the idea of social participation in the local development process, as well as building trust between public authorities and socio-economic partners in a given area (Osborne, Williamson, and Beattie 2004). Such an approach is intended to allow local authorities to communicate the needs of the community and exert a social pressure to focus financial support on real problems. At the same time, only thanks to the involvement of the local community in the preparation and implementation of the RP it is possible to achieve the goals set in it (Edwards et al. 2000, 1).

According to the “Principles...”, social participation in RP should include at least social consultations, which should at least accompany the process of RA designation and preparation of a document of RP. It is recommended to precede the process of RP consultancy with educational activities, expanding knowledge about local development and revitalization, addressed mainly to residents and potential partners in RA (including entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations), but also in other areas of the commune.

Thus, social consultations accompanied the process of developing all the surveyed RPs. They had the form of meetings with elements of workshops and debates. They were devoted to the presentation of the idea of revitalization, the identification of social needs and problems, the designation of DA and RA, consulting proposals of revitalization projects, and in the final stage of the development of RP—consulting the project of its final version. Public consultations were also carried out by surveying the residents who, in the questionnaires most frequently sent electronically, expressed their opinions about the development needs of the local community, delimitation of DA and proposals for revitalization projects. In addition, commonly used were various forms of informing about RPs, such as: posting information on websites, placing them on notice boards in commune offices and ensuring the possibility of obtaining information from employees of these offices. In several communes meetings or lessons on revitalization for junior high school students were held, selected aspects of revitalization in the local press or social media were presented, and internal trainings for employees of commune offices were conducted. The expected effect of these activities was to provide residents with knowledge about planned revitalization activities, to identify their problems and needs, to increase social activity and involvement of residents in the development and implementation of RP and to obtain their opinions and comments on RP.

Forms of social participation planned at the RPs implementation stage were: continuing publishing information on RP implementation on commune websites, periodic evaluations of RP implementation by revitalization teams set up by commune heads and possible updating of RP in response to changes in conditions having a major impact on achieving the objectives set in it.

Conclusion

Most of the analyzed rural communes in Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship decided to prepare the RP based on the Act of 8 March 1990 on commune self-government, deliberately giving up revitalization tools, the use of which allows the Act of 9 October 2015 on revitalization—i.e., the Special Revitalization Zone and the local revitalization plan. However, even those communes that have developed RP based on the latter did not decide to use them.

18 out of 25 RPs were prepared by consulting companies, which proves insufficient competences of employees of commune offices in the field of revitalization programming. In the case of 12 RPs, it was the same company that developed similar programs not only in terms of editing, but also substantively. Revitalization programmed in a such way is not a response to specific problems of

a given area, and a document of RP, although it meets the requirements of the “Principles...,” it is not a thoroughly prepared strategy for the development of problem areas. The intervention from public funds planned in it, although directed at solving specific problems, seems to be a dubious tool to recover these areas from the crisis.

Due to the necessity to concentrate revitalization processes in a limited area in terms of surface and population, rural communes usually faced the choice of RA from areas with very similar problems, because the crisis (manifested by an unfavorable situation on the local labor market, a lack of economic self-sufficiency of the population, aging of society or low level of education) is identified in the majority of them. For rural communes whose programs were analyzed it is characteristic that their level of socio-economic development is lower than in urban or urban-rural communes and that the diversity of the level of this development between towns and villages in a given commune is relatively small. In addition, according to the “Principles...,” the choice of a unit of space (town or village) as an area of intervention depends only on the subjectively chosen set of indicators. Thus, communes could select indicators in such a way as to implement the revitalization projects planned by them in a purposefully selected area.

The surface of RA — i.e., the area on which intervention is to be focused — in almost half of the analyzed RPs did not exceed 10% of the commune surface, and in 7 it was less than 5%. Although in RA in the surveyed RPs lived a relatively high percentage of the commune population (in 18 RPs it exceeded 15%, in 15 RPs it was more than 20%), it seems that in the case of rural communes the concentration of interventions in the limited area can contribute to the dynamization of its socio-economic development to a very small extent and the impact on the entire commune is even smaller. In such a situation the effects of intervention might refer only to diagnosed most urgent socio-economic problems and improvement of the infrastructure in a given unit of the commune’s space. Although they might be felt by a relatively large part of the population, they will be negligible in the scale of the whole commune.

This conclusion seems to be confirmed by the results of the analysis regarding the number and value of projects envisaged in RPs. There were on average 8 basic projects per RP, however, most often there were 6 such projects, including 3 financed from the ESF (average funding PLN 77,5 thousand) and 1 financed from the ERDF (average funding PLN 487,8 thousand). The value of projects financed from the ESF, aimed at solving social problems, is usually smaller than the value of infrastructure projects, which is due to their nature. However, even with this in mind, such a small number of projects directed primarily to residents of RA is unable to resolve structural problems of the Polish countryside: addiction to social assistance, social exclusion of the elderly, long-term unemployment, etc.

The surveyed RPs meet the principle of financial complementarity, because they combine various sources of financing of revitalization projects. However, the implementation of RPs was mainly based on EU funds. 129 out of the 208 basic projects are to be financed from the ESF, 49 from the ERDF, and 12 from funds earmarked for the implementation of the common agricultural policy. Among 102 complementary projects, there were 18 financed from the ESF, 19 from the ERDF and 5 from the Rural Development Program. A small number of projects financed from private funds have been entered into the RPs, but nowhere clearly has it been written that these are projects implemented by entrepreneurs. In the surveyed RPs the term private funds was usually understood as funds available to non-governmental organizations. This means that the idea of including entrepreneurs in the processes of revitalization has not been fully realized. They took part in social consultations but usually they only represented the voices of the inhabitants of a given unit of the commune. Their participation in revitalization processes was limited to co-deciding. It was not active participation in revitalization projects.

Socialization applied at the stage of developing of surveyed RPs, as well as planned at the stage of their implementation, indicate that social participation associated with revitalization processes in communes had the non-advanced forms. It was mainly informing and consultations. The element of co-decision was present, but it usually concerned the involvement of residents in choosing one of several proposed “top-down” options or acceptance of a solution developed by a limited group of people (employees of the commune office together with experts from consulting companies).

In the analyzed RPs an optional range of socializing activities appeared sporadically. Hence it seems that the communes took into account only the required minimum of such activities to meet the principle of social participation, which allowed the RP to be considered at the stage of their assessment as compliant with the “Principles...”.

Programming revitalization for rural areas is a novelty that was introduced in Poland in 2015 with the entry into force of the Act on revitalization. Although the rules of programming prescribed by the regulations (concentration, financial complementarity, social participation) seem reasonable, the experiences of rural communes in Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship that developed RPs lead to different conclusions. They show that the principles of programming of revitalization, which may be effective in cities, do not always correspond to the conditions prevailing in rural communes, which, as a rule, are predominantly plunged in a crisis situation caused by the common occurrence in their area of structural problems. Perhaps a good solution would be to abandon the obligation of focusing intervention on the area limited in terms of population and surface, and to allocate public and private resources to solving problems important for the whole commune, not for a small, subjectively selected part of it. In such conditions the involvement of local entrepreneurs operating in various parts of the commune in revitalization processes would probably be greater. An additional incentive for them to engage in revitalization projects could be financial support from local budget or EU funds.

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