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THE RURAL LABOUR MARKETS IN POLAND – SHRINKING RESOURCES OR ENDLESS RESERVES

Abstract: Social and economic development, as well as life conditions in Poland, to a large extent is connected to the situation of the labour market – the stability of employment, the structure and collocation of work resources, the adjustment to the changing needs of the economy and to external conditions – *i.e.* the attractiveness and pull factors of foreign labour markets. Likewise, the development of rural areas in a territorial meaning, therefore in a local and regional dimension, and closely related to the success or lack of success in the close urban centres – is strongly dependent on fluctuating rural labour resources as well as on externalities and the endogenous conditions of the rural labour market.

The paper attempts to assess the development trends of rural areas in Poland taking into account the changing labour resources of the countryside (and therefore the labour supply) and the factors interacting on the selected directions of these changes and also the conditions and opportunities of maintenance or the increase of the labour demand in rural areas (stable jobs in the countryside in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors). It shows that the nature of changes in the rural labour market in Poland is complex and complicated, and, additionally, significantly varied on a national, regional and even local scale.

Key words: Rural labour markets, rural areas, internal and foreign migration.

Introduction

The socio-economic development of Poland, together with its inhabitants' living conditions, are increasingly connected with the situation on the labour market – employment stability, the labour resources structure and arrangement, meeting the changing needs of the economy, and external factors – such as the attractiveness of foreign labour markets, and many others.

The development of rural areas, in a territorial meaning, therefore in local and regional systems, and also the peculiar to prosperity or its lacking in urban centres – highly depends on the changing of the work resources in the countryside, as well as the external and endogenous factors of the rural labour market.

This article is to estimate the developmental situation in rural areas in Poland according to trends in the work resources in the country (that is the work supply), and factors affecting the directions of these changes (chosen), as well as the possibilities of stabilization or the increase of the work supply in a village (that is stable work places in rural areas in the agricultural and off-farm sectors). It takes into account that the nature of the changing rural labour market is complex and complicated, and also highly diversified at a national, regional, and even local level.

1. Rural labour markets – the question of origin and changes of factors

At the threshold of systemic transformation, the main economic sector of rural areas in Poland – agriculture – has significantly changed, which has considerably influenced the situation of the people connected with farming. Firstly, the national agricultural holdings were liquidated which resulted in huge unemployment in this sector. Most of the workers were unfit for any other work activity, with no possibility to move towards vacancies, and finally lost their only sources of income. Unequal and connected with the postwar method of nationalization of agriculture on the so called “regained lands” – the arrangement of workplaces in national agriculture caused the stable diversification of complicated social and economic effects of the process in a spatial dimension. Secondly, private farming played a significant role on the labour market during the transformation, because of the long-lasting, evolutionary origin (socio-economical, politico-cultural) of the present ownership and agrarian structure. A petrification of rural structures, together with all the positive and negative consequences, has immunized them – in relation to the rest of the economy, against the results of the system transformation in the first half of the 90s. The rural, and specifically the agricultural labour market, has appeared to be more stable than the off-farm economic branches. Among other results of the relative stability of agricultural work places there is also the cohesion of family organization and economic organization, which, from the point of view of economical effectiveness, gives worse effects, but it secures basic living conditions. The flextime enables all of the family household members to run both an agricultural holding and a housekeeping. That type of workflow significantly absorbs the influence of bad economic effects, and during difficulties on the labour market, it “kept” a lot of work sources in agriculture dominant areas [see, among others: Frenkel, Rosner 2001; Kryńska 1999; Rosner 1999; Witkowski 2004].

In the condition of the market economy and the European influences on the operations of rural areas, the “absorbing” form of the agricultural economy in Poland has been gradually diminishing, which is apparent through numerous short- and long-term migration flows abroad from rural areas [Łabędzki 2009, pp. 137-147].

It is distinctive that the arrangement of rural areas is quite stable – in terms of spatial arrangement – with their numerous and permanent problems of the function-

ing of the labour markets. However, there are relatively wide rural zones where the labour markets have expanded and demonstrate developing predispositions. It is to acknowledge that they create relatively compact zones of a local nature and different conditions and developing trends. On one hand, they are rural areas on different stages of urbanization, more or less integrating economically and socially with major towns and cities of the nation-state. Their developing grounds, and growth perspectives are mostly considered advantageous [np. Falkowski 2009; Strzelecki, Holcel 2008, p. 57-71].

On the other hand, in almost all of the regions there are often wide complexes of rural areas which are at risk of being peripheral and with deepening developing difficulties (Fig. 1).

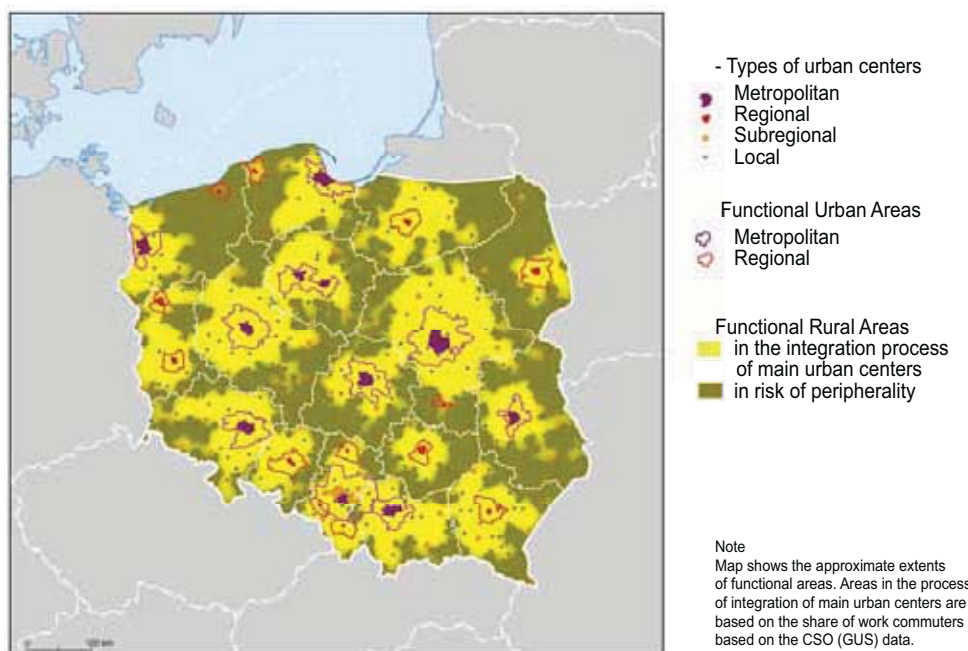


Figure 1. Rural zones of integration to urban centres and areas at risk of peripherality

Source: [*Krajowa Strategia ...* 2011]

In many studies it has been noticed that the development of regional centres – during at least the past two decades – has been mainly concentrated on the suburbs of their agglomerations which results in a growth in the number of inhabitants of rural communities located in urbanizing areas, and their work resources and activity also grow [Bański 2008, pp. 29-43].

It must be taken into account, however, the growing potential of rural areas, surrounding large and medium cities, which results mainly from the inflow of people

from nearby urban areas (Fig. 2). They are the “new” inhabitants of villages who in the same time mostly remain a part of the urban labour market and urban economy, though formally they change the structure of the rural population. In turn, the quite wide rural areas located in the peripheral zones – both at state and regional levels – are getting depopulated, and their demographic structure and work sources are getting more and more limited (compare Fig. 3) [see among others: Heffner 2011, pp. 8-26; Kłodziński 2012, pp. 40-56; Rosner 2012].

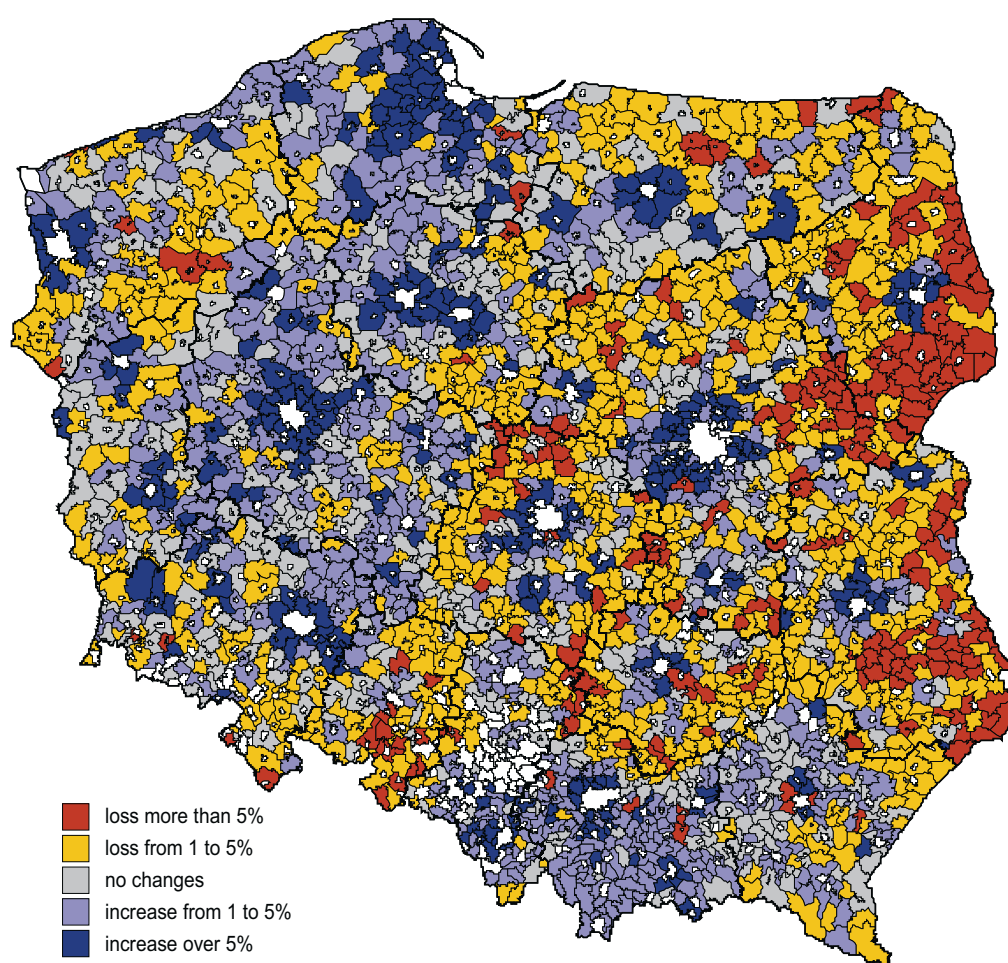


Figure 2. Changes in the population of rural communes in the period 2002-2008

Source: [Rosner 2012]

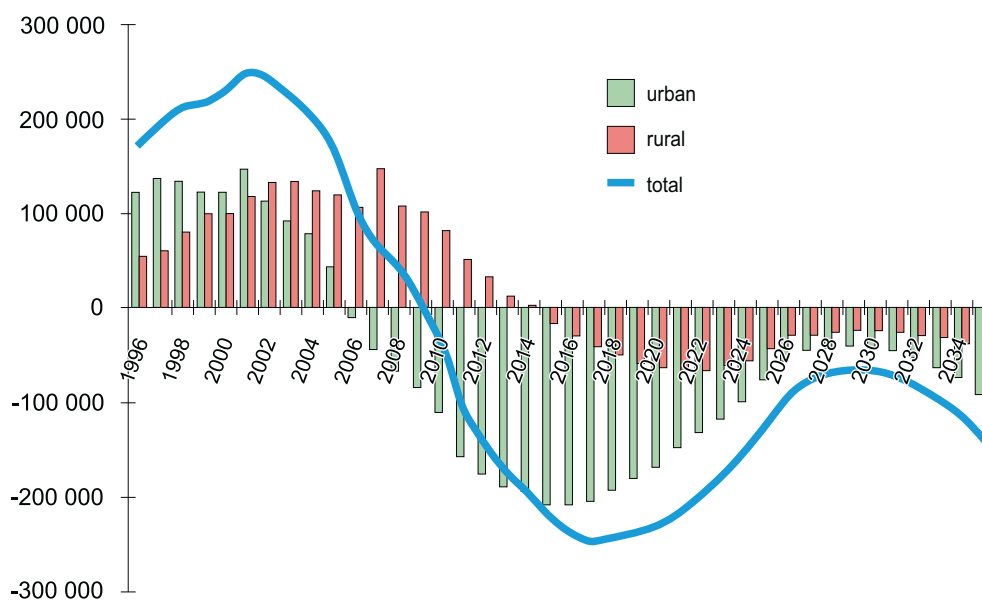


Figure 3. The annual balance of the population in working age in Poland for 1996-2035 period

Source: [Stanny 2010]

The identification of the correlation between the market “functions” of agriculture and agricultural holdings as well as their relation with the processes of economical development and the quality of life within different types of rural areas – over the last decade has been the subject of many studies and research projects [among others: Refsgaard, Johnson, 2010, pp. 239–257; www.interscience.wiley.com; Shucksmith 2010, pp. 1-14].

Knowledge about the influence of different politics on the relations between the components of development of rural areas is also significant. In general, it is shown that external direct support (farming subsidies) can negatively result in the functioning of the regional economy, and its limitation through the deliverance of work resources and capital, stimulate the achievement of better non-agricultural effects through the establishment of advantageous economic feedback. An additional effect is the achievement of a better quality environment and general quality of life in a village [Bryden, Hart 2004].

It is acknowledged that the success of rural regions is often connected with the efficient transformation of the many public properties, among which some merge with agriculture into new types of commercial activities connected with the environment and culture [Gilg 1983, pp. 74–105; Terluin, Post 2000/2001].

Also, it is stated that the degree of the transformation of public and private properties within agricultural holdings into the development of the territory (ex. community) and a higher quality of life if its inhabitants, depends mainly on the condition of the local economy, and its social and environmental context. The factors which specify when and to what extent the process of the changes appears in each of the rural regions – mainly depend on the way the politics of the development is run, and its affection on the regional and local decision makers (agricultural holding owners, employees, customers, entrepreneurs, and potential emigrants and immigrants) [compare: Stark, Fan 2008, pp. 234-247; Stockdale 2006, pp. 354-366].

2. The multifunctionality of a village and rural labour market

One of the concepts which has an indirect influence on “a demanding part” of the rural labour market is the striving for multifunctional development of a village, and within this approach – the multifunctional development of the agriculture. The multifunctional development of a village is, in general, the creation of workplaces and activities which are located in a village but are not directly connected with agriculture. The multi-functionality of rural areas means a diversification of economic activity in a village, creating a friendly environment both for farmers and the non-farming population of a village, strengthening the vitality of rural areas, and meeting the expectations of those involved in the development of rural areas (who often do not live in a village)¹. Some authors understand it as a diversification of workplace supply in a rural environment, generated by local societies which find different forms of self-fulfilment in the place of their residence [Jurek 1996].

From the point of view of the durability of rural labour markets, there is no doubt the multifunctional development of a village strives for the slowing down and even the blocking of the processes reducing the economic dimension of local economies through the holding down of the working population in a village, and the limitation of migration outflow. The local labour market of a multifunctional rural area includes the so-called “green workplaces” – agriculture with its additional functions, and also forestry, protected site service, renewable power engineering, and tourism and recreation, “white workplaces” – social, health, and housing services (*i.e.* second homes), remote and part-time jobs. Moreover, there is a place for numerous crafts and small manufacturing, and transportation and construction services, which both in agriculture and its associated activities, and also in the public and housing sectors are demanded. Boosting that kind of activity extends the local possibilities for the inhabitants of villages to earn their livings, start local off-farm entrepreneurship, concentrate on the

¹ The term *multifunctional development of rural areas* was defined by numerous group of Polish experts in various scientific and practical fields *i.e.* M. Kłodziński, A. Stasiak, M. Jasiulewicz, K. Heffner, J. Falkowski, M. Feltynowski, A. Czarnecki, J. Wilkin; a syntethic approach at work: [Czarnecki 2009].

searching of new options for the use of manufacturing potential. Most of these activities aim at finding new sources of income for the inhabitants of villages to discharge the agriculture from the necessity of providing for the redundant workforce [see among others: Drejerska 2008, pp. 67-73].

All of the initiatives resulting in keeping a minimum population potential in rural zones are significant – it “guarantees” a reasonable demand on most of the off-farm activities established in a village and in the intimately connected small towns.

3. Work resources in a village

No doubt the main determinants of the situation on the rural labour market is on the one hand the labour supply – which means all the resources available and possible to establish, and on the other hand – the work requirements, which means the demand. It is difficult to mention all the factors which influence the scale of work resources in a village, additionally they differ regionally. Some of the factors are strictly based on demography, merging with the structure according to the sex, age, and marital status of the inhabitants of villages. Influencing on them, or through them, is quite difficult and long-lasting, with a high uncertainty of the results which appear after a couple, or more often, dozens of years. Significant are also the factors of the so-called human resources, which means the education, entrepreneurship, professional experience and abilities which often initiate the permanent migration outflow from the countryside, and paradoxically, lead to the depopulation of many areas. A similar meaning for the work resources in a village has the so-called social capital.

During the second half of the 2000s, the rural resources of the population of the productive age were annually rising at an average rate of more than 100 thousand people, which means that the balance of people reaching the productive age and leaving this age group was positive. However, the growth rate of the population of productive age (and consequently also the work resources) was noticed also in the town and cities, in respect of the negative balance of the migration flow, the work resources in urban areas have gradually decreased. The growth rate of the work resources in a village is the principal component of the national work potential [Stanny 2010].

Beginning in the 70s, the selective (according to the participants' sex) migrating flows from the villages to cities were highly dominating, which practically “took away” the whole growth rate of the population in a village, and the number of the population in a village did not change. The process was crucial for the course of demographic reproduction both in a village and in cities, in the end of 20th century, resulting in the regressive trend in the general population of Poland. In the 90s, the internal migration flows got considerably weaker, but since the beginning of 2000, the rural areas have been characterized as having a positive migration balance, higher than the growth rate of the population. The loss of population related mainly to cities, and

the number of the population in a village, however, with a different intensity of some regions, has indicated a slight growing tendency [Rosner 2012].

It is worth mentioning that the quantitative dislocations on rural areas significantly differ regionally, and the population increase distinctively concentrates on the rural areas in the suburbanization zones of mostly regional centres (Fig. 2). There are, in turn, wide rural areas where the population loss is significant and concentrated, mostly in the eastern regions of Poland – the south-eastern and eastern parts of the Podlaskie Voivodeship, bordering that zone the eastern part of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, and the northern and eastern Lubelskie Voivodeship, and also the outer zones of the Świętokrzyskie, Łódzkie, Mazowieckie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, and Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeships. The large loss is also noticed in the eastern part of the Opole region, and in the Kłodzko Area (located in the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship). The socio-economic structure of the depopulation areas include a relatively high number of sources of unearned income, very high employment at public services on an off-farm labour market, and a small number of off-farm business entities. Mostly, they are companies with very few workers which supply nearly all to the local market [Drygas 2010].

Generally, the range of the growth rate of the population of the productive age in 1991-2010 in Poland – which is one of the most important determinants of the changes in work resources – is determined as exceptionally wide (Fig. 3) [Rosner, Stanny 2012].

In rural areas, on the ground of demography, the growth rate of work resources will be stable after 2014, and then will be negative as well as in cities. It does not mean, however, that the rural areas will have more problems with workforce supply, that kind of problems will be local which is connected with maladjusted structures. The characteristic feature of the age structure changes of the inhabitants of villages in 2000-2007, was the absolute and relative growth of the participation of the population of the productive age in the rural work resources. The number of the population of the productive age in a village was growing much faster than in cities, particularly high differences were in the second half of the 2000s when almost the whole growth rate was concentrated in villages. One of the most important reasons of these differences was a growing inflow predominance of the population from cities over its outflow from rural areas.

4. Migration flows as a formation factor of rural labour markets

The stability of the positive rate of population flows between almost all big towns (over 50 thousand inhabitants) and rural areas means that the life conditions in a village become more and more attractive to a large number of the urban population, and the settlement targets attract to villages more and more relatively wealthier and

better educated people who start to face commuting to work to the city or metropolis where they used to live.

From the point of view of the economic and service activities in a village, this is also a positive symptom. However, the relocation of the urban population to the rural suburbanization zones, on one hand, delays a disclosure of the limitation process of the rural workforce resources, and, on the other hand, improves the formal structure of these resources. Furthermore, the territorial dimension of this phenomenon (metropolitan and agglomeration areas, especially regional centres) accelerates the growing of the internal differences in direction, and with the possibilities to develop the rural areas. On a regional scale, the areas with a strong predominance of inflow are concentrated around Warsaw, Gdańsk (here a relatively wide area of Kaszuby is included), Poznań, Bydgoszcz and Toruń, Wrocław, Cracow, Łódź (especially in the north-western zone), Szczecin, Białystok and Lublin, and also the regional centres – Gorzów Wlkp., Zielona Góra, Olsztyn, Kielce and Rzeszów, and the cities of a regional value – Zamość, Nowy Sącz, Bielsko-Biała, Płock. The main areas of a positive flow balance in villages are, in the decade 2000-2010, connected with all the metropolises and regional centres (apart from Opole, which having a wide rural suburbanization zone, has a negative balance of foreign exchange movement, and the Upper Silesian agglomeration where the outflow is mainly in a direction outside its influence zone, and, in the western part, even abroad), and also with some other developing industry centres (Bełchatów, Lubin-Polkowice). The apparently negative balance of population flows does not include the wider rural zones, however, many types of that kind of local area are in the southern and eastern parts of the Opole region, in the Pomeranian Lakeland (the Zachodniopomorskie and Pomorskie Voivodeships), in the Fore-Sudetic part of the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship and south regions of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship.

A village with a convenient and balanced environment is especially attractive, as are small and medium towns with an availability of services, transportation, and a good infrastructure, and also a convenient local environment, security, and nature close by, and a stable labour market. Unfortunately, the last mentioned is usually based on the relatively limited public sector, connected mainly with local administration [see, among others: Bosworth 2006; Rosner, Stanny 2008, pp. 45-60].

In turn, big towns are mainly chosen because of the labour market, and the availability of transportation and services, and the quality of infrastructure [more in: *Trajektorie migracyjne...* 2010].

The accumulation of the internal migration lines in the relatively narrow rural zones around the bigger towns in particular voivodeships distinctively diversifies the rural space and the functioning of the rural labour market. In the context of the developmental perspectives of rural areas, the local labour markets play more and more important role, using the potential of the metropolises and bigger urban centres, which means they are located in and around those centres. They attract a staff (work resources which are the most active and mobile, especially well-educated, with a large

developing potential) from the weaker, badly connected and, therefore, peripheral in the regional and local ranges and the rural labour markets (meaning the rural areas together with small towns).

5. The labour market in villages and rural areas – changing factors

In the 90s and in the beginning of the 2000s, the rural labour market was characterized by a wide free workforce [Sosnowska 2009]. The structure of the rural labour market in Poland and its elements (demand, supply, labour costs, unemployment), and correlations between them, and also the components and the directions of evolution connected with demographic and economic conditions show that regional differences have a relatively stable characteristics [Sikorska 2001].

The arrangement of the population of the productive age in a village was very unequal both in 2004 and 2011 (Fig. 4), the largest work resources were in Poland's western Voivodeships (Opolskie, Dolnośląskie, Lubuskie, Wielkopolskie and Zachodniopomorskie) and the northern Voivodeships (Pomorskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie), and also in the Śląskie Voivodeship, and the Warsaw, Łódź, and Kielce agglomerations. The lowest resources are in north-eastern Poland, in the Podlaskie and Lubelskie Voivodeships, in the wide outer zone of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, and the Świętokrzyskie-Łódzkie Voivodeships borderland. Changes in a number of the population of the productivity age are also characteristic for large differences in a spatial system, because the growth rates during 2004-2010 concentrated in wide surrounding of Gdańsk agglomeration, around Poznań, Wrocław, Cracow and Warsaw, and Toruń and Bydgoszcz, and some other urban centres. Apart from them, wider, compact areas of the growth rates are in Małopolskie, Podkarpackie and Wielkopolskie Voivodeships. The zones of decrease have no compact features, they are in some communities of southern Opole region and Dolnośląskie Voivodeship (the Kłodzko Area), and individually in 9 further regions (Fig. 5). On a relative basis, the growth zone includes whole east Poland, apart from Warsaw agglomeration, and Pomorskie, Opolskie, and Małopolskie Voivodeships (Fig. 6).

The spatial differences of change of number of men and women are quite similar to changes in arrangement of the total population of the productive age (Figs. 7-8). The growth rates of the number of men and women of the productive age are located similarly, especially around the big cities – Gdańsk, Poznań, Wrocław, Cracow, and Warsaw, and the Małopolskie and Podkarpackie Voivodeships. Negative changes, a decrease in the number of women of the productive age, are characteristic for single communities in all the voivodeships, in a few regions (the Opolskie, Świętokrzyskie and Dolnośląskie Voivodeships) there are more of them.

A regularity is the relatively high and rising supply surplus (employees) over the demand (employers), which is effected by the high unemployment hidden among

farming and non-farming population of villages, inherited after the period of command economy, hitting the productive age of the so-called second wave of the demographic boom, the much faster decrease of employment in the public sector in comparison to its increase in the private sector on rural areas, and playing the role of an absorber of the effects of unemployment on an urban labour market by villages. Many researches have also shown the weak mutual adaptation abilities of the supply and demand representative entities on the rural labour market, especially in the poorly conjugate zones (*i.e.* questions of transportation, communication availability, the lack of social capital, *etc.*) with regional and sub-regional developing centres [Sosnowska 2001, pp. 139-158; also compare: Schlitte 2012].

The rural labour market is specific for its low rationality of the allocation of the work resources which mainly derives from a weak mobility of the inhabitants of villages. The domination of only one profession (farming) in most of the rural communities, and the employees' traditional attitudes to decision making also do not induce the process of a rational arrangement of employees in villages [compare Suchta *et al.* 2006].

In addition, the rural market has a secondary nature, offering "worse" workplaces which means bad working and wage conditions (in comparison to corresponding job offers in cities), lower employment stabilization, smaller chances of promotion, *etc.* A significant feature of unemployment in villages, however, is its structural character and the genesis deriving from the transformation effects. The spatial difference is quite stable (compare Figs. 9, 10), and has a significant connection with the suburbanization zones (significantly lower) and peripheral areas (significantly higher) with different conditions (the outer borderlands – the Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Podlaskie, Podkarpackie, Lubelskie, Lubuskie and Dolnośląskie [zone of the Sudetes Mountains] Voivodeships, the regional peripheries – Zachodniopomorskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie, west and north Mazowieckie, the borderland of the Lubuskie and Dolnośląskie, west Opolskie Voivodeships, and part of the Świętokrzyskie and Radom region) – mostly highly negatively correlated with the economic level of the rural areas and the level of education of the population.

Quite similar (but spatially not that compact and clear) and also stable is the arrangement of communities with most of the unemployed groups (compare Figs. 12-13). They are situated on the borderland of the Opolskie-Dolnośląskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie-Podlaskie, Wielkopolskie-Kujawsko-Pomorskie and Mazowieckie-Świętokrzyskie Voivodeships. Moreover, there are many communities like this in the Zachodniopomorskie, Podkarpackie and Wielkopolskie Voivodeships – their spatial arrangement has a partially genetic background (the former areas of nationalized farming or closed down local industry).

The largest growth rate of the number of unemployed in villages is a characteristic of Poland's eastern regions (apart from the zones around the regional centres – Kielce, Lublin and Rzeszów, but including those in the areas of Białystok, Warsaw

and Cracow), and the zone between Opole and Gliwice and south-eastern Wielkopolskie. Significant changes in the level of unemployment are in those areas where the level of unemployment is relatively low – Poland’s eastern Voivodeships, the Mazowickie, Łódzkie Voivodeship, the east Opole region (increase), and, in many areas with a relatively high level of unemployment in villages, some decreases were noticed (the western Opole region and the eastern part of Dolnośląskie, the northern part of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship (see Fig. 11).

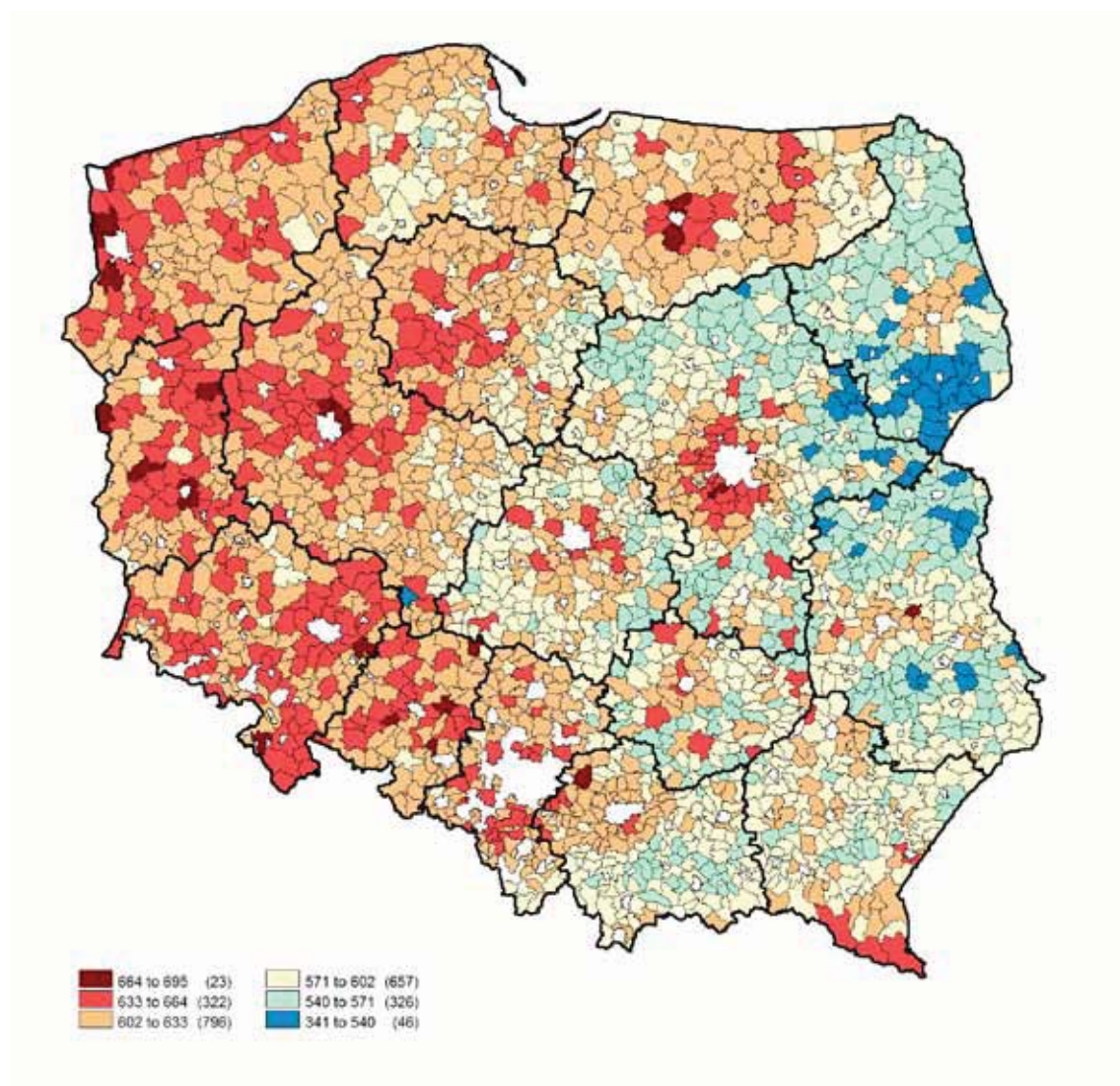


Figure 4. Total working age population in the country in the year 2004

Source: Elaboration P. Gibas and K. Heffner (2012), University of Economic in Katowice [Figs. 4–11]

A main direction of the rationalization of employment and the lowering of the unemployment rate in villages and in agriculture, is an acceleration of the process of the multifunctional development of the rural areas connected with the improvement of the macroeconomic business cycle. The active, pro-employment policy of the labour market, complementary to the macroeconomic socio-economical policy, should also play an important role in balancing the rural labour market. It also seems reasonable to emphasize and harmonize the macroeconomic, regional and local function of the employment policy [Sosnowska 2002, pp. 203-221].

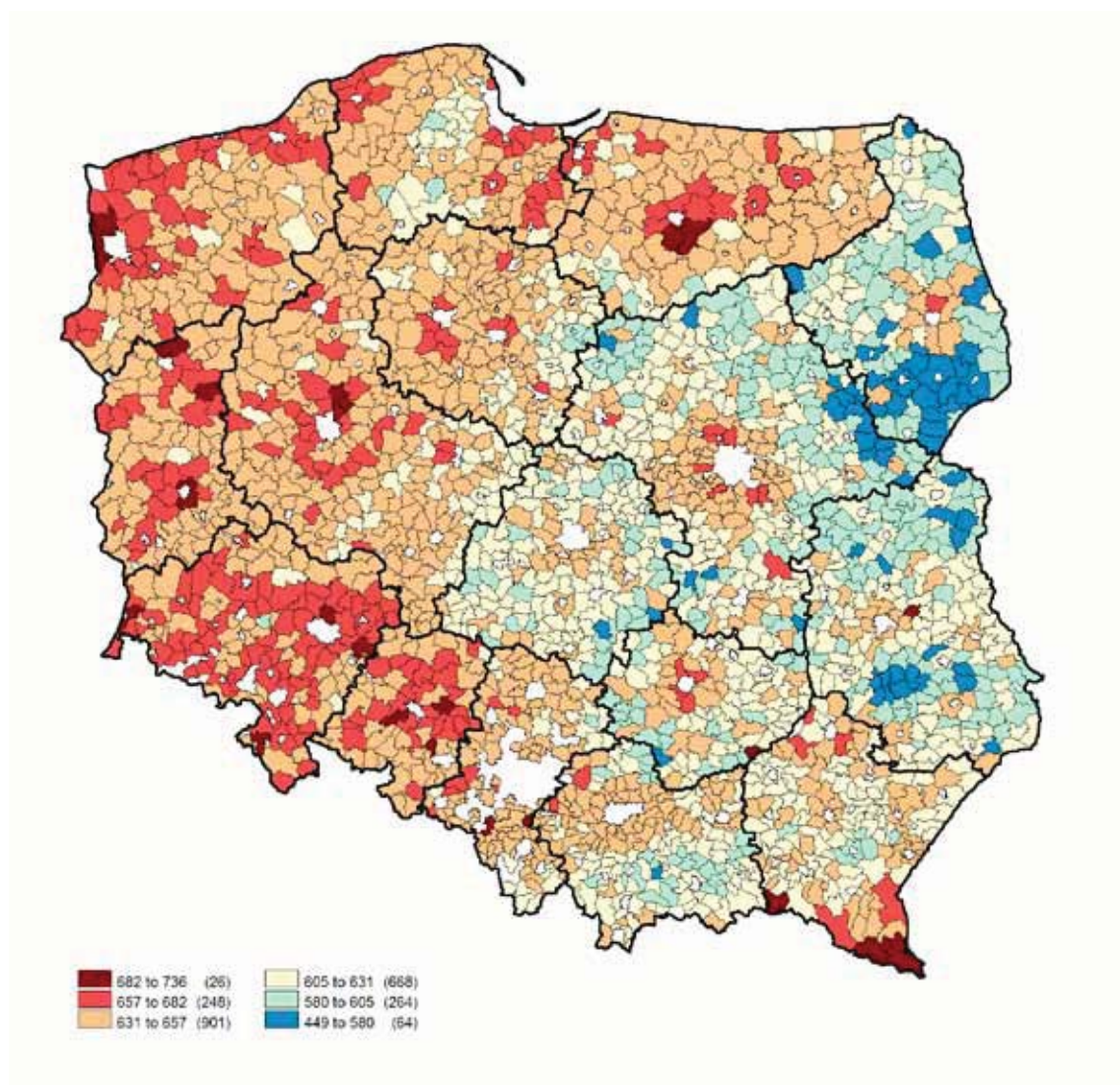


Figure 5. Total working age population in the country in the year 2011

For at least two decades, the policy of development of the rural areas has been concentrated on the challenges connected with the need of differentiation of the economic functions (the increasing of the functional changeability of villages). In particular, it is about the possibility of the implementation of off-farm functions, the promotion of new forms of off-farm employment in villages, and the support of the service system, and also the implementation of many facilities for the various population groups residing the rural areas [compare among others: Bartkowiak 2009, pp. 299-308].

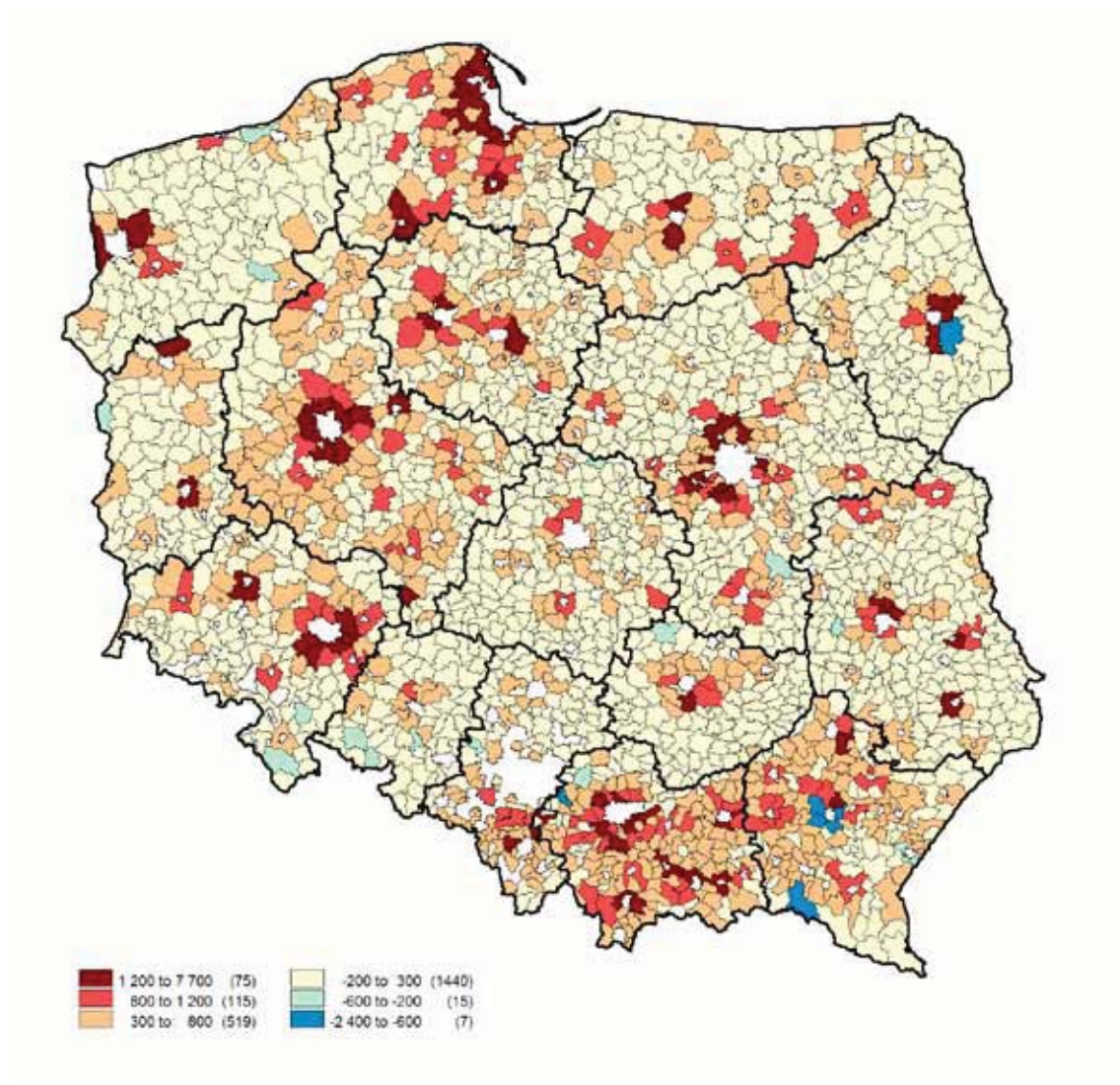


Figure 6. Total growth of population in working age in the country in the years 2004-2011

Explanation: classes shows the deviation from the average growth of the working age population per 1,000 people of working age in the community. Yellow color corresponds to the average level of growth for the country (rural areas).

They are not goals of the development but ways which lead to an increase in the level and quality of life in a village. Simultaneously, a changing socio-economic, and often also the political (privatization and its effects, market facilitation of the economy along with such effects as the total decline of many types of activity in some regions or their parts, the increase of ecological awareness of the population, *etc.*), situation leads to the relatively frequent changes of the priorities and goals of the development of the rural areas, either on a European, national, regional, and even local scale.

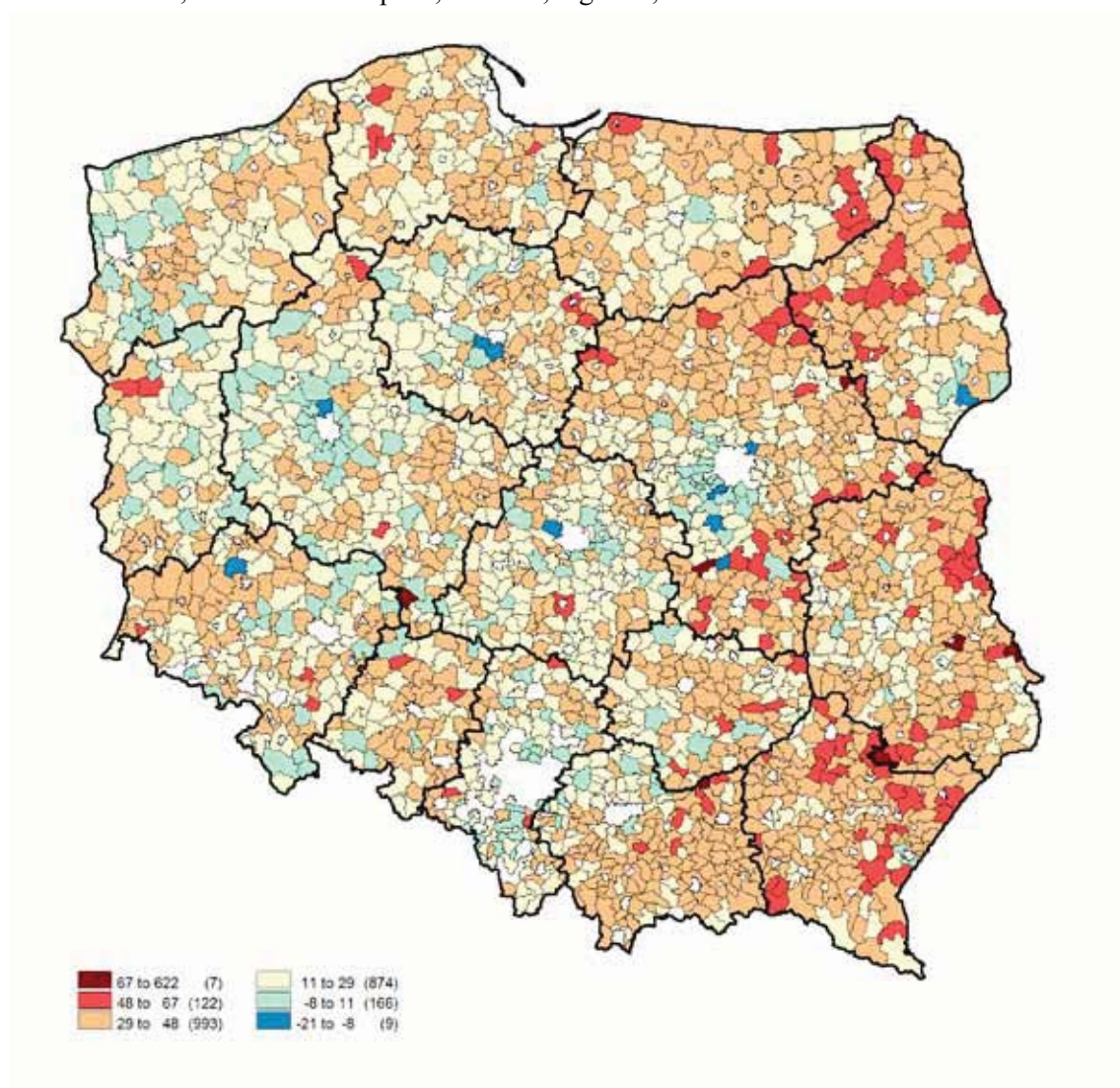


Figure 7. Total growth of population in working age in the country in the period of 2004-2011
 Explanation: classes shows the deviation from the average growth of the working age population in rural areas (in absolute numbers). Yellow color corresponds to the average level of growth for the country (rural areas).

During the preparation time of Poland's entering of the European structures and after the accession to the European Union (1995-2005), the rural areas development policy evolved relatively quickly, gradually being concentrated on the changing directions which generally lower the distance of Polish villages to the level reached in other member states, which are supported by different kinds of European funds and programmes. The latter were strengthening the initiatives diversifying the directions

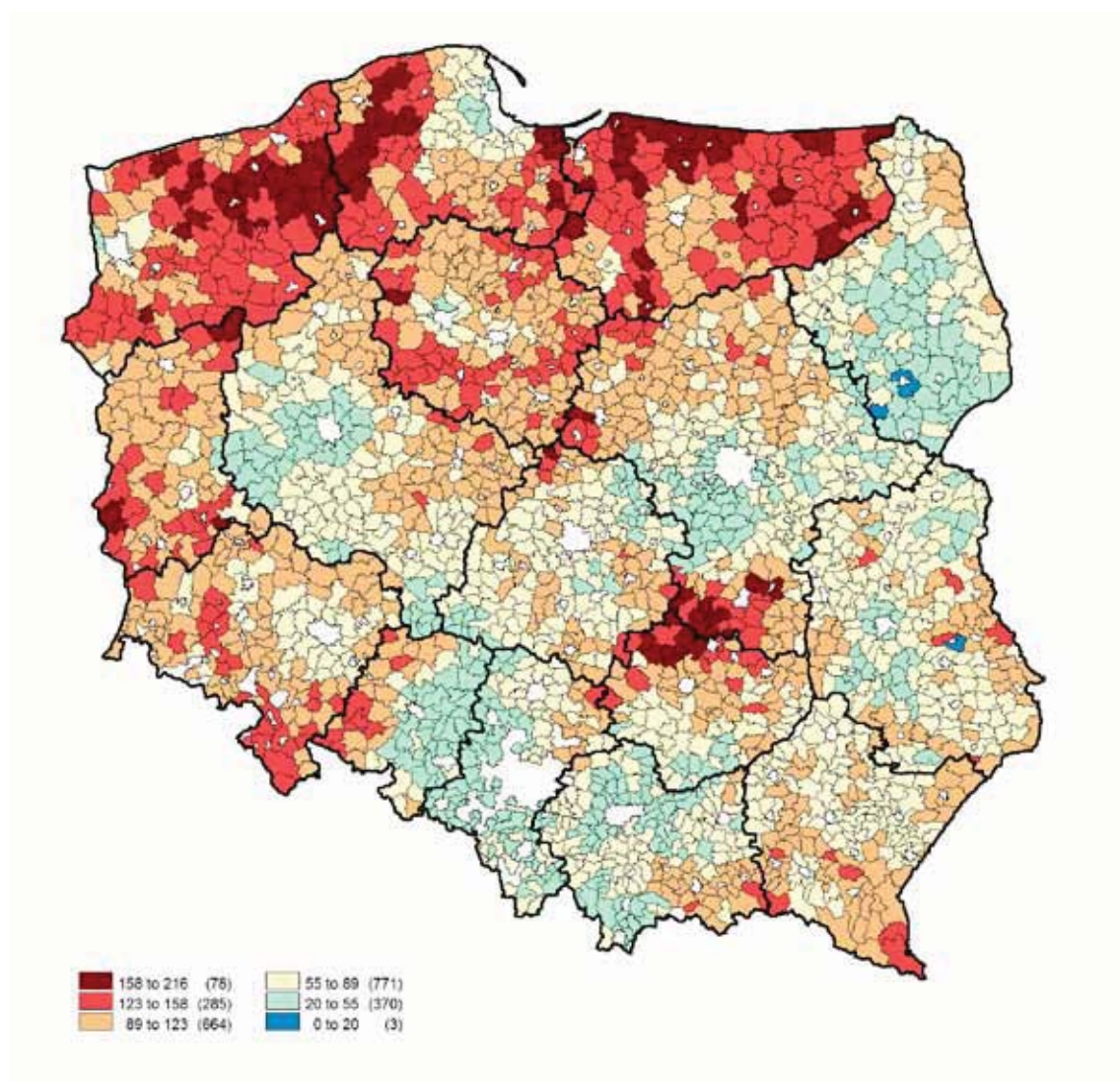


Figure 8. The unemployment rate in rural areas in 2004

Explanation: classes shows the deviation from the average level of unemployment in communities.
Yellow color corresponds to the average number of unemployed in the communities (rural areas).

of agricultural holdings activity and promoting local products and agrotourism, which support small and medium businesses and improve the countrymen's qualifications, skills and level of education [e.g. Bartkowiak 2010].

Moreover, the activities which improve the condition of the rural infrastructure and the securing of natural resources as well as the landscape values are widely subsidized on a local and regional scale [compare *i.e.* Drygas 2008, p. 137-156].

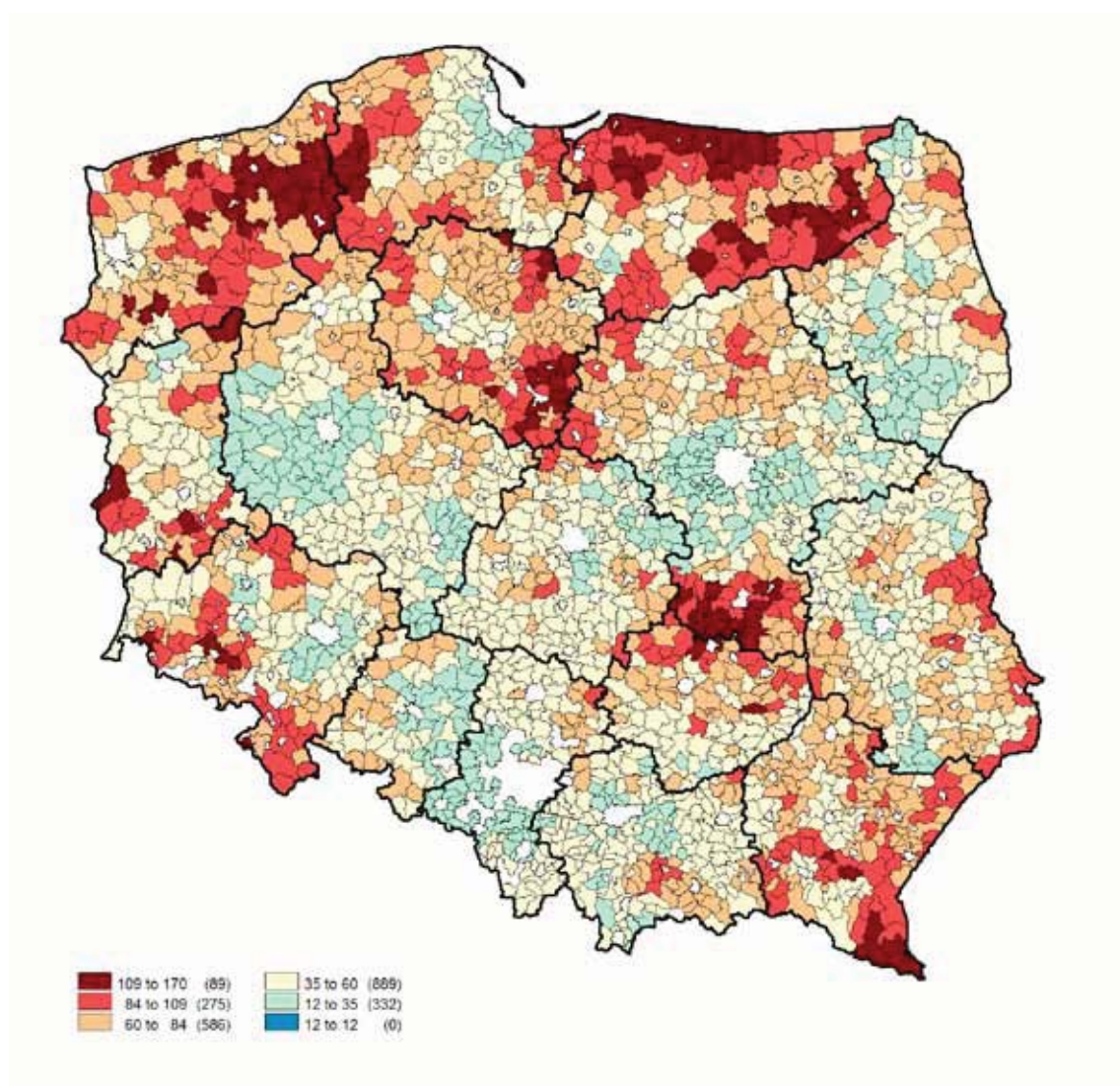


Figure 9. The unemployment rate in rural areas in 2011

Explanation: classes shows the deviation from the average level of unemployment in communities. Yellow color corresponds to the average number of unemployed in the communities (rural areas).

Nowadays, the socio-economic development of rural areas is a wide category including not only the diversification process of the rural economy (which means a parallel activity of many rural economic functions, that is striving and reaching a multi-functionality of rural areas), but also the economic support programmes for countrymen, which is con-

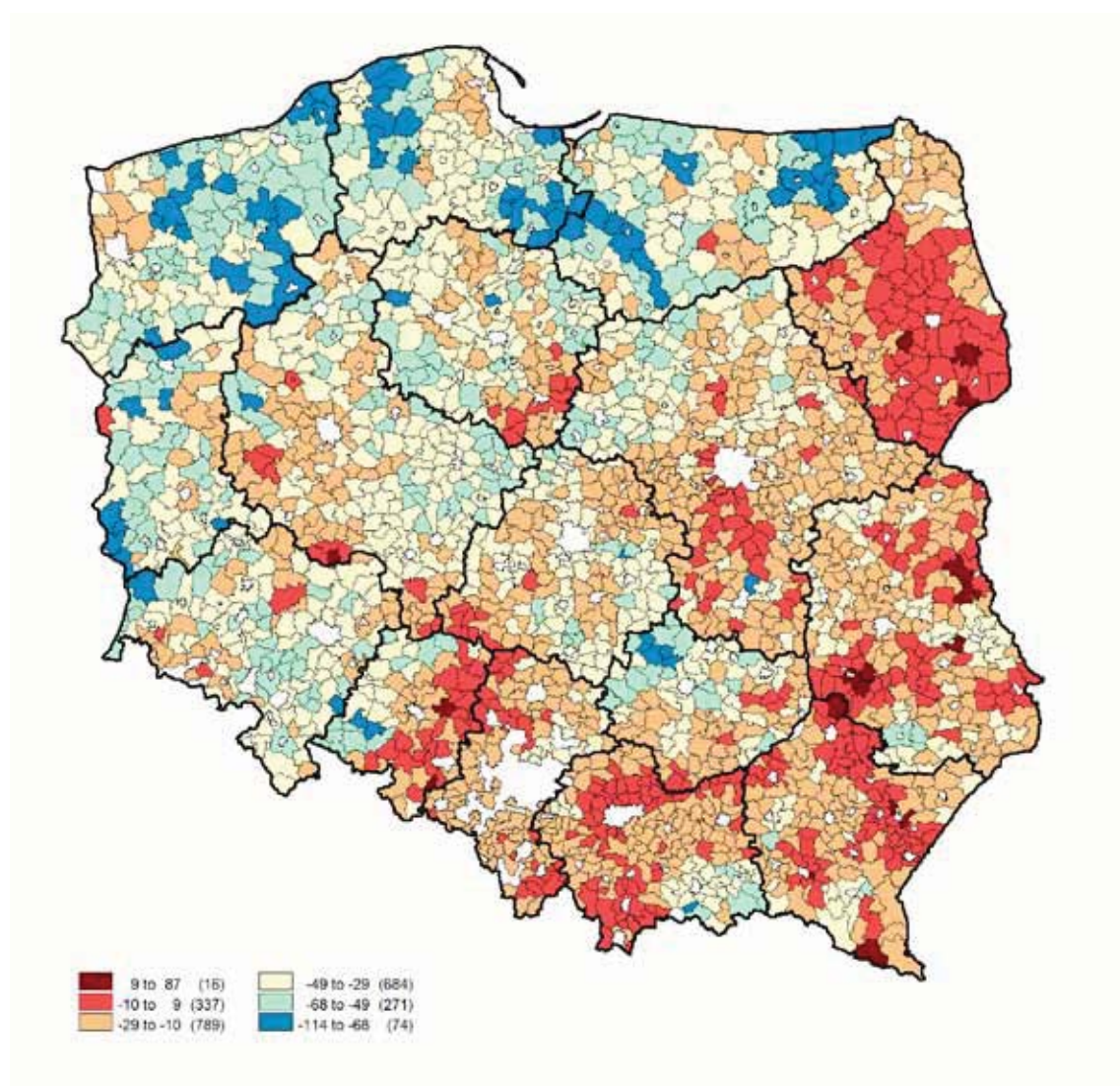


Figure 10. Changes in the number of unemployed in the communities in relation to the average level of change in the rural areas in Poland in the period 2004-2011

Explanation: classes shows the deviation from the average change in the number of unemployed in Poland by municipalities. Yellow color corresponds to the average level of change in the number of unemployed in the communities (rural areas).

nected with the stimulation of local business activities and attracting outer investments. The point is also to improve the conditions and quality of life which are reached through keeping the environment (often restore and renew the lost values with the required innovation and economic and technical measures) and the cultural values of villages.

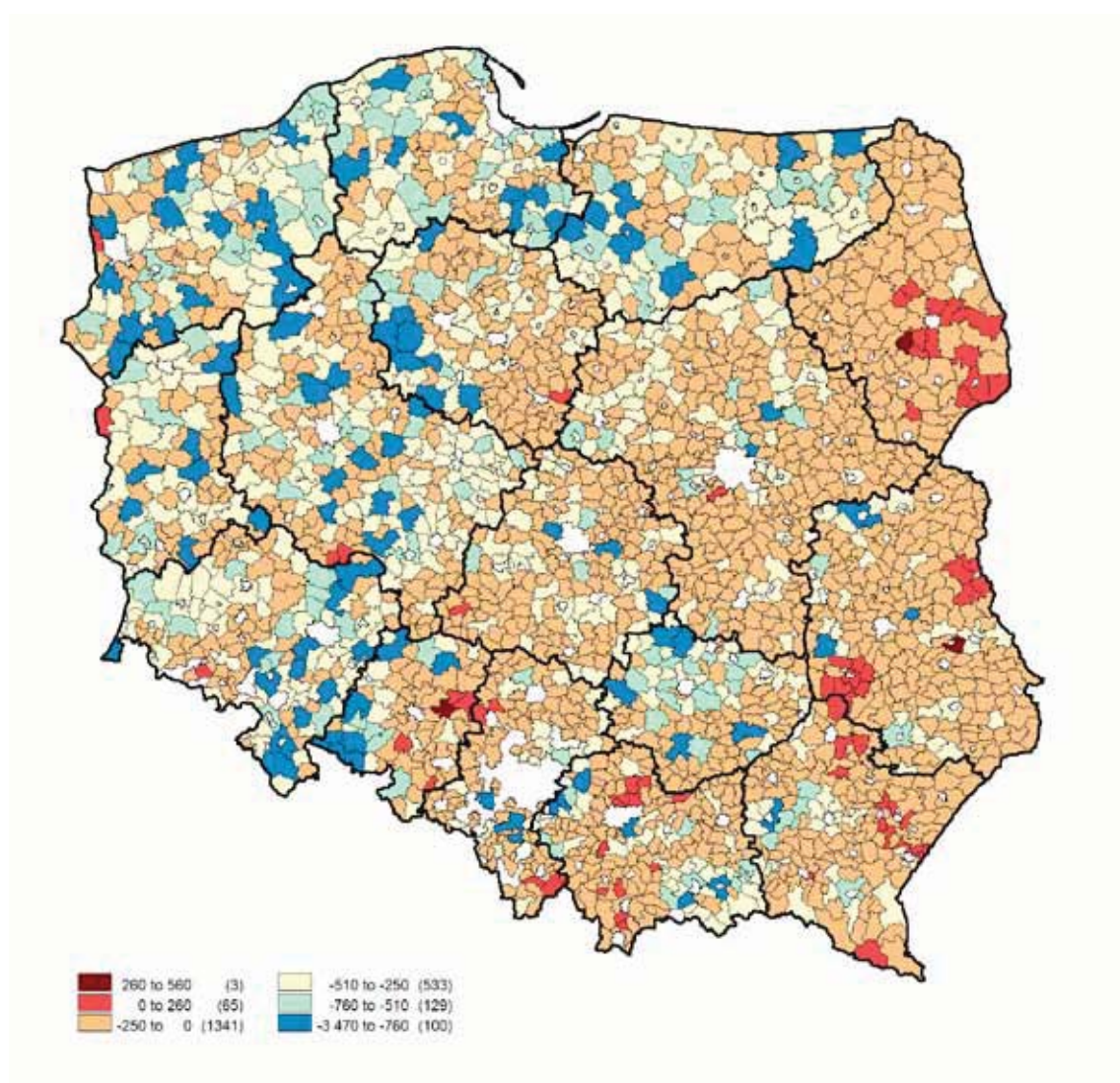


Figure 11. Change in the level of unemployment in rural communities in the years 2004-2011
 Explanation: classes shows the deviation from the average change in the unemployment rate in rural areas.
 Yellow color corresponds to the average level of change for the country (rural areas).

Conclusions

Still taking into account the agricultural sector in the functioning and development of rural areas, a more and more important role in most Polish regions, both economically and socio-culturally, is played by the relation “home – work”. It can be defined as two typical processes:

- the inhabitants of cities move to rural areas, keeping a workplace in the city,
- the significant interdependence of the inhabitants of rural areas with an urban labour market and employment on this market.

Both processes are directly and positively correlated with a good and mutual accessibility of urban centres and rural areas. The liveliness of a suburbanization process can considerably limit both of the trends, slowing down the development of a village and deteriorating the communication conditions in the polarization zones, both in regional and national arrangements.

A key factor for rural areas outside the zones of influence of large urban agglomerations is the relation with the central places (local zones, local operating zones, local labour markets, local service zones). They include the relation between a city and a village deriving from the service functions of high and common availability. They are also the off-farm labour markets which can (should) implement a workforce surplus of the surrounding villages and must have the feature of a high availability from their local zones. The changes on rural labour markets involve “a centrality” of smaller cities in the range of education and professional adaptation, trade, banks, insurance, health care, services of culture and local administration. In the 2000s, however, an emerging tendency of simplification of hierarchy and function of urban centres of the kind, which is a relocation of the institution and service sector (particularly it is about a public sector which is a permanent component of the local labour markets) to greater cities and even metropolises, results in the deterioration of accessibility to services on rural areas. It also resulted in the weakening and limitation of the functional diversification possibilities of a village (enlarged and irrational commuting to work) and workplace reductions.

To maintain a stability and diversification of rural labour markets, the relations between rural and urban entrepreneurship are also important. They particularly involve modern and technologically advanced agriculture, which highly depends on the transfer of knowledge, modern services and new products, delivered by institutions situated in large urban centres, research and development centres, and companies. At the same time, the city is a sales market of food produced by the agricultural sector, and the relations transform from local into regional, which, because of the resistance of lower distance, their service is a main component of keeping workplaces in villages.

The least important role in the diversification of rural labour markets is played by the relations connected with the reaction and leisure functions of rural areas (“consumption areas”). The rural areas perform the important function of providing the

possibilities of meeting the city inhabitants' recreational needs [Kutkowska 2003; Pomianek 2006, pp. 282-285], which not only diversify the agricultural holdings economic base (multifunctional agriculture), but often initiate the establishment of new forms of village activity and performance. However, it often happens that near huge metropolitan areas, the recreation and leisure zones located in rural areas lose their rural character, being transformed into a huge recreation establishment. In other places they keep the rural features and are mainly visited because of the natural and cultural values; often the dimension of the tourist movements exceed their environmental resistance. In many cases, the rural areas evolve towards "consumption landscapes". Recreation and leisure as the main forms of the relation between a city and a village become a basic component of the advantageous influence on the local labour market of rural areas in the peripheral zones.

The rural labour markets in a wide range assure the functioning of drinking water resources, water treatment plants, secured aquifer, landscape and wooded areas, mainly located on rural areas, and also electricity supply and some kinds of resources.

Altogether, the functioning of the rural labour market distinctly territorializes which may be considered as a correlation of their condition, developing abilities and changing trends with the developing situation of the regions where they operate and remain a part of them. No doubt, the rural areas in the zones of the economic and communicational impact of large urban centres (metropolises, regional centres) are a component of their labour markets and develop along with them. In those rural areas, which surround metropolises, the number of employed significantly grows (see fig. 9). It is all the more visible that for the former inhabitants of cities who more and more locate in the suburban zones, the majority of their work activities are still realized in the city.

On a territorial basis, at least since the 90s, an apparent concentration of development and supporting instruments of structural policy in metropolitan areas (large urban agglomerations) and growing regional centres has been visible, but not in problem rural areas. Another national strategy of regional development has been the initiation of the development impulse diffusion processes in the lower developed areas and the better use of an internal region protection potential. The regional strategies, however, concentrate this help mainly in the regional capitals², without any suggestion of how to uniform the stimulation measures for local centres (small towns among which only some might be the objects of revitalization initiatives), which both handle the nearby rural communities, and also become a catalytic agent of the diversification of regional labour markets. If they are not revitalized, the outer-agglomeration rural areas in many regions will still depopulate [Kłodziński 2012, pp. 40-56].

The rural areas around the largest cities, which benefit from the urban markets neighbourhood, feature a fast development, but it is mainly based on the work resources

² Only through growing regional centers, particularly in regions without metropolis, the competitiveness of regions can be maintain, applying preferences for the polarization and diffusion policy at national level [compare Heffner 2010, pp. 163-184].

and “colonization” potential of the zone, connected with the large urban centres. The suburban zones emerge around the largest cities and also around medium cities with a high level of urban level, but do not emerge around mono-functional cities. The rural work resources gradually integrate with the urban agglomeration labour market, and their functioning is strictly connected with the development of the cities around which they exist.

The rural areas, in which economic and often social development are behind the times and with low dynamics of development, exist in areas which are peripheral to the main cities network. More of them are in the eastern than the western part of Poland, but, among the factors which specify the spatial diversification of the rural labour market, a historical conditioning plays a lowering role in the developing potential formation of a village in comparison with a rising interaction of a centre-periphery system (Fig. 9). The main problem of the rural labour markets in zones of that kind is a decreasing population potential and self-limiting demand which derive from the limited financial means. On one hand, the measures stabilizing the population of these areas, and on the other hand, the initiatives stimulating and making their cities and villages attractive can stop and reverse the negative economic, and consequently the demographic and social changes.

As a conclusion, a lot of the inhabitants of villages have a dilemma whether to be oriented toward employment in cities, or toward the rural labour market, which, in spite of the two decades of transformation, is relatively small and quite destabilized. The decision whether to direct towards the urbanized areas is connected with the starting or continuation of and the improving of skills.

It is difficult to skip the operations stimulating and activating a rural off-farm labour market in the process of programming the development of rural areas. A large part of the EU aid funds, which are directed to Poland, is assigned to this purpose, which means an economically and culturally strong village as a complementation of cities and towns, and, at the same time, a village full of environmental values and mixed landscape, with the agriculture important for the local economy.

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