

AXIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SILVER ECONOMY IN RURAL AREAS IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN POLAND

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Abstract. The paper presents the concept of sustainable development adopted by the United Nations in 1987, with its foundations contained in the Enlightenment and Kant's philosophies of designing rational social development. It was stressed that successful social development is the responsibility of future generations. Fundamental humanistic, social and natural values were described as those realized as objectives of the concept of sustainable and multifunctional development of rural areas in Poland. The study also emphasized the need to involve older people from the rural environment in the implementation of these concepts in their place of residence. One of the forms of such an activity of seniors is silver economy in the commercial and non-commercial aspects.

Keywords: sustainable development, rural areas, values, senior citizens, silver economy.

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Introduction

Rural areas in Poland are situated outside the administrative borders of cities and cover about 93 % of the country's area. They are the largest beneficiary of support from the EU funds aimed at improving the standards of living of their inhabitants. The support contributes to the implementation of numerous investments in the field of road infrastructure, cultural infrastructure, and environmental protection. Rural residents appreciate the benefits of the natural values of the area they live in, lower costs of living, greater safety and attractiveness of the place of residence (Informacja na temat, 2017). In 2016, 40 % of the country's population lived in rural areas, of which about 20 % were people in pre-working age, 60 % in working age and about 20 % in post-working age (Polska wies 2018, 2018).

The basis for the functioning of agriculture in Poland are family farms, with their number reaching about 1,600 thousand. The average area of the farm is 9.6 ha. In addition to agriculture, which is an important sector of the rural economy, non-agricultural activities in rural areas are developing intensively. This activity constitutes the basis for a multifunctional rural development strategy, which does not only diversify the rural economy and introduces new economic functions, but it also activates inhabitants to develop non-agricultural activities based on the resources of natural environment and rural culture (Stanny, 2013). The strategy is primarily aimed at limiting agriculture, creating new job opportunities in rural areas, reducing unemployment rate, developing local entrepreneurship and social and technical-utility infrastructure in rural areas.

Societies of Poland and other European countries are undergoing the process of ageing, which is caused, among other things, by prolonged life expectancy and low total fertility rates. At the end of 2017, the population of Poland amounted to 38.3 million, including over 9 million people aged 60 and over, which accounted for about 24 % of the population. In rural areas, residents over 60 years

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of age constituted 20 % of the country's population, of whom 43.2 % were men and 56.8 % were women (Informacja o sytuacji, 2018). Estimates of the Central Statistical Office (GUS) in the demographic forecast for 2014-2050 indicate that in rural areas, the percentage of the working age population (men aged 18-64, women aged 18-59) will be decreasing from 63.4 % in 2014 to 50.8 % in 2050. Furthermore, the percentage of the population at the post-working age (men aged 65 and over, women aged 60 and over) will be increasing from 16.2 % in 2014 to 34 % in 2050 (Polska wieś 2018, 2018).

At present, seniors are a generation born mostly during the post-war baby boom in 1945-1959, chiefly in the countryside. It is a „baby boom generation“, whose lives and abilities to satisfy their needs are determined by the common economic and institutional context, reflecting the socio-economic history of the times in which these people studied, worked, started families, and participated in the social security system (Szatur-Jaworska, 2018). The baby boomers' generation is a generation that, at the threshold of old age, belongs to families in which four generations live at the same time. It has duties both towards older parents and their own grandchildren. Since families in Poland occupy a very high position within the value system, this generation is an important source of support and assistance. This is why old parents expect help from their children, whereas adult children (mostly women) feel obliged to provide it and consider it as something natural (Walkowska, 2018).

There is therefore an important need to implement the concepts of active ageing, healthy ageing, also termed successful or positive ageing. This concept aims to optimise active life of older people towards to ensure the best possible quality of life, its improvement and making it as long as possible. This process is expected to be accompanied by humanitarian values and the need to develop the so-called „silver economy“, supported by the values of health, culture, support, material security and activity. Successful ageing, with good mental and physical condition, good health and financial independence, means less of a burden not only on public finances, but also on their adult, already ageing children (Rowe, Kahn, 1998). It also promotes sustainable social development of towns and villages.

The first part of the paper formulates the hypothesis that the concept of sustainable social development presented by G.H. Brundlandt at the United Nations in 1987, in the *Our common future* report is situated in the Enlightenment and Kant's traditions of social philosophy, especially as an idea of „practical reason“. The view that this concept invalidates the liberal position of A. Smith on the formation of „spontaneous social order“ and a view on minimizing the role of the state in the management of social development was justified. The second part presents a typology of fundamental values for sustainable social development: 1. humanistic values, including 'supra-egocentric' values (good, truth, love, honesty), the value of the human person and seniority, these two values are presented for the first time in literature; 2) the social values contained in the „Report“, i.e. sustainable development of modern civilization, solidarity, responsibility; 3) natural values, i.e. balance and biodiversity, the value of land, sky, mortal beings, i.e. people. These values were adopted from the philosophy of M. Heidegger. The paper presents the results of empirical research devoted to the realization of the values of seniority in the development of silver economy in rural areas consistent with sustainable development.

The views and analyses contained in the paper have a cognitive and practical status because the conclusion part indicates the tasks of the state and self-government administration concerning the implementation of the objectives of silver economy, consistent with the sustainable and

multifunctional development of rural areas. The paper was written based on the analysis of various literature sources on the subject, data collections of social statistics, political documents, and reports from surveys.

Subject of research in literature

At the end of the eighties of the last century, G.H. Brundlandt, Prime Minister of Norway, presented a report *Our Common Future* in the UN (1987) in which she formulated a political and at the same time civilisation-centred concept of *sustainable development*. The report's author adopted a broad concept of development identical with the concept of civilisation. She stated that „at the present level of civilisation, sustainable development is possible, i.e. development in which the needs of the present generation can be satisfied without diminishing the chances of future generations to satisfy them” (*Nasza wspólna*, 1991).

Two issues should be emphasized in relation to the quoted statement: The first is the combination of current policy with a civilisation mission. This broad understanding of development expresses holistic thinking, which is the basis for the formulation of many sustainable development objectives. The second issue is the acceptance of ethical rather than merely economic responsibility for future generations, the responsibility of those of us living today to maintain a world that will be suitable for living of the generations to come. The responsibility of people understood in this way is based on the Kant's ethics of obligation, duty and responsibility.

The concept of sustainable development of modern civilization is in opposition to neoliberalism and global capitalism. It rejects A. Smith's classic view of the formation of a „spontaneous social order”, a view accepted by all neoliberals. It assumes the restoration and stabilisation of the state's power, which is able to coordinate, as the only entity, the achievement of sustainable development objectives by various actors, including business entities. It will therefore be a rationalised development rather than a result of uncoordinated actions.

We believe that the concept of sustainable development is an idea formulated similar to the Kant's „practical reason”^x and is connected with the Enlightenment tradition. It is well known that the Enlightenment accepted the Cartesian view that reason is not an autonomous authority in relation to the world, but it plays a cognitive-valuating role and designs social life based on critical cognition of people's experience.

In the Enlightenment, according to this Cartesian view, many so-called social utopias were written and published as a remedy for the then unjust social relations. Utopias have gone down in history. Kant's views continue to inspire contemporary social philosophy and politics. It should be remembered that based on the famous Kant's dissertation „*On Eternal Peace*”, the concept of a united peaceful Europe was formed after World War II. The philosopher wrote that „peace must be somehow created”, first in human thought as a project, and then it is realized (Kant, 1992). He believed that politics means „the art of governing people.... and (it is) practical wisdom, (Kant, 1992), which should lead to a state in which everyone would be content” (Kant, 1992). Kant wrote that the idea of practical reason is „most fertile and necessary for real activity”, so it must be given *in concreto* and not in the form of abstraction detached from life (Kant, 1986). Kant stated that „such ideas of practical reason

^x Defining the concept of sustainable development as the Kant's idea of "practical reason" was suggested in the paper: W. Kaczocho, J. Sikora, *Aksjologiczne aspekty zrównowzonego rozwoju w ujęciu teoretycznym i empirycznym*, [Axiological aspects of sustainable development in theoretical and empirical approach] (in:) *Journal of Agrobusiness and Rural Development*, No. 1 (19), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczego w Poznaniu, Poznan 2011.

demonstrate their causality in relation to human activities" (Kant, 1986), when they reach the consciousness of intelligent people who want to overcome the chaos in social life and want to design and realize the present and the future in a rational way. We are of the opinion that the objectives and principles of sustainability contained in the Brundlandt's report are concrete in that they set out specific actions to be taken in politics, the economy, the protection of nature, life and human health. All the constitutions of democratic European countries contain appropriate provisions obliging individual political, economic and social entities to implement sustainable social development. Thus, the objectives and principles contained in the concept of sustainable development have become the causes of the subjective and objective activities. The Constitution of the Republic of Poland stipulates that „1. Public authorities shall adopt a policy to ensure environmental security for present and future generations" (Konstytucja, 1997). In the *Environmental Protection Law*, sustainable development is defined as „socio-economic growth in which political, economic and social activities are integrated with the preservation of natural balance in order to ensure satisfaction of basic needs of particular communities, both present and future generations" (Ustawa, 2001).

In Poland, similar to other European countries, few authors have addressed axiological issues of sustainable development. They have only analysed selected problems of values. In Poland, Tadeusz Borys (Borys, 2016) presented a thorough study on the fundamental values of sustainable development. This researcher wrote that „Dissemination of an supra-egocentric approach to development would be extremely beneficial, primarily for the reinterpretation of the category of the progress of civilization by basing development on stable foundations - key „warm" axiological values such as: good (unconditional good), truth (unconditional truth), love (unconditional love), empathy (unconditional empathy), honesty (unconditional honesty)" (Borys, 2016).

These values are considered by the author to be the „axiological foundation" of sustainable development (Borys, 2016). In our opinion, these values have a humanistic status. These fundamental values also include the value of the human being, including the value of seniority or being a senior. This value, we believe, has been marginalised and even invalidated in contemporary culture, which puts emphasis on the value of youth (i.e. being a young person). It can be stated that the value of youth dominating in mass culture is egocentrically oriented, it is directed towards itself and not towards others, and it prefers to be an independent individual. It should be noted that the value of the human being as the subject of one's own life and the subject of social life is developed in neo-thomistic philosophy (K. Wojtyła, 1982).

The fundamental values of sustainable development include the social values mentioned in the *Report*: sustainable development as a value for the civilization, the value and at the same time the norm of responsibility of the current generation and individual persons for the development of generations to come, the value and norm of solidary cooperation of people in the implementation of sustainable development. Obviously, the fundamental values of sustainable social development include natural values, referred to in the *Report* as „ecological balance, biodiversity", which, like all values, should be respected in people's consciousness and realized in practice, especially in business activity.

With reference to the philosophy of M. Heidegger, fundamental natural values include the Earth, the sky and people as mortal beings. The philosopher wrote in the book *Building Dwelling Thinking* that the essence of living on earth is to „keep a simple quadrilateral" in a dwelling, designated by „Earth and Heaven, Divine Beings and the Mortals" - mortal people live „by dwelling a quadrilateral". The preservation of the quadrilateral, living in it, among things, by actions and according to the

values assigned to its particular corners, is vested only in man. Only human is in the quadrilateral of these values (Heidegger, 1977).

Developing Heidegger's thought, one can say that the values of the quadrilateral constitute the existence of a human in the dwelling, in the world and in culture. We live on earth, we have heaven above us, we are mortal, but do we believe in God Beings? A quadrilateral in a dwelling consists of corners to which values are attached. The two corners, with the values of earth and heaven, determine our earthly existence, but also make us think, especially to people who believe in a religion, of Divine Beings, in which they see their transcendence. Religious people, connected with earth and heaven, recognize the transcendent being in Divine Beings, with which they wish to unite after death (Zych, 2013). Heidegger seems to say that non-believers are devoid of transcendent thinking, but this is their sovereign decision.

Using Heidegger's language, one can say that the quadrilateral of values exists „here“, in a limited space of a house, in the space of a dwelling; at the same time, it also exists „in the world“ outside the house, in the space „inside the world“ (Heidegger, 1997).

In modern culture, people often reject the values of the quadrilateral or forget that they exist. Then, the being, as a whole determined by the values of the quadrilateral is, using the Heidegger's notion, „covered“. People perceive only fragments of existence depending on their life's situation, determined by their instrumental roles performed at work and in social life. Consequently, these values are treated instrumentally (utilitarian) in the economy, politics and social life.

The adopted basic values of sustainable social development are conducive to the development of the natural and economic spheres in which older people live in rural (and also urban) areas. These values can also be found in European documents concerning the problems of older adults (WHO, 2004; GUS, 2016). Humanistic values are dominated by the following values: good, love, honesty, human dignity, seniority. The socio-economic values include solidarity, trust, cooperation, responsibility, work, capital. The natural values include land, climate, air, flora and fauna. These values form a fundamental basis for sustainable development of rural areas, agriculture and non-agricultural activities. They correspond to the basic factors of economic development, i.e. land, labour, capital. They are close to the values adopted by M. Heidegger. Their implementation in practice is supported by the conditions presented in the concept of practical reason by E. Kant. They form the basis for a supra-egocentric approach to the sustainable development of rural areas, with the value of seniority and dignity of older people deserving special recognition in silver economy.

Results and discussion

The complementary values presented in this part of the paper are close to older adults living in rural areas. They represent the basis for the development of silver economy as an example of successful ageing of the rural population. Silver economy is an economic system aimed at using the potential of older people, taking into account their needs. Like any other economy, silver economy is characterised by a demand-oriented and supply-oriented approaches. The generation of older adults has its own specific needs, which require the development of activities and services of different companies and institutions (demand side). On the other hand, older adults have a specific human and social capital which can be used and managed to increase their professional, economic and social activity (Golinowska, 2011) (supply side). The concept of silver economy does not approach the ageing of the population as a threat, but rather as a challenge and an opportunity to achieve economic growth and improve economic competitiveness. Its overriding goal is to improve the quality

of life of older adults, stimulate economic activity to meet the needs of these people and create job opportunities for their employment. Such an approach contributes to raising awareness in society, exchanging experiences, shaping a positive image of older people, building solidarity between generations.

An important element of silver economy is the so-called 'white jobs', the development of the care and health services sector for older adults and matching of vocational training programs with the needs of the labour market. Various possibilities of creating incentives for social activity, civic participation, development of voluntary work for the elderly and acting as leaders in the local environment are also important. Developing the valuable potential of seniors, their knowledge, skills, professional and life experience and willingness to work for the benefit of others is one of the key challenges of senior policy (Zalozenia Dlugofalowej, 2014). Therefore, silver economy has two dimensions: Commercial and non-commercial. Realization of silver economy should include not only older adults but also entrepreneurs, business partners, administration, politicians, local entities and the non-profit sector. Unfortunately, neither the labour market today nor most segments of the economy are yet oriented towards exploiting the potential of the older generation in the urban and rural environments.

Silver economy in rural areas can support a strategy for the sustainable and multifunctional development of these areas. The implementation of silver economy in rural areas should take into account the social context of values functioning in the local community, since silver economy in terms of supply is mostly run by family businesses, including family farms. The family is the owner, manager and, at the same time, the staff of the company providing work. It is a place where direct, often emotional ties are established in order to satisfy the needs of family members or the closest community. The culture of work is based on basic norms of social coexistence, e.g. the norm of respect for the values and personal dignity of older people; the norm obliging to respect their health; the norm recommending the role of a „reliable carer“; the norm recommending respect for cultural goods, traditions and natural assets (Sikora et al., 2015). The realization of the values of sustainable social development, development of silver economy (humanistic, social and natural values) is accompanied not only by the above mentioned formal and moral norms (non-formalised) but also by the knowledge, life experience and professional experience of seniors.

The development of silver economy in terms of demand in rural areas is very welcome. However, the problem requires a separate study. A supply-side silver economy based on the axiology of seniors and the value of seniority developed in rural areas supports the sustainable social, economic and natural development of these areas (Skowroński, 2003).

Opportunities for its development are provided by elderly people, who mostly live with their families running agricultural farms (46 %) (Informacja o sytuacji, 2018). They support the household budget by receiving a pension and assistance in performance of agricultural and non-agricultural activities in the household. It should also be added that among senior citizens in 2016, 13 % had their own farms and 4.4 % were self-employed in non-agricultural businesses. The potential of support for family farms by seniors living in rural areas is substantial and diversified. A significant part of these farms derive incomes from non-agricultural sources and from additional gainful activities based on working in agricultural farms (Table 1, 2). Therefore, the chances of development of commercial silver economy in the supply aspect in rural areas in Poland are significant. Unfortunately, No detailed research has been done in Poland into this subject.

Table 1

Individual agricultural farms with non-agricultural incomes in Poland

Specification	Total			
	2005		2016	
	thousand	%	thousand	%
Total farms	1723.9	100.0	1398.1	100.0
Total farms with non-agricultural income	1317.4	76.4	1149.0	82.2
- from non-agricultural business activities	159.1	12.1	213.0	18.5
- from paid employment	692.5	52.5	668.3	58.1
- from a pension	668.6	50.7	462.1	40.2
- from other non-gainful sources	75.2	5.7	106.3	9.0

Source: *Polska wieś 2018, (2018), Raport o stanie wsi, (Polish countryside. Report on the state of rural areas) ed. J. Wilkin, I. Nurzyńska, Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, Warsaw, p. 124.*

The analysis of the above data shows that in 2005 and 2016, the percentage of households obtaining income from non-agricultural sources increased from 76.4 % in 2005 to 82.2 % in 2016 (Table 1). In general, apart from the decreasing source of non-agricultural income from pensions, other sources of non-agricultural income by agricultural farms increased in the analysed years. Additional incomes in 2005 and 2016 from gainful activities based on the agricultural farms are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Households with additional gainful activity based on an agricultural farms in Poland

Specification	Total			
	2005		2016	
	thousand	%	thousand	%
Number of households	1723.9	100.0	1398.1	100.0
Total farms with gainful activities	107.1	6.2	39.7	2.8
- agritourism	8.2	7.6	10.6	26.7
- handicraft	1.7	1.6	1.4	3.5
- processing of agricultural products	4.4	4.1	2.6	6.5
- production of renewable energy	0.3	0.3	0.4	1.0
- aquaculture	12.1	11.3	0.9	2.2
- agricultural contract work	28.9	27.0	3.8	9.6
- other activities (e.g. trade)	57.6	53.8	21.8	55.0

Source: *Polska wieś 2018, (2018), Raport o stanie wsi, (Polish countryside. Report on the state of rural areas) ed. J. Wilkin, I. Nurzyńska, Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, Warsaw, p. 124.*

The analysis of the presented data shows that in 2016, compared to 2005, the percentage of farms with gainful activity based on the resources of agricultural farms decreased from 6.2 % in 2005 to 2.8 % in 2016 (Table 2). This situation does not apply to agritourism, handicraft, processing of agricultural products (mostly based on regional cuisine traditions), production of renewable energy and other activities. The reasons for this state of affairs can be found primarily in the progressing industrialization of agriculture and dwindling labour resources of agricultural families, especially those based on family members of working age. These people are looking for a well-paid job outside the farm, also abroad. Therefore, they reduce the interest in additional gainful activity in agricultural farms (Polska wieś 2018, 2018).

However, it is worth emphasizing that the development of additional gainful activity based on the resources of agricultural farms, such as agritourism, handicraft and processing of agricultural products, is combined with assistance and support for this activity by older adults, especially women.

Consequently, they help develop rural tradition and a folk culture with a growing demand, especially from tourists (Sikora, 2012).

In addition to the supply aspect of silver economy in commercial terms in rural areas, attention should be paid to its non-commercial aspects (the non-profit sector). An example of this approach are some elements of social capital in Polish rural areas, especially social work of older adults in civic organizations. In 2016, people aged 60 and over in rural areas accounted for 19 % of the total number of artistic groups and ensembles. Of them, 35 % were members of vocal and folklore groups and choirs, and 54 % were members of rural housewives' clubs. It is worth noting the significant percentage of people aged 60 and over among graduates of computer courses (54 %) organized in rural areas (Informacja o sytuacji, 2018). Social activity of seniors in the Polish rural areas is wide. Many older adults are active not only within formal and registered organizations, but also devote themselves to social activity in informal entities operating in schools, religious groups, village councils, and self-help activity. Unfortunately, there No detailed research has been done into this problem. However, one can propose a thesis, which would require a deeper verification, that the level of social capital in rural areas among seniors, measured by reluctance to joint action, small degree of self-organization and lack of social trust, is not low and it is an important factor for silver economy (commercial and non-commercial) and sustainable social development of rural areas in Poland.

Conclusions, proposals, recommendations

Based on the characterization of the empirical research results, their discussion and analysis of the literature, the following general conclusions can be formulated:

- 1) The goals of sustainable development, including rural areas, should be supported by humanist values, including the values of seniority and dignity of older adults. The value of seniority should be recognised in social and economic life and in the political decisions of central and local authorities oriented at rural development.
- 2) The realization of the idea of sustainable and multifunctional development of rural areas is connected with the need to adopt the value of community and the concept of successful ageing of the rural population.
- 3) Silver economy in rural areas in Poland in terms of demand and supply, targeted at commercial and non-commercial goals, has great opportunities for development. This economy is supported by humanistic, social and natural values rooted (or remaining to be rooted) in the present generation of older adults.
- 4) As a consequence of demographic change, silver economy in rural areas must be taken into account in public policy towards older people, at central, regional and local levels. The areas of this policy include: financial standing of older adults living in rural areas, social assistance, health care, professional and social activity, intergenerational solidarity, promotion of the value of seniority.

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