

TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC SPACE IN RURAL AREAS – IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ITS MANAGEMENT IN SELECTED COMMUNES OF WIELKOPOLSKA PROVINCE

Eliza Kalbarczyk✉

ORCID: 0000-0002-4871-2483

Department of Spatial Econometrics, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
ul. B. Krygowskiego 10, 61-680 Poznań, Poland

ABSTRACT

The goal of the work is to identify public space types in rural areas of Wielkopolska Province and determine their specific nature by means of learning about the way and state of their management. The research material is based on the results of a survey conducted in 2014–2018 in the following five communes: Drawsko, Jarocin, Kaczory, Komorniki and Zaniemyśl. The assessment of the identified space types revealed considerable differences both between the communes and the types of examined common space. The overall state of public space management was evaluated as best in the commune of Komorniki and the lowest scores were given to the commune of Jarocin. What is worth noting is high repeatability of very good scores for places such as a school sports ground and a village community room. It was suggested that a school sports ground could be considered a distinct type of new rural public space. In rural areas more and more frequently one can observe facilities which are usually associated with those available only to city dwellers.

Key words: common space, rural area, type of space, Wielkopolska

INTRODUCTION

The range and pace of transformations taking place in Polish rural areas during the first two decades of the 21st century are comparable to the degree of changes which occurred in the first years of the period after 1989 (Przemiany struktury... 2006, Rola środków... 2010, Głębocki 2014, Kalbarczyk 2014). These transformations include not only the economic sphere, as an effect of e.g. the influx of additional funds from the EU or the development of farm multifunctionality, but also the social sphere (Głaz and Hasiński 2010, Kołodziejczak 2010, Wójcik 2010).

The phenomenon which cannot be overestimated in the latter sphere is reversal of the direction of movement of people from villages to towns. New rural-urban inhabitants of rural areas are only beginning to be the object of academic studies (Matysiak 2019). However, without a doubt they bring both a new character and new (higher?) expectations regarding the quality of life in a rural community. In this context, availability and management of common space in rural areas gain a new meaning.

Importance of public space for building good neighbourly relations, and at the same time its influence on quality of life, has been emphasised

✉ekalb@amu.edu.pl

in publications of many researchers (Zimnicka and Czernik 2007, Gehl 2010, *Problemy kształtowania...* 2010, Jagori 2011, Søholt 2017). The intensified pace of suburbanisation in Poland increased interest in the processes of rural area transformation in suburban areas (Zimnicka and Czernik 2007, Niedźwiecka-Filipiak and Borcz 2010, Mierzejewska 2011). Nevertheless, the issues of transformation regarding public space management in purely rural areas are raised slightly less often (Soszyński et al. 2016). For this reason conducting research on rural public space has been considered justified. In accordance with the definition from the Act on Spatial Planning and Development of 27 March 2003 (Dz.U. 2003 nr 80 poz. 717) a public space is “an area of a special importance for fulfilling the needs of inhabitants and improving the quality of their lives which contributes to establishing social interactions due to its location as well as its functional and spatial features”. In the literature one could find numerous types of public space (Global public... 2016). Generally a public space is divided into: streets and pavements, open public spaces (squares, boulevards, watersides, esplanades, avenues), green spaces (gardens and parks), and non-identified, empty spaces. A more detailed typology was proposed by Wantuch-Malta (2016), who enumerates: new manifestations of architectural types, revitalised squares and streets, new roads and streets, green public spaces of a contemporary city, integrated transport hubs and new public spaces connected with municipal public transport systems, commercial and retail spaces, waterside public spaces, postindustrial spaces and former urban wasteland, residential development, and complex systems. The above-mentioned types refer primarily to urban

spaces. An interesting division of village public spaces was presented by Górka (2012), who distinguished the following categories of new village common spaces: playgrounds, village greens, village parks, squares and streets, and special-use spaces.

As a research hypothesis, the work makes an assumption that in rural areas there are changes in the presence and number of certain public space types as well as the way and state of their management. The goal of the work is to identify public space types of selected communes in Wielkopolska Province and determine their specific nature by means of learning about the way and state of their management.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research material is based on the results of a survey conducted in 2014–2018 in the following five communes: Drawsko, Jarocin, Kaczory, Komorniki and Zaniemyśl (Fig. 1).

The study selected communes different in terms of area size, population size, and population density (Tab. 1), having a different location in relation to the administrative centre of the province (periphery – Poznań metropolitan area). Field research was conducted in each of the communes at least twice, once in the autumn–winter season and another time in the spring–summer season.

Site inspections determined a type of public space, its predominant users, functions, availability and the way and state of its management taking into consideration architectural elements, greenery and special-use facilities. The state of management was evaluated on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 equalled a very bad state and 5 – very good. In addition, photographic

Table 1. Basic data on communes of Wielkopolska Province included in the research

Marked as in Fig. 1	Name of a commune/district	Area [km ²]	Population*	Density of population [inhabitants/km ²]	Number of village administrative units
1	Drawsko/czarnkowsko-trzeciecki	162.95	5 866	36	12
2	Jarocin/jarociński	200.23	45 853	229	23
3	Kaczory/pilski	150.05	7 952	53	12
4	Komorniki/poznański	66.55	29 415	442	8
5	Zaniemyśl/średzki	106.76	6 939	65	18

* as of 2018, BDL (2019)

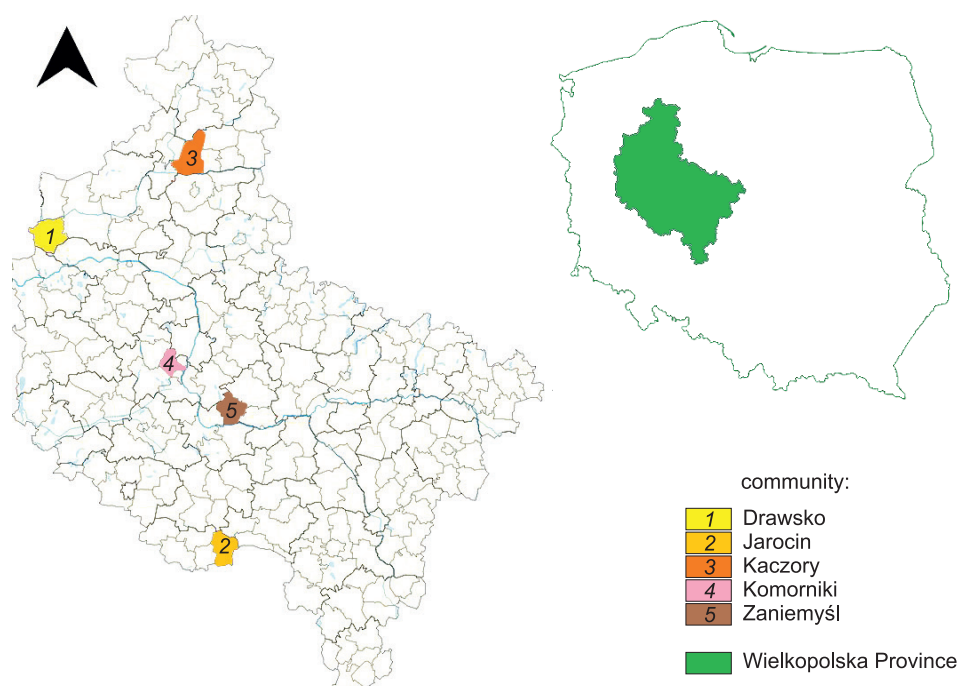


Fig. 1. Location of the examined communes in Wielkopolska Province

documentation was made for particular places. The field research was preceded by the review of literature mainly on the development of rural areas and public space. Subsequently, the gathered material in the form of photographs, questionnaires and tables used during the field survey was analysed. The division into basic types of rural public place was adopted after Górką (2012) who differentiated the following categories of new rural common areas: playgrounds, village greens, village parks, squares and streets, special-use spaces.

The obtained results were presented graphically and in the form of tables using the Microsoft Office 2016 graphics and word processing tools.

RESULTS

In the examined area of rural areas all types of common space distinguished by Górką (2012) were identified; however, not in each of the examined communes at the same time (Tab. 2).

The most diversified in this respect was the commune of Jarocin where places belonging to each of the five main types of space were identified; next

came the communes of Kaczory and Zaniemyśl; the least diversified was the commune of Drawsko with places classed only as two out of the five considered types of space. Out of the specified types of common space the most frequently identified were playgrounds and special-use spaces, merging all the remaining types (Fig. 2). Due to high chances of classifying all places which did not strictly reflect the four specified types of space as the remaining type, a type grouping highly varied spaces, and at the same time the most numerous, was created. It was affected by the presence of spaces adjoining such frequent facilities as a bus stop. However, in this case one could consider suitability of classifying this place as the type: squares and streets. Interestingly, the next most frequent type of space was a school sports ground, closely followed by space in the vicinity of places of religious worship (shrine, church, statue) and a village community room. In addition to numerous school sports grounds, the presence of many sports recreation facilities was observed, e.g.: an outdoor gym, a sports hall, a marina on a lake; and leisure facilities such as a bonfire area, a lake beach, and a theme park (Fig. 3). The above

Table 2. Types of public space in selected rural communes in Wielkopolska Province – identification

Types of public space	Rural commune				
	Drawsko	Jarocin	Kaczory	Komorniki	Zaniemyśl
Playground	Y (16)	Y (22)	Y (6)	Y (8)	Y (7)
Pasture ground	N	Y (1)	N	N	N
Village park	N	Y (5)	Y (2)	Y (1)	Y (2)
Village square (including market square)	N	Y (4)	Y (4)	N	Y (1)
– special spaces, including:					
– sports field	Y (4)	Y (4)	Y (15)	Y (17)	Y (2)
– sports hall	N	N	Y (1)	N	Y (1)
– outdoor gym	Y (3)	Y (2)	N	Y (1)	Y (1)
– rural club room	Y (1)	Y (9)	Y (13)	Y (2)	Y (3)
– railway station	Y (1)	Y (4)	Y (1)	N	N
– bus stop	Y (19)	Y (18)	Y (5)	Y (>20)	Y (11)
– area adjacent to religious sites (church, roadside shrine/figure)	Y (21)	Y (6)	Y (5)	Y (2)	Y (3)
– public library	N	Y (2)	N	Y (1)	Y (2)
– beach	Y (2)	N	Y (2)	Y (1)	Y (3)
– place for a bonfire	Y (14)	Y (2)	Y (2)	N	N
– theme park	Y (1)	N	N	N	N
– marina/harbor	Y (1)	N	N	N	N

Explanations: Y – confirmed occurrence of a given type of space; N – no identification of a given type of space (in brackets – the number of identified places of a given type in a given commune)

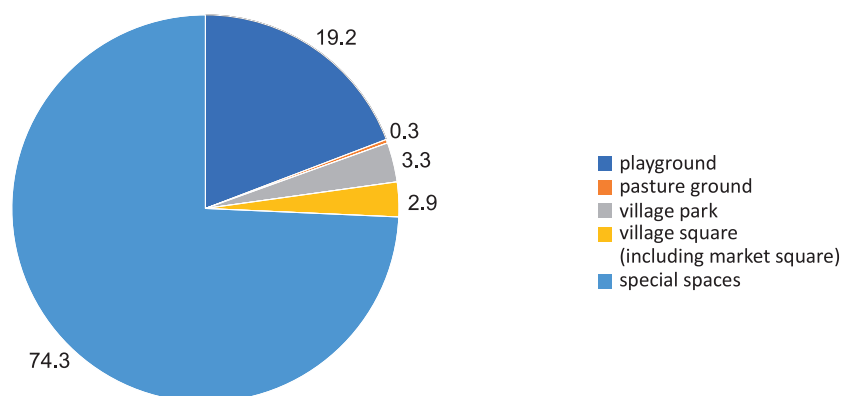


Fig. 2. Structure of public space types [%] in rural areas of selected communes in Wielkopolska Province

mentioned places usually occur individually and only in some of the communes, but their presence in rural areas cannot be omitted. Frequent and relatively numerous sports grounds justify the sense of separating them and treating as another type of common space present in rural areas.

The assessment of the state of the identified types of space showed considerable differences both between the communes and the types of examined common

space. The state of common space evaluated in several villages in each of the communes differed in the range of awarded scores and therefore the results were not averaged for a commune, but all the most frequent scores were listed. Thanks to this, the actual state of management of these spaces was reflected better. In the overall evaluation of common space management, the commune of Komorniki ranked highest; it was given very good and good scores (Tab. 3).

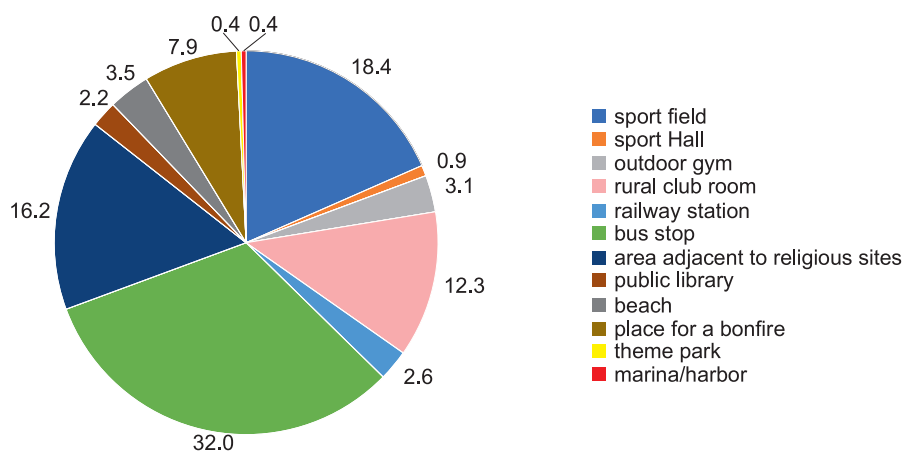


Fig. 3. Types of special public space [%] in rural areas of selected communes in Wielkopolska Province

Table 3. Assessment of public space management in rural areas by specific types in selected rural communes in Wielkopolska Province (on a 1–5 scale)

Types of public space	Rural commune				
	Drawsko	Jarocin	Kaczory	Komorniki	Zaniemyśl
Playground	2; 5	2; 5	3; 4	4	4
Pasture ground	–	–	–	–	–
Village park	–	4	3	5	3
Village square (including market square)	3	2; 5	3; 4	4	4
Sports field	2; 5	1; 4	2; 4; 5	5	4; 5
Other special spaces	1; 5	1; 3; 5	2; 5	4	2; 5

Explanations: 1 – very poor condition, 5 – very good condition

The lowest scores were given to common spaces in the commune of Jarocin; some of them (e.g. an outdoor gym) were even assessed as very bad. What was noticed was high repeatability of good and very good scores for places such as: a sports ground, a village community room or a playground.

DISCUSSION

The common space in rural areas identified in the work differs in many respects, e.g. functions served, availability, the state of its management and equipment; however, they are all aimed at fulfilling the need of direct contact between the members of a local community. Such understanding of public space is close to the definition of this notion by Lorens (2010). In definitions of public space applied by other authors

a differentiating factor was also creating conditions for interaction and direct contact (Chmielewski 1996, 2001, Dymnicka 2013). According to Lorens (2010), physical availability of space may be temporarily limited by the way it is organised. Therefore, public space may include not only open space such as sports grounds or playgrounds but also facilities like a village community room or a village library.

The work, while identifying the occurrence of public space types, used a typology proposed by Górka (2012) which in a clear way enables classification of common space in rural areas. The conducted identification pointed to over-representation of facilities/spaces of one of the types (special-use space). Thus, introduction of another type of space was suggested, i.e. a sports ground. Recreation facilities were distinguished among types of public space

by Soszyński et al. (2016), who, describing the types of public space, applied a functional division. On the other hand, Tomecka and Korzeniowska (2017) distinguished such categories of space as: squares separated from the spatial structure, areas adjacent to service facilities and public buildings, space next to recreation facilities, and space open to landscape and roads.

In the overall evaluation of common space management, the commune of Komorniki ranked highest, the lowest scores were given to common spaces in the commune of Jarocin. It is worth pointing out that the communes have extremely different locations in relation to the administrative centre of the province but a similarly high population density (Tab. 1).

The conducted assessment of the identified public space showed more and more frequent presence of very well managed places, highly rated by their users, places which have been recently created or renovated. The facilities which were most frequently renovated or arranged included playgrounds, school sports grounds and village community rooms. It may prove effectiveness of actions taken in the first decades of the 21st century by rural communities, including applying for funds for construction or renovation of such facilities (Gład and Hasiński 2010, Wójcik 2010, Czapiewska 2011).

In rural areas one can increasingly observe facilities which are usually associated with those available only to city dwellers, such as a sports hall or an outdoor gym. Czapiewska (2011) noted that the changes occurring in rural areas assume a character of a large social movement, which in the long-term may lead to transformation of “the image of the Polish countryside”. The observations made in this work may indirectly serve as another proof of large-scale transformations which have been taking place in rural areas since the 1990s. Multifunctional development of rural areas, initiated at that time, at first mainly through ecological agriculture and agritourism (Bobrowski 2006, Kalbarczyk and Kalbarczyk 2007), offered not only new possibilities to village dwellers (Matysiak 2019), but also, in some rural areas, attracted new urban-rural inhabitants, increasingly urban lifestyle and new expectations from common space.

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted assessment of the presence and management state of the identified types of space showed considerable differences both between the communes and the types of examined common space. In the overall evaluation of public space management in selected rural communes of Wielkopolska Province the commune of Komorniki ranked highest. The lowest scores were given to public spaces in the commune of Jarocin. Most frequently, very good and good scores were awarded to such places as: a school sports ground, a village community room and an outdoor gym, which mainly results from the fact that in recent years those objects underwent renovation works or are newly-built facilities. The work pointed to frequent presence of sports grounds. Therefore, it was suggested that a sports ground could be considered a distinct type of new rural public space.

The observations made in this work may indirectly serve as another proof of large-scale transformations which have been taking place in rural areas since the 1990s. In rural areas one can increasingly observe facilities which are associated with those available only to city dwellers, such as a sports hall or an outdoor gym.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the students of spatial management at the Faculty of Geographical and Geological Sciences of Adam Mickiewicz University for help in carrying out field work.

REFERENCES

- Bobrowski, A. (2006). Transformacja w polskim rolnictwie i na obszarach wiejskich po 1989 r., w: *Przemiany struktury przestrzennej rolnictwa – sukcesy i niepowodzenia* (Transformation in Polish agriculture and in rural areas after 1989, in: *Changes in the spatial structure of agriculture – successes and failures*). Eds. B., Głębocki, E., Kacprzak. Bogucki Wyd. Nauk., Poznań, pp. 9–20.
- BDL, <https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/BDL/dane/podgrup/tablica>, access: 15.09.2019.

- Chmielewski, J.M. (1996). *Teoria urbanistyki. Wybrane zagadnienia* (Theory of urban planning. Selected Issues). Ofic. Wyd. Politechn. Warszawskiej, Warszawa.
- Chmielewski, J.M. (2001). *Teoria urbanistyki w projektowaniu i planowaniu miast* (Theory of urban planning in city design and planning). Ofic. Wyd. Politechn. Warszawskiej, Warszawa.
- Czapiewska, G. (2011). *Odnowa wsi szansą na rozwój peryferyjnych obszarów Pomorza* (Village renewal as a chance for development of peripheral areas of Pomerania). *Barometr Regionalny. Analizy i Prognozy* 3(25), 85–94.
- Dymnicka, M. (2013). *Przestrzeń publiczna a przemiany miasta* (Public space and city changes). Wyd. Nauk. Scholar, Warszawa.
- Gehl, J. (2010). *Cities for people*. Island Press, Washington-Covelo-London.
- Global public space toolkit. From global principles to local policies and practice. (2016). Ed. O'Reilly. United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).
- Głaz, M., Hasiński, W. (2010). *Odnowa wsi dolnośląskiej – pierwsze doświadczenia wdrażania Programu Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich 2007–2013*, w: *Rola środków europejskich w rozwoju obszarów wiejskich*. (Renewal of Lower Silesia village – the first experimental of implementation Rural Development Operational Program 2007–2013, in: *The role of EU funds in rural areas development*). Eds. E., Kacprzak, A., Kołodziejczak. *Studia Obszarów Wiejskich* 24, PTG – IGiPZ PAN, Warszawa, pp. 174–185.
- Głębocki, B. (2014). *Zmiany w strukturze agrarnej polskiego rolnictwa w latach 2002–2012*, w: *Zróżnicowanie przestrzenne rolnictwa* (Changes in the agrarian structure of Polish agriculture in the years 2002–2012, in: *Spatial diversity of agriculture*). Ed. B., Głębocki. GUS, Warszawa, pp. 14–71.
- Górka, A. (2012). *Krajobraz przestrzeni publicznej wsi. Zagadnienia planowania i projektowania ruralistycznego* (Landscape of the village public space. Issues of rural planning and design). Ser. *Projektowanie Środowiskowe*, Wyd. Politechniki Gdańskiej.
- Jagori, UN-Habitat and UN-Women (2011). *Building safe and inclusive cities for women. A practical guide*. Jagori, New Delhi.
- Kalbarczyk, E., Kalbarczyk, R. (2007). *Recreational space valorisation in Western Pomerania district*. *Acta Sci. Pol., Administratio Locorum* 6(3), 59–74.
- Kalbarczyk, E. (2014). *Analiza zasobów gruntów w dobrej kulturze rolnej*, w: *Zróżnicowanie przestrzenne rolnictwa* (Analysis of land resources in good agricultural culture, in: *Spatial diversity of agriculture*). Ed. B., Głębocki. GUS, Warszawa, pp. 178–199.
- Kołodziejczak, A. (2010). *Model rolnictwa wielofunkcyjnego w Polsce – aspekty teoretyczne i aplikacyjne*, w: *Rola środków europejskich w rozwoju obszarów wiejskich* (Model of multifunctional agriculture in Poland: theoretical and application aspects, in: *The role of EU funds in rural areas development*). Eds. E., Kacprzak, A., Kołodziejczak. *Studia Obszarów Wiejskich* 24, 69–88.
- Lorens, P. (2010). *Definiowanie współczesnej przestrzeni publicznej*, w: *Problemy kształtowania przestrzeni publicznych* (Defining contemporary public space, in: *Problems of shaping public spaces*). Eds. P., Lorens, J., Martyniuk-Pęczek. Wyd. Urbanista, Gdańsk, 6–20.
- Matysiak, I. (2019). *Młodzi i wykształceni w procesie przemian polskiej wsi* (Young and educated in the process of transformation of the Polish countryside). Wyd. Nauk. Scholar, Warszawa.
- Mierzejewska, L. (2011). *Przestrzeń publiczna strefy podmiejskiej (na przykładzie Poznania)* (Public space of the suburban zone: An example of Poznań). *Rozwój Regionalny i Polityka Regionalna* 15, 85–97.
- Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, I., Borcz, Z., 2010. *Zmiany krajobrazu wiejskiego zagrożeniem dla zachowania tożsamości miejsca* (Transformations of the landscape village as a threat to preservation of the place identity). *Acta Sci. Pol. Administratio Locorum* 9(4), 85–97.
- Problemy kształtowania przestrzeni publicznych* (Problems of shaping public spaces). Eds. P., Lorens, J., Martyniuk-Pęczek (2010). Wyd. Urbanista, Gdańsk.
- Przemiany struktury przestrzennej rolnictwa – sukcesy i niepowodzenia*. (2006). Eds. B., Głębocki, E., Kacprzak. (Changes in the spatial structure of agriculture – successes and failures). Bogucki Wyd. Nauk., Poznań.
- Rola środków europejskich w rozwoju obszarów wiejskich* (The role of EU funds in rural areas development). (2010). Eds. E., Kacprzak, A., Kołodziejczak. *Studia Obszarów Wiejskich* 24, PTG – IGiPZ PAN, Warszawa.

- Søholt, H. (2017). Making cities for people. Moulding urban design around human beings. *The Journal of Public Space* 2(2), 1–12, doi: 10.5204/jps.v2i2.102.
- Soszyński, D., Sowińska-Świerkosz, B., Gawryluk, A. (2016). Kształtowanie wiejskich przestrzeni publicznych – ocena rozwiązań krajobrazowych w wybranych gminach Polesia Zachodniego (Shaping the rural public places – evaluation of landscape solutions in the selected communities of West Polesie region). *Prace Komisji Krajobrazu Kulturowego* 34, 149–162.
- Soszyński, D., Gadaj P., Kołodyńska, M., Muda, K., Szewczyk, A. (2012). Problemy funkcjonowania i kształtowania wiejskich przestrzeni publicznych na przykładzie wybranych wsi gminy Uścimów na Polesiu Zachodnim (The problems of the functioning and shaping the rural public space, on the example of chosen villages of Uścimów commune in West Polesie region). *Acta Sci. Pol. Administratio Locorum* 11(3), 227–237.
- Tomecka, J., Korzeniowska, A. (2017). Przestrzeń publiczna na wsi jako miejsce spotkań na przykładzie województwa podkarpackiego (Rural public meeting space – selected examples from the Podkarpackie Voivodeship). *Przestrzeń – urbanistyka – architektura*, 1(17), 329–340, doi: 10.4467/00000000PUA.17.020.7138.
- Ustawa z 27 marca 2003 r. o planowaniu i zagospodarowaniu przestrzennym (Act on Spatial Planning and Development). *Dz.U.* 2003 nr 80 poz. 717 t.j., <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20030800717/U/D20030717Lj.pdf>, access: 15.09.2019.
- Wójcik, M. (2010). Struktura i działanie – geograficzno-społeczna interpretacja oddziaływania funduszy Unii Europejskiej na przykładzie programu „Odnowa wsi”, w: *Rola środków europejskich w rozwoju obszarów wiejskich* (Structure and agency – socio-geographical interpretation of effects of European Union funds. Case of program “Village Renewal”, in: *The role of EU funds in rural areas development*). Eds. E., Kacprzak, A., Kołodziejczak. *Studia Obszarów Wiejskich* 24, 186–201.
- Zimnicka, A., Czernik, L. (2007). *Vademecum wsi podmiejskiej. Jakość zagospodarowania przestrzennego* (Vademecum of suburban village. Quality of spatial development). *Wyd. Hogben, Szczecin*.