

Sustainable Development of Rural Areas in Poland in the Context of 'urban Sprawl' Process

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SUMMARY

Sustainable development of rural areas is a concept that pertains to many issues, including, without limitation, rational management of space which constitutes a non-renewable resource. Intensification of development of real property located in suburban areas results in negative changes in land use and is contrary to the idea of sustainable development of such areas. This phenomenon, referred to as "urban sprawl", causes many spatial conflicts. Due to attractive location, the vicinity of a city or town and good transport infrastructure, arable land of highest quality and agricultural suitability, protected under the Act on the Protection of Arable Lands and Forests, is often designated for development, as well as plots whose shape significantly hinders their optimal use. These conflicts can be avoided if the principles of sustainable land use are applied by rational spatial planning at the regional and local level.

Nevertheless, changes in land use effected pursuant to Polish planning documents, such as local development plans and local studies of conditions and directions of spatial planning, are not always in line with expectations. Local development plans are drafted only for certain areas and do not secure the actual implementation of their guidelines. Local studies of conditions and directions of spatial planning cover the entire territory of communes – but they are not acts of local law and they are not binding in the issuance of individual administrative decisions on outline planning and spatial development. The discussed documents include information on the assumed spatial development. On the other hand, the practice shows that these assumptions are not necessarily followed.

The objective of the study was the analysis of legal conditions of allocation of land for building development in rural areas with consideration of the procedure of exclusion of land from agricultural or forest production in Poland. Based on the example of the assessment of the existing state of selected problem areas in the Warsaw agglomeration, the need for analysis of

environmental conditions and implementation of the land consolidation and division procedure was pointed out. Its implementation would considerably improve the conditions of sustainable development of the areas.

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