



The Role of Local Resources as Factors of Regional Development



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1 Introduction

Regional development is in large measure conditioned by the quality and quantity of internal resources present in a given region, as well as the degree to which those resources are the focus of social or economic utilization. It is for this reason that today's development policy in EU member states attaches more and more weight to internal potential in the form of defined resources. A new paradigm for territorial development policy is thus taking shape, with this taking greater account than hitherto of local specifics, and this is taken to mean, not only economic and social factors, but also valuable cultural and natural features. The assumption then is that activation of internal potential has a favourable effect on the conditions inhabitants live under, also allowing more effective use to be made of funds designated for development. It is to these kinds of assumption that the theoretical concepts of territorial capital (Camagni 2008), endogenous capacity (Scott and Storper 2003) and local conditioning and local networking (Fujita et al. 1999) are addressed.

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According to Romer (1990), a factor of fundamental importance in the development of a region is the activation of its internal potential, as determined by the resources it possesses at the outset. A high level of own potential has a positive influence on the way favourable living conditions for inhabitants take shape, and awareness of this should translate into major objectives for regional development. In the view of Porter (1990), this goal can be achieved through the effective use of endogenous resources. Equally, the utilization of external factors is considered to depend greatly upon the activity of the local system itself. In the “system” or “configuration” of this kind, an important role is played by the participation of representatives of the local community, and this involves both the formulation and introduction of mechanisms by which development can be achieved and innovation ensured (Jouen 2008; Garofoli 1992). In these circumstances, we refer to local development as a complex process whereby local authorities use their own resources—and involve external partners—to stimulate the economic development of the particular unit of territory (Blakely 1989).

Internal resources form an element in the implementation of the concept of neo-endogenous development. In this case, it is assumed that there will be a search for—and use made of—all possible internal potential with a view to the greatest possible absorption of external factors taking place, so that an area’s own resources may, in turn, be multiplied and magnified (Ray 1997). Regions or smaller units of territorial administration should activate their own potential so that socioeconomic development can be shaped and proper use made of endogenous support instruments. The stimulation of development from outside is important, at times even essential, but without a strong local base, even major resources injected in support of development may end up being wasted.

Bearing in mind the resources that shape the internal potential in a given area, it is possible to distinguish between two key categories: (1) universal resources that can be generated in any other area or many other areas; and (2) local or specific resources that underpin the unique character of a given territorial unit. The latter category, which this study focuses on, offers a foundation upon which an area’s competitiveness can be built, in line with the way in which valuable features representative of that area are difficult to either replicate or substitute for. Furthermore, the most specific resources may not be separated from their place of occurrence, being deeply rooted in the local space and community.

Local resources play a particular role in weakly developed regions and peripheral areas. In these areas, appropriate activation can assure these resources of a status as major agents of development (Pike et al. 2006). This in turn denotes a need for a more individualized approach to be taken to regions, so that fully effective use can be made of their internal resources. In other words, alternative strategies of development are required, depending on whether the conceptualization is a regional or local one (Pike et al. 2007). This is also confirmed in numerous studies in which the authors seek out internal development potential in areas which currently are only weakly developed (Bahl et al. 1984; Bryden and Hart 2004; Wong 1998).

The results of work carried out in three regions of eastern Poland (the provincial regions—Voivodeships—of Podlaskie, Lubelskie and Podkarpackie) that can be

regarded as peripheral, and are in fact among the most weakly developed regions in Poland. In addition, those regions are characterized as the area of unfavourable population transformations, including excessive migration outflow and deformation of demographic structure (Banski and Flaga 2013). The main aim of the work has been to achieve fuller insight into local resources in the above areas, as well as an assessment of the potential for development which they offer.

2 The Concept of Local Resources and Research Methods

There is no universal or even widely accepted definition of local resources. Rather, much has depended on authors' needs and research interests, with diverse categories being created to characterize given areas. Nevertheless, most researchers believe that local resources can be an important factor underpinning development, with proper utilization likely to strengthen social and economic development in its territorial aspects, as local markets, entrepreneurship, infrastructure and inhabitants all experience a stimulatory effect (Dale 2002; Konsolas 1990; Sweeney 1995; Schucksmith 2010). As this argument makes clear, considerable attention is paid to the role of a local community as a factor determining the proper use of all the potential inherent in a given area (Dale 2002; Conroy 1998; Knack and Keefer 1997).

For the purposes of this chapter, local resources will be understood as unique or near-unique and, at the same time, socially and economically useful features, factors and phenomena in a defined area and actually or potentially shaping its internal potential for development. In other words, these are elements of the internal potential of a given area, creating opportunities for new development impulses to be generated.

It is possible to propose a three-level division of resources into categories, groups and types (see Fig. 1). To put things at the most general level, local resources can be material in nature (i.e. be raw materials, products, valuable natural features, etc.) or non-material (in the form of relationship skills and capacities, linkages, culture, etc.). In the first category, we are dealing with natural resources generated irrespective of human beings, as well as anthropogenic ones that arise as a consequence of the human activity. The second category of resources is also divided into two groups, i.e. social resources associated with specific features of inhabitants and cultural resources arising out of local customs and traditions, specific ethnic, religious and cultural features as the historical past. Also, the need to be taken account of is the general way in which the use of local resources is shaped by very complicated sets of features or phenomena, to the extent that they may be assigned to more than one type.

The logic of the research procedure required three main stages. The first of these entailed the identification of resources using different source materials. The Internet, of course, proved an especially important source of information, with the use of keywords plus names of regions and names of localities capable of giving rise to

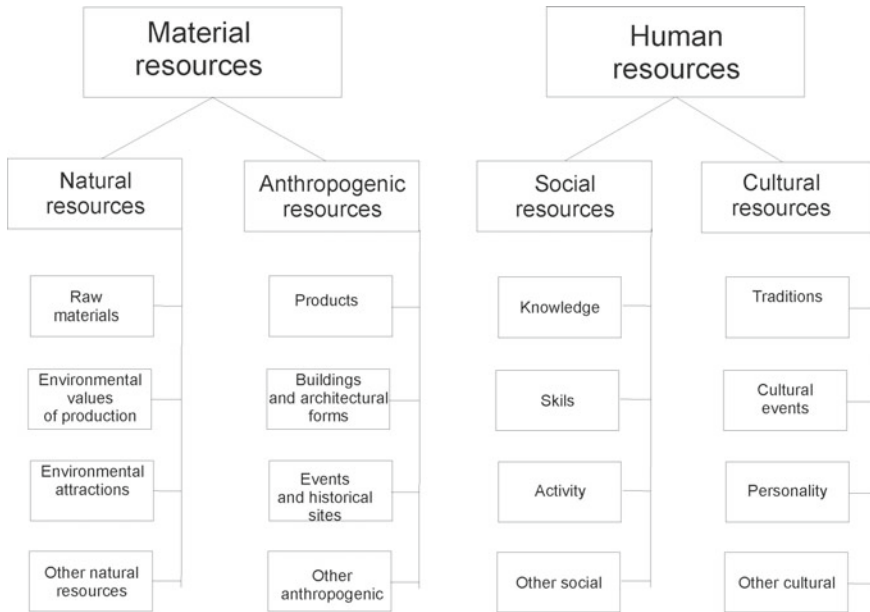


Fig. 1 Classification of local resources (Source author’s own elaboration)

extensive resources of data. In contrast, it was a literature that most often served to enhanced knowledge of a resource. In the case of resources that the further research process was able to recognize as very important for a region’s development, these also became the subject of extra field-based research.

A second stage of the work saw all the resources recognized subjected to assessment from the point of view of their uniqueness and utility in terms of five independent experts who are specialists in regional development. At this point, the notions of uniqueness and utility need explaining, given the need for cohesive interpretation of them by all the participating experts. Thus, uniqueness was taken to denote a phenomenon, i.e. resource, either not occurring at all in other places, or at most present only very rarely elsewhere. Most especially, it was things capable of being considered one of a kind (“one-offs”) that were being looked for. Utility in turn relates to the possibility of a resource being put to use in the shaping of local development. The utility of each studied resource assessed by experts received either a low, average or high evaluation. A low assessment implies a limited potential for development, while a high one denotes a potential for market success. In the case of uniqueness, the principle was the same—it could be at the local, regional or national level. The most valuable resources are obviously those that are unique at the national level, i.e. have no counterpart (comparable object) in other regions of the country. As a result, it proved possible to distinguish between three classes of resources (Table 1) Strategic (A), Significant (B) or Supplementary (C).

Table 1 Assessment of local resources in terms of level of utility and uniqueness. Classes of resources: strategic (A), significant (B) or supplementary (C)

Utility	Uniqueness		
	Local level	Regional level	National level
Low	C	C	B
Average	C	B	A
High	B	A	A

Source author's own elaboration

The third stage of the work was analytical in nature, entailing a reconnaissance of the spatial distribution and structure of resources, as well as analysis of the experts' assessments. Statistical and cartographic methods were applied in this case, though the process began with all of the resources identified being assigned to categories, groups and types.

3 Results

The result of the first stage was gathered information on 220 local resources, including 63 in Podkarpackie Voivodeship, 68 in Lubelskie and 89 in Podlaskie. Among the local resources identified, there is a decided prevalence of examples of the material resources category, with a leading role played by architectural forms and buildings (93 resources or some 42% of all valuable features identified), as well as valuable natural features shaping attractiveness from the point of view of tourism (51 resources—23%). Best represented within the category of non-material resources are customs and traditions (64 resources—29%). The remaining types of resources are less well-represented. As configured regionally, the breakdown by different types of resources is similar, with certain spatial differences observable.

In line with the above remark, the resources identified are capable of being assigned to more than one type, group or even category. They are thus of a mixed nature. A total of 107 resources are representative of one type, while 83 represent two, 25—three, 4—four and 1 as many as 5. The most uniform in nature is the group of natural resources (Fig. 2). Among the 71 examples of such resources, only 18 could simultaneously be assigned to other types. These are mainly valuable natural features that help make an area attractive to tourists while at the same time serving as places associated with history or characterized by the presence of architectural heritage. In the case of 155 valuable features of the anthropogenic group, there were 66 displaying the aforementioned kind of feature. Analogously, among 45 social resources, there are 33 that are of a mixed character, while among 97 cultural resources, a similar situation applies to 69.

From the point of view of geographical location, most of the resources are of a "point" nature, which is to say their precise location in a defined place can be referred to. There are far fewer resources which exist on a linear from (e.g. the *GreenVelo* cycle trail, the Podlaskie White Stork Trail, etc.), or covering larger areas (as with Lake Wigry National Park, the "Biebrza Valley" Area of Protected

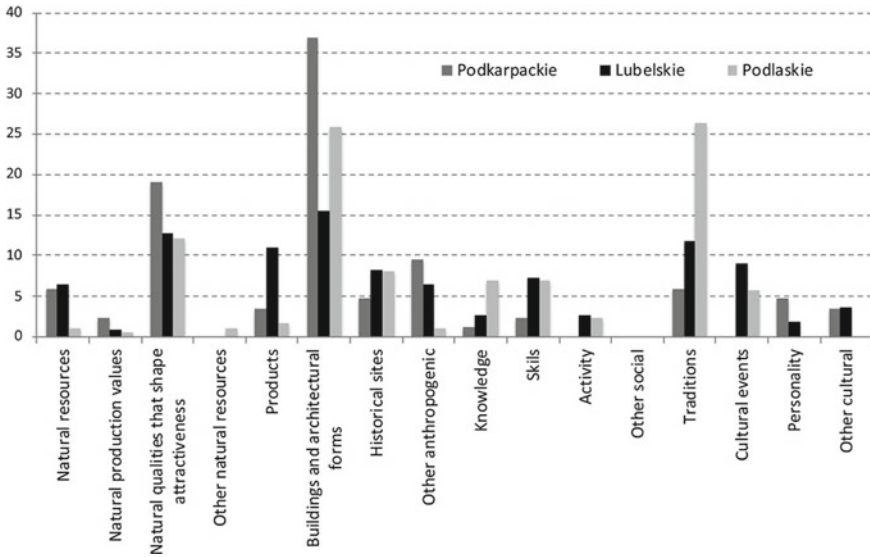
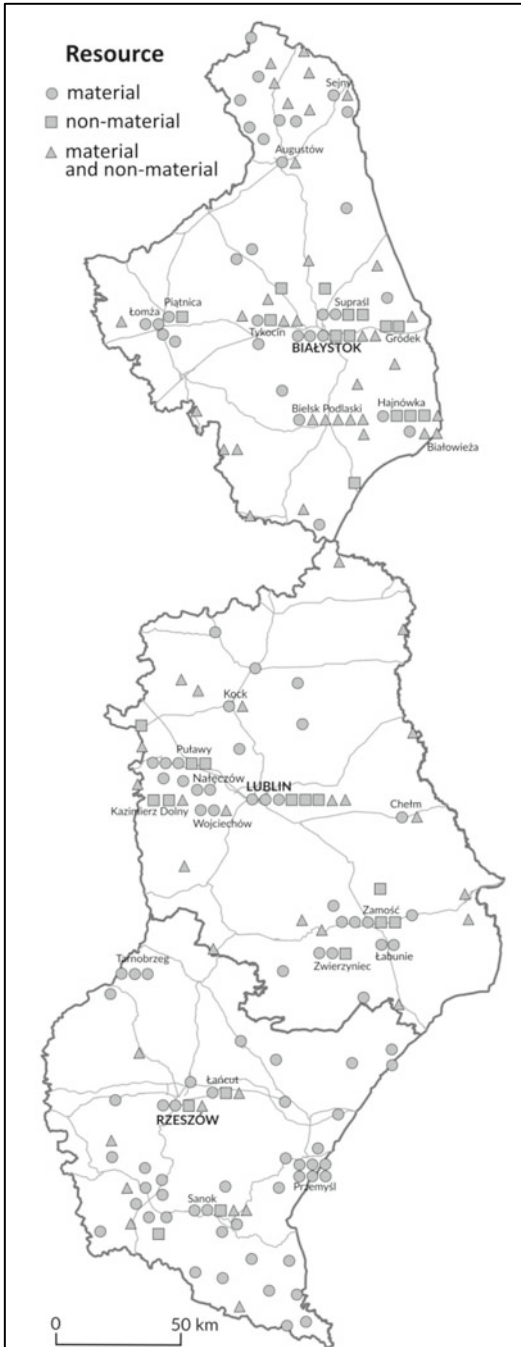


Fig. 2 Breakdown of local resources by type in the three voivodeships studied (%) (Source author's own elaboration)

Landscape, etc.). In terms of spatial configuration, the local resources can be said to be moderately dispersed, albeit with distinct concentrations in a couple of areas (Fig. 3). These are areas already much visited by tourists on account of both their natural and their historic-cultural attributes. There are also concentrations of resources around the regions' capitals, i.e. Białystok, Lublin and Rzeszów, in areas in their immediate vicinity, and in and around other larger localities. The large number of valuable features identified in these cases reflects the sizes of the urban areas, the functional role these centres play in their regions and their rich historical pasts.

In terms of their level of utility, the resources were not be evaluated very highly by the experts. Most typically, evaluations are average or low, and this is seen to be true in all three regions studied. Among the assets assessed, most favourably are in fact well-known across Poland already and hence constitute resources already subject to "exploitation". These are:

- Lake Solińskie (a dam reservoir along the River San surrounded by an attractive hilly landscape, with considerable utilization in tourism);
- Kazimierz Dolny (a historic town located in a naturally attractive area that also plays host to various festivals as well as more spontaneous get-togethers of artists);
- the academic potential of Lublin (as the capital of its province region, with its many higher education institutions creating significant academic potential and achieving the highest indicator values for numbers of students per inhabitant);



The resources covering larger areas or not associated with a clearly-defined locality

Voivodeship: Podkarpackie
Local resources: Molotov Line, Food products, Petroleum, Craft Trials

Voivodeship: Lubelskie
Local resources: Cake “Lublin onion”, “Green Velo”, Agricultural potential, Shale gas deposit, Swamp turtle, Limestones

Voivodeship: Podlaskie
Local resources: Protected Landscape Area “Biebrza Valley”, Protected Landscape Area “Narwia Valley”, Protected Landscape Area “Rospuda Valley”, Protected Landscape Area “Suwalski Lake District”, Protected Landscape Area “Sejny Lake District”, Podlasie Stork Trial, The Wood and Sacrum Trial, Tatar Trial, “Green Velo”

Fig. 3 Distribution of groups of local resources (Source author’s own elaboration)

- the stud farm in Janów Podlaski (famous for the breeding of pureblood Arab horses, with annual auctions at which some fetch prices exceeding a million euros);
- the mineral waters in the Nałęczów area (with the healing properties of the waters themselves and the unique microclimate ensuring the presence of popular spas and health resorts);
- Zamość Old Town (a pearl of Renaissance architectural heritage (Polish and Italian) already well-visited as a magnet destination for both organized tours and individual tourism).

Białowieża National Park (one of the last natural forests on the European Lowland, a refuge for the European bison and many other unique animal and plant species).

The assessment of the level of uniqueness of resources appears much more favourable. While resources receiving average evaluations again prevail, uniqueness at the national level (the highest rating) was found to be characteristic of 10–20 resources in each region. These are almost twice the figures obtained with the utility assessment. Furthermore, only a small number of resources were assessed as of low value. Among all, the resources valued most highly by all the experts were:

- the stud farm in Janów Podlaski (*see above*);
- the Old Town in Zamość (*see above*);
- Białowieża National Park (*see above*);
- Biebrza National Park (a valuable natural area of marsh and fen with numerous unique wetland bird species, including ruffs *Philomachus pugnax*);
- Magurski National Park (a refuge for forest fauna typical for the lower montane forest zone and the Carpathian foreland);
- the “Grabarka” hill (the most important site of religious cult importance for followers of the Russian Orthodox faith);
- *Szkoła Orłąt* in Dęblin (training pilots and aviation engineers);
- The Parish Church of the Assumption in Haczów (Europe’s tallest wooden church in the Gothic style).

Crosstable analysis in relation to levels of utility and uniqueness points to the existence of 40 strategic resources (class A—shown as the dark grey field in Table 2). Among these are 16 that obtained the highest average assessments for the features studied. The collection of significant resources (class B) in turn runs to 107 items, while the supplementary resources (class C) are 73 in number. We can see that resources evaluated highly from the point of view of their utility also received high scores for their uniqueness. Only 3 out of 19 such resources (Nałęczów’s mineral waters, the academic potential of Lublin and the chalk quarries in the Chełm area) were assessed as unique at the regional level, while all the remainder were considered to achieve uniqueness on the scale of the country as a whole. In contrast, in the cases of 39 resources assessed most favourably from the unique point of view, as many as 21 are regarded as of average utility only, while 2

Table 2 Evaluation of local resources in terms of both utility and uniqueness

Utility	Uniqueness		
	Local level	Regional level	National level
Low	26	41	2
Average	6	105	21
High	0	3	16

Source author's own elaboration

(the museum of unusual bicycles and the Young Violinists' Competition held in Lublin are even regarded as low utility.

The highest utility level characterizes the naturally valuable features that help make a place or object attractive to tourists. Among these, there are eight resources assessed most favourably by the experts. Resources of other types were only assigned lower assessment values. Among these, there are only a relatively small group of resources of high value from the point of view of development. In numerical terms, the clearly prevalent resources are those with average assessment values. The same is in fact, true in the case of the uniqueness assessment carried out for the resources. Among these, it is mostly uniqueness on the regional level that is achieved. Nevertheless, it is worth stressing how there are a greater number of resources receiving highest-level assessments from experts. These are included among five types of resource, i.e. valuable natural features helping shape attractiveness from the point of view of tourism, architectural forms and buildings, historical places, customs and traditions and cultural events.

4 Discussion

Analysis of the local resources present in eastern Poland reveals how resources in the material category prevail over their non-material counterparts. In other words, this is an area whose local and regional development may be more shaped by natural potential and what people achieved in the past than by valuable contemporary features of a social or cultural nature. This is probably the result of this area's characteristics and notably its visibly low current level of socioeconomic development (Bański and Janicki 2013; Józwick and Sagan 2014). In regions of eastern Poland, it is possible to point to a whole range of negative social, demographic and economic phenomena that have ensured the emergence of extensive problem areas (Bański and Flaga 2013). This also explains why the social potential in the form of knowledge and skills, activeness of inhabitants and of local leaders and cultural events is relatively limited and less important than the valuable material resources.

In eastern Poland, a particularly unfavourable kind of conditioning preventing full use of internal resources for development relates to the low levels of both entrepreneurship and social activeness on the part of inhabitants. A 2012 study carried out by the author in rural areas revealed that the three voivodeships under

analysis here are characterized by Poland's lowest values for numbers of businesses per 1000 inhabitants of productive age. Equally unfavourable features characterize this area's figures for activeness in society, with this again reflecting the relatively low level of education among inhabitants, as well as a considerable migratory outflow, in particular, involving society's youngest and most active adults.

The above conclusions gain support in extended interviews run with cultural animators and representatives of the administration at regional levels within the voivodeships studied. In general, they pointed to the same resources which were identified in the course of this study. This meant a prevalence of material values, with only relatively few resources of a social or cultural nature being mentioned. Respondents drew attention to the high value of regional resources, which have broader connotations assigned to them than the study had made clear. Among these, there were aspects like the multi-cultural nature of regions, its clean natural environment and the wealth of flora and fauna, the hospitality of inhabitants, the polycentric settlement structure, opportunities for trade with the East and so on. While these features are indeed of great importance in the context of socioeconomic development, they do not represent concrete resources but are rather reflections of the general character of the area studied.

A second key conclusion arises out of the assessments of the utility and uniqueness of the resources identified. In the opinions of the experts, the regions studied have far more resources of value thanks to their uniqueness than they do from the point of view of their potential to shape social and economic development. Almost all the resources regarded as being of high utility are at the same time, either unique or rare. Hence, the conclusion that high development potential relates first and foremost to unique resources. Equally, the mere fact that a resource is not found elsewhere offers no guarantee that its level of utility in the context of local development will be high.

It is thus worth considering what features, other than uniqueness, local resources should have in order that conditions for a given area's development can prove favourable. Obviously, much depends on the category resources belong to. Thus, in the case of raw materials, they must be present in quantities allowing them to achieve economic significance. In contrast, where valuable features determining attractiveness to tourists are concerned, uniqueness has to combine with aesthetic features of the surroundings, transport access, the degree to which the areas in question are supplied with tourist and other infrastructure and even the economic potential of those availing themselves of the services on offer. Indeed, a still more diverse set of features will be required in the case of social and cultural resources. While it is true that resources of this category offer only limited development potential in eastern Poland, it is very much upon them (and upon attendant knowledge, activeness, skill and personality) that the mobilization of the potential of material resources there can be seen to depend.

The greater part of the resources assigned high values for uniqueness (as opposed to those of major practical benefit) is such as to indicate that the regions under study in eastern Poland are characterized by the presence of unused internal potential. It is probable that some of the resources identified are basically still in a

“dormant” state. However, their individual potential is anyway generally low. Furthermore, they are located far from larger concentrations of population and are typically of limited accessibility in terms of transport. It is thus hard to expect them to do much to build development potential, given their isolation. In this context, the best solution would seem to be an effort to interlink resources only, achieving lower values for utility, with this also forming a basis for new local products that draw on the value of several resources to be developed. This requires a full understanding of the links actually or potentially present between local resources, as well as the devising of entirely new local products. Concepts for such new products that draw on potential resources should be clear as to their objective and type of recipient and intended results. Naturally, the activity of this kind should also be coordinated by regional authorities.

In 2014, a specifically commissioned pilot project was implemented by the Marshal’s Office of Lubelskie Voivodeship for the development of strategies for several products that would make use of the region’s local resources. One such product was named the “active weekend—come to the theme village”, with the aim here being to make use of five such resources, i.e. the Tartar Village of Studzianka, the Masłomęckie Association of the Village of the Goths, the village of Malinowa Wieś, the profession of the blacksmith and forge in the village of Wojciechów and folk medicine. This product may be based on associations that bring together people actively pursuing the goal of revitalizing disappearing skills (such as sieve-making and blacksmithing), as well as on the various theme villages that have made their appearance. This product seeks to inspire investors to broaden the range of the said theme villages located in this area. Indeed, the development of these is actively proposed, while local communities are encouraged to propagate the traditions and skills hanging on from the old days.

Another example is resources which might be linked is the so-called silver economy. The Lublin region has four resources (the production of herbs, the mineral waters of Nałęczów, thermal waters and the academic potential of Lublin itself), and on the basis of these, it has been possible to advocate for a new product that would be linked with healthcare and cosmetic services for elderly people. This product makes use of the local potential associated with the herb-growing that takes place in several local villages, with the spa and health resort that is in Nałęczów (with its specific microclimate and waters and many treatments, renewal and spa centres already in place), as well as the research potential inherent in the academic staff of the Medical University of Lublin. In turn, the types of resources best represented in eastern Poland (i.e. valuable natural features making the area attractive, combined with architecture, traditions, and customs) of course show linkage with tourist functions. This all makes it possible for many new tourist products to be devised and developed. Analysis of resources by type of structure also shows that half of these are of mixed character—a feature that in fact needs to be viewed as very favourable, given that these kinds of resources may prove attractive to various different groups of recipients. And, this makes it easier to create new local or regional products on their basis.

It needs to be emphasized that regions of eastern Poland are located peripherally in many senses, with limited transport access and a relatively minor potential to provide services. For these reasons also, new products using local resources need to focus in on areas where obstacles and problems are least marked. These areas are above all the larger urban centres and areas in their vicinity or else areas located along the main transport routes. In Poland, there are many examples of economic success being built upon different types of local resources. These include the aforementioned theme villages which draw on valuable natural features, local traditions, history, specific agricultural products and so on. However, this first requires commitment on the part of local people, the breaking of stereotypes, a willingness to leave the house and a process of self-discovery vis-à-vis capacities and skills. In fact, shortfalls in all of these areas represent a significant break in development in eastern regions of Poland.

5 Closing Remarks

The activation of a region's internal valuable features represents one aspect conditioning socioeconomic development, which exerts a favourable influence on the lives of inhabitants and facilitates the effective use of funds invested inwardly from outside the region. Internal valuable features also offer a basis upon which to build a given area's competitive advantage. The analysed internal resources can be considered rather only in the context of local development. However, it can be assumed that the set of several resources may become the basis for shaping new products creating competitive advantages of the region in specific sectors of activity.

In the case of Poland, which receives more than any other EU member state in structural funding, the use of regional potential is of particular significance. Conceptualizations of regional development in relation to resources usually distinguish two categories of resource, i.e. universal and local (specific). The latter can be divided into material and non-material, while within them it is possible to identify groups of resources and concrete kinds thereof.

In eastern Poland, diverse groups of local resources were identified, with these including—irrespective of the region—the great numbers of buildings and other architectural items, as well as valuable features capable of contributing to tourist attractiveness and customs and traditions. The research showed that identified resources are of average uniqueness, while they are only of utilitarian value (from the point of view of local development) to an average or limited degree. In the assessment of the experts, the greatest number of highly utilitarian resources is associated with the same valuable features as shape attractiveness from the tourism point of view.

Almost, all the resources for which the index of utilitarian value is high are at the same time characterized by high values for uniqueness. However, there is a relatively large group of highly unique resources (e.g. customs and traditions, cultural events and items of architectural heritage) that only attain more limited utilitarian

values. In this case, an activation process ought to be linked with the shaping of new regional products, constructed simultaneously on the basis of several complementary local resources. It is in this way that effective use can still be made of resources rated as of more limited utility.

It can be accepted that the number of resources identified is determined by the level of detail of research carried out and the scale of the frame of reference. This study took in three regions—a circumstance that most likely excluded a series of poorly known resources impacting upon small settlement units or even individual households. Interesting results might also arise from studies of local resources in small territorial units (a single *gmina* or a set of several). These should find their place in newly developed strategies and plans for the development of the units in question. For, through the use of local resources, it is possible to implement the development of small territorial units in the most favourable directions.

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